

Let's Revel in

John's Gospel

A Devotional Study of the Gospel of John
New American Standard Bible

John G. Mitchell, D.D.

Glory Press
West Linn, Oregon

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Dedication

Dr. Willard M. Aldrich, Th.D.

Like sons of thunder,
Dr. Willard and Dr. John
taught,
prayed,
and served
beside one another as
associates,
brothers,
companions,
defenders,
enthusiasts,
friends
for more than 50 years.
With Dr. John taking
the more public ministry
and Dr. Willard, as long-time president
of the Multnomah School of the Bible,
the more private,
the two served their Savior
with unrivaled devotion.

The one could not have served
so well
without the other.

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Foreword

to the 1982 edition, entitled *An Everlasting Love*

For more than six decades, the author of this exposition of the Gospel of John has been preaching the love and grace of God. During this long period of expository ministry, the author has, like John the Apostle, exalted Christ and warmed his audience with his presentation of the Lord Jesus Christ as the center of our faith and our devotion. It seems fitting that John G. Mitchell, having reached the approximate age of the Apostle when he wrote the Gospel, now presents this intimate insight into the heart of the Saviour based on what the Apostle John penned by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The Gospel of John has its own peculiar charm among the sixty-six books of the Bible. Its focus is on the Person of Jesus Christ. Its message is that Jesus Christ is the Saviour. From the introduction of Jesus Christ as the eternal Word who became flesh to the climax where Peter is questioned about his love for the Saviour, the Gospel breathes the love and grace of God and records the exalted revelation of His deity.

What characterizes the writings of the Apostle is precisely what has characterized the expository ministry of the author of this book. Few preachers and faithful expositors of the Word of God have exalted Christ more than John Mitchell. Thousands have been touched by his ministry. This work is a fitting legacy to leave to a new generation of faithful preachers who follow his example.

The Gospel of John is about people, those who were touched by the message of Christ and

in whom the Saviour's power and grace were manifested. The record of this Gospel is the hall of fame of those who preeminently illustrated what salvation in Christ can accomplish. In this Gospel we meet John the Baptist, Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip, Nathanael, the mother of Jesus, Nicodemus, the woman of Samaria, the nobleman with the sick son, the infirmed man at the pool of Bethesda, and many more. They were people who were saved, healed, and restored.

In his Gospel, John records the first miracle at the wedding in Cana, the great prophecy of the coming of the Holy Spirit, the healing of the blind man, the revelation of Christ as the True Shepherd. As the narrative progresses, we learn about the intimate circle of friends including Mary, Martha, and Lazarus and read the touching story of Mary anointing Christ with her precious spikenard. Only in John's Gospel can we find the Upper Room Discourse with its prophetic foreview of the present dispensation characterized by "you in Me, and I in you" (John 14:20). Only here in John is the record of the high priestly prayer of Christ (John 17). On the cross He died as no one else had died. He rose as no one else arose. All this was written "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name" (John 20:31).

If this exposition thrills readers with its revelation of Jesus Christ and brings them to trust the Saviour and to worship at His nail-pierced feet, then its purpose will have been realized.

John F. Walvoord, then President
Dallas Theological Seminary

Preface

to the first edition, entitled *An Everlasting Love*

“We would see Jesus.”

Two men stand before Philip, brushing off the dust from their trip to Jerusalem. Their simple request masks the burning desire which has brought them from their Greek homeland to the Ancient City.

This study answers that request for the reader of *John’s Gospel*. For Dr. John G. Mitchell, Jesus Christ is the center of the book of John.

And who is Jesus Christ?

Jesus Christ is God in human form. He is the heart of the Gospel message. He is the One who brings God’s everlasting love.

Christ’s opponents asked Him Who He thought He was in John chapter 8. His answer was quick. God. “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day. I’m El Shaddai. The Almighty One. I’m Abraham’s God. I’m Moses’ God.”

He’s the Son of God . . . God manifest in the flesh. And He came with explicit purpose. Jesus Christ came to reveal God. And His everlasting love.

“God so loved the world.” This is the crux of John 3:16. Love provided a way for men to be delivered from their sin. Love stepped into the picture and provided a Gift, Jesus, God’s only begotten Son, “that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

This is the message for the world. But we who believe hear it even more strongly. Because Jesus Christ came with love for His own. “Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them

unto the end" (John 13:1). It is the same love—the same divine, intimate, and perfect love which the Father has for the Son, and the Son for the Father—which the Son has for each of His own. "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:26).

This is Jesus Christ. The Creator God. The Faithful Shepherd. The Gospel of John centers around Him and Him only. We see the revelation of the Holy God and the love of God in His one Person.

Journey with Dr. Mitchell through the Gospel of John. Much like a trip through the majesties of a beautiful, mountainous countryside, his discussions include trips off the main road to see other parts of the splendor in the scenery. So we enter many more parts of the Bible in addition to John's Gospel. Yet all of this journey brings us close to the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ. All of his explanations reveal the beauty of God's heart. Because of the careful attention of writer Dick Bohrer to Dr. Mitchell's own unique style and manner of communication, this work preserves the best of the sermons and transcripts from which it was compiled.

Commentaries on John fill shelves of many New Testament libraries. Why another one? Verse by verse studies of the fourth Gospel have given us pages of analysis. Is there need for yet more explanation of its contents? But this one work may be the most important of them all. For its pages are filled with a love for the Saviour and a desire to know more about His love for us. Jeremiah wrote, "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (31:3). This is the only kind of love God has . . . a perfect, complete, eternal love. This He has shown in Jesus Christ. The One we would see in the Gospel of John.

Editor's Note

to the first edition, entitled *An Everlasting Love*

For fifteen years this manuscript has been on or near my desk. I sensed, each time I worked on it, that I was on holy ground. Many months at a time, I felt I could not work on it because I was not a holy man—holy man enough to do a holy work. It was only when I realized that this book would make unholy men, prone-to-wander-Lord-I-feel-it men, more holy that I could resume; for it exalts the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and, in so doing, captures hearts.

No transcription, no copyedited version of a man's sermons that doesn't remain faithful to the cadence of his tongue is worth its ink. To remove the vibrations of his voice, that touch of Northumbria that marked John G. Mitchell for life, would do violence to any book of his sermons. As a man is known by his works, any edition of his words must remind us on every page of the man who said them.

These sermons were given in 1964-65 when Dr. Mitchell pastored the Central Bible Church in Portland, Oregon. The tapes were transcribed by Miss Jean McNett. Her manuscript of about a thousand pages was virtually error-free. Her little penciled notes in margins, notes of concern for accuracy and clarity, bespoke her own interest in the work and her faithfulness in ministry.

My wife Betty has listened to Dr. Mitchell's more recently recorded radio tapes on the Gospel of John and has taken copious notes which have been unusually helpful in preparing this book.

It has not been difficult to keep the text faithful to Dr. Mitchell's heart as well as to his

tongue. God's Word seems to nudge his cup, as it were; and the Living Water that fills him to the brim overflows in love and concern for his listeners. This is not a man who deals in cold truth. The pulsating warmth of his yearning for his Saviour (his own preferred spelling) and his yearning for men to know Him work at one's heart.

I used to leave the services when Dr. Mitchell spoke longing to become a man of the Book as he is. He is a walking concordance. Give him a Bible word and he will recite companion verses galore. He brings them from everywhere to play on a biblical theme much like a weaver of nets brings cord upon cord.

He loves God's Word and longs for God's people to become men and women, boys and girls of the Book. He would often admonish those of us who were his students at Multnomah School of the Bible, "Don't you ever read your Bible?"

It was Dr. Mitchell's concern—and it is my concern—that these pages help readers to "fall in love with the Saviour"—to use his own phrase. Anything less than that would make this book mere sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.

—Prof. Dick Bohrer, M.Sc.,M.A.

Editor's Note

to the second edition, now titled
Let's Revel in John's Gospel

When, inadvertently, the printing plates of *An Everlasting Love* and *Right With God* were destroyed and when the trustees of Multnomah Bible College and Biblical Seminary decided to reprint John G. Mitchell's commentaries on the Gospel of John and Romans as part of the school's 60th anniversary year celebration, an opportunity to return to vintage Mitchell presented itself.

As those of us who sat under his ministry, whether in church pew or classroom, well know, this man had a style uniquely his own. We found it impossible to reduce his sermons and lectures to an orderly outline. He would develop subpoints to the extent they became main points, and then he would go back, pick up where he had left off and review it again--better the second time than the first.

"I want to get this into your hearts," he would explain.

And for so many of us, he did.

Did he string out his nouns and prepositional phrases? I say, let him. Did he repeat too much? I say, let him. Did he wander from his outline? Let him. Did he preach too much?

LET HIM.

For nearly 75 years, he was a venerable preacher of God's Book and a teacher who had memorized his text. He would roam back and forth through Scripture like that old-time grocer who, filling our mother's orders himself, would scurry up and down his aisles plucking items from their shelves. He not only knew where a text was, he could quote the verse before it and the verse

that followed. And he expected us his students to do the same. Hah!

He had a heart of love for the Lord Jesus and a heart of love for His people of every age. He should be allowed to speak in his own manner and with his own style and voice. That's what made him an original.

These several editions have amalgamated the lessons he delivered at Multnomah, the sermons he gave from the pulpit of Central Bible Church, Portland, Oregon, where he served as pastor, and the lessons he taught over the radio. This edition retains Dr. Mitchell's preferred spelling of "Saviour."

The man comes across as a master teacher who knows God's Holy Book, as a wise counselor who knows the heart of man, as a devoted servant who knows the heart of God.

Were he with us still, he would want to point you to your loving Saviour and minister to your heart of hearts.

Let him.

—Prof. Dick Bohrer

Acknowledgements:

Essential to any "work of the sanctuary" are the wise-hearted servants of God who give their time to read the proofs. To Mrs. Bonnie Weiss, Mrs. Irene Scruggs and Dr. Leonard Ritzmann I am indebted for their spiritual insights, for their sense of what Dr. Mitchell meant, for their careful attention to detail.

Also, it is not easy to teach an old dog new tricks, especially when this old dog had never used an IBM word-processor before in his life. Without the voluntary help of Randy Dewhirst at first and Mat Weiss of Campus Crusade through the long course, this writer/editor might still be huddled under his work table, hugging his knees and mumbling incoherently. These friends met my crises with calming words of instruction and reassurance and made the home-office desktop publishing of this revision a reality.

db

Introduction

Before We Begin

Just Who Is Jesus of Nazareth?

Is Jesus of Nazareth the Son of God? Christianity stands or falls on this one question.

The first Gospel message of the Spirit of God after the resurrection of Christ was given through Peter, an untaught fisherman. How in the world a man like Peter could preach like this is beyond human comprehension. It is the Spirit of God using a willing vessel, filled with the Spirit of God, to exalt the person of the Lord Jesus.

Listen to him in Acts chapter two.

Men of Israel, listen to these words:

Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.

And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power (Acts 2:22-24).

Go down to verses 32-36:

This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.

Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.

For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he

himself says: "THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE THINE ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR THY FEET."

Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.

Is this Jesus of Nazareth the Son of God?

When I use that term, the Son of God, it may be better for me, in view of the fact that so many speak glibly of being the sons of God with Jesus being just a son of God like the rest of us, to emphasize that Jesus of Nazareth was God, the Son, evident in the flesh among people. Notice that Peter is very, very positive in the fact he is "Jesus the Nazarene."

You remember in John chapter one that the statement was made by Nathaniel, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

Any good thing out of Nazareth? Why, half the town did not live in homes. The people lived in caves in a city known for its sin and its moral corruption. There were Roman soldiers there. It was a center for traffic north and south. Any good thing out of Nazareth? Can this Jesus of Nazareth—despised Nazareth—be the Son of God?

We couldn't help but think of this when, flying from Beirut down to Jerusalem a couple of years ago, we covered some of this territory. And I said to Mrs. Mitchell, "Why, if the Lord were coming to the earth, why in the world didn't He come to Oregon instead of coming to this desolate, desolate place?"

There were no trees. It was desert. It was sandy. It was rocky. Nobody but goats could live there. And then to come to despised Nazareth! Why didn't He choose Portland or some other good place? I couldn't help but think of the real humiliation of our Saviour when He came to this earth. Think of His leaving worship by angelic beings, leaving the place of glory!

When Moses said in Exodus 33, “Show me Thy glory,” God said, “I can’t show you My glory. You couldn’t live if you saw My glory.” And to think that the Son of God—God, the Son—the One who framed the ages by the word of His mouth, should leave eternal glory, worship by angelic beings, and take His carnate place to be raised in a town like Nazareth! And yet when Peter speaks, he is very explicit that this is “Jesus the Nazarene.”

The Lord willing, I want to follow through in these coming chapters with this question concerning the One whom we worship, the One whom we trust. Is this Jesus of Nazareth really God?

Possibly, I ought to say this from a negative viewpoint first.

If Jesus of Nazareth is not God manifest in the flesh, then, my friends, we have no Saviour. We are still in our sins. We have no peace. It is a false peace we have, if Jesus is not the Son of God. We have no Saviour because the value of the cross is determined by who He is.

And if He is not what He claimed to be, if He is not the Christ of God, if He is not God manifest in the flesh, if He is not the sinless Holy One, then we have no Saviour and He died for His own sins. That is what you have in the Old Testament where under the law every man shall stand for his own sins. If He was just a man, then He was born in sin and would Himself need a Saviour.

If He is not God manifest in the flesh, we have absolutely no Saviour, no Redeemer; we are yet in our sins and we have no hope. Let us then be like the Epicureans. Let us eat, let us drink, let us be merry for tomorrow we die and that is the end of it.

People say to me, “Why, Mitchell, don’t you know when we’re dead, we’re dead. We’re like the dogs of the street. When we die, that’s the end of it.”

Well, if that is all there is to it, then, my friend,

let's get all we can out of life. That is the level on which most people live.

And, furthermore, if Jesus of Nazareth is not God manifest in the flesh, we have no real manifestation of God as to His character or as to His heart. I am well aware of what the 19th Psalm says, "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge." There is no place where the voice of creation is not heard.

In Romans 1:20, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse."

In other words, you know there is a God by creation. The argument of design declares that there must be some Eternal Being who framed the worlds and framed the universe.

You can't even set your watch except by what He has done in the heavens. This did not "just happen." Among the greatest scientists of the world, as far as I know, there is not one who does not believe in God. They may not believe in Christ or in the Gospel; but they do believe there is a God, a Mind that has created all these exact things.

But do you KNOW Him? If Jesus is not God, what do you know about God? Nothing. You are just groping in blindness. Just groping.

We went down the street one day in Hong Kong and saw a Chinese funeral procession. The mourners were carrying a paper house and a paper car so that the spirit of the dead would have a car to travel in.

You say, "What folly."

But behind it, what is there? A hope, an unfounded hope that somewhere in the spirit world the dead will need certain things. How ignorant, how blind these people are. They do not know the Saviour.

I ask you, where do you go after you leave this world? Where do you go?

“Oh,” you say, “I am going Home to be with the Lord. I am going to glory.”

And you are positive about that. You are going to a place where there is absolute glory—no sin, no iniquity, no death, no tears.

A day with the Lord is far better, you quote to me, for to be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8).

But these people in Hong Kong do not know the Saviour. They believe there is a God somewhere, and they try to show off to appease evil spirits so that their days may be free from fear.

If Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth, is not God manifest in the flesh, how much of God would you know? Did you ever stop to think? All that we know of God is found in Him. You don't even know God if He is not God. No, you don't even know Him.

What about fellowship with God? How can you approach God? You say, “Why we come to the Father through Jesus, His Son,” and “No one comes to the Father but through Me, as He said to His disciples in John 14:6.”

But if He is not God, if He is only man, what access do you have into the presence of God? How can you have fellowship with God? You go blindly through certain rituals like most people do with no conscious realization that you can come to the Father, that you can know He is your Father, that you can have fellowship with Him, that you can live with Him, that He understands you. He can meet your needs and enable you to say with the Apostle John, “Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3).

Now, the Gospel through John was written after most of the New Testament was written. The epistles of John were the last books written. They were written after the book of Revelation.

And John has one thing before him: that there is

no such thing as life, eternal life, spiritual life, salvation, apart from relationship to Jesus, the incarnate Word of God. When you come to his epistles, you have the absolute impossibility of a person who denies the Incarnate Word of God having real, intimate fellowship with the living God. When he comes to the question of fellowshiping with God, he says, don't you ever receive anybody who denies the Incarnate Word of God.

And in the third epistle—whom shall I receive into my fellowship?

Those who believe in the Incarnate Word of God.

You have got to confess one fact, that John is always corrective when he writes. John was dealing in the first century with a gnostic heresy; and the gnostics believed that Jesus Christ was a wonderful created being, but that He was not God manifest in the flesh.

They said He might be the highest form of creation, an emanation from God; but He was not God manifest in the flesh.

We have the same thing with us today. In fact, I would say this very bluntly, that among the majority of ecclesiastical leaders in our country today, there are very, very few who even believe that Jesus is God manifest in the flesh. They will tell you they believe in the Son of God as we are all sons of God. They will tell you He is a wonderful teacher, the beginning of a new religious movement, and so forth and so on; but to say that He is God manifest in the flesh—they do not believe that.

And let me suggest this: When you find someone who does not believe that Jesus Christ—or let me be a little more blunt, that Jesus of Nazareth—is God manifest in the flesh, you will also find he does not believe in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross for sinners nor does he believe in the physical resurrection of the Son of God, nor does he believe in the exaltation of Christ to the Throne of God as a Man.

For the angels of God in Acts 1 said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”

And God expects those of us who believe in the Word of God—who believe that Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh, who believe that He is the only Saviour of sinners, who believe that He has been exalted to the right hand of God, who believe that He is going to return again in power and great glory—to enlighten our generation with this wonderful truth of Jesus, the Son of God.

I repeat it, my friend. Christianity stands or falls on this one question: Who is this Jesus?

The Lord asked the disciples that question in Matthew 16, when He said, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”

“Well, some say you are John the Baptist raised from the dead. Some say you are Elijah. Some say you are Jeremiah. Some say you are one of the prophets.”

“Well, what do you think?”

And Peter said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

In John, chapter 6, our Lord had said, “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. Unless ye are joined to me, ye have no life.”

He said, “My words, they are spirit and they are life.”

And the crowd left Him.

And He said to the twelve, “Will you also go away?”

And Peter said, “Lord, where can we go? Where can we go? You alone have the words of eternal life. And we have believed and come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”

Take the Pauline epistles. All Pauline epistles are based on this one fact: that this Jesus is the

Son of God—He “who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant and being made in the likeness of men.

And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth” (Philippians 2:6-10).

In Hebrews 2:9, the writer says, “We see . . . Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honor; that by the grace of God He might taste death for every one.”

In Colossians, the Lord is “the image of the invisible God.” It is pleasing to the Godhead that in Jesus all fullness should dwell. “In him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.” I am quoting Colossians 1:15 and 2:9.

The whole New Testament is based on this one fact:

This Jesus of Nazareth is God!

You go on through the Bible. The God of glory appeared unto Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees and said, “Get out.” And Abraham obeyed God and went out, not knowing where he went. I am joining Hebrews 11:8 with Acts 7:2-3. And if you don't believe that the God of glory is the Lord Jesus, I would suggest I Corinthians 2:8, where Paul said that had they, the princes of this world, known it they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.

In John 8:56, Jesus said, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it, and was glad.” And when Abraham heard the Son of God, he obeyed.

What did you do?

I am joining Isaiah 6:1-3 with John 12. “In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord . . .

lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. (And the seraphim cried out,) Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.”

And you remember that Isaiah fell on his face and cried out, “I am . . . unclean,” and the angel touched him. Then he heard the voice saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” And Isaiah said, “Here am I. Send me.” Whom did he see? We are told in John 12:41 that Isaiah “saw His glory, and He spoke of Him.”

Even Samuel in I Samuel 3, when he was disturbed from his sleep, did not know how to account for the voice speaking to him in the night, you remember. And Eli, the old man, said, “Go lie down, and it shall be if He calls you, that you shall say, ‘Speak, LORD, for thy servant is listening.’” And when the Lord appeared unto Samuel, there was a ready response: “Speak, for thy servant is listening.”

The Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus saw the Son of God. He could say afterward, “Have not I seen the Lord?” Remember his words when he saw Jesus. He cried out, “Who art Thou, Lord?”

What has been the response in your heart, my Christian friend? The great majority of the world with its hundreds of millions of souls is in darkness, darkness in this land because of rejected light, darkness in pagan lands through ignorance. And here we are living in this generation where God has put us. He has given each of us the personality we have. Whatever that personality is, He wants each of us as a light, that we might bring to our generation the knowledge of the Son of God.

Will you be like Abraham, when the Lord said, “Go out to a land that I will show you”? He went out, not knowing where he would go. He obeyed. It was the simplicity of faith in obedience, the ferocity of faith, the courage of faith in obedience.

When God says, “Whom shall I send and who

will go for Us," may we be able to say with Isaiah, "Here am I. Send me!" (Isaiah 6:8). His was a heart response to the cry of the heart of the Son of God.

And dear John, the Apostle: We saw him; we handled the Word of Life and "what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." Whom did he handle? Whom did he see? With whom did he have fellowship? That eternal Life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us.

My friend, these days, not only for my own heart, but for your heart, may there be in us a real passion for the Son of God—a real heart hunger to be able to say, "Here am I, O Lord," and "Speak, Lord"—a real desire to be found with hearts obedient, hearts in love, hearts devoted to the Son of God Himself. This will free us from pettiness. It will free us from jealousy and envy. To make Him the very object of our heart's devotion will free us from the things that hinder us from being usable in God's hands.

My friend, fellow believer in Christ, I plead with you to lay hold of the things of Christ, having both an increased capacity for the truth and a great longing to be found usable by Him.

And may I say to the young person who says, "I am only 14 or 16 years old," that a young man who was a teenager cleaned up the whole nation of Judah of its idolatry and moral corruption and spent the years from 16 to 20 doing a job for God (2 Kings 22).

My, what a wonderful thing it would be if you would dedicate your life to the Lord Jesus Christ and be found usable by Him in reaching our present generation. My, what God could do with you if you were just yielded and committed to Him.

And don't you older ones sit back and say, "That's good for the young people." You get on

your knees and intercede for them. Bring people under the sound of the Word of God. The time for reaching our generation is very, very brief. And God forbid that, when our Lord comes, He is going to find Mitchell asleep—or whatever your name may be. Oh, that we might be in such intimate fellowship with Him that our lives will be benedictions. As Peter said, we are to “proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

May the Lord take these few words and burn them into your heart and burn them into your life.

John 1

Christ, the Word

The Revelation of God, the Son

The Gospel of John, as you know, is a revelation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. The great question in Matthew is “Is this Jesus—the Messiah?” The great question in John is “Is this Jesus—God?”

When you speak of Him as the Messiah, the Christ, you are speaking of His office. When you speak of Him as the Son of God, you are speaking of Him in His person.

That is why, when you come to chapter 20, verse 31 of this book, you find that “these (things) have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.” In His official capacity He is the Christ, the anointed of God; but He is also the Son of God.

Now, being intellectually persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, doesn't make you a Christian and does not bring you into fellowship with Him. But by putting your trust in Him, by believing, you may have life in His Name. Here you have the action of faith, the trusting of the heart to the Son of God, that He IS the Christ, that He IS God manifest in the flesh, that He IS the Saviour of the sinner.

It is rather remarkable that somewhere in the neighborhood of 247 times in the Gospel through John the title given to the Lord is “Jesus.” That has struck me quite forcibly. You would

think that that would be true in Luke's Gospel, where He is revealed as a Man; and it is true that more than 100 times He is called "Jesus" In Luke. But when you come to John's Gospel, you would expect more or less that the writer would be continually talking about "the Son of God" or "the Lord Jesus" or of "the Christ." In fact, he rarely ever speaks of Him as "Christ" except as it is coupled with "Jesus." Why? Because John, in writing, is concerned about one fact—that this Jesus, whom men put on a cross and whom God has put on the throne—is none other than God's Son.

Christ, the Pre-incarnate Word (1:1-2)

1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
2. He was in the beginning with God.

In verse one, you have Him in His pre-incarnation. "In the beginning was the Word" way, way back in eternity. Now that is not the end.

In verse 14 we are told "and the Word became flesh and dwelt (tabernacled) among us . . . full of grace and truth." So you have in verse one who He was and in verse 14 what He became—flesh. He didn't become the Son of God in verse 14, but He was manifested as the Son of God in verse 14. He took His place in humanity.

In Philippians 2:6, He who was in the form of God "did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped." He was found in appearance as a man, and He humbled Himself to death. Now in John 1:14 we have the Word made flesh and dwelling among us. But John 1:18 says, "No man has seen God at any time." No man has gazed upon God in all His fullness, as in verse one; but the only begotten Son, the One who became flesh in verse 14, is the One who reveals the Father in verse 18. He has shown Him forth and made Him

known.

And the whole gospel through John, right through chapter 20 (21 is more or less an epilogue to the book, dealing with His disciples), is nothing more than a revelation proving this one fact, which you had in verses 1, 14 and 18.

You start in at verse 19 and go right through John's Gospel, and you find John taking specific things to prove what he has just said about the Lord Jesus. He selects and selects. He has said, for example, in verse 25 of chapter 21 that, if he were to write all that Jesus did, this world would not be big enough to house the books that could be written about Him. Instead, he has chosen "these things" that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

From the first verse of the Gospel, he builds on this theme; and the three verses, 1, 14 and 18 form his primary thesis. All you read in John's Gospel—all seven miracles that the Lord did, all His testimony and all His claims—is nothing more than the building up of these three verses:

1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

14. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth.

18. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has explained Him.

The Lord Jesus has come out from the very heart of God. He has come not so much to reveal the power of God nor to reveal the might or even the purpose of God (though that is included), but He has come to reveal the very heart of God. He wants you to know God personally, intimately, surely.

And I want to say at the outset, very frankly, that, if we do not know God intimately and per-

sonally, it is not because He has not revealed Himself. If you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Saviour, if you have never come into relationship with Him and your joy is not filled full and your peace is not there, it is because you have not accepted the marvelous provision that Christ came to make for you whereby you can be brought into fellowship and relationship with God.

I say it is a wonderful thing that this Jesus of Nazareth wants you to know that He was in the beginning with God, that He was pre-existent and that—even before Abraham was born into the world—Jesus WAS. He was made manifest, He came into the human race as a man in the midst of men, and He came for the express purpose of the revelation of the very heart of God to men.

For, you see, in your Old Testament you have the revelation of His power, of His Godhead, of His authority, of His character in everything from Genesis to Malachi.

For example, the power of God is displayed in creation. Men should know God through His creative acts—that is, that He is a Person and that He is God. For “the heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.” And there is no place where the voice of creation “is not heard” (Psalm 19:1-3). As Paul could write, “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse” (Romans 1:20).

And God also revealed to man His own character. Even the pagan world knows this. Read, for example, the laws of Hammurabi, the great Babylonian lawgiver, way back in Abraham's time. Hammurabi, when he gave his ten rules to his na-

tion, had received some light even though he was a pagan.

Read the books of Exodus and Leviticus and see something of the holy character of God, the holiness of God.

“I am the LORD, and there is no other,” reported Isaiah of Him. “Besides Me there is no God” (Isaiah 45:5). “For thus says the high and exalted One who lives forever, whose name is Holy” (Isaiah 57:15). The revelation of His character in that He is holy, righteous, and just is revealed throughout your Old Testament.

When you come to John 1:18, you find that “no man has seen God at any time”—fully seen Him as He really is—but “the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father.” He came out from the very heart of God to reveal to you God’s heart for you. The yearning of God’s heart is for men and women to know Him, to walk with Him, to appreciate Him, to enjoy Him.

God’s great desire for us who are Christians is just two-fold, and you can put the whole of Christian life and ministry into it. His great desires for you individually and for the church are that you might have intimate, continual fellowship with Him and that the life of His Son might be evident through you. God yearns for your fellowship; He has made provision for your fellowship if you are His child. And then He desires that the life of His Son may be known through you to your generation.

Now, to bolster that, I shall take the next verses.

Christ, the Creator, the Life, the Light (1:3-5)

3. All things came into being through Him; and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

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

5. And the light shines in the darkness; and the darkness did not comprehend it.

Verses one, two, three, four and five would be applicable to our Saviour in His dealing with the human race before He became a Man. You see, John says in the first two verses that "in the beginning was the Word." He attracts you to the One who is the Word, the divine expression of God. He is the Word. You remember Colossians 2:3, which says that God has hidden in Him "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

Or if you go to 1 Corinthians, chapter one, verse 24, He is "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God" deals with personal distinction. He was with God. Go back to your book of Genesis: "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. . . . Behold, the man has become like one of Us. . . . Let Us go down and there confuse their language" (Genesis 1:26; 3:22; 11:7).

One could go on down through the Scriptures. Colossians 1:19 says, "For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell in Him," dealing with the question of Christ's deity, His personal distinction.

And at the end of John 1:1 we read, "And the Word WAS God." Colossians 1:15 says that He is "the image of the invisible God." In Hebrews 1:3 He is "the exact representation" of His character and of His person. And one could take the time to go through the many scriptures dealing with the deity of our Saviour; but what I am after is this fact: that way back in eternity the Son was with the Father.

As Proverbs 8:27-30 says, "I" was with Him when He made the world. "I was beside Him, as a master workman; and I was daily His delight."

In verse three of John's first chapter you have the Lord's creative acts. "All things came into being through Him; and apart from Him nothing

came into being that has come into being.”

He is the Creator. He was one with God in creation. You have that in Hebrews 1:2 and in Hebrews 11:3 and so on in many passages concerning this fact.

But you notice in verse four here, “in Him”—in this One who was the Living Word, in this One who was way back in eternity, this One who became a Man to reveal the heart and character of God—“in Him was life.”

And I take it that this is the key verse of John’s Gospel. In Him is life. Apart from Him there is no life.

That is why we have in John 3:36, “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life.” That is why in John 5:26 He could say that “the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself” as the source of life. That is why in chapter eight, verse 51, He could say, “If anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.” Why? Because the LIFE he gives is His own eternal life.

Read the first epistle of John, chapter five, verses 12 and 13, “He who has the Son has the life; and he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God; in order that you may know that you have eternal life.” Read the first epistle of John, chapter five, verses 12.

Now in the Gospel through John, you learn how to receive the new relationship. In the epistle of John you are told how to enjoy life. Whose life? His life. It is hard for us to take, is it not? And yet John does not play with words. He cuts clean down the center. Either you have life or you are in death.

That is what Paul means in Romans 6:23, “The wages of sin is death.” Sin pays wages. You cannot dodge it. You cannot go on strike. You cannot sit

down on the job. You've got to receive your wages. You cannot even quit the job. But the good news is that He came, and in Him is life. And, since it is divine life, then the sin problem must be settled. For wherever sin is, there is death.

A person never really lives—he has no spiritual life—until he is in Christ Jesus. You may be good; you may be moral; you may be religious; you may be a wonderful man, a wonderful woman; but unless you are in Christ, you have no life.

“Well, Mr. Mitchell,” you say, “you are kind of narrow, are you not?”

That's right. That's right. I say that broad is the way that leads to destruction. Narrow is the way that leads to eternal life. And if Christ Jesus does not give to us spiritual, eternal, perfect life, then tell me, my friend, where are you going to get it? Study all your philosophers. They cannot give you life. They don't offer you life. Study your pagan religions. They have no life. It is a hopeless situation. In Him and only in Him is life.

“And the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). The 36th psalm, the ninth verse, says, “For with Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light we see light.”

David has just been talking about the mercy of the Lord, the righteousness of God, the judgments of God. And then, let me repeat, he says, “With Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light we see light.” John says, “In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness; and the darkness did not comprehend it.” Every truth from Adam to the present time, every bit of real truth has come from Him.

I quoted concerning Hammurabi, the great Babylonian lawgiver, a contemporary of Abraham, for he is one of those kings in Genesis 14 who fought against the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. Amraphel is the name used there. Amraphel is the old, ancient Hammurabi. Where did he receive his

information? How did he work out these great laws that he made? Whatever light he had on morality he received. It was planted in him from the Lord.

I repeat it. Any light that men have, they have received from Him. Men know what they should do. Don't you forget that. I don't care what part of the world you go to; men KNOW, right down in their hearts, what God expects of them. All men know what they ought to do in matters of right and wrong. And they stand accountable before God.

"In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness; and the darkness"—may I change the word there?—it is not "comprehend." They didn't "comprehend" it. It should be that they didn't "apprehend" it. The world could not put it out! Men have tried since the days of Cain to put out the light. They protest, "Don't talk to me about Christ. Don't talk to me about your Saviour. I don't want to hear. I'd rather not know."

If you do personal work, you will know that. With some of these men you can talk about anything under heaven. You can talk about any person. They will listen to you. Strange thing that, when you mention the name of the Lord Jesus with reverence and mention their responsibility to Him, they do not want to hear about it.

In fact, my Christian friend, may I say this? One of the greatest tactics and movements of the devil today is to remove Jesus as a PERSON from the thinking of men. The move today is "the Christ idea," not the person of Christ. So that, if a man is a hero whoever he may be, men put him on a pedestal. They will put a man on a pedestal and say, "Follow him." They present him as an ideal.

The world puts Christ on a pedestal not as an ideal person to follow, but simply as the representation of an idea. They are doing away with a personal Saviour. They are doing away with a per-

sonal God. In fact, they have written a book, *God is Dead*. My, what a revelation is going to come to some people when they stand in the presence of the God whom they deny. In Him is life, and ONLY in Him is life.

Who is He? He is the One who was with God; the One who was the Word; the One who was made flesh; the One who reveals the Father. See, I'm dealing with the Person here. In Him is life. And men have tried through the centuries to rid themselves of their responsibility to God, who has enlightened their mind and enlightened their conscience as to what He wants.

Now, into this darkness, into this moral darkness, God sends a man.

John, the witness (1:6-9)

6. There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John.

7. He came for a witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all men might believe through him.

8. He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light.

9. There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

. If you want to know about the life of John, you have got to go to Luke's Gospel. In John's Gospel there is no birth or boyhood of anyone, including our Saviour for he is dealing with the ETERNAL God, who has no birth, no beginning, no ending. Every personality mentioned in the Gospel through John is mentioned for just one purpose: What is his relationship to the Saviour?

"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John." You see, God put this man into the human race for a purpose: "to bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness

of the light. There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.”

Here man is in such darkness that God has to send a witness of the light. Did you ever think of it? I'm sure you would call me a fool if I were to say, “You see that sun up there? That is a light.” Everybody knows that. That is a light. A light does not need a witness. But man is in such moral and spiritual darkness that God has to send a messenger to bear witness of the Light.

That is why in this same chapter, in verse 29, when John the Baptist, with the crowd gathered round him, saw Jesus, he said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” In verses 35 and 36, he said again to his disciples, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” THERE is the Lamb of God. THERE is the One to follow. In so saying, he lost his own disciples. In verse 29, John the Baptist points to the work Jesus will accomplish—He is the Lamb of God to take away sin. In verses 35 and 36, he points to the Person and attracts them to His Person.

What is John? John is just a witness. He came to bear witness of the Light, to point men, to attract people to the Son of God. The Lord Jesus is the Light. In John chapter 8, verse 12, Christ says, “I am the light of the world.” In John chapter 9:5, He says, “While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” In John chapter 12, verse 35, He says to His disciples, “Walk while you have the light.” The night comes when no man can work or walk. John's responsibility is not to attract people to himself. His responsibility is to attract people to Christ.

My Christian friend, that's YOUR responsibility, too. It is not your responsibility and it is not my responsibility to attract people to ourselves. We just do that naturally; we need no instruction on that. In fact, people go out of their way to do that. But John's great responsibility is to attract people

to Christ, the Light of the world, the One in whom is life as well as light. And John was faithful to his trust, even to the losing of his head.

May I ask you a question? Are you faithful to your trust? For, you remember, our Lord could say in Acts chapter 1, the 8th verse: "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Luke 24:48 says, "You are witnesses of these things." And 2 Corinthians 5:20 says that "we are ambassadors for Christ," begging men on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God. And just as John was a witness of the light in the midst of moral darkness, you and I are God's light, God's witnesses, in the midst of moral and spiritual darkness.

You remember the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:12, talks about the "rulers . . . of this darkness." In 2 Corinthians 4:4, Paul writes, "The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." In Acts 26:18, Paul could say he was sent to open blind eyes and to turn men "from darkness to light."

10. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

11. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

12. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,

13. Who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

14. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The world is in moral darkness, spiritual darkness, under the sentence of eternal death.

Are we going to permit, are we going to ALLOW men to go on in their darkness?

I appeal to you young people. Possibly more than two-thirds of the population of the world, not only hundreds of millions, but billions are out of Christ. They are in darkness, either through ignorance or rejected light.

I appeal to you older ones. Whatever our age, God has put us here. Just as we have read that there was a man sent from God, whose name was John, who came to bear witness of the Light, it could be said of you, "You were sent." Why didn't you live a hundred years ago? Why didn't you live 1900 years ago?

God put you now in this generation, at this time, with a distinct personality; He has redeemed you and saved you; He has indwelt you by His Spirit for one job: To bear witness of the light, that all men through you might believe. I question if there is much time left to us.

People talk to me about world conditions, saying, "Brother Mitchell, there is only one answer to the present problem."

I agree. There IS only one answer, and that is the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And you and I can revel in the fact that He is even at the door. We say, "Why, the Lord MUST come. What else is there to be fulfilled?" We are just waiting for the coming of the Lord.

If you really believe that, you will redeem the time. If I believe it, I will redeem the time and buy up every opportunity of knowing the Word of God and of walking in blessed fellowship with Him. And because of the Word of God and because of that fellowship, I'll bear witness. I will be a light shining in a dark place "until the day dawns" (2 Peter 1:19).

A friend said to me once, "I wish you would pray for me that I might have another job."

I said, "What do you want another job for? You've got a good job."

He said, "I'm the only Christian in the plant."

I said, "I'm going to pray you'll stick."

He said, "Don't pray that."

I said, "I'm going to pray it, that you'll stick. What would you want instead?"

"I want a job where there are other Christians."

"Well, that's very nice. That would be wonderful. But why has God got you there in that plant? You're the only light that is there. Why has God put you there?"

"I'm a very, very small light."

"Yes, but you go into a dark room and strike a match—and the match is a wee thing—but you would see the light."

Now, you might be only a little old match where you live or where you work, but you are a light. And you be sure you STRIKE the match. Let it light out; let it shine.

What is your name? "There was a man sent from God, whose name was _____." Stick your name in there. There was a man sent from God whose name was John G. Mitchell.

What is YOUR name? Put it in there. YOU have been sent from God. If you love Him, you have a job to do to attract people to the Saviour.

You have been sent to bear witness of the Light that all men might believe.

The testimony of John the Baptist (1:15-28)

Now John also was a worshiper. Let us read verses 15 through 17 and then follow through into verse 30:

15. John bore witness of Him, and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a

higher rank than I, for He existed before me.' "

16. For of His fulness we have all received, and grace upon grace.

17. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.

30. "This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.' "

The place of John (1:15-18)

Here you have John hiding, if I may use this term, hiding behind the person of the Lord Jesus. Remember that the Lord had said of John, and I quote from Matthew 11:11, that of those who are born of women, there was none greater than John the Baptist. The greatest born of women! And yet, John hides behind the Saviour, saying, "HE is the Preferred One. He was before me."

John here really is declaring that our Lord was pre-existent. He is dealing here with the divine sovereignty and pre-existence of the Saviour. "He WAS before me. He IS the pre-eminent One. I am not even fit to tie His shoelace." Oh, the remarkable humility of John!

You go back to Matthew and Luke where he thunders at the Pharisees and says, "You generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" You don't find that here. John is the worshiper here. "He was before me. He is the preferred One."

And, you remember, when John made this statement he was the center of attraction. Great multitudes were following him, and he was down here in Bethabara at the Jordan preaching repentance and baptizing those who would come confessing their sins. And it caused such a stir in the whole nation that they sent a committee of priests and Levites.

You can just see them, dressed in their priestly

robes, going down to the Jordan from Jerusalem to find out who is this man John who is causing such a stir. Who is he? Is he a prophet? Is he the Messiah? Who is he? We've got to find out. He's taking the country by storm.

And John here says, "Oh, no. I am speaking of another One. He is the Preferred One; He is the Pre-eminent One."

We have in the seventh verse. "He came for a witness, that he might bear witness of the Light."

And then in verse 19, you have his witness, what he has to say. And, if I may take the sense of the passage, John was continually, everlastingly, talking about one Person, the person of the Saviour, the Preferred One, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The worship of John (1:19-28)

Oh, that we would be worshipers. Wouldn't that be a wonderful thing? And, my Christian friend, may I put it this way? Just as much as you really worship the Lord, just that far will you bear testimony for Him. You cannot divorce real testimony from real worship. Otherwise Your testimony becomes a fleshly thing.

But if you really worship, your life will reveal it; your tongue will reveal it. And I say that continually, all the time, John's whole heart was occupied with the Person of this One who was the Preferred One, the Pre-existent One, the Eternal One.

"And I'm not even fit to tie His shoelace," John said.

Oh, the humility of this man.

Now, it is revealed a little farther down in the passage in verses 19 to 28, that these Jews, these priests and Levites, came at the instigation of the Pharisees.

19. And this is the witness of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"

Now John's answer was very simple.

20. And he confessed, and did not deny, and he confessed, "I am not the Christ."

John recognized that these men had one thing on their minds: "Is this the Messiah?" Is this the Messiah?" The time was ripe for the coming of the Messiah. They were groaning under the heel of Rome. They yearned for the deliverer. They were looking for the coming of the Messiah.

Is this the Messiah?

This was in their minds, when they said, "Who are you? Who are you? What are you doing? Who are you? Tell us who you are."

He said, "I am not the Christ."

21. And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?"

They were quoting from Malachi 4:5 that Elijah must come before the coming of the Saviour.

21. And he said, "I am not."

"Are you the Prophet?"

And he answered, "No."

Now I am not going to take up the question of the two Elijahs, the one where John came in the spirit of Elijah as our Lord said and then the Elijah that is going to return before the coming of the Lord to earth (which you have in Malachi). But suffice it to say, these men are seeking to get John occupied with John.

This is a common lure of the tempter. You go back to the book of Genesis, chapter three. All the devil had to do was to get Eve occupied with Eve; and, when Eve got occupied with Eve, she was on the downward road. She was deceived into sinning, and she brought sin into the human race. Adam brought in sin because he obeyed Eve.

But John, you see, is so occupied with the Saviour that he is a worshiper; and nothing is going to stand between him and his occupation with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Oh, how easy it is for us—and I say it frankly—how easy it is for us to be taken away or to be side-tracked from worshiping the Son of God by getting occupied with ourself, with our own needs and griefs and failings.

I wonder, if you were to examine your own heart and if I were to examine my heart and to be honest before God, really, really, how much do we worship the Saviour? Things pile up in our lives and just fill our vision. John refused to have his vision filled up with anybody else but Christ.

“Who are you?”

“I am NOT the Christ.”

“Then, are you Elijah?” They are sticking to their Old Testament. These were priests and Levites.

“I am not.”

“Are you the prophet?” They go back to Deuteronomy 18:18, where Moses said there would be a prophet like unto himself and to him would the people come and take heed.

Now, John's answer is very, very brief. First of all, “I am not the Christ.”

“Elijah?”

“I am not.”

“Art thou that prophet?”

“No.” He just closes if off. “No, I am only a voice calling, ‘Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness.’” He draws them back to Isaiah 40:2-3.

Did you ever think of it? He brought them right down to the place: “I am only a voice calling; . . . make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.”

I say, I love this man John as he hides behind the Saviour and refuses to be side-tracked on any other issue, especially concerning himself. How easy it is to become self-occupied. How easy to be-

come egotistical. How easy to become introspective, which is a dangerous thing by the way.

“Art thou the Christ? Art thou Elijah? Art thou that prophet?”

“I am only a voice. I am satisfied to be just a voice.”

Believer, would you be satisfied to be just a voice crying in the wilderness?

Oh, I want a big church, you say.

Do you?

I want to be a great missionary.

Do you?

I want to be a great leader.

Do you? That's not the worshiper. As Jeremiah said to his servant (45:5), “Are you seeking great things for yourself? Do not seek them.”

I am just a voice, just a voice, just a voice.

Crying where? in Jerusalem?

No.

In the temple?

No, in the wilderness.

Believe me, it IS a wilderness whether you take it geographically or whether you take it morally and spiritually. What a need there is for voices, yours and mine, in these days to exalt the person of the Saviour because of the spiritual and moral worldliness in which we live today. Now John may have had reference, geographically, to where he was. But I believe he knew all Israel was spiritually dead.

The message of John (1:29-36)

And then the third thing I want to say about John is that not only did he give Christ the preferred place and hide behind Him, not only was John the worshiper, being occupied with Him, but he bore testimony concerning His person.

He begins to give his message in verses 29 to 34:

29. The next day he saw Jesus coming to him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

30. "This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'

31. "And I did not recognize Him, but in order that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water."

32. And John bore witness saying, "I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven; and He remained upon Him.

33. "And I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.'

34. "And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

The next day John saw Jesus coming unto him and he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" He is saying, This is the One I was telling you about. He is the Preferred One.

Who is He?

He is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

The first message in Matthew's Gospel, "You shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins," has an application, primarily, to Israel. But John sees the Jew as a reprobate. In verse 11, "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him." He is outside.

But what did God do? "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." This is the One of whom the prophets wrote. This is the One who fulfilled every sacrifice in the Old Testament. (If you wish to read about the sacrifices, you will find them in the first seven chapters of Leviticus.) He is the One of whom Abraham and Isaac

were types. He was the One of whom the passover lamb was a type in Exodus, chapter 12. And now, when we come here, He is the One who fulfills this whole thing.

29. "Behold the Lamb of God."

John did not say, "Behold the Lord of Lords and King of Kings." To the crowd he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

May I say this again? When John said this, he lost his disciples. Did you ever think of John preaching as somebody who lost his followers? You talk about humility.

What would you think of a preacher who would tell his congregation, "Now next Sunday, you go over to Such-and-such church and hear Brother So-and-so. He will tell you more of Christ than I can tell you, and that is where you ought to go."

Did you ever hear a preacher say that? I've heard them talk about being loyal, but "loyal HERE."

Go elsewhere?

This always gets into my heart that dear John was willing to lose his own disciples, his own followers, if they followed Jesus. Still, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God."

In verse 29, he has reference especially to His ministry as a sacrifice for sin. In verse 36, he has a special reference to His person, "Behold the Lamb of God."

And the next part of his message is in verse 33, because he now points the Lord Jesus out as the One who can fulfill Joel 2:28-29. This is the One, John says, and it is only He who can baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

"I can indeed baptize you with water. That is as far as I can go," he says in effect. "But He is the only One who can baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

In these days of confusion, may I make that very, very clear? God is the ONLY One. You can't work up to it either. HE is the only One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And as Paul could write in 1 Corinthians 12:13, we've all been baptized by one Spirit into one body and have all been made to drink of that self-same Spirit. HE is the One who shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, John says.

34. "And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

That was a tremendous statement for a Jew, especially one who had been gathering the people of Israel together, one looked upon as a prophet, one who had really taken the country by storm. It was marvelous for him to say, "I bare record that this Jesus is none other than the Son of God; He's the Lamb of God; He's the baptizer with the Spirit; He's God, the Son."

I repeat, it was at this point that his disciples left him and followed Jesus.

And now, just one more thing. Go back down to verses 22-25.

22. They said then to him, "Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?"

23. He said, "I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD,' as Isaiah the prophet said.

24. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.

25. And they asked him, and said to him, "Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

They had said, "Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet? What are you baptizing for?" Apparently there was some intimation among the Jews that,

when the Messiah finally came, this would be one of the manifestations. What right had John then to baptize, asked the Jews. "Where is your authority to baptize if you are not the Messiah?"

His answer:

26. John answered them saying, "I baptize in water, but among you stands One whom you do not know.

27. "It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie."

28. These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

This is a tragedy—Jesus was in their midst, and they did not know Him. It is an amazing thing that the Son of God can be in the midst of an assembly, and there are those who do not know Him. They had never heard, they'd never seen, they'd never believed.

Can this be said of you, my friend, that you don't know Him?

I'm not saying you don't know about Him.

But do you really know Him?

Is He your Saviour?

Have you committed yourself to Him?

Have you put your trust in Him that He is the One who can baptize you with the Spirit?

My friend, today, may the Lord open your eyes and your ears and your heart. May it not be said of you, as John said of these Jews, "Among you stands One whom you do not know."

But may we indeed know Him, for He is the Lamb of God that has taken away our sin. He is the only Saviour.

Thank God you can be saved right where you are, if you mean business, by receiving Jesus Christ, the One who is the Lamb of God for you.

You can pass from death to life. He is indeed the Lamb of God who has taken away our sin. As Hebrews 9:26 says, "But now once at the consumma-

tion (of the age) He has been manifested to put away sin (my sin, your sin) by the sacrifice of Himself."

Christ, the Center of gathering (1:35-51)

When we come to the end of the chapter, we have four different individuals who are brought to the Saviour in four different ways. The longing of their hearts was to see the Messiah, to know who He was and what He was.

35. Again the next day John was standing, and two of his disciples;

36. and he looked upon Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!"

37. And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

38. And Jesus turned, and beheld them following, and said to them, "What do you seek?"

And they said to Him, "Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?"

39. He said to them, "Come, and you will see."

They came and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

40. One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

41. He found first his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which translated means Christ).

42. He brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him, and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" (which translated means Peter).

Andrew responded to the preaching of John when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God."

Nathanael came (verse 45) in response to the witness of the Word of God.

Simon Peter was brought to the Lord through the testimony of Andrew (verses 40-42).

43. The next day He purposed to go forth into Galilee, and He found Philip, and Jesus said to him, "Follow Me."

Philip came because he received a personal call from the Lord Jesus Himself.

44. Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter.

45. Philip found Nathanael, and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

46. And Nathanael said to him, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

Philip said to him, "Come and see."

47. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!"

48. Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?"

Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

49. Nathanael answered Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel."

This is an amazing thing. Remember what David said to Solomon in 1 Chronicles 28:9 when he spoke to him from his deathbed and said, "If you seek Him, He will let you find Him." And may I say that that is true today? Wherever there is a heart that really means business and wants to meet the Lord, He will let you find Him.

One great desire of the heart of God is that He might bring people to Himself, whether it is

through the preaching of a man of God or whether it is through personal testimony or even by the personal visitation of the Saviour Himself. In the different ways you have in this chapter as well as all through the Word of God, hungry hearts are always met. And today, there are many hungry hearts. Let us present to them the precious Word of God that they might have that hunger satisfied and be able to say, "We have found Him."

Andrew, Peter, Philip and Nathanael—examine them—are four different kinds of men, and everyone of them was satisfied when he met Jesus. Dear Andrew could say, "We have found Him. We have found the Messiah. We have found the Christ." Dear Philip could say, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." And Nathanael could say, "You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel."

50. Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these."

51. And He said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

And then the chapter ends with—marvel at this—the time is coming when YOU and all of God's people will see the Son of Man coming with "the angels of God ascending and descending" upon Him, a prophecy looking forward, no doubt, to His return to the earth as Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

Praise His Name.

John 2

Christ, the Creator

The second chapter starts,

1. And on the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there;
2. and Jesus also was invited, and His disciples, to the wedding.

The very first picture of Christ in the Gospel through John, after the declaration of His Person and the drawing of disciples to Himself, is at a marriage feast where He, the Incarnate Word, demonstrates His power as the Creator who is Omnipotent (verses 1-12) and Omniscient (verses 13-25). In the process, He sanctifies the marriage with His presence and shares in human joy. He makes everybody happy. It is a wonderful picture.

But before I take it up, let me give you a wee lecture—some practical words. For those of you who are Bible students, it might be well to notice the wonderful dispensational picture that is given to us in chapter one and chapter two.

You have at the end of the first chapter the restoration of Israel's joy at Christ's second coming. In 1:29 you have the cross: "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world," followed by Jesus Christ's becoming the center of gathering for two blessed days. No longer is John the Baptist gathering disciples, but Jesus becomes the center of attraction; and John, the announcer, becomes the worshiper. Using John 1:1, 14, 18,

34, 51 and the third day a marriage where He manifested forth His glory, you have the whole sweep from eternity past to the Kingdom that is soon coming.

I say it is just a wonderful picture of the program of God, reminding one of Hosea 5:15 to 6:2, "I will go away and return to My place, until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me. Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us. He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day that we may live before Him."

And our Lord could say at the end of Matthew 23, verse 39, "You shall not see Me until you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"

If you want to follow through on the prophetic picture, there it is. But now come back to chapter two with respect to a personal word for our own hearts. The marriage was held in Cana of Galilee, and there is a possibility that this may have come about because of Nathanael.

At the last of chapter one, you have Nathanael coming to know the Lord; in chapter 21:2 we read that Nathanael was of Cana in Galilee. Now there is no question in my mind that the Lord's mother Mary also had relatives there and that this was a family affair. This marriage was not in the temple; it was in a home. And the Lord Jesus went there to make Himself known and to enjoy fellowship with the people.

I am glad for this. The Lord did not put Himself off in a corner and hide Himself from people. He went where they were, and He attended the feast.

A wedding, as you know, is a place of joy and thanksgiving. And the Lord God was there, physically there! Indeed, I would say that one of the first things our Lord did was to sanctify a marriage

where a young couple was being united. He was there, and blessing and joy were the portion of everyone.

It is a wonderful thing to have the Lord there, when people are being married, there to sanctify the union with His own Presence.

The first sign (2:3-12)

3. And when the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine."

4. And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what do I have to do with you? My hour has not yet come."

5. His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it."

May I stop here just a moment? Mary came to the Saviour and said, "They have no wine." Now her statement, I think, gives to us what was in her heart and in her mind. For the past 30 years they had been in Nazareth, and Mary had seen in the Lord Jesus the wonderful perfectness of His character.

She also was reminded of the fact that, before He was born, the angel Gabriel had said to her that the holy thing that was to be born of her should be called the Son of the Highest, and that the time would come when He will sit upon the throne of His father David and that His kingdom will have no end (Luke 1:32-33).

But "they have no wine."

I think the implication in Mary's voice was "Son, it is about time you made known to people who You are."

She had kept this secret right in the very depths of her heart. I don't believe that Mary publicized the fact that Jesus, her first-born Son, was the Messiah, born of the Holy Spirit.

She is in effect saying, "Son, they have no wine. Isn't it time You displayed your power? Isn't it time

You revealed Yourself as the Messiah, as the One who is going to reign upon David's throne? Isn't it time to do this?"

The Lord's amazing answer was "Woman (not mother—I do not know how the Roman Catholics get around this fact), what do I have to do with you?"

I do not believe that when He said the word, "Woman," that He said it in any disrespect to Mary; for you remember in John 19:26 He said to John at the cross, "Behold, your mother." And He said to Mary, "Woman, behold your son."

This question of relationship in John is not pressed forward, as it may be in the other Gospels. And yet I am reminded in Matthew's Gospel (12:47-50) that they came and the people said to Jesus, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside."

And He said, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold, My mother and My brothers! For whoever shall do the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."

But here in John's Gospel, I believe that Mary was very desirous that the Lord should reveal Himself in His official capacity as the Messiah.

He is 30 years old. He has been baptized by John; and John has declared, "I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

"Now," Mary says, "manifest yourself. They have no wine."

"Woman (may I put it in my own words?), your purpose and My purpose do not agree. We're not one in this matter as to when I should reveal Myself as to who I am. Woman, what do I have to do with you?"

It was not that the Lord was pushing her off; but, rather, it was "We do not have the same thought in this matter. It is not My time to reveal

Myself. I will declare when the time will be to reveal who I am. My hour is not yet come.” You remember that over and over again in John’s Gospel—three or four times in John 7, in John 8, and then in John 12 when certain Greeks desired to see Jesus—He said, “My hour has not yet come.” And then in John 17, He could say, “Father, the hour has come.”

The first time He made this statement was to His mother: “My hour has not yet come.” The last time He made the statement was to His Father: “Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee.”

The hour for the glorification of the Father through the Son was at the cross and in resurrection; but, in John two, that hour had not yet come.

Mary’s good advice (2:5)

And then we have Mary’s wonderful, wonderful advice. She did not argue. She just said to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it.” And this is a wonderful answer to give to those who are caught up in the worship of Mary, the mother, and who see less reason to worship the Son. We do honor Mary. We take her advice; whatever He says, we do.

To me this first sign in the Gospel through John is remarkable. Matthew’s first sign was the cleansing of a leper; and rightly so, for in Matthew Jesus is revealed as the Messiah. And when Messiah comes, He will do certain things, one of which is He will cleanse the lepers. That is why in Matthew 8:4 Jesus said to the leper after He cleansed him, “Go, show yourself to the priest.” The priest in the Lord’s day was the high authority in the nation.

You remember the history—Israel was ruled first of all by judges under God, then the kings. And after they returned from Babylon under Ezra and Nehemiah, the Jews were ruled by the priesthood.

Today, it is the rabbi; but then it was the priesthood: "Go, show yourself to the priest." He was saying, "Show him that Messiah is here!"

Now, when you come to Mark and Luke, you have an entirely different picture. In Mark one and in Luke four we have the first miracle in those two books—the casting out of a demon in the synagogue. Here is a man in the synagogue (if I may say it, in the local church), and he is demon possessed. And when our Lord came into the synagogue, there was immediate conflict. It is rather strange that there was no conflict before. But the moment He came in, there was conflict.

He came as the Great Deliverer, as the Servant of Jehovah in Mark, and as God's Man in the Gospel through Luke. He took his position as the Great Deliverer, not only from sin and death but from the powers of hell; and in the very first miracle He is going to deliver men from the authority and bondage of the powers of darkness.

When you come to John's Gospel, you have none of that. In fact, in John's Gospel you have no record of our Lord's casting out demons at all.

This is an astounding thing to me. John gives us a revelation of our Lord as God, fulfilling Isaiah 40:9, "Say to the cities of Judah, 'Here is your God.'" John calls Him "Jesus," the Man who is God, 247 times. And his first miracle is a sign that He is God, the Author of Creation. He did not heal the sick nor cast out demons nor heal the palsy nor touch the fever—as you have it in Matthew, sign after sign. Not here. Here He is the Creator.

And the mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." And may I suggest that obedience brings transformation, obedience brings satisfaction, obedience brings joy—full obedience. Too many believers are only partial in their obedience; they will do certain things, but not others. But He asks for complete obedience. Now, remember, He is God. And being absolute in authority,

He demands absolute obedience.

And she said, "Whatever He SAYS, whatever HE says, whatEVER He says, you do it."

Now let us see what took place.

6. Now there were six stone water pots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each.

These were ceremonial pots for cleansing.

This was common in Jewish homes. The Jews were very particular about how they ate, how they washed their hands; and they always had an abundance of water nearby. But these water pots were empty. They were ceremonial pots, but they were empty.

7. Jesus said to them, "Fill the water pots with water." And they filled them up to the brim.

And what they received was according to their obedience. If they had just filled them half full, then they would only have been half full of wine. But they filled them to the brim.

8. And He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the headwaiter." And they took it to him.

I believe that most of our lives are destitute of power, of usefulness, of joy, of blessing, and of peace because we are not fully obedient.

"If anyone loves Me, he will keep my word" (John 14:23). I repeat it. The key to all spiritual life, the key to being transformed by the power of God, is through obedience, not through some little gadget you use, not through doing some little stunt. I repeat it. The key to usefulness, the key to joy, and the key to fellowship is obedience; and transformation is the fruitage of obedience. He transformed the water into wine.

9. And when the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom,

10. and said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first, and when men have drunk freely, then that which is poorer; you have kept the good wine until now."

I like to think that the first miracle Moses, the man of law, did was when he took water and transformed it into blood. The first miracle of our Saviour, the Man of grace, was when He turned water into wine and made everyone happy. Moses, the legalist, with his first miracle, blood, produced fear, the opposite of joy. Our Lord transformed water into wine and brought joy.

May I suggest something else? And here I want you to mark the deity of our Saviour. He didn't speak to the water. He didn't command the water. He didn't touch the water. He just said, "Fill the waterpots with water," and they did so. "Draw some out now—ladle it out." It was wine! My friend, only God can do that.

In many of our Lord's miracles He touched people. Take the leper. He laid hold of the leper and said, "I will, be thou clean." He touched the palsied. Sometimes He just spoke the word, "Go home. Your daughter is made whole." Or He said, "Talitha, I say to you, arise" to the daughter of Jairus. But He said no special words here.

He just said, "Fill the waterpots with water."

And they obeyed.

"Draw some out now."

Why? The very thought of the Saviour in His own will, in His own heart, in His own authority, in His own power as God was sufficient. It was wine. I say we're dealing with the Gospel through John. This is the act of a Creator. If He is God, then there is one thing He ought to do—create.

This is what He did. And the result? It was wine.

The complete picture (2:11)

The further result of this? I read,

11. This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.

Now, I don't think you have the 12 disciples here—possibly just the ones you have in the first chapter. There may have been just those four or five fellows (I wouldn't know), Andrew, John, Philip, and Nathanael. But whoever they were, they believed in Him. And the verse also says He “manifested His glory.” He will do that when He returns and restores the nation of Israel; and they are going to have the best wine at last.

The Jews had a wonderful time under David and Solomon. They are going to have a more wonderful time when the Lord returns, and the nation will be redeemed, and the wine pots will no longer be empty. They will no longer be following empty ceremonies; for, my friend, may I suggest to you that any ceremony apart from the Word of God is an empty thing. I don't care what the ceremony is. If it is apart from the Word of God, it is valueless.

How we need to have the Word of God filling us up, so that God may work through us to His own glory and to His own praise.

12. After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother, and His brothers, and His disciples; and there they stayed a few days.

13. And the passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

14. And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers seated.

His authority (2:13-17)

I want you to see in the very beginning of this Gospel through John the display of our Lord's authority as God. Now John the Baptist had introduced our Lord in 1:29 when he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

In Revelation five we are told not only who the Lamb is, that He is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, but the next chapter speaks of the wrath of the Lamb. Here in the temple at the very beginning of His ministry, the Lord Jesus manifests the wrath of the Lamb. He did not come as a prophet. A prophet would have stood and rebuked them for their sin in the temple. It is Passover time. Jews were all coming in from different parts of the country and also from overseas. And they came to the temple to offer their sacrifices and to worship the Lord.

I am sorry to note that this which was at one time God's Passover has now degenerated into "the Passover of the Jews." And in the outer court of the temple, possibly the Gentile court, the priests and Levites and Sadducees and Pharisees were making it very, very easy for these Jews who came from other lands to keep the Passover. They were making religion easy; and, may I suggest, be careful of anything that makes it easy. It was a rational thing, but it was a racket.

You all know what I mean by that.

The Lord Jesus comes at the beginning of His ministry and identifies Himself with His Father's House. "Every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath, and holds fast My covenant; even those I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples" (Isaiah 56:6-7). But He finds the leaders of Israel and the merchants making merchan-

dise of the people of God in the temple court. There were the cattle and the sheep and the doves and the money-changers.

As the worshipers came from other countries, they had to change their money into the shekel of the treasury of the temple. You could not take Roman money in there or Greek money. You came to the temple, and you changed your money and you bought your bullock or your ox or whatever you wanted or your sheep; or you bought your doves if you were poor.

But do you see the trouble with this? It was on the temple grounds. You couldn't offer your own household lamb, and you couldn't go outside and buy a lamb. They wouldn't accept that. You had to buy here. You can see how the priests were becoming rich by merchandising the people of God.

May I add to this Jude, verse 11. In the last days the ecclesiastical leaders in the professing church of Christ will be doing the same thing—"for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam." And just what is that?

It is commercializing spiritual things, and the Lord is against it!

15. And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the moneychangers, and overturned their tables;

16. and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a house of merchandise."

17. His disciples remembered that it was written, "ZEAL FOR THY HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME."

I tremble when I think of the racket, the religious racket going over the radio and television and throughout our whole country. The tragedy is that so many of God's people are supplying the racket, keeping it going by their gifts.

And here it was in our Lord's day. They were having a racket; they were making merchandise of the things of God. Of course, they wouldn't do it in the inner temple. That was sacrilege. But in the Gentile court—what did they care about Gentiles? The Lord Jesus took a scourge of cords and whipped them out of the place. The disciples remembered the statement from Psalm 69:9 that the zeal for His house has "consumed" Him. He is zealous for His Father's house.

Remember, the Lord Jesus had been here many times before. In Luke, chapter two, as a boy He came; and I'm sure that conditions were the same then. When Joseph and Mary left to go back to Nazareth, they missed Him and came back to Jerusalem and hunted for Him and found Him in the midst of the doctors in the temple, confounding them with His questions and answers. And I'm sure that the Jews were merchandising the things of God in those days.

And more than likely, while He was at Nazareth with Mary, He went up to the temple possibly every year as other good Jews did; but nothing was done then concerning the cleansing of the temple.

Now, He has come on the scene as God manifest in the flesh. His first sign is the act of a Creator. He has just willed water into wine; and now in the temple, He comes as the Messiah. He comes in His official capacity, manifesting His authority over His Father's house; and He is absolutely against making merchandise of the people of God.

Remember Hillel, the great Jewish teacher, had a student who caused such a commotion that they changed the price of a dove from about \$3.75 to 18 cents because they were overcharging God's people.

The Lord Jesus manifested authority. He drove out the sheep and the oxen and, I take it, their

leaders. He drove out the money changers, and He threw over their tables; and the money was scattered everywhere.

He didn't throw out the doves; they would have lost them. You don't drive doves. He would have looked foolish trying to flap doves out of the temple. His zeal was filled with tenderness; there was no destruction.

He told them to take their doves out. The Lord manifested authority as He whipped the merchants out of the place. In fact, I would say this. These Jews were experiencing something of the terror of the Lord. They knew that He was right. Their consciences knew that. The law, which they professed to teach and believe, taught this. He cleansed the temple, saying, "This is My Father's house."

In Matthew when He cleansed the temple, He said, "You have made my Father's house a den of thieves." His zeal was for His Father's house, and He was filled with righteous indignation.

The Book of Revelation, especially at the end of chapter six, says that the day of the wrath of the Lamb is come and who is able to stand? I think sometimes in these days we forget that He is Righteous God and that every one of us must stand in His Presence and give an account to a righteous God.

Paul could say in 2 Corinthians 5:11, "Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men." In Hebrews 10:31 we have, "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Now, if our Lord were jealous for this temple which He recognized as His Father's house, would He not be just as jealous over you, over me? Our body also is the temple of God. And He is the only one who can cleanse our temple.

I would urge upon you, believer, if your life needs to be cleansed that you come to Him and have Him cleanse it. He will do it in grace; He will

do it in love. And remember, if your temple is not clean, if your life is not godly, if you are a child of God and you are not coming to Him in repentance for cleansing, then He will come and clean it. "For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives" (Hebrews 12:6).

It is no light thing to become a child of God. It is no light thing to have these bodies the sanctuaries of God.

Think about it! Your body is the sanctuary of God. It belongs to Him. And Paul could say, "Therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:20). The temple in Jerusalem was for worship. It was for praise, it was for adoration, and it was for the glorifying of God. It had degenerated through the Jews into a place of merchandise and materialism. God grant that we who profess His name, we who know that these bodies are the sanctuary of God might so walk before Him in praise, in adoration and for the glory of God.

Paul could say to the Corinthian church, "Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning" (1 Corinthians 15:34). I say the Lord has a right to cleanse His own temple; He has a right to cleanse you. Far better it is for us to come joyfully and willingly and to confess our condition so that He may forgive and cleanse us. And He is willing and ready to do that with us, if our heart and our life need cleansing. How wonderful to know that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, "cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

And to any unsaved person, I would say that your life will never be free or cleansed from sin unless you accept the divine provision God has made for you in Jesus Christ, His beloved Son, who died to "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:26).

Now, if we revert back to our old ways, the Lord will have to do with us what He did with the

temple; for just as soon as He left the scene, they were back at their old job. He cleansed the temple at the beginning of his ministry and again, three years later, at the end. You see, these merchants paid quite a sum to come in and sell on the temple grounds; and they made much money on this business. It was a very lucrative thing.

At the beginning of His ministry, our Lord charged that they had made His Father's house "a house of merchandise." And at the end, in Matthew 21:13, He said they had made it "a robbers' den." They had refused to respond to Him the first time, and their condition at the end shows the result. This is the way with evil. But the Lord is ever faithful to His promise.

He is always willing to restore our soul as He cleanses us and to turn our own "robbers' den" into a "house of prayer."

He cleansed the temple, saying, This is "My Father's house." Mark you, This is "My Father's house." He claims relationship to the Living God. And this to Jews was an incendiary thing!

In chapter five (verses 17-18) when He says, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working," they say He is a blasphemer, "making Himself equal with God." And here in chapter two, He says, "This is my Father's house," and He implies, "Because of my relationship, because I am God the Son, I have the right to clean my Father's house."

A sign demanded, a sign given (2:18-25)

Then the priests stand up and challenge Him.

18. The Jews therefore answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, seeing that You do these things?"

"What right do You have to do this? What is the ground for Your authority? Who do You think You

are?"

Mark His answer.

19. Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

This is a very, very strange statement that I am sure they did not understand. I am very sure the disciples did not understand it.

I am also sure that if you and I had been there, we would not have understood it. Their next response is a very logical one.

20. The Jews therefore said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"

21. But He was speaking of the temple of his body.

They said, "Why, this temple has been 46 years in building. It is not finished yet." In fact, ten more years were put to renovating the temple by Herod and his successors.

"You mean to tell us, destroy this temple and in three days you will raise it up again?" You can just hear the sarcasm. You can just see the attitude of these Jewish leaders. "Destroy this temple and in three days you'll raise it up?"

This is an amazing answer to their challenge, but the Lord Jesus at the very beginning of His ministry is declaring the very foundation of all His work.

The sign was His death, burial and resurrection. And then, three years later at the end of His appeal to Israel, you have the Pharisees clamoring again for a sign; and He says (Matthew 12:39-40), "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the

earth.”

In 1 Corinthians 1:22, we read, “Jews ask for signs.” This is His one great sign—His death and resurrection. And may I suggest something to your own heart? The Lord Jesus banks His whole ministry and His purpose and His Person on His resurrection from the dead. I want you to notice the great place Jesus Christ gave to this question of resurrection.

His whole ministry, His Person, His work at the cross, why He came, Who He is, are all based—and HE bases it Himself—upon His resurrection from the dead.

Did you notice that the apostles in the early ministry of the church based their whole message upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? The Church of Jesus Christ stands or falls on the resurrection from the dead. It is a wonderful, wonderful thing: His death, burial and resurrection. This is the heart of Christianity.

The Muslims, the Buddhists and the Shintoists hate this question of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. The thing that marks out Christianity from everything else is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. In Romans 1:4, Paul says that Jesus Christ was “declared with power to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead.”

Now, mark the challenge.

“Who do you think you are? Where do you get your authority? Who are you?”

And He bases His authority, His Person, His purpose, His work and His ministry on the resurrection. He didn’t base it upon His miracles.

He based it on the foundational thing—His death, His burial, His resurrection. I feel I must repeat it and repeat it and repeat it to get it into your heart.

May I suggest to you that this is one doctrine that every unbeliever despises and does not want.

Hell tries to ridicule this doctrine. The intelligentsia of the world spurn it and despise it. It was ever thus.

When the Apostle Paul went down (Acts 17:17-33) to the Athenians, they took him up to Mars Hill and said, Let us hear what this "idle babbler" has to say, for he brings strange things to our ears. He had preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.

And on Mars Hill, Paul stood up and declared the God of creation. He came right where they were. He started there because many of them did not even believe that. And then he went on to say that God had made of one blood all nations of men to dwell upon the face of the earth. God has set the bounds of their habitation. What for? That they might seek after God and find Him. When God scattered the nations of the earth in Genesis 11, He put people in the best place where they could find God. Man wasn't satisfied with that place, and that is why we have had wars. Down through the centuries man wasn't satisfied with the place God gave him. He wanted what the other fellow had. But now God makes a change.

"Don't you for one moment think," said Paul to these Athenians, "that God is like unto something made out of stone or brass or some other thing. God isn't like that. God made everything. You can't make an image of God. Your own handiwork condemns you. But now God commands all men everywhere to repent." Why? "Because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

And the moment he mentioned the resurrection from the dead, they said, "We've had enough." Some mocked; some scoffed; some said, "We shall hear you again." But that's the end of it. You never read of a church being built in Athens. In the next

chapter he did a remarkable work at dissolute Corinth, where he was for 18 months, but not at philosophical Athens. The world by wisdom knew not God.

My friend, this calls for faith. This does not call for a degree of scholarship. This calls for simple faith and a Gospel so clear that a man, though a fool, cannot err therein.

It is simple. It is clear. It is sure.

22. When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken.

The disciples did not even believe Him until after He was raised. Or shall I put it this way—their faith in Him was made secure by the resurrection. There was no question after the resurrection, no question that He was God manifest in the flesh, no question that He was the Saviour of sinners. There was no question in the minds of the Apostles.

“We saw Him,” they said. “We handled Him.” And they went everywhere preaching a risen Christ, declaring—not defending or arguing—the resurrection from the dead. (In the Book of Acts, they referred to the resurrection more than twice the number of times they spoke of the cross.)

His knowledge (2:23-25)

23. Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, beholding His signs which He was doing.

24. But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men,

25. and because He did not need any one to bear witness concerning man for He Himself knew what was in man.

If I were to be literal here, many believed in His name, but He did not believe in them. Their faith

was based on the spectacular. That is not saving faith. They were intellectually persuaded that these things were miracles; but their faith was not in the Person who performed the signs, who performed the miracles. They were persuaded this was miraculous, but they had no faith in Him; and He knew it. A faith that is based on the spectacular is not saving faith.

“Show us a sign! Give us a miracle! We'll believe if we see a miracle!” No, you won't. No, you won't.

I remember years ago in Saskatchewan, Canada, during the flu epidemic that people were dying on the prairies. You could not get doctors or nurses. I stayed up every night for three solid weeks. I did not take my clothes off, nursing a family—a man and his wife and six children—out on the prairie.

And then, when the little baby took sick, the little wee one, the mother said to me, “Mr. Mitchell, if God heals my baby, I'll believe.” God was very gracious in healing her baby. And then she said to me, “But I thought He would do it in a minute.”

I said, “Mrs. So-and-So, you remind me of what Jesus said: ‘If they believe not the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one be raised from the dead.’”

I say I am dealing with one of the most astounding things. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the guarantee of salvation to those who will trust Him; but it is also the guarantee of judgment to those who will not. We are just as sure of eternal life as we are that He was raised from the dead. And we are just as sure of eternal judgment on those who reject Him as we are that He was raised from the dead.

I am pressing this because we Christians in coming days will need to be very sure of the ground on which we walk.

If there is no resurrection, says Paul, then we haven't a thing. “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins”

(1 Corinthians 15:17). You are of all men most miserable. You have no hope. You might as well do what the Epicureans do. Let us eat, drink and be merry; for tomorrow we die. We have no hope if there is no resurrection.

How glad I am that we can say with Paul, “But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:20-22). Death is a conquered foe. Sin has been put away. God’s perfect righteousness has been satisfied. And we can come in simple faith and revel that we have a real Saviour, a living Saviour, and a perfect salvation.

“What sign do you show?” The resurrection.

I am just as sure that I will never again see my sins as I am that Christ was raised from the dead.

You say, “Why, sir! Aren’t you overstating it?”

That is an UNDERstatement, my brother. When you and I stand—if you are trusting the Saviour Who died for you and rose again—when you and I stand in the presence of God, we will stand with a righteousness, we will stand with a perfection, we will stand as He stands; for our Father God has determined that we should be conformed to the image of His Son—His risen, glorified, glorious Son. Think of it!

And so we have seen our Saviour manifest His authority and power in this chapter by cleansing the temple. He has declared His authority over death by claiming, “If you destroy this body, in three days I will raise it up again.” He has manifested His omniscience by knowing what was in man and by not committing Himself to those who claimed to believe on Him.

Faith that is based upon the spectacular, I repeat, is not much faith. Faith must be in a

Person, not in some experience. I repeat that because today so many are basing their faith upon some spectacular experience or some sign or miracle that someone has performed. The Lord Jesus would not commit Himself to these because their faith was a shallow thing. They wanted signs. They didn't want Him. He must personally be the center as well as the object of our faith and trust. But there WAS a man to whom He could commit Himself. This man was a ruler of the Jews.

John 3

Christ, the Saviour

The need for the New Birth (3:1-3)

1. Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews;
2. this man came to Him by night . . .

Nicodemus, the teacher, was possibly one of the most popular and outstanding teachers of the people of Israel, into whose midst had come this Man Jesus. There is no question that Nicodemus had seen the Lord performing miracles, presenting His credentials; that is why he comes to Him.

2. . . . and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

Nicodemus comes at night, I believe, because he is a very busy man. More than likely he wanted to come when he could discuss these matters with the Lord Jesus without interruption. He cannot do that with the crowd in the temple; so he comes to Him by night and has the Lord all to himself. He opens his heart, genuine in his desire to know the truth. He wants to know who Jesus is and what message He has for him.

3. Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Now this is a strange thing for the Lord to say to this man. "Nicodemus, you know what's the matter with you? You're born wrong. Unless one is born again . . ."

Nicodemus is a teacher of the things of God, an instructor of the Old Testament. He is a teacher of Israel; and, no doubt, like all the Jews, he has been looking for the Messiah. He wants to know, "Who is this Jesus who does these signs, who presents these credentials, who has the authority to cleanse the temple, who says, 'Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.' Is this the Messiah? Is He going to bring in the kingdom? Is this to be our Leader?"

And the Lord's amazing answer is, "Nicodemus, you've got to be born again before you'll ever see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus here stands for every man.

The need for the new birth is universal. Man's condition demands it. There must be a radical change in man even to see the kingdom of God. God's holiness demands the new birth. We were born wrong, and the removal of sin does not give life.

The way of the New Birth (3:4-8)

4. Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"

"It's impossible!" says Nicodemus. "I can't go back to my mother's womb and be reborn."

5. Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

In other words, He is saying to this man, "Nicodemus, even though you are the teacher of Israel,

you have missed what the Scriptures have to declare. Nicodemus, you are born wrong. There has to be a cleansing and a renewing of the Spirit of God in you. You have got to be born again entirely new. The old cannot come into, nor even see, the kingdom of God.”

6. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

So, may I say first of all that man’s condition demands he be born again if he is going to see or enter the kingdom of God. And this is something that man does not like. It’s not a very popular doctrine; the great majority of people do not believe it. They still believe, as all religionists believe, that if you can DO something or merit something in some way, you are going to enter the kingdom of God.

Now the Lord Jesus makes it very explicit. He says, “Nicodemus, your trouble is you are born wrong, and there is nothing you can do with the old nature. It is born wrong, and it is always wrong and it cannot be anything else but wrong. And, if you knew your Bible, Nicodemus, you would have known that. Did not Job say in Job 14:4, ‘Who can make the clean thing out of the unclean? No one!’ Did not Jeremiah say in 13:23, ‘Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?’ Did not King David say in Psalm 51:5, ‘I was brought forth in iniquity; and in sin my mother conceived me’? Did you never read, Nicodemus, that the thoughts and the imaginations of the heart of man are only evil continually (Genesis 6:5)?”

And to us in these modern days does not the Apostle Paul say, “The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God”? I

am quoting Romans 8:7 and 8.

Does he not say to the Corinthian church, "A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (1 Corinthians 2:14)? One could go on in the Scriptures. There is not one thing that man can do—of himself—that could cause him to be fitted to even see the kingdom of God, much less enter it. Now the Lord Jesus said that!

And then I think of the holy character of God. Take for example, Hebrews 12:14, where we read that without holiness, without righteousness, "no one will see the Lord." God shuts the door tightly and absolutely against encouraging the flesh.

Look at the Apostle Paul himself. He was well born. He was a Pharisee. He was a zealot for God. As touching the law, he was righteous. The rites within the law? He was blameless. And yet Paul would say later in 1 Timothy 1:15, "This is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all." That was because his eyes had been opened.

"Nicodemus, if you are going to see the kingdom of God, you must be born again; you must be born from above."

You see, there must be a new nature. Everything that was from Adam or from our parents is sinful. The old nature is of the flesh. That's why Peter says, in 2 Peter 1:4, by these many precious and magnificent promises we have been made "partakers of the divine nature."

In 2 Corinthians 5:17, you remember that amazing verse, Paul said, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature"—a new creation. In Galatians 6:15, Paul says that being a Jew or a Gentile profits nothing, but "a new creation" does. It is what you have in John 1:13, "who were born, not of

blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” This is the nature of the new birth—being born from above, born of God.

Then the Lord goes on, and He is getting stronger. He says,

5. “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

He goes on to say,

6. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

7. “Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’

8. “The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is every one who is born of the Spirit.”

The wind blows where it wishes; it comes and goes some place. You cannot see it; you do not know where it comes from; you do not know where it is going; but you can experience the power of wind. So is the Spirit. You cannot explain everything the Spirit of God does. We cannot begin to fathom the moving of the Spirit of God in taking a sinner and transforming him into a child of God. You do not see the movement of it; you do not see how He does it; but it is done, and we see the fruitage of it—for that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

“How in the world can I be born again? I cannot go back into my mother’s womb and be born.”

“No,” says Christ, “this hasn’t a thing to do with the flesh; it is something entirely new. The person who lives in the flesh has got to be cleansed from sin; he has to be renewed by the Spirit of God. It is something entirely new.”

Unless someone reads into verse five what is not there— may I just stop a moment. I am going to

misquote the verse. It does NOT say, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is baptized in water and baptized by the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

It does not say that, and don't you read into it what is not there. He is talking about a new birth, to be begotten, to be born. You did not do anything to be born the first time; and when you are born again the second time, you don't have a thing to do with that either. GOD DOES IT to those who put their trust in Him, who are born of water, born of the Spirit. The emphasis here, I say, is "born."

Now what does the water signify? Does not water mean water? I would say that in the Scripture, oftentimes, the word "water" is used as a picture of some spiritual truth. For example, in John four, the very next chapter, Jesus says to the woman at the well, "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst."

"Well," the woman says, "you've got no pitcher to draw with and the well is deep. How are you going to get that water?"

And the Lord Jesus says, "You drink of this water, you'll what? You'll thirst again. You drink of the water that I will give you—you'll never thirst. It will be IN YOU a well of water springing up into eternal life." Is that literal water?

John 7:37-39: "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me, and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, "From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water."' But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive: for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."

Ephesians 5:26: "That he might sanctify her, having cleansed her (the church) by the washing of water with the word." In John 15:3, Christ said, "You are already clean because of the word which

I have spoken to you.”

Now then, in 1 Peter 1:23, Peter says we have been born again of the imperishable seed of the “living and abiding word of God.” James 1:18 says, “In the exercise of His will He brought us forth (this is the same word, ‘born’) by the word of truth.”

When He says, “Unless one is born of water,” He is speaking both of the power, the cleansing power, of the Word of God in the heart of one who trusts Him and of being “born of the Spirit” where we come into a new relationship, into a new life. This is something entirely new, unknown by the world.

And what is the method of being born of water and of the Spirit? It is something that GOD does.

8. “The wind blows where it wishes . . .”

This is the illustration He uses. How does the Spirit come? We cannot see Him, but we can feel Him. We can experience His presence. We can experience His power. He comes into the heart that is open to Him and brings in a new creation. He does not patch up the old. Thank God, the patching days are over! He brings in a new life, a new relationship, something entirely new.

I’ve oftentimes said, and I repeat it, that the removal of sin does not make you a Christian. The removal of sin does not give you life. The removal of sin does not make you righteous.

I state that for this reason. There are those who say, “Well, I’m going to give up my sin.”

All right, brother, that’s a wonderful thing. Give up your sin. You ought to give it up any way. But that does not make you a Christian; it does not give you life; it does not fit you for the presence of God. Unless one is BORN of the Spirit of God, he can neither see nor enter into the kingdom of God.

The ignorance of Nicodemus (3:9-13)

And then this is followed by the ignorance, if I might use the word, the ignorance of this teacher of Israel in verse nine, where we read,

9. Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?"

"How can this be accomplished?" if you please. "You mean I am born wrong? All my teaching, all of my good works, all of my knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, all my religious feelings, all that I've been going after all my life does not merit anything at all, does not mean entering or seeing the kingdom of God? I've got to be made over new? I've got to be born of the Spirit? How do you do that? How can these things be?"

And the Lord's answer is,

10. Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not understand these things?"

He is saying, "You should have known, Nicodemus, for both Jeremiah and Ezekiel speak of the fact that the day is going to come when I will take out of you your heart of stone, and I will give you a heart of flesh."

He adds, "I will take my laws, and I will write them on your heart; and I will give you a new spirit. You should have known that.

"And David said in Psalm 51:10, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.' He was saying, 'I'm born wrong, Lord, I'm born wrong.' That's what David means, Nicodemus. 'Create in me a clean heart. I've got no hope of the old one.' You ought to have known that."

"But," Nicodemus says, "how can these things be? What is the method whereby I, Nicodemus,

can be born of water, can be born of the Spirit? How can I be born again? How can I get into the kingdom of God? How can I see it or enter it?"

And in verses 14 through 17, the Lord gives us three amazing answers.

He gives the first one in verses 14 and 15, but He leads us up to that first.

11. "Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and you do not receive our witness.

12. "If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how shall you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

13. "And no one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven, even the Son of man."

I am not going to go into the blessedness of our Saviour in His omnipresence. Nobody else could have said, "Not only am I telling you how to get into the kingdom of God, but the one who is talking to you came from heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven."

How to receive the New Birth (3:14-17)

14. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up;

15. that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life."

Here, first of all is substitution—faith and substitution. You all know the story in Numbers 21. The people of Israel had murmured against God because of the manna. They had said—think of this!—they had said to God, "We loathe this miserable food." They despised the divine provision for their daily needs. And we read that God sent serpents among the people of Israel, and many of them died because of the poison.

And they cried out to Moses; and Moses came to God, and God said, "You make a serpent of brass

and lift it up on a pole, and every one who looks shall live." So we read that every Jew who had been smitten with the serpents and was dying of the poison, if he just looked, he lived. God provided a remedy for the affliction. He gave them a saviour from death. "Look and live."

We used to sing that when I was a boy—"Look and live. Look and live. Look unto Jesus now and live."

Did you ever sing that? Maybe some of you old timers can sing that one—"Look to Jesus now and live." God provided a remedy for their affliction.

"Now," said Jesus to Nicodemus, "God has provided a remedy for YOUR condition. 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.' He must die on a cross. And every one who puts his trust in this One who is going to be hanging on a cross, this One who is to be lifted up—just as the serpent was lifted up, He will be lifted up—will live, as in that day those who looked with a look of trust, of belief, of faith, lived. So now, the Son of man will be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life, everlasting life."

And then He gives the second answer.

16. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

"You want to know how, Nicodemus, HOW you can be born again? HOW you can be born of water and of the Spirit?" Here it is. "God so loved the world." That is the crux of it.

Love has provided men a way to be delivered from their sin and to be born of water and of the Spirit. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." Notice in verse 14, the Son of man is to be lifted up. In verse 16, God is going to send His only begotten Son, the eternal Son, as

a Gift. Love is providing a Saviour. In verses 14 and 15, He provides a substitute.

In 16, love steps into the picture and provides a Gift, “that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

And the third answer comes next, where you have Him sent to be the Saviour.

17. “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him.”

May I say this, my Christian friend? When you accepted the Saviour, you heard some good news about God sending His Son—that this Son was sent to die on your behalf, not only for your sins but for YOU. And that, if you would put your trust in Him, you would pass from death to life; you would be born from above, born into the family of God; you would be fitted to see and enter the kingdom of God.

How did this happen? You heard the word; the word attracted you to a Person; you put your trust in that Person, the Son of God, and immediately you were cleansed and possessed by the Holy Spirit; you were born of water and born of the Spirit. The Spirit of God quickened the Word to your heart, and thus you passed from death to life. You became a child of God.

Now, from verse 18 down through verse 21, I believe our Lord is continuing His challenging statement to Nicodemus when He says, “He who believes in Him is not judged.” Believes in whom? We have it in the preceding verse: “God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him.” He sent His Son, as 1 John 4:14 declares, “to be the Saviour of the world.” He is the provision for the world to be saved, but on one condition; and now He picks up that condition:

The opposition to the New Birth (3:18-21)

18. "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

19. "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil.

20. "For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

21. "But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

Will you please notice that this question of salvation does not hinge primarily for us on the fact that God loves or that Christ died for us. Those things are true. But you can believe that God loves and that Christ died and yet not be born from above. You can be moral and be religious and give an intellectual assent to all the wonderful doctrines of Scripture, but that does not mean that you are saved. That does not mean you are born again. You must put your personal trust in the Saviour, not just believe that He did the right thing. There must be a relationship between you and Him if there is to be salvation.

Notice verse 15: "That whoever believes may in Him have eternal life." Verse 16: "That whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." Verse 18: "He who believes in Him is not judged." Verse 36: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who disbelieves the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

I am picking out this question of the fruitage of our Lord's message on the new birth.

Four times He says, "He who believes, he who believes, he who believes, he who believes." That means we must put our trust in Him. Then

we have life. We have eternal life.

But “he who does not believe,” the one who does not put his trust in the Saviour, will “perish,” is “judged already,” the wrath of God “abides on him.” Why doesn’t the judgment of God fall today? Because “the Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

The last testimony of John (3:22-30)

Now, starting in at verse 22 and following down through verse 30, we have the last testimony—the full satisfaction—of John the Baptist.

22. After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea; and there He was spending time with them, and baptizing.

23. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and they were coming, and were being baptized.

24. For John had not yet been thrown into prison.

I take it that until John was in prison our Saviour and John had interlocked their ministry together. They both were baptizing for the remission of sins. You find that in the book of Matthew.

And then I read of a little confusion in the minds of John’s disciples.

25. There arose therefore a discussion on the part of John’s disciples with a Jew about purification.

26. And they came to John, and said to him, “Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have borne witness, behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him.”

27. John answered and said, “A man can receive nothing, unless it has been given him from heaven.”

You know, I can appreciate these disciples of John. He had been the center of attraction. Great multitudes had come around him; and he said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). He baptized them unto the remission of sins in preparation, moral preparation, for the coming of the King. "The King is on His way. Be ready for Him!"

And then Jesus comes on the scene and John says, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." He loses two of his disciples, John and Andrew. And now both the Lord and John the Baptist are carrying on the same ministry. These dear disciples were simply jealous for John's reputation.

Do you remember, when God gave the 70 elders (Numbers 11:24-29) the spirit that was upon Moses, that two men who were not there at the time began to prophesy? A young man told Moses, "You'd better do something about these two fellows. They're prophesying in the camp."

Moses said, "I would to God that all His people were prophets and had the Spirit of God upon them." He too had no room for jealousy, no room for envy.

John said, "If I have any ministry at all, I have received it from heaven. And if Jesus has a ministry, it comes from heaven."

There is no room in his heart for competition, no room for rivalry, no room for envy or jealousy. When the sun comes up in the morning and blazes out over the earth, the stars apparently disappear. But they are there. It is just that the blaze of the glory of the sun obliterates the shining of the stars as far as we can see. John is a star, and the Sun comes on the scene and begins to shine; and John is very, very happy about it, for here again he is the worshiper. He is clothed with humility.

You and I ought to be clothed with humility. Are you worried about a reputation? Even in a Chris-

tian assembly it would be very, very easy to be jealous for our reputation as a Gospel center, when we should rather rejoice wherever we hear of people accepting the Saviour or of God's blessing somebody else's ministry.

We ought to rejoice. I say, I love John here. You have nothing but what comes from heaven.

27. John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing, unless it has been given him from heaven."

The intimation of John here is that his ministry is from heaven.

28. "You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ', but, 'I have been sent before Him.'

29. "He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. And so this joy of mine has been made full.

30. "He must increase, but I must decrease."

Don't you love John here? What an amazing thing he says. "I am perfectly satisfied. My joy is filled full. I have seen the Bridegroom; and, as the friend of the Bridegroom, I am willing to rejoice in His presence."

The Pre-eminence of Christ (3:31-36)

My friend, can you love the Lord Jesus too much? Can you praise Him too much? John says, "He must increase; I must get out of the way. Now that He has come on the scene, He is the pre-eminent One. Never mind me; I am only the friend of the Bridegroom."

In those days, you remember, the friend of the bridegroom was the one who brought the bride to the bridegroom. Of course, we have changed that today. We have the father come and give the bride

away. But in that day, the friend of the bridegroom came and took the bride and brought her to the bridegroom.

"This my joy is filled full," John says. "I have seen the Bridegroom. My job is finished."

Whenever I think of this, I think of the wedding I had one time when the best man wanted to run the whole business. You know that sometimes these best men or sometimes the bride's mother (I wouldn't dare say that out loud) want to run the whole thing.

I always maintain that, when it comes to a wedding, it is the bride's day. Whatever she wants, she can have. If she wants the preacher to walk on his hands, then he's got to walk on his hands. Whatever the bride wants, that's her day. Well, this best man wanted to run the whole thing. He was telling the bride how it should happen, what she should do, what I should do and everything else.

So I said to him at the rehearsal, "Listen, fellow, this is not your wedding."

"Well," he said, "I am the best man."

"I don't care what you are," I said. "You just behave yourself and do what you are told. She's not going to marry you, so forget about it."

Well, we got through the rehearsal, and the next night the wedding went through very nicely. They always do, you know, even though the preacher is scared to death.

And then when it came to the standing in line where all the friends say their words to the bride and bridegroom and commend them and congratulate them, here was the best man right alongside of the bride. So I went through the crowd and pulled on his coat. He leaned back, and I whispered in his ear.

"Come out here," I said. "I want to say something to you." So I got him out of the line and got him out through the crowd.

"Now get out of here," I said.

He said, "But I'm the best man, Dr. Mitchell. This is what the best man does!"

I said, "Listen, your job is through. Get out of the way. You're not wanted any more."

See, that's what John says. "The bridegroom has come on the scene. As the friend of the bridegroom my joy is filled full. He must increase. I must decrease."

Do you know how to decrease by letting Him increase? The more He fills your vision, the more He is the object of our love and our worship and our devotion.

The more you get out of the way, the more you will want Him to be pre-eminent, to be Lord, to be Master.

John is the worshiper in love with the Lord Jesus, and nothing is going to interfere with that. In chapter one, the Pharisees tried to get John occupied with himself; and he would have none of it. In chapter three, his own disciples want him to be occupied with himself. He will have none of it.

Once John caught a glimpse of Him, everything else faded out of the picture.

My Christian friend, have you seen Him? Have you seen Him? Is He the object of your worship?

When you come to the Lord's table, remembering the pit from which you have been dug, remembering that terrible price He paid, the wonderful price He paid for you, can you honestly say, "Father, I want the Lord Jesus to be the perfect object of my love and my devotion, of my faith, of all that I am. He must increase. I must decrease. I want Him to be the center of my devotion, of my affection, of my worship." This ought to be your experience and mine, whatever failures or blessings we have had in the past.

But why should He be first? Why should He increase? Why should He be the center?

John here cites His heavenly origin. Whether it is John the disciple speaking here or John the Baptist, I am not going to discuss; suffice it to say that both

would recognize the wonderful fact of the pre-eminence of the Lord Jesus Christ. He's from heaven.

His heavenly origin (3:31)

31. "He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all."

John's ministry was limited to the earth. But our Lord's ministry was a heavenly ministry. Why? He came from heaven.

About 40 times in John's Gospel from here on, you have that He is from heaven, He was sent from heaven, He is going back to heaven, He is the heavenly one.

His heavenly testimony (3:32-34)

32. "What He has seen and heard, of that He bears witness; and no man receives His witness.

33. "He who has received His witness has set his seal to this, that God is true.

34. "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure."

This is His heavenly testimony!

Now, you and I can speak of heaven. You and I can speak the words He gives us to speak. He reveals to us by His Spirit through the Word the message He wants us to give to men. But here in John's Gospel, the Saviour has come.

He Himself is the center of the message, and everyone who believes that message concerning the Son has "set his seal to this, that God is true." As Romans 3:4 says, "Let God be found true, though every man be found a liar." The Word of God is true; and we set a seal to the fact that God is true and that, when the Lord Jesus spoke, it was God speaking. This is what John is writing about.

In John 5:19 our Lord could say (let me paraphrase), “The words are not mine; they’re my Father’s. What I see my Father do, that’s what I do.”

The same thing is found in John 8:28 and in John 14:8-10: “My words are not mine; they are my Father’s. The works I do are not mine; they are my Father’s. What I see the Father do, that is what the Son does.” He is speaking as God.

I can say that this is the Word of God that I preach; but He can say, “This is God speaking.”

That is why, when we come to the end of the chapter and read that “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who disbelieves the Son shall not see life,” we find that He is the center; He is the source of all life. And when He speaks, it is God who speaks. John is just a messenger. He is of the earth. He is restricted. But the Son is not. He is pre-eminent. So you have the heavenly witness. Chapter 7 of John goes more fully into that.

His heavenly authority (3:35-36)

35. “The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand.

36. “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who disbelieves the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

The Father loves the Son. You remember John 17:24, “Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world.” The Father loves the Son. In Matthew 3:17, when our Lord came to be baptized by John in Jordan, a voice from glory said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”

The Father loves the Son. The Father loves you because you love the Son. You and I have become the objects of the love of God. In John 16:23-28

you pick it up again. We have become the objects of the love of an eternal God because we have put our trust in His Son and because the Son is the center, the object of the Father's love.

The Father loves the Son and has put all things into His hands. You'll notice in John 3:31 that He "is above all." In verse 35 the Father "has given all things into His hand." Think of that! All authority is His. He is above all.

In Hebrews we find that He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. What does that mean? He has all authority over every bit of creation—the universe, the earth, man, angels, demons, principalities, powers, seraphim, cherubim. He has been given the place of authority.

No wonder in John 2 we have a taste of that. He made a whip and whipped them out of the temple.

"This is my Father's house. You have made it a house of merchandise, a den of robbers when it should be a house of prayer for all nations."

He has authority. He raises nations and puts them down. None can say to Him, "What do You do?" We have come to a place—can I say this?—we have come to a time that is possibly one of the most strategic, one of the most delicate times in the history of many nations when the Word of God is being pushed out, Christ has been dethroned, and men have been exalted.

I plead with you as God's people that you spend much time on your face before God, pleading with Him that His will may be accomplished in our nation—that it may be kept from the evils of atheism, of infidelity, of things that would dethrone the Son of God. And yet, remember that we are in a world that has no place for Him and that our ministry as Christians is to exalt the Person of Christ.

I plead with you not only to pray for your country, but to take the time to be able to say honestly before Him, "He must increase; I must decrease."

May this be the desire of our heart.

John 4

Christ, the Water of Life

Let me give you another wee summary.

In chapter 3 a religious leader received the marvelous, wonderful message of the new birth, the Lord revealing to him that unless a man was born from above, born again of the Spirit of God, he could neither see nor enter the Kingdom of God. The chapter ended with the pre-eminence of Christ, His heavenly origin, His Heavenly witness, and His heavenly authority. And then we are swung right into Samaria where the Lord deals with a sinful woman.

If you and I were preaching, if we were to go down to a gospel mission, for example, to reach the men of the street, we would preach on the new birth. Not so the Lord. You wouldn't expect me to go down to the mission and preach to these men on the Godhead, that God is Spirit and that they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth. We'd preach the new birth! Not the Lord.

What Nicodemus must learn is that he needs to be born again because God has no confidence in the flesh. The Samaritan woman did not need to be told not to have any confidence in the flesh. She had none already. What she needed was a revelation of God.

So when we come to this fourth chapter, we have a three-fold revelation in the passage. There is the revelation of the Father, there is the revelation of the Son, and there is the revelation of the woman.

Indeed, there are three missions in the chapter. There is the Lord's mission, the woman's mission, and our mission. It is a wonderful passage on soul winning. It is a wonderful passage on psychology, in case you didn't know it. It's a great passage, this fourth chapter of John; and I would suggest that those of you who are hungry to win souls for Christ spend some time in thinking of how the Lord dealt with this woman. The more I read this chapter the more I am amazed at the tenderness and the patience and the compassion of the Saviour as He deals with this dear woman who needs the Lord so badly.

Now in the first few verses, in the first nine verses to be exact, we have the discourse on the water of life.

The occasion: The need for water (4:1-8)

1. When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John

2. (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were),

3. He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee.

4. And He had to pass through Samaria.

5. So He came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

6. and Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

You will notice that our Lord left Judea and went to Galilee when He knew that the Pharisees were still cultivating the undercurrent of hatred and opposition they exhibited in chapter 2. He did not come back to Judea until just before He was crucified. So "he had to pass through Samaria."

The Jews customarily had no dealings with Samaritans. They felt superior to Samaritans be-

cause their blood was pure. The Samaritans were descendants of Jews who had married the Gentiles who resettled in Samaria during the reign of “the great and honorable Osnappar” (Ezra 4:10). The Samaritans were suffering with an inferiority complex in the presence of the Jews. They “loved” each other afar off.

But our Lord “had to pass through Samaria.” There is a sinful woman there, a woman hungry for reality—no doubt tired of her sin and needing a Saviour. The Lord had to pass through Samaria to meet her need, despite the fact that Jews as a rule went up the Jordan Valley into Perea and crossed over that way into Galilee. They were willing to take the longer route rather than go through Samaria because of the tenseness of the opposition one to the other between Jew and Samaritan.

I might add in connection with this that the Lord, looking down upon the earth, “had” to come to the earth because you are here, because I am here. We needed a Saviour. We needed a Lord. So He came because he loved us.

Now, you come down to the water of life discourse at verse seven.

7. There came a woman of Samaria to draw water.

And the Lord made the first move.

Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.”

And John adds in verse eight a very simple little thing.

8. For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

Where were His disciples when Jesus said this? Do you think the woman would have come to the well with 13 Jews around it? She would have gone back to Sychar. I take it this was in the middle of the day, at noon. This is not the time when women come to the well to get their water. They

generally come in the morning or they come in the evening.

This is a place where they come for gossip; this is a place where they meet to hear all the juicy things that are going on. But not this woman. She is an outcast.

We have seen this in Israel; we have seen it in Central America; we have seen it in other parts of the world where the common well is used, and you find the women gathered around it. Sometimes they come to wash their clothes; sometimes they get drinking water, but it is all the same old well. And they tell everything they know. It is a wonderful place for fellowship, I take it; but this woman is alone, and Jesus is alone. So John adds in here why He was alone. The disciples had gone to the town to get some food.

I've always been amused at this. If you were in a company of 13 and it was time to eat, how many would go to the store? Well, you would say, we need only one to go there. Oh, no. You need two. One to buy the food and one for fellowship and to help you carry it back. But the Lord got rid of all 12 of them.

"Well, you fellas all go," can't you hear Him say; and He "was sitting thus by the well." He is weary. He sat thus by the well, and the woman came.

Now she knew He was a Jew by the way He was dressed. And to her utter amazement He said, "Woman, give me to drink."

The topic of conversation: Water (4:9-14)

9. The Samaritan woman therefore said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

In other words, she is saying, "Why, what's the world coming to?"

We sing that song, “He Hath Broken Every Barrier Down.” Here the sex barrier was broken down. For a Jewish rabbi, a teacher, to speak to a woman was unheard of in the first place. And He broke down the national barrier—she was a Samaritan. And He broke down the sinful barrier—He was the Saviour. Did you ever think of it?

“Woman, give me a drink.” The Lord Jesus put Himself under obligation to this woman.

You who are soul winners, mark this, how the Lord dealt with this woman. He knew all about her. He knew she was a sinful woman, even by the very fact that she came at that time of the day so she wouldn’t have to meet the other women at the well. And, oh, the sweetness of it, the tenderness of it, when the Lord said simply, “Give me a drink.”

“You, a Jew, asking me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?” See, curiosity. His first step was to speak of the thing in which SHE was interested. This is a good soul-winning tactic. Don’t go to a sinner and knock his head off. Don’t pounce on him and say, “Are you saved?”

“Woman, give me a drink.” How sweet for the Lord to discuss the matter that was very close to her heart. She came to get water, so the Lord—just think of it—wants water.

“You ask a drink of ME?” she asks.

And note our Lord’s answer in verse 10.

10. Jesus answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.”

Now, you see He has her curiosity. “Woman, if you knew the gift of God, if you knew who was talking to you, you would have asked Him. He would give you living water.”

“Well, where do you have it?” she asked.

11. She said to Him, “Sir, You have nothing to draw with

and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water?"

"Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with. The well is deep. Where have you got that living water? I'd like to get some of that," she says.

12. "You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?"

"Are you greater than Jacob? Who are you, anyhow?" And here you can just see her mind. "This Jew puts himself under obligation to me and wants a drink of water—and he tells me, if I knew who he was, I would ask of him and he would give me living water and he's got no pot to draw with?"

"Say, where's your pot? Where are you going to get the living water? Who are you? Are you greater than Jacob who gave us the well and from here he watered his cattle, his livestock?"

13. Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again;

14. but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

15. The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty, nor come all the way here to draw."

You see, he already has this woman. Here she had come, day after day, alone to the well to get her water. It is quite a chore. You see, she had to carry her water back home.

"This stranger says to me," she muses, "that if I only knew who he was, he would give me the living water, that he who drinks of this water shall never thirst again. How well I know that. I come here every day for my water. It never satisfies me. I never have enough."

And, friend, may I suggest to you that the world has its wells of water which never satisfy your heart and never satisfy your soul. Outside, the world is running hither and yon trying everything under heaven, like a bee running from flower to flower, trying to get satisfied with honey.

“Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again.” So Monday, you go to a dance and Tuesday to a show, and Wednesday you have a party and Thursday you do something else. You go the regular round week after week, week after week, trying to be satisfied; and there is no satisfaction.

“**If I only had money,**” you say. If you had money, you wouldn’t be satisfied. In fact, you would be more dissatisfied than you are today.

“If I only had a place of honor,” you say. Even that wouldn’t satisfy you.

“If I had all the pleasure I want . . .” Still, you wouldn’t be satisfied.

“He who drinks of this water shall thirst again. But if you drink of the water I’ll give you, you’ll never thirst. It will be in you a well of water.”

You don’t find satisfaction outside or bring it on the inside.

“It will be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

“Sir, give me this water.”

Three revelations given (4:16-26) The revelation of the woman (4:16-19)

16. He said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.”

That’s the last He mentions water. It is never mentioned to her again. He is through with this water business. He already has her now. He lays bare her heart with all its sin and shame.

But this is not the only time He refers to water in His ministry. In John 7:37-39 He will say, “If

any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed on him were to receive."

"Sir, give me this water that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw."

Jesus said, "Go and call your husband."

And here we have the revelation of the woman. Notice the change. The woman had answered before, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with." That's respect. And "Sir, give me this water." But now, when He says in verse 16, "Go and call your husband," she's immediately a changed woman.

17. The woman answered and said, "I have no husband."

"I have no husband. Why bring that matter up? Why bring that into the question? What's up about that? I haven't any husband." She didn't say "Sir" this time. You can just see her rising up. "I haven't any husband. Why talk about that?"

And the Lord Jesus said, "You old sinner!" Oh? Is that what He said? "Lady, you're an awful woman, an AWFUL woman." Did He? That would have made her angry. She would have answered, "I'm as good as you are."

He said to her, and I can just hear Him say this:

17. Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband';

18. for you have had five husbands; and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly."

"You're right. But, you know, you've already had five husbands, and the fellow you're now living with is not your husband. In that thou sayest truly."

19. The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a

prophet.”

“Sir, I perceive you’re a prophet,” she says out loud, but inside she is saying, “How did this Jew know about that? What have I got myself into this morning?”

There can be no reception of living water until this question is settled.

“Go and call your husband.”

“I haven’t any.”

And she is exposed. She stands before her judge, for He is the Judge (John’s next chapter tells us that); she stands before Him with her heart laid bare, her whole life an open book. But she didn’t run away. If He had been hard, if He had accused her of sin, she might have said, “Mind your own business,” and picked up her pot and gone away without her water. She hasn’t drawn her water yet. In fact, she leaves her pot empty afterwards when she goes to speak to the men of the town. I say she stood with her heart bare before Him, and she didn’t run away.

I am reminded, by the way, of three other confessions. Job in Job 42:5-6 said, “I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees Thee. Therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.” And there is no restoration for Job until you have his confession.

The same thing is true in Isaiah 6:5. The great prophet, who as a courtier prophesied in the reign of four kings, said, when he saw the Lord, “Woe is me, for I am ruined.” And on that confession the angel came and touched his lips and cleansed him of his sin.

Dear Peter in Luke 5:8 said, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

Whether it be Job or Isaiah or Peter—or you—the revelation of God always brings the revelation of yourself. We can have no appreciation of all that God is until we see ourselves as God sees us.

Why is it today that so many of us have no appreciation of the Saviour? Because we have never seen ourselves as God sees us. We are not willing, we are NOT willing to declare that there is no good thing in us. We are like Nicodemus whom Christ had to inform that everything he did—I don't care what it was—was not pleasing to God. He had to be born again.

The revelation of the Father (4:20-24)

And this dear woman—she stands before Christ. She knew her condition. When the Lord said, “Here's your heart; here's your life,” she stood there.

19. The woman said to Him, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.

20. “Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.”

“But I want reality. What can a person do? Where can I really worship God? We say it must be in this mountain. You Jews say it must be in Jerusalem. Where in the world can an old sinner go?”

The Lord gave an amazing revelation then of the Father when he said,

21. Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father.

22. “You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know; for salvation is from the Jews.

23. “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.

24. “God is spirit; and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Here is the revelation of God as Spirit and as Father to a poor Samaritan woman—not to Nicodemus, but to this poor woman. Having had a revelation of her own heart, she receives the revelation of God. Before there can be cleansing or, should I say, before there can be cleansing and reality of life, there must be a recognition that we're sinful. She's recognized that question.

Neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall men worship the Father. Places disappear. How wonderful! Places disappear before the God of all grace. It's not a question of place. It is not a question of ceremonies. It is not a question of ordinances.

The main thing is, "You're to worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is looking for reality, not place, not outward observances." He looks right down into the heart, and He wants us to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

I say, what a marvelous thing. God gives to this woman the revelation of the Father—that God is Spirit.

You remember in the Epistle of John we have a three-fold revelation of God—that God is light, that God is righteous, that God is love. In Hebrews 12:29, "God is a consuming fire." But here, in the revelation to this woman, He is "Father."

Now you don't find this in the Old Testament. Here is a new revelation—that God is the Father. And I care not how far down in sin a man goes—if he will turn and accept the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, he comes into vital relationship with God the Father and hence can worship Him in spirit and in truth. And God seeks such to worship Him. He is not seeking servants. He is not seeking for people to work. We are not saved to serve. He is looking for worshipers.

Service is the outflow of what worship is. In other words, worship is the important thing. And

when you and I really learn to worship Him, there will flow from us an appropriate service.

Now I am well aware of the fact today that in most Christian churches throughout the land service is made a great deal of. You can't even read your newspapers without their pressing this question of service. I want to say this to you—as far as I can read my Bible—that the first important thing for a man to do is to accept the Saviour; the next is to worship.

The revelation of the Son (4:25-26)

And now she is kind of troubled. She is still in a fog. "I want this thing this man is talking about," she says to herself. "I want this living water. I want to worship the Father. But how?"

25. The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us."

26. Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."

This is the revelation of the Son. You can just see the movement in this woman's experience. You can just see her thinking and see how the Lord in His patience, in His tenderness, in His love, is just leading her right along. What a wonderful picture of the Saviour! There is no judging of the woman. He doesn't damn her. He doesn't condemn her. He doesn't tell her to go away from Him, that she would defile Him. He just leads her along.

She came to the well, this sinful woman, for natural water. But now she leaves her water pot and goes into the city and says to the men, "Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?" She herself becomes the pot filled with living water.

My friend, does this apply to you? Have you longed for reality? Have you longed to say, "I know

where I am. I know my relationship to my Father and to my Saviour, but I would like to have in my daily walk and conversation this living water.”

Go through this passage and examine the experience of this woman and the questions that are raised in her heart and mind. Then watch the Lord meet the need. Might I say, it is a wonderful picture. Our Lord “had” to go through Samaria. There’s a woman there, a woman who’s hungry for reality. She doesn’t yet know what she needs or what she wants, but she knows that her life is empty. Sin has never satisfied her. She has drunk and drunk and drunk of that water and has never been satisfied.

And I say to you, you can try everything that man offers, everything the world offers, everything that religion offers, and never be satisfied. For, although this woman was a sinful woman, she knew something about the Old Testament. She knew something about the coming of the Messiah. She knew about the worship they had on the mountain; but she was never satisfied.

If you want living water, if you want perfect satisfaction, if you want peace and forgiveness for the sins that so easily beset you, there is only—absolutely only—one place to find it, and you’ll find it in a Person. As we let Him lay bare our hearts and reveal the Father to us, we are letting Him prepare us for the inflow—and outflow—of living water to us and through us. Knowing who He is (verse 10) is a requisite for having the living water.

He has given us the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit that we might know Him, and it is His purpose that we know Him in Spirit and in truth. As we know the Father and the Son, our lives will flourish and become fruitful; and we will be those fitted to carry the water of life to others.

For, outside in the world, there are tens of thousands of unsatisfied people. They have tried every-

thing. Can't we manifest something of the spirit of our Lord—that patience, that tenderness, that sweetness of approaching others and talking about something in which they are interested? Can't we meet them on their own ground and then from there bring them into the wonders of the glorious gospel of Christ?

Never judge them or condemn them because of their sinful lives. Point them to a Saviour who can really satisfy; for He said, "If you drink of the water that I'll give you, you'll never thirst. It will be in you a well of water springing up to eternal life."

My, what a Saviour we have. What a Lord we have. What a lesson—the revelation of the woman, the revelation of the Father, the revelation of the Son. May God open your eyes and my eyes to the glories and the beauties of our Saviour, that we may serve Him in Spirit and in truth.

The next portion of this chapter gives us a revelation of three missions from verse 27 down through verse 42. First of all, we shall take up the woman's mission.

Three missions given (4:27-42)

The mission of the woman (4:27-30, 39-42)

27. And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He had been speaking with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek? or, "Why do You speak with her?"

They were silent. They didn't know what to make of it.

28. So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city, and said to the men,

29. "Come, see a man who told me all things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?"

30. They went out of the city, and were coming to Him.

Let's move down to verse 39.

39. And from that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all the things that I have done."

40. So when the Samaritans came to Him, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days.

41. And many more believed because of His word;

42. and they were saying to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world."

Notice that this woman, brought to the Saviour by His own word and by the revelation of Himself, immediately became a missionary, a testimony for Him. I have no record here that she ever had a chance to fill her waterpot. She left it empty and went to the city.

As I mentioned before, she herself became the waterpot, filled with living water. There was nothing for her to do but to go back to the city and tell the people the good news.

And she said, "Is not this the Christ? Come see a man who told me all the things that I have ever done."

One is reminded of John in Revelation 2 where he rebukes the Ephesian church because it left that first love, that fervency of love that a new believer often has in seeking to reach friends with the Gospel of Christ.

She is so filled with the joy of salvation, so filled with the joy of living water, that she says in effect, "I've got to pass this on to somebody else."

May the Lord restore you and me to that first love, that fervency of love for Christ Himself. She didn't argue about it. Hers was a very simple testimony: "Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done. This is not the Christ, is it?"

I say there was no argument. There was no long story—just a wonderful, simple statement.

My friend, listen. I believe that there are more people saved through the simple testimony of newborn babes in Christ than all the flowery sermons preachers give. It is not a question of intellectual persuasion or a scholastic setting forth of truth. There was no splitting of hairs. It was just a simple announcement: "I have found a man who told me all the things that I have done. Is not this the Christ?"

I say, I wish that the Lord would make it so precious to you and to me that it will be our daily and our weekly delight to be able to speak to others, not to argue with them or try to confound them by our knowledge of theology but to give them a simple blessed statement of Jesus Christ as the Saviour. And I read the fruitage of that. The day she met the Saviour, she became a witness; and many believed on Him because of her word.

You know, I was struck with one thing. There are no miracles here. He didn't perform any miracles. In chapter 2, you remember, after He had cleansed the temple, the Jews said, "Where do you get your authority for cleansing this temple."

And He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." And the chapter ends (John 2:23-24) with "many believed in His name, beholding His signs which He was doing. But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them."

Theirs was a persuasion, not of love for Him, but of faith based on the spectacular—a very, very shallow faith. But not here. There are no miracles here. There are no signs. He didn't do some supernatural thing. They came to him on the testimony of a woman.

In chapters 2 and 3 you have Him in Judea. You have Him in Jerusalem. You have Him dealing with the Jews, performing miracles, presenting the credentials of His Messiahship, the credentials of His Saviourhood, the credentials of His person. And they didn't believe on Him.

He comes down to the hated Samaritans, the despised Samaritans, and without even a miracle they believe the Word of God. My friend, there is nothing that delights the heart of God more than to have people just believe His Word.

Quite often people have said to me, "Why, Mr. Mitchell, if God would ever perform a miracle, I'd believe."

No, you wouldn't. No, you wouldn't.

One day, in Luke 16, the Lord told the story of Lazarus the beggar who besought Abraham to send someone from the dead so his brothers would repent. And the answer comes. They will not be persuaded "if someone rises from the dead" (verse 31).

The Lord is saying, "If you're not attracted to My person, you'll not believe the things I do."

By the way, I have a very precious verse from the Psalms, if I might give it to you here. Psalm 68:11 (my version): "The women who proclaim the good tidings are a great host."

I couldn't help but give you that verse, ladies. God uses the poor Samaritan woman; and He has such fruitage through her testimony that His heart, I am sure, was filled with joy. She now, having met the Saviour, had something to live for. What was her mission? Telling her friends and neighbors of the Saviour.

Is that your mission?

Now we come to the second mission.

The mission of the Saviour (4:31-34)

31. In the meanwhile the disciples were requesting Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat."

32. But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about."

33. The disciples therefore were saying to one another, "No one brought him anything to eat, did he?"

34. Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him

who sent Me, and to accomplish His work."

Administering grace was His meat. Reaching hungry hearts and hungry souls was meat and drink to Him; for, when one is filled with a great yearning to do the Father's will and to reach hearts for Him, he finds this gives much greater satisfaction than having a meal. Have you experienced that? You've forgotten the whole business of meeting physical needs in your reveling in the presence of God because you have been used of the Lord in leading some souls to Him. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me."

And then we see the ignorance of the disciples, their lack of knowledge. We thought that of the woman, when the Lord talked to her about living water.

She said, "Where have you got it? The well is deep. You've got no pot to draw with. Where have you got this living water?" She was mystified by His statement. Likewise, the disciples here.

"Has anybody given Him something to eat? Why, when we left Him, He was hungry. He's just been sitting on this well talking to this woman. Now we've brought food for Him and He ignores it. 'Master, come on and eat.'"

But He says, "I have food to eat that you do not know about. . . . My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work."

I said earlier that this woman had a project of reaching her friends and neighbors with her testimony. The Lord Himself came to earth here on a project. "My Father sent me on a mission. My meat, my joy, my satisfaction is not here in the material. My satisfaction is to finish the job my Father has given me to do."

You know it is possible for people to be very, very busy and to have no fruit—or very little fruit. And someone has well said, "If you have a project, get busy and perform it."

Our Lord left the glory and came down here, and He had a great mission; and that mission primarily was to do the will of His Father. His Father's will for Him was winning men to God, as in John 3:17. He didn't come "to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through Him."

These Samaritan men said of the Lord Jesus, when they heard Him for themselves, "This One is indeed the Saviour of the world" (John 4:42).

And John wrote in his first epistle (1 John 4:14) that "the Father has sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." This was His project; this was His mission; and His great delight was to perform that mission.

Read John 5:30, "I do not seek My own will, but the will Him who sent me." And that is repeated again in John 6:38. It is spoken again in John 8:29, when He said, "I always do the things that are pleasing to Him."

In other words, as I have said so often here, the driving force in the life of our Saviour was the will of His Father; and His mission was to become the Saviour of sinners, the Saviour of all men.

And it is this sort of thing that the people of His day could never understand, especially those in Israel, in Judea and even in Galilee. He came for a purpose—to do His Father's will. He came to seek and to save that which was lost.

No wonder the Pharisees couldn't understand Him. In Luke 5:30 they criticize: "Why do You eat and drink with tax-gatherers and sinners?" In Luke 15:2 they murmur, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

In Luke 5:32 He answers and says, "I have not come to call righteous men but sinners to repentance." And as Paul could write, "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15).

If I may make it personal, He came into the

world, my friend, to save you and He came into the world to save me.

The person who has never really, positively received Christ as Saviour has no relationship with Him. Jesus Christ came for the express purpose of dying and rising again to save us. This was His purpose, and He could say, "My meat (my great delight) . . . I am satisfied . . . to do the will of my Father." Note His complete satisfaction with this.

No wonder in John 17:4-5 He could say, "I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do. And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I ever had with Thee before the world was."

He says, "I have finished the work."

He says, "My meat, my delight, my sufficiency is in doing the will of my Father."

My Christian friend, may I say to you that we, as members of the body of Christ, redeemed by His precious blood, have been left down here on earth for a purpose. We've been sent on a mission.

"As Thou didst send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world." And because the job is great and because the enemy is powerful, "I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth" (John 17:18-19).

Oh, I wonder, do you have a project? Do you have a mission? If you love the Saviour, you have a mission; and I think it is time we got busy on our mission.

This woman—the moment she came into a real relationship with the Saviour—couldn't rest until she went right back to her city. Just like dear Andrew said to Simon, "We have found Him." And dear Philip said to Nathanael, "We have found Him." And the woman said, "We have found Him."

Have you?

And the more the Saviour means to you and to me, the more we fall in love with Him, the more

we'll be able to say, "My meat, my great desire, my joy is filled full."

How?

"Doing the will of My Father." This should be paramount in the life of every believer.

As Carey of India said, "My job as a missionary is to tell people about the Saviour. I just cobble shoes to pay the way."

I don't know what your job is. That's neither here nor there. Maybe God gave you that job to pay the way. But, primarily, your job from the moment you accepted the Saviour and came into relationship with Him, your great purpose in life is to do the will of your Father.

What is the will of your Father? "That none should perish, but that all should come to repentance." He uses you and He uses me—all of us—for this job.

Which leads me to the third mission:

The mission of the believer (4:35-38)

35. "Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.

36. "Already he who reaps is receiving wages, and is gathering fruit for life eternal; that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.

37. "For in this case the saying is true, 'One sows, and another reaps.'

38. "I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

One would be very, very tempted to spend some time on this portion of scripture. Each believer is a member of the body of Christ, and we have a job to function in that body for edification of the body and for the increase of the body in love. One sows; another reaps; but we all rejoice together.

I want you to mark how the Spirit of God rules out any room for envy or for jealousy or for egotism. You remember in 1 Corinthians 3:6-7 where Paul says, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth."

We don't rejoice in the tool that is used. We don't rejoice in the sickle. It is the wheat we desire. We don't glory in the pen that writes the letter. We are not to glory in ourselves because we are just the tools, the channels that God uses.

And now He says, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest" (John 4:35).

I take it from the context that, when the woman went back to the city of Sychar, out came the men. Oh, I wouldn't be surprised if there were women there, too. Here came some of the people from Sychar out to the well; and, as they were coming up the road to the well, the Lord said, "You say there are four months and then comes the harvest? I say, look, the harvest is already here. The field is white unto harvest."

The trouble is not that there is a harvest. The trouble is there are no reapers. Your sickles are dull.

May I tell you, my friend, that today, after we have had the Word of God for 1900 and some years, the field is still white unto harvest.

Our Lord could say in Matthew 9:38, "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest," for I read he had compassion on the multitudes. They were as sheep having no shepherd. Pray ye, pray ye the Lord of the harvest to thrust forth laborers into His harvest. The harvest is here. The reapers are few.

If I were to ask you now how many you have reaped this year, how many souls you have witnessed to concerning the Saviour, what could you

say? Have you had a harvest? Have you sown the seed?

Now, remember, all do not harvest. Some plow the field. Some sow the grain. Others have to reap the harvest. But they all share in the harvest, and they all rejoice in the fruitage. Some men have a propensity for personal work. Others don't. Others have the joy of sowing the seed of the Word of God, scattering the seed, giving a testimony by life as well as by word. Others rejoice in teaching the Word in homes, in classes, in churches. But every one of us has a part in this thing. You either sow or you plow or you harrow or you reap. But I tell you today that the harvest is white.

The thing that amazed me during a trip I took to Southeast Asia was the great hunger in the hearts of the Asian evangelists who one after the other stood up and pleaded for help for their country. One from Hong Kong stood up and said, "My brethren, my brethren," with tears running down his cheeks, "remember there are more than 700,000,000 Chinese. My people need the Gospel!"

And the next hour, a man from India stood up and said, "May I remind you, gentlemen, that there are 450,000,000 in India; and this year there will be thousands who pass over to eternity without ever hearing the Gospel of Christ." His heart was broken as he spoke about India. And so on down the line. These men had a vision. They saw the fields white unto harvest, but no harvesters, no laborers.

Some of us used to have a sickle. When you were first saved, you remember how sweet it was to bear testimony of how the Lord used your sickle and how you brought in some harvest to the Lord. And then you put the sickle to one side, and it has become dull and rusty. We haven't kept in the Word of God; we haven't kept our fellowship with Him. In some way we've lost the urge, the desire to reach men and women for Christ.

I'm not saying you won't be rebuffed. In every city he went to, the Apostle Paul was rebuffed and persecuted; and he could say, "I have no abiding place."

But certain ones believed. Very few, in fact, believed. Even our Saviour, in three-and-a-half years of presenting Himself with His credentials—how many followed the Lord? In John 6:53 He said, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood" (unless you are joined to Me), you have no life."

They said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" (John 6:60). And from that time forth many of His disciples walked no more with Him.

He said to the twelve, "Are you going to go, too?"

Peter said, "Lord, where can we go? You alone have the words of eternal life."

I say the harvest is plenteous; laborers are so few. Pray ye the Lord of the harvest.

You say, "Mr. Mitchell, I can't go and I haven't much to give."

Can you pray? Can you pray?

"But I don't even know how to pray."

All right, you read Romans chapter 8, verses 26 and 27, where Paul says, "We do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words." He can do the praying, even with groanings that cannot be uttered. It is not a question of "we can't pray." The question is we don't give ourselves to God for the Spirit of God to pray.

We don't take the time. We dash into His presence and dash out again. We know so little of waiting on the Lord.

I firmly believe that if God were to put in any church two dozen people who would give themselves to intercession for lost souls and two dozen believers who would really be on fire for soul-winning, I'm telling you, you and I would not begin to estimate what God would do in the midst.

If only we would stop playing Christianity and be like this dear little Samaritan woman. Simple. She's not profound. She's not a teacher. She doesn't know very much. In fact, she's ignorant.

But she knew one thing: "Come, see a man." They came out and a great many more came and said, "We believe because we have seen Him ourselves and heard him."

You and I have a job to do, whether we harrow, whether we plow, whether we sow, or whether we reap. We each one have a responsibility of reaching our generation for Christ.

Let's look at just one more thing in the chapter—just to touch on it to finish the chapter.

The second sign in Galilee (4:43-54)

43. And after the two days He went forth from there into Galilee.

He was two days among the Samaritans, teaching them, revealing to them Himself and His purpose; and, as I said earlier and I repeat it, the amazing thing that must have rejoiced His heart is there was no need to perform any miracle because they saw Him themselves and they believed His word. As our Lord could say in John chapter 20 to Thomas, "You're blessed, Thomas, because you've seen and believed. But more blessed are those who have not seen, yet have believed."

44. For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country.

I take it that there he meant Nazareth, because the next verse says that when He was come into Galilee, the Galileans received Him.

I think there are five times in the Gospels where the Lord speaks of his own country, and each time he had reference to Nazareth. You remember He

could say in Mark 6:5, "And He could do no miracle there," because of their unbelief.

It was in Nazareth in Luke 4:29 where they tried to throw Him over a cliff because they were so mad at Him and His message. There was no place in their hearts for our Saviour.

They likely said, "We know who you are. You're the son of Joseph. You're the son of Mary. We know your brothers. We know all about you. Who do you think you are?" This was Nazareth.

45. So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they themselves also went to the feast.

46. He came therefore again to Cana of Galilee where he had made the water wine. And there was a certain royal official, whose son was sick at Capernaum.

Now you note this town of Capernaum.

47. When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him, and was requesting Him to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death.

48. Jesus therefore said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe."

He did not say that in Samaria; this is to the Jews. In 1 Corinthians 1:22-24, we have, "Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to the Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

The Jews required a sign. He said, "You won't believe unless you see signs."

49. The royal official said to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies."

A man's need is his plea. "I've got no time to

argue this question,” he says. “Sir, come down before my child dies. I don’t care about signs. I don’t care about these things. Please, sir, come down!”

I say his need was his plea.

Did you ever meet the Saviour with those words? And didn’t you learn that He has never yet turned down a needy heart, a pleading heart?

“Sir, come down before my child dies.”

50. Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your son lives.”

And the fever was immediately stopped.

I am not going into the picture, but to me it was a rather remarkable thing how the Lord deals with people. Did you ever notice in chapter 1 how He dealt with fishermen? In chapter three He dealt with a leading rabbi of Israel, a Pharisee. In chapter four He deals with a Samaritan woman and with a nobleman.

You know, the Lord deals with all the strata of society. And when He comes to Capernaum, may I remind you of something? It was at Capernaum that the Lord performed three tremendous miracles. It was at Capernaum that He healed the centurion’s son or servant; and this centurion was a Gentile, a Roman soldier. It was at Capernaum where He raised from the dead the daughter of Jairus, a leader of the synagogue, a rabbi more than likely. And now you have a nobleman and his son—three remarkable miracles at Capernaum.

And remember what the Lord said? “And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You shall descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day” (Matthew 11:23-24). In other words, if the works that were done in Capernaum had been done in Sodom and Gomorrah, they would have repented.

Capernaum was His home in the three-and-a-half years of His ministry. There He performed and

revealed so many signs of His Messiahship and of His Deity; and yet they spurned Him.

May I just close with this? The Lord is wonderful in the kinds of people He can reach, whether it be commercial fishermen or whether it be a leading philosopher and teacher or whether it be a despised and outcast Samaritan woman or whether it be the son of a nobleman. It makes no difference who you are or what you are. If you have a real need, the Lord will meet that need.

And may I suggest something else?

Sometimes the Lord causes you to have a need in order for you to reach out to Him. This nobleman would not have been reaching for the Saviour if he hadn't had a sick son. Did you ever think of it?

Jairus, the rabbi, the leading rabbi in the synagogue, wouldn't have sought Jesus if his daughter hadn't died. Sometimes the Lord uses afflictions and sorrows to bring us to Himself.

It was a blessing for the nobleman that his son was sick, because through that son he met the Lord Jesus. And I read that his whole house believed. I say what a wonderful thing to take the various afflictions of life and find in them God's purpose to bring you closer to Himself. I say this man's need so possessed him that he didn't care about signs or wonders.

"Sir, come down!"

Do you have a need? Do you have a problem? Do you have an affliction? Are you in sorrow?

Can you say with the writer of old that "in faithfulness Thou hast afflicted me" (Psalm 119:75)? What for? To draw us closer to Himself. The great desire of the heart of God is to bring us close to Himself.

So, then, may I repeat three things that should be true of you every day for the rest of your life? You are, first, to worship, to be a devoted worshiper.

Then you have a mission—to do your Father's will, and your Father's will is that men should not perish. You are to cooperate with God and bring to them the good news of the Saviour.

Third, your afflictions can be used by God to bring you, your friends, and your family into a deeper relationship and fellowship with Himself.

Remember that.

Find courage and strength for yourself and others in that.

May the Lord take these few words and make them real to your heart and to my heart.

John 5

Christ, the Judge

I would like to take a wee look ahead and then discuss with you the tremendous claims of the Saviour as they are portrayed before us in these few chapters—5, 6, 7, and 8.

In this Gospel, we have John the Apostle presenting seven great signs to reveal the truth of Isaiah 40:9, "Behold your God." In 1 John 1:1-3 this same writer writes, "What we have seen we proclaim to you." In other words, "We beheld Him."

Three of these signs have to do with creation—turning water into wine, chapter 2; feeding the thousands, chapter 6; walking on the water, chapter 6. Three of these signs have to do with disease—healing the nobleman's son, chapter 4; healing the man sick for 38 years, chapter 5; opening the eyes of a man born blind, chapter 9. Note, we do not read of lepers being cleansed nor of our Lord casting out demons. One sign in chapter 11 is the raising of Lazarus from the dead. There is one more miracle after His resurrection in chapter 21.

The book could be outlined as Christ teaching individuals, chapters 1-4; Christ teaching the multitudes, chapters 5-12; Christ teaching the disciples, chapters 13-17; His betrayal and death, chapters 18-19; His resurrection, chapter 20; His final words to His disciples, chapter 21.

In the first chapter of this Gospel we have the Lord dealing with fishermen, in chapter 2 with His mother and the leaders of Israel, with Nicodemus

in chapter 3, with the Samaritan sinful woman and a nobleman's son in chapter 4. The Lord, and let me make a special point of repeating this, can reach every strata of society—whether fisherman or rabbi or ruler of the synagogue, outcast, Samaritan woman or nobleman—because the message of the Gospel of the Saviour of men is for everyone.

Now, when you come to chapters 5 through 8, you have the very heart of the Gospel through John; and here He begins to deal with the multitudes. Here you have His many claims, as John begins to press this very fact that Jesus is indeed God.

Who is this Jesus who was asking men to put their trust in Him? Is He a real Saviour? Is He who He claimed to be? Is He God manifest in the flesh? Does He have all authority? Does He have all power? Can He save sinners? Can He give life eternal? Can He free us from judgment? Can He raise us from the dead? These are the issues, and it starts in chapter 5 with the healing of a man sick for 38 years.

When you come to chapter 6, He manifests Himself as the Creator—when He feeds 5,000 with five loaves and two fish; when He walks on the water and stills the storm; when He declares that the life He gives is eternal life, satisfying life. It is indwelling life. All you need of life is in Him.

When you come to chapter 7, He is the Heavenly One. He came from heaven. His message is from heaven. He is going back to heaven. He is going to send the Spirit of God from heaven.

When you come to chapter 8, He is the Light of the World. He is the One who has authority over death. He can deliver you from death and deliver you from sin. He is the sinless one. He is El Shaddai, Abraham's God. He is the Eternal One.

It is at this point that His hearers realize that they must make a decision. They've either got to

fall down in worship or they've got to kill Him. They pick up stones.

This is the crux of the whole situation. Either Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is worthy of your trust and worthy of your worship and worthy of your praise or He ought to be taken out and stoned.

In chapter 9, He opens the eyes of a man born blind. In chapter 10, He's the Good Shepherd. In chapter 11, He raises Lazarus from the dead. In chapter 12, He's the center of attraction. In chapter 13, He is the Advocate. In Chapter 14, He's the Coming One.

In chapter 15, He is the Vine. In chapter 16, He is the Pre-eminent One. In chapter 17, He is our High Priest. In 18 and 19, He is taken and crucified.

In 20, He is raised from the dead. In 21, we have some of His final words to His disciples.

So I say we are coming to possibly one of the greatest passages in the Word of God—chapters 5 to 8 of the Gospel of John. I'd like to urge you to read it and reread it and reread it.

And for your further information, I would like you to read the book of Exodus, chapters 15, 16, and 17.

Chapter 15 of Exodus is comparable to chapter five of John, chapter 16 to chapter six, and chapter 17 to chapter seven. Chapter eight has to do with Him as the Great Light.

In Exodus, you remember, God had a pillar of fire by night to guide them and to light their way.

Now the first part of chapter 5 starts with a miracle, and then you have a discourse.

In chapter 6, John starts with a miracle and ends with a discourse.

In chapter 8, He starts with a moral issue and ends in chapter 9 with a physical issue, for chapter 9 is the illustration of the truth given to us in chapter 8.

I'm just giving you a little survey of this. I want to whet your appetites to read your Bible.

The Third Sign: He is Jehovah-Rapha (5:1-16)

1. After these things there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

2. Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes (porches).

3. In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, withered, waiting for the moving of the waters.

4. For an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.

5. And a certain man was there, who had been thirty-eight years in his sickness.

Along came Jesus, and He did an unusual thing. In His first miracle in chapter 2, His mother said, "They have no wine." In chapter 4, the second miracle, a nobleman came and asked Him to heal his son. In this third miracle no one asks anything of the Lord. Of His own volition He comes to the pool of Bethesda.

6. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, "Do you wish to get well?"

7. The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me."

8. Jesus said to him, "Arise, take up your pallet, and walk."

9. And immediately the man became well, and took up his pallet, and began to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day.

Here we have the revelation of Jesus Christ as Jehovah Raffa (you find that in Exodus 15:26,

and it means "I, the Lord, am your healer").

You remember the account. The people of Israel had come out of Egypt and had crossed the Red Sea. They had taken a three-day journey into the wilderness and had found no water. When you take a lot of people three days without water, you've got a problem. So they murmured. They were wishing they were back in Egypt. And then, when they did come to water, it was very bitter. They called it "Marah," bitter.

And the Lord said to Moses, "Take a tree and throw it in, and the water will be sweetened." So the waters were healed of their bitterness, and God revealed Himself to them as Jehovah Raffa. And then He said, "If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the LORD, am your healer." And remember, they are going to spend 40 years in the wilderness with no corner drug stores, no drugs, no vitamins, no doctors, no nurses, not anything.

You say, "But what are they going to eat?"

Well, the Lord gave them a balanced diet. All the vitamins and all the minerals that the body needed were in the manna. But what I am after is this. At an open pool in Exodus 15, God revealed Himself as Jehovah Raffa, "I, the LORD, am your healer." Here in John 5 the last revelation of God as Jehovah Raffa comes at an open pool. It is rather strange, is it not? It starts with a pool and ends with a pool. And around this pool in Bethesda is a great multitude, lying on five porches.

When Mrs. Mitchell and I were in Jerusalem, we went to the Pool of Bethesda. You see, a great many of the critics of the Bible have said that this story could not be true because there was no pool in Jerusalem that had five porches and was big enough for a multitude of sick people. The archae-

ologists are still excavating there; and they are way, way down through many layers and through a couple of thousand years, you know. And they have gotten down to the Pool of Bethesda. They have found the five porches. And one of the folk showed us a plan of what they have found and what they expect to find. I learned that at that time they hadn't yet uncovered one third of the place that was called the "Pool of Bethesda." So there would be plenty of room for a great crowd of sick people. Brother, you can still stay by your Bible!

Now, the Lord came; and I'm going to ask you one or two questions, if I may.

When He came, here was a crowd of sick people; and they were all waiting to get into the pool. Now it says that the first one that got in was made whole. But here's a man who has nobody to help him. His friends and his family have given him up in despair, and he is left alone to die. For 38 years he has lain there. For 38 years he hasn't been in the temple—38 years he has lain in helplessness, for 38 years experiencing the fruitage of sin.

God never intended at Creation that man would have to put up with sickness and weakness and disease and affliction. This was not His purpose. These things are the fruit of sin in the human race; and, when you and I are born into Adam's race, we are born with the seed of death in us. Thank God, the day is coming when our Saviour will return; and we will have bodies that will know nothing about disease or frailty or affliction or sorrow or suffering.

But the Lord came and found this man. He said to him, "Do you want to be made whole?"

And the fellow said, "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but while I am coming, another steps down before me."

Jesus said, "Arise, take up your pallet, and walk." And the same day was the sabbath.

My question is this: Why didn't Jesus heal the whole crowd? I'd like to put you on the spot, my friend. Wouldn't you like to see people healed? When you go down to the hospitals and see the patients, don't you wish you could just heal every one of them? Or are you different from me? I go in, and sometimes I feel so helpless. The dear saints of God and others are suffering so. It's true we pray, and the Lord wonderfully answers prayer. We thank God for that and for His faithfulness in raising up people. But don't you just wish you could touch every one of them?

And if you had been here at this pool, how many would you have healed? All of them? Would you have healed them all?

You mean to tell me you've got more compassion than the Lord Jesus? He healed only one! You would have healed them all and He didn't? I repeat the question. Do you have more compassion than the Lord? Then why did He heal just one? That was because there was only one who had given up hope of getting into the pool. All of them were still hoping to get in. They had their friends, they had their families, they had their different ones to help them. But this man said, "Sir, I have no one. I've given up hope."

Jesus said, "Take up your bed and walk." And when He said that, He started an opposition that never ended until He was nailed to the cross. I want you to mark this. There was something started in chapter 5 that you do not have preceding this. You have an opposition, a hatred, a desire that will never, never be satisfied until Jesus is put out of the way. He deliberately healed this man on the Sabbath day. And this leads me to my next question.

Why didn't the Lord wait until the next day? The fellow would still be there, wouldn't he?

Or why didn't the Lord just will him well and pass on by without all this fuss? That's what He

did in chapter 2 when His mother said, "They have no wine." The Lord said, "Fill the pots to the brim with water." He just willed it, and it became wine.

And He said to the nobleman, "Go home. Your son is made whole." He didn't even go down to see him.

Why then did He come to this fellow on the Sabbath day and say, "Take up your bed and walk"? He knew that Jeremiah 17:21 says, "Take heed for yourselves, and do not carry any load on the Sabbath day." And why didn't He have him leave his bed behind? Perhaps, because if he had left his bed, he might have thought he was coming back to it.

"Now it was the Sabbath on that day." What is the Sabbath? The Sabbath is a day of rest. It was because Israel had broken the Sabbath that the judgments of God came upon it. And one of the great things that the prophets went after Israel on is the question of the Sabbath. The people had defiled His Sabbath.

Then along came Jesus and said, "Take up your bed and walk." And the same day was the Sabbath.

Now mark the result.

10. Therefore the Jews were saying to him who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet."

11. But he answered them, "He who made me well was the one who said to me, 'Take up your pallet and walk.'"

12. They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your pallet, and walk?'"

13. But he who was healed did not know who it was; for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place.

14. Afterward Jesus found him in the temple . . .

Rather precious, is it not? The moment the man is healed, he goes right to the temple. He goes

to worship. He goes to thank God. For 38 years he hasn't been inside the temple. Now he is at the temple, worshipping the Lord.

And the Lord found him in the temple.

14. . . . and said to him, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin any more, so that nothing worse may befall you."

15. The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

16. And for this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.

Now, mark the opposition. These Jews were not concerned about the fellow's being made whole. They didn't care whether he stayed there 38 more years or not. They were more concerned about their tradition and about the things they had added to the law because of their ignorance of what the Sabbath day really meant.

"You're carrying your bed on the Sabbath day. What are you doing that for?"

"Well, the one who healed me told me to do it. It must have been all right." The man wanted them to see the fact that he was healed.

"Who told you that?" They didn't care about the healing. "You're carrying your bed on the Sabbath day!"

They were more concerned about keeping the law than they were about the question of healing the man who was a derelict of society. The Lord has to teach these people a lesson.

Now the sick man must be met on the moral issue: "Sin no more." There is no question that his sickness for 38 years had been the result of his personal sin; and so the Lord dealt with him on a moral issue, facing him with his sin. But when He comes to the Jews in verses 16 to 18, He meets them along another line.

His teaching (5:17-30): He asserts His Sonship

Christ claims equality with God in His Nature (5:17-18)

17. But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working."

18. For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making himself equal with God.

One cannot read this fifth chapter of John without realizing that when our Saviour made these statements He was claiming equality with God in nature, equality with God in power and equality with God in authority. In fact, He takes up in this passage the wonderful union between Himself and His Father.

It was this that brought the opposition to the front when He said, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working."

Indeed, the Lord Jesus here was saying, "As long as my Father has to work, when derelicts of society are before you like this man who has been sick for 38 years, then I must work. I am one with my Father. I go right along with Him. Whatever He does, that's what I am going to do. And if there is no rest for my Father, then there is no rest for Me."

And may I say to those of us who love the Saviour, it is folly for us to rejoice in our union with Him unless we likewise work even as He worked. And that very challenging will of God which was for the Son will also be for us.

For He could say, "I do always the things that please Him. My meat is to do His will. I have only one ambition in life as a man among men—to do His will." This should be our purpose in life likewise as we love Him and as we glory in our union with Him.

“My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.”

There you have the first claim of Christ that He is equal with God in nature. “My Father,” he could say in John 10:29-30, “who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.” He said, “My Father”—a personal relationship.

And these Jews, these intelligent Jews, knew what He was meaning. They said, “You make yourself equal with God.” And they picked up stones to stone Him.

And our Lord said, “Why are you going to stone me? For what work do you stone me?”

They said, “Not for any work; but because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God.”

And back in John 5:17, He said, “My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.”

Now, I know in Genesis 2, the first two verses, that God hallowed the Sabbath day. “And . . . God . . . rested . . . from all his work.” But in Genesis 3, He starts to work again. He took the skins of animals and clothed Adam and Eve. Down through the centuries, God has not rested. Today, God doesn’t rest. There is no rest as long as men are under the thralldom, the bondage, the fruitage of sin. As long as people are in sorrow and affliction and suffering and pain, He must work. “And as long as He works, I work,” Christ said.

And what is He doing here? He is pointing these Jewish leaders to God. They cared less for the man’s being healed than for the Sabbath’s being kept. They had a distorted idea of what the Sabbath meant. The Lord Jesus points this out to them repeatedly. He does it next in John chapter 9 where you’ve got a man born blind. He was born blind, he’s always been blind, and he was a beggar. And the Lord, you remember, told him to wash in the pool of Siloam; and he went and

washed and came seeing. And the same day was the Sabbath.

Why didn't the Lord wait until the next day?

He was pointing out that the real rest for people is in cooperation with God in the work that He wants done. The Jews were ignorant of the value of the Sabbath. They thought it was only a day of rest; but it was the sign of a covenant, a national covenant. God did not give the law of the Sabbath day to the Church of Christ nor did He give it to the Gentiles. It is a sign of a covenant between God and the people of Israel.

Wherever Israel went, whatever nation came into contact with Israel, the question came up: "What are you keeping this day for? Nobody works. How come?"

"Ah, it's a sign of our relationship to the Most High God." This was a sign. But they ignored it as a sign of a relationship between God and them. It became a tradition. They made the Sabbath to be a burdensome thing. Of course, if it touched their own pocket, if one of their sheep were to fall down a well, they would pull it out on the Sabbath day for sure!

**Christ claims equality with God in power
(5:19-21)**

19. Jesus therefore answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.

20. "For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and greater works than these will He show Him, that you may marvel.

21. "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes."

Do you know what He is saying? "Everything

that God does, I can do. And as He can raise the dead and make them alive, that's what I can do." He is saying that He has equality with God in power. And, by the way, when you come to the 11th chapter of John's Gospel, our Lord proved that when He said to Lazarus, who had been four days in the tomb and was in corruption, "Lazarus, come forth." And Lazarus came forth.

He did not say, "I will pray the Father for you to come forth." He did not say, "In the name of my Father come forth." He said, "Lazarus, come forth." At His word, Lazarus was given life.

Do you see where our Lord now is heading in His ministry? In the first four chapters He is not challenging. It's true He used authority and cleansed the temple, but He didn't challenge them very much. But now He is coming to challenge them. He deliberately goes down to the pool. He deliberately picks out the one man who is totally helpless. He deliberately tells him to carry his bed on the Sabbath day. He deliberately faces His enemies. "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working. And whatever He can do, that's what I can do."

Now they are faced with his claim. He is not playing with words.

He didn't say to these Jews, "Pardon me, you're misunderstanding me. I didn't mean what you think I said."

He said, "You're perfectly correct. Not only am I one with the Father in nature, but I am also one with God in power; and anything that God does I can do and will do. For as the Father has power to raise the dead and give them life, that's exactly what I can do." It is not that the Father has given the Son power, but that the Son in Himself has the power.

Why did the Jews crucify Christ? What was their argument before Pilate? "Because he said he is the Son of God."

And I say to you, either Jesus Christ is worthy of all your trust and all your worship and all your adoration and all your praise and thanksgiving or He isn't worthy of being trusted. You have to make your choice. Is Jesus God manifest in the flesh? Are His claims true? Did He present His credentials?

John, deliberately by the power of God (in John 20:31), says, "These have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (these things are a proof to you that this Jesus is none other than the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh)."

I say what a claim! "I and my Father are one. My Father and I. I'm in union with the Father and one with the Father. And all that the Father does, I am one with Him in it. And everything He does I can do." I say He is worthy of your trust. He's worthy of your worship.

And yet with these Jews—as we go through the book and realize the intensity of their hatred for the Son of God—when Pilate says, "I'll scourge him," they say that's not enough. That's not enough! They want Him crucified. Away with Him! Crucify Him!

You either stand with the Jews who opposed and eventually crucified the Saviour or you bow in simple faith with the children of God, putting your trust in Him as the Saviour, worshiping Him in spirit and in truth.

Jesus said, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." It cost Him His life.

What is it costing you and me?

Dear saints of God, let's redeem the time. Let us buy up every opportunity of witnessing. God is still saving; He is still transforming; He is still bringing peace; He is still bringing people to a Sabbath rest, rest in Him. Let us not waste the time. Let's not waste our time. "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." As long as there are sin-

ful people, distressed people, people in sorrow, in trouble, there's a job to be done.

Broken hearts, broken lives, broken homes—we've got a job. May God grant that you and I will be faithful to Him and do the job He wants us to.

Christ claims equality with God in authority (5:22-30)

Now we come to a very, very important passage from verse 22 right down through verse 30. Here Jesus Christ claims equality with God in authority. But before I take up verse 22, I would like to go down to verse 24 because this verse is the center of the message as far as you and I are concerned.

All life is in His hands (5:24-26)

Quite a few of you pastor churches or you do personal work or you teach a Bible class or you deal with people; and quite often in dealing with sinners, possibly down at a mission or in a Bible class somewhere, you will use John 5:24:

24. "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life."

Where do you receive your authority to say to any sinner—man or woman, boy or girl—that "if you put your trust in Jesus Christ as your own personal Saviour, I will guarantee to you that you will receive eternal life right now? And I guarantee that you will never come into judgment and that right now you are passed from death to life." What right have you got to say that? What is behind this verse?

"He who hears my word." This is the hearing of faith. This is not a mere mental assent to doctrine

or even to truth. This is the hearing of faith. “If any man hear my word and believe—put your trust in—Him that sent me, I’ll guarantee you’ll have everlasting life. I will guarantee you will never come into judgment. I will guarantee you will pass from death to life where death will have no more authority over you.”

This is a tremendous statement!

It would be well for us to recognize why we use the verse and where we receive our authority. Now you notice, a person does just two things. We hear and we trust. We hear and believe.

Let me say again that in the New Testament, “to believe” means to put your trust in. It doesn’t mean to just give assent to the historical facts. It means for you to trust your eternal soul and your welfare to who Christ is and what Christ has done. That’s what it means to believe.

For example, there might be young people, raised in our own church, who can quote this verse backwards and forwards and who can tell me, “Why, Dr. Mitchell, I’ve always believed that.” But life can only come through relationship. Unless a person really trusts the Saviour, he hasn’t that “faith” or that “believing” that is used 98 times in the Gospel through John.

Now God says in verse 24 that if we’ll believe, He will do three things for us. First of all, Jesus Christ is claiming He will give us life. That’s the first thing. Look at verses 21 and 25.

21. “For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.

25. “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live.”

He is not talking about physical resurrection. He is talking about those who are dead in sins. This is a present experience.

Just in case someone would question this matter, I would suggest that you come down to verse 28, where He deals with physical resurrection—that everyone in the grave is going to hear His voice. But in verse 25, it is limited to those who hear. And He adds the next verse which is a continuation of the same thing.

26. "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself."

What is He claiming in this passage? God is the only One who is able to give life, eternal life, satisfying life. Jesus is saying, "I, too, have that authority. In Me, too, is the source of life. Just as the Father is the source of life, so does the Son have the source of life; and, if anyone has eternal life, it is because of relationship to the Son." You remember in John 1:4: "In him was life."

In John 4:10, Jesus said, "If you knew who is talking to you, you would ask of him, and he would give you living water." In John chapter 10, the 10th verse: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

In John 14:6: "I am the way, (I am) the truth, and (I am) the life." In 1 John 5:12: "He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life."

Life, eternal life, spiritual life, is in Jesus Christ. He is the source of it. And just as the Father has life, so has the Son the authority to give life.

You remember in John 17:3: "This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." The Lord Jesus here is really saying, "All life, real life, is in my hands."

If I may go back to verse 23:

23. " . . . In order that all may honor the Son, even as

they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.”

I read that verse for this reason. There are those who say, “I believe in God, that He is the source of life; but I do not believe in Jesus Christ.”

I received a letter from a student in one of our colleges in Portland in which he said, “Don’t answer me and talk to me about Christ. I don’t believe in Christ. I don’t believe there ever was a Christ.”

I take it this boy is an atheist. At least he is secular if not an atheist, if you can make a difference between the two.

If we spurn the Son, we spurn the Father.

And Jesus said, “If you do not honor the Son, you do not honor the Father.” If you honor the Son, you honor the Father. There is an indissoluble union between the Father and the Son. You can’t have One without the Other. You can’t know God except through Christ. And just what I know of Christ is what I know of God. And as the Father gives life, the Son gives life.

He is the source of it.

Jesus here is saying, “All life is in my hands.” Life can only come through relationship to the Son.

This is His claim.

All judgment is in His hands (5:22-23, 27, 30)

Now the second benefit in John 5:24 is that not only shall we receive eternal life, but that we shall not come into judgment. Our Lord here is claiming that all judgment is in His hands. Let’s look at verses 22, 27 and 30.

22. “For not even the Father judges any one, but He has given all judgment to the Son . . .

27. “. . . And He gave Him authority to execute judg-

ment, because He is the Son of Man.

30. "I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."

The Father has committed all judgment to the Son because He is the Son of Man.

Someone might say, "Well, God doesn't know the tests I go through. He is holy and He is righteous, but He is way off somewhere running the universe. What does He know about me and my tests? What does He know about me and my afflictions? How can He really judge sympathetically, righteously?"

The Father has committed all judgment to the Son because He is the Son of Man. The Father has given to the Lord Jesus all judgment. He is the Judge. He knows the tests. He knows the trials of life. He knows what it is to suffer. He knows what afflictions and sorrows are. He came into the human family and was tested in all things as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

When you receive the Saviour, He forgives your sin, gives you a divine pardon, pronounces you righteous. How then can you stand before God in judgment when you have been forgiven every sin, pronounced righteous and brought into a relationship with the Son of God? How can you be judged?

Romans 8:1 says that "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." And Romans 8:32-34 says that if God "did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies (who has pronounced us righteous)." It is Christ who has died and is risen again and is at the right hand of God, interceding on our behalf.

There is no judgment.

In the preceding part of the fifth chapter, these Jews had sat in judgment on Christ. They said,

“You’re a blasphemer.” They sat in judgment on the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Jesus is saying in effect, “Listen, my friends, I am the Judge; and in that day I will not be a Lamb. I will be the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. You will not be dealing with a Lamb; you’ll be dealing with a Lion.”

And as Acts 17:31 says, God has “fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom he has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

I repeat, my Christian friend, that, when He came the first time, He came as the Lamb of God in humiliation to put away sin. When He comes the next time, He is going to come as the great Judge of men.

God today is inviting people to accept the Saviour. In that day there will be a summons, not to receive life, but to be judged.

And Jesus here is saying, “I am the One who is going to give that summons. I am the One who is the Judge. And you Jews, who are sitting in judgment on Me today, will stand before Me in that day when I am the Judge.”

I say, all judgment is in His hands.

Isn’t it a wonderful thing that, when sinners accept the Saviour, they not only receive life eternal but they are guaranteed they will not come into judgment?

My, what a wonderful truth!

All resurrection is in His hands (5:28-29)

The third benefit found in verse 24 is that the believer “has passed (present tense) out of death into life.” What is He saying? He is saying, “All resurrection is in My hands.” Notice what He says in verse 28:

28. "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice,

29. "and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds, to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment."

What is the Lord saying to these Jews? "Listen, you haven't heard anything yet. I have just informed you gentlemen that I am on equality with God in nature. I and my Father are one. I am equal with God in authority and power. I can raise the dead just as He does. All life is in my hands. All judgment is in my hands. Listen, you haven't heard the rest of it yet. Marvel not at this. For the hour is coming in which all who are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God."

Everyone.

Here is an astounding fact. Death comes to the human race, you know, whether you are rich or poor, bond or free. If you're sick, you call in a doctor. If you're in trouble, you call in the lawyer or the preacher, one or the other, maybe both, I wouldn't know.

But, brother, when death comes in, there's nothing left but the undertaker. The doctor walks out, and nobody can do a thing. Death comes in. Death reigns today because of sin. And the Lord here makes an amazing statement: "If you will accept Me as your own personal Saviour, I'll guarantee that you'll immediately pass from death to life, that death will have no authority over you."

That's what He is saying. "I have all authority over resurrection."

No wonder Revelation 1:18 says that He has the keys of death and of hell. That's authority. And may I inject this? I'm speaking to you, my Christian friend; and if you have any fear of death, may I say to you, death is already a conquered foe. Death is today the open door into His presence.

I remember Dr. B. B. Sutcliffe one time saying to me when he was quite sick, “You know, I don’t mind going to heaven. I like that. But I don’t like the way I have to go.”

We all want to be raptured, don’t we? We all want to be translated. Wonderful! And maybe we shall. But death is a defeated foe. How are we going to be raised? It says here in verses 28 and 29, “The hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice”—all. Everybody.

He’s not talking here about a time element. The time element we would have to take up with other passages of Scripture. But He’s dealing with one fact, “I am the God of resurrection. I am the One who has authority over death. I am the One who is going to raise the dead. Everyone who is going to be raised from the dead is going to be raised from the dead by My voice.”

Life comes through His voice.

Did you ever notice in the Bible, in the miracles of our Saviour, that He raised three people from the dead?

In Luke 7, you have the resurrection of the widow’s son. In Luke 8, you have the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus. In John 11, you have the resurrection of Lazarus. You’ve got a little girl, you’ve got a young man and you’ve got a mature man.

In the resurrection of the little girl, he said, “Child, arise.” He spoke the word, and I don’t know where she was. Oh, theologically we would say she was in Sheol. But, be that as it may, wherever she was, she heard the voice of Jesus saying, “Arise.”

In chapter seven of Luke, you have the widow’s son; and the widow’s son was already on his way to the grave. He was a young man. And Jesus said, “Arise,” and He delivered him alive to his mother.

In chapter 11 of John, you’ve got a man, a mature man. But he’s in corruption. The little girl had

just died. The widow's son was on the way to the tomb, on the way to corruption. But Lazarus was already in corruption.

And Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth." And he that was dead came forth. As has been well said, if the Lord had not said, "Lazarus," the whole graveyard would have come forth. That's true. All are going to hear the voice of the Son of God. And He raises the dead only one way.

He speaks, and it is done. He just speaks, my friend. And one day, He is going to descend from heaven with a shout!

Now it's true, He varied His method of healing the sick. He varied His method of opening blind eyes. He varied His method of cleansing lepers. But he never varied His method of raising the dead.

How are people who are dead in sins to receive eternal life if they are dead in sins? Ephesians 2:1 and 3 say that we were dead in our trespasses and sins; . . . we were children of wrath like the rest. How do we receive eternal life? Through His word. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing through the Word. We heard the word of Jesus.

He said, he who "believes Him who sent Me has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." We hear His Word. We believe Him. The Word brings us to the Saviour. The Bible of itself doesn't give us life. The Bible brings us to Him; and He said, "My words, they are spirit and they are life."

If you, my friend, having read this far are perhaps just now realizing that you have never accepted the Saviour, I would plead with you to take this 24th verse and make it your own.

I'll guarantee to you that the moment you put your trust in Jesus Christ, God's Son, as your own personal Saviour, you will receive right now eternal life; and you'll never come into judgment, and you'll pass from death to life. He has guaranteed

it.

Just one further word, lest some ask the meaning of verse 29. It says, "Those who did the good deeds, to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment." This is a two-fold aspect of resurrection—the resurrection of the saved and the resurrection of the unsaved.

Those who did the GOOD deeds—that word "good" has to do with those who put their trust in the Saviour. The first good thing a person can do is to accept the Saviour.

Then they who have committed the evil deeds are those who are intrinsically evil, their whole nature is evil; and they are resurrected unto judgment.

When people say to me, "Why, Mr. Mitchell, I don't believe in resurrection. When I'm dead, I'm dead," I say, "Yes, when you are dead, you're dead. And I can tell you Who is going to raise you from the dead. And if your name is not found written in the Book of Life, you'll be cast into the lake of fire."

This is the second death.

My, what a solemn thing, that the Lord Jesus is not only the Saviour, but He's the Judge. And He's the One who is going to raise us and transform us and make us just like Himself.

30. "I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

31. "If I alone bear witness of Myself, My testimony is not true.

32. "There is another who bears witness of Me; and I know that the testimony which He bears of Me is true."

The witness of others:

**Five evidences of Christ's claims (5:31-47)
The witness of John (5:31-35)**

Then we have the presentation of five witnesses who declare that His witness is true. The first is John the Baptist.

33. "You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth.

34. "But the witness which I receive is not from man; but I say these things, that you may be saved.

35. "He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light."

The witness of His works (5:36)

The second is the works He Himself finished.

36. "But the witness which I have is greater than that of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish, the very works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me."

The witness of the Father (5:37)

The third is God Himself.

37. "And the Father who sent Me, He has borne witness of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form."

The witness of God's Word (5:38-44)

And the fourth is the Scriptures.

38. "And you do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent."

And from verse 31 to the end of the passage, we have the evidence and the guarantee of the claims of Christ, mentioned above. He challenges His enemies with their unbelief when He says,

39. "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me;

40. and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life.

41. "I do not receive glory from men;

42. but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves.

43. "I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another shall come in his own name, you will receive him.

44. "How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another, and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God?"

The witness of Moses (5:45-47)

45. "Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope."

Now, they—were—reading the Scriptures. These were leaders in Israel. From the time they were children, they were taught to read the five books of Moses; and they knew them by rote. But if they had searched the Scriptures with an open heart, they would not have been opposed to Christ; for He goes on to say,

46. "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me.

47. "But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

The Son of God gives His stamp of approval here on what Moses wrote. Our present-day critics declare that Moses never wrote the Pentateuch, that Joshua did that. They deny that the Pentateuch is inspired of God, but the Lord Jesus Christ has put His "Approved of God" on the authenticity of the Pentateuch and on its Mosaic authorship.

And He said, "If you had believed Moses—the one in whom you trust, the one of whom you boast—you would have believed Me. Search the scriptures, if you want to know who I am, if you want to know if My claims are genuine. Search the scriptures. In them you THINK you have eternal life, but you're insincere in your search, you're insincere in your reading, you're insincere in your attitude to the Word of God. If you had an open mind, really wanting the truth, you would have believed Me."

He accuses them of the fact of their unbelief. They knew not God.

And because they knew not God, they didn't know Christ. If they had known God, they would have known His Son Jesus Christ.

May I make that applicable to us today?

There are so many ecclesiastical leaders in Christendom today who despise the Word of God. And the reason they despise the Word of God is because they do not know God. "If you knew the scriptures, you would know God," I tell them. "If you knew God, you would know His Son."

Now this is what He is declaring in chapter five. And I'm saying emphatically that we're living in days when so many men go by the name of Christian, but the Word of God has lost its authenticity and authority in their lives. They know not God. If they knew God, they would know His Son. If they knew His Son, they would love His Word. And our Saviour stands as one speaking with authority when He goes right down to the hearts of these men and accuses them, not only of unbelief, but of insincerity and of their ignorance of the knowledge of God.

What a need we have today in our present generation for men and women to know God personally. I say it very sincerely, that if we mean business—if we draw near to God—He'll draw near to us.

God is more desirous of revealing Himself to us than we are to have that revelation. Let us not excuse our unbelief, our insincerity by saying it is impossible to know God. He is no longer hidden behind a cloud, as under the law. He has come out to man and revealed Himself, as our Lord could say in John 14:9, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." Let me repeat, there are no barriers between God and the soul that means business with him.

So, in closing up chapter 5, we find our Saviour going after these unbelieving leaders of Israel. He puts it right on the table where they can see it; and, from here on, there is no let-up in their opposition and hatred of the Son of God. Nothing will satisfy them but to kill Him.

That's why, later on, when Pilate said to them, "You have a law—you can take Him out and stone Him if you want to (they did that with Stephen), they said, "No, sir, that won't satisfy us. He has to be crucified as an accursed thing. Nothing less will satisfy us!" Their hatred of the Son of God was so real and so intense; and this is where it started—in chapter 5.

John 6

Christ, the Bread of Life

Let's take another wee look ahead. Now, when you come to chapter six, you come to an amazing story of the Lord's feeding of the 5,000. This is the one miracle and the only miracle that is mentioned in all four gospels; hence, it must have tremendous import in the teaching of our Saviour. In chapter six, He also gives to us that marvelous discourse of Himself, the first "I am" in the Gospel through John—"I am the bread of life."

In the first few verses our Lord is teaching and healing the people.

1. After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias).

2. And a great multitude was following Him, because they were seeing the signs which He was performing on those who were sick.

May I point out one thing? If you want to follow through all the detail of it, I would suggest you go to Matthew 14, Luke 9, and Mark, chapter 6. Each one gives a little different aspect of the story, but in the main it is the same. Luke tells us He healed all who had need of healing; and toward the end of the day He was tired, and the people were hungry. But the one thing we want to mark is in verse 2.

The great multitudes followed Him because they saw His miracles which he did for the diseased.

They did not follow Him for His own person. They were following Him because of the spectacular.

May I just say a word of warning here? Please, do not follow the spectacular. Faith based upon the spectacular is not genuine; it is shallow, at the least, and empty. Now I recognize that we all love the spectacular; we all love to have our emotions worked on. And I'm not opposed to emotional feeling. That's the way we're made. But don't you build your faith upon an emotional experience or upon the spectacular.

Now, our Lord was performing miracles, healing all that had need of healing. He was full of compassion, full of tenderness. He didn't say, "Come back next week and I'll pray for you." He didn't say, "Come down to the meeting and I'll pray for you." I say that because there are those today who claim to have the gift of healing; and they say, "You come down to the meeting or I'll give you a ticket or come down next week or do something else." The Lord never did that. The Lord immediately, when He found a need, met that need. He healed all that had need of healing. He had compassion upon them.

The fourth sign: The feeding of the 5000 (6:3-15)

3. And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples.

4. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.

5. Jesus therefore lifting up His eyes, and seeing that a great multitude was coming to Him, said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, that these may eat?"

6. And this He was saying to test him; for He Himself knew what He was intending to do.

And when He saw this great company, He lifted up His eyes—one of the few times that we read of our Lord lifting up His eyes. Then He said, "Philip,

where could we buy bread to feed this crowd?"

Why did He turn to Philip? It may have been because they were not very far from Bethsaida, and Philip was from Bethsaida. If anybody knew where to buy bread, it would be Philip.

7. Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for every one to receive a little.

You know, the Lord never does give you little wee bits.

8. One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him,

9. "There is a lad here, who has five barley loaves, and two fish; but what are these for so many people?"

I think he felt a little ashamed that he even brought it up. I don't know.

In Luke's Gospel, chapter 9, the disciples said, "Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns (Bethsaida and Capernaum) round about, and let them purchase their food." Just think of that. The disciples would send the multitude away from Christ. That's true today, too.

Jesus said in Mark 6:37, "You give them something to eat." In other words, "I make you fellows responsible to feed the crowd."

"Lord, how can we feed this crowd? We have only five loaves and two fishes." When the disciples got their eyes on the hungry crowd and on what they themselves had, they said, "What are these among so many? Lord, we can't feed this crowd on that. This is all we've got. We are inadequate to feed such a people."

You and I see throngs of people every day. I tell you I felt this way as I stood in Singapore and Hong Kong and Bombay and these other places where there are people by the millions. You stand

on the street in Tokyo and see them 30-deep, just going by one after the other—wave after wave of people. You wonder what they do, where they live, where they're going. You feel so inadequate. Yet they must be met; and they must be fed.

“Lord, what can I do?” we say. “I haven't any gifts. I am just a poor old child of God. I can't do much. I haven't very much, and I can't see very far. Lord, what can I do?” That's always the attitude of us people. It was the attitude of the disciples.

10. Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

11. Jesus therefore took the loaves; and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted.

12. And when they were filled, He said to His disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments that nothing may be lost.”

13. And so they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves, which were left over by those who had eaten.

When they centered their eyes on Whom they had, instead of what they had, they could have fed five million as well as five thousand. Here we have the Lord Jesus Christ revealed as El Elyon, as Jehovah Raah, as the One Who is the Shepherd of His people, the One Who is sufficient for every need.

We say in the 23rd Psalm, “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.” He is sufficient. He is the mighty God who can take five loaves and two fishes and create. Now here is something new. No wonder it is in all four Gospels. He takes five loaves and two fishes, a little wee bit of stuff; and, as it leaves His hands to go into the hands of the disciples, it multiplies and multiplies and multiplies. This is an act of the Creator; and as long as

there were hungry mouths to feed, there was always an abundant supply.

Mark the difference. You and I can bake bread for five thousand, and then we are out of bread. You might be able to catch enough fish to feed a certain crowd, and then you're out of fish. But the Lord never ran out; He just kept on creating it. Whether it is for one, He is sufficient for your need. Whether it is for five thousand or five million, He is sufficient for your need. He is the Creator, and He is your Shepherd. He is Jehovah Raah. I do not know what your need is, but He does and He is sufficient for it.

May I suggest something else? He did not call for volunteers. He never calls for volunteers. He makes the disciples responsible to feed the group. They have 5000 people, and they put them in companies of 50. That's 100 companies.

Did you ever wait on tables? I worked two years through college waiting on tables. I had three tables—ten to a table, and I know what is involved. When I brought the tray around, they all ducked their heads. I had only 30 people to wait on, and I just kept on my feet until I got through with the 30. But here were 5000. And he makes the twelve responsible. I repeat it. He doesn't call for volunteers. He never calls for volunteers.

Oh, just a minute, you say. There is one place where the Lord said, "Whom shall I send? Who shall go for us?" Yes, and will you please tell me how many were there when He said that? Just one! That's Isaiah six, if you want to find it. But the Lord challenges His disciples, "You give them something to eat." And if you claim to be a disciple of the Son of God, you have a responsibility to feed the multitudes with the Word of God and bring them to the saving knowledge of Christ.

Just one more thing in this little picture. You come to the boy. This lad gave up all that he had. I like this little chap; and I want to point out a very,

very human thing. How did the lad ever get to be near Andrew? Do you think that little fellow would have gone near Peter? Hah! This little fellow, he saw the crowd. You can just see him working his way along through the crowd, you know, between legs and by legs. You know how a boy does. He's got to be on the inside of the crowd. And if he'd gotten by Peter, Peter would have said, "Get out of the way! Don't push around here!" That's what Peter would have done. Not Andrew. The boy came along by Andrew.

How did Andrew know that he had five loaves and two fishes? All day long he has carried his five loaves and two fishes, and he stands alongside of Andrew. My, the Lord must have been wonderful in His ministry for the lad to forget to eat his bread and his fish. When I go fishing, before noon I've eaten all that is in the pail.

You can just see the two of them standing there.

"Got any lunch?"

"No, do you?"

"My ma gave me five loaves and two fishes. Share it with ya." And then Andrew and the lad heard Philip being made responsible when the Lord said, "Where are we going to get bread to feed this crowd?"

And you know the rest.

I have a notion that this little fellow tagged along with Andrew when the disciples were feeding the crowd. Don't you think so? And, when they came back, they had 12 basketsful. Each disciple had a basket. I love to think the Lord doesn't care for waste; He doesn't stand for wasting food or wasting anything. "Pick up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."

I think the little fellow went right along with Andrew as he gathered the fragments in his basket. I'm just suggesting this. That's just life, isn't it? My, what a privilege this little fellow had. He gave up his five loaves and his two fishes, and he coop-

erated with the Son of God.

Am I talking to you? Have you got something precious to your heart? Will you cooperate with the Lord? He wants to feed the masses with the Word of God. Why don't we cooperate? This little fellow gave up his five loaves and two fishes. He didn't lose by the transaction. He gave. He was a fellow-worker with God. Think of it. When he left home that day, he had no thought of such a thing; but before the day was out, he was a fellow-worker with the Son of God.

And when I think of the need today, I would urge upon all of us that we come into the presence of the Lord, throw off our unbelief and open our eyes to the harvest around us—for the field is white unto harvest. All He asks us to give Him is what we have. As the Apostle Paul said in Romans 1:15: "Thus, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome." That is all God asks—that we do our part.

When I think of the tremendous ministry of Tommy Titcomb in Africa and think that he was only an engine-wiper in a roundhouse in England, just wiping the oil off the engines when they came off the road, I marvel. And yet, God took that fellow. As far as background is concerned, he had nothing; but he gave God what he had. And the result was that he became a mighty man of God in Nigeria and represented a dozen tribes before the Parliament of Great Britain.

An engine-wiper!

What do you have? What do I have? All He wants is a channel through which He can express Himself, through which He can make known His power and His grace. He's looking for channels. He's looking for people to cooperate with Him. He has all the supply. It is for us to distribute what He gives. He does the multiplying. But He wants us to be real disciples.

Remember, He lifted up His eyes; and He saw

the multitude and had compassion upon them. Shall we not lift up our eyes and look on the fields? They are white unto harvest. He says to you and to me, "You give them something to eat."

When we get our eyes off our circumstances and what we have and put our eyes upon Whom we have, we realize His sufficiency to meet every need, every emergency, every hungry heart.

From verse 14, we read of another incident where our Lord revealed Himself to His disciples as El Elyon, the possessor of heaven and earth. This revelation is just to His disciples for their encouragement and partly for a rebuke for their lack of faith. Read Matthew chapter 14, verses 22 to 33, as a corresponding passage.

14. When therefore the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, "This is of a truth the Prophet who is to come into the world."

15. Jesus therefore perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force, to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.

The fifth sign: Power over the elements (6:16-21)

16. Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea,

17. and after getting into a boat, they started to cross the sea to Capernaum. And it had already become dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.

18. And the sea began to be stirred up because a strong wind was blowing.

19. When therefore they had rowed about three or four miles, they beheld Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat; and they were frightened.

It might be very enlightening for us to typify the walking on the water or use it as a type of the church in the midst of a storm with the Lord

returning and immediately freeing us from the troubled waters and taking us Home to land. But I shall not touch that aspect of the truth. The Lord had perceived that the people would take Him by force and make Him a king, and He would have none of it; so He sent His disciples into the storm to keep them out of the temptation of making Him a king. I am sure that Peter and these other disciples would have been more than happy to have joined with the crowd in making their master and teacher king.

I wouldn't be at all surprised if the question raised in their minds, when He sent them away on the sea, was—is He really a king? Here's a man being offered a kingdom.

The crowd is saying, "Let's make him a king. Let's force him to be our king. We'll take him to Jerusalem. We'll put him on a throne. We'll make him a king. We need a king. We're ruled over by willful Rome, sinful, powerful Rome. And here is one who can be our king and set us free. He can feed us. He can heal us. He can raise our dead. He can open our blind eyes. He can meet every need. This must be 'that prophet.' Let's make him a king."

May I remind you of the fact that, when our Lord came the first time, He did not come to raise up a material kingdom. He came in humiliation. He was born in a manger. His first companions were cattle. His last companions were thieves. His university, someone has said, was a carpenter's shop. He had no place to lay His head. He used a borrowed boat to sail the Sea of Galilee. He used a borrowed ass to go into the city of Jerusalem. He was buried in a borrowed tomb.

Our Lord came in humiliation.

Also, there could be no king and no kingdom without a people that was spiritual. These people wanted a king because they were concerned about their tummies' being full of food. They were follow-

ing Him because they were filled with bread. He must be “that prophet” because He was meeting their temporal needs. Some people want the Lord just for what they receive. These men wanted Jesus to wait on them. They weren’t seeking Him.

Later on, He said, “You seek me, not because of the miracles so much, but because your stomachs were filled. You ate the bread.”

Do you go to church for some material need? Some social need? For some religious need? Or do you go to meet Him? Remember, a faith that is based on the spectacular, on the sensational, on the emotional, is not real faith. Christ Himself must be the object of our faith, not some experience.

He sent the crowd away. He didn’t want them. And I’m sure the disciples didn’t understand that either. So the Lord did a remarkable thing. He sent them in the boat across the lake while He Himself went up into the mountain to talk to His Father and to pray.

Now He knew what was going on. Our Lord knew about the storm that came suddenly down upon the disciples. He knew where they were. And they needed to be encouraged as to who He is and what He is. Even though they had seen the 5000 fed with five loaves and two fishes, they too soon forgot; for you remember the Lord in one case reminded them, “Did you forget the five thousand and the five loaves and the two fishes?” And while the storm was raging and while they were in the midst of the sea—I take it about half way across—the Lord came, walking upon the water.

Most of us would rather enjoy a calm sea with the Lord in the boat with us. We don’t like rough weather. We don’t like stormy lives. We don’t like affliction. We don’t like sorrow. But when the sea is calm and the Lord is right there with us, when we experience His presence and we’re full of joy and blessing, it is wonderful; but our faith never

grows that way. We never see His authority and power that way.

It is in the storms of life, it is in the sorrows and the afflictions and the fears of life that we see them. God uses the afflictions of life, the sorrows and tests of life as stones to sharpen the tool that He can use for His glory.

I say again, He sends them from the test into the tempest. He sends them into a storm to keep them out of temptation. And I am sure that oftentimes the Lord permits us to go into times of sorrow and affliction to keep us from something that could be infinitely worse.

20. But He said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid."

21. They were willing therefore to receive Him into the boat; and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

And now, as they saw the Lord come, walking on the water—as Matthew said—as if He were going to go by them, they were afraid. They thought it was a spirit, an apparition, a ghost; and I maintain they were more afraid of what they saw than of the storm which they felt. They had been in storms before, but they hadn't seen ghosts before. I love the tenderness of the Saviour here, when He said, "It is I; be not afraid," and He stilled the storm. He rebuked the winds and the waves. There was a calm.

I say, what a wonderful thing! Even though we may not experience His presence, even though the heavens are black and we feel so frail as if the end has come, He on the throne works all things out after the counsel of His own will. Our Lord was on the mountain with His Father. He knew—He knew about His disciples. He knew the storm through which they were going, and He knew that He would come down and deliver them. And it was only to the disciples, I say, that He revealed Him-

self as the One who had authority over the elements.

The winds He muzzled.

There was a calm.

My, how wonderful it is!

You and I go through times of darkness and despair. Sometimes, we wonder if our prayers ever go beyond our lips. We wonder if the Lord ever hears us. We go on and it becomes darker and darker and darker. Yet, my friend, He knows. He understands. And at the right time—He’s never ahead of time; He’s never behind time—at the right time He comes. And He can say with that gentleness, that blessed sweetness of His, “It is I; be not afraid.”

No wonder we read in Hebrews 13:5-6, “For He Himself has said, ‘I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you, so that we confidently say, ‘The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What shall man do to me?’ ” This is the wonderful experience of the presence of God when everything seems black as night. We can say with Job (13:15), that even though we can’t see, “though He slay me, I will hope in Him.”

I wish we believers could come to that place—as we think of this experience of the disciples, full of fear and terror in a storm with everything looking hopeless—where we see the Lord coming on the scene with that tenderness and compassion, that understanding. There’s no rebuke. “It is I. It is I. Do not be afraid.”

I say, what a wonderful thing. And then the calmness, the peace that passes all understanding, just comes in and garrisons and guards our hearts and our minds.

And then I would like to mention a “venture of faith,” if I may use that terminology. Sometimes we read this story of dear Peter in Matthew 14, and we say that Peter was out of his head. He didn’t even use good sense.

He said, "Lord, if it is really you, if it is really you, let me come to you."

The Lord didn't say, "Peter, you're asking a ridiculous thing." He didn't say that. He didn't say, "That's a foolish request."

Here was something new. Peter saw His Lord defy the laws of nature. But could not the One Who made the water walk upon the water? It's a revelation to Peter that his Master cannot only create bread and feed the crowd, but He can still the storm at His word.

"It is I; do not be afraid."

"Lord, that's you over there. Let me come to You."

I don't say that, as some liberals say, there was a kind of fog there, and they were near the shore, and they saw the Lord walking on the shore through the fog. What are you going to do about Peter? "Lord, command me to come."

And the Lord just said one word. It wasn't foolish to the Lord. The Lord said just one word, "Come." And Peter got out of the boat.

Now Peter has a problem, just as you and I have a problem. What do you think is Peter's great test? Walking on the water? Oh, no. No, the hardest thing for Peter was to let go of the boat. As long as he was in the boat with two planks under his feet, he felt quite safe. Remember, it was storming when Peter said, "Lord, command me to come to You." Now the Lord said, "Come," and Peter got his feet out; and you can see him sitting on the edge of the boat.

I can hear the disciples behind him saying, "Have you gone crazy, Peter? What do you expect to do, walk on the water? Why, come on back in the boat here where you belong."

That's what I would have said. I would have pulled him back in.

And yet, Peter with his hand on the side of the boat . . . Ah, there's the water. He's on the outside

of the boat now. What's he going to do? Let go the boat? Yes, the Lord had said, "Come."

I know Peter is the fellow who always jumps the gun—the gunwhale, this time—but he walked on the water just the same. You can just see him going up and down through those stormy waves.

But mark the seriousness of this. I believe that Peter's experience, wonderful though it was, got the disciples' eyes off Christ and onto Peter. Now, don't tell me they weren't human. They were watching Peter.

"Look at that fellow go."

"Why, Peter's walking on the water! What do you know about that? Look at him go."

And all of a sudden there was a larger wave coming. And Andrew yelled out, "Look out, Peter, a wave's coming."

"Where's that wave?" And down he went. He had just looked around and down he went. Dear old Peter. Down he went.

That's the trouble with all of us. You and I are in deep circumstances, and we try to keep our eyes on the Lord. We say, "Lord, let us come to Thee," and the Lord says, "Come on, walk in faith." And we start a walk of faith. Then we get our eyes on the circumstances and down we go. And I think Peter could have gone right to the bottom. Can't you see it? Peter was going down, and the last thing down is his head and his hand--and there is the Lord.

"Lord, save me." And the Lord pulled him out. Remember? Just pulled him right out. And, don't you forget, they walked back to the boat together. But I am positive of one thing, that Peter walked right behind the Lord, where he could get ahold of Him. His eyes are no longer on circumstances, but upon the Lord.

Listen. The Lord leads you and me into circumstances that sometimes are insurmountable, but the Word of God is under your feet. Will

you remember that word—that one word, “Come,” of Jesus? Peter was safer, walking the water with that one word, “Come,” under his feet, than when he was in the boat with two planks under him. You and I are safer on the Word of God than we are with all the experiences of life, and I don't care how marvelous they may be.

What I am after is this. Every one of us, sooner or later, to a more or less degree, learns that God is faithful. He is always with us in the storm. But sometimes we become so fearful. Has the Lord forsaken us? Has the Lord left us? Is His Word to be trusted? Our lives are based too much upon what we feel and what we see. Jesus said, “Come.”

I care not what your experience may have been, and I don't care how ecstatic or how marvelous your experiences are. I know one thing. The only thing that will hold you up in the storm is the Word of God. And nothing delights His heart more than to have you and me step out and say, “Feeling or no feeling, seeing or no seeing, I'm going to stand on the Word of God.”

Are you having tests, unusual tests and trials and sorrows and griefs and heartaches, not only from the physical but the spiritual? Do you feel sometimes as if you are alone in the world? The Lord Jesus permits the storm so that you and I may experience His presence and His power. His disciples learned Who He was in the storm. They fell down and worshiped Him and said, “You are certainly God's Son.” And they learned what He was in the storm. It is only in the hard places we get to know God.

May this word come to you then as a word of comfort, as a word of strength, as a word of hope and of assurance. The very Saviour who stilled the storm and rebuked the winds and delivered His disciples is the same One who is with you today and tomorrow and the next day until He comes. He said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.”

He is with us even when it is dark. He is still there, holding us by the hand. He who leads us into the storm will bring us through the storm.

Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

He is Jehovah-Raah, the Shepherd of His people, caring for them in their need. And He is El Elyon, the One who is the possessor of heaven and earth in Genesis 14. He not only creates but He possesses the heavens and the earth; and in these two names, we have the manifestation of His person as the Son of the Highest. The first one was to the multitudes. The second one was for the comfort and encouragement of His own disciples.

The Bread of Life discourse (6:22-59)

Following this, we have the great discourse of our Lord as the Bread of Life, the beginning of those great terms, the "I am's." Notice the setting of this.

22. The next day the multitude that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other small boat there, except one, and that Jesus had not entered with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples had gone away alone;

23. There came other small boats from Tiberias near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks.

24. When the multitude therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats, and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.

25. And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You get here?"

You notice He ignores their question.

The life He gives is eternal (6:26-34, 47)

26. Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because

you ate of the loaves, and were filled."

The disciples had gone over the sea, and the Lord had met them; and then they came over toward Capernaum.

The people knew that the disciples had gone into the boat without the Lord. So they asked the question. How did He get there? He spurned their question by making a statement.

He said to them, "You folk are seeking something which you need, but you don't know your real need. You are seeking the physical, instead of the spiritual. Your life has been occupied with the material side of life and you've missed the important thing, the spiritual."

The moral comes out of the spiritual. If there is no spiritual, there is no moral. And the reason we are where we are today in this country is because we have despised the spiritual life that can only be found in Christ, with the result that the morals have gone out the window. What a challenge we who profess the name of the Saviour have to present before people the great need of the human heart—not the physical or the material, but the spiritual.

What these people wanted Jesus for was to have their tummies filled. They wanted the Lord to serve them. They wanted the Lord to run a restaurant, if you please. They weren't seeking Jesus for Himself. They didn't care about the person of the Lord. All they wanted was their physical satisfaction.

And this is the attitude of the Jews which caused the Lord Jesus to change His approach and His ministry in teaching them. Now, He is seeking to attract them to Himself by the revelation of His person. He is going to declare to them, "You folks are blind. You're dealing with the material. You're dealing with the physical. I'm dealing with the spiritual—that which is eternal, that which satisfies, that which goes on forever."

But they never did see. They saw the miracle, but they never realized that the miracle was given for the exaltation of His person. They wanted the physical, but they didn't want Him. They wanted the experimental, but they didn't want Him.

And may I say that this is true today in too many places among professing Christians. We want the physical. We want the material. We want the spectacular. We want the experimental. I am not opposed to any one of them; but the important thing is the spiritual, which is eternal, which goes on forever. Our danger is for us to be so occupied with the material and the physical and with living in the senses that we miss the important thing—our fellowship and communion with Him.

Do we seek Him for Himself or do we seek Him for what we can get? They wanted the Lord Jesus to serve them. That was why they followed Him. So He challenged them concerning this. "You seek me, not for myself. You seek me because you want to be filled."

And then He made this statement:

27. "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man shall give to you, for on Him the Father, even God, has set His seal."

28. They said therefore to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?"

29. Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

I want you to notice that our Lord was beginning to attract them to the spiritual, telling them not to spend their time and energy laboring for things that perish. You remember Isaiah 55:1 speaks of the same thing. "Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy, and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost."

“Don't you labor for things that pass away,” He is saying. “You look at ME. I will give you eternal life. It's a gift I will give to you. I am the one who has come from God. I am the one who has come from heaven. I am the Bread of Life.”

Mark the times all through the chapter when He speaks about His coming from heaven, when He speaks about whom the Father has sent, when He uses His own personal pronouns, “I” and “Me.” I repeat, it is the one great desire of His heart to attract them to Himself, not to what He gives.

They said, “What shall we do that we might work the works of God?”

I have the feeling here concerning these Jews that they were perplexed. “This man Jesus has fed us bread from heaven. He has multiplied the loaves and the fishes. He has fed us. He has healed our sick and cleansed our lepers. He has met all our needs. Now He says not to labor for that which perishes but for life eternal, which the Son of man shall give us. But how can we do it? What shall we do to do the works of God?”

Now these were Jews. The law of Moses said, “Do these things and you will live.” The law said, “The man that does them will live by them.”

They knew about the “doing” business. Their whole life was filled with doing; so they asked, “What shall we DO that we might work the works of God?”

In other words, “How can we please God? How can we reach God?” If not by works, not by ceremonies or ordinances, how?

And the Lord's amazing answer was, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.”

Rituals, works of any kind, moral works, good works, dead works, all kinds of works will not satisfy God.

One thinks of Nicodemus in chapter three when the Lord Jesus said to him, “Unless one is born

again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

“How can these things be?” Nicodemus said. “How can these things be? How can a man be born again when he is old?”

Likewise here: “How can we do the works of God?”

“This is the work of God. This is where you’re going to start—that you believe on Him whom He has sent.” There is nothing that satisfies the heart of God more than faith. Hebrews 11:6 says, “And without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”

Faith says that God is accessible. The only access we have to God is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. “This is the work of God.”

I repeat it. The one thing that delights the heart of God more than anything else is the person—it makes no difference how weak he is, how sinful he is—who will come in simple trust, in simple faith, believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, taking Him as the One who is the Saviour from sin, as the One who can bring him into the presence of God. This is the work of God.

Now it may be perhaps, my friend, that you know all the questions and answers concerning the Gospel. You can know these things and yet not trust the Saviour. “This is the work of God.” This is the first thing—to believe, to put your trust in, the One whom God has sent.

Now mark what unbelief does in verses 30 and 31.

30. They said therefore to Him, “What then do You do for a sign, that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform?”

31. “Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘HE GAVE THEM BREAD OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT.’”

The problem here is not signs. He had per-

formed miracles. John says in chapter 2 that many believed on him when they saw the miracles which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself to them.

Why? Because He knew the shallowness of their own hearts. He knew they had no trust in Him. Theirs was an emotional thing, depending upon things they saw instead of trusting the One they saw. Likewise here.

“What sign do You show? Can you do a greater work than this? Our fathers ate bread for 40 years. Our fathers ate bread from heaven. Moses gave us that bread for 40 years. Can you match that? Are you greater than Moses?”

See, the issue now is His person. He attracted them to Himself when He said, “The Son of Man will give you this eternal life. The Son of Man will do this for you; and this is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent.” But do you sense the challenge? It was a challenge to the Lord. “Are you greater than Moses?”

Now, remember, it was Passover time and their minds were filled with the history of Israel as their forefathers came out of Egypt and crossed the Red Sea into the wilderness. No doubt, the 16th chapter of Exodus was fresh in their minds—where they went out every morning for 40 years and gathered the manna according to their appetites. They were always filled, but their experience led them to a wrong philosophy of life. Their thought was “seeing is believing.” That’s a wrong philosophy. Seeing is not believing.

Look at verse 36: “But I said to you, that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe.” It is not for lack of evidence. There’s plenty of evidence. The cause is unbelief. Hebrews 3:12 says, “Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart.” There’s no reason why any person today should be an atheist. There’s not a day goes by but what you see the miraculous. I

say the cause is not lack of evidence. The cause is unbelief.

He said, “You did see. You still don’t believe.”

And I want to say, my friend, don’t you for one moment begin to minimize unbelief or to look down on unbelief as a light thing. Unbelief is a terrible thing. It is the product of an evil heart. And that’s the issue here. “Are you greater than Moses?” And the Lord picked up the challenge. Mark what He says in verse 32.

32. Jesus therefore said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven.

33. “For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.”

He is saying, “My Father gives the true bread. All Moses could do was to give you bread for the body, a passing thing. And the time came when the manna ceased. It was just a temporary thing; it was for the physical. But the true Bread from heaven is eternal. It satisfies forever.”

34. They said therefore to Him, “Lord, evermore give us this bread.”

Now He has gotten something stirred up.

One is reminded of that verse in John four when the Lord was talking to the woman at the well. He said, “Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”

“Sir, give me this water.” You see? She was stirred up. So it is here. “Lord, evermore give us this bread.” But notice. They have not yet caught the significance of the Bread that He would give.

All through the chapter you will find them groping along, having no trust, no faith; and the chapter ends with them all leaving Him except the twelve.

Do you see the movement as the Lord begins to reveal Himself? And the more He reveals Himself, the farther away they go from Him. They want Christ to serve them for the physical, for the material; but He has no time for it. He comes right out now boldly and says in effect (verses 32, 33), "That true bread is the Son of man which comes from heaven."

And now mark what happens.

It is a satisfying life (6:35-36)

35. Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

First of all, we had eternal life in verse 27; now we have satisfying life in verse 35. God has so constituted us, has so made us, that no human hearts are ever perfectly satisfied until they are in Christ. All the material things that men run after never satisfy them. There might be a little satisfaction for a fraction of time, but it peters out. Perfect, eternal, continual satisfaction is found only in one place. It is found in a Person, not in a thing, not in an experience. It is found in Him. He is the one who can satisfy.

My friend, if you think the miracles of Christ are wonderful, I want to inform you that the words of Christ are far more wonderful.

"Oh," you say, "if I could only see the Lord perform a miracle . . ."

Listen, my friend, His word, His statements, are beyond all miracles. "I am the bread of life." Listen to this claim. "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." Here is perfect, complete,

eternal satisfaction in Christ.

Whatever the affliction may be—many of us have realized this—whatever the affliction, whatever the sorrow, whatever the disappointments, whatever the misunderstandings, we can always find in Him One who can satisfy, really satisfy our hearts.

“I am the bread of life,” He says. “He who comes to Me shall never hunger; he who believes on Me shall never thirst.” My, what a passage! No human mind can begin to delve into the depths and the wonders of this little statement. “I am the bread of life. I am the only one who can really satisfy the human heart.” What a statement!

Does He satisfy you? The happiest people, the most joyous people are not the millionaires. Some of the most contented people I’ve met in my life lived in a sod shack with the walls on the inside just whitewashed. These people had perfect satisfaction as they daily, continually, enjoyed the Lord. Their cup was filled full with joy, with peace, with satisfaction. That doesn’t mean they were freed from tests and trials and sorrows. They had them abundantly. But they rejoiced in a peace, in a God who had given to them the well, the joy of satisfaction that lasts through eternity. My, what a prospect for you and me.

But many of us have had only a little wee taste of what God has for us. All we have had are little wee tastes. But the Psalmist says in the 16th Psalm, 11th verse: “In Thy presence is fulness of joy; in Thy right hand there are pleasures forever.” Or take the 34th Psalm and read it through. “O taste and see that the Lord is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him.”

Or consider dear Peter when he says, “Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord” (1 Peter 2:2-3).

“I am the bread of life,” Christ says. “He who

comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.”

May I take just one more moment with you? There is so much between verse 35 and verse 40. Could I give you a little gist of it?

36. “But I said to you, that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe.

It is resurrection life (6:37-47, 54)

37. “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

38. “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

39. “And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

40. “For this is the will of My Father, that every one who beholds the Son, and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.”

He is the bread of life. In verse 37, He's the One who receives everyone who comes. In verse 38, He's the One who always does His Father's will. In verse 39, He is the One who guarantees security to His people, the preservation of His people; and in verse 40, He guarantees their resurrection, the completeness of their experience in Him when their bodies will be redeemed and raised from the dead and made like His. This is what you have in these verses.

Think of it!“ I am the bread of life.” Hence He can satisfy you. He will in no wise cast you out. He receives all who come to Him. He says, “I came down from heaven to do not my will but the Father's will, and this is the Father's will—that of everyone He has given to me, I should lose nothing.”

He preserves His people. “If any one eats of this bread (verse 51), he shall live forever.” It's an eter-

nal life. Over and over again in the passage He speaks of the fact that to know Him, to trust Him, means eternal life. In fact, He comes out very boldly in verse 47 when He says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life."

And then, thirdly, it is resurrection life, a life over which death does not even cast a shadow. To me, it's marvelous to think and to meditate over and over again on the wonderful fact that God Himself is the One who gives us this life. It's a satisfying life; it's a resurrection life.

Let me summarize three things in these verses. In verse 33, as the Bread of Life, He gives life; and in verse 37, "All that the Father gives Me will come to me." And then in verse 39, He not only gives life, but He preserves all who come to Him: "that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing." I will not only give them life, but I will preserve them. I will make them secure. In verse 40, "I Myself will raise them up on the last day" and bring them to Myself. Here are three claims for this Man, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. None other can make such claims, for He is God.

He repeats four times in verses 39, 40, 44 and 54, "I will raise him up on the last day." The ultimate of all eternal life is resurrection from the dead and glorification. This is what Jesus is saying.

Now remember, they sought Him, but not for Himself. They sought Him for what they could receive. But He comes out and says, "I am the bread of life; I am the only one who can satisfy your heart. And to encourage you, I am telling you that I will not under any circumstances turn anybody away who comes. Whoever comes to Me, I'll guarantee to keep him; and I'll not only keep him, but I'll raise him up from the dead." My friend, what a Saviour!

Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

No wonder Paul could say in 2 Timothy 1:12, "I

know whom I have believed." Do you? And don't you put that little word "in" in there, will you. Don't you say, "I know in whom I have believed." It is not there. You've missed the whole thing. "I know Whom I have believed."

Now, Whom have I believed? The One who is the bread of life, the One who has promised never to turn anybody away, the One who has guaranteed preservation to every one of His children, and the One who guarantees the culmination and the completion of salvation in raising their bodies from the dead. I say, what a Saviour!

May God keep us from being spiritual paupers when we ought to be mighty men and women of God, living in a generation that's gone into sin. You have the message, and you have the Saviour. You have the Lord. You have the One who is the bread of life, who can satisfy the hearts of these people who are running hither and yon, all searching for something and never being satisfied.

May God forgive us for keeping from them He who is the Bread of life.

But, may I say here as we go into these next few verses, the Lord Jesus never excuses unbelief. Mark what He says when they murmured at Him.

41. The Jews therefore were grumbling about Him, because He said, "I am the bread that came down out of heaven."

42. And they were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, 'I have come down out of heaven?'"

Strange thing about human nature. They murmured at him because He said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven."

"You're just the son of Joseph," they said. "We know your father and mother. We know who you are and all about you."

Go down to verse 52.

52. The Jews therefore began to argue with one another, saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?"

Now, they weren't fighting each other; they were getting stirred up.

Go down to verse 60.

60. Many therefore of His disciples, when they heard this said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?"

The thought behind this is, "He's insulting us! He's asking the impossible thing." Their hearts were becoming closed to all the revelation that He had given them. Then, notice verse 66.

66. As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew, and were not walking with Him any more.

"Your sayings are offensive, and we are through with you." This is how it ends. They were insulted. To them, He was still the son of Joseph.

Now notice our Lord didn't argue the point of that at all.

This question of the incarnation, I believe, was wrapped up in Mary's heart. Possibly this was the sword of Luke 2:35 when it was prophesied, "A sword will pierce even your own soul." All through her life she lived under the cloud. For her to say to them that this Jesus, her first born son, was begotten of the Holy Spirit and was born of a virgin . . . They would have laughed it out of court.

They would have ridiculed her. They would have taunted her and mocked her. All her life she had to live under this cloud. When they said to Him, "We know who your father is; You're the son of Joseph; You're Jesus, the son of Joseph," He never argued the point, but He made a tremendous statement in answering them in these next verses.

43. Jesus answered and said to them, "Do not grumble among yourselves.

44. "No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

45. "It is written in the prophets, 'AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.' Every one who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me.

46. "Not that any man has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father.

47. "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life."

It means union with Him (6:48-59)

48. "I am the bread of life.

49. "Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died."

Now please don't take verse 44 out of its context and start to teach the sovereignty of God—although I'm very strong for the sovereignty of God. The more I see human nature and the more I see the sinful heart of man, the more positive I am that God is sovereign. But He doesn't close out the responsibility of His creatures—"They shall be all taught of God." God "draws" in verse 44; and He "teaches" in verse 45. The human responsibility? The man, the sinner, comes and he believes. And everyone who sees the Son is going to come.

You say, "Why, these folk saw Him." No, they didn't. They saw Him as the son of Joseph. They never did see Him as the Son of God—even when Pilate said, "Let him go. I find no fault in him."

The people said, "You can't let Him go because he made himself the Son of God." They never did see that. And everyone who "sees" the Son and believes on Him has eternal life. Now, it is not that man can't come. It is that man won't come. Every time a person hears the Gospel, it is God teaching men: "This is My Son. This is the One who can

save. This is the One who can give life eternal.” And all have the right to come, but they won’t come. It is not that they couldn’t come, but they won’t come.

I find myself between two extremes. There are some who believe that God is going to save only those He has predestined to be saved, that He’s elected them and they have no choice in the matter. The Bible doesn’t teach that. On the other hand, there are those who deny the sovereignty of God and say it is all in man to seek the Lord, and they too are wrong.

The more you see the utter sinfulness of the human heart, the more you realize God must do the drawing. How does He do it? By giving forth the blessed Word of life; and your response will determine whether you have life or whether you don’t have life.

We have that in chapter five of John, verse 39. “You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are UNWILLING to come to Me, that you may have life.”

Salvation is not a moral persuasion. It is not an intellectual persuasion.

It is a thing of the heart. It is a thing of the will. It’s a question of a relationship between a sinner and God.

For example, there is no excuse for anyone reading this book to say, “God never chose me.” You’re excusing your unbelief.

Jesus said, “Whoever comes to Me, I will not cast out. Whoever comes to Me, I will give eternal life. Whoever comes to Me, I will give satisfying life. Whoever comes to Me, I will raise from the dead.”

I’ll tell you one thing. I’ll guarantee if you were to hear the prayers of our Arminian brethren, I’ll guarantee on their knees they are Calvinistic. Now you’ll have to work that one out. When a person comes into the presence of God, he sees his own

vileness and his own sinfulness and he recognizes that if God didn't save him he never would be saved.

And Jesus said this to a people, to a group that was spurning and rejecting His person, a people who said, "Aaaah, we know who you are." You see, they had no heart of openness.

"We know who you are. You can't fool us with your talk. You're just Jesus, the son of Joseph. We know who you are. You're the carpenter down there in Nazareth. You're no better than the rest of us." That's the human heart. There was no desire, there was no hunger, there was no yearning for Him.

Now, what is His purpose? This brings me to the fourth aspect of the life He gives.

First, before we get into that, go down to verses 50-51:

50. "This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.

51. "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh."

There is no question that the Lord Jesus was speaking of His sacrifice for men and women.

How are we going to get satisfying life, eternal life, resurrection life when we are dead in trespasses and sins?

"I'll give my flesh for the life of the world. I, if I be lifted up, will draw all unto me." Here's the cross. "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). As we go through the passage, the whole thing has reference to His death and burial and resurrection.

Now we come to an amazing statement.

53. Jesus therefore said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves.

54. "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life; and I will raise him up on the last day.

55. "For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink.

56. "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood, abides in Me, and I in him.

57. "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.

58. "This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate, and died, he who eats this bread shall live forever."

59. These things He said in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum.

Now we've come to His purpose. God is going to bring into being a people in perfect union with Himself.

And lest I be misunderstood, may I say, even though we have the breaking of bread at the Lord's Table and we remember His death till He comes, He is not referring to this in John, chapter 6. I question if it were even in the mind of the Lord. He's delving into a far deeper thing.

He has just said, "If you eat this bread, you'll be satisfied and you'll live forever. If you put your trust in Me, you will have eternal life. If you come to me, I will not only take you in, but I'll raise you from the dead."

Now He says the fourth thing: "You've got to be in vital union with me to have life." I say again, it rules out all moral and intellectual persuasion. You do not receive life through moral persuasion or through intellectual persuasion. You receive life through union. "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves."

If I may use these words, He is saying, "You've

got to be part and parcel with Me.”

Then He goes on to say, “This union is the same union between the Father and the Son—the living Father and the living Son in perfect union. There is oneness between the Father and the Son and the believer. This is salvation. This is relationship. This is life eternal. This is communion. This is satisfaction.”

Need I say any more concerning it?

I sometimes—I don't want to be blunt in this—I sometimes get discouraged at the lightness, the shallowness of present day Christianity. Our Lord is dealing with religious people here, and He offers them His person. His purpose is to die and bring to Him a people in vital union with Himself. And because of this union, you have life; you have satisfaction; you have communion; you have a oneness that is going to last through eternity. I say, what a tremendous, tremendous claim our Saviour made. The more I have read and reread and reread and studied and meditated upon this sixth chapter of John, I confess to you the more I feel I have barely scratched the surface of the tremendous impact and the purpose of the Son of God in His statements here.

We look at miracles. If we could see 5000 people fed upon five loaves and two fishes, we would be living in the joy of that for the next year.

“We SAW the Lord take five loaves and two fishes and feed 5000,” we would say with amazement. “He had twelve basketsful left!”

Yet I declare to you that what He is revealing to us here is far greater. Just as high as the heavens are above the earth, so is His ministry of the Word of God in this particular thing so far beyond the physical, the material, the sensuous.

So may I just, instead of going any farther, say this. And I am repeating it. I want to repeat it. I'm deliberately repeating it. I want this thing to get into your heart. Jesus said, “I am the bread of

life.” The bread of life is a Person, the Son of God, One in vital union with the eternal God, One with the Father.

And now He says, “I am going to the cross. I am going to give My body, My flesh, for the life of the world. (As Hebrews 10:5 says, “A body Thou hast prepared Me”—for sacrifice.) And through this sacrifice I am going to bring to Myself people who will come—anyone who will come. And I will give them life. I will give them satisfying life, eternal life, resurrection life, indwelling life, if you please. I’ll bring them into vital union with Myself.”

And when the Lord spoke of “eating My flesh and drinking My blood,” He was speaking not of a material thing. He was speaking of a spiritual reality, of a union in life, of a oneness with Himself. The reaction was—

60. Many therefore of His disciples, when they heard this said, “This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?”

The effect of His teaching (6:61-71)
The rejection of His Person and Words (6:60-66)

61. But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, “Does this cause you to stumble?”

62. “What then if you should behold the Son of Man ascending where He was before?”

63. “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

64. “But there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray him.

65. And He was saying, “For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father.”

66. As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew, and were not walking with Him any more.

The reaction was—they said it was “a difficult statement.” From that time forth, many walked no more with Him.

The confession of the disciples (6:67-71)

Jesus turned to the twelve and said, “Will you also go away? Do you want to go, too?”

Peter threw his hands up and said, “Lord, well, where can we go? You’ve just declared to us that ‘the words that I speak to you, they are spirit, and they are life. The flesh profits nothing. But My words, they are spirit and they are life.’ Lord, where can we go? You alone have the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that You alone are the Holy One of God.”

Is that your reaction? You either stand with the Jews and resist salvation through the blood of Christ—“That’s a difficult statement.” Or you stand with Peter and say, “Lord, where can we go? Where can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and are sure that You are the Holy One of God.” May this be your joy this day.

Have you never faced up to this issue, never taken the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Saviour? I want to say, my friend, don’t you stand in unbelief and hide behind some argument of men. I suggest you come.

Jesus said, “He who comes to Me, whoever comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out. And whoever comes to Me, I’ll preserve, I’ll not lose. And whoever comes to Me, I will raise up from the dead in that day. And whoever comes to Me, I will join to Myself in a union that is eternal and that is perfect.”

My, what a privilege!

What a joy!

John 7

Christ, The Heavenly One

Christ and His brethren (7:1-13)

1. And after these things Jesus was walking in Galilee; for He was unwilling to walk in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill Him.

2. Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Tabernacles, was at hand.

Between chapters 6 and 7 you have a period of months; for, in chapter 6, you have the Passover, held in the spring, and in chapter 7, the Feast of Tabernacles, held in the fall—possibly in the month of September.

This was the time when you had three feasts—the Feast of Atonement, the First Fruits, and the Tabernacles—one after the other. Tabernacles was one of three feasts (with Passover and the Feast of Atonement) that every Jew in Israel sought to observe. It had reference to the Lord's coming to earth to reign, when every man would sit under his own vine and fig tree. No man would build a house only to have somebody else live in it.

This is what the prophets declared about the kingdom age, and the Feast of Tabernacles was a foreshadowing of that time. The people took palm leaves and went out of the city and made themselves booths.

Our Lord was in Galilee, and His brethren came to Him.

3. His brothers therefore said to Him, "Depart from here, and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may behold Your works which You are doing.

4. "For no one does anything in secret, when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world."

"Now, if you are really the Messiah," they say to Him, "if you are what you claim to be, you go on up to the feast and you show yourself. Hiding up here in Galilee performing miracles won't do you any good. Go to Jerusalem. Go up to the feast. There will be multitudes there. If you want to be a king, then be one and show yourself."

5. For not even His brothers were believing in Him.

Now, whether they were members of his family and children of Mary or whether they were just his kinfolk, I don't know. They are called "his brethren." We do know that James the Just and Jude were two of the brothers of the Lord. But here's an astounding thing when you think of it. Our Lord lived a pure, sinless, righteous life as the compassionate, tender Son of God before them for nearly 30 years. He ran the carpenter shop, lived in a humble abode in the bosom of the family and still, after 30 years, they did not believe in Him.

Possibly, you are the only Christian in your family. It's a strange feeling. May the Lord come to you in real comfort. He perfectly understands what you go through. I was the first one that I know of that was saved in my family (my parents accepted the Saviour later); and when I first gave my testimony at home, my mother said to me, "It's nice to have you stay home, but please don't talk about those things here."

I know of precious youngsters in the Orient who accepted the Saviour and came out of paganism and idolatry. When they went home and gave

a testimony for the Lord Jesus, they were beaten and kicked out of the house. They were told, "Come back when you are able to bow down to the gods." We know nothing of that; but we do know something of being ostracized, of feeling alone.

Our Lord is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and He knows exactly what we go through. "He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18). And Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need." Why? Because He understands. He went through it. He knows what it is to be ostracized and not be believed, even though He lived 30 years with them in sinlessness, in purity, in a town like Nazareth.

"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Yes. But it is hard to believe, is it not, that there were those in His family who did not believe Him.

6. Jesus therefore said to them, "My time is not yet at hand; but your time is always opportune.

7. "The world cannot hate you; but it hates Me, because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil.

8. "Go up to the feast yourselves; I do not go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come."

9. And having said these things to them, He stayed in Galilee.

Jesus didn't say He wasn't going up, but "I'm not going up when you say so." The brethren did not know who He was; they were blind to the Person in their midst. They didn't understand why He came, and they didn't understand the religious world to which they belonged. How true that is today.

"The world will not hate you," He told his brethren. "The world hates me." Why did His world hate Him? Because He testified of it that its works were evil. His life and His ministry were an open

rebuke to the world. He showed up the evil in men's hearts, and they hated Him without a cause.

You know, before you became a Christian, you were part of a circle of friends. As stories were told and things were done, you just sat there and everybody freely talked about evil. Then you accepted the Saviour, and you gave a testimony. Immediately there was a barrier. It's not because of some doctrine. It's because the life of Jesus in you is a continual rebuke to men in sin. That's why they don't like Christians.

Evil men and women are uneasy in the presence of real Christians. Now, if that's true of us, how true it was about Him! He was absolutely sinless, harmless, holy, righteous, and absolutely pure.

"The world doesn't hate you. The world hates me," He told His unconverted brethren.

Don't be surprised then, my Christian friends. When you take a stand for the Saviour, don't expect the world to come and pat you on the back. A tremendous barrier stands between the world and the believer.

As Paul said in Galatians 6:14: "But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."

And John wrote in 1 John 2:15: "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If any one loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

The world is a religious system that is opposed to Jesus Christ, to the people of Christ, and to the Word of Christ. It is a willful system, despising the person of Christ, the work of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ.

I repeat it.

His brethren did not believe on Him. They had no place for Him.

The astounding thing is that people can live month after month and sometimes year after year

under the sound of the gospel and can hear of the glories of the Saviour who can save sinners and satisfy them and yet go on without committing to Him.

These men lived 30 years with the Saviour Himself and still didn't trust Him.

Now, notice the reaction of the people to Christ. Verse 43 says, "There arose a division in the multitude because of Him."

The truth concerning Christ is divisive.

10. But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as it were, in secret.

11. The Jews therefore were seeking Him at the feast, and were saying, "Where is he?"

12. And there was much grumbling among the multitudes concerning Him; some were saying, "He is a good man"; others were saying, "No, on the contrary, He leads the multitude astray."

13. Yet no one was speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews.

14. But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach.

His heavenly claims (7:14-39)

He claims His message is from heaven (7:14-24)

15. The Jews therefore were marveling, saying, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?"

16. Jesus therefore answered them, and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me.

17. "If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself."

The common people were fearful of the leaders, and the leaders were fearful of the common people. Go down to verse 20.

20. The multitude answered, "You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?"

Go down to verse 25:

He claims He came from heaven (7:25-36)

25. Therefore some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill?"

26. "And look, He is speaking publicly, and they are saying nothing to Him. The rulers do not really know that this is the Christ, do they?"

27. "However we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from."

Go down to verse 31:

31. But many of the multitude believed in Him; and they were saying, "When the Christ shall come, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?"

32. The Pharisees heard the multitude muttering these things about Him.

Go down to verse 40:

40. Some of the multitude therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, "This certainly is the Prophet."

41. Others were saying, "This is the Christ." Still others were saying, "Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He?"

42. "Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?"

43. So there arose a division in the multitude because of Him.

44. And some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

45. The officers therefore came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, "Why did you not bring

Him?"

46. The officers answered, "Never did a man speak the way this man speaks."

In their attitude about Christ, the people are theological gypsies. We have the same kind among us today. They are people who don't know what to believe. One day, they believe one thing; and another day they believe something else. They are never stabilized in their faith. But there's no reason why every Christian should not be established. God deliver us from being theological gypsies, running from church to church, group to group, doctrine to doctrine, never stable, full of perplexity.

Such people say to me, "Mr. Mitchell, you preach one thing and the Reverend So-and-So preaches something else, and Dr. So-and-Such preaches something else. What can a poor fellow do?"

I tell them, "Do you really want the truth or are you excusing your unbelief by saying, 'What can a fellow believe when you are all preaching something different?'"

The Lord Jesus asks, "Do you really want to know if My teaching is from heaven? If any man will do His will—if you really want the truth—you shall know whether I'm speaking from God or otherwise."

In chapter 6:37, you remember, the appeal was to the heart. He "who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." It is the same thing here in chapter 7. If your heart is yearning for reality, for life, for God, if you really mean business with God, God means business with you. If you really want to know, "you'll know that My teaching is from heaven, from My Father."

You have it in chapter 6:28, when they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?"

He said, "This is the work of God, that you be-

lieve in Him whom He has sent.”

Do you want reality? Do you really want to know? The revelation of truth is given to the believer and only to the believer who is willing to walk in the truth that God has already given to him. If you don't walk in the truth God has given you, He won't give you any more.

Why are Christians so ignorant? It is because they do not walk in that which God has already revealed to them. If I cease walking in the truth as I've seen it in God's Word, there will be no further revelation of truth. But as I do what I see to be the will of God, then He keeps opening doors to further truth and further revelation. There has to be that personal cooperation, that personal hunger, that heart yearning for the Saviour Himself if there is to be that revelation of Himself to our hearts.

We are living in a day of compromise, a day of shallow Christianity, a day when so many people are confused. And the tragedy of our day is that the average Christian has lost this hunger, this yearning for the living God.

Jesus said, “If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself.”

Now mark what He says.

18. “He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the one who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.”

In other words, He is saying to test your teachers. If a man is preaching for his own glory, then he's not speaking as a messenger of God. That kind of draws the line, doesn't it?

Of course, as the Lord was speaking, He had before Him these Jewish leaders who were always after one thing—self-glory. When these Pharisees came with their gifts to the temple, they blew the trumpet so everybody could see what they did.

When they stood and taught in the synagogue or temple courtyard, they were seeking their own glory.

Jesus said, "Let's prove it. Am I seeking my glory or the glory of Him that sent me? I'm pointing you to Him, the living God. My message is from Him."

His is a heavenly message given by a heavenly Messenger. The proof? He sought the glory of God.

I wouldn't ask you to try to judge everybody you hear, because the danger is you'll not judge righteously. You cannot see what's in the heart. But you can mark what place the messenger gives to Christ. That's the measurement.

And then He goes on to say,

19. "Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you carries out the law? Why do you seek to kill Me?"

This made them mad. They said, "You've got a devil."

"You're out of your head."

"Who goes about to kill you?"

"Where do you get that idea about killing you?"

Now it may be that the common people didn't know what the leaders of Israel were going to do, but He did.

When you come to the next chapter, He declares, "I am without sin."

They say, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?" See the issue? Either you accept the Son of God and go on with Him (as Peter in the last chapter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life") or your opposition to Christ increases.

"He is a good man."

"No, he's not."

"You're demon possessed." (Just think of that accusation against the Son of God. Demon possessed!)

See their perplexity and growing hatred for Him?

The issue is the same today in society and in the church. Christ must be the center. "What do you think of Christ?" ought to be the question we ask one another. "What do you think of Christ? Who is He? What is He?" Our answer will determine our eternal destiny. Our answer will determine our spiritual life. Our answer will determine how much we'll serve Him. Our answer will determine whether we are a real disciple or not.

Christ—that's the issue.

He who wills to do His will shall know of the doctrine. The obedient heart is the heart that grows. The obedient heart is the one to whom God reveals Himself. It's the obedient heart that enjoys the intimacy of His fellowship. It's the obedient heart that becomes a channel of blessing to others.

Put the Lord Jesus at the very center of your affection and then gladly obey Him, feasting upon His Word and finding His purpose in your life. Then you will go forth to be a real channel of blessing to your generation.

May He become exceedingly precious to you, not only today, but in the coming days, that His name might be glorified and magnified in your life.

Now Christ's first claim was that His message is from heaven. His second claim is that:

**He Himself came from heaven
(7:25-36)**

25. Therefore some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill?"

26. "And look, He is speaking publicly, and they are saying nothing to Him. The rulers do not really know that this is the Christ, do they?"

Some of the people do know that the rulers are determined to kill the Saviour. But they see Him standing in the temple courtyard boldly teaching the people, and nothing is being done. So they

raise the issue—have the rulers changed their minds? Have they lost their desire to kill Him? Or are they changing? Are they beginning to realize this is the Messiah and they're holding back?

They say,

27. "However we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from."

Had these Jews wanted to know the truth concerning our Saviour's birth, they could have found out that He came from Bethlehem. The temple records of births were right there in their city. And they knew Micah 5:2, "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity."

But they said, "We know where this man comes from. He's from Nazareth. He's a Galilean. But when Messiah comes, nobody knows where he is going to come from."

I take it they had in their minds Malachi 3:1 that says Messiah is going to "suddenly come to his temple." These were Jews who claimed to know the Bible! It is very easy to use the Bible to suit your own whims and to back up unbelief. And today there is just as much perversion of the gospel of Christ. Mark the Lord's answer.

28. Jesus therefore cried out in the temple, teaching and saying, "You both know Me, and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know.

29. "I know Him; because I am from Him, and He sent Me."

Notice the reaction to that statement.

30. They were seeking therefore to seize Him; and no man

laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.

What made them desire to take hold of Him? If I could put it in my own words, He is saying this: "I am the One who is from heaven, and My message is from heaven. I'm the One who knows the Father and am joined to Him. My Father and I are one."

If Jesus is not from heaven, if His message is not from heaven, if He is not God incarnate, then we have no actual revelation of God nor can we ever know God. You can point to creation if you want to, but you don't know God through creation. You only see His handiwork; you see the demonstration of His power; you see the revelation of His Godhead, that there is a God. But to know Him, to know who He is, to know what He wants, we need Jesus who says, "I am the One. I've come from heaven. I know the Father."

You see, the Lord is making the issue very clear. I'm not surprised there was a division among the people because of Him. Here He is in the courtyard of the temple teaching the people with authority just a few weeks before He is going to be crucified. And the more they oppose Him, then the more He speaks of His deity and the more He makes His claim that He is one with the Father. This makes them angry. They want to take Him, but they can't.

31. But many of the multitude (possibly these are the Galilean Jews who came down for the feast) believed in Him; and they were saying, "When the Christ shall come, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?"

32. The Pharisees heard the multitude muttering these things about Him; and the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers (I take it they were the temple officers) to seize Him.

Do you see the picture? The Pharisees didn't

come themselves; they sent officers to take Him. And when the Lord saw these officers coming to take Him, He made this amazing statement:

33. Jesus therefore said, "For a little while longer I am with you, then I go to Him who sent Me.

34. "You shall seek Me, and shall not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come."

He is very bold in coming out and making these statements. "I am only going to be with you a little while, and then I'm going back to Him that sent Me. I'm going back to heaven. And where I am, there ye cannot come."

I do not know what the Universalist does with a verse like this. There are those who teach that eventually everybody is going to be saved; everybody is going to be reconciled to Him; everybody, even Satan himself, is going to be brought back into the picture. This is what they call a "universal salvation" and "universal reconciliation."

But Jesus said, "Where I'm going, you cannot come." This is positive. There are no strings attached to it. "You have shut your heart to Me. You're opposed to Me personally. You don't want Me. Then you cannot come where I am going; and where I go, you cannot come."

Let me refresh your memory on this one fact, that all through these chapters—5, 6, 7, and 8—the appeal is not to some doctrine. The appeal is to a Person. Unless you have come to Him, personally, you have no life in you. Verses 37 to 39 contain the next great truth, and this to my mind is one of the most marvelous statements of our Lord in the whole Bible:

**He claims He will send the Holy Spirit
from heaven
(7:37-39)**

37. Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.

38. "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'"

John the Apostle, years afterwards, added this verse:

39. But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Here we have the last day of the feast. The Lord Jesus had been sitting down, which was the custom, teaching the people the Word of God, bringing His Father's message to their hearts. Now, the last day of the feast, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood (He's no longer teaching) and cried out, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink." This is a proclamation by the Son of God.

You see, He was at the Feast of Tabernacles, the only feast of eight days. Each day for seven days, the people went down to the Pool of Siloam, filled their silver pitchers with water, and walked up toward the temple. As they walked into the temple courtyard and to the temple itself, they sang the Psalms from the 103rd through the 118th to refresh their memory. Psalms 103, 105, 106, and 107 give the history of God's dealings with the children of Israel from the Passover and their deliverance from judgment and the crossing of the Red Sea to their wilderness wanderings and preservation by God. Read Ex 12:17-18.

Their minds were filled with both the past history of God's faithfulness and the coming kingdom. And, as they came up, they poured the water on the altar. This was done for seven days. But the eighth day, the great day of the feast, they did not

go down to the Pool for water. This was a day of rejoicing, a day of expectation. And right in the very middle of this the Lord Jesus stood and cried out, proclaiming, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'"

I am not surprised, a little later in the passage, that the policemen of the temple said, "Never did a man speak the way this man speaks." They had gone to take Jesus captive. Instead, He captivated them. "Never did a man speak like this man." How true. He was God.

Would a man make a statement like this? What would you think if I were to stand and of my own volition say, "If any man thirst—I don't care what you're thirsting for—come unto me and drink. And if you believe on me, out of your innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. There will not only be an intake, but there will be an outflow of life." Why, you'd say that man Mitchell is beside himself. These officers, they knew. They'd heard rabbis and teachers who daily taught in the temple, but this Man was different.

"If any man is thirsty . . ." Is there a person that has no craving of heart, no thirst? Some are thirsting for wealth, for popularity, for pleasure, for position. God has so made man that he will never be satisfied except with eternal verities.

Jesus said in chapter six, "You're not seeking Me for Myself. You want more bread for your tummy. You want Me to give you a free lunch counter."

"If any man is thirsty. . ." I am reminded of John 6:37: "The one who comes to me, I will certainly not cast out—I will never turn away."

"If any man is thirsty . . ." This is not the voice of a man. This is the voice of One who is in the heart of God, giving the pleading of the heart of God to humanity in its sins, in its lack of peace and joy and blessing and spiritual reality.

“If any man is thirsty . . .” No wonder in Matthew 11:27-28 He could say, “Nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. Come to me.” Do you want to know God? Then you “come to me . . . and I will give you rest.”

We are living in a generation that knows nothing of peace. All of us lock our doors. We are living continually in fear. There is no peace of heart, no peace of mind.

“If any man is thirsty . . .” Oh, I'm glad He said, “If any man.” That lets you and me in, no matter what our condition or our background.

“If any man is thirsty . . .” All He wants is that we be thirsty. Isn't it simple? “If you want satisfying life, come to Me. Do you want eternal life? Come to Me. Pardon, forgiveness, peace? Come to Me.”

Remember John 4:13-14: “Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst.” It will be in you a well of water springing up.

Here He says it will be a river flowing: “From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.”

I say, if there is an intake, there must be an outflow. Otherwise, the water gets stagnant. Do you say you are indwelt by the Spirit of God? The next verse says, “But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

John is writing from the other side of Pentecost as he looks back to what our Lord had said. “But to as many as received him—whoever comes to him—receives life, satisfying, everlasting, wonderful, abundant. We not only receive an intake of the Spirit of God, but there is a flow of blessing to others—the outflow of the Spirit of God.”

Here's a fisherman called Peter. A girl says to

him, "You're a Galilean. You're one of his disciples."

He says, "I'm not! I don't even know him!" And he curses and swears (Matthew 26:69-74).

But when the Spirit of God comes and indwells Peter, there's an outflow. He stood up before all Jerusalem and preached. Three thousand were saved. He stood up again. Five thousand were saved. He stood up before the Sanhedrin, the same men who put Christ to death, and accused them of killing the Prince of Life (Acts 2, 4 and 5).

Are you thirsty? What is lacking in your life? I do not know what your thirst is as a Christian. Are you thirsting for knowledge? for power? thirsting to be used? thirsting to know the purpose of God? He says, "Come to me. Come to me." That's where the believer should be—in His presence, for He is the One who meets every need.

Someone is going to ask me, "What if I'm thirsty for something that is not of God? Why come to Him?"

To change your thirst. He'll give you something better.

May I say just this and pass it along? Every believer in Christ receives the Spirit of God the moment he accepts Jesus as Saviour.

Romans 8:9 says: "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him." To the Corinthian church, Paul wrote, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you" (1 Corinthians 6:19)? Our Lord could say in John 14:17 that the Spirit of God is "with you, and will be in you." The same is found in John 15:26 and 16:7, 13-15.

Wonder of wonders! He wants to live in you and through you, for from you shall flow rivers of living water. What a privilege of committing our lives and all that we are to Him, who will flow through us like a stream of blessing to our generation.

And, my friend, our generation needs it. If we do

not flow with blessing from God to men, they'll never have it. Not to angels, but to you and me is given this honor and privilege and responsibility. "Out of your innermost being shall flow rivers of living water" to the parched around. Thousands upon thousands of parched people, thirsty for something, live around us.

They don't know what they thirst for because their thirst has never been quenched. He says, "I'll quench your thirst. You come unto me." I say, what a proclamation! May we heed it. And there is no question in the minds of these religious leaders of Christ's day.

The effect upon the people (7:40-8:1)

40. Some of the multitude therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, "This certainly is the Prophet."

41. Others were saying, "This is the Christ." Still others were saying, "Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He?"

42. "Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?"

43. So there arose a division in the multitude because of Him.

44. And some of them wanted to seize Him; but no one laid hands on Him.

45. The officers therefore came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, "Why did you not bring Him?"

46. The officers answered, "Never did a man speak the way this man speaks."

47. The Pharisees therefore answered them, "You have not also been led astray, have you?"

48. "No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he?"

49. "But this multitude which does not know the Law is accursed."

They were so angry that when

50. Nicodemus said to them (he who came to Him before, being one of them),

51. "Our Law does not judge a man, unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?"

52. They answered (sarcastically) and said to him, "You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee."

They would have found, had they searched their records, that both Jonah and Nahum came from Galilee. These two men prophesied to Nineveh.

53. And everyone went to his home.

8:1. But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

They had a home to go to, and He didn't. "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head" (Matthew 8:20). That crowd went to their homes. He went to the Mount of Olives to be with His Father.

John 8

Christ, The Light of the World

(Part 1)

Let me give you another wee summary.

The eighth chapter ends this section of four chapters which have given us the tremendous claims of the Son of God. The opposition to Him, which started in chapter 5, comes to a climax at the end of chapter eight when they accuse Him of blasphemy and seek to kill Him.

You remember in chapter 5 the Lord claims equality with God in nature, equality with God in power, equality with God in authority—not that God had given Him the power or the authority, but that He in Himself has power and authority equal with God.

In chapter 6, after having manifested Himself in blessed omnipotence by multiplying the bread and the fish, stilling the storm, and setting His disciples free from their terror, the Lord gives the great discourse, “I am the Bread of Life,” taking upon Himself the great name of God, a name which the Old Testament saints rarely ever used because it was so holy a name.

“I am the Bread of Life,” and the life that He gives is eternal life. It is satisfying life. It is resurrection life—a life over which death doesn't even cast a shadow—indwelling life.

It means union with God the Father and God the Son.

No wonder Peter cries out, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. And we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”

In chapter 7, He is the heavenly One. He came from heaven. His message was from heaven. He was going back to heaven. He would send the Holy Spirit from heaven.

He was the One who would be the fulfiller of Joel, chapter two. He would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. And the astounding thing to me in chapters 6 and 7 is that our Saviour didn’t look on the people as run of the mill. Every one is an individual person to Him, having a peculiar, individual need. And He meets each one on this level.

The occasion for the teaching (8:2-11)

Now, when we come to chapter 8, the great discourse of our Lord’s being the light of the world is preceded by a moral issue concerning a sinful woman; and it is concluded in chapter 9 with a physical issue when He heals the eyes of a man born blind.

Chapter 7 closes with His standing, making a proclamation: “If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink” (verse 37). Any man, irrespective of who or what he is, can come and drink and be satisfied.

Now in chapter 8, on the day after the last day of the great Feast of Tabernacles, He comes down from the Mount of Olives early in the morning. He walks into the temple courtyard to the treasury, and there He sits down again to teach the people. You remember that in the Feast of Tabernacles they had carried the water for seven days from the Pool of Siloam to the temple. And the last day, when they did not carry the water, He cried out, “If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.” Now in chapter 8, when the lights, the special

lights of the tabernacle feast have been put out, He proclaims, "I am the light of the world."

Now the occasion which brings out the message, "I am the light of the world," begins as He deals with a woman who is a sinner. If you remember the background of the other gospels, the Lord in a great many of these discourses revealed the fact that He was the friend of publicans and sinners.

He said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." People accused Him by saying, "This man receives sinners" (Luke 15:2). He said, "The Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

Now with this background, you can appreciate the situation in John 8 at a point in time near the end of our Lord's ministry. And while He is teaching the people, the Pharisees and scribes bring Him a woman caught in the act of adultery.

I'm not taking the time to be a critic on this portion. I am well aware of the fact that so many have written that this should not be in the Book, that this was just pushed in here, that John didn't write it, that it has no place in his gospel. I'm not going to discuss that matter. But, if you remove it, you have a hard time making a smooth transition from chapter 7 into chapter 8 and His discourse on the light of the world. It has a real bearing on the passage, and such men as Augustine and Jerome believed this was in the Book. We accept it as such. It has a real place in the connection between His great discourse on the water of life and "I am the light of the world; I am the great deliverer of men from slavery and from death; I am the sinless One; I am El Shaddai; I am the Almighty and the Pre-existent One."

2. And early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them.

3. And the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the midst,

4. they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act.

5. "Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?"

This amazing chapter starts with a sinful woman about to be stoned; it ends with a sinless Man about to be stoned. It starts with an outcast woman, worthy of death. It ends with the holy Son of God being the object of men's hatred as they pick up stones to stone Him. In contrast to the self-righteous, religious Pharisees, who are under the sentence of death themselves, the woman and our Saviour belong to an eternal inheritance.

Now, notice, these wily Jews set a trap for the Lord. They throw the woman down and say, "Rabbi, according to Moses' law this woman should be stoned. What do you say about it?" And the Lord Jesus does a wonderful thing.

Remember, He is seated. He's been teaching the people.

6. And they were saying this, testing Him, in order that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground.

He bowed Himself down and wrote on the ground and absolutely ignored them. What can you say to such evil-hearted men as these?

It's true that in Leviticus 20 and in Deuteronomy 22 those who committed adultery, the man and the woman, were to be taken out and killed. Now they didn't bring the man, these peeping Toms. They brought the woman. According to the law the man should have been there, and the man should have been stoned as well as the woman.

There was no need for the Lord to interpret the law, for Him to tell them what He thought about it.

The law was very clear. These folk should not have brought the woman to Him. They should have taken her to the Sanhedrin. Christ wasn't the judge of the Jews. The Sanhedrin was. But they brought her and threw her down before Him.

And I say I just love this picture of the Lord Jesus Christ as He wrote on the ground. And please don't ask me what He wrote, because I don't know. Neither does anybody else know. Suffice it for me to say that He ignored such people, and such people ought to be ignored or dismissed without a word. But they refused to be dismissed. They persisted that He answer them. You see, they thought the Lord was in a trap. If He says, "Obey Moses' law; take her out and stone her," then He is no longer the sinner's friend. And not only so, He would have come under the jurisdiction of Rome, for Jews had no right to stone without permission from Rome. So He would be in the wrong with the Roman leaders.

If He says, "Let her go," then He is opposed to the law of Moses.

You can see the Jews rubbing their hands. "Whatever His answer may be, we've got Him this time. We've got Him this time."

7. But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."

8. And again He stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

9. And when they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she had been, in the midst.

And the Lord looked up and said, "Let the one who is without sin throw the first stone at her." In other words, if I may put it this way, "All right, gentlemen, I appoint you men as the executioners of this woman—on one condition." And I personally believe His implication here is "If any of you

men have not committed the same sin that this woman has committed, cast your stone.”

Whether He wrote what they had done or not, I don't know. Suffice it to say this, when He wrote the second time with His head down, the Pharisees and scribes left—from the oldest to the youngest.

He is going to give this message, “I am the light of the world.” What did He do? He let the light shine on the consciences of these Jewish leaders. And when the light shone into their hearts, they got out as fast as they could. Now they didn't go out in a crowd. That would have been very noticeable. They slipped out one by one.

Listen, if religious leaders in Christ's day could not stand the light of Jesus Christ in veiled glory as a Man in the midst of men, please tell me how in the world will men stand in the presence of God in unveiled glory?

You say, “I don't believe that God will send a man to hell.” You don't need to worry, my friend. He'll be glad to go to hell in preference to standing before a Holy God in the blaze of His glory. No sinner could ever stand in the presence of a Holy God—not even Moses, the man of God, the servant of God. He said, “Show me your glory” and God said, “No man can see me and live.”

10. And straightening up, Jesus said to her, “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?”

11. And she said, “No one, Lord.”

The Lord turns to the woman. “Where are your accusers?”

“There are none, Lord.”

Then, if there are no accusers, the sentence cannot be executed. According to the law of Moses, you have to have witnesses; and, if there are no witnesses, none to accuse you, then no judgment can be passed.

11. And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go your way; from now on sin no more."

So He said, "Neither do I condemn thee."

Now the Lord is not glossing over her sin. By no means. But He refuses to sit as a judge with no witnesses. However, He did say something to my mind far more important.

He didn't say, "Sinful woman." He didn't say, "Prostitute." He didn't say, "Adulteress." He said, "Woman." My, what it must have meant to her. By the way, it is the same word used in John 2 when Jesus said to His mother, "Woman, what do I have to do with you?"

"Woman, where are your accusers?" There was no condemnation, no Phariseeism, no self-righteousness here. He just said, "Woman, where are your accusers? Did no one accuse you?"

"There are none, Lord."

You know, I'm of the persuasion that there was a tremendous transformation in this woman. When she came, she was dragged by those self-righteous religionists. You can just see her fighting her way. Such a woman would fight. Who wants to be made an object of shame? But when she looked into His face and heard His gracious words—and I'm sure He spoke with that love, that grace, that tenderness that would break her heart—

11. "Neither do I condemn you; go your way; and from now on sin no more."

Go home and repent? No. Go in peace? No. Go, and sin no more. It is far stronger. The Lord never condoned the sin; but He did love this woman, this sinner. He wanted her to be a transformed woman, free from such a life to live for the glory of God.

You know, it's an amazing thing, if I may just digress here for a second, how some people will come along right here and attack the grace of God. They say that if you're saved eternally and become

a child of God forever, you can go out and do anything you want to do. What we want to do is to glorify God. You can't look into the face of the Son of God, receive His mercy, His grace, and His love and then want to go out and continue to live in sin. Not when you've seen Him. The tragedy is, too few of us have really looked into His face and appreciated His grace and His mercy and His love. Here it is. "Go and sin no more."

Out of this came His next statement.

The teaching (8:12-58)
He is the Light of the World (8:12-20)

12. Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life."

If you read on down through this chapter, they go after the Saviour time and again; and here we have their first interruption:

13. The Pharisees therefore said to Him, "You are bearing witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true."

You've got to have two witnesses.

14. Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true; for I know where I came from, and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from, or where I am going."

Why? You're in the dark.

15. "You people judge according to the flesh; I am not judging any one.

16. "But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and He who sent Me.

17. Even in your law it has been written, that the testimony of two men is true.

18. "I am He who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me."

19. And so they were saying to Him, "Where is Your Father?"

Jesus answered, "You know neither Me, nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also."

May I suggest one or two things. In chapter 6, He said, "I am the bread of life;" in chapter 7, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Now He says, "I am the light of the world." There is no question that the issue is a Person, not His teaching. "I am the bread of life. You'll never hunger, if you come to eat this Bread. I am the light of the world; not to follow me means to walk in darkness; not to follow me means death."

But to follow Christ means trust. It means to believe and to trust Him. You won't follow Him without trusting Him. If you trust Him, you'll follow Him. In Colossians 1:13, "He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son." These Jews arguing with Christ were in darkness. They did not know from whence they themselves came. They didn't know where they themselves were going. Jesus said, "I know where I came from; I know where I am going. And my witness is true. My Father and I . . . He bears witness of me; we are one."

I am not surprised at the end of verse 20:

20. These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.

They would have taken and torn Him to pieces if they could, but His time wasn't ready. They couldn't touch Him. (For your comfort, my Christian friend, the world can't touch you and Satan can't touch you, until your job is finished.) Why

are they in the dark? “Because they know not the Father, nor me.” Ignorance of Christ is the root of not knowing God.

People today say, “Well, I believe in God; but I don’t believe in Christ.” They’re talking in a riddle. You can’t know God without Christ. And when you come to know Christ, you come to know God. These are inseparable.

Even in chapter 14:6-9, when Philip said, “Show us the Father, and it is enough for us,” the Lord said, “Have I been so long with you, Philip, and yet you have not come to know Me? He who has seen Me has seen the Father. . . . No one comes to the Father, but through Me. . . . If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also.”

These religious leaders of Israel were in the kingdom of darkness. They lived in the darkness. Their actions were in the dark. And they didn’t know where they themselves were going. Why? Because they didn’t know Christ.

And as He goes on in His claims, you’ll notice that ten times between verse 12 and the end of the chapter these Jews interrupt His messages. And before He is through, they are so mad, they are so hateful, they are so full of sneering at Him, that He makes some of the strongest statements in the Bible.

Starting in at verse 21 and running down through verse 36, we have the Lord Jesus revealed as the great Liberator. He liberates from death. He liberates from slavery. And in between those two aspects of liberation we have the ground of that liberation, which is the cross. And we’ve been noticing all the way through the gospel, from chapter 2 when He said to His mother, “My hour has not yet come,” that He has the cross before Him. Even in this discourse, in this passage, there can be no deliverance from death or from slavery except on the ground that He is going to die.

He is the great Deliverer from death (8:21-36)

21. He said therefore again to them, "I go away, and you shall seek Me, and shall die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come."

22. Therefore the Jews were saying, "Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come?'"

23. And He was saying to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world; I am not of this world.

24. "I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins."

Then they interrupted again. I want you to notice the emphatic statements of our Saviour here.

25. And so they were saying to Him, "Who are You?"

Jesus said to them, "What have I been saying to you from the beginning?"

26. "I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world."

27. They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father.

Had they not been listening? He had told them He was one with God. He was one with the Father.

But the reason for their blindness was because they didn't know the Father. To know God and to come into relationship with Him and to have the life of God is impossible without listening to Christ and knowing Christ.

So I say, unbelief in Him is a terrible thing. Don't you for one moment minimize the terrible-ness of unbelief. Hebrews 3 and 4 both say that unbelief is the product of an evil heart. And the root of it is unbelief in the Saviour. Now I may be frail. I may be weak. I may stumble. But there is no unbelief in me concerning the Person of our

Saviour. I'm trusting Him. It is only as I know Him that I come into the presence of God and know God.

So, they said, "Who are you?" They did not understand that He spoke to them of the Father.

Second, we have the foundation of our deliverance.

28. Jesus therefore said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.

29. "And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him."

30. As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.

Notice that the foundation of deliverance is the cross. Here we have it again: "When you lift up the Son of man, then you will know that I am He." When did they know this?

It was fulfilled in Acts 2:14-36 when Peter preached: "This Jesus, whom you took by wicked hands and crucified, has God raised up, to which all we are witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God . . . He has poured forth this which you both see and hear" and so on. And when the people heard of their crucifying Him and of God's raising Him from the dead, they cried out, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

"When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know."

In John 12:31-34 the Lord Jesus said, "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself. But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die."

"When you lift up the Son of man, then you will know that I am He." And He goes on, the Father

“has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.” This to me is the most precious thought concerning the sacrifice of Christ. In Matthew and Mark, our Saviour died as the trespass offering and as the sin offering respectively. That's why He cried out, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” You have it in Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34, Psalm 22:1.

But when you come to John's Gospel, He doesn't say that. He presents our Lord as the burnt offering, the offering of worship, the offering of submission. Take John 16:32 where He said, “Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.”

In Matthew and Mark, you have God in His governmental dealings with men; hence, you have the separation, the forsaking. He was a sin offering, a non-sweet-savor offering. He became sin for us that we might be delivered from sin.

But not in John's gospel. “When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am He . . . the Father has not left Me alone. I do always the things that please Him.” There's no separation in John. Jesus Christ is revealed here as two aspects of the offering: He is the burnt offering, the One pleasing to the Father; and He is the meal offering, the One whose life and sinless character always bring pleasure to God.

Third, He is the great Deliverer, not only from death but from slavery.

31. Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;

32. and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

33. They answered Him, “We are Abraham's offspring, and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You

say, 'You shall become free?'"

34. Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, every one who commits sin is the slave of sin.

35. "And the slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever.

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

He's the great Deliverer from slavery.

May I give you two aspects here, as our Lord declared them? First of all, true discipleship is evidenced by continuing in the Word of God. If you are not continuing, if you are not abiding in the Word, then you are not His disciple. One of the great characteristics of a follower, of a real disciple of the Son of God, is abiding in His Word.

How can I know the will of God if I do not stay in the Word of God where it has been revealed? And notice the result. If you and I stay in the Word of God as disciples, we shall experience liberation, freedom.

Do you have in your life things that sap spiritual strength? Have you become bound somewhat by some sin? There is deliverance for you, daily deliverance through the Word of God.

May I say to you that there is not one man on the face of the earth today, nor ever has been, except our Saviour, who knows the full power of the Word of God in his life. If we had a real inkling of the power of the Word of God, we would spend more time in it. This is one thing that Satan hates.

You remember the 119th Psalm, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Thy word" (verse 9). . . . "Thy word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee" (verse 11). Our Lord could say in John 15:3: "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you." Ephesians 5:26: "That he might sanctify (the church) by the washing of water with the word."

Now let me repeat these last six verses. There is so much honey here, so much truth for our hearts, that we must take the time to look deeper.

31. "Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;

32. and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

33. They answered Him, "We are Abraham's offspring, and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You shall become free?'"

It's an amazing thing how blind people can be, how self-deceived these Jews were. Never in bondage to any man? They must have forgotten their 400 years in Egypt. They must have forgotten their 70 years in Babylonian captivity. And while they were boasting of their religious relationship to Abraham and to God, they were groaning under bondage to Rome. And not only so, but they were slaves to sin—

34. Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, every one who commits sin is the slave of sin.

35. "And the slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever.

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

May I suggest to you 1 John 3:9: "No one who is born of God practices sin." He is not dealing with us who fail God now and then. He is talking about a life that is dominated by sin, a life controlled by sin. A person can be a moralist in his actions, can be an exemplary man in his actions before men, but be a slave to the lusts of the flesh and the lusts of the mind.

There is only One who can set us free; and whoever the Son sets free, is free indeed. If you're

bound by sin, by habits, one Person can set you free—actually set you free—and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. The only One who can put away sin is the One who died for you and me. He died that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He became what I was—sin, that I might become what He is—righteous.

He claims to be sinless (8:37-51)

37. "I know that you are Abraham's offspring; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you.

38. "I speak the things which I have seen with my Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father."

Now, follow on through this passage and watch these Jews go after the Son of God. They interrupt. They malign Him. They call Him names. They've got no argument against Him. So they begin to be personal in their venom.

39. They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father."

Jesus said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham.

40. "But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do.

41. "You are doing the deeds of your father."

They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God."

42. Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me; for I proceeded forth and have come from God; for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.

43. "Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word."

The Lord pours His anger on them when he

says,

44. "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies.

45. "But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me."

He tells them that the one who controls their life is a murderer and a liar and that the things that characterize their life are murder and lying. (In contrast, the Son of God is full of grace and truth, John 1:14.)

And then He makes this tremendous claim.

46. "Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?"

47. "He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God."

48. The Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?"

49. Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me.

50. "But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges.

51. "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death."

He claims to be El Shaddai, the Eternal One (8:52-58)

52. The Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word, he shall never taste of death.'

53. "Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?"

54. Jesus answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is noth-

ing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God';

55. and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I shall be a liar like you, but I do know Him, and keep His word."

They were murderers and liars. He was sinless. As you study these 10 interruptions of Christ's message by the Jews, take time to meditate. You will come to the conclusion that either they must get on their knees and worship this Jesus, the Son of God, or they must kill Him for blasphemy. There is absolutely no question in their minds about what He is claiming.

56. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad."

57. The Jews therefore said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?"

58. Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM."

Their decision (8:59)

59. Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple.

"I am the eternal One. I am the El Shaddai."

Oh, my! There's only one thing to do and that is to worship Him. Or stone Him. Again, oh! the terribleness of unbelief that would pick up stones to kill the sinless, holy Son of God. This is how far unbelief goes. It would slay God the Son—a terrible thing!

Let us continue in the Word of God. "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). Stay, abide in the Word of God because unbelief is tricky. It is subtle. Satan, the Devil, the adversary, will do anything under heaven to keep you from dwelling in that Book, to

keep you from being occupied with the Son of God. I say it again, unbelief is a terrible thing.

May God deliver us from it and may we as His people have a consuming passion to get into this Book and know the purpose of God.

May we get into the stream of His purpose and live to the praise of the glory of His grace.

John 9

Christ, The Light of the World

(Part 2)

Let me give you another wee summary.

This chapter illustrates the truth of chapter eight as John gives not only the healing of a man born blind, but also the reaction of his neighbors, of the Pharisees, his parents, and the blind man himself. The chapter ends with the man cast out of the temple, repudiated, excommunicated, but on his knees in front of the Saviour, worshiping Him as the Son of God. The One who has been spurned by the nation and the leaders is worshiped by a man, a blind beggar, whose eyes He had opened.

Following this, Christ never again pleads with Israel; and Israel is also through with Him.

In chapter 10, you have the revelation of the Shepherd who is going to have His sheep after all. In chapter 11, He is on the road to Jerusalem; and He raises Lazarus from the dead. In chapter 12, He's the center of attraction on His way to Jerusalem.

In chapters 13 through 17, He's in the upper room with His disciples and in the vineyard. In chapters 18 and 19, He is betrayed and crucified. In chapter 20, He is raised from the dead. In 21, He meets with His disciples at the Sea of Galilee and gives them His final words.

But here in chapter 9, there is absolutely no desire in the hearts of these leaders for Christ. They

are determined not to believe on Him, and they are determined to excommunicate anybody who would even think of believing on Him. The matter is closed. They are through with Him. Nothing will satisfy them but His death. At the end of chapter 8, when they picked up stones to cast at Him, Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them.

**The illustration of chapter 8 (9:1-33)
As the Light of the World, He opens blind eyes**

1. And as He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth.

Now, whether there was a time element between the two chapters, I'm not even going to discuss. To me, it is just as easy for Him to see the man as He came out of the temple as later. He has found one of His sheep, one who was born blind. The chapter is full of suggestions of practical truth for us.

2. And his disciples asked him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?"

3. Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him."

The disciples show their ignorance of the ways of God. They ask a question that the Lord is not going to discuss. His statement, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents" doesn't mean they were sinless, but that He's dealing with the man's blindness "that the works of God might be displayed in him."

4. "We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming when no man can work."

He is saying, "My work is delivering people from the thing in which they find themselves." And as

long as we are here on earth, we Christians also have a job to do. We are surrounded by people in affliction, in sin, in despair, in darkness. They are lost. And as long as people are suffering because of sin, we've got a job to do.

In chapter 5:17, Jesus said at the healing of the man sick for 38 years, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." He healed that man and had him carry his bed on the Sabbath day. The issue then was the Sabbath. The leaders didn't care about the man as long as their traditions were kept. Let the man stay in his defiled, reprobate condition.

But now, this man was a well-known beggar. Why didn't the Lord wait until the next day? The fellow would still have been there. But He deliberately performed the miracle on the Sabbath day.

After all, the Sabbath day was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. The Sabbath was a day of rest. What better day to heal this man than on the Sabbath day and bring him into the enjoyment of his rest in God.

In the first chapter of John, the Jew is seen as a reprobate. "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him." Then why should He keep up the Sabbath day sign of the covenant? They've broken the covenant and refused to obey the God of the covenant. Why worry about the sign?

4. "Night is coming, when no man can work.
5. "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

Note the urgency. I question if God has given us very much more time to reach our generation with the Word of God—that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. How much have you done this last month in trying to reach somebody for Christ?

Paul tells us (Ephesians 5:16) to redeem the

time because the days are evil. Christ says, "As long as I am here, I must do the work. I must reach people in need." This ties in to John 4:34: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work." How close we are to—night.

6. When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes,

7. and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam," (which is translated, Sent). And so he went away and washed, and came back seeing.

You'll notice that the man didn't ask to have his eyes opened. The Lord loves to do things differently. Except for the one case where He healed 12 lepers at one time, He healed more blind people than any other kind. He raised the dead three times. Four or five times, He opens blind eyes; and He does it a different way each time, depending on the personality and the circumstances.

The Lord deals with us, not *en masse*, but as individuals. Each of us is a special object of the grace and care and faithfulness of God. If you were the only one on the face of the earth, He would still take care of you. This is manifested here. He made clay and put it on the man's eyes. And this calls for two things from the man, faith and obedience. The moment he obeyed, he had deliverance. Deliverance comes from obedience.

You remember in John 8:31-32 the Lord Jesus said to the Jews who believed on Him, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." In verse 36: "If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed."

This passage in John 9 is the illustration of John 8. To follow Him means not to walk in darkness. Here is a man who has never seen the light of day, never seen a tree or a flower, never seen his

mother. He has never seen anything. He has always lived in the dark. How glad I am the Saviour is the light of the world and can come into any darkened heart that wants to know God. The moment your heart is open to Him, the light shines.

At the end of chapter nine, the leaders asked, "Are we blind?" There is a kind of sarcasm about this question. "We're leaders. You're accusing us of being blind?"

"Yes," said the Lord, "and your condition is worse because you say you see when you are blind."

Obedience brings deliverance. This blind man had to manifest faith. He had never seen Jesus. As far as I know, he may have heard the name; but he didn't know who it was who put His hand on him and said, "You go and wash." He just obeyed. And when the Word of God speaks to us, let us believe it.

Our believing will be evident by our obedience; obedience brings freedom, emancipation, liberation.

Now we've got some trouble on our hands.

Notice, first of all, the neighbors.

8. The neighbors therefore, and those who previously saw him as a beggar, were saying, "Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?"

9. Others were saying, "This is he," still others were saying, "No, but he is like him."

He kept saying, "I am the one."

10. Therefore they were saying to him, "How then were your eyes opened?"

11. He answered, "The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam, and wash'; so I went away and washed, and I received sight."

12. And they said to him, "Where is He?"

He said, "I do not know."

They were not so much occupied with the fact that his eyes were open. They were concerned about how it happened. This is unbelief. Faith looks to the fruit. The man of faith rejoices: "My, the man's eyes are open. We don't care how they were opened. They are open. That's the important thing." Unbelief goes the other way round. Unbelief is not concerned with the fruit but with the manner.

This is one of our dangers today—that we are more occupied with methods and manner than we are with life in Christ. I don't care what experience you've had. I do care that you really know Him.

Have you life in Him? Are you joined to Him, related to Him? That's the important thing. The important thing here is not the clay, not the Pool of Siloam, but that his eyes were opened. As one fellow said, "How do I know when I was saved? I was there when He did it."

13. They brought to the Pharisees him who was formerly blind.

14. Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.

Dear Lord, why didn't You do it on the first day of the week? Why didn't You do it some other day than the Sabbath? He just seemed to love to do something like this to bring out truth.

15. Again, therefore, the Pharisees also were asking him how he received his sight. And he said to them, "He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see."

16. Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath."

But others were saying, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?"

And there was a division among them.

Always this. You remember in chapter 7 there was a division among them because of Him. Here the division is not the blind man. The division is the Lord Jesus.

17. They said therefore to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?"

And he said, "He is a prophet."

18. The Jews therefore did not believe it of him, that he had been blind, and had received sight, until they called the parents of the very one who had received his sight,

19. and questioned them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?"

The parents were frightened. It had gone around that if anybody claimed that Jesus Christ was the Messiah he would be excommunicated.

Now that doesn't sound like much to us. We would just leave one church and go to another—but not a Jew. A Jew belongs to the temple. When he's been excommunicated, he can't enter any temple or synagogue. He's been cut off from the worship of God and the reading of the Word of God. He's cut off from social life with his people. He's an outcast.

These parents were afraid of this.

20. His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind."

You couldn't fool that mother. If anyone knew he was born blind, she did. My, what years upon years of sorrow these parents had had. And now their son stands before them with his eyes open. But they are scared.

21. "But how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he shall speak for himself."

22. His parents said this because they were afraid of the

Jews; for the Jews had already agreed, that if any one should confess Him to be Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.

23. For this reason his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

24. So a second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner."

Isn't that a nice thing to say? "Give God the glory. Ignore this one who opened your eyes. We want to glorify God." It is all words.

As the Great Deliverer, He delivers from darkness

25. He therefore answered, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

Once I was lost, and now I'm saved. Once I was a child of wrath, and now I'm a child of God. Once I was bound for hell, and now I'm bound for heaven. You can bring all the intellectual arguments you want to; but one thing I know—I was blind, and now I see.

The man feels pretty good now. Listen to what he says. I love to read this.

26. They said therefore to him, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?"

27. He answered them, "I told you already, and you did not listen; why do you want to hear it again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?"

He's getting a little sarcastic.

28. And they reviled him, and said, "You are his disciple; but we are disciples of Moses.

29. "We know that God has spoken to Moses; but as for

this man, we do not know where He is from.”

30. The man answered and said to them, “Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes.”

“You’re religious leaders, and you don’t know the things of God?” He’s beginning to irritate them.

31. “We know that God does not hear sinners; but if any one is God-fearing, and does His will, He hears him.

32. “Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that any one opened the eyes of a person born blind.

33. “If this man were not from God, He could do nothing.”

This man is beginning to crow at them a little wee bit. Watch now as these religious leaders press harder and harder on him and try in their unbelief to push Christ out of his thinking. They want him to deny that Jesus had done this.

Unbelief is a terrible thing. A closed heart to the Saviour is an awful calamity.

34. They answered and said to him, “You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?” And they put him out.

35. Jesus heard that they had put him out; and finding him, He said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”

36. He answered and said, “And who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?”

37. Jesus said to him, “You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you.”

38. And he said, “Lord, I believe.” And he worshiped Him.

As the Sinless One, He forgives the sinner. As the Eternal One, He accepts worship.

I believe the Lord went right out and found him. It’s wonderful. Even though one may be kicked out by the world and scorned by friends, the Lord Jesus is always there.

As Hebrews 13:5-6 says, “ I will never desert

you, nor will I ever forsake you,' so that we confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What shall man do to me.'"

Isaiah 41:10: "Do not fear, for I am with you" in the factory, in the shop, in your neighborhood, in your home.

If you take a stand for the Saviour, if you love Him and worship Him, you'll be ostracized by your unsaved friends. But He has said, "Do not fear. I am with you. I will never leave you. I will never forsake you."

I love this little picture.

Notice that the Lord is always willing to add further truth. In verse 11 the man said, "A man that is called Jesus made clay, and opened my eyes." In verse 17, when they asked, "What do you think about him?" he said, "He is a prophet."

Jesus in verse 35 said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

"Lord, I believe," he said in verse 38, "And he worshiped Him." Do you notice the movement? First, he said Jesus was a man, then a prophet, now the Son of Man and he worships Him.

When you and I walk in the truth God gives us, He will add more truth. But there is no further revelation of truth to your heart until you walk in the truth you already know. He is a man. He is a prophet. He is the Son of Man, the Son of God. Worship Him.

Do you want to know more of the intimacy of the heart of God and His purposes and counsels? Then walk in obedience to the truth that you know. He will unfold it, enlarge it and increase our capacity until we become mature men and women in Christ.

The second lesson I want you to mark is in verses 24 and 25.

They said, "Give God the praise."

He said, "Whether he is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that, whereas I was blind,

now I see.”

39. And Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see; and that those who see may become blind.”

40. Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things, and said to Him, “We are not blind too, are we?”

41. Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, ‘We see’; your sin remains.”

Oh, what blessed assurance. We can say with Paul in 2 Timothy 1:12, “I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.” And Philippians 1:6, “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”

I love that verse in Ecclesiastes 3:14: “I know that everything God does will remain forever; there is nothing to add to it and there is nothing to take from it, for God has so worked that men should fear Him.”

Once I was blind, but now I see!

John 10

Christ, The Good Shepherd

I want to give you one more wee summary.

In this wonderful portion on the shepherd work of Christ, we find the Lord gathering together a flock of sheep. Throughout your Old Testament, God was looked upon as the Shepherd of His people.

In Psalm 22, as the good Shepherd He dies for the sheep.

In Psalm 23, He cares for the sheep: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

In Isaiah 40:11, He takes the lambs to His bosom.

In Ezekiel 34 and Zechariah 11, He pastures His people.

He looks upon Himself as the Shepherd of His people and distinguishes in both Testaments between the real shepherd and the false shepherd. Ezekiel 34:1-2 warns about false shepherds who undermine the work of God and who have no care or desire or love for the sheep.

But God loves them, cares for them, and lays down His life for them.

Now here in John 10, He is going to have a flock. He's going to care for them. He's going to give them abundant life. He's going to protect them from their enemies.

The Son of God reveals Himself as the true Shepherd, the good Shepherd, the only Shepherd, the obedient Shepherd, and as the faithful Shepherd. In the first six verses of the chapter, He is

revealed as the true Shepherd in contrast to the false shepherds; and He is going to put forth His sheep out of Israel.

He is the TRUE Shepherd (10:1-6)

1. "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber.

2. "But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep.

3. "To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out.

4. "When he puts forth all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.

5. "And a stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers."

6. This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.

This is the only parable you have in the Gospel through John, and they (the Jews who were confronting Him concerning the healing of the blind man) did not understand what He was getting at.

Of course, you know the picture. At eventide when the sun went down, all the flocks would come into the one fold. And in the morning the shepherds would come to get their own flock, and each shepherd would give his own particular call. His sheep, and only his sheep, would follow that shepherd. They would wend their way through the other sheep and come out of the sheepfold and follow him off. Another shepherd would come along, give his particular call and his sheep would come out. The sheep know their shepherd.

The Pharisees and scribes and priests of our Lord's day considered themselves to be the leaders

and the shepherds of God's people, but I believe primarily the Lord here is referring to these Pharisees before Him as the ones who are the false shepherds. They had no love for the man in chapter 5, a man sick for 38 years. They'd rather see him in his sinful and wretched physical condition by the pool than to have the Sabbath day and their traditions broken. It's the same also in chapter 8 where they caught a woman in the act of adultery and became her critics and judges. They didn't come as shepherds caring for the sheep. Nor had they interest in the man born blind, who had never seen the light of day. They had no care for the sheep. They were false shepherds.

Now we have six things before us in this parable. We have a true shepherd and false shepherds, sheep and a sheepfold and a door. We have one who is the porter.

The shepherd is the Lord Jesus Christ; the sheep are His people. The fold is Israel here. Verse 16 clarifies that. He says there, "And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock with one shepherd."

You remember in Matthew 10:5-6 the Lord said to the disciples as He sent them out two by two, "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Or in Matthew 15:22-26 when the Canaanite woman came to the Lord and said, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed."

You remember the Lord's answer, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs. I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Now who is the porter in John 10? May I suggest this? The porter would be John the Baptist who, by preaching the baptism of repentance for

the remission of sins, first prepared the way of the Lord and opened the door of the sheepfold to Him. He introduced our Lord officially to Israel when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

But what would the door be? It describes the way Messiah was supposed to come to fulfill the promises to Israel. There was no question in the minds of the Jews how Messiah would come.

When Herod went to the scribes and leaders of Israel in Matthew 2 and asked, "Where will the Christ be born?" they knew how He would be born and where. Isaiah 7:14 says, "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel."

Isaiah 9:6 says, "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us." Micah 5:2 says: "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity." I could multiply the passages.

The Jewish leaders never challenged the Lord Jesus concerning His right to the throne. All they needed to do was to go down to the archives in the temple and follow through the genealogy of David. They would have had to come to Mary.

He says, "I am the only true Shepherd." He is the One who (verses 3-4) "calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out. When he puts forth all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice." He is putting forth His sheep, leading them out of Israel. He is starting a new flock, as we'll see in verse 16.

I love this relationship between the Lord Jesus and His people. He knows each individual believer by name. He is the One who leads his sheep out of the fold of Israel and into the flock of God.

"And I have other sheep, which are not of this

fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock with one shepherd." He has changed the word "fold" to "flock" in that verse.

No longer is the flock restricted to Israel. It's international—for anyone, Jew or Gentile, who will become a member of His flock. He knows them all by name, and they are in tune with Him, and they know His voice.

Sheep won't listen to another voice. You could put on the shepherd's cloak, take his rod, make the same cry he makes, and the sheep will just ignore you. They know his voice.

May I ask a question? Does He have that intimacy with you? Do you know His voice? Or would you follow a stranger? In this day when so many false philosophies, false doctrines, so many voices are crying out, it is amazing how even God's weakest people will not be taken in.

Young people in schools and colleges often face the anti-Christian teacher who ridicules their faith with all kinds of smooth arguments. He seeks to do one thing—destroy faith in Christ.

Whether any of us is able to answer his arguments or not is neither here nor there; for he is blind, leading the blind. If you have heard the voice of the Son of God, your heart will not be open to strangers.

Now, listen.

If you get into the Word and saturate your mind—I don't care who the teacher is or how clear and how wonderful he may sound—even though you can't explain away his arguments, the Spirit of God will move in your heart, warning you there is something wrong.

You may not be able to put your finger on it. You may not be able to analyze it.

But you'll know, right down in your heart, that there is something false.

Saturate your mind with the Word of God and

follow your true Shepherd.

He is the GOOD Shepherd (10:7-11)

7. Jesus therefore said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

8. "All who came before Me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them."

Now God is going to begin to give us two things—His purpose and His program. His purpose is to gather out a flock. How can He gather a flock when they need life, when they need cleansing, when they need liberation? So starting at verse 9 you have His program.

9. "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

He'll say it again in John 14:6: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me." That's why Peter could say before the Council in Acts 4:12: "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved."

Now remember, the Lord is standing up before these leaders. He is claiming authority over the souls of men ("if any one enters"), authority in the salvation of men ("he shall be saved"), authority in the liberation of men ("shall go in and out"), authority in the sustenance of men ("find pasture"). He is not a hireling. He is not somebody hired to do a job. Here is the manifestation of His love. He is the door of the sheep, and everyone who enters into Him has salvation, liberation, and sustenance.

There is plenty of pasture today for God's people. We go in and out of the Scriptures, out of the Old Testament into the New and back to find our pas-

ture. Remember in the book of Ruth? Boaz said to her, "Do not go to glean in another field. Stay here with my maids." There is abundant pasture. You do not need to leave His field. If you fed on this Book for a hundred years, you'd still find the pastures green.

I remember a statement by dear W. R. Newell, the man who wrote on the book of Romans. We were together one day in St. Louis at a Bible conference in the same room in the same hotel, and I said to him, "W. R., how often have you taught the book of Romans?"

He looked at me with those deep-set eyes and said, "Jack, I have taught the book of Romans 80 some times and the pastures are still green."

And if our Saviour in the first Psalm could say that He, the blessed Man, did meditate day and night upon the Word of God, shall we do less? Let us be well-fed sheep. Well-fed sheep are contented sheep.

Search the Scriptures. In them you'll find life and strength. You'll have that wonderful peace that passes all understanding because they always point to Him who is the Living Word. He gives peace.

If I were to follow through His program, He came that we might have life and that we might have it abundantly. How? "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (verse 11).

10. "The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.

11. "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

He is saying, "I am the shepherd, the good one, in contrast to the hirelings, the thieves, and the robbers. And as the shepherd, the good one, I manifest My goodness, My love, and My care for

the sheep by giving My life for the sheep that they might have abundant, overflowing life.” This is divine life, eternal life. This is the life He has been talking about in chapter 4, chapter 5, chapter 6, chapter 8. Indeed, it starts in chapter 1, verse 4: “In Him was life.”

But how can those who are dead in sins receive life?

“I am the shepherd, the good one, and I lay down my life. I give my life.”

What for?

That we might live? Yes. That we might have an overflowing, abundant, satisfying, resurrection life, an indwelling life in union with God Himself.

Now you go to your Old Testament. In Genesis 4 Abel’s sheep died for him. Go to Genesis 22 where Abraham offered up his son, and God stopped him. Abraham took the ram caught in the thicket and offered it instead of his son.

Go to Exodus 12. They slew a lamb, applied the blood, and then the death angel passed over. All through the Old Testament it is the sheep that die for the shepherd. But when you come to this picture, it is the other way around. This is an amazing thing—that He should lay down His life that the sheep might not only be saved, but might have an abundant, overflowing life.

Now in verses 12 to 16 He is the only Shepherd. He is the—only—Shepherd. He loves the sheep. The hireling doesn’t. The good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. The hireling runs away.

I wonder if we Christians appreciate such love—a love evident in sacrifice.

What is its value to us? that we might just be saved from sin? that we might just get to heaven?

These alone are wonderful things. But the value of such a love to us is that we might be partakers even now of an abundant, eternal, divine life—an overflowing life, a life that goes out to others.

How much do you love Him? He lay down His life

for you because He loves you, cares for you, knows you, wants you, owns you. How do you respond to His love?

He is the ONLY Shepherd (10:12-16)

12. "He who is a hireling, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, beholds the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees, and the wolf snatches them, and scatters them.

13. "He flees because he is a hireling, and is not concerned about the sheep."

The hireling is not the shepherd and doesn't own the sheep. He has no love for the sheep; he doesn't care for the sheep; and when the wolf comes and scatters the sheep, he's gone too. Why? Because he doesn't own the sheep. He flees because he is a hireling.

14. "I am the good shepherd; and I know My own, and My own know Me,

15. even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep."

Oh, this is a wonderful thing—this union. The Lord says, "I know My Father, and the Father knows Me, and I know My sheep. But I love My sheep, and I lay down My life for the sheep, and I care for the sheep. And no one is ever going to take My sheep. Don't you know your Shepherd? I own you. I know you intimately by name. I love you. I manifested My love by dying for you."

When the wolves come, He doesn't run away. When opposition comes, He is right by your side. He is your Shepherd. And if He were to leave you for one moment, He would not be a keeper of the sheep. He wouldn't be the Shepherd—the good one. As John 13:1 says, "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end."

As even dear Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, could write, “The LORD appeared to him from afar, saying, ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love’” (Jeremiah 31:3). That is the only kind of love God has—perfect, complete, eternal love.

16. “And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock with one shepherd.”

Whether Jew or Gentile, irrespective of name, of color, of tribe, of language, of country—it makes no difference who the person is—God has a flock. This is God’s purpose. He’s gathering out a people to be a flock.

In Acts 15:14-16, James said: “Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. And with this the words of the Prophets agree; just as it is written, ‘After these things (after I have gathered out my flock of Jews and Gentiles) I will return, and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen.’”

When He comes back to earth, He is going to rebuild Israel. But right now He is gathering out a people for His name. He is gathering out Jews and Gentiles and forming a flock.

It is not that the Gentiles are coming into the Jewish fold. We don’t come into the Jewish fold, into Israel. We never are Israel, never were Israel, and never will be Israel. We belong to the Church, the flock of God today. We have become a new flock.

I want to be dogmatic here. I want this thing to be very clear in your mind. This was one of the troubles in the early Church. In the fifteenth chapter of Acts, the first Council of Jerusalem wanted the Gentiles to be saved; but they wanted the Gentiles to be saved through Judaism to Christ. That is, they wanted them to come to Christ through

the Law. We are not even spiritual Israel. We're the Body of Christ. We're a flock that is international. "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock with one shepherd."

He is the OBEDIENT Shepherd (10:17-18)

17. "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.

18. "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

Here is a stupendous thing. Here is something that nobody else can do. Notice the authority of the Son of God, working in perfect cooperation with the desire and will of the Father. "I lay down my life that I might take it up again." He only could do that. You can't do that. No man can do that. You can blow your brains out, but you are not laying down your life. "No man takes My life from Me."

You say, "Why, they crucified Him."

Yes, they killed His body, but not until He gave them the opportunity to do it. All through John they picked up stones to stone Him. He slipped through their midst. In verse 24 the Jews gathered round Him with a jealousy, with an envy, with a hatred, with an opposition that nothing would satisfy except His death. "No man takes My life from Me," He said. "I have authority (power) to lay it down."

Go to the cross. The Lord Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" He cried out, "I thirst." He cried with a loud voice, "It is finished," and He bowed His head in resignation and yielded up the Spirit. You can't do that.

The Lord's death was both natural and supernatural—natural because of sin. 1 Peter 2:24: He bore “our sins in His body on the cross.” Isaiah 53:6: “All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.” He died because of sin. People die because of sin. The wages of sin is death. Romans 8:10 says, “The body is dead because of sin.” It's under the sentence of death because of sin. We're born into the world in sin and we're born to die.

But He wasn't born in sin. He could say in John 8:46, “Which one of you convicts Me of sin?” He was without sin. He did no sin. In Him is no sin. He knew no sin. He was sinless. Yet He died, and He bore your sin and my sin. He bore our sins, and I say from that viewpoint His death was natural.

But His death was supernatural. “No one takes My life from Me. I have power to lay it down. I have power to take it again.”

Not only did He lay down His life for the sheep, but He came forth in resurrection to guarantee life to the sheep, that they in turn might enjoy divine life, eternal life, satisfying life. This is stupendous!

What authority He has as Son of God, as Son of Man, working in perfect cooperation with the Father. This is His desire. You have here the eternal, complete obedience of the Son. And in so doing, He ignores the powers of hell. He ignores the power of men. “No man, no power, no authority can take my life from me.” A stupendous statement of Christ's! No wonder there was a division among the Jews.

He is the FAITHFUL Shepherd (10:19-30)

19. There arose a division again among the Jews because of these words.

20. And many of them were saying, “He has a demon, and

is insane; why do you listen to Him?"

21. Others were saying, "These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?"

He says, "I have authority to lay down my life. I have authority to take it up again."

They say, "You're mad. You're demon-possessed. You are not talking like a rational being. You're saying things that could only be said by God." Then about three months went by between this and the next verse.

22. At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem;

23. it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon.

The Feast of Tabernacles is in September, approximately. The Feast of Dedication, or the Feast of Lights, is in December.

In fact, some declare the Feast of Lights should be held the twenty-fifth of December as the memorial of the cleansing of the temple by Judas Maccabaeus about 150-200 B.C. Since then, Jewish people all over the world have recognized this Feast, called here the Feast of Dedication, remembering the cleansing of the temple when it was defiled by Antiochus Epiphanes, the one who sacrificed a pig on the altar.

24. The Jews therefore gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly."

You can just see them hemming Him in now on Solomon's Porch. And they all crowded around Him.

"Now tell us, tell us in your own words. Are you the Christ?"

25. Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these bear witness of Me.

26. "But you do not believe, because (and this is what I want to get at here) you are not of My sheep."

"If you were My sheep, you would believe Me, you would follow Me, you would love Me, you would heed Me.

"But I know you are not My sheep because you don't believe Me, you don't love Me, you don't follow Me, you don't obey Me."

27. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."

Here is a bond. Here is a relationship.

27. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

28. "And I give eternal life to them (until they backslide? No!), and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand.

29. "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

30. "I and the Father are one."

In John 13 when the Lord came to wash the disciples' feet, Peter said to Him, "*Never shall You wash my feet!*" but he did let the Lord wash his feet.

However, when Jesus says "never," He means exactly what He says: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give eternal life to them; and they shall *never, in no wise, under any consideration* perish." Why? Because "no man is able to snatch them out of My hand. My Father who gave them to Me is greater than all—He is omnipotent, He is God—and no

man is able to plunder them out of My Father's hand." He says, "I am the one who gives eternal life to my sheep. I lay down My life for the sheep. I give them My life. The life I give My sheep is My own life."

Some say that a Christian doesn't have eternal life. They deny the fact that Christ is eternal. But that is the only life He has to give. The very life that God gives to sinners who believe in His Son is the same life that He Himself has. In Him is life!

When you and I came as sinners and received Him as our Saviour, we put our trust in Him. At that very moment He gave us His life—divine life. We are partakers of divine nature, of a life that never ends.

"No one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one."

The opposition (10:32-42)

31. The Jews took up stones again to stone Him.

32. Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?"

33. The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God."

Then the Lord Jesus gave this unanswerable argument:

34. Jesus answered them, "Has it not been written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'?"

35. "If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came, (and the Scripture cannot be broken),

36. do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"

He said, "I depend upon your own infallible

Word, the Scriptures. If God called the unjust judges of the day back in the Psalms ‘gods,’ what think you of the One whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world, the One who said, ‘I am the Son of God.’ ”

He didn’t object to the leaders of Israel who were unjust.

They were made the recipients, the caretakers, of the Word of God; but they were unjust in their dealings with God’s people. “And if God called them gods, are you angry because I, who have been sanctified by the Father and sent into the world, say I am the Son of God?”

37. “If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me;

38. but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father.”

39. Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him; and He eluded their grasp.

40. And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing; and He was staying there.

41. And many came to Him; and they were saying, “While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true.”

42. And many believed in Him there.

The Lord left them and went to Bethabara (v. 40) across the Jordan, and I read that the people still remembered John the Baptist and his statements (v. 41). They said all that John said of this man was true, and many believed in Him there (v. 42).

What I’m after is this: How does all this affect your own heart, your own love for the Saviour, your obedience to His word? You will surely want to follow Him when you realize that He knows you, that He loves you enough to die for you and give

you His life, that He calls you by name, that you are precious in His sight, and that He cares for you.

He's the real Shepherd. He's the faithful Shepherd, faithful even unto death, faithful in caring for us. The very life that is His is the life He has given to us.

May I say to those of you who love the Saviour, isn't it about time that we Christians really got down to business with God and appreciated His love and His care and His knowledge? To think that He calls you by name—by name individually, personally. He loves you, cares for you, knows you, and is guaranteeing that one of these days—because you belong to His flock—you'll stand in His presence conformed to the image of your Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

I say, what a Saviour! What a Lord! We can say with the psalmist, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

John 11

Christ, The Resurrection and the Life

First, let's have our wee preview.

The resurrection of Lazarus from the dead is the last sign the Lord gave of His deity before the cross.

In chapter 5, He claims the power to raise the dead; and in chapter 11, He proves it.

In chapter 10, the Jews had said to Him, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." And when He did tell them, they picked up stones to stone Him. Now He is going to give them a sign they must accept or reject.

Oh, the awfulness of unbelief! How far the human heart will go in its rejection of the Saviour. I trust this chapter will bring to us both the revelation of the marvelous heart of God—His tremendous care and sympathy for His people in their need—and the revelation of His mighty power over man's worst enemy, death.

The resurrection of Lazarus (11:1-46) Lazarus is sick (11:1-6)

1. Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, of the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

2. And it was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.

3. The sisters therefore sent to Him, saying, "Lord, behold,

he whom You love is sick."

It wasn't a case of his having the flu or having a cold. This man was really sick unto death, and they knew it. And it would take the messenger two or three days to get to the Lord.

4. But when Jesus heard it, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it."

The driving force in our Lord's life was the glory of God, and through that glory the Son was going to be glorified.

You have that in chapter 12:23: "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified," and in chapter 17:1: "Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee."

The great purpose of redemption, the purpose of suffering for the believer is, in the final analysis, that it will be all for the glory of God. We may not begin to understand it, especially when we are going through it; but it is for the glory of God.

Now these two girls have appealed to the Lord on the ground of His love. I believe this is the ground whereby we can have our requests answered.

You remember in John 16:26-27 He speaks of the fact: "In that day you will ask in My name; and I do not say to you that I will request the Father on your behalf; for the Father Himself loves you." We are to make our requests and expect them to be answered not on the ground of our love or affection for Him, but on the ground of His devotion, His infinite love for us. John 17:24 illustrates that. "Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world."

This very affliction of Lazarus's drove these two girls to the Lord Jesus. Afflictions often come to God's people for the purpose of driving us to Him.

5. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.

Notice the contrast between verses 3 and 5. In verse 3, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick." The one for whom You have great affection—phileo—is very sick. In verse 5, "Now Jesus loved—agape—Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." His is a much deeper word—"Now Jesus was very devoted." Their love was an emotional thing.

Verse 5 anticipates that in this chapter He is going to reveal something concerning the very heart of God that is not shown in any other place.

6. When therefore He heard that he was sick, he stayed then two days longer in the place where he was.

If we had been in those girls' shoes, we would have said, "Lord, hurry up. Hurry up! Every day we see him going farther down. If You don't come soon, Lazarus will die. It's no use coming when he's dead."

What an appeal. Of course, the Lord is going to come. The girls thought He would rush right over and heal him. But, my friend, if God makes us wait, He has a far richer blessing for us through the waiting. His delays are just as important as His answers.

It is hard to wait, isn't it. It seems sometimes the Lord is so slow to answer our prayers.

We pray, "Lord, I'm in a jam. Things are just going down and down. Lord, hurry up." But it is far better for Lazarus to die and be in corruption and be raised from the dead than to be healed of a physical infirmity.

The Lord's got a greater purpose and reason for the delay.

The attitude of Christ to death (11:7-16)

7. Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."

Oh, the wonderful desire of our Lord for the fellowship of His disciples. He's going to Jerusalem.

"Let us go into Judea again. That's where I'm going to die. That's where I'm going to be rejected and crucified. I want you to go with me. Let us go into Judea."

8. The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You; and are You going there again?"

9. Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world.

10. "But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."

In other words, He is saying—if I may give the implication of it—"They can't touch Me until My work is finished." You see, He is comforting the disciples. "I am walking in the day, in the good of the Light of this world. I won't stumble. The Jews can't do a thing until my Father permits it."

11. This He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, that I may awaken him out of sleep."

The Lord knew already that Lazarus had died.

12. The disciples therefore said to Him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover."

13. Now Jesus had spoken of his death; but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep.

14. Then Jesus therefore said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead."

Those dear disciples should have known about this. Peter, James and John were with Him in Luke 7 and 8 when our Lord raised the widow's son and the daughter of Jairus.

Furthermore, if Lazarus is just sleeping physical sleep, how long is he going to sleep? It is going to take them two or three days to walk from where they were up to Bethany. Is he going to sleep all that time? They weren't thinking.

How quick we are to misunderstand. We lose sight of the purpose and presence of God.

15. "And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him."

Not only would the resurrection of Lazarus be a sign to Israel, especially to those leaders of Israel who said, "If You are the Christ, tell us plainly;" it would also be a sign to inspire and give assurance to His own disciples.

16. Thomas therefore, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him."

I know most folk don't like Thomas because he was the doubter. But I like Thomas. He was in love with the Saviour. Oh, we may have some questions about what took place in chapter 20, but he really loved the Lord. And because of this, he said, "Let's go and die with Him. Let's not let Him die alone." Yet when the Lord was taken, they all forsook Him and fled—including Thomas. Peter, too. He was the one who said, "Lord, though all these other fellows will leave you, you can sure count on old Peter. I'll stick by you, Lord. You can count on me."

But he too ran with the rest of them.

The attitude of Martha to Christ (11:17-28)

17. So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days.

18. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off;

19. and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning their brother.

20. Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him; but Mary still sat in the house.

21. Martha therefore said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.

22. "Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You."

She is saying, "I'm not going to limit You, Lord, as to what You can do; but don't You think You've come too late? He's already been in the grave four days."

Later on, she says, "Leave the stone alone. It doesn't smell very good in there. He's in corruption." And yet there was a longing in Martha's heart—shall I say, a hope?—that Jesus could even yet do something. "Lord, if You had been here—if You had only come—my brother would not have died."

But you know?

Even if the Lord had left when He first got the message and had walked up the hill for two or three days—up through those canyons and caves and desert roads—up to the city of Jerusalem (He would have had to walk from 900 feet below sea level to approximately 3000 feet above sea level), He would have been too late.

23. Jesus said to her, "Your brother shall rise again."

24. Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."

Now, she has a Scripture for that—Job 19:25-26: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after

my skin is flayed, yet without my flesh I shall see God.”

And Daniel 12:2: “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.”

And Isaiah 26:19: “Your dead will live; their corpses will rise.”

“Oh, yes, Lord,” she says, “I know he’ll be raised in the resurrection at the last day.”

You see, Martha wanted her brother to be delivered *from* death. Jesus wanted Lazarus to be triumphant *over* death. There’s quite a difference. Martha doubted and needed instruction, and so the Lord gives her the instruction:

“Listen, Martha . . .

25. Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies,

26. and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

Here is another one of these “I am’s.” “I am the resurrection. I am the life.” In John 5:21, He had said, let me paraphrase, “As the Father hath authority and power to raise the dead, the Son can do likewise. Just as God can raise the dead and give them life—that’s what I can do. Not that the Father does it through me, but I do it.

“Martha, I am the resurrection and the life. If there is to be any resurrection of any kind, I am the One who is going to do it.

“And listen, Martha, if you believe that your brother will be raised in the last day, and that I am the resurrection and the life, then I am the One who will raise him in the last day. And if I can raise him then, can’t I raise him now?”

But dear Martha didn’t say, “Yes, Lord, I believe he is going to be raised now.” What did she say?

27. She said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world."

She gave a wonderful testimony, but she missed the issue.

He had said, "I am the resurrection and the life." Death is not the end of all. The end of the natural body is death. But resurrection is the end of death. Death is a terrible enemy, but death is a defeated enemy.

When a believer leaves the earth, he goes right into the presence of the Lord.

Paul said, "I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ," (Philippians 1:23) in whose presence is fullness of joy. And "Absent from the body (is) to be at home with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). The Lord doesn't have around Him millions of sleeping saints. They're enjoying His presence.

I wish we Christians could remember that, when we accept the Saviour, we are made partakers of the divine nature. We receive the very life of God. Death has no place in it.

Jesus said to Martha, "Everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

Do you really believe it?

We love to quote John 5:24: "He who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." That's a wonderful verse, but do you believe it?

"Do you mean to tell me, sir," you say, "that you will never see death?"

"That's correct."

"You mean you'll never die?"

"I'll never die."

Eternal life is eternal life, is it not? Indeed, I would say this to you: When we leave these bodies,

we shall then experience real life. Our lives today are affected by sorrows, by afflictions, disappointments, misunderstandings. We're full of fear. Death comes along as man's worst enemy, and people are afraid to die. Too many Christians feel that way. We ought to look forward to the experience of perfect, eternal, real life which we will enter into through what man calls "death."

As Dr. B. B. Sutcliffe, the first president of the Multnomah School of the Bible, used to say, "I don't mind going to glory, but I don't like the way I have to go." And I should remind you about that dear man of God. I stood by him one day, and he held me by the wrist. He was very, very sick. The doctor had told me he wouldn't live the day, so I went over to the hospital and stood by his side.

He said, "Oh, Jack, I'm so sick," and he looked it. He had heart trouble and a few complications. He was sitting propped up with a Bible in his lap. When he dropped his head and closed his eyes, I thought he was gone; but he still had hold of my wrist.

All of a sudden he shook himself; and he looked at me and said, "Is that you, Jack?"

And I said, "Yes."

"My, oh my, oh my, I'm so disappointed. I'm so disappointed. I was expecting to see the Lord, and all I saw was you."

Well, I would have been disappointed, too, wouldn't you? The tragedy is we Christians know so little of this real life in Christ over which death doesn't even cast a shadow.

Now Martha has just testified of her faith in Him.

28. And when she had said this, she went away, and called Mary her sister, saying secretly, "The Teacher is here, and is calling for you."

The attitude of Mary to Christ (11:29-36)

Mary did the proper thing. By Jewish custom, she stayed home in the house of mourning. Martha didn't. She should have stayed in the house, too; but she heard the Lord was coming, and she had to see Him and tell Him about Lazarus.

When Martha returned to the house, she whispered in Mary's ear, "The Lord has come and called for you."

29. And when she heard it, she arose quickly, and was coming to Him.

30. Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met Him.

31. The Jews then who were with her in the house, and consoling her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

32. Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."

That's all. Now Mary said the same words that Martha said, but I think with an entirely different motive. You see, Martha doubted, and she needed instruction. Mary wept, and she needed comfort. And the Lord meets both girls in their need. You remember, this is one of three times where Mary is found in the Scriptures. Each time she is found at the feet of the Lord Jesus. In Luke 10:39, she sat at His feet for instruction. As He revealed to her the things of the Father and the purpose of God for the Son, she believed. In this passage, she is at His feet for comfort. In chapter 12, she will be at His feet for worship.

Remarkable! It was Mary who understood that Jesus was going to die. She had an insight into the purpose of God for the Lord that I don't believe Peter, James or John had. She knew He was God's Lamb who came to take away the sin of the world.

His death did not take her by surprise. She showed it by not going to the cross.

33. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her, also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit, and was troubled.

One version says He was indignant and troubled.

34. and said, "Where have you laid him?"

They said to Him, "Lord, come and see."

35. Jesus wept.

36. And so the Jews were saying, "Behold how He loved him!"

I wonder if you and I can realize what it meant to the Lord Jesus, the object of the hatred of the leaders, just to go across the Valley of Kidron, climb up the side of the Mount of Olives on the east side, and come into Bethany to the house of Mary and Martha and Lazarus—to be invited home.

Here was love; outside was enmity. Here was love; outside was opposition. Here was love; outside was hatred. What a wonderful place for the Lord to come.

35. Jesus wept.

I don't know of any verse that gives to us the revelation of the heart of God more than this. Here is Infinite God, taking time out to weep with sorrowing friends. When you and I go through times of sorrow, the Lord Jesus is there. He sympathizes with our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15).

Aren't you glad you have a real Man in heaven who knows, who understands, who cares? Even though I can't understand why I go through certain things, it is enough to know that He cares, that He loves, that He weeps.

Three times our Lord wept. He wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41). He wept in the garden (Hebrews 5:7). And here in John 11, He wept at the tomb of Lazarus. Here is Infinite God as Man entering into the sorrows, the afflictions, the wounded hearts. He is one with them.

“Jesus wept.”

From our viewpoint, if you or I had been the Saviour, we would have said, “Now, listen, Mary and Martha and you Jews. Just stop this hollering and grieving. I’m going to raise your brother from the dead. Now just settle down.”

Isn’t He going to return their brother to them? Then why doesn’t He get about it and do it? This is one of the most astounding passages in all the Bible—that Infinite God, as a Man in the midst of men, would take the time out to stand by two girls in their sorrow and weep with them.

My, what a Saviour we have! What a Shepherd we have! What a Lord we have! As God, He can raise the dead and defeat the powers of hell and the grave. But as the perfect Man in the midst of men, He can take their sorrows as His own and weep with His people.

He does this with you, my friend. You’re crushed?

You say, “Why doesn’t He come and do something for me?” He will. He’s right there with you, to comfort you, to give you peace in the midst of unrest, to touch that broken heart, that crushed soul.

And aren’t you glad when you read in the book of Revelation that “He shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. There shall be no more death, no more tears, no more sorrow nor crying”?

No wonder John could say in Revelation 22:20, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”

Lazarus raised from the dead (11: 37-46)

37. But some of them said, "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of him who was blind, have kept this man also from dying?"

38. Jesus therefore again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.

39. Jesus said, "Remove the stone."

Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench; for he has been dead four days."

40. Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you, if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

41. And so they removed the stone.

This is the final sign to the people.

41. And Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hearest Me."

Here is the relationship and fellowship with His Father.

42. "And I knew that Thou hearest me always; but because of the people standing around I said it, that they may believe that Thou didst send Me."

43. And when He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth."

44. He who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings; and his face was wrapped around with a cloth.

Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

45. Many therefore of the Jews, who had come to Mary and beheld what He had done, believed in Him.

46. But some of them went away to the Pharisees, and told them the things which Jesus had done.

Here you have that wonderful cooperation. What these people standing there could do, He did not do. What they could not do, He did. They could roll away the stone. He didn't do it. They could loose

him and let him go. He didn't do it. But resurrection—they couldn't do that. So He said, "Lazarus, come forth." He obeyed and came forth. Indeed, if He had not said, "Lazarus, come forth," I believe everyone in that cemetery would have come forth.

This is the last great miracle in John with respect to the signs that God gave to Israel concerning the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Opposition (11:47-57) **The decision of the council (11:47-53)**

47. Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs.

48. "If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."

49. But a certain one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all,

50. nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish."

51. Now this he did not say on his own initiative; but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation;

52. and not for the nation only, but that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.

53. So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.

The chapter ends with the attitude of the leaders of Israel—evil, devilish, and yet unknowingly they prophesied a great truth that Christ would die, not only for that nation, but for those who were scattered abroad. At the very end of the chapter, our Lord, His hour not yet come, went into the wilderness to a city called Ephraim, which would be northeast of Jerusalem.

The Lord withdraws Himself (11:54-57)

54. Jesus therefore no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews, but went away from there to the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there He stayed with the disciples.

55. Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover, to purify themselves.

56. Therefore they were seeking for Jesus, and were saying to one another, as they stood in the temple, "What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?"

57. Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if any one knew where He was, he should report it, that they might seize him.

These Jewish leaders, these priests and Pharisees and Sadducees, are determined now to kill Him. It is all out in the open. Here is organized rebellion, an organized desire to slay the Son of God.

It was now public news. It was spread abroad through the whole city.

It was one great blatant determination to kill the Son of God.

John 12

Christ, the Center of Attraction

In a wee survey, this chapter has four great movements: the feast, the triumphal entry, the Lord's meeting with the Greeks, and then His rejection by the Jewish people and by their leaders.

Wherever you find Jesus Christ, He is the center of attention. When He was born in Bethlehem, they worshiped Him, not Mary or Joseph. When He was a boy of 12 standing in the midst of the doctors, He was the center of attention.

Then John the Baptist came on the scene—and they knew that John was a prophet. One day, he baptized the Lord Jesus; and then he stepped aside. The Lord became the center of attraction.

On the mount of transfiguration the three disciples saw Moses, the great law-giver. They saw Elijah, the great prophet. Then they saw no man, except Jesus Himself alone; and they heard the voice of God, saying, "This is My Beloved Son."

And when we come to this passage, although people came to see Lazarus, the Lord is the center of attraction at the feast—not Lazarus.

On the road to Jerusalem, the people sang His praise, "Hosanna" (verse 13). Later on, He said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself" (verse 32). He was the center of attraction.

Where is He today? At the right hand of God, at the right hand of the Majesty on High where He is still the center of attraction. Hebrews speaks of

this: “When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (1:3). We see Jesus . . . crowned (2:9). “Let all the angels of God worship Him” (1:6). “But of the Son He says, ‘Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever’” (1:8).

Even when He stands as Judge and judges men, they will cry out for the rocks and mountains to fall on them to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb.

Now we come to this:

The Center of Attraction at the Feast (12:1-11)

1. Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

Our Lord had left Ephraim and, coming down by way of Jericho, had moved on toward Bethany to meet His friends. One home where He was always welcome was the home of Martha and Mary and Lazarus.

2. So they made Him a supper there; and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him.

And Mary was at His feet. All three loved the Saviour. Don't question Martha's love for Him. Don't question Lazarus's love—or Mary's love. These three really were devoted to Christ, but they manifested their love in different ways. Don't you demand of others that they love the Saviour the way you love Him or show that love the way you do.

Martha? She loved to serve the Lord. Some believers express their love by continual service.

Lazarus? He sat with those at the feast. People

came to see him. Why wouldn't they? Here's a man who had been four days in the tomb, a man whose body was already in corruption. And now he's raised from the dead and is sitting at the feast, eating with them at the table as Martha served.

What an evident token of the power of God.

Here you have the quiet adoration and love of Lazarus. As far as we know, he never said a word. Why should he speak, when the One who had raised him from the dead was there? You wouldn't expect him to talk. There are some people who are always talking about their experiences. But they never had one like this one. Lazarus never said a word. Why should he draw attention to himself? He was perfectly content to be in the presence of the Saviour, enjoying Christ for Himself.

3. Mary therefore took a pound of very costly, genuine spikenard ointment, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment.

And Mary? In her adoration and worship she pours her love upon Him. But according to Jewish custom, she had no right to be where she was. As the men reclined round the festive board, the women waited on them. But Mary came at His feet and poured her treasures upon Him—in adoration, in worship, in thanksgiving.

Why shouldn't she? He had raised her brother from the dead. Nothing was too expensive, nothing too costly.

I would to God that we knew something of this generosity. You love somebody? You'll be generous. You love the Saviour? You'll be generous. Generosity is ever the language of love.

Mary took her pound of ointment of spikenard—very costly—and anointed the feet of Jesus. Mark says she broke her alabaster box—another expensive thing. She didn't just pour a little out. She

broke the thing to pour all that she had upon Him. The house was filled with the odor of the ointment.

And Judas?

4. But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said,

5. "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii, and given to poor people?"

He wasn't philanthropic. He was a man who was sold out to money. Three hundred denarii is practically a year's wages for a laborer of that day. To take your year's salary and pour the whole thing upon the Saviour?

"What a waste," this man said.

6. Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.

7. Jesus therefore said, "Let her alone, in order that she may keep it for the day of My burial.

8. "For the poor you always have with you; but you do not always have Me."

9. The great multitude therefore of the Jews learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead.

The contrast here is between Mary, who showers upon the Saviour all her love and devotion because there is nothing too costly to pour upon Him, and Judas—a man even worse than the priests who plotted to put the Lord to death. Judas spent three-and-a-half years with the Saviour. He traveled with Him. He had seen His wonderful miracles. He had heard His gracious words. And, you remember, "never man spoke like this man."

Here was one in the intimacy of the circle with Christ. And while this woman is pouring out her love and devotion on the Saviour, he stands by

and criticizes with a heart that is purposing to sell and betray his Master. How much more devilish could a person be? How much more corrupt can the human heart be—to be that close to Him and then to plot to sell and betray Him? Judas was sold out to money. And all he got was thirty pieces of silver.

Here is Mary worshiping. Here is Judas sneering. Here is Mary attracted to the Saviour. Here is Judas rejecting the Saviour. Here is one worshiping; here is the other despising. She is adoring Him, and he is plotting to sell Him. The amazing thing was that when Judas asked, "Why was not this sold and given to the poor?" some of the other disciples agreed with him. And the Lord rebuked them for this.

It may be, Christian friend, in your desire, in your love and devotion to the Saviour that some other Christian will criticize you for doing something in service to Him. That person may say you're just wasting your money or your time. What of it? Others may call you a fanatic. What of it? They may call you "religious crazy." What of it as long as your life is poured out upon Him? And may I say very frankly, the more devoted you are to Christ, the chances are the more you'll be criticized for it. But what of it as long as your heart is occupied with the Saviour!

This woman Mary didn't care what they thought as long as she could be found at His feet.

I would like to ask you how much time you spend at His feet? She was willing to break her alabaster box and pour her treasures upon Him. Matthew and Mark tell us she poured it upon His head. John says upon His feet. You know, there is no difference here. She took a whole pound of ointment and poured it over His head, on down over His garments to His feet. It was so much that she took her hair and wiped the excess, and the place was filled with the fragrance.

May I say this? When our lives are poured out for Christ in love, they become a sweet aroma to Him and to others wherever we go.

Hudson Taylor poured out his life at the feet of the Lord Jesus, and thousands of Chinese smelled the aroma and came to Christ. Amy Carmichael of India poured out her life, ministering with a broken, sickly body the last 20 years of her life. And the fragrance of that life has swept through thousands of families in India and through her books across the world. Wherever God finds a life poured out on His Son, the sweet aroma of His presence is realized; and people are brought to Him.

I wonder, friend, is there in your own family, among your neighbors, among your friends, in the office, in the shop anything of the sweetness of the life of Christ manifested in you? If there is one thing that God wants, it is that the life of His Son shall be manifest in us and through us day by day. Anyone who spends time with Him, anyone who pours out his life in behalf of the Son of God, will have a life that will be a sweet aroma of Christ.

It is so easy to be occupied with 300 denarii. Let us not be like Judas, sold out to materialism, sold out to money—so much so that his character was gone and Satan took over. His was not a life poured out with the sweetness of Christ, a life sacrificed in love for Christ. His was a life lost because he was occupied with himself. The selfish life always leads to death; the life poured out always leads to life. This is the principle right through God's creation, right through your Bible.

God grant that you and I may come and pour out our treasures upon our Lord and that He will be the center of our devotion, of our affection, of our worship. The Father is always looking for poured-out lives through whom He can display His Son in the sweetness of His character, in the sweetness of His own heart.

But one thing hinders the expression of the

character of the Son of God in us. Our hearts—our lives—are not totally His.

God grant that each one of us may manifest something of the sweetness of the aroma of the Son of God, that in every place we go our words, our actions, our attitude will be such that people will see something of the character, of the sweetness, of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. May we emulate Mary. May we manifest our love for Him. Again, I say, sacrifice is ever the language of love. Gratitude, generosity—these are the language of love.

Do you love Him? How is it displayed? Let us spend time in His presence, and let His life be lived through us.

And may I say to our hearts—as the late Professor Dr. Marchant King has pointed out—that the fragrance of Mary's spikenard, which had surely saturated His garment, went with him all the way to the cross. Though others forsook Him, he had a lingering reminder of her trust, of her worship, of her love as He carried His cross toward Golgotha (Mark 15:20). This was in the plan of the loving Father.

10. But the chief priests took counsel that they might put Lazarus to death also.

“Let us get rid of the evidence,” they said.

Now, it is not for want of evidence that people deny Christ. Don't you be surprised if humanist leaders in government deny the evidence. Unbelief closes the heart to any evidence. They see Lazarus who had been in the tomb in corruption. Now he's raised and is sitting at the feast, eating with the rest. There's only one thing to do—get rid of the evidence. These fellows were so jealous, so mad, so determined to kill him—

11. Because on account of him many of the Jews were go-

ing away, and were believing in Jesus.

Then watch what happens next.

The Center of attraction on the road to Jerusalem (12:12-19)

12. On the next day the great multitude who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,

13. took the branches of the palm trees, and went out to meet Him, and began to cry out, "Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, even the King of Israel."

Now Josephus says that at some of these Pass-over feasts people would come from all over Asia Minor to be there. Sometimes the crowds around Jerusalem would number 3,000,000 people. Notice, everyone is following Him—the Pharisees, the priests, the crowd, the disciples—and all have a different attitude to the Son of God. In the mob are some who have seen Lazarus raised from the dead, others who have heard of it.

Then here comes Jesus who raised him. He's leaving Bethany and is coming toward Jerusalem. As He comes round the bend, round the Mount of Olives, the people salute Him. They take their palm leaves, throw them in the way, and cry out, "Hosanna!" (which means "Save us!"). "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." They call Him the King of Israel.

The tragedy is this—they want a material kingdom. They want to be delivered from Rome. He comes with a spiritual kingdom. Many of these crying, "Hosanna!" will be crying, "Crucify Him!" in just a few hours. What a terrible thing!

But is it not a significant truth that before He comes to the city to be acclaimed as the King of Israel, He has been anointed? Mary didn't know the

greatness of her act of worship. (Sometimes the Lord uses us when we don't know that He is using us.) The law required that a king must be anointed before He is crowned. Mary had anointed Him for His coronation. He's on the way to be crowned—but with a crown of thorns.

Notice the literal fulfillment of the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

When Zechariah wrote that, there were no kings in Israel. He prophesied after the Babylonian captivity to encourage the remnant to rebuild the temple in the midst of the ruins. They had no king. They have not had a king from the scattering by Nebuchadnezzar until the present time. Zechariah is prophesying to encourage the remnant who returned under Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel.

14. And Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written,

15. "FEAR NOT, DAUGHTER OF ZION; BEHOLD, YOUR KING COMES SITTING ON A DONKEY'S COLT."

He comes in humility, not as a warrior on a horse. Oh, the literal fulfillment of it all. When one thinks of the detail of all that the Scripture said concerning His first coming, even to the last words He uttered on the cross (Psalm 22:1), we ought to look with real expectancy to the Scriptures which pertain to His rapture and return to the earth. Every detail will be fulfilled literally. And, unless it says otherwise, you take it literally.

16. These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him.

17. And so the multitude who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb, and raised him from the dead, were bearing Him witness.

18. For this cause also the multitude went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign.

19. The Pharisees therefore said to one another, "You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him."

Notice the attitudes of all these people.

The mob?

They were filled with praise.

The disciples?

They needed understanding. All this was beyond them. After they received the Spirit of God in Acts 2, their minds were opened; and they understood what had happened this day.

And the Pharisees?

They had seen Him take a man who was a derelict for 38 years and heal him. They had seen Him take a blind man, born blind, and open his eyes. They had seen Him raise a man in corruption from the dead.

Talk about evidence! Yet their hearts were full of evil, full of devilish thoughts.

The Center of attraction (12:20-36)

20. Now there were certain Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast;

21. these therefore came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

Attracting Gentiles (12:20-22)

The Lord begins now to give the last word in the Gospel of John that He has for the people of Israel. It is introduced by a strange element that comes into the picture with the coming to Him of the

Greeks. At this time He expresses that the great hour has arrived for which He had come.

Now these were not Jews who lived in Greece. These were Greeks who possibly had found nothing in the heathen, pagan religions in which they were born and had turned to Judaism. They possibly were proselytes because they had come to the city to worship at the Passover. Whatever their background, these men were hungry for something real.

They said, "Sir, we would see Jesus." But the door was not open to the Gentiles until after the resurrection.

22. Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came, and they told Jesus.

Study these two men. In chapter 1 they are both soul winners, the only ones of the twelve who did any personal work. Andrew found Simon and brought him to Jesus. Philip found Nathanael and brought him to Jesus. In chapter 6, Andrew brought the little boy with his five loaves and two fish when the Saviour asked Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, that these may eat?"

There is something about these two men that captivates my heart. They're not preachers like Peter or Paul. They are not writers like John. They are just two of the quiet ones who are devoted to the Saviour, the ones to whom people come to find out about Him.

"Sir, we would see Jesus." Wouldn't that be a wonderful thing to put across the front of any church? They have it on the inside of some pulpits to remind the preacher why the people come to church and why they attend Bible classes. I trust it is the cry of your heart, as it was of the hearts of these Greeks: "Sir, we would see Jesus."

23. And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has

come for the Son of Man to be glorified.”

We do not know whether He said any word to these Grecian men or not, but He did say, “The hour is come for the Son of man to be glorified.” In chapter 2, He said to His mother, “My hour has not yet come.” In chapter 7, He said to His brethren, “My time is not yet at hand.” Also, in chapter 7, verse 30, they could not lay hands upon Him “because his hour had not yet come.” Then, in chapter 8:20, they sought to take Him, but “his hour had not yet come.”

In chapter 10:18, we have, “No man has taken My life away from Me. I have authority to lay it down. I have authority to take it again.”

In Matthew 26:5, the leaders of Israel had a committee meeting to plan and plot His death. “But they were saying, ‘Not during the festival,’ ” because they feared the people.

But the Lord Jesus said, “That’s when I’m going to die.” He is the One who declared that, not they.

Did you ever stop to think, my Christian friend, that every page of this Gospel is a revelation of the sovereignty of Jesus Christ of Nazareth?

Take chapter 11, verse 4, when Jesus said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it.” In chapter 12:23 we read, “The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified.” Notice, He did not say, “The hour has come for the Son of man to be crucified.”

Our Lord looks beyond the suffering to the glory. He is going down into the darkest experience anyone has ever gone—“that He might taste death for every one” (Hebrews 2:9). The one thing that characterized Him in all His suffering was that He looked beyond it to the glory.

In John 12:28, when the Lord Jesus had said, “Father, glorify Thy name,” there came “a voice out of heaven: ‘I have both glorified it, and will glorify

it again.' ” In John 13:31, 32: “When therefore he (Judas) had gone out, Jesus said, ‘Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately.’ ”

Go down to chapter 17:1: “These things Jesus spoke; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee.’ ” The great consuming passion of the Lord Jesus, as He was going on to the cross, was the glorifying of His Father through Whom He Himself would be glorified. This is an amazing answer when He said, “The hour has come.”

Oh, the impossibility of the world, of men, of demons, of hell's even touching the Son of God until His hour was come! No power on earth or in hell could touch Him until His hour was come.

And no power on earth or hell can touch you until the job which God has for you is completed. The believer in Christ, as that believer walks in the will of God, is immortal until his life is done.

Now Christians do die prematurely under the chastening hand of God. “For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep” (1 Corinthians 11:30).

“There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this” (1 John 5:16). It is possible for a Christian to die ahead of the time that God had planned for him. That's in judgment, lest he be condemned with the world, as 1 Corinthians 5:5 declares.

But, if you and I seek to please Him, there's no power on earth or in hell that can touch us. We can say just as our Saviour said, “Mine hour has not yet come.”

They hemmed Him in; they wanted to lay hold of Him and slay Him, stone Him, and tear Him to pieces. He stepped out of their midst; His hour had not yet come. They had no authority, no

power to touch Him.

In Matthew 26:5 the Pharisees did their planning. But the timing was not in their hands. The timing was in His hands, for that same night they took Him. He arranged the time in spite of all their ingenuity, and all their committee meetings, and all their devisings.

Just as you have in Galatians 4:4: "But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son" and in Romans 5:6, "At the right time Christ died for the ungodly."

And He's going to return for the Church at the right time. He'll not be one hour ahead of time, and He'll not be one hour late.

Such a Saviour! Such a Lord!

So we have had Him attracting the Greeks; now He will begin—

Attracting disciples (12:23-26)

24. "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."

I came across a jar of Oregon Giants the other day, bean seeds that I used to use when I had a little garden plot over in the West Hills. In all these years in that jar they haven't sprouted once. They abide alone. But you take them and put them in the ground, and they die. There's no fruitage until there is death.

"Unless I die, there will be no fruitage," He says. He is talking about a spiritual kingdom. He is going to speak of His death, of the manner and extent of His death. There must be the cross before the crown, suffering before glory, death before fruitage. Out of death comes life.

25. "He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal."

He tells his disciples, “If you’re going to follow Me and experience this life of which I am the giver and you are the recipient, it is going to call for faith and obedience; and it may call for suffering.” The selfish life ends in destruction; the spiritual life goes on through to eternity. These Jews and Greeks must learn the lesson, as must we—that only out of death can come life.

And here He says, “Now My hour has come—to lay the foundation for a spiritual kingdom.” This is the foundation of our Christian faith; for, if there’s no death, there’s no resurrection; if there’s no resurrection, there’s no fruitage.

Think of the fruitage of His death—the hundreds of millions of souls saved for eternity. Our eternal life has come out of His death.

He takes a natural event in every day living to teach this. You must put your corn seeds into the ground. Some come up and some don’t. The ones that die are the ones that come up. This is true of all life. Even when a baby is born into the world, the mother goes down to the bowels of death to bring up life. And if God is going to have a spiritual kingdom, if He is going to have a people who will be fitted to spend eternity with Him—a people just like His Son—then His Son must die. If you put wheat into the ground, you get the fruitage of wheat. If you put in beans, you get beans. If Christ dies, then the fruitage of that death will parallel what He is.

That’s why Paul could write in Ephesians 1:6 that we are “in the Beloved”—we are in all that He is. Notice this is something God does, not something we do. John says in 1 John 3:2, “We shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.” Paul says in Philippians 3:21, God is going to “transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory,” as He died and came forth in resurrection.

Peter says we “have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God” (1 Peter 1:23). We must be like Him if we are going to stand in His presence.

Unless a person is just like Jesus, he will never see glory because as the seed is, so is the fruitage. And if He died and came forth in blessed resurrection with a body that is absolutely unlimited and glorified, that’s what God is going to do in every believer—raise us with a body that is going to be absolutely unlimited and glorified. We are the fruitage of Christ’s death. It is not what we do. It is what God does in us and for us.

Read Romans 6:4-11.

25. “He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal.”

He is contrasting the material and the spiritual. Why aren’t people saved? They want the material. Their whole life is wrapped up in the physical. Until a person’s heart is open to what Jesus Christ is offering, he will never be saved. Unbelief closes the heart and shuts out the Son of God. The life of the unbeliever is physical, limited. Death is the end of it. But as I turn my back on that which is physical and material—in the sense that my life is not wrapped up in it—and I turn to the Saviour and receive Him who died for me the sinner, then I receive life.

This is real life. I may be frail down here. I may be in sorrow. I may have afflictions and failures. But right down here we’ve got life—that eternal life which is in Christ. Now this question of discipleship:

26. “If any one serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if any one serves Me, the Father will honor him.”

Faith and obedience are the evidence that we are a disciple. We follow Him. That's why He said in John 10:27, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them."

Attracting the heavens (12:27-30)

And now we come to a very serious matter. Notice these "now's" if you please in verses 27 and 31.

27. "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour.

28. "Father, glorify Thy name." Then came therefore a voice out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

29. The multitude therefore, who stood by and heard it, were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, "An angel has spoken to Him."

30. Jesus answered and said, "This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes.

31. "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out."

He begins saying, "Now My soul has become troubled." This is the same solemn tone we find when, later, in the Garden of Gethsemane at the foot of the Mount of Olives, He casts Himself on the ground and prays, "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). In Isaiah 53:12 we read He poured out His soul unto death. We're coming to something here that is beyond the physical.

Many of His people have suffered in the physical—and I say this reverently—just as much as the Lord suffered in the physical. Others have been

scourged and crucified or flayed and set afire or torn to pieces by wild beasts. Some have been put on the rack until their bones were pulled out of joint. These people have suffered. But not what He went through. He tasted death for every man.

He cried out, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" The sinless One, the righteous One, the One who always did the things that pleased His Father (John 8:29), is going to become sin. Your sin, all your sin, all my sin, all the murders, all the adultery, all the vileness, all the perversion of the human race were to be put upon the Holy One, the Sinless One.

You and I can't fathom this. All I know is what John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

He, the One who had never touched sin, the One in whom there was no unrighteousness, the absolutely holy One, became this damnable thing called sin. He was not only bearing your sin and my sin, but He was dying the death we should die. To die, forsaken by God, cast out by man, is an accursed thing. "Father, what shall I say? what shall I say?"

I am not surprised that in the garden an angel came and strengthened Him (Luke 22:43). The physical couldn't begin to stand the tremendous pressure and the burden and agony of becoming a sin-bearer. No human mind can enter this.

Nothing is said in the Bible about those three terrible hours when He hung on the cross. The sun hid its face. A great darkness covered the earth, and there was an earthquake. But you have to go back to Psalms 22 and 69 and Isaiah 50, 52, and 53 to see what He went through when He said, "My Father, what shall I say? My soul is troubled even unto death." For the first time God the Son would be separated from God the Father.

Down through the eons of time, the Father and Son were always together in perfect, intimate fel-

lowship. "I was with him when he made the worlds." He was with Him in the Garden of Eden when man transgressed. They were together at the Tower of Babel. When He was a Babe, They were together. At the River Jordan, They were together. On the Mount of Transfiguration, in the Garden of Gethsemane, when He stood before Pilate, They were together. But at Calvary, They separated.

Why? He bore my sin. All the wrath, the judgment of the Holy God that should have fallen on me, fell on Him. This is the extent of the cross.

Did you ever stop to think when you partake of the bread and the cup that this is the only thing the Lord Jesus asked you to remember? "Do this in remembrance of me." Remembrance of what? That through His death we have access into the presence of God; that through His shed blood we were cleansed from all sin; that when He died, He died in my place and yours.

Not only did He die for your sins, He died for you—the sinner. He died for me—the guilty one. He became sin. He was made sin for us. He who knew no sin. Why? To bear fruitage—that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

He poured out His soul unto death—right down to the very bowels of death for us. As Hebrews 2:9 says, He "tasted death," something you and I will never do. We will never taste death. When we leave this scene, we go immediately into the very presence of God.

Attracting the world (12:31-36)

31. "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out.

32. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."

33. But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die.

In the manner of His death, He must die by crucifixion, fulfilling Psalm 22 and Psalm 69, which give the experiences prophetically of One being crucified. Crucifixion was a Roman punishment. It was never known in the days of David. And yet, David prophesied by the Spirit of God that He would die by crucifixion; and, by His so doing, God judged the world.

Make no doubt about this fact, the world is already judged. It is not moving on to judgment. It is moving on to the execution of the judgment. And the believer is no more a part of this world. Paul said in Galatians 6:14, "But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."

We're in the world; we don't belong to the world. When you come to John 17, our Lord clearly defines the fact that, just as God is free from the world, so is the believer. Nineteen times in that passage, our Saviour speaks of the world and says that we are not of the world. The world is judged. We have been freed from that judgment.

And Satan was judged at the cross. "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out." Our Savior speaks of Satan three times in John's Gospel as the prince of this world. In chapter 12, here, he is to be cast out at the cross. At the end of chapter 14 (verse 30), Jesus said, "The ruler of the world is coming, and He has nothing in Me," nothing he can attract or deceive; and in chapter 16:11, "The ruler of this world has been judged." In Colossians 2:15, "When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him."

Our Saviour at the cross defeated the forces of darkness. That's why in Colossians 1:13 Paul could say that God has "delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the king-

dom of His beloved Son.” That’s why He became a man, why He took His place in the human family, “that through death He might render powerless him (annul the power of him) who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14). The captives of Satan can now be set free because his authority and power have been annulled.

Our Saviour did a tremendous thing when He died on the cross. Why is it that people are ashamed of it? Because the cross was an offensive thing (Galatians 5:11). It is an offense to my morality. The cross says I haven’t any. It is an offense to my philosophy of life. It says that I am absolutely no good. The cross is an accursed thing.

And please do not say that Jesus changed the cross from an accursed thing into a thing of glory. The cross is never a thing of glory. We can glory in the cross, because there Christ purchased redemption for us. But the cross itself is an accursed thing. “Cursed is every one who hangs on a tree” (Galatians 3:13). It has a stigma, and that is why men don’t accept the Saviour.

The average Christian hasn’t begun to realize the depth, the marvel of the work our Saviour accomplished on the cross. The very heavens are going to be purged from sin on the ground of what He did on the cross. Not only were we redeemed, not only were your sins put away, not only was God’s righteous character vindicated, not only was death defeated, but the world was judged, Satan was shorn of his power and his captives were set free.

Now mark the reaction. We have the Lord’s last, real, definite statement to them. It is both a warning and a plea.

34. The multitude therefore answered Him, “We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, ‘The Son of man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?”

All down through this Gospel He has revealed by His words and works that He is the Christ of God, the Son of God, the Son of man. Now they knew those titles. These were Jews. And they knew their Bibles—at least some of it. They knew that in Daniel 7:13-14 the Son of man was none other than the eternal God, the Ancient of Days.

“And you’re talking about being lifted up?” they say.

He had said this in John 8:28-29, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He,” that I came from God and that “He hath not left Me alone.”

But they say, “Why, Christ, when He comes, is going to live forever. He is going to abide forever.”

“What do you mean, ‘being lifted up’?”

“And who is this ‘the Son of Man’?”

“Are you talking about dying? He doesn’t die. He’s eternal.”

Now the Lord ignored that:

35. Jesus therefore said to them, “For a little while longer the light is among you. Walk while you have the light, that darkness may not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes.

36. “While you have the light, believe in the light, in order that you may become sons of light.”

These things Jesus spoke, and He departed and hid Himself from them.

What is the warning? In a little while there will be no more light.

In John 9:5 He said, “While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” But for 1900 years the Jewish people have rejected the light and have walked in terrible darkness. And may I add, our generation, too, is spurning the light and is walking in darkness.

If you were to ask me, “Nationally and internationally, where is the world going?”

tionally, where is the world going?"

I would say it doesn't know where it is going. Our own nation, founded on the Word of God, has spurned the Word of God. The professing church of Christ has spurned the Light of the world; and we are walking in uncertainty and fear, not knowing what tomorrow may bring. Why?

Politically, economically, religiously, when any nation or individual rejects the light, nothing is left but darkness. God has blessed our country, but we've rejected the Blessor. He has blessed great nations that for centuries have boasted of being Christian, of having the Word of God. Where are they today? Morally? Politically? Spiritually?

Yet, here is an amazing fact. In Israel when David Ben-Gurion, for many years the premier of Israel, was living, more than 1,000 Israeli Bible-lovers would gather as guests of a little town just south of Tel-Aviv. All expenses were paid by the town—all the food and housing was provided—and they would have four days of Bible study led by some of the political leaders of Israel.

Wouldn't it be a wonderful thing if our government were to call for a Bible conference?

Perhaps the light is beginning to break through the darkness of Israel, but it is becoming increasingly dense in hearts and lives in other nations of the world. We don't know where we are going.

I'm glad I don't belong to the world. I'm glad I belong to Him. Our redemption draws near. Our only hope is in the One who in this chapter nearly 2000 years ago pled with Israel: "Walk while you have the light, that darkness may not overtake you" (verse 35).

Now in the next verses we have two summaries—the summary of their unbelief (verses 37-43) and the summary of our Lord's final word to the nation of Israel (verses 44-50).

The summary of their unbelief (12:37-43)

37. But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him;

38. that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?"

39. For this cause they could not believe, for Isaiah said again . . .

Notice the statement, "Yet they were not believing in Him . . . for this cause they could not believe." Though He had performed many miracles—healing a man sick for 38 years, a man born blind and absolutely hopeless, and raising a man dead and buried and in corruption—yet they believed not on Him. Though He had taught many wonderful things—"I am the Light of the world, I am the good Shepherd, I am the great Shepherd, I am the Resurrection and the Life, I am the Bread of Life"—and, although "never man spoke like this man," yet, for all that, they didn't believe on Him. And because they persisted in their unbelief, they could not believe.

They would not, therefore they could not. They could not because they would not. In other words, God ratified their own actions.

It is not that God prevented them or forced them to a state where they wouldn't believe. This would be contrary to all the revealed truth:

"If any man is thirsty, let him come."

"Ho, every one that is thirsty, come."

"Come unto Me all that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

"He who comes to Me I will in no way cast out." That's anybody! That's everybody! He appealed to the individual.

But when a person persistently refuses to accept the evidence and refuses the Saviour, hardness

sets in. God ratifies that person's own actions.

Take Hebrews 3—the appeal of God when He said three times, “Do not harden your hearts” (verses 8, 13, 15). Unbelief is the product of an evil heart. He pled with them that their hearts would not be hardened through unbelief. It is not that God doesn't want to save people; but, when people won't be saved and won't believe, the Spirit of God withdraws. That was true of Pharaoh in Exodus. It was true of Israel. Why were they scattered? For this same reason.

The tragedy is that the Spirit of God prophesied through Isaiah not only to Isaiah's generation but also to all succeeding generations: “Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” The report is here. The testimony is here. But who will believe it?

40. “HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES, AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART; LEST THEY SEE WITH THEIR EYES, AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED, AND I HEAL THEM.”

41. These things Isaiah said, because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him.

I am so happy that that verse is in the Scriptures. It's a quotation from Isaiah 6:1-3.

You remember how it starts: “In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple.” And one seraph cried unto another, “Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.” Isaiah spoke of Jesus when he saw Him in His glory. I think John is standing back, taking a retrospect of the whole thing; and he puts in exactly what Isaiah said about my Saviour, about my Lord.

Isaiah saw Him in His glory.

In the next two verses we have a warning:

42. Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue;

43. for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.

These men were convinced, but I question their being persuaded. They were convinced He was the Messiah, but they were not converted to Him. It is possible for a person to be convinced of the truth and have no experience of life. We can know the Word of God. We can know doctrine. We can be persuaded that He is the Christ, but that's not enough.

I had a long session with a young man in my office one day. Two or three times he stood up. I thought he was going to punch me, and I stood up, too—because if I'm going to be punched, I'm going to be standing up. But I told him to sit down, and he sat down.

When we got through our discussion, he said, "Dr. Mitchell, I believe that Jesus Christ died for the whole world."

I said, "I want you to be more specific than that."

He said, "I believe that Jesus Christ died for my sins. I believe that He was raised again from the dead." He accepted the evidence; he declared he believed. Did that make him a Christian? No.

I said, "Sir, you have no excuse. You have declared you believe these facts. Now will you, of your own volition, put your trust in Jesus Christ as your own personal Saviour?"

He said, "I'll do no such thing."

He acknowledged the essential facts, but he wouldn't by his own will put his trust in Christ as his own Saviour. Salvation doesn't come through the enlightenment of the mind. It comes through the will. I think the folk in these verses in John believed in their mind. They knew, by the miracles and His gracious words, that He must be the Mes-

siah.

But they thought, "It might mean I'll be put out of the synagogue. I might lose some business. I may lose my popularity. I may be in trouble with the Sanhedrin."

I believe that too many people in our churches have just given a mental assent to truth, and there hasn't been that realistic receiving of the Son of God into their own hearts and lives as Saviour. From verses 44 to 50 we have His final word to them.

It's the summary of His person and His work and His ministry.

The summary of His teaching (12:44-50)

44. And Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me does not believe in Me, but in Him who sent Me.

45. "And he who beholds Me beholds the One who sent Me.

46. "I have come as light into the world, that everyone who believes in Me may not remain in darkness.

47. "And if any one hears My sayings, and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world."

You have that statement in John 3:17 and 1 John 4:14. He came to save the world not just the elect. He also insists upon this fact, that He and His Father are one in the following verses. His works are His Father's works. His words are His Father's words.

48. "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.

49. "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak.

50. "And I know that His commandment is eternal life;

therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.”

He insists upon this oneness with the Father. Not to believe Him means you don't believe in God. If you don't believe His words, you don't believe God's words. Now that's the issue. This is His statement.

The Word becomes life—if I receive Him.

The Word becomes my judge—if I reject Him.

John 13

Christ, Our Advocate

A wee preview.

Of all the Scriptures between Genesis and Revelation, I know of no greater portion as far as the people of God are concerned than chapters 13 through 17 of John. I believe in these chapters we have the seed germ of all the truth concerning the church, the Body of Christ, as well as almost all the doctrines in the New Testament. What the Lord says here takes us up to within about 24 hours of His crucifixion.

What shall our Lord say to His disciples? These men have walked with Him for three-and-a-half years. Spiritually, they are not very mature. Their knowledge of the things of God is very meager. And now He must leave them. He speaks from a heart that is absolutely full of love for His own.

In chapter 13 He is the Advocate, making provision for their communion and their fellowship; if they are to be His disciples, they will evidence it by love.

In chapter 14 He speaks of His return—that, if He goes away, He is going to come again and receive them unto Himself. He speaks of the fact that He will send the Spirit of God to indwell them. He will not leave them comfortless.

In chapter 15 He speaks of Himself as the vine and of them as the branches. He expects much fruit-bearing from them, for “by this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit.”

And then in chapter 16 He declares Himself to

be the pre-eminent One. He is the One of whom the Spirit of God will speak.

Indeed, the Spirit will teach them things concerning Him and show them things to come.

Then, when we come to chapter 17, He is revealed as the great Intercessor, our High Priest, as He pleads with the Father on behalf of His disciples whom He is going to leave in the world. In that chapter He speaks 18 times of the world. He knows the world. He knows what is in the world. He knows the world is a tremendous enemy against His own. So He prays for them.

It is remarkable that this section, starting in chapter 13, begins with the statement, "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." And then the division ends in chapter 17 with Jesus praying "that the love wherewith Thou didst love Me may be in them, and I in them." He starts and ends the division with His love for His own. And down through these five chapters we have the marvelous revelation of His love, of His meekness, of His concern for His own.

I just wish that every one of you would read and reread these passages as we go through them. It is a wonderful thing to know that we have a Saviour who is on the throne today, who cares for us, whose love for us is never affected by our failures or our weaknesses or our circumstances. We see that in these first few verses of John 13, for here we see His sovereignty, His heavenly origin and divine destiny.

His knowledge (13:1-3)

1. Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

2. And during supper, the devil having already put into the

heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him,

3. Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God, and was going back to God,

4. rose from supper . . .

Our Lord was very much aware of all the details concerning the next 24 hours. Here He manifests His sovereignty and His omniscience. He knew where He was going. He knew when He was going—that His hour had come. He knew to whom He was going—He was going to the Father.

He knew that the Father had such confidence in Him that He would finish the purpose for which He came. Now, if the Father had confidence in Christ through it all, is it asking too much that we believers should have complete confidence in the Lord—confidence for our family, our home, our business, for personal work, for our ministry 24 hours a day—and confidence “that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6)?

He knew who would betray Him. He knew what Peter was going to do that night. He knew what Thomas would say after the resurrection. He knew all about the frailty and the failures of His disciples, yet He loved them to the end. He loves us clean through to the end, to the uttermost.

I repeat, our frailty, our faults, our failures, our circumstances never affect His love for us.

Now, I'm not condoning frailty nor am I condoning failure. But instead of becoming discouraged because of failure, we must get our eyes on Him and remember that even our failures have not affected His love for us. For “having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.” The more I see His love for me, the more I want to obey Him. May the Lord increase our love so that we will not want to fail Him or disappoint Him. If He loved us when we were ungodly, think of how

much He loves us now. Tell the Lord how much you love Him.

Starting in verse 4, He gives us an example—this wonderful experience of foot washing.

You can just hear John reminding himself of all the details of that evening as they had sat down at the table and reclined to eat supper. They had come in off the street, but nobody had washed their feet. They wore sandals, and the very first thing to do would be to wash each other's feet or have a servant do it. This was the custom, but no one had washed their feet nor even the Lord's feet.

So who is going to get up and wash their feet? Nobody stirred. Nobody moved. You see, there still is a great deal of pride in the disciples. Who is going to start it?

Then Jesus Himself rose from supper to wash their feet.

My friend, can you conceive this tremendous act of our Saviour? Here is omnipotent God. Here is the One who said, "I know my hour has come. I know I am going to my Father. I know who is going to betray me. I know the Father has utter confidence in me." Here is the Lord of Glory on His knees, washing the dirty feet of His disciples.

One is reminded of Philippians 2:5-7: "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped." But He emptied Himself and made Himself like a common man and took upon Himself the form of a servant, of a slave.

Here is One before whom angels fall in worship, adoration and praise. And if they could gaze out of the battlements of heaven and look down upon earth, they would see the Saviour on His knees with a basin of water, not only washing feet but wiping them as well.

The example (13:4-6)

4. (He) rose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, girded Himself about.

5. Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

6. And so He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?"

"This can't be, Lord. You can't wash my feet. I should be washing Your feet. You're my master."

The lesson (13:6-11)

7. Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now; but you shall understand hereafter."

And I personally think He had reference here to the time when the Spirit of God would indwell and teach Peter these things.

8. Peter said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!"

Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

The English here is not strong enough. "You shall not wash my feet forever. You'll never wash my feet at any time or in any place. You're never going to wash my feet. Why should I, the servant, the disciple, be washed by my Master? I will never be. You'll never wash my feet." That's just like Peter, you know.

9. Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."

"Lord, if it means communion, if it means relationship, if it means something to do with You, then do the whole business."

10. Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to

wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.”

11. For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, “Not all of you are clean.”

There is a two-fold lesson here that the Lord desires us to know. First, we learn the advocacy of our Saviour. In verse 8, He said, “If I do not wash you.” He didn’t say, “If somebody else washes you, you are clean.” Hebrews 10:14 says, “For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.” His work at the cross bathes people in the bath of regeneration, as Titus 3:5 declares.

The Old Testament priests were bathed just once when they were inducted into the priest’s office. After that, they washed only their feet and hands at the laver of cleansing.

May I say, there must be cleansing before there can be communion. The cross was an act once forever. But daily, there must be cleansing before there can be communion.

The Lord Jesus at the right hand of God not only makes intercession for us now, but He advocates—He pleads our cause. He does this on the ground that He has already put away our sin by the shedding of His blood. As our Advocate, He always keeps us fit for heaven. “Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.” We maintain fellowship with Him now through confession, forgiveness, and cleansing. Let me repeat—there can be no fellowship, no communion with Him, without cleansing.

The exhortation (13:12-17)

The second lesson is one of humility. Wherever you find real love for Him, you will find meekness and humility.

12. And so when He had washed their feet, and taken His

garments, and reclined at table again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?"

13. "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right; for so I am.

14. "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

15. "For I gave you an example, that you also should do as I did to you."

He has washed Peter who will deny Him, Thomas who will doubt Him, and Judas who will betray Him. He has more in mind here than an ordinance of foot washing. I have no argument against these who claim we should have literal foot washing services. If you feel you should do that, that's between you and the Lord. I think the Lord has a far greater thing before us here.

Peter and the disciples knew all about foot washing. This was a daily occurrence with them. But this is the only place in the New Testament where Jesus said, "I gave you an example." What was the example? Meekness. Look at Matthew 11:29: "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls."

Only once did Jesus ever say, "Learn of Me." Learn what? Gentleness. Humility. Peter in his first epistle reaffirmed this: "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps" (1 Peter 2:21); and then he discussed Christ's meekness. Galatians 5 also tells us that the fruit of the Spirit is gentleness.

We have no record that these disciples ever criticized each other or quarreled after this evening. In fact, this same Peter will say in 1 Peter 5:5-6, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God." He also tells the brethren, "All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another," just as the Lord girded Himself with a towel. Humility is a sign of greatness in the King-

dom of God.

16. "Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master; neither one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.

17. "If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."

Gentleness is the fruit of the Spirit. It takes a strong man to be gentle. We have many weak, but not many meek Christians these days.

You say, "Well, how can I do it, Brother Mitchell?"

There are plenty of feet to be washed. Galatians 6:1 says, "Even if a man is caught in any trespass"—if a brother be out of joint—"restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, looking to yourselves, lest you too be tempted"—you also get out of joint.

When an arm is out of joint, do you cut the arm off? Certainly not. You put it back in. And there are a great many Christians who are out of joint, out of fellowship with God. Don't take a club to them. Don't criticize them. Love them. Wash their feet. Restore them. Sin did not keep God from His appointment with Adam in the garden, but sin kept Adam from his appointment with God.

If you are spiritual, take the Word of God and wash the feet of other believers who have stepped out of the way and gotten their feet dirty. You can't go through this world without becoming dirty and neither can they. Use the Word lovingly. Restore them with the spirit of gentleness, for the time may come when you, too, will need to be restored to fellowship.

The Lord's great desire at the beginning of this Upper Room discourse is communion. How glad I am that every one of us who has professed the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is the object of His love. He loves us to the end in spite of all our frailty. And He has made provision for the great

yearning of His heart—that you might have fellowship with Him. And when you're in fellowship with Him, it is so easy to be in fellowship with your brethren.

The betrayer revealed (13:18-30)

Now, following this, you have the revelation of the one who should betray the Saviour. He knew who should betray Him. He said in verse 11, "Not all of you are clean." The omniscience of Christ is evident in this passage.

18. "I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME.'

19. "From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He.

20. "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me."

Our Lord speaks here of the union of believers, Himself, and the Father. To reject the Saviour is to reject God. And our attitude one to another will reveal our relationship to our Saviour and God. God expects us to walk down here on earth as those who are in vital union, in vital life with the Son. And what the Father expected of His Son, the Son expects of His people. For the love the Father has for the Son is the same love the Son has for you and for me. So our love for each other is the outward demonstration of our love for Him. God sees my faith, but men see my love. God wants the life of His Son to be displayed in our love for one another. Now in the midst of that, we come to this:

21. When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me."

This is the thing that troubled Him. Not one of the Pharisees, not one of the Sadducees, not one of the Herodians, not one of His enemies, but “one of you” would be the one who would betray Him. What a startling statement to make!

22. The disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one He was speaking.

And if you read this story in all four gospels, you'll notice the great confusion in their minds. I would be surprised if they didn't wonder, “Am I the one who is going to betray Him? You mean that one of us is going to betray You, Lord? Why, we've lived with You for three-and-a-half years. We've followed You all over this country. We have testified concerning You. We have heard Your gracious words. You are our master. You are our teacher. You are our Lord. You mean one of us will betray You? It is unbelievable.”

23. There was reclining on Jesus' breast one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.

I believe it is to John himself he has reference here.

24. Simon Peter therefore gestured to him, and said to him, “Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking.”

25. He, leaning back thus on Jesus' breast, said to Him, “Lord, who is it?”

26. Jesus therefore answered, “That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him.” So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.

27. And after the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Jesus therefore said to him, “What you do, do quickly.”

We studied this in chapter 12. It is an astound-

ing thing that a person can be one of the twelve and walk three-and-a-half years with the Lord and yet not have any love for Him! He had associated with the disciples of Christ. He had gazed upon the Saviour. He had heard His words and seen the miracles He performed. And yet he had no place in his heart for Christ.

Is it possible? Listen. A person can know all the doctrines and can associate with God's people and be found in the worship meetings, the prayer meetings, at the Lord's Table, and yet not know Jesus Christ as Saviour.

Both Jude and Peter write concerning this. Jude 1:12 says, "These men are those who are hidden reefs in your love-feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water." Their life is without Christ.

Judas had a weakness—covetousness. Now the Lord knew that Judas was a thief. But as far as I know, Judas did not know he was a thief when he became treasurer of the company. The Lord did.

You say, "Well, then, why did He allow it?"

Because He wanted Judas to see himself so that he could be freed from his sin. Remember, he was the only one of the twelve from Judea. I take it he was a brilliant businessman and probably well thought of by the other eleven. I question if any one of them ever dreamed it was Judas. He was so one-with-them. He was one of the executives. I say to you solemnly that if you have some weaknesses in your life and God puts circumstances around you, remember it is that you might see your sin and get rid of it. This Judas didn't do.

You ask, "Was Judas ever a Christian?" Very clearly, Judas was never a real disciple of Jesus Christ.

In Matthew 26:21-25, when the Lord Jesus said, "One of you will betray Me," and the disciples in perplexity said, "Lord, is it I? Is it I?" They called him "Lord."

But Judas said, “Rabbi, Master, is it I?”

In John 6:70, the Lord had said, “Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?” In John 17:12, He speaks of Judas as being the son of perdition. In Acts 1:25, Peter said, “Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” Here in John 13, the Lord is ratifying what was already in Judas’s heart.

There is such a danger in being religious among God’s people but never really knowing the Lord. This is a particular danger for second and third generation Christians.

Two things ought to have opened Judas’s eyes to the deity of Christ. First, Jesus said, “One of you shall betray me.” Now who knew that Judas was going to betray his Lord? The other eleven certainly didn’t. Who did? In his heart, Judas knew what he was going to do. He had determined he was going to sell Jesus for money. And when the Lord Jesus said, “One of you men is going to betray me,” Judas’s eyes should have recognized the omniscience of his Teacher.

Second, when John said, “Lord, who is it?” the Saviour said, “That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him.”

Now the custom was that the governor of the feast would honor someone by taking his own bread, dipping it in wine, and presenting it to the one he desired to honor.

The Lord said, “I know who is going to betray me, and yet I am going to offer to him the place of honor. I’m going to recognize him at the feast.” He took the sop, dipped it in the vinegar, and offered it to Judas. He was still pleading with him.

Now notice. When Judas took the sop, he determined to go through with it. He opened his heart to that determination, and Satan took over.

“What you do, do quickly.” Jesus ratified that decision.

There would be no return. Judas had spurned

the grace of the Saviour. He ignored His omniscience. He made his decision. He went out and sold his Lord. As Zechariah 11:12-13 says, they treasured God at thirty pieces of silver, the price of a dead slave (Exodus 21:32). See the confusion of the disciples:

28. Now no one of those reclining at table knew for what purpose He had said this to him.

29. For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, "Buy the things we have need of for the feast"; or else, that he should give something to the poor.

They didn't realize what was going on. They thought he was going out to prepare for the meal.

30. And so after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.

In John 8:12, the Lord Jesus said, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." Not to have Jesus Christ in your heart, in your life, means night. That's why in 1 Thessalonians 5:5 the Apostle Paul calls us "sons of light." We're not children of the night. We are children of the day. The same thought occurs in Romans 13:12: "Put on the armor of light." God is light.

If I spurn the light, there is nothing left but darkness. "And it was night." Peter could say that the unrighteous, the ungodly are kept in chains of darkness. Impenetrable darkness is the portion of those out of Christ.

Here is Judas who spent three-and-a-half years with this wonderful Saviour.

And when he left, he not only went out into the darkness at midnight, but he went out into impenetrable darkness.

"Judas turned aside" (Acts 1:25).

He made his choice; he went to his own place. God does not need to send men into outer darkness.

They choose to go there, and God ratifies their choice. You think about that.

The new commandment (13:31-35)

31. When therefore he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him;

32. if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately."

The hour is come. "Now is the Son of Man glorified" and now will the Father be glorified. Where? At the cross.

There God was glorified in that His character was vindicated, in that redemption was completed, in that sin was put away, in that He is now free to manifest His mercy to sinners. The Son was glorified, for the Father would raise Him from the dead; the Father would glorify Him with His own glory and give Him a name that is above every name.

Remember Romans 3:25-26, speaking of Christ, "Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

The Father is glorified through the work of His Son. The Son is glorified because the Father exalted Him and has given Him a name above every name. I suggest for your further study Philippians 2:6-13.

33. "Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You shall seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, 'Where I am going, you cannot come;' now I say to you also."

This is the only time our Lord called them, "Little children." It is like a mother taking her little children round her and saying, "Little children, I've got you all to myself now. The traitor has gone out, and here we are. I love you and you love me. Here we are, my little children, all together. I've got some things to say to you personally now." You can just see the heart of Christ being poured out when Judas left.

Now there was a difference between what He said to the Jews in chapter 8 and what He says to the disciples here. In chapter 8, He said, "Where I'm going you can't come, because you don't belong to me; and you'll die in your sins." But to the disciples He repeats this statement. "Where I'm going, you can't come—that is, you can't come now. I'm going to leave you, and you can't come with me now. But you will come afterwards. So now I say to you:

34. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

35. "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Wouldn't it be wonderful if in our churches any criticism, bitterness, envy, any strife would be thrown out the window, and our love would be evident? Remember, love covers a multitude of sins.

The Lord doesn't criticize us. He loves us. He knows our frailty. He remembers we are dust. And, oh, how compassionate, how tender He is with us in our frailty. It is when we get stiff-necked that the Lord puts out His hand in chastisement. A mother doesn't spank because her child is weak or stumbles, only when he gets self-willed, when he wants his own way.

He evidenced his love by sacrifice. And as 1 John 3:14-16 says, we will manifest our love for the brethren by sacrifice, by laying down our lives for our brethren. Love is evident by sacrifice, not by our service, not by holding true doctrine.

This is a sad thing today among evangelicals. We hold true doctrine and we're eager and zealous for service, but we manifest no love. "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." The badge of discipleship is love.

Are you His disciple? Judas revealed what he was. He went out. He had no love. He was no real disciple.

There are three measurements of a disciple. We had the first in John 8:31, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

The second one is here in verse 35, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." Remember, "Love is patient, love is kind" (1 Corinthians 13:4). Don't you forget that.

The third measure of discipleship is in chapter 15—fruit bearing. God grant that we Christians, we who love Him, we who have been redeemed by precious blood, may wear the badge of discipleship which is genuine love one for the other and especially for frail, stumbling believers.

The measure of our love for each other is to be His love for us. My friend, this rules out all divisions. It rules out all bitterness and jealousies and envies among God's people. It rules out all pettiness and smallness and shallowness. How much are we to love each other? As Christ loves us. This is the measure.

Let us manifest love in our daily walk and conversation. Remember, He took His dear little children and gathered them round Him, and this was

the first thing He said to them—"Love one another."

This will also be the last thing He has to say to them— "Love one another."

John 14

Christ, the Coming One

A wee reminder.

Now you have the Lord's answering his disciples' questions, revealing more of Himself, more about His return, and more about the indwelling Spirit whom He wants to give them.

All this takes place after Judas goes out. In a few hours another one of His disciples is going to deny Him, and the rest are all going to forsake Him and flee. And yet the Lord takes the time to comfort these perplexed disciples concerning the future.

I want you to see something of the heart, the tenderness, the compassion, the love, and the yearning of heart our Saviour has for these 11 men, remembering that you, too, have now come into that same relationship, under that same care, having the same place as they in His heart.

Life is full of tests and trials and afflictions and sorrows as well as blessings. The Lord permits these things to come into our lives because He wants to wean us away from transient things and fix our hearts on eternal verities.

In these chapters, from 14 through 17, we have remarkable revelations of what God has in store for us, for He has made provision for His disciples and for you and me to help us cope with tests and trials in a world that has no place for Him.

We are living in the same world as these disciples. We go through the same tests and trials of life they did. Our circumstances may be a little dif-

ferent, but the tests are there. The flesh is so weak and frail, and we stumble along. But He understands and has made marvelous provision for us to be certain of some things. How glad I am that He has made the acceptance of every one of His children certain.

The disciples raise four questions:

The first is, "Lord, where are You going?" The second is, "Lord, how can we know the way?" The third is, "Won't You show us the Father?" And the fourth is, "How can You show Yourself to us and not to the world?"

How glad I am that the disciples butted in to interrupt the Lord, for these very questions brought out even more of His wonderful revelations.

The first question and answer (13:36 to 14:4)

36. Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?"

Jesus answered, "Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you shall follow later."

37. Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You."

38. Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a cock shall not crow, until you deny Me three times.

1. "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.

2. "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you."

This question of Peter's arose out of the discussion they had been having in verse 33. This dear man, how he blurts things out. You can never question Peter's love for the Saviour. I question his knowledge of spiritual things. As I've said, a person can love the Saviour and be zealous for God

and be ignorant of spiritual realities.

“Where are You going?”

“Well, where I’m going you’ll come afterwards, Peter.”

“Why can’t I go with You now? I’ve been three-and-a-half years with You, Lord. I gave up my boat. I gave up my fishing. I’ve followed You these years and You’re on my heart. You’re my Master and my Lord. Why can’t I go with You now?”

“You’ll come afterwards.”

“Lord, I’m willing to die for You.”

“Yes, I believe that, Peter; but I want to inform you that before this night is out, before the cock crows, that somewhere between two and three o’clock in the morning you’re going to deny Me three times.”

No wonder these men were perplexed. He had just said, “One of you is going to betray Me.” And Judas went out. Now He tells them that another one of them is going to deny Him. And then He gives these gracious words, “Let not your heart be troubled.” Actually, He swings into the plural in chapter 14—“Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.” The balm for heart trouble is a continual faith in Him.

“You’re believing in God whom you haven’t seen. Now believe in Me, because I’m going to be unseen, too. I’m going to leave you. And just as you have faith in God, have faith in Me for I am God. Have faith in Me.”

I’ve been reading a book by a medical doctor who says that one of the greatest death-dealing foes we have is the heart. A great percentage of those who die of heart trouble would not have died if they had been living in peace. Isaiah, you remember, in 26:3 says, “The (one who is) steadfast of mind Thou wilt keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in Thee.”

There is no question that strains and stress undermine the heart. But our Lord is giving us some-

thing here that is good for the body and good for the soul in times of need and sorrow and affliction.

“Let not your heart be troubled. You put your trust in God. Now put your trust also in Me.” Nothing delights the heart of God more than to have His people on earth living the life of faith, a life of daily trust in Him whatever the circumstances. In a few short hours, our Lord is going to give His back to the smiters and His cheeks to those who will pluck out the hair. He's going to be scourged and hung on a cross as a malefactor. And yet He talks to these disciples about peace and rest. That means He Himself is at peace and rest even in the midst of what is coming.

If you and I knew that within a few hours we were going to suffer, we would be all torn up inside. Not He. And He takes the time—oh, what tenderness, what love, what compassion—to say to these men, “Don't be troubled. Let not your hearts be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.”

In Genesis, God prepared a garden; but man ruined it. Christ has gone home to prepare a place for us that man will never ruin. He created Eden with a word. He has been spending nearly two thousand years preparing a special place for us. And look how long He has been spending preparing us for that place!

Down through the centuries these first three verses of chapter 14 have been a tremendous comfort and strength of hope to God's people under all circumstances. Don't be troubled, they tell us. Don't be perplexed. Don't feel hopeless. We are just in school down here for a few years being trained by God for eternity. This life is just a fleeting shadow, in preparation for what He has up there.

And there is going to be a reception committee waiting for us. We're not unknown in heaven, you know. If you are a Christian down here with few

friends and so lonely, may I tell you that there will be a reception committee waiting for you when you get there. It is home.

Isn't it a wonderful relief for you and for me when you leave your office or your shop or your store or whatever you're doing and you get home? You kick your shoes off and put your slippers on and just sit down. "Oh, boy, I'm home!" This is the place where you are relaxed; this is the place of love; this is the place where you're loved for yourself; this is the place of peace, permanency, restfulness; home—where you're loved just because of who you are. You might be as difficult to get along with as anybody else, but you're loved just the same when you get home.

Someone said to me, "Well, Brother Mitchell, you talk of heaven. Do you think they'll let you in?"

"Well," I said, "even if Michael the Archangel were to stand at the door of glory and say, 'Mitchell, you can't come in here,' I'll just push him to one side and say, 'Get out of my way. I'm the man Christ died for. I'm coming Home.'"

It is no strange place to me. I'm not going to heaven as a stranger. I'm going Home as the son of One who is God.

Just as dear old Job back yonder in chapter 19, verses 25-27, could say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth and I'm going to see Him face to face. And when I see Him, behold, it will be He Himself and not any other." I'm not surprised the Apostle Paul could say in Philippians 1:23, "But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better." It's Home!

Will you mark something else? He is not only preparing a place, but He is preparing a people. Men were made for the earth. I was born on the earth and I belong to the earth, physically. The day came when I became a child of the living God, and since then I belong to heaven. This is something

new in the economy of God. It must be a tremendous thing for angelic beings to find people from the earth being received in the glory as the children of the eternal God. He is preparing a people, I say again, for that place.

"Oh," you say, "I thought I was prepared the moment I was saved."

Ah, yes, you received eternal life. You came into right relationship with Him when you accepted the Saviour. There's no question about that. If you're just a babe in Christ, you're going to go home to glory. Whether you've got much faith or little faith, whether you're mature or immature, whether you are strong or weak, you are going to be there. Every believer is going to be there. There will be differences or positions in the sense of service and ministry; some will be crowned, some not crowned. But suffice it to say, God today is preparing a people for that place.

But the important thing is not heaven. As I say, the important thing is being with Him.

3. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

The call is not to heaven; the call is to Him—to a Person. "It is my Father's house, and I'm going to be there," He says. "And you're coming to be with Me."

The disciples were sad this night. They would be sad at the cross. They would be sad at the empty tomb. But after their risen Lord had instructed them for 40 days, they saw Him go up to heaven. And while they were looking up, there came two men in white apparel who said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). They

went back to Jerusalem rejoicing with great joy. And I am sure that the early disciples lived every day in the expectation of the return of the One whom they loved.

And what a tragedy it is today that what we hold as a doctrine—the coming of the Lord—the early church believed as a reality.

It is easy to become so occupied here that we miss the vision of His soon return. He, not an angel, will come for us. No angel died for us. The Lord Himself will come.

If you want to follow this wonderful truth through, refer to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, Hebrews 10:37, and 2 Corinthians 5:1. Also, remember, Psalm 16:11 tells us that in His presence is fullness of joy.

4. "And you know the way where I am going."

The second question and answer (13:5-7)

Then Thomas injects himself.

5. Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going; how do we know the way?"

In other words, "If we don't know the destination, how can we know the way?"

The disciples never understood when He talked of eternity. They just didn't see beyond the material kingdom. Thomas utters the second question, and it evokes this wonderful answer:

6. Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.

7. "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him."

Jesus Christ did not say, "I am a way-shower." Not only the cults, but some who profess to be real

Christians in theological circles are declaring that Christ was a "way-shower," just as you and I are way-showers, pointing people to Him who is the way.

He said, "I AM the way." This is another one of our Lord's tremendous statements. In chapter 4, He was the Water of Life; in chapter 5, the great Judge who has all resurrection and all life and judgment in His hands.

In chapter 6, He said, "I am the Bread of Life. I am the One who can satisfy you. The life I give is a satisfying life. It's resurrection life, eternal life, indwelling life."

In chapter 7, He said, "I am the One who can send the Spirit of God upon you."

In chapter 8, He said, "I am the Light of the World."

In chapter 10, He said, "I am the good Shepherd;" in chapter 11, "I am the Resurrection and the Life;" in chapter 14, "I am the Way."

No mere man would say things like that. This is God speaking. "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved."

God is going to have a people in heaven without sin. He is a holy God, a righteous God. And He has made the provision for us to get there. He says, "I've got eternal life to give." He says, "I'm here to save." He says, "I'm going to have a people in heaven, but this is My way." If He is going to do the saving, God has a right to say what the way is.

Our way is in Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." But Jesus said, "I am the way," the way to the Father, the way to the destination.

He is not only the way. He is the truth. Colossians 2:3 says, God hath hidden in him "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." You want the truth? You'll find it in Him.

And He is the life. He is the water of life. He is eternal life. "He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life" (1 John 5:12).

He is the way that brings us to God. He is the truth that sets men free. He is the life that brings men into fellowship with God. "This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

The third question and answer (14:8-21)

8. Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us."

9. Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

"Don't you yet know who I am?" Now the disciples knew more than the Jews did. Had not Peter said in Matthew 16:16, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"? But how slow they were to lay hold of the wonderful truth concerning His person.

And how slow we are. Some Christians have been on the way for 40 and 50 years, and yet know so little of our precious Lord and the wonderful life that we have in Him.

This request of Philip's has been the cry of thousands of people through the centuries.

"Show us the Father. If we could only see Him." Just like Moses said to God in Exodus 33:18, "Show me Your glory." This is the yearning of the human heart—a yearning for something that is real, something that's eternal, something that will really satisfy us. "Show us the Father."

"Have I been so long a time with you, Philip?" I think this is a kind of mild rebuke to Philip. He was one of the early disciples. "Don't you—even

you—know Me?”

And then the Lord gives us the marvelous revelation that the Father is seen in Jesus Christ. All that I know of the Father is what I know of Jesus Christ. Just what I know of Jesus Christ is what I know of God. When you introduce people to Jesus Christ, you are bringing them face to face with God. We Christians fail to realize this.

John 1:18 says, “No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.”

The Apostle Paul speaks of Jesus Christ as “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15). In Hebrews 1:2,3 He is the “heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature.”

I repeat it—all I know of the Father is just what I know of Jesus Christ.

To see Jesus is to see God. Compare Hebrews 1:2,3 with Colossians 1:15 and Colossians 2:9. The more we know Christ, the more we know God. No man hath seen God at any time, but Adam and Eve saw Jesus in the garden. With whom did Enoch walk? With whom did Noah talk? The God of glory appeared unto Abraham, who “rejoiced to see My day” (John 8:56). Whom did Moses see? Whom, the elders of Israel on the mount? Isaiah? “The only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him” (John 1:18).

Then when you come to the first chapter of Revelation, He says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” the beginning and the ending. . . . “And I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore” (Rev. 1:8, 18). “I am El Shaddai.” That was the very name that was used for the revelation of God to Abraham in Genesis 17:1—“I am the El Shaddai, the Almighty.”

How is the Father made known? Through the word and through the works of His Son.

10. "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.

11. "Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me; otherwise believe on account of the works themselves."

What does He mean? Let me paraphrase. "I am so one with the Father that the words He has are My words, and the words that I speak are My Father's words." We had it again in John 5:19, "Whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner." And "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life; even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes. I have the same authority. I have the same power to raise the dead and make them alive" (John 5: 21).

The authority He has and the power He has are equal to His Father's. Throughout the Gospel of John the teaching of our Saviour is far more remarkable and far more supernatural than the physical works that He performed. I think sometimes we forget that. Though John does give us seven signs to prove that Christ is deity, the astounding thing is not the miracles. His words are the claims of One who is God and just as supernatural, just as real, just as divine as the Father's. All His statements, all His miracles, all His life have been the revelation of the Father.

"Philip, have I been with you so long and you don't see it?" How is the Father known through the Son? By His words, by His works. Now, remember, right down through verse 21 He is still answering the question, "Show us the Father."

The second revelation is that the Father is also made known through the believer in his words and in his works.

12. "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the

works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father.

13. "And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

14. "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it."

Now, don't take that prayer promise out of its context. He is dealing with the revelation of God. When men were walking the earth in our Lord's day, if they had wanted to see God the Father, they would have seen Him through Jesus Christ His Son; but He is seen today by the words and works of His people.

Someone has written a verse that ends, "What is the Bible according to you?" People today are not reading their Bibles. They don't believe the Bible. They only know about the living God through you and me.

Now this verse 12 has been used by some who believe that we should always be performing miracles, that we're going to do the greater works because He has gone to be with the Father. Are you doing the works He did? Do you feed the hungry?

"Oh," you say, "we go down and buy a dozen loaves, a hundred dozen loaves, and take them to the rescue mission."

No, He took five loaves and two fish and fed 5000.

Do you still the storm when the wind blows outside? You run for cover. He stilled the storm. You may use the wind—as with an airplane—but you can't control it.

He said, "Be muzzled," to the wind; and it was muzzled.

He said to the storm, "Peace;" and it ceased raging.

He said to the dead, "Arise;" and they rose. He said to the lepers, "Be thou clean." He said to the palsied, "Take up your bed and walk."

He said to the blind man who told Him, "I want

my sight," "So be it unto thee."

I mention this for a reason. I have had in my ministry men who come to me and say, "You don't believe your Bible. You don't believe the miraculous." I certainly do. I don't believe the day of miracles is past by any means. We see them right along, but we don't brag about it.

The day of miracles is still here, but do you do the works He did?

Now, you may answer me by saying, "Well, He doesn't mean every individual will do greater works."

But that's kind of backing down, isn't it? It was true in the Book of Acts and in Hebrews 2:3-5 where God confirmed the message of the Apostles by miracles and wonders and signs. But it is not God's purpose to keep on performing physical miracles.

Christ performed them at specified times for a purpose in both Old and New Testaments. He used them to free Israel from Egypt and to lead them through the wilderness. He closed the heavens, and it didn't rain in Elijah's day for three-and-a-half years. He miraculously took care of dear Elijah, using the ravens and then the widow. Following him, Elisha performed twice the number of miracles Elijah did.

In our Lord's day, the nation was in apostasy and declension led by a priesthood that didn't believe in the supernatural. The Lord performed miracles to open their eyes to the fulfillment of Isaiah 35:5-7—that when Messiah comes, He will open blind eyes, the lame will leap like a deer, and He will feed the hungry. That carries over into the Book of Acts and then ceases.

Yet I would not for one moment exclude the fact that the Lord always answers individual faith. But, by and large, the miracles passed away with the Apostles.

They raised the dead.

They cast out demons. They healed the sick “and greater works than these shall you do.”

But I believe the spiritual miracle of transforming men who are dead in sin and making them eternal in Christ, one with God even as Christ is one with the Father (guaranteeing them eternal glory), is a far greater miracle than the resurrection of Lazarus from the tomb. Through the centuries multitudes of people have been taken out of the slavery of sin, out from under the bondage of death, and have been fitted to spend eternal glory with God.

How will we do greater works than our Saviour did when He walked among men? “If you will ask anything in my name, I will do it.”

Now don't tell me that the Lord just writes out a check and signs it and leaves it for you to fill in the blank how much you want. That sounds very nice. But every prayer promise in your Bible has something attached to it. Here He is talking about the revelation of the Father in His people. The reason for the greater works is because Christ goes to be with His Father, giving us an access into the very presence of God that these greater works may be done.

My friend, that's a tremendous promise.

Is the yearning of your heart that God will be revealed through you and me by our word, our attitude, and our actions? How can I live in a world like this one? How can I work down there in the office, down there in the shop, or live among my neighbors when all around I see things that are godless, unrighteous, unholy. You hear and see ungodly things all day long. How in the world can a man live for God in a world like this?

“Whatever you ask (Him) in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”

The great passion of the Son is the glorification of the Father through the Son. We had it in chapters 11, 12, 13, and you've got it now in 14.

You'll have it again in 16 and 17. He wants to be glorified through you and through me.

How is He going to do it? By my words. By my actions. By my attitude to people.

"But I feel so weak," you say. "I feel so frail."

"All right," He says, "I'll give you something. Whatever you ask Me, I will do it."

Could I be a little blunt and ask you a question? Honestly now? Honestly? Do you want to live that He might be glorified? Do you want to so live that the eternal God will be revealed through you? Do you want your family to see God in you? Do you want your neighbors to see God in you? How can it be?

He gives us our resources in Ephesians 6. Starting in verse 10, we're to be strong in the Lord. Then He identifies the enemy. Then He gives us our armor. Then He gives us our sword. Then He gives us our resources. The unsearchable resource for the Christian is to be able to come at any time under any circumstance into the very presence of God and to speak boldly, reverently to Him: "Father, this is what I want."

The Lord Jesus said, "I will do it, if it is for the glorification of my Father and Me." This gives you assurance and certainty. Paul speaks of it in Ephesians 3:11-12, having received the revelation of "the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him."

My, how we live like paupers when we ought to live like rich people—rich in faith and in power, rich in peace and in joy because of our certainty. The Father has put all authority in the hands of the Son. The yearning of the Son is that the Father be glorified, I repeat. Whenever you ask for that, He will give it to you. It is just that simple.

But the trouble is that a great deal of our praying is asking for ourselves. God wants you to ask largely, but for the purpose of glorifying Him.

Now, in verses 15 through 20, John gives us the marvelous revelation of the indwelling Spirit. Notice three things: love, obedience, and His word. They run together.

15. "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

16. "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;

17. that is the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you.

18. "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

19. "After a little while the world will behold Me no more; but you will behold Me; because I live, you shall live also."

I love the tenderness of our Saviour here. You remember in chapter 13, in verse 33, He could say (let me paraphrase again), "Little children—my little wee bairns—yet a little while I am with you. I will not leave you orphans. But I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, another Paraclete, another Advocate. Not a different one, but another like Myself, one in equality with Myself, not someone who is a servant under Me. Just as the Son is in equality with the Father, the Spirit of God is in equality with the Son. I will not leave you orphans."

May I say, it was to the advantage of believers that the Lord should leave them. The Son prays, the Father sends, the Comforter works. Who is this Comforter? The One who will "be with you forever."

If I were teaching Romans 8 here, I'd point out that we have two Advocates, one in heaven pleading our cause at the throne and one in us who pleads our cause and His cause. The Spirit of God reveals to us the very deep things of God. It is the Spirit of God indwelling the believer that makes the tremendous difference between the Christian and the non-Christian. He is the Spirit of Truth

whom the world cannot receive.

20. "In that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you."

This union cannot be broken. Just as the Father and the Son are united forever, so is the believer with the Son. We've been united forever, the one to the other.

The world knows nothing of this. It is different from all the religions of the world. The moment you and I in simple faith took the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, that very moment we were not only redeemed and forgiven and given life eternal, but we came into a union with the Son of God comparable to that of the Father and the Son. There could be no spirituality, no power, no salvation apart from this marvelous union.

We share His resources in prayer. He indwells us by the Spirit. He gives us life eternal. We have union with Him. The Christian life is a supernatural life. The Spirit of God indwells us.

Our actions, attitudes and words ought to reveal God to this world; but we can only reveal God as we yield ourselves to Him.

Let us not be too hard on these disciples. They had gone so far beyond the men of their generation. But let us do be hard on one another. We don't read the Word much these days. How can we know the Truth unless we read it? How can we obey it unless we know it? We can't be disciples unless we're obedient.

21. "He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him."

The fourth question and answer (14:22-31)

22. Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, what then has

happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us, and not to the world?"

23. Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him."

May I suggest five answers to Judas's question?

First, He said, "If you love Me, you will keep my commandments" in verse 15; "He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me" in verse 21; and "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word" in verse 23. Obedience and love cannot be separated.

What is the measure of your love for Christ? It is measured by your obedience to His Word. Obedience is the true test of love. If I say I love the Saviour and you see in my life nothing but disobedience, then I'm only saying words.

24. "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me."

We go to Bible conferences, New Life conferences, Keswick conferences, spiritual life conferences. We have all kinds of doctrines concerning the spiritual life and how to get it and how to maintain it. But if you analyze it and bring it right down to basic facts, the key is obedience.

You say, "Brother Mitchell, don't you believe in discipleship?"

Yes, but the key to discipleship is obedience. The foundation of spiritual power and spiritual experience is obedience.

My friend, I don't care what ecstatic experiences you may have. They may be wonderful. They may fill you with joy and blessing. You may be in the third heaven. But if it is not the fruitage of a life of obedience, it is nothing but a fleshly, ecstatic thing.

Second, notice something else in verses 21 and 23: “And he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father. . . . And my Father will love him.”

You say, “But, Brother Mitchell, doesn’t the Lord love us even before we’re saved? Doesn’t the Apostle John say in I John 4:19 that ‘We love, because he first loved us?’ But here it says that if we prove our love by our obedience, He will love us. Why?”

This is an added love, a special love to those who are obedient. And with it comes a revelation of His person (verse 21) and the intimacy of His fellowship (verse 23). Why do Christians know so little about Him? Why doesn’t the Lord manifest Himself more? Because we are not obedient.

Why don’t we have more fellowship with the Living God? Because we are not obedient.

May I remind you of 1 John chapter 1? In the first verse we have the Apostle’s great experience: “We have heard . . . we have seen . . . we beheld and our hands handled. . . the Word of life.” In verse 2 he repeats it.

Then in verse 3 he says his great desire is that “you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” Fellowship with the Father and the Son should be the very hunger of our hearts.

John may have had in mind there in his epistle these two or three verses in John 14 as he gives the Lord’s answers to Judas’s question, “How can you reveal yourself to us and not to the world?”

The third answer is, “We will come to him, and make Our abode with him,” with the one in fellowship with the Living God. The Spirit of God will indwell that one and teach him all things, and he will have peace.

Mel Trotter started the Union Gospel Mission in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The Lord saved him from a life of sin at a Chicago mission. He became a mighty testimony for God.

One day, a man said to him, “Look here, Trotter.

You've been talking to me about your God and about your Saviour. How do you know they live? Have you seen them?"

"No," Mel said.

"Have you heard them?"

"No."

"Then how do you know they live?"

"Why," he said, "that's very easy. I was just talking to the Lord five minutes ago."

Now the world doesn't understand that. How can the world not see Him?

Judas says, "How in the world can you make yourself known to us and not to the world?" This is something of which the man out of Christ knows absolutely nothing. He may have all the degrees of the university after his name; but, if he is out of Christ, he is totally ignorant of what I'm talking about.

It is not for the world.

25. "These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you."

The fourth answer is in verse 26:

26. "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."

After the Spirit of God came to indwell His people on the day of Pentecost, dear Peter stood and said, "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know" (Acts 2:22).

The Lord had just revealed to him the wonders of His grace. Here's an ignorant fisherman, and his message in Acts 2 is a wonderful sample of real homiletical teaching.

The fifth thing is His peace about which we are told from here to the end of the passage.

27. "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."

The Lord is in the shadow of the cross. The disciples are greatly troubled. How can He comfort their hearts? He says, "Peace I leave with you."

Follow through the Scriptures on this question of peace. The very first words the Saviour said to the disciples after His resurrection were, "Peace be unto you." The first experience of a sinner coming to find the Saviour is "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

In Colossians 1:20 He made peace for us "through the blood of His cross."

In Ephesians 2:14-17, "He Himself is our peace." He established peace. He "preached peace" unto us. See, the thing that God wants to give to men is peace.

In John 16:33 we read, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation."

Paul says, "And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7). And dear Isaiah in 32:17 says, "The work of righteousness will be peace."

You and I are living in a generation that has never known peace.

May I say this? It is absolutely impossible for the world to give you peace. I say that dogmatically. The world can give you wealth, pleasures, honor; but one thing the world cannot give you is peace.

Now mark the next verse.

28. "You heard that I said to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced, be-

cause I go to the Father; for the Father is greater than I."

Greater? Isn't Christ equal with the Father? As a Man in the midst of men, He took the place of subservience to the Father. He is speaking here as a man. When He went back into glory and took His position of equality with the Father back again, He was given a name above every name.

But these disciples know nothing of what is beyond death.

The Lord has just told them that "in My Father's house are many mansions, and I'm giving you My peace whatever your circumstances." Now He adds, "I'm going to leave, and I'm going to my Father. Oh, if you only knew. You'd be filled with joy because I said I'm going to my Father."

You know, I wish I could put into words the way I feel about this. If we could only get a glimpse of what is on the other side: the glory of an omnipotent God, no more trials or sickness or sorrow or death; no slavery, no more misunderstanding, no more afflictions; perfect love, perfect joy, perfect peace, perfect fellowship in the presence of eternal God. If we only knew, we would be filled with joy.

Do you remember that, when the Lord had ascended into heaven in Mark, in Luke, and in Acts 1—just three places—the disciples are reported as going back into the city with exceeding great joy. They didn't go back with their heads down, saying, "We've lost our Lord." They went back with great joy.

Here in John 14, He gave them a little glimpse of that joy. "Not only will I give you My peace, but if you knew what was on the other side, you'd be filled with joy. You'd rejoice because I said, 'I go to My Father, and you will see Me no more.'"

29. "And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it comes to pass, you may believe.

30. "I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of

the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me;

31. "but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go from here."

Jesus Christ is the only member of the human race in whom Satan could find nothing, absolutely nothing to which he could appeal.

"The ruler of the world is coming." Now, remember, when He is saying this, Judas has bargained with the priests. In fact, while He is in the upper room, they are gathering Roman soldiers and the rabble to hunt for Him. That same night He is going to be scourged and be crucified.

He didn't say, "The Roman soldiers are coming." He didn't say, "Judas and the priests are coming."

He said, "The ruler of the world is coming." It is his last opportunity to find something in Him.

"He comes and he is going to find nothing in Me. I'm absolutely obedient to my Father. If it means the cross, then I go to the cross. If it means death and the grave, I'll go through that. He finds nothing in Me. He finds no trace of rebellion, of sin, of disobedience in me."

Satan found it in Adam and Eve in the garden. He found it in Abraham. He found it in Moses and in David and in all those great prophets. And down through the centuries, Satan has found it in God's great men. There is only one Person in the human race of whom it can be said that Satan has nothing in Him.

My friend, if there had been something in Him to which Satan could have appealed, we would not have had a Saviour. He was absolutely sinless and righteous and perfect.

That's why He could die for you and for me.

One more thing. In the last verse, in 31, His word concerning His complete submission to His Father shows how He loved the Father. Have you

noticed that in John 14? He mentions the Father 23 times. There is no chapter in the whole Bible that is as full of this relationship between the Father and the Son. All His words, all His works, all His motives, all His desires were His Father's. His complete union with His Father brought forth complete obedience.

Do you love the Lord? As I've read and reread and reread this passage, I've tried in my own heart to comprehend this amazing relationship between the Father and the Son. It is beyond the reach of men.

If the Lord tarries another thousand years and preachers and students study the Word of God, they will never begin to plumb the depths of this chapter.

Oh, how the Lord loved the Father!

Oh, this bond of union, of love, of obedience, of submission to His Father.

How much do we love Him?

How can I measure my love?

What is its true test?

My obedience to His Word.

May the Lord in all things be pre-eminent in our lives. May we live a life of submission, a life of obedience to Him.

John 15

Christ, The Vine

Now let me open a wee door into a marvelous truth.

The great theme of this portion is fruit-bearing. And the great requisite for fruit-bearing is “to abide.”

In the Old Testament, Israel was called the unfruitful vine. Let me suggest for your study Psalm 80, Isaiah 5 and 27, Jeremiah 2, Ezekiel 15 and 19, and then Hosea 10.

Chapter 14 of John ended as Christ said, “Arise, let us go hence.” I take it they left the upper room on their way down to the Garden of Gethsemane.

Some believe it was as they passed the temple and saw the golden vine on the doors that the Lord was prompted to give his disciples the object lesson of the vine. Or it may have been sparked by the vineyard outside the gates of the city or by a decoration in the room where they ate. Who knows?

Personally, I believe He went to the Garden by way of a vineyard outside the city, taking a path to the Brook Cedron and then going over into Gethsemane.

Fruitbearing (15:1-17)

1. “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.”

Verse one is our little door. But watch how wide a room it opens into.

There were husbandmen before in the Lord's parables who didn't do their job. In Matthew 21, the husbandmen beat the servants the owner sent and some they slew. He said, "I will send my son. They will reverence my son."

And when the son came, they said, "This is the heir. Let us take him and kill him."

The Lord said, "What shall the owner of the vineyard do to those husbandmen who slew his son? He will cast them out and give his vineyard to someone else."

Our Lord took that 21st chapter of Matthew and this illustration in John 15 to speak prophetically of the fact that God was going to push Israel to one side and find His fruitage elsewhere. You can't read your Old Testament without recognizing that God looked upon Israel as a vine. Psalm 80:8 speaks of the fact that the Lord brought a vine out of Egypt and planted it in Canaan. He took care of it Himself, and it flourished. As I've mentioned, the prophets spoke of Israel as a vineyard. When God went to look for fruit and couldn't find the right kind, He pushed the vine to one side.

As the Lord said, the Father is the husbandman, the One who cares for the vine. He is not going to trust it to anybody else. He is going to prune it. He is going to cleanse it. He is going to get much fruit from it.

And we are the ones who bear the fruit. We are the branches. Of course, you recognize that the branches do not produce the fruit. The branch holds it out. We are in union with Him, and the manifestation of that union is fruit-bearing. The branch is a part of the vine. It is not the vine.

When the Lord says, "I am the true vine," He is the root, the branches, the whole thing. And we, being in the vine, are to hold up the fruit. The branch's life is in the vine. There must be union before there can be fruit.

2. "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit."

You'll notice there are two kinds of branches in verse 2 —a branch that is not bearing fruit and a branch that bears fruit. Many expositors believe verse 2 means the Lord takes the branch away in judgment. I do not accept this.

Now, there's no question but that the New Testament teaches Christians can die before their job is done. They are taken home in discipline. You have it with Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5, with the young man in 1 Corinthians 5. You have it in 1 John 5 and in Timothy where Paul mentions some are given over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that they might learn not to blaspheme.

And then you have 1 Corinthians 11:30, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." But I do not believe that is what our Lord has reference to here.

The theme of this discourse is fruit-bearing that is dependent upon abiding.

"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away." The Greek word in its primary meaning means to "raise up" not to "take away." It should read this way: "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, he raises it up."

What is the purpose of the husbandman? As he goes through the vineyard, he is looking for fruit. But here is a branch on the ground, not bearing any fruit. What does he do? Cut it off? No. He raises it up, so the sun can shine upon it and the air can get to it. Then it will bear fruit.

Some Christians don't bear fruit. What's the matter with them? They need to have the Son shining on them.

When a believer is out of fellowship with God and is occupied with the things of the world, he is not bearing fruit. The Husbandman must come

along and lift the branch, raising it up and bringing the individual believer back into fellowship in order that he or she might bear fruit. God's purpose is fruit, not judgment.

Romans 12 tells us we are to serve in the body of Christ according to the gift of grace given to us. He that ministers, let him minister according to the proportion of his faith and of his gifts that are also part of the fruitage of the Spirit of God in the believer.

3. "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you."

"Pruned" and "clean" are the same word. Now the husbandman comes to a branch that is bearing some fruit, but not the luscious fruit he wants. And, as he examines it, he finds something is hindering the fruit. So what does he do? He cleanses the vine. Some say he prunes it; and the word, "cleanse," may include pruning. Certainly there are things in your life and mine that ought to be pruned. But how does he do it? Through the Word.

Have you noticed in John the marvelous place God gives to the Word? In chapter 5, the Word was to be believed. In chapter 8, we are exhorted to continue—to abide—in the Word. In chapter 14, we are told to obey the Word. In chapter 15, we are cleansed by the Word as in Psalm 119:9, "How can a young man keep his way pure? by keeping it according to Thy word." Here He says, "You are already clean because of the word."

What does He wash off? The infinitesimal bugs that get on the vine and sap out its life prevent fruit-bearing. Along comes the husbandman carrying a goat-skin full of water to squirt on the vine and wash off the parasites hidden there.

You can't live in the world without some of these wee little parasites sapping out your life. It is the little foxes that "are ruining the vineyards" (Song of

Songs 2:15).

But we all excuse ourselves by saying, “Well, you know, I was born this way. I was born with this temper.” Are you blaming God for that?

“Well, you know I wasn’t born in a preacher’s home.”

Neither was I. I thank the Lord for that, sometimes. But you’ve got to confess with me that the little wee things that come into your life do rob you of joy, of usefulness, and of much fruit. We get occupied with material things that don’t amount to anything. They become the big things in our lives that rob us of fruit.

Would you be willing to come into the presence of God alone, just you and He, and ask Him to cleanse you from those things that sap out your spiritual life, your spiritual power, the things that rob you of bearing luscious fruit for Him?

I’ll guarantee He’ll do one thing. He’ll send you to the Word because it cleanses us. When you’re doing your job, let your mind be filled with some portion of the Word of God. Chew it over, like chewing the cud. Chew it over and over again. Get all the meat and the honey and the life out of it. And unconsciously—you won’t know it—it will affect your whole life. It will affect your language. It will affect your attitude. It will affect the whole business.

4. “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine; so neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

5. “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.”

Fruit-bearing depends on abiding. John, in chapters 14, 15, 16, and 17, speaks much of this wonderful, unbreakable union between Christ and His people. We have no life in ourselves. He has

the life and the power. He does the producing.

"Well," you say, "what can the branch do?"

The branch of itself can do nothing. He has just said, "Without Me you can do nothing." All the branch needs to do to bear fruit is to abide. That's all you have to do. Abide. "Apart from Me, separated from Me, you can do absolutely nothing."

The life and power are in the vine. The vine produces the fruit, and the branch bears it. A vine is known by its fruit, and the fruit it bears declares what the vine is.

You and I are branches in the vine. We are joined to Him. His life is our life. His power is our power. He does the producing. We do the cooperating. How? By abiding.

He says to us, "Stay close to Me. Stick to Me. Keep in close, intimate fellowship with Me; for the closer you are in fellowship with Me, the more fruit you will bear. The farther you get away from Me in your fellowship, the less fruit you will bear."

That's the key to the whole thing. Abide. Abide. Abide. But the problem is this. All of us set our jaws and our wills and decide we're going to produce fruit. But what we can produce is not what He wants. All that we in our own strength produce is of the flesh. The Spirit indwells us in order that we might produce spiritual fruit. Every one who has really put his trust in the Lord is His child, is in the vine, is in Christ, has His life, His Spirit, His power. All that we need is in Him. What He wants us to do is to rest in Him, abide in Him, stay in close proximity to Him, have fellowship with Him, cling to Him day by day, hour by hour.

We talk about great men of God through the centuries. You will find that the men who were usable by the Spirit of God were men who were abiding. The closer you walk with Him and the closer you stay to Him, the more evident will be the luscious fruit.

Now, you won't be looking at yourself and say-

ing, "I wonder if I have it?" You won't even be thinking about the fruit. You won't be thinking about anything else but Him. If your life is controlled by Him, you will automatically bear fruit—on the job, in the factory, in the office, in the shop, washing your dishes at home, taking care of the children. We will do the everyday things of life with our hearts in fellowship with Him.

And what's the fruitage? "Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). What's the fruitage? Compassion, tenderness toward others, a desire that others might know the Lord.

You watch our Saviour. As He walked among men, He was a friend of publicans and sinners for the purpose of bringing them into eternal life.

He could say, "I do always the things that please Him."

He could say, "I and my Father are one."

He could say, "My Father loves Me, and I love Him. There's a oneness there. His words are My words; His works are My works." We see real abiding between the Son and the Father.

Now, as He leaves the world—for in a few hours He is going to be nailed to a cross—He brings these disciples and you and me into this same blessed, wonderful relationship. It is what Paul meant in Galatians 2:20: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."

It is what he wrote in Colossians 3:4, "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."

The only life that is worth anything is this life in Christ. And what is the evidence of such a life? Fruit-bearing.

6. "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

Whoever it is who does not abide in Me is a spurious one, an imitation. Is it not true that thousands of those who profess to be followers of the Saviour have never had any life in Him? They have never been in Christ.

"If any man does not abide in Me, he looks like it. He withers." Why does he wither? There is no life. Why does he wither? He is not in the vine. All He is is fit for burning. And again:

7. "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you."

Now please don't take verse 7 out of its context as people do with the prayer promise in John 14:13. If you live close to Him, abiding in Him with His word abiding in you, what do you think you will ask? You will pray in the will of God.

Abiding in Him gives us entrance into the very heart of God where His will becomes our will, where our will is His will. We not only have a union with Him in life, but a union with Him in communion. We have a life of communion. Life comes to us through union with Christ. Fruitage comes through communion with Christ.

Being in fellowship with Him, you will know His will. You will know what He wants done, and you will cooperate with God as a partner in revealing His character and His grace.

God has chosen you out of all created beings as the channel through which He will manifest His character and His grace and His mercy before men, for how can the world ever see the character of God except as it is displayed in His people? And how can it be displayed except by fruit-bearing, by this life of communion with Him?

8. "By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; and so prove to be my disciples."

He links discipleship and bearing much fruit. In chapter 8, we had abiding in the Word as the evidence of a disciple. In chapter 13, love is the badge of a disciple. Now in chapter 15, bearing much fruit is the manifestation of a real disciple.

In other words, as we take it all and boil it down in all these passages, we find the essence is living in close, blessed, intimate fellowship with the Saviour; it is abiding in Him with His Word abiding in us. You can't separate them. The more I live in the Word of God, the more I'll abide. The more I abide in Him, the more I want to be in His Word. Then will come the revelation of His will.

You want to know why some Christians have their prayers answered more than others?

Here's the key of it: Abiding in Him, and His Word abiding in us. If the husbandman, our loving Father, were to come through the portion of His vineyard where you are today, would He find much fruit?

Would He find any fruit?

May I urge upon you who are branches in the Vine, that you stay close to Him. Keep in His Word. Then you'll understand His will. Then there will be displayed through you, because He has the life and the power, the luscious fruit that glorifies God.

Now, in the section that follows, we have first of all our relationship to the Lord in a life of union with Him. And then we have our relationship to each other in a life of love and service.

And then we have the opposition to that life, found in the world, from verse 18 down through chapter 16, verse 4.

Notice in verse 10 the two words, "love" and "commandments." The Lord doesn't divide them. They run together. Love keeps His commandments.

Now, I'm not talking about the commandments of Moses. Love keeps God's words. I display my

love for Christ by obedience. As I've stated many times already, the measure of true Christianity, of reality, of life, is the obedience of His people. Faith cements our relationship to God, but obedience is our side of the picture. It causes us to bear much fruit for His glory.

9. "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.

10. "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love."

Notice the love and obedience. His love for the Father was a perfect, complete love. He said, "I always do the things that are pleasing to Him" (John 8:29), and "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me" (John 4:34).

11. "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

12. "This is my commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

13. "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

14. "You are My friends, if you do what I command you."

Notice the connection: Love, commandments, joy. Our love is displayed by obedience to His Word. Obedience to His Word brings full joy. Why are Christians so sad, so lacking in joy and blessing? Because they are disobedient. Obedience brings full joy. Sin never brings joy.

Sin never brings joy.

Did you get that?

Sin never brings joy!

The world outside is running hither and yon trying all kinds of sin. Worldlings run like a bee from one flower to another, trying to be satisfied. They have no real joy. They may find a certain measure

of fleshly thrill, even happiness, depending upon circumstances.

But when circumstances change, the joy is gone. At least, their happiness is gone. But joy, deep joy, is His joy.

“My love I give to you. My joy I give to you. My commandments I give to you.” You talk about a relationship! You talk about a union!

Look, my friend, you and I can rejoice in our union with Christ in life. We are children of God and we’re justified and we’re forgiven and we’ve got life eternal and we’re on our way to glory. His joy carries us through in the midst of affliction and deep sorrow. It brings peace and rest of heart.

As a pastor, I’ve been with God’s people in their sorrow and suffering.

I’ve seen a child of God, in intense suffering, smile with tears running down her cheeks because of the love and grace of God for her. She had peace. These experience something with God that so many of us who can’t stand any suffering never get. He can’t trust us with it. In verse 7 we have access by prayer.

In verse 11, we have celestial joy.

In verse 16, we have abiding fruit. No human mind can begin to plumb the depths of His love, of His Word, of His joy, of His fruit. You and I are brought into a relationship, into a fellowship with Him in this matter.

I call verses 15 through 17 the three C’s.

15. “No longer do I call you slaves; for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.”

The second is in verse 16:

16. “You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your

fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you."

Verse 17 has the third:

17. "This I command you, that you love one another."

Please don't switch these around. You are not commanded to be friends. You are called to be friends. You are not commanded to bear fruit. You are chosen to bear fruit. You are commanded to love one another.

In verse 15, John quotes the Lord as saying, "I no longer call you servants. I call you friends."

Someone might say, "Why, Mr. Mitchell, I'm more than a friend."

Now, just a minute. We could take John 1:12, 13 and say we are children of God or Romans 8:14 and say we are the sons of God.

And you might say, "Why, I'm more than a child of God. I'm a son by adoption, and I am His heir." That's wonderful. And yet the sad thing is that you and I can revel in our adoption as sons and heirs and yet know very little about being a friend of God.

When people say, "This is my friend," we know they share confidence, intimacy, and a revelation to one another of what's on their heart. I don't tell the secrets of my heart to everybody. Do you? That's folly. You reserve those secrets for the ones in whom you have confidence, the ones who are your friends.

I was a child of my father the moment I was conceived. But my dad never made a confidante of me when I was a boy. It wasn't until I was grown up that my dad and I sat down, and he told me what was on his heart.

Jesus first called them disciples, and now He calls them friends. "I am making you a confidante of what is in my heart and of all that I hear from

my Father. The very secrets of the eternal counsels of God I reveal to you. You are my friends.”

Too many of us—even Christian workers—know so little of the confidence He places in His people. We have robbed ourselves of the marvelous riches of the intimacy, the fellowship, and communion with the loving God Himself. We fail God. We come to church Sunday morning, go to Sunday school, go to Wednesday night prayer meeting, and we’ve done our duty.

But how much do we know of Him?

To think, you and I can go morning, noon, and night in perfect, blessed, intimate fellowship with God where He will unveil before us the glories, the treasures of His counsel and of His heart. Whatever your job may be—in the office, the shop, the store, the school, the home—you can do your job with your heart in fellowship with God.

Now, that doesn’t mean that I don’t do my work. It doesn’t mean I don’t wash my dishes. Now, don’t you go and ask Mrs. Mitchell if I wash the dishes. I don’t. I used to do it twice a year—at Thanksgiving and Christmas Day.

I always said that when the women work in the kitchen on those two days, when they’ve gotten out all the dishes, pots, and pans and have used every pot in the house, a man should say to his wife, “You go on in the living room and enjoy yourself, and we men will clean up the kitchen.” You’ll never know how many pans they’ve got in the kitchen until you try that.

Second, He has chosen us to bear fruit that will last through eternity. That’s why He’s the husbandman. The Father is not trusting this to anybody. He’s not trusting it to any church leadership. He’s not trusting it to angelic beings. The Father Himself is personally interested in every branch—that it bear fruit. With the innumerable company of angels and principalities and powers and the billions on earth, God picks up a little wee

group—Christians—and says, “I’ve chosen you to be my channels to express my character, to reveal my love and grace to others.”

I wonder sometimes what the world sees in us. I read an article the other day. It just made my heart go down to my shoes. It said this, “Christianity is on the way out. It is not able to meet the demands and the needs of our present generation.” Of course, it was an unsaved man writing.

Has Christianity failed? Is it on the way out? You go to the Far East, to Southeast Asia, and you see a tremendous revival of Buddhism. You find all the ideologies of men are moving like a vast wave over the earth. I say it again. The true test of real Christianity is obedience to His Word. The secret of fruit-bearing is abiding. And abiding is intimate communion with God.

The Lord Jesus ends up with “You’re My friends. I’ve brought you into the recesses of My heart. I want to lay bare before you the secrets of God’s counsel, the greatness of His heart, the marvels of His grace, and the sovereignty of His power. You’re My friends, and I’ve chosen you. Out of all the millions, I have chosen you to bear fruit and that your fruit should remain. And to encourage you in this fruit-bearing, whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you.”

Third, we are commanded to love one another. Commanded? You command a person to love somebody else? Doesn’t that just mean loving the believers that love you?

You know, I’ve often thought that the Lord has an amazing family. He has some wonderful children; and He’s got some ornery, bad-tempered, envious, jealous, and critical children. “These things I command you, that you love one another.”

And I am of the persuasion that there are some Christians who may be unlovable or unlovely in some of the things they do. They might not be like that if somebody were to love them, you know. It’s

amazing what a little love will do.

Wouldn't it be a wonderful thing if we were to be disciples of Christ, glorifying the Father by bearing much fruit? Wouldn't it be wonderful if we were to go out with the blessed realization that "we are His friends"?

God called Abraham His friend. He spoke with Moses face to face, as a man speaks to a friend. Ah, you say, that was Abraham. That was Moses. But Jesus said, "You are my friends, if you do what I command you."

I say, what a wonderful thing for you and me as God's people to go out into the world of darkness and be so in communion with the living eternal God through Jesus Christ His Son that with His Word living in us we would become God's channels to present to the world something of His character, His mercy, and His grace.

Now the Lord is very much concerned about the world. He speaks of it 30 times in chapters 15-17.

The opposition to fruitbearing (15:18-27)

18. "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.

19. "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

"But don't forget, it hated Me before it ever hated you. And it hates you because you belong to Me, because I have chosen you."

What does He mean by the world? Certainly He is not talking about the earth upon which we live. He's not talking about geography. Nor is He thinking about taverns, theaters, dancing, and things that are coupled with "the world." These are "worldly things" and they may be included, but He is talking about a Satanic kingdom that is antagonistic to the kingdom of God.

Now let's get this thing clear. There are two kingdoms, the kingdom of God and a kingdom that is absolutely dominated by Satan, its prince and god. He is the one who energizes every one of its citizens. It is the kingdom of "darkness" (Colossians 1:13), the kingdom to which you and I belonged before we were saved.

It is a kingdom absolutely antagonistic to the kingdom of God. It can be moral and can be religious at the same time it is Satanic.

You will have that in John 16:2—"An hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God." This has been the experience of God's people for 1900 years since our Lord died and rose.

Then when you come to chapter 17, the Lord in His prayer with His Father mentions the "world" 18 times.

The Apostle John must have had this in mind when he wrote his epistle because 1 John 3:13 says, "Do not marvel, brethren, if the world hates you." The more the world hates the believer, the more we ought to love the people of God.

It is a tragedy to find in this day of enlightenment that Christians will go to the world to criticize and condemn other Christians. We are to have no part, no relationship to the world. It is a system diametrically opposed and antagonistic to the kingdom of God, and its great venom is directed against those who have been taken out of the world by the Son of God.

Why this hostility? Why do they hate Him? Our Lord came offering love. He offered life, forgiveness, grace. He offered man a relationship with the Living God. They offered Him hate, envy, and then murder. Remember, the world that had no place for Christ has no place for you and me.

20. "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also

persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

21. "But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.

22. "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.

23. "He who hates Me hates my Father also.

24. "If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well."

Why? "Because I tore the mask off."

Somebody asked the question, "If Jesus Christ were to come to our country, what would we do with Him?" We'd crucify Him because He would tear our mask off and show us what we are.

Here are Pharisees and Sadducees, Herodians and scribes in our Lord's day who have spent their whole lifetime claiming that they served God. In chapter 8 they said sarcastically to Him, "We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God." They made that boast to the Living God; yet they belonged to the kingdom of darkness, and He tore the mask away.

"If I hadn't come and torn the mask away, you'd have had no sin. It would not have been revealed. But I came and tore it away, and people saw you for what you were."

25. "But they have done this in order that the word may be fulfilled that is written in their Law, 'THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE.'"

This is a quote from Psalm 35:19. It indicated that the Lord was already rejected. They had no place for Him even though there was no reason at all why they should hate Him. He went about doing good. He healed all who were oppressed of the devil.

He fed their hungry, raised their dead, opened

the eyes of the blind, cleansed the lepers. He stilled the storms. He met their need. He was a friend of publicans and sinners.

One day, the religious folk said to His disciples, "Look at your rabbi. He's eating with sinners. He's become a friend of publicans."

Jesus, overhearing it, said, "Listen, you fellows haven't anything to give to sinners. But I have peace, pardon, life and love to give these people."

By the way, have you got a message for sinners? For outcasts? Do you claim to be joined to Christ? to have the life of the Son of God? Do you believe that His Spirit is living in you? What is going to be the evidence of it? Being a friend to publicans and sinners is. Why? To bring to them life through God's Son.

Why is Christianity so different from other religions? Because it has a risen Saviour, a living Saviour who can give life. Religions tell you what you should do for the gods. Christianity is telling the world what God has done for man in the person of His Son.

And this makes a tremendous chasm between those who love the Saviour and those who are in the world. The world is religious—whether it is Rome or Constantinople or Hindu or Muslim or Buddhist or Shinto and the other cults like Jehovah's Witnesses and Christian Science. They are in the same kingdom.

The great cause of the persecution and suffering of God's people in the first century A.D. was because they would not let Jesus be put among the gods.

Christians said, "We can't worship the gods. There is only one God. There is only one Saviour—Jesus, the Son of God. He doesn't belong to the world or to its gods. He is the only living God." So the world accused them of being atheists and crucified them, burned them and threw them to the lions. The more they tried to kill them, the more

they increased.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is separate from the world. The world didn't want Him. "The world does not know us, because it did not know Him" (1 John 3:1).

The world never understood Him. The religious world wouldn't have a thing to do with Him and killed Him. When God's people draw the same line of demarcation He drew, the world will do the same thing to them.

26. "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me,

27. and you will bear witness also, because you have been with Me from the beginning."

People who do not belong to the Saviour can be wonderful, moral, religious people, and yet hate the people of God. Why? They do not know God. They don't understand why you who were at one time in the world no longer belong to the world. They don't understand that the One they crucified has chosen you out of the world to be His own.

You go to the mission field. Here's a man who is a Muslim, raised a Muslim. You come along. You're a Westerner and you love the Saviour, and you work in among the Muslims. They don't kill you. They don't chop your head off. They don't poison you. Why?

You're a Westerner. You are practicing your religion.

But let a Muslim accept the Saviour and he will have to leave his home and his district if he is going to live. His family is responsible to slay him; and if they don't do it, the town will do it. He will have to get away if he is going to continue as a Christian. They will let the missionary live, but they will kill one of their own. The most dangerous thing a Muslim can do is to turn to Christ. The

Muslim world hates him. His people kill him in the name of Allah.

Many of us know so little of persecution. We live in countries where it doesn't cost a thing to be a Christian. It doesn't cost any physical hurt or trouble or any sacrifice of financial reserves and resources. But there is a coldness if you are outspoken for Him, if you are His spokesman and you touch their conscience. The world will treat you as a foreigner, as somebody who doesn't belong.

Have you analyzed why your neighbors act as they do? There is a barrier. If you were to ask your neighbors about it, they wouldn't know what you were talking about. They are in the dark. They belong to the world. They can be friendly or unfriendly or they can be indifferent. But there is always a barrier between. Why? You belong to Him. But in many countries it has cost believers a heavy price to stand up for the Lord against the unbelieving world. But they too are not alone. Why? They belong to Him.

John 16

Christ, the Pre-Eminent One

The world's hatred for God's people (16:1-4)

1. "These things I have spoken to you, that you may be kept from stumbling."

The Lord tells His disciples that these are the facts of the Christian life. "I have suffered. You will suffer. If they accept My word, they will accept yours. If they don't accept Me and My word, they won't accept yours." Read 1 John 4:1-6 if you want to go into that further. The world loves its own, not the child of God.

2. "They will make you outcasts from the synagogue; but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.

3. "And these things they will do, because they have not known the Father, or me.

4. "But these things I have spoken to you, that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.

5. "But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?'

6. "But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart."

I remember the second year of my ministry when I went to a little wee town way up in northern Saskatchewan, Canada, to hold some meetings. I was

walking down the street one morning about the second or third day I was there; and a gentleman stopped me and said, "Pardon me, you're a stranger here."

I said, "Yes, sir, my name is Mitchell and I'm holding some Gospel meetings in that little store building down on the main street." There were about two streets in the town.

"Oh," he said, "you're that preacher."

I said, "Yes, sir. Who are you?"

And he said, "I'm the pastor of the So-and-So Church here, the United Church." Then he said this to me. "I understand that you preach that sinners can only be redeemed through Jesus Christ, a Jew who died 1900 years ago."

I said, "That's right, sir. That's the only way sinners can be saved—through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who died that we might live."

He said, "I'm going to tell you, if I had my way I would liquidate every one of you preachers who preach such a doctrine. I would liquidate you because you are a hindrance to civilization."

So I'm a hindrance to civilization. Why? Because I was preaching Christ. He wouldn't have said such a venomous thing, such a murderous thought, if I hadn't been preaching the Gospel. He would have welcomed me into the village—"Glad to have you with us, sir. Anything I can do to help you? What can I do to make your stay comfortable?" None of that. Instead it was—"If I had my way, I would liquidate every one of you fellows."

He belonged to the world. Why did he hate me? Because I belonged to Christ. Yet he was calling himself a Christian preacher!

This is not a separate case. How would you like to have written on your sidewalk in front of your house—"We give you so many hours to get out of town." What would you do? You'd stay, of course.

Look at the last verse of this chapter: "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may

have—” what? fear? that in Me you’ll get scared? that if you live for Me, you’ll lose your head?

No! “That in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation: but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

We have guaranteed victory over this antagonistic kingdom that would seek not only to kill the Son of God, but also to kill the people of God. And we have guaranteed peace. How glad I am for a Saviour who is on the throne, working all things out after the counsel of His own will. The very nations of the earth are before Him as nothing. Hence, we can just rest in Him.

“In Me”—not in your circumstances, not even in your strong faith if you have any—no, “in Me” you’ll have peace.

In the world? You’ll have tribulation. “Cheer up, I have overcome the world.”

What a Saviour!

What a Lord!

The work of the Spirit (16:5-15)

Now you will notice that in chapters 14, 15, and 16 He injects the coming of the Spirit of God. In John 7:37-39 our Lord had said on that last great day of the feast, “If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.’”

But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

I question if the disciples caught the significance of that statement. Paul mentions the Spirit of God in Romans 5:5, “The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” and in Romans 8:9, “However you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not

have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him."

In John 14:16-18, the Lord said, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."

He deals with the amazing truth of the indwelling Spirit of God.

Luke in his Gospel and the Book of Acts speaks of being Spirit-filled. The only time Paul mentions that is in Ephesians 5:18, "Do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit."

John is the one who deals expressly with the indwelling Spirit.

His ministry to the world (16:7-11)

7. "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you."

If Christ had stayed on earth, His ministry would have been limited because of the physical. Here is a whole world needing the Saviour. Here are hundreds of millions out of Christ, without God, without hope. How are they going to be reached? "It is to your advantage that I go away."

Caiaphas used that same word when he said, "It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish" (John 11:50). Here you have an antagonistic, vile, jealous high priest with no time for Christ cooperating and coordinating with the purpose of God unknowingly.

The time is going to come when God will make the

very wrath of man to praise Him (Psalm 76:10). The Comforter comes to indwell, to teach, to bring things to remembrance, to comfort and streng-then.

We're never alone.

I remember a dear man I knew in a hospital who said to his daughter one day, "My eyes are so bad I can't read, and I'm so weak in my body. I'm just going to put my head on Jesus' bosom and enjoy Him for Himself." Why don't you do that?

The Spirit of God indwells us to make Christ known to us and to comfort us so that we can enjoy His peace, His love, His very life.

Even though we don't say much, we can confide in our Saviour; we can rest in Him and be a benediction to others.

The Spirit not only teaches and comforts us, but He is also the One who bears witness through us. He uses our missionaries abroad as His channels so that people around the world will hear the Word of God. And He witnesses where you live because He wants to use you as a channel. The believer and the Spirit cooperate to testify to others regarding the Saviour. Why is the Spirit active in the world?

8. "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment."

Now this word "convict" is an amazing word. The thought is one of illumination. He rebukes the world to bring conviction. When the gospel is preached, a person may be convicted of sin because the Spirit of God has illumined his heart. He realizes he is a sinner in the presence of Holy God.

Notice, He didn't say the Holy Spirit will convict the world about lying or stealing or murder or adultery. He convicts men for the sin of unbelief. When unbelief is taken out of the human heart, these sins go, too.

Isaiah had an illuminating experience and said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined." Job said in his repentance, "I retract (I abhor myself)." Peter said to

the Lord, "Depart from me for I am a sinful man."

9. "Concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me;

10. and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me."

The resurrection and ascension of Christ manifest His righteous character to the world. He accomplished His work on the cross. You can talk to people about anything under heaven. But you talk about the Son of God, His work on the cross, His resurrection, and immediately you've got opposition.

The righteous life of Christ was an open rebuke to the Jews of His day. These religious ones thought that they were the ones who were fitted for God's presence. When they looked at Him—what a rebuke. What a conviction. But if you want to know what kind of man God will accept, look at Christ. He is the only acceptable one. Unless you are in Him, you are not accepted. "Of righteousness because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me" is the divine guarantee of His life and of His death.

11. "And concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged."

He convicts the world of spurning the Saviour. He convicts the world for being joined to the kingdom of darkness over which Satan rules. Its prince has already been judged.

So the Spirit of God is in the world to convict, to illuminate the world with respect to sin, righteousness, and judgment. There is one more thing.

His ministry to believers (16:12-15)

12. "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now."

You do not have the capacity to receive them, for

the Lord the Spirit also teaches us according to our capacity to receive truth. You feed your babies on milk or some of these special things you can get for babies today. And then you could give them some good old Scotch porridge! But you don't. You give them canned spinach, canned peas, canned meat, and strained this and that.

You don't feed them T-bone steaks. You feed them according to their capacity to receive. When it comes to spiritual things, God is just as careful.

13. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you things to come.

14. "He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you.

15. "All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said, that He takes of Mine, and will disclose it to you."

How ignorant most of us are of the wonderful treasures of His grace, the wonderful revelation of His purpose.

May God grant to us an increased capacity to receive truth; for when the Word is preached, each receives according to his capacity.

Some receive more than others. Sometimes the preacher preaches over the heads of the people. They don't have the capacity to receive spiritual things.

God is always willing to meet our need, but He can't just pull it out of the air. We need to read His Word, disciplining ourselves and asking the Lord to make the things of Christ real to our heart.

The result is transformed lives.

What else do you need in your life, in your heart, in your home?

The Spirit of God indwells you to guide you, to direct you, to teach you, to remind you, and to take the things of Christ and suit them to your need.

There is much ministry today about the Spirit;

but, remember, the Spirit of God will not speak of Himself or from Himself.

The Father and the Son and the Spirit are all of one accord; and, when the Spirit of God comes to indwell you, whatever He says will be in perfect accord with the purpose and will of our Father and of the Lord Jesus Christ. "He will take the things of mine . . ."

The great theme of the Spirit of God is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When a believer claims to be filled with the Holy Spirit, look for the evidence of the heart and character of Christ in the person.

God grant to us these days that we might be filled unto all the fullness of God and be taught by the Spirit of God.

God means business.

Do you?

The perplexity of the disciples (16:16-22)

16. A little while, and you will no longer behold Me; and again, a little while, and you will see Me.

17. Some of His disciples therefore said to one another, "What is this thing He is telling us, 'A little while, and you will not behold Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'; and, 'Because I go to the Father'?"

18. And so they were saying, "What is this that He says, 'A little while'? We do not know what He is talking about."

19. Jesus knew that they wished to question Him, and He said to them, "Are you deliberating together about this, that I said 'A little while, and you will not behold Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me'?"

Obviously, the disciples were perplexed. They simply did not understand the plan of God; and, when Christ was buried, their hopes were shattered.

They admitted in Luke 24:21, "We hoped He would redeem Israel." He answers their dilemma here in advance.

20. "Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned to joy.

21. "Whenever a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she remembers the anguish no more, for joy that a child has been born into the world.

22. "Therefore you, too, now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one takes your joy away from you."

As David mentioned, in God's house is fullness of joy. The disciples would have joy at the time of the resurrection.

We will have joy when He returns for us in the clouds. It's interesting that those who are persecuted experience unusual joy.

We know so little of that in many countries. Our brethren in other parts of the world have experiences with the Saviour that we know nothing of.

The encouragement (16:23-30)

23. "And in that day you will ask Me no question. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you shall ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you in My name.

24. "Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full.

25. "These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming, when I will speak no more to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father."

The Lord encourages them by reminding them of their privileges. Verse 23 speaks of the day when the Spirit of God indwells the believer. Then He tells them that they have the same access to the Father that He has. They can come at any time to the throne of grace and stand before the Father in the good of all that Jesus Christ is to the Father. We can stand before

the Father just as the Lord Himself stands.

We are told that we will have whatever we ask "in my name." We are not to just tack "in Jesus' Name" to every prayer. It is a reference to the fact that access to the Father is based on redemption. Our sins are forgiven. We are a cleansed people. We are children of One who is God.

"Abba Father" is our Father. When we pray in the name of Christ, we stand before God in all the merit and all the righteousness and all the good standing of our Saviour Himself. He is our living representative. We are "in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:6). Too often we pray for ourselves in the power of self-will. But when we remember we are standing in the presence of God, we will make our requests as if the Lord Himself were making the request. On that basis we know our requests will be answered.

On what ground does He answer?

26. "In that day you will ask in My name; and I do not say to you that I will request the Father on your behalf;

27. for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father."

Notice, faith is not mentioned. The ground of His giving is His love for us. Our Advocate prays for us because of our frailty, but we make requests that are answered because we stand before God in all the beauty and merit of Christ. See Hebrews 7:25 and 9:24. The only time the Lord Jesus makes request of the Father on this ground is given us in John 17:24: "Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; in order that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou didst love me before the foundation of the world." On the ground of His Father's love for Him, the Lord expected His request to be answered.

When I pray, is my request for the glory of God—that the Father be glorified in the Son and that the Son will be manifested among men and women?

Will my request be for His glory, for the salvation of souls, for the edification of His people?

What a tremendous place we have in the economy of God. To think that we can come into the presence of the Father and make request as if the Lord Jesus Christ were making the request, knowing He'll meet the request because He loves us—because He loves us, not because we love Him!

28. "I came forth from the Father, and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again, and going to the Father."

The Lord reminds us of His incarnation, ministry in the world, and His ascension. But there is nothing here about His love. We can know the facts of His life, but we cannot know His love until we accept Him as Saviour. Because we're objects of His love, He will meet our needs. Sometimes a mother meets the needs of her child in a different way from what the child expects. It is the same with our Heavenly Father. He is love personified.

29. His disciples said, "Lo, now You are speaking plainly, and are not using a figure of speech."

Even now, they probably did not understand.

30. "Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God."

They probably didn't understand what they were saying themselves.

The promise of victory (16:31-33)

31. Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe?"

32. "Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.

33. "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

The contrast is interesting that the Lord says here, "Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me;" and from the cross we hear, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

He is the trespass offering, hence the separation. We learn that from Matthew. In Mark, He is the sin offering, bearing our sins, and hence this statement. In Luke He is the peace offering where there is no separation, so we do not have this cry from the cross. In John He is the burnt offering, all for the Father. Even at the cross He was doing the will of the Father.

He ends the chapter with a reminder that in Him we have peace. In the world we have tribulation, but "He Himself is our peace" (Ephesians 2:14).

He "made peace through the blood of His cross" (Colossians 1:20).

He has given us peace (John 14:27). Now "in Me" we have peace in the midst of tribulation.

"All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12).

Those who endure suffering shall reign with Him (2 Timothy 2:12).

We walk in the triumph of the One who has overcome the world.

Victory is assured.

We can sing that grand old hymn:

"Cheer up, ye saints of God,
there's nothing to worry about!
Nothing to make you feel afraid,
nothing to make you doubt.
Remember, Jesus never fails
so why not trust Him and shout?
You'll be sorry you worried at all
tomorrow morning?"

John 17

Christ, The Intercessor

A wee foretaste.

Now we're on holy ground. We have come within the veil. We have come into the holiest of all, and we are permitted to see the communion—the union and the blessing—between the Father and the Son. One is not inferior to the other; both are on equality as they commune together.

During His life, our Saviour frequently retreated into the mountains or the wilderness to pray. Often He would spend all night in prayer. Here we're allowed to come within the veil to hear Christ talking to the Father.

This is really one of the most remarkable chapters in all the Word of God. Our Saviour has opened His heart to His disciples all through the 16 chapters of John. He has spoken to them of His love for them and of His Father's love for them. He has explained their unbreakable union with Him. He has told them about the Holy Spirit who would come and indwell them and be their Comforter, Teacher and Guide. And now He brings us into the very presence of His Father.

Three times in this chapter He says, "I pray." He is not making a request of God, but is speaking what is on His heart. In fact, if there is any chapter in the Bible that would reveal the deity of the Son of God and the equality of the Son with the Father, it would be this chapter. He prays in verse 5 that He may be glorified with the glory that He had with the Father before the world was. He asks

in verse 11 that His Father take care of these disciples that they might be kept. He asks in verse 17 that they may be sanctified through the truth. Then He prays in verse 24 that they may behold His moral glory.

You see the heart of Christ poured out here, as He and His Father commune together concerning you and me. Not only has He redeemed us, but He has us upon His heart. The great yearning of our Lord's heart is for you and for me.

The chapter divides itself into three simple sections. In the first five verses, it is "Christ and His Father." The key word there is "glory." And then from verse 6 down through verse 19, we have "Christ and His Disciples." And the key word is that they might be kept, be "preserved." Then from verse 20 to verse 26 you have "Christ and the Church." The key word there is that all might be "one," in union together, in oneness in Christ and in oneness with each other.

You'll notice also that there are four great doctrines in the chapter. We have the doctrine of salvation in the first five verses, the doctrine of preservation from verse 11 to verse 16, the doctrine of sanctification from verse 17 down through verse 19, and the doctrine of glorification from there to the end of the chapter.

The chapter also has three different kinds of glory: His eternal glory in verse 5—that which He had with the Father before the world began; His acquired glory in verse 22—the glory in which you and I share; and His moral glory in verse 24—where He prays that we, His people, might see Him as a Man at God's right hand, glorified with all the glory of the omnipotent God.

Christ and His Father (17:1-5)

This great discourse of our Saviour's opens in John 13:1 with the revelation of His love ("Having

loved his own who were in the world, He loved them to the end”) and closes in John 17:26 with a restatement of His great love for His own (“That the love wherewith Thou didst love Me may be in them, and I in them”). This divine love, this perfect and eternal love that the Father has for the Son and the Son for the Father is the same love He has for you and me.

Indeed, this is the kind of love He wants to see displayed through you and me.

You remember in Romans 5:5 we read, “The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” Paul could say in 2 Corinthians 5:14, “The love of Christ controls (over-masters) us.” When God’s people come to the place where His love is evident in their lives, in their words, in their actions and attitudes and motives the one to the other, then you’ve got a revival of God in the midst of His people.

And if we ever want to see a great ingathering of souls, it will be when God’s people get right with Him. This rules out all pettiness and all harsh criticism. It knits us together in a bond. It causes the world to wonder and say, as they said of the early church, “See how they love one another.” Now we shall take up the first five verses.

1. These words Jesus spoke; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify thee.”

Couple this with verse 5, “And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I ever had with Thee before the world was.”

Having opened His heart concerning our oneness, our eternal union with Him, in that we are the objects of His love, He brings us right within the holiest of all; and we sit down in the presence of God.

How much do we know about coming within the veil, within the holiest of all, and being perfectly at home in the presence of the Father and the Son? We are allowed to sit there and witness this fellowship, this communion, this bond, this oneness, the equality between the Father and the Son.

We have already discussed the tremendous importance of the "hour" that was now come. You remember in chapter 2 He said to His mother, "What do I have to do with you? My hour has not yet come." In chapter 7 He said to His brethren, "Your hour is here. My hour is not yet come." In chapter 12 He said, when the Greeks wanted to see Him, "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified." Not that the Son of man should be crucified, but glorified.

In Luke 22:53, when the leaders took Jesus captive in the Garden of Gethsemane, He said to them, "This hour and the power of darkness are yours."

Did you ever stop to think of the fact that the powers of darkness, the forces of hell, had an hour? Their hour was their taking of the Son of God and scourging and mocking Him, crucifying and killing Him. And yet the Lord took that very same thing—"Father, the hour (of crucifixion) has come"—and showed that the ultimate purpose of Calvary is not salvation but the glorification of God.

Paul picked this principle up in Romans 8:18. "I consider," said he, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." And in 2 Corinthians 4:17 he said that "our light afflictions" are but for a moment. They are working for us "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." In Romans 5:3 he said, "We exult (glory) in our tribulations."

Every sorrow, every pain, every bit of suffering, every circumstance, every joy, everything that

comes into your life is going to be for the glory of God. Do you ever think of it? There's no place now for self-sympathy, growling, and grumbling. Why? Because it is all going to abound to the glory of God (2 Corinthians 4:15).

The matter of the Son's being glorified started in chapter 11, was carried on through chapter 12, repeated in chapter 13, and it now appears again in 17. One of the most astounding things in the whole universe is that there is a Man at God's right hand, glorified with all the glory of the omnipotent God. His whole passion of life—His every word, every action, every attitude—was for the glorification of His Father all His life long.

That's why He could say in John 4:34, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me." He repeated this in chapter 5:30. In John 8:29, He said, "I always do the things that are pleasing to Him." In the Garden, He said, "Not my will, but Thine be done" (Luke 22:42).

This one hour when He is nailed to the cross is the central hour of all eternity. As a result, God has "bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth" (Philippians 2:9,10). Every created intelligence shall acknowledge that this Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Again, the center of it is this hour at the cross; for there can be no glorification without the cross.

The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified; and in the glorification of the Son, the Father is glorified. The One is glorified in connection with the other. Neither is inferior nor superior to the other. "Father, the hour is come." Oh, the eternal thrill of this!

Why is so little place given to this very fact in our Christian churches today? May God grant to you and to me an enlarged vision of this which was planned back in eternity and revealed in

Psalm 40:8: "I delight to do thy will, O my God." That will was the cross.

What for? For the glorification of God. That is why we're saved. That is why He keeps us.

And don't you for one moment think, my Christian friend, that God is going to let you go. He's concerned about our growing and about our being—as Romans 8:29 says—"conformed to the image of His Son." What for? That we might through eternity glorify Him. This is the heart of the incarnation, of redemption, of the resurrection and ascension, and the plan of God for His people.

2. "Even as Thou gavest Him authority over all mankind, that to all whom Thou hast given Him, He may give eternal life.

3. "And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."

You notice what He claims? He has power—authority over all flesh. Yours. Mine. Yes, all flesh, wherever you find it. We ought never to fear anyone's flesh, for "underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deuteronomy 33:27). Men can rage, but they can't touch believers unless He permits it. Christ is the One who holds authority over death and hell (Revelation 1:18).

Did He not say in Matthew 28:18, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth"? And we gladly say, "Yes, Lord, that is true. You have authority in heaven. You rule in heaven, and your purpose will be accomplished on earth."

But He didn't say that here. He says, "Even as Thou gavest Him authority over all mankind." For what purpose? "That to all whom Thou has given Him, He may give eternal life." He has authority to give life instead of death, authority to save sinners instead of destroying them, authority to love them with an everlasting love instead of hating them because of their sin and corruption. He has authority

over all flesh, authority over a world in chaos, and authority over your flesh if you don't have authority over it. You do things you don't want to do, things of which you're ashamed as a Christian. You say things you are ashamed of.

My friend, listen. Christ has authority over all flesh—yours and mine. The trouble is, we don't permit Him to do what He wants to do. Now He could do it in sovereignty, but you are not a piece of machinery. He's not going to dash into your life and force His way. He tells you what He would like you to do; and if you say, "I have no power to do this," He'll say, "I supply the power."

It's all in Romans 8:11: "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you."

And if He is going to transform our body and change it from mortal to immortal, from corruptible to incorruptible, certainly He can control that body now. And what He asks from you and me is that we yield ourselves to Him, that He, too, may control our bodies which have become the temples of the Holy Spirit. I fear in these days we trust ourselves too much in this matter of control.

He also has authority to give life to people under bondage to sin. He has the authority to give eternal life to everyone the Father has given Him. Knowing Him is life eternal.

All down through the Book of John we've been dealing with it continually: "In Him was life" (John 1:4); "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63). In John 10:10, He said, "I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly"—eternal life, satisfying life, indwelling life, resurrection life.

What is life eternal but the personal knowledge of the Father and the Son? Eternal life comes through relationship with God Himself. God is not

an idea. He is not a doctrine. He is not a concept. He is a living Person.

Life is not a commodity you can buy, a life you can pray for or work for. Life can only come through relationship. This is the trouble with religions. They offer you things if you work hard enough, if you're earnest enough, if you sacrifice enough. This is not Christianity. You can't buy your way, earn your way, or argue your way into Christianity. Christianity is a life that produces fellowship and communion with the living God.

The world has nothing to offer you but empty husks. It has nothing to offer you but death. But Christ conquered death and turned death into an open door into the very presence of God. Man's worst enemy has become the tool used by God to bring you to Himself. "This is life eternal, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."

4. "I have glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do."

He is the only one who could fully say that. Now there have been other men on earth who have brought glory to God—Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah. God has had men who have brought Him glory, but not one has been able to say that from the moment he was born until he left this scene that "I have glorified Thee on the earth. Everything I have said, everything I have done, every attitude, everything in my life has been for the glory of God."

As we've discussed earlier, the great consuming passion of His heart was for the glory of God. When He cleansed the lepers, when He fed the thousands, when he opened blind eyes, raised the dead, stilled the storm, rebuked the wind, showed compassion on sinners—even when He chose Judas Iscariot—it was all for the glory of God.

Even when He was being scourged!

This always causes a strange feeling in my heart when I think of the fact that they took the Son of God and scourged Him until His face was marred more than any man's, fulfilling Isaiah 50:6 when He said, "I gave my back to those who strike Me, and My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard: I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting." Even this was for the glory of God.

I can't understand it. I can't fathom it.

Even at the cross, when they gnashed on Him with their teeth, He could cry out, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." When the dying thief said, "Jesus, remember me when you come in Your kingdom," He said, "Today you shall be with Me in Paradise." The whole thing was for the glory of God. "I glorified Thee on the earth."

Believer in Christ, could you and I come into the presence of God and say this to Him? Ever since we've been Christians, have we been like this?

Now, we may say, "Lord, I want to live for Your glory," and we mean it. But not long afterwards, we find how frail and how weak and stumbling we are.

In fact, it will take eternity for us to fully appreciate this amazing statement, "I glorified Thee on the earth."

Whatever the past may have been between you and the Lord, my friend, whatever the past with our failures and weaknesses, may I suggest that you get down before the Lord and say, "Lord, from here on I must live for the glory of Christ."

Only then can we echo His recurring words: "Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house? . . . My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work. . . . I came not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent me. . . . I do always the things that please Him. . .

. I have accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do.”

What was the work of the Son? Way back in Psalm 40:8 He said, “I delight to do Thy will, O my God; Thy law is within My heart.” His work was a two-fold job. He came to give mankind the revelation of the heart and character of God, and He came to bring men back into relationship with the Father.

This now has become our two-fold job. We are to bring mankind a glimpse of the heart of Jesus and let people see Him in our actions, in our compassion, in our tenderness, in our grace, in our love.

Isn't it strange that after nearly 2000 years people are still echoing Job's cry: “Oh, that I knew where I might find him!” The world needs to see in us the work of the revelation of the very heart and character and person of the living God. For Christ has finished the work of redemption. His death on the cross would have satisfied God if not a living soul believed in Him. He still finished the work of redemption, making it possible for us to be loosed eternally from sin.

He finished the work of reconciliation, making it possible for man to enjoy peace with God in a renewed relationship.

He finished the work of propitiation, removing the barrier between us and God and perfectly satisfying the righteous, holy character of God because He bore our sins. This is what God has in the cross. Sinward—Christ put away sin; manward—He made reconciliation; Godward—He satisfied the very character of God. “I have accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do.”

5. “And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I ever had with Thee before the world was.”

I don't know of any chapter as full of the deity of

Christ as this one. Here He is claiming not only equality with God, He is claiming pre-existence. Notice this great yearning of His heart that He might again be glorified “with the glory which I ever had with Thee before the world was.” He is going back into heaven as a Man. This is something new, that Jesus Christ as a Man is going to be glorified with all the eternal glory of omnipotent God.

In 1 Peter 1:21 we read, “Who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory,” and Hebrews 2:9, “We do see Him . . . crowned with glory and honor.” See also Philippians 2:5-11.

Did not Gabriel say to Mary, “You’re going to have a son; you’re going to call him Jesus. He shall be the Son of the Highest” (Luke 1:31-32)? Mary became the vehicle whereby God took His place in humanity.

Now Jesus in humanity is going back into glory to be glorified with the eternal glory that God the Son had before the foundation of the world. He is there at the right hand of God today—a Man, a real Man, glorified with all the glory of God. And He is going to bring into the presence of God a multitude, a host of redeemed ones, who through eternity shall magnify and glorify the Son.

I know of no better time than now for us to dedicate ourselves and lay our bodies, minds, and wills at His feet and acclaim Him to be Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

Christ and His disciples (17:6-19)

6. “I manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me, and they have kept Thy word.”

Six times, it mentions that these disciples were the Father’s gift to the Son (verses 2, 9, 12, 24 and John 6:37,39). We, too, belong to the Father; and

He gave us to the Son.

What name of God did Christ reveal? He was already known to the nation as Elohim—and Jehovah, His eternal name. In the Old Testament He was identified as Jehovah-nissi—the Lord our Banner (Exodus 17:8-15), as Jehovah-jireh—the Lord will provide (Genesis 22:13-14), as Jehovah-rapha—the Lord who healeth (Exodus 15:26), as Jehovah-shalom—the Lord our peace (Judges 6:24), as Jehovah-tsidkenu—the Lord our righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6), as Jehovah-shammah—the Lord is present (Ezekiel 48:35).

I believe that the name of God that Christ revealed here was "Father." It was a new relationship. He has made us children of One who is God. "See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God" (1 John 3:1).

7. "Now they have come to know that everything Thou hast given Me is from Thee;

8. for the words which Thou gavest Me I have given to them; and they received them, and truly understood that I came forth from Thee, and they believed that Thou didst send Me."

The Lord Himself is the Father's indescribable Gift to us (2 Corinthians 9:15). God has given us the perfect Gift; and, for nearly 2000 years, He has been gathering out a people for His name as a gift to His Son. Where did God get these men? Out of the world, dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2). Nothing is said about their failures, even though the Lord knows that on that same night Peter will deny Him three times and the others will be scattered and leave Him alone (John 16).

But still ringing in His ears is Peter's affirmation of faith—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

"They believed that Thou didst send me."

9. "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine;

10. and all things that are Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I have been glorified in them."

Think of the tremendous place these men had in the heart of the Saviour. And look down at verse 20, "I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word."

Do you realize the tremendous place you have in the heart of Christ? But how many of us really know the Saviour? How many of us have a real place in our heart for Him?

The world is not on His heart. It is a foreign institution, as we noted in John 15:18 through 16:4. You have it in 1 John 2. The world is a kingdom of darkness. Satan is its ruler and power.

Christ has finished His work for the world. He has just said, "I have accomplished (finished) the work which thou hast given Me to do." In chapter 19:30, He will again say, "It is finished." God's only message to the world is one of salvation, one of redemption through His Son. But He is not working for the world today. It was wicked hands of worldlings that crucified Him; it was loving hands that put Him in the tomb. He did not appear to the world after His resurrection; He appeared unto His own people only.

Nor is the Spirit of God praying for the world. The Spirit of God prays for us. You have that in Romans 8:26,27,34; Hebrews 7:25 and 9:24; and 1 John 2:1,2.

I just love this little statement, "I ask on their behalf" or, more simply put, "I pray for them." And you remember, if you have trials, tests, sorrows in the weeks ahead, He said, "I pray for them." And if you have suffered failures in days and weeks past, remember that He said, "I pray for them." He

prayed for Peter that his faith would fail not. Isn't it wonderful that He is praying for us? The man of the world can't say, "Somebody is praying for me." But we can. He is ever living "to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

Put your name in there. "I pray for _____. I do not ask on behalf of the world, but for _____ whom Thou hast given Me; for _____ is Thine. And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I am glorified in them."

Did you notice how He identifies His loved ones? "They have kept Thy word. They are not of the world. They are Your gift to Me. And they have glorified Me." And then He says, "I am glorified in them."

Christian friend, did you ever stop to realize that every experience in life is an opportunity for God to be glorified in His people? At the beginning of the chapter, He is going to the cross for the glorification of God. We go through our tests to glorify God. Why didn't He take us Home when we were saved? Wouldn't it be wonderful if the moment you received the Saviour you were taken right Home into the presence of God where there is fullness of joy?

No, the place where we glorify God is not in heaven; it is on earth. How is the world going to know about our Saviour if every believer goes Home?

Some Christians say, "I'm going to ask the Lord to take me Home."

Listen, this is one prayer God does not answer. When He wants you Home, He is going to take you Home fast enough. No pills or antibiotics are going to keep you down here when He wants to take you Home.

There were three discouraged men in the Bible who asked the Lord to take them Home, and He never answered one of the three prayers. Do you recall that?

Moses, the servant of God, said, "Please kill me at once . . . and do not let me see my wretchedness" (Numbers 11:15). Take me Home. Let me get out of this situation.

Here's Elijah, the man who shut the heavens and opened the heavens. He performed miracles. He raised the dead. He fed the hungry. He knew God. Yet he could say, as he sat under the juniper tree, "I, even I only, remain. I'm the last one You've got left, Lord. You might as well take me, too." Discouraged? (I would be too if a painted woman chased me for a hundred miles! I certainly would.) If you don't believe that story, you read chapters 18 and 19 of 1 Kings.

Here's another man, Jonah, who preached and a city of more than 500,000 inhabitants repented. Yet Jonah "begged with all his soul to die, saying, 'Death is better to me than life.'" (Jonah 4:8). But God didn't answer that one either.

He leaves us here for a purpose, that He might be glorified in us. So don't become sour because certain circumstances have come into your life and because people disappoint you. It is in the tests and trials of life that our faith grows. He says, "I pray for them." My, what safety. What security. What peace of heart. What joy it gives. "I pray for them."

11. "And I am no more in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, the name which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as We are."

As far as the Lord is concerned, His ministry on earth has about come to an end. In a few hours He will be in the presence of His Father, where there is fullness of joy. He'll be away from this scene with all its hatred and its envy, the opposition of hell and the jealousy of religious leaders. He's going to be free of the whole thing.

"I'm going Home to glory, Father, but these dear men, with all their weakness and frailty—I'm leaving them in this world that hates Me. I'm leaving them in a world that's going to crucify Me. I'm leaving them in a world of sin and opposition, in a world that is controlled and dominated by its prince, Satan. And I'm leaving these dear men—Peter, James, John—and they can't keep themselves. If they had a problem, they would come to Me. If they had a need, they would come to Me. If they were hungry, they'd come to Me. But now I'm leaving them, Father. Where can they go?"

And I just love this: "Holy Father. . . ." It is the only time that Jesus ever called His Father, "Holy Father."

Can God in His holiness, can God in His righteousness take care of these men in their frailty? "Holy Father, You keep them."

You see, we were the Father's first of all. He loved us so much He gave us to the Son. Now the Son loves us so much, He's putting us right back into the heart of the Father.

"Holy Father, You keep them." All the love of God is behind this. "Keep them through thine own name—the ones You've given me. Put Your name on these men. They are Yours. Care for them."

What a ground and comfort for safety. He doesn't trust us to keep ourselves. It is as if someone puts a knife in my heart when I hear people say, "Ah, well, you can take yourself out of God's hand. As long as you hang on, you're saved. And if you don't hang on, you're not saved."

Listen, friend, there's not a man or a woman on the face of the earth—and I don't care how godly they may be—who can keep himself, herself for one minute. Our security, our safety, our joy, our comfort, all we have and need is found in one place—in Him.

12. "While I was with them, I was keeping them in Thy

name which Thou has given Me; and I guarded them, and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled."

That's the word. "I've guarded these men. Now, Father, You guard them." He will guard that which we have put in His hands until that day when we stand in His presence, conformed to the image of His Son. What a Saviour we have! What a salvation is this!

Let me back up a verse for a moment. The second desire of His prayer is in verse 11, "that they may be one, even as We are." During these last few hours, our Lord has just one great desire—that these men may know something of this union with the living God and be brought, not only into a relationship in the family of God, but also into a oneness with God Himself. He prays that we might be one with Him in life, one in love, one in fellowship. See 1 John 1:3.

The Lord also made a third request that we might be kept from the world.

13. "But now I come to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy made full in themselves.

14. "I have given them Thy word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15. "I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.

16. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

Here our Saviour speaks of the opposition of the world to His people. He had touched on this in chapter 15:18 when He said, "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you." I am sure one of the reasons why we Christians do not experience the enmity of the world is

because we have compromised with it. The message of God for the world is salvation. The message of God for His people is separation from the world. See 2 Corinthians 6 and 1 John 2:13-15.

Eighteen times in this passage our Saviour speaks of the world as a system, a kingdom of darkness controlled and dominated by Satan. And when you and I become Christians, we're taken out of the world. We have no relationship to this system any more. I repeat it—God's message for the man in this world is salvation, and for the saved it is separation. We are in the world but not of it. The whole world lies in the lap of the wicked one. See Galatians 1:4 and 6:14.

One of the great tragedies is that so many professing Christians are living as those who are in the world. They have been tainted and affected by the materialistic and humanistic philosophy and morals. There is no such thing as a new morality. The Bible doesn't speak of any new morality. Sin is sin, and you and I belong to the Saviour who died to redeem us from sin. Therefore, as children of God for whom He prays and upon whom He has set His name, as those who are the object of His love and His heart, may we live for Him on earth.

But, you say, "Brother Mitchell, I'm surrounded by tests and temptations of all kinds."

I know. We're living in a world that is a moral cesspool. That's why Christ said, "I pray for them." That's why He says, "Holy Father, you keep them." That's why He said, "Father, make them one just as We are."

Believer in Christ, I don't know what your circumstances may be. Remember the Father, the Holy Father, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the Lord of Glory, has made you the object of His care. Shall we fail Him? Shall we dishonor Him? Shall we live like the world from which He has delivered us? Shall we not be ambassadors representing Him—showing forth the praises of

Him Who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light?

It is not a question of isolation from the world, but insulation from the world. When we give ourselves to God, it is amazing what He can do with us. We can witness to the world. We can have victory over the world.

Now there are some opportunities we have in the world we will not have in glory. We can witness for Christ in the world as ambassadors for Him. We can experience the power of God to help us overcome the wicked one. We won't need that in heaven. We'll be perfect there. We can experience the peace of God during affliction and sorrow. In heaven there will be no more sin, death, trial or sickness.

This is the world that had no place for Him, the world that opposed Him, the world that eventually crucified Him. Yet in this world He came to the poor, to sinners, to publicans, to sorrowing hearts, to broken hearts, to slaves—and set them free. And the work which He started is passed on to you and to me. This is why we are here in the world today. He started a work. We carry it on until God's purpose is completed.

Now to do that, He must sanctify us.

17. "Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth."

Now sanctification is a wonderful word. It means "to be set apart." And there are two or three aspects of sanctification. For example, we've been sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ, once for all. Sanctification is not imputed. Justification is. Righteousness is imputed to the believer, but not sanctification which is more of an impartation, an inwrought work by the Spirit of God because we are in Christ.

In the Book of Hebrews, sanctification is never by the Spirit. It is always on the ground of the

blood of Christ and because of our relationship to Him. It has a practical side—a daily sanctification—that has to do with our godly walk as Christians in the world. The very heart of Christianity is right here. A holy life in a world that hates God is God's program for His people. Not looseness. Obedience to His word is a sign of discipleship (John 8:31).

If there is no godliness, you can't claim the word, "Christian." I'm not a Christian because I'm godly. But the fruitage of being in Christ is a transformed life, and it is a daily process.

There are some people who have been on the way 50 years and still act like babies, spiritually speaking. There are those who grow fast.

Our Saviour walked among men, revealing the Father. We had this in chapter 14 where the Father was made known to men through Christ's words and through His works. Now, when it comes to sanctification, we not only have been set apart for God as an act of God, set apart for God on the ground of the fact that Christ died for us and we are related to Him, but there is such a thing as He said here: "Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth."

As I hear the Son of God speak, I know that He is speaking exactly what the Father would say. As I note His actions and His attitude to people, I learn exactly what the Father would do. And don't forget the fact that the more the Word of God takes its place in your life, the more it lives in you, the more like Him you will be. This is why I am so continually urging people to read and reread the Word of God.

The tragedy of the 21st century Christian church is the fact that we neglect the Word of God. This is why, in religious and secular circles, the Word of God is being pushed out. In many of our seminaries, the Word of God isn't wanted. In our church-related colleges and universities, they don't

want the Word of God. And to me the astounding thing is that sometimes the man of the world, the unsaved man, will point out the inconsistencies of religious preachers with respect to the Word of God.

If there is anything Satan and all hell hates, it is the person of Christ and the Word of Christ. And yet it is by this Word that believers are set apart and sanctified, and a godly walk that pleases Him is daily produced in their lives. A godly walk, let me say again, is a rebuke and a witness to the man of the world who has no place for Christ.

But we are also sanctified for a mission.

18. "As Thou didst send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world."

Now when the Lord started His work, His ministry, He spent all night in prayer. When He came down from the mountain to the people, He deliberately chose 12 men to accompany Him as He walked among men. They didn't choose Him. Every believer in Christ has been set apart by God for a mission (John 15:16). Christ has finished His mission. We will learn in John 20:21 that we are to carry it on: "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

I can hear you protesting that you don't have any gifts. Wait a minute. What kind of people did God use when He raised up judges over His people and what kind of instruments did they use? Shamgar had an ox goad. Samson used a jaw bone of an ass. Gideon, the least in his father's house, gathered an army and used only lamps and trumpets to rout the enemy.

When God wanted to split the Red Sea, what did He use? Just a dried up old stick. Don't you limit God. Don't rationalize your disobedience by saying, "I haven't any gifts." You have been assigned by the eternal, sovereign, living God to go back

into the world from which you have been redeemed. Your assignment is to manifest the character and the love and the life of the living God and to give forth a testimony of the Saviour. You are to be a bearer of Good News to men who are dead in trespasses and sin.

Do you remember how Acts 1:1 starts? "The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up." He began a job; He began a mission. He has assigned you and me to continue the mission.

That's what you have in Philippians 2:15,16 where it says you are the "children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life."

I'm not asking you to be preachers or even to be missionaries in the sense of going from your own home to some foreign field, though it would be wonderful if you did. But wherever God has put you, you have an assignment. You are to represent the living God to men.

To me, one of the astounding challenges of the Bible is found in Luke 4:18,19 where Jesus said as He started His ministry, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." What for? "To preach the gospel to the poor . . . to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord."

That is your job, and that is my job. Everything in that passage we can do by the power of the Spirit of God who indwells us.

"Father, as Thou didst send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world." But this is not the end.

19. "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth."

Did you ever stop to realize that the Number One burden on the heart of Christ is not the upholding of the physical universe? We have supposedly conquered the earth and the heavens, but we still can't conquer ourselves. How far man has gone in his investigation of the powers, the forces of nature.

How far he has gone in the sphere of medical science and the sphere of nuclear physics. The science of man has gone beyond all the dreams of men who lived just 50 years ago. But the Lord isn't concerned about that.

"In Him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17). He "upholds all things by the word of His power" (Hebrews 1:3). He not only is the creator of all things, the heir of all things, but He is the upholder. He holds up the physical universe by the word of His power. But that is not the important thing to Him.

He flings worlds into space at a word, but on His heart are the lives and souls of millions of people on the face of the earth. That's why He came and died for a rebellious world.

The second desire of our Saviour is that we might be separated unto the Gospel of Christ and sanctified through the truth.

His third desire is that we might be one even as the Father and the Son are one. This is a vital relationship. God deals with vital things, with eternal verities; and this is the great yearning of the heart of our Saviour a few hours before He is crucified.

Let me digress briefly to point this up in several verses: Verse 10, "All things that are Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I have been glorified in them." Verse 11, "Keep them in Thy name, the name which Thou has given Me, that they may be one, even as We are." Verse 21, "That they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I

in Thee, that they also may be in Us." Verse 22, "And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one."

Verse 23, "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity." Verse 26, "And I have made Thy name known to them, and will make it known; that the love wherewith Thou didst love Me may be in them, and I in them."

How often you have the word "as," or "even as." It is the same Greek word all the way through, by the way. He is dealing with an internal unity. The union of believers will be the same as the union between the Father and the Son. This is not organizational unity dealing with man-made affiliations. This is a vital relationship in life between God and the believer. The lack of this unity has been a tremendous hindrance, keeping men and women everywhere from receiving the Saviour.

Now there are occasions when the divisions in Christianity occurred because of carnality rather than spirituality. The great revivals that God has brought among men through the years, instead of knitting all God's people together, caused division.

When Martin Luther stood out for justification by faith, another group started. When Charles and John Wesley ministered in those great Gospel revivals in Great Britain, they caused separation and schism. That which was cold and worldly and carnal separated from that which was spiritual.

This has been true all down through the years. A great many of the so-called denominations have come out of other denominations because of a cleavage concerning spiritual life.

And today we see men trying to cause a union of all those who profess to be Christians, irrespective of doctrine. It is a man-made thing which is doomed to failure. Christianity is centered around a Person. You can't be united in Christ unless you are united in essential doctrine. You cannot unite

those who believe in the deity of Christ, the inspiration of the Bible and the atonement with those who do not.

The Son came for the express purpose of bringing into being a new race of people, “set apart,” as the Apostle Paul could say, “for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son” (Romans 1:1-3). We are those that believe on His name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:12-13).

We have been made “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). Paul in Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10 speaks of the new self, the new man which is created in righteousness and holiness. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17). Christ wants men and women to have a real, vital, eternal relationship, a oneness with God. This is the yearning of His heart. He is going to the cross. He is going to be crucified. He is going to leave these men. And it is not enough for Him to pray that the Father might keep them, but He wants them to realize this oneness—that “we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

As we day by day center our heart, our affection, our devotion on Him, we change, so that our unity in life with God evidences itself in our unity with each other. Whether we are Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Brethren, Congregational, this or that, is neither here nor there. Ecclesiastical distinctions disappear when you come to the family of God, when you come to those who are truly one in Christ and who hold to those essential doctrines.

I had lunch the other day with a gentleman, a brother in Christ whom I’ve known for a great

many years. He doesn't come to my church. He belongs to another. But down through the years we've had wonderful, intimate fellowship. Why? We don't talk about denominations or organizations. We talk about the things that knit us together in Christ—the same life, the same purpose, the same desires, the same devotion, the same Saviour, the same destination.

You go to Africa, China, Southeast Asia, Europe, North and Central and South America and you meet people of different color, different language, different culture. But the moment you find they are in Christ, there is a bond there.

I think of some Chinese in Singapore, for example, whom I'd never seen before in my life. They took me right into their home, just as if we were brothers. We are. There's a oneness there. This is what the Lord is talking about. It's not union in organization, but an internal unity in love, in life, in purpose, in desire.

I think this is in John's mind, for example, in 1 John 1:3: "That you also may have fellowship—partnership—with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." This oneness is the great yearning of our Saviour's heart. If you love the Saviour and if you're joined to Him, don't forget you are joined one to the other.

Remember, Proverbs speaks of six things God hates, "yes, seven which are an abomination to Him." What is the seventh? "One who spreads strife among brothers" (6:19). Why? Because we are one in life. We are joined to Him. And, when we're joined to Him, we are joined to each other. When you sow discord among brethren, you're cutting your own throat, for fellowship, for blessing, for usefulness. Grieve the Spirit and the whole work of God is hindered.

Christ and the Church (17:20-26)

20. "I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word."

Mark our responsibility for everyone who shall "believe in Me through their word."

21. "That they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me."

When you and I walk in fellowship with Him, enjoying Him for Himself, it knits us together with every other believer. We yearn to encourage each other in Christ.

And do you realize that, when Christians are having wonderful fellowship together, it is a testimony to the world that the Father sent Jesus into the world to save sinners? The world outside is going to say either "See how they love one another" or "See how they scrap with one another." God's thought is that you and I in union with Him may become His channels to bring good news to men that Jesus Christ was sent by the Father to redeem men and women from sin, death, and hell.

Now the next prayer of our Saviour in verses 22 to 24 has to do with His glory.

22. "And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one;

23. "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me.

24. "Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world."

We have two glories here. In verse 22 He gives his glory. In verse 24 He shows His glory. This second has to do with His eternal moral glory, a

glory that we cannot share. We can only gaze upon it. The glory that He gives is His acquired glory, the glory He received from the Father because He accomplished our redemption.

Paul refers to this in Romans 8:18: "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us;" in 2 Corinthians 4:17: Our "momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory;" and in Colossians 3:4: "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." You and I are going to share in this glory.

In John 17:24 He says, "Father, I desire . . ." That word is translated in other versions as "I will." This is the only time in our Lord's ministry upon the earth where He ever said to His Father, "I will."

In Isaiah 14:13, Satan, the adversary, said to God, "I will raise my throne above the stars of God. . . . I will make myself like the Most High." He said "I will" five times in that passage.

Jesus here said "I will" only once and it concerns you and me. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; in order that they may behold My glory."

The Lord Jesus is on His way to the cross and to the tomb. He is going to be raised and exalted to God's right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour (Acts 5:31).

The most astounding thing in all God's universe today is that there is a real Man at God's right hand, glorified with all the glory of Omnipotent God. And you and I are going to see Him in His glory. Why, the last chapter of our Bible, Revelation 22:4, says, "And they shall see His face." What a prospect!

Even David had a little glimpse of that when he said in Psalm 27:4, "One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek; that I may dwell in the

house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to meditate in His temple.” If these Old Testament saints caught a little glimpse and were so yearning to be with Him where there is fullness of joy, what about us?

So, in His last words before He goes to the cross, the Lord Jesus is thinking about you and me in union with Him. Every believer in Christ is going to stand in the very presence of God and gaze upon Him in His glory. Moses in Exodus 33:18 said, “Show me Thy glory.” God said, “You can’t see Me in My glory and live.” But you and I will.

This is one of the most marvelous things—that God should not only redeem us and give us life eternal, but that He will also bring us into this relationship. Christ can say, “Father, I want everyone who believes on Me to be with Me where I am, to see Me in My glory—because You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”

There’s one more thing in the passage, and I’m through. Maybe two.

25. “O righteous Father, although the world has not known Thee, yet I have known Thee; and these have known that Thou didst send Me.”

I was very much struck with this verse. “O righteous Father . . .” It is the only time the Lord Jesus ever called Him, “Righteous Father.” The only time He called Him “Holy Father” was when He asked Him to care for you and me.

I took the time to go through these chapters again, 13 through 17, noticing the things the world doesn’t know and doesn’t have and cannot give.

For example, in chapter 14:17 the world knows nothing of the Spirit of God, “whom the world cannot receive,” whom the world cannot know. In John 14:27, the world can’t give you peace. “My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you.”

When you come to chapters 15 and 16, the world hates the Son of God and hates His people. We are not of the world, even as He is not of the world. Now He says, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee." The world never does know Him.

First Corinthians 2:14 says, "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." Don't be surprised about this. The world doesn't know the Saviour.

You remember in Matthew 11:25-27, Jesus said, "I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes. Yes, Father, for thus it was well-pleasing in Thy sight. . . . No one knows the Son, except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."

He could say, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17).

It's a continual action. He's declaring the truth of God today through His people, through His Word. If our hearts and minds are closed, we'll never learn a thing. But if our mind and heart are open, what God wants to teach us, He'll teach us.

26. "And I have made Thy name known to them, and will make it known; that the love wherewith Thou didst love Me may be in them, and I in them."

He starts the whole passage from chapter 13, verse 1, with "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." And how does He end it here? "That the love wherewith Thou didst love Me may be in them, and I in them."

The Father's love for the Son is the same measure of His love for His people. And that's immeasurable.

You feel like saying with the Psalmist in the 139th Psalm, verse 6, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me."

Revel in it.

Enjoy it.

Live in it and tell somebody else about it.

John 18

Christ, The Faithful One

(Part 1)

A wee summary

We now come to the last few hours of our Saviour's life among men when He begins to manifest the last great sign concerning His person and His authority.

He has been giving us various claims already: that He is Judge over all and the Bread of Life; that all life and judgment and resurrection are in His hands; that He is the fulfiller of Joel 2; that He came from heaven; that His message is from heaven; that He is going back to heaven; that He will send the Spirit from heaven; that He is the Light of the world and the great Liberator from death and sin; that He is the Sinless One; that He is the El Shaddai, our Eternal One; that He is the Resurrection and the Life; that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

And now we come to the final claim. "What sign will you give us as a sign of your authority," they asked Him in John 2.

He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again." We will find Him in the Garden of Gethsemane where Judas will betray Him. We will see Him stand before the ecclesiastical court and the political court. He will be condemned to death. We will see Him crucified, buried, and raised again. We will see Him giving His Word to His disciples in the last chapter.

The resurrection is the final sign of His person

and authority. The very first gospel message in Acts 2 will build upon it: "This Man, this Jesus, whom you nailed to the cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death, hath God raised up and exalted to be Lord and Christ" (2:23, 24, 36). Peter, in the last words in the Bible to the Jewish leaders, will say that God has made that same Jesus both "a Prince and a Saviour" (Acts 5:31).

The betrayal (18:1-14)

We now come to the beginning of these last few hours.

1. When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, into which He Himself entered, and His disciples.

He moves from being an intercessor to becoming a sacrifice. He moves from being in the center of His beloved disciples to being in the midst of His enemies for the fulfillment of His redeeming work.

John does not speak of our Lord's agony in Gethsemane. It has already been described in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. When John wrote so many years later, he possibly did not see the need for it. Or it may have been too sacred for him to mention, for you have here the final submission of our Saviour to the will of His Father.

He has crossed the brook Kidron. He takes His disciples into the garden with Him, and then takes Peter, James, and John on farther. He tells them to watch and pray lest they enter into temptation.

He cries in prayer, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). Both Matthew and Mark record the fact that His soul was "deeply grieved to the point of death." But we had it first in Isaiah 53:12, "He poured out Himself (his soul) to

death.”

In Luke's Gospel (22:43-44) we have Jesus Christ frail with intense suffering because His sweat “became like drops of blood.” An angel came and strengthened Him.

As I say, John says nothing of that. We read only that there “was a garden, into which He Himself entered, and his disciples.”

We can never fathom what complete submission to the will of the Father meant to Christ there in that garden. We know what the 22nd and 69th Psalms prophesied concerning Him. He knew, too. And He knew what Isaiah 50, 51, and 53 meant. He knew the prophetic picture of the intense suffering and abuse that would befall Him.

What would you and I do if we knew God wanted us to give our back to the smiters and our cheeks to those who would pluck off the hair? What would we do if we knew the crown of thorns would bite into our heads, if we knew our face would be marred more than any man's, if we knew we would be nailed to a tree—shamed, stripped naked?

These Romans could do such a thing. He knew this. Yet He could say in the 40th Psalm as quoted in Hebrews 10:5-7, “Sacrifice and offering Thou hast not desired, but a body Thou hast prepared for Me. . . . Then I said, Behold, I have come to do Thy will, O God.”

The very center of all time is before us. The God-head had planned in ages past that He, the holy, righteous Son of God, would be made that terrible thing called “sin” for us. No wonder He shrank when He said, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.”

But He went forth a Conqueror. The victory had been won.

The betrayer (18:2-5)

2. Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the

place; for Jesus had often met there with His disciples.

3. Judas then, having received the Roman cohort, and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.

I do not know how far down a person can go in sinfulness and opposition to Christ, but I think here we have one of the vilest things a person could ever do. Judas had accompanied the Saviour for a little more than three years as one chosen for ministry by the Lord Himself. Judas had heard His gracious words and wonderful claims. He had seen His marvelous miracles. He had seen five loaves and two fish feed 5,000 men.

He had seen Lazarus raised from the dead. He had seen lepers cleansed, blind eyes opened, and the palsied healed. He had lived with Him for more than three years. He knew what always took place in the privacy of the garden of Gethsemane when the Lord of Glory would meet with His Father. It was a time of rest. It was a holy, holy experience.

Is it possible for a person to live three years with the Saviour and now, because of a few shekels, betray the Holy Son of God?

Is it possible that a person can go to your church and hear the truth of the Word of God and see the Son of God exalted week by week and eventually be lost?

My friend, it is possible to start in the beginner's department and go through the whole Sunday school and live your life in the midst of the things of God and not know Him.

Judas never knew the Son of God in a vital relationship. Even in chapter 13, our Saviour still pleaded with him to turn from the path he was taking. But he still went to tell the priests where to find Him. He still brought a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees. They came with torches and weapons to capture One who went about unarmed, doing good, healing all

who were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him.

But notice the next verse.

4. Jesus therefore, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth, and said to them, "Whom do you seek?"

We see here His majesty. Instead of their seeking Him, He went to meet them.

5. They answered Him, "Jesus the Nazarene."

He said to them, "I am He."

And Judas also who was betraying Him, was standing with them.

Jesus manifests His power and majesty (18:6-9)

6. When therefore He said to them, "I am He", they drew back, and fell to the ground.

Oh, the manifestation of His majesty, the manifestation of His person as the Son of God. What authority! He just said, "I am," and the whole multitude fell to the ground. Notice, Judas with them.

What a time for Jesus and the disciples to run away. They could have just slipped off and left their enemies in fear and confusion. How easy. But the Lord was completely submissive to the will of His Father. That meant the cross. He knew that.

7. Again therefore He asked them, "Whom do you seek?"

And they said, "Jesus the Nazarene."

8. Jesus answered, "I told you that I am He; if therefore you seek Me, let these go their way,"

9. that the word might be fulfilled which he spoke, "Of those whom Thou hast given Me I lost not one."

I love the concern the Saviour had for His own.

My Christian friend, weak though you may be, remember you are always the object of His care, of His love, of His devotion. Just think of it. You personally are the object of His devotion. He said, "I give eternal life to them; and they shall never perish; no one shall snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:28).

Jesus manifests His grace (18:10-11a)

Now, dear old Peter, he just had to do something.

10. Simon Peter therefore having a sword, drew it, and struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave's name was Malchus.

The final miracle our Lord performed before the cross was to repair what one of His own disciples had done in fleshly enthusiasm. In Luke's Gospel, we are told that the Lord healed Malchus (Luke 22:50-51).

Now don't you for one moment think that Peter was a real swordsman. He was really attempting to cut the fellow's head off. He just got the ear. However, when you remember that these men were emotionally disturbed after all they had been through, such action can be justified.

I wonder if Christians today are not guilty in the flesh of cutting off peoples' ears. Instead of loving God's people, we criticize them. Sometimes, the scars we cause go with a person to the grave.

If we love the Saviour, we should honor Him. If we love His people, we should honor them, love them, not judge them, not be hypercritical. Don't go tell somebody about somebody else. But wherever we find the power of God at work, we seem to find a manifestation of the flesh. That's why some Christian institutions become threshingfloors for trouble, criticism, friction, and division.

Jesus manifests His obedience (18:11b-14)

11. Jesus therefore said to Peter, "Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?"

May I suggest two cups? One was a cup of suffering (Luke 22). The other is the cup of submission: "Shall I not drink the cup which My Father hath given Me to drink?"

12. So the Roman cohort and the commander, and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him,

13. and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.

14. Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people.

I say, He was bound, not so much by the fetters the soldiers put upon Him, but bound because of His love for sinners.

He could say in John 10:17-18, "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

They could no more have bound Him against His will than jump over the moon. But, let me say again, it was His love for you and for me that prompted Him to submit to them. Because He loved you and me, He willingly set His face to go to the cross.

The failure of Peter (18:15-18, 25-27)

Although I have mentioned some of these things

before, I feel much inclined for a moment to spend time again on Peter because he has such a great place in my heart. He is so much like the rest of us, and we're so much like him.

When the Lord first met Peter, his name was Simon. Jesus said, "You shall be called Cephas"—Peter—Petros—rock (John 1:42). This was not an immovable barrier kind of rock but a rock you can kick around with your foot.

Then I believe Peter, Andrew, James, and John went back to their fishing. The Lord met them later and said, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men" (Mark 1:17).

In Luke 5:8-10, after the miraculous draft of fishes, Peter says, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

Then the Lord says, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men."

In Matthew 14, Peter showed his courage and faith when the disciples were in a storm, and the Lord came walking on the water in the third watch of the night. The men were scared. They thought they saw a spirit.

And Jesus said, "Be not afraid. It is I."

Peter said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to you on the water."

I love dear Peter because he passed a test none of the others was willing to face. As his feet touched the water, he was still hanging on to the boat. He had to let go of the boat and trust just the Saviour's one word: "Come."

He let go and he walked on the water. Don't you question it. He walked on the water, and he didn't have skis. But then he felt the wind blowing and saw the waves rolling high. I can just hear the others yelling out, "Watch out, Pete! A wave is coming!"

The moment he got his eyes off the Saviour and onto his circumstances, he fell in a hole. And, as he was going down, he called, "Lord, save me. I

perish!”

The Lord pulled him up; and you can be sure Peter walked back to the boat very, very close to the Saviour. Peter had the courage of faith. The others didn't. His problem was that he did things on the spur of the moment without thinking: “Lord, bid me come to Thee, if it is really You.”

But Peter was safer when he walked on the water with the one word, “Come,” under his feet than when he was in the boat with two planks between him and the water. A believer is safest when he dares to trust what God says. The Lord didn't think it was an awful thing for Peter to say, “Bid me come to Thee.” I think He was thrilled that Peter wanted to come.

Jesus says, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). “The one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out” (John 6:37).

So many people feel pressed down by weights of disappointments, trouble, sorrow, afflictions, problems. They've prayed and prayed, and there doesn't seem to be any deliverance. Sometimes the Lord permits us to drop to the very bottom—just like Peter. He wants us to get to the end of ourselves. He just loves to have people trust Him. Only Him.

Then in Matthew 16:16 and John 6:68-69, the one who walked on water makes a great confession: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And “You have words of eternal life. And we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”

He learned that by revelation—a revelation given not to the Pharisees, Sadducees, and priests, but given to a humble fisherman, an impulsive man, a man whose heart yearned for reality. Wherever God finds a heart that means business with Him, He will meet that heart. The trouble is that too many today don't desire the things of God. Truth

is imparted only to open hearts, to hungry hearts.

Peter in Matthew 16 receives three revelations: of His person—that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God; of His purpose—that He is going to build a church; and of His program—that He will suffer, die, be buried, and be raised.

But then he breaks out with, “Lord, Lord, You forgot something. I have just declared that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God; and now You tell me You are going to suffer and die? Get this out of Your head. God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.”

And the Lord said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan. You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.”

Poor, dear Peter. He is always the same. But for all his frailty and for all his torrent of words, right down in Peter’s heart there is a great yearning and a great love for the Son of God. He has really fallen in love with the Saviour.

Then the Lord prepares him for the announcement of his failure. This must have been very hard for him. We found it in John 13 when the Lord said to the disciples, “I am going to leave you.”

Peter said, “Lord, where are You going?”

“Well, where I’m going you can’t come now, but you’ll come afterwards.”

“Lord, why can’t I go with You now? I’ll die for You. I’ll go to prison for You. I’ll suffer anything for You.”

And Jesus said, “Simon, Peter, before the cock crows twice tonight, you will deny Me three times.”

Peter didn’t realize what the Lord was saying. He had meant every word—“I’ll die for you.” But pride and self-confidence in a Christian’s life are the first steps to denial. Then in Luke 22:31-32, the Lord said, “Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail;

and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

Peter said, “Lord, don't You worry about that. You can count on old Peter.”

Please notice that when He announced the denial, the Lord said, “I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail.” So many Christians never realize the wonder of our Lord's present ministry from the throne of God.

Do you remember 1 John 2:1, “My little children, I am writing these things to you, that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” The Lord had already prayed for Peter before he ever thought of denying anybody. He didn't pray that Peter wouldn't fail, wouldn't sin, but that his faith would not fail.

There's no question about what happened. Even when he was denying his Lord with oaths and curses, his faith did not fail. Faith is never destroyed by tests or by frailty. His love did not fail. Peter failed.

“Simon, when you're converted, strengthen your brothers.” The very man who denied with oaths and curses was chosen to be the mouthpiece of the Spirit of God on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Three thousand were saved. It was the same man—Peter, transformed and indwelt by the Spirit. What was his original trouble? Pride and self-confidence. “Though all deny Thee, I will not deny Thee. I will die for You. I'll go to jail for You. Lord, you can sure count on dear old Peter.” That was the first step down.

Next, Peter became prayerless. The Lord took the disciples across the brook; and He took Peter, James, and John apart and told them to watch and pray—lest they enter into temptation. Then He went a little farther and prayed, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.” When He returned, He found them asleep. They'd found it eas-

ier to sleep than to pray.

Peter is a good sleeper. He slept on the Mount of Transfiguration in the Lord's glory (Luke 9:32). He slept here in the garden in our Lord's agony. And in Acts 12, he slept in jail despite the threat of his own death.

And there are a lot of Simon Peters in church every Sunday morning!

Peter's next step down was doing things in the energy of the flesh. This was the incident when he cut off the ear of the high priest's servant.

The next step down? Peter followed afar off after the soldiers laid hold of the Lord. But Peter is still following. He is still in love with the Saviour. His love just drags its feet. He wants to run away, but his love keeps him near. At least, he is following.

The next step down? Peter stood outside the gate of the high priest's house.

15. And Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest,

16. but Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought in Peter.

There are those who believe "that other disciple" was John. How a commercial fisherman, a Galilean, should be a close friend of the high priest, is open to question. Whoever he was, I think he felt he was doing Peter a favor; but he wasn't. It would have been better if Peter had stayed outside.

17. The slave-girl therefore who kept the door said to Peter, "You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?"

He said, "I am not."

This man who took up a sword with courage and chopped off the ear of the high priest's servant, wilts before a girl—a servant girl, at that.

18. Now the slaves and the officers were standing there, having made a charcoal fire, for it was cold and they were warming themselves; and Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself.

Here is a man who was "going to die for the Saviour," taking comfort from the enemies of Christ and warming himself at their fire.

Then drop down to verses 25 to 27:

25. Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They said therefore to him, "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?"

He denied it, and said, "I am not."

26. One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?"

27. Peter therefore denied it again; and immediately a cock crowed.

Many of God's people are like that. We warm ourselves at the enemy's fire, the fire of the world. We don't want to be somebody separate. We want to be where the world is. We want to do what the world does. Then we compromise.

The early church lived in a time when believers suffered persecution and violent death. Then came years and centuries where people imitated the Christian life. And today, movements that once stood for something vital spiritually have failed and lost their ministry.

I'd rather stand for the Word of God, the person of our Saviour, and the authority of the Book and stand alone, than warm myself at the enemy's fire and be one with the gang.

The logical sequence of Peter's steps downward ends in denial. Three times dear Peter denied his Lord. But it started way back with pride and self-confidence, prayerlessness, demonstration of

the flesh, following afar off, compromise, being where the enemies are, doing what the enemies do. That's why he denied with oaths and curses.

Luke 22:61 says, "The Lord turned and looked at Peter." I don't believe He looked at him with a critical attitude or condemnation. Nor do I believe He looked with an expression of great disappointment. I think the Lord looked at Peter with such love that it broke Peter's heart.

He went out and wept bitterly.

I love what happened after the resurrection. In Luke 24:34 we learn that "the Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared to Simon." The Lord had a special meeting with Peter.

And He waits to have special meetings with all such Simons who step away from the Lord and are out of fellowship with Him. The Lord sought out Simon. He is always the Seeker.

No matter how many steps we take downward, He is the One who always says, "Come."

Now, I would like to read some verses from Isaiah, written hundreds of years earlier, as a black prelude to what happens next.

"I gave My back to those who strike Me, and My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting. For the Lord God helps Me; therefore, I am not disgraced; therefore, I have set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed" (Isaiah 50:6,7).

"Just as many were astonished at you, My people, so His appearance was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men" (Isaiah 52:14).

Jesus before the religious court (18:12-14, 19-24)

Now we come to the last few hours of our Lord's life among men.

It is not a very beautiful ending. Yet I must say, as His birth was supernatural and His life was supernatural, His death also was supernatural.

12. So the Roman cohort and the commander, and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him,

13. and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.

14. Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people.

19. The high priest therefore questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching.

The Lord Jesus was first led to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest. For a number of years Israel's high priest, Annas, was followed by his sons as well as his son-in-law Caiaphas, but Annas was really the power behind the priesthood and the brains behind the graft so evident in the temple. He was a very subtle man, full of politics.

20. Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues, and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret.

21. "Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; behold, these know what I said."

22. And when He had said this, one of the officers standing by gave Jesus a blow, saying, "Is that the way You answer the high priest?"

23. Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?"

24. Annas therefore sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

You'll notice very little is said in John's Gospel concerning the religious court. Our Lord was

really tried before three courts—the religious court of Annas and Caiaphas, the worldly court of Herod where our Lord said not a word, and the civil court of Pilate, the Roman governor.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are very clear as to His trial before the religious court. John takes this for granted as he writes his Gospel many years later. That court was an illegal court.

It was contrary to the law to try a man in the middle of the night and not give him an opportunity of defense. Furthermore, the sentence was passed before He was tried. The priests and the leaders of Israel had determined to kill Him back in Matthew 26. When they brought Jesus before Pilate, they merely wanted Pilate to carry out their verdict. Also, it was illegal for the officer to smite the defendant during the trial.

“I have done nothing in secret,” He said. “My whole ministry has been above board. Ask those who heard me.” This was an open rebuke of the high priest.

I’m amazed at the longsuffering of the Lord of Glory, to stand there, to be buffeted, to be smitten, to be spat upon by these men who were supposed to be servants of God. He never spat back. In the other Gospels our Lord didn’t answer his questioners until they put Him under oath (“I adjure thee by the living God” Matthew 26:63).

The issue in the religious court concerns His person, not His character, not His works, not His words. Our Lord had claimed to be the Son of God, equal with God in power, equal with God in authority. He claimed to be Bread, Light, Deliverer, the Sinless One, El Shaddai, Abraham’s God, the Eternal One, One with the Father. The issue before the religious court is who He is.

“The Jews answered Pilate, We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God” (John 19:7).

“The high priest said to Him, “I adjure You by

the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:63-64). He was quoting Daniel 7:13.

The Jews howled, "What further need do we have of witnesses?" What witnesses they had were at total disagreement with one another.

Jesus before the civil court (18:28-19:16)

John does not bring in the scene where Christ was taken before Herod, but he tells us quite a bit concerning the trial before Pilate.

28. They led Jesus therefore from Caiaphas into the Praetorium; and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium in order that they might not be defiled, but might eat the Passover.

29. Pilate therefore went out to them, and said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?"

30. They answered and said to him, "If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you."

31. Pilate therefore said to them, "Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your law."

The Jews said to him, "We are not permitted to put any one to death,"

32. that the word of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die.

This was spoken outside the judgment hall.

You'll notice the empty profession, the false holiness of these men whose hearts were full of murder against the holy Son of God. They said, "We can't come into the judgment hall lest we be defiled."

You talk about empty religion. If they had gone into the judgment hall, they would have defiled Pi-

late, not he they. They were full of murder and hate and envy against the Son of God.

We have the same kind of people with us today. There are many who are very religious on Sunday morning. They make a great sign of being holy, of being religious; and the rest of the week they live like the devil.

I'll never forget the first month or two that I was a Christian. Where I worked, a foul-mouthed boilermaker used to come over to my bench for expanding reamers and taps I used to make for him. One day, he came in and asked, "Could I borrow one of your little tools?"

I said, "What do you want?"

He told me.

I said, "You'll find it in the top drawer of my tool chest."

He pulled one of the drawers open, but I had moved all the tools out of that little drawer and had put a Testament in there. I could just barely close it.

So when he pulled this little drawer open, instead of the little one he should have pulled open, here was my Testament open.

He looked at it, and he came to me and said, "Well, Mitchell, are you turning religious?"

I said, "No. No, I'm not turning religious. It's true that I have accepted the Saviour," and I gave him my testimony.

He listened for a while, and he said, "Now, if you're going to be a Christian, be a good one. But don't be like Barney outside."

Barney was a toolsmith who carried a Bible under his arm on Sunday mornings, but the rest of the week he was the most foul-mouthed man in the shop.

That's like these fellows. They'd go into the temple, and they were so holy butter wouldn't melt in their mouths. And yet with hearts full of murder, envy, and hate against the Son of God, they

wouldn't go into the Gentile judgment hall lest they be defiled. Oh, may our relationship to the Lord be genuine and real—not like these men.

Now let's come to Pilate. Three times he examined Christ, and three times he declared He was innocent. He asked the question, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?"

Now they dodge the issue. They said, "If He were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you. But we have tried Him, and He must be put to death."

"Well, you take Him, and judge Him according to your law."

Pilate is trying to get rid of this thing.

And I want you to mark this man Pilate. I am of the persuasion he knew about Jesus. He was the governor, the ruler of Judea, and he knew what was going on in his territory. Why only a few days before, Lazarus had been raised from the dead. Lazarus was from Bethany. Bethany was just across the Brook Kidron from the city of Jerusalem.

Pilate knew about these things. He had heard about Jesus—of that, I have no doubt.

And when he saw them bring Jesus to him to be tried, he knew that they didn't really want him to try Him. They wanted him to pronounce sentence and carry out the sentence they had already passed.

Again, I say, Pilate tries to get out of this.

33. Pilate therefore entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus, and said to Him, "You are the King of the Jews?"

Now this was the issue with Pilate. It is a political thing. In the Jewish court it was a question of the person of Christ. In the Gentile court it is a question of the character of Christ.

34. Jesus answered, "Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?"

"Are you saying this because you know it? Or are you parroting somebody else?"

Oh, my friends, this is a basic question. We say we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners. Do we believe that because we have heard it? Or do we really believe it for ourselves? Is our confession of Christ real? Or is it only an empty thing?

"Did you say this of yourself? Or did somebody tell you?"

35. Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You up to me; what have You done?"

You can see this Pilate, this Roman, drawing himself up. "Am I a Jew?"

36. Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."

He is saying, "My kingdom is not of the earth. It is not run by soldiers and power and authority as the Roman government is. My kingdom is a heavenly kingdom. My kingdom is based on truth. My servants don't fight with weapons. We're not after money. We're not after an earthly kingdom. We're not like Rome."

You can just see the Lord here in the dignity of the Son of God, the King of Israel, the Sinless One. He stands before a human court, before a governor so seared in conscience but so touched in heart that he doesn't know what to do about it.

37. Pilate therefore said unto Him, "So you are a king?"

A better translation is "Thou art a king?"

Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king."

Putting that colloquially, it would read, "You said it! I am a king."

"For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears My voice."

38. Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?"

And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, "I find no guilt in Him."

You see, as you peer into this scene, Jesus is not on trial. He puts Pilate on trial. The conscience of Pilate is becoming stirred.

Pilate is confused.

The issue is Christ, and Pilate doesn't know what to do with this Man. He is obviously not a malefactor or a criminal. He stands in dignity as a king would. Pilate is accustomed to having prisoners grovel before him, trying to get out of punishment. And here is a man already condemned to death by His own people.

Now the scene is outside again with Pilate saying, "I find no fault in Him, no fault at all."

39. "But you have a custom, that I should release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?"

"Ah, now," he is thinking, "now I'll get out of this thing. I'll find the worst man in my prison and stand him up against Jesus and make them choose."

40. Therefore they cried out again, saying, "Not this Man,

but Barabbas." Now Barabbas was a robber.

Pilate has made a decision. He brings out Barabbas on one side and Jesus on the other.

The very fact that he put them up for a choice indicates he has already passed sentence, although he said, "I find no fault in Him."

Then why did he bring Christ out as a criminal to be chosen as one of two?

Why?

Isaiah 53:1-3 tells us why:

"Who has believed our message?
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been re-
vealed?

For He grew up before him like a tender shoot,
And like a root out of parched ground;
He has no stately form or majesty
That we should look upon Him,
No appearance that we should be attracted to
Him.

He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;
And like one from whom men hide their face,
He was despised,
and we did not esteem Him."

John 19

Christ, The Faithful One

(Part 2)

Jesus before the civil court (19:1-16)

1. Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged Him.

Pilate is now trying another scheme. He wants to get Jesus off the hook, but he doesn't know the Jews.

2. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and arrayed Him in a purple robe;

3. and they began to come up to Him, and say, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and to give Him blows in the face.

4. And Pilate came out again, and said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no guilt in Him."

They have scourged Jesus in the presence of Pilate. They've torn His clothes off and hung Him up with His feet off the ground—tied, spread-eagled—and they have whipped Him until His body and His face were marred more than any man's. Then they platted a crown of thorns and jammed it down on His head. They put an old robe on Him and a reed in His hand.

"Hail, King of the Jews!" More than likely they snatched the reed out of His hand and smote Him with it.

And Pilate took Him out to the Jews. He must have thought their human sympathy for a muti-

lated Man would free Him. He stood Him before them, blood and spittle running down His face. But Pilate didn't know these Jews. They could not care less that he found no fault in Him.

5. Jesus therefore came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe.

And Pilate said to them, "Behold, the Man!"

I'd love to spend a whole chapter here. "Behold the man!"—the only real man that ever walked the earth—God's Man. We are just poor imitations.

6. When therefore the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, "Crucify, crucify!"

Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves, and crucify Him: for I find no guilt in Him."

Even when Pilate said that, he knew they couldn't crucify Him. The law forbade it. But, mark you, three times Pilate has said, "I find no fault in Him."

7. The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God."

8. When Pilate therefore heard this statement, he was the more afraid;

9. and he entered into the Praetorium again, and said to Jesus, "Where are You from?"

But Jesus gave him no answer.

I am sure that Pilate here was thinking of all the miracles he had heard about. "Who are You? Where did You come from?"

He is really scared. He knew he had gone too far to have this Man scourged, and the Lord knew he had gone too far.

10. Pilate therefore said to Him, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?"

11. Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me up to you has the greater sin."

12. As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, "If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; every one who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar."

The Jews first of all chose Barabbas. Now they choose Caesar, and as a nation they turn their back on God. They have turned their back on their King and have now acknowledged their servitude to Rome. I remember the prophecy of dear Jacob in Genesis 49:10, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah . . . until Shiloh comes." Shiloh has come. The sceptre has departed. For, openly, before the Roman governor, they have declared their allegiance to Rome and preferred Caesar to Christ. The decision is made.

13. When Pilate therefore heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha.

14. Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold, your King!"

15. They therefore cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!"

Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?"

The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."

Actually, Pilate was being tried by the Son of God; and he had to answer the great question as to what he would do with Jesus who is called the Christ. The Jews crucified One who claimed to be God. The Gentiles crucified One in whom they found no fault. Both are equally guilty of the cruci-

fixion of Christ.

Peter picked this up in his sermon in Acts 2: "Ye men of Israel, you took him and you crucified him." He accused them in Acts 4 and 5 of killing the Prince of life, the Saviour of man. In 1 Corinthians 2:8 the Apostle Paul speaks of the leaders, the princes of this world who, had they known it, would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Jew and Gentile are equally guilty of the crucifixion of Christ.

At this point, I would like to have you read verses from the Psalms and more from Isaiah 53:

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? . . . They open wide their mouth at me, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and Thou dost lay me in the dust of death.

"For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots" (Psalm 22:1, 13-18).

This was written 1,000 years before Christ. The Spirit of God through the psalmist wrote this psalm, giving to us the experience of one being crucified. And when the psalmist wrote this, he knew nothing, absolutely nothing, of this terrible death by crucifixion.

And then let us read in the 69th Psalm: "I have become estranged from my brothers, and an alien to my mother's sons. For zeal for Thy house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach Thee have fallen on me. . . .

"When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them. Those who sit in the gate talk about me, and I am the song of the drunkards . . .

"Reproach has broken my heart; and I am so

sick. And I looked for sympathy, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none.

“They also gave me gall for my food; and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink” (Psalm. 69:8-9, 11-12, 20-21).

And then you remember in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, we read in the 12th verse, He “was numbered with the transgressors.”

16. And so he then delivered Him up to them to be crucified.

We recognize that the writer was an eyewitness of what took place, but a great deal of detail will not be found in John's Gospel. Matthew and Mark tell of the statement, “My God, My God, why has thou forsaken me?” and the fact that there were three hours of darkness. John is dealing with the work of Christ at the cross as the burnt offering, as the One who is wholly satisfactory to God; whereas in Matthew and Mark we are dealing with Jesus Christ as the trespass offering and as the sin offering.

Very little is said in any Gospel concerning the sufferings of Christ. One has to go to the 22nd Psalm, the 69th Psalm, and Isaiah 50, 52, and 53.

The scourging, the beating, the maligning, the scoffing, the mocking, the smiting on the face, the crown of thorns—this has all taken place now. He has come before the ecclesiastical court of the Jews, and they have given Him over to be crucified. Pilate realized they had done this for envy. There was no justice being done.

His crucifixion and burial (19:17-42)

17. They took Jesus therefore; and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha.

Did you ever stop to think of the shame of it? The Romans called those who were crucified, “the bearers of the cross.” It was a special word of contempt that plumbed the depths of derision. “Bearers of the cross” became an accursed name. Our precious Saviour, the Holy One of God, after being scourged, beaten, abused, despised, spat upon, crowned with thorns, became a “bearer of the cross.”

None of us can even begin to realize the depths of this; but when our Saviour in Gethsemane cried out, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt,” He knew what it meant.

He knew fully.

Beaten, bleeding, bearing His cross, He went forth to a place called, “The Place of the Skull,” outside the city of Jerusalem. This couldn’t take place in the city. Wasn’t it called “The Holy City?” He was crucified in the city dump as an accursed thing.

18. Where they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between.

Now John doesn’t say a word about the thieves. Matthew and Mark declare they both railed on Christ.

Luke tells us one turned to Jesus and said, “Jesus, remember me when You come in your kingdom!” And He said to him, “Today you shall be with Me in Paradise.” Notice, the Lord sets the time when they will be in Paradise.

When our Saviour was crucified in the midst, on the center cross, He was recognized as the pre-eminent criminal. The two thieves were dying because of their own crimes, but Jesus died for the sins of the world.

If we want to see ourselves as we really are, we must look at Christ hanging naked on the cross.

He became an accursed thing and was nailed to a cross in your place and in mine. "He humbled himself . . . to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8).

Let me say, parenthetically, that the cross carries a curse, an anathema, a stigma over to us.

Paul wrote to the Galatian church (6:14), "But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." And let me put Galatians 5:11 in my own words: "Why do I yet suffer persecution? If I were to have the rite of circumcision or add any ordinance to what Christ did on the cross, I wouldn't suffer persecution. But then would the stigma, the offence of the cross, cease."

To this day, the cross is an offense to mankind because it calls to death all that man is and takes the work of earning heaven out of his hands.

He was crucified in the midst. He was the center. Even if I have said this before, I must say it again. The Lord Jesus Christ is always—and always will be—in the center. When He was born in Bethlehem, He was the center of attraction to the shepherds and the wise men. When He was a lad, 12 years of age, He was in the center of the leaders of Israel in the temple, confounding them with His questions and with His answers.

When He was baptized by John in Jordan, He was the center; for the voice from heaven said, "Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well-pleased" (Mark 6:11).

On the Mount of Transfiguration with Moses and Elijah, when dear Peter said, "Lord, let's make three tabernacles—one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elijah," there came a voice out of the excellent glory, saying, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; hear Him" (Matthew 17:4-5). Never mind Moses. Never mind Elijah. My Son has come.

On the way to Jerusalem, He was the center of attraction. At the feast, He was the center. And now on the cross, He is the center. And in the glory at the very right hand of the Majesty on High, He is the center of attraction.

Jesus Christ will not play second fiddle, if I may use that term. He has got to be the center. And when He ceases to be that in our worship, then we degenerate into a mere religious form and ceremony. He has got to be the center. He must be the object of our praise, our thanksgiving, our worship.

They put Him on the center cross, making Him the pre-eminent criminal!

19. And Pilate wrote an inscription also, and put it on the cross. And it was written, "JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS."

20. Therefore this inscription many of the Jews read, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin, and in Greek.

21. And so the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews'; but that He said, 'I am King of the Jews.'"

22. Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

Pilate was so angry at the Jews! With deep cynicism he said, "What I have written, I have written. I am not going to change anything else for you Jews." So the sign, "JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS" remained above the cross in three languages. Everyone could read it. It was as if Pilate were saying, "You've chosen Caesar, but here is your king. This is your king. This accursed thing is your king."

They said, "We don't want it. Change it."

Pilate refused. He had written that under the authority of God. He could not have changed it had he wanted to.

My friend, He was the King of the Jews. He

was born King of the Jews. "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" the wise men asked when they came to Herod in Matthew 2.

He lived as a King.

He stood before Pilate as a King.

He said, "My kingdom is not of this world."

And He died a King.

The day is going to come when the Lord Jesus Christ is going to be gloriously manifested before all nations, all kindreds, all tongues as Lord of Lords, King of Kings. He is going to shepherd the nations with a rod of iron. He came once in lowliness, in humiliation. He comes the next time to reign with authority and to put all nations under His feet.

"Righteousness shall be the belt about His loins" (Isaiah 11:5). The poor man will have justice. The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. No wonder, when you come to the last verses in the Bible, the Lord Jesus says, "Surely I come quickly," and John responds, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." My, what a time that is going to be!

23. The soldiers therefore, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece.

24. They said therefore to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be;" that the Scripture might be fulfilled, "THEY DIVIDED MY OUTER GARMENTS AMONG THEM, AND FOR MY CLOTHING THEY CAST LOTS."

25. Therefore the soldiers did these things.

These verses prove the inerrancy of Scripture. Some people tell me that the Bible is not worthy of our trust or belief, that our Lord as a Jew knew these prophecies and tried to make them be fulfilled.

Did He manipulate these Roman soldiers into buffeting Him, scourging Him, spitting in His face, beating and maligning Him, putting a crown of thorns on His head and mocking Him?

And now they sit by the cross and gamble over His garments, indifferent to the death of the Son of God, indifferent to the Jews around them. There they are, casting their dice for His garments. Who told them to gamble over His garments?

Why should David, a thousand years before this, write this very fact in Psalm 22:18—that, in the hour of His being crucified, they should gamble over His garments? If you doubt the Word of God, its authority, its inspiration, its inerrancy, think of this. Approximately 1,000 years B.C., it was written that He would have this experience of crucifixion and that they would gamble over His garments and give Him vinegar to drink.

Here it is. These were Gentiles—more than likely idolaters with a great deal of contempt for the Jewish people among whom they lived. Cold, indifferent to His death, they gambled over His garments.

And may I say this very, very sadly—too many people today are just as indifferent, just as cold, just as insensitive to the death of Jesus, the Son of God.

Oh, the tragedy of that fact!

No wonder the prophet cried out in Lamentations 1:12, “Is it nothing to all you who pass this way? Look and see if there is any pain like my pain which was severely dealt out to me, which the LORD inflicted on the day of His fierce anger.”

Is it nothing that Jesus, the Son of God, the Holy One, the sinless One, should die such a death as an accursed thing? But the physical sufferings, terrible as they were, were not as dreadful as His spiritual sufferings.

This is God’s way of redeeming men and women. Every other way is a false way. I say that dogmatically. He, as the slain Lamb, satisfied divine holi-

ness. He made it possible for us to be redeemed.

This is the divine way. This is the essence of the meaning of the cross.

25. But there were standing by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

26. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!"

27. Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her into his own household.

As far as I know in the record, Jesus never called Mary, "Mother." In John 2, when they had no wine, He called her "Woman." When she and the relatives came to see Him and couldn't get through the crowd, someone said to Him, "Thy mother and thy brethren are outside wanting to see you."

He said, "Who is my mother and who are my brethren but they who do the will of my Father who is in heaven."

There is no room for Mariolatry, no room to give Mary the place that some have given her. Now, I would not minimize her place as the mother of our Lord and her Lord, the channel through whom our Saviour should come. But it is rather remarkable that the Lord Jesus, as far as the record goes, never said, "Mother." Even on the cross, even though He was in His intense suffering, He said, "Woman, behold your son!" And to John, He said, "Behold, your mother!" His care for His own was wonderful.

The work finished (19:28-37)

28. After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, in order that the Scripture might be ful-

filled, said, "I am thirsty."

29. A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop, and brought it up to His mouth.

30. When Jesus therefore had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit.

We have read in chapter 13:1 that Jesus knew "that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father." He also knew who should betray Him. And on the cross He knew "that all things had already been accomplished."

Now, He didn't say, "I thirst," just that the Scripture might be fulfilled. He was thirsty. We read that again in Psalm 22:15, "My tongue cleaves to my jaws," to the roof of His mouth because of the dryness, the awfulness of crucifixion. And one can read up medically on this question of crucifixion, on the terrible tortures through which the victim went.

But may I say that every Scripture in the Old Testament, every detail concerning the first advent of our Saviour among men was fulfilled to the "nth" degree. And when it was completed, He cried out, "Accomplished! It is finished!"

And "He bowed His head." His head didn't drop. He bowed it in resignation and "gave up His spirit."

He said in John 10:18, "I have authority to lay down my life, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from my Father." The death of Christ was not only natural, but supernatural.

If every detail of the first advent of Christ was completed, we can be sure that every detail of the second coming of Christ will be completed. If He came the first time to be a Saviour, He's going to come the next time to be a Judge. If He came the first time in humiliation, He's going to come the

next time in glory. If He came the first time to be maltreated, He is going to come to be honored and to reign as Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

“Knowing that all things had already been accomplished,” He bowed His head and yielded up His spirit. You can't do that. I can't do that. No person can do that. Our times are in His hands. He's the One who settles the time of our going.

May you and I be delivered from all the coldness and indifference of these days concerning our Saviour. How easy it is for God's people to be so occupied with things here that we miss out in our appreciation of the wonderful Saviour we have and what He has accomplished for mankind. As you speak to the unsaved, tell them that He finished the work. Redemption is completed. He asks them to accept Him as Saviour and as Lord.

We sometimes sing, “Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.” He is the Saviour, the complete Saviour.

He's finished the work.

Blessed be His name.

Now you and I go free. You and I can and have become the children of God by faith in Him. Our sin question has been settled once for all forever. He has destroyed the evidence; and you and I now stand before Him, dressed in His righteousness alone, in all the merit and all the beauty of our Saviour. May the Lord make this real to you and through you.

The price for our redemption has been paid!

Someone has asked me what took place when our Lord was buried. Where was He? What was His experience in His death and burial?

In Psalm 16, I read: “Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will dwell securely. For Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol (the nether world); neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to see the pit” (Psalm 16:9,10).

The Apostle Peter in Acts 2 says this refers not

to David, but to our Saviour, for he said we have David's sepulchre with us until this day.

In the 69th Psalm, which also has to do with the death and burial of our Saviour, I read these words: "Deliver me from the mire, and do not let me sink; may I be delivered from my foes, and from the deep waters. May the flood of water not overflow me, and may the deep not swallow me up, and may the pit not shut its mouth on me" (Psalm 69: 14,15). You remember our Lord mentioned the fact that "as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40).

We have in Jonah 2:2-6 these verses concerning the prophet's experience in the fish: "I called out of my distress to the LORD, and He answered me. I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; Thou didst hear my voice. For Thou hadst cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the current engulfed me. All Thy breakers and billows passed over me.

"So I said, 'I have been expelled from Thy sight. Nevertheless I will look again toward Thy holy temple.' Water encompassed me to the very soul, the great deep engulfed me, weeds were wrapped around my head. I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever, but Thou hast brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God."

And then if I might read Ephesians 4:8-10: "Therefore it says, 'When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men. (Now this expression 'He ascended,' what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things)" (verses 8-10).

31. The Jews therefore, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

They are very keen about keeping the detail of religious rites. Deuteronomy 21:22,23 says that if a malefactor should be hanged, his body shall not be allowed to hang on the Sabbath day.

So the Jews came on that account to Pilate: "We would like you to have the bodies taken down from the crosses and put away. Let them be tossed on the ash heap where criminals are tossed." That's what "taken away" means here.

Now the Romans let the victims hang on the cross until they died. Often this took two or three days. Then they were taken from the cross and thrown on the heap. But, you see, it was the preparation for the Passover; and these who slew the Lord of Glory were more concerned about some little religious rite than they were about Him.

Pilate didn't care, but He did want to be sure that Jesus was dead. I do not know what was in his mind. I think he was still a very scared man. He seemed relieved when the centurion declared He was dead.

32. The soldiers therefore came, and broke the legs of the first man, and of the other man who was crucified with Him.

This word "to break" in the original language is an interesting word. It means "to smash or break in pieces." In other words, when they broke the legs of malefactors, they had to be sure that when they got through they were dead. And you remember, they were crucified in the middle of the day, between the third and the sixth hour. So they took their mallets more than likely and broke to pieces—smashed—the bones of these two thieves.

33. But coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs;

34. but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water.

This is the testimony of one who was present.

35. And he who has seen has borne witness, and his witness is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe.

36. For these things came to pass, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, "NOT A BONE OF HIM SHALL BE BROKEN."

You remember in the 12th chapter of Exodus where it speaks of the passover lamb, it says they shall eat the flesh, but a bone shall not be broken. Psalm 34:20 speaks of the fact that not a bone of Him shall be broken. God saw to that.

God also saw to it that He was dead.

I want you to see the sovereign power of God in fulfilling His purposes.

Jesus said, "I am thirsty," that the Scriptures might be fulfilled; and knowing that everything was accomplished, He cried out, "It is finished." He bowed His head in resignation, and He gave up the spirit.

And then you have the Jews and the soldiers. Lest someone say that Jesus really never did die—that He was only in a swoon, that He was not dead when they took Him from the cross the same day He was crucified, that in the coolness of the tomb He was resuscitated, that when the stone was rolled away He merely came out of the tomb, that there was no need to believe in any resurrection because He never died—the Jews made sure He was dead.

The Roman soldiers who were accustomed to dealing with death knew He was dead. And to make it sure, they pierced His side. Out came

blood and water. The centurion knew He was dead. John, who saw all these things, knew He was dead. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, two men who took His body from the cross, wrapped it in spices and linen cloths and put it in the tomb, knew He was dead.

There is no question as to the death of Jesus Christ. The Jews made sure of it. The Romans made sure of it. And the disciples knew it.

37. And again another Scripture says, "THEY SHALL LOOK ON HIM WHOM THEY PIERCED."

Zechariah 12:10, written between 500 and 600 years B.C., gives this prophecy concerning the return of our Lord to the earth: "They will look on Him whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born." Revelation 1:7 says, "Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him." Not rejoice, but mourn, wail. There was no question about His death.

When our Lord Jesus said, "It is finished," He finished the work of redemption. He not only put away the sins of men, but He also made it possible to take sinners who believe in Him and fit them for the presence of God.

This was eternally God's plan. Christ appeared once in the end of the age "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Hebrews 9:26).

"But He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God." I am quoting Hebrews 10:12.

We have it in 1 John 3:5, "You know that He appeared in order to take away sins." And even John the Baptist could say, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

Peter said, “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross” (1 Peter 2:24). Isaiah declared, “All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him” (Isaiah 53:6).

He died to put away your sin and my sin, and He finished the work. Romans 5:9 says, “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.” In Him we have not only redemption, not only forgiveness, not only justification and propitiation, not only life eternal, but we are fitted in all the merit and beauty and glory of the Son of God. This He accomplished at the cross. This is God’s way of redemption.

The burial (19:38-42)

38. And after these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. He came therefore, and took away His body.

39. And Nicodemus came also, who had first come to Him by night; bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight.

40. And so they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.

41. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had yet been laid.

42. Therefore on account of the Jewish day of preparation, because the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Up to this time, you’ve had wicked hands at work. Wicked hands scourged the Lord Jesus, took off His garments, put a purple robe on Him, and beat Him. Wicked hands nailed Him to a cross.

But once He cried, “It is finished,” He is no

longer in the hands of wicked men. Now loving hands take over. All four Gospels mention Joseph of Arimathea. Only Luke (23:50-53) mentions that he did not agree with the decision of the council when it declared that our Saviour must die. He was a secret disciple, a rich man, the one who brought the linen.

John alone records that Nicodemus came with him. Both men were members of the Sanhedrin, both were rulers of Israel, both were probably there when our Saviour was on trial. Only John mentions Nicodemus's visit to the Lord Jesus by night. He came then, not because he was a coward, but he wanted a personal and private talk with the Saviour. What better time than at night. In chapter 7 of John he was the one who asked, "Our law does not judge a man, unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?"

Both men are like Elijah's 7,000 who would not bow the knee to Baal. Nobody knew about them but God. And yet, when Christ died, something got hold of these men. Notice, Joseph didn't go to the chief priests. He didn't go to the soldiers. He went to Pilate for permission to take the body of Jesus. Joseph was taking a stand against all Jewry, against the leaders, and against the Romans.

He took a stand for the Saviour, even though his Saviour was dead. He hadn't lost his love for Him nor his faith in Him. But he had lost his hope. Just like the two disciples in Luke 24:21 who said, "But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel." But I can just visualize these two men gently taking the body of our Saviour down from the cross. Nearby was a garden in which was a tomb, in which man had never lain.

I sat one time on a bench in front of the garden tomb, and I personally believe this was the tomb where our Lord was laid. It was dug right out of

the solid rock. And as you go into the entrance of the tomb, you stand in a short passageway. To the right, you can see where these two men put the body of Jesus after wrapping Him in spices.

In that tomb someone had planned to put three persons, but only one crypt was finished and ready. You see, nobody else could have come out of that tomb because nobody else was in the tomb. It was a new tomb. Scripture is very specific about this. It wasn't just anybody's tomb. It was a new tomb.

Note how God in His sovereignty guards this thing. There is a resurrection. It has to be unmistakably Jesus.

Now, there was something about the death of our Saviour that transformed these men from weak, secret believers into outspoken, courageous men. And, believe me, they did a courageous thing. If they hadn't, what would have become of the body of Jesus? The disciples were not there. But God arranged these men, secret believers, to take care of this. It was foretold in Isaiah 53:9, in fact.

Oh, the marvel of it all! Our Saviour was born in somebody else's manger, and He was buried in somebody else's tomb. He hadn't a place to lay His head. This One became my Saviour, your Saviour.

John 20

Christ, The Victorious One

We come to the final testimony to the authority of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. All that our Saviour has done, all that He has said, all the claims He has made will go for nothing, as far as authority is concerned, if He is not raised from the dead.

The very foundation of our Christian faith is wrapped up in the resurrection of our Saviour.

“If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless,” wrote the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:17; “you are still in your sins.” Indeed, the great witness that God has given the world as to the person of His Son and as to the efficacy of His work at the cross is given to us in the resurrection from the dead, which marked Jesus Christ out from all others (Romans 1:4).

Indeed, when the Jews asked the Lord for a sign in John 2, His answer was, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

In the book of Matthew, chapter 12, verses 39-40, they asked again for a sign. The Lord said, “An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it, but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

It is still God's witness to the world concerning Jesus Christ. Paul in Acts 17:31 on Mars Hill preached Jesus and His resurrection, that God “has fixed a day in which He will judge the world

in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.” More than 20 times in the book of Acts, different ones spoke of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Paul said to Agrippa, “Think you it is an incredible thing that God should raise the dead?”

And lest I be misunderstood, when we speak of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we’re speaking of the physical resurrection. There’s no such thing in the Bible as the resurrection of the spirit. The word “resurrection” doesn’t mean a thing if that which died was not raised again. The spirit didn’t die; the body died. It was the body that was raised. And all hell was determined to keep the body of Jesus in the tomb.

Appearing to Mary (20:1-18)

1. Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb.

The Jews had told Pilate, “That deceiver said, ‘After three days I am to rise again.’ Therefore give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, lest the disciples come and steal Him away.” So Pilate gave them permission to make the sepulchre as secure as they could. They sealed the heavy stone and set a watch (Matthew 27:62-66).

It would have been impossible for anyone, much less a woman, to roll away the stone. I question if Mary or the women who came later even knew about the seal or the Roman guard. They were good Jews. They would have stayed home on the Sabbath day.

2. And so she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They

have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.”

3. Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they were going to the tomb.

4. And the two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter, and came to the tomb first;

5. and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in.

John, “the other disciple,” like Mary, just looked.

6. Simon Peter therefore also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he beheld the linen wrappings lying there.

Whether it be Mary, John, or Peter, you'll notice how human they are and what different personalities they have. It was so typical of Peter to dash in, so typical of John to hold back, so typical of Mary to be standing there sobbing. Each acts according to his own personality. Nothing is covered up. Peter, just like Peter, went right into the sepulchre “and he beheld the linen wrappings lying there.”

7. And the face-cloth, which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.

Peter stood there bewildered by what he saw. He was confounded, confused. Read Mark 16 and Luke 24. He didn't know what to make of it. There was no body there. Here were the linen clothes, just as they were wrapped around the body of Jesus. And there was the napkin which had been wrapped round His head. How could a robber take the body and leave the linen? He would take the whole business.

If Jesus Christ were not dead when He was put in the tomb, how could he have torn the linen wrappings off Himself? He was in a linen strait-

jacket. God has absolutely guarded this thing. The grave was not robbed, neither did the Lord get out of the tomb except the way the Scriptures said.

8. Then entered in therefore the other disciple also, who had first come to the tomb, and he saw, and believed.

Three different words are used to translate “see” or “saw.” Here the word means “to see with the intellect, with assurance, with understanding.” When John saw the clothes, he believed that the Lord was raised from the dead.

John found the clothes as they had been on the body, with the napkin laid down in perfect order. In other words, the resurrection of Jesus Christ was a deliberate thing. God is the God of order. You wouldn't expect to find any chaos. You wouldn't have expected to find things tossed around. When the Son of God was raised from the dead, He was raised supernaturally. He defeated death and the grave.

He had robbed the grave of its prey. He came forth in resurrection and left the clothes just as they were. John saw and believed. His Saviour was alive. He had been raised from the dead.

My friend, I take it that you have looked in. In Matthew 28:2-7, the angel called the women to come in and see the place where the Lord lay and then to go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead and that they will meet him in Galilee.

Personally, I will never forget the day in Canada when I looked in. It was years ago. It changed my whole ministry. It came to me that my Saviour was really alive, that His work on the cross for sinners so satisfied divine justice and divine character and divine righteousness that God raised Him from the dead as a guarantee to me personally that I would never see my sins again.

It was the guarantee to me personally that I have

life eternal, that death has no more authority over the man in Christ. It has been shorn of its power. Read Hebrews 2:14,15, "that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those (us) who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives."

At the cross we see His love, but in resurrection we see His power.

It changed my whole outlook on life. God made it real to me that the One who had died on the cross of shame was no longer on a cross, no longer in a tomb. We've been joined to a risen Saviour. That is why the apostles gave witness with such great power in the book of Acts. Paul stood before Felix, before Festus, before Agrippa, before the Sanhedrin, before the philosophers of Athens, and before the corrupt Corinthians with only one message—the risen Christ of God.

But why is it one of the rarest messages you ever hear today?

Even among evangelicals, where is the wonderful truth of the resurrection of Christ? You can go to evangelistic meetings, week after week, and you hear about the cross and about His dying for our sins. And that's true. I wouldn't diminish that for one moment.

But I say, the cross is a tragedy if there is no resurrection. Would to God that His people would continually rejoice that our Saviour is alive forevermore. John looked in, and he saw and believed.

9. For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.

10. So the disciples went away again to their own homes.

The chances are that they went right to the Lord's mother—since John had now taken her to his own home—and told her.

11. But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb;

12. and she beheld two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying.

I want you to mark the marvelous devotion of this Mary Magdalene. She was the one out of whom the Lord had cast seven demons. He had become her Teacher and Lord. Her whole life was wrapped up in Him. She was not looking now for a living Christ. She was looking for a dead Christ. It was not in her thinking that He was raised from the dead.

13. And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?"

She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know do not know where they have laid Him."

She said to the disciples, "They have taken away the Lord." She said to the angels, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." They had asked, "Why are you weeping?" This word "to weep" here is more than just weeping. She was sobbing out her heart. Not even the angels could distract her. She had every right to weep if Jesus were dead.

I wish you and I had half the devotion for Christ that Mary had. If He is raised from the dead, she has no right, no ground for weeping. But she didn't know about it. No one had told her.

You know, as I have read this over and over again and have tried to put myself there in the garden, I couldn't help but say to myself, "Well, Mitchell, if you had seen two angels, what would you have done?" I'd have become occupied with the angels. Here are two heavenly beings. I've never seen one in my life, neither in my dreams nor on the earth.

But here are two, and they are sitting in the

place where the Lord had lain. A vision of angels is not going to stop this woman from finding her Lord. Her life, her devotion, her love are all wrapped up in a dead Christ.

"Where have you laid Him? If I only knew where they have laid Him."

It may be that these angels somehow indicated that they saw the Lord just outside, for the next verse says,

14. When she had said this, she turned around, and beheld Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus.

15. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?"

Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away."

Her heart is wrapped up in the Saviour.

Is yours?

Do you permit things to come into your life that distract you from Christ? Is not this true of all of us? We allow material things, friends, circumstances, anything under heaven to come between us and searching for and seeking the Lord.

I say with this dear woman, absolutely nothing—not even the vision of angelic beings—is going to hinder her from seeking her Saviour. You would think if she were so devoted to Him and knew Him so well from having accompanied Him so long, surely she should have known Him. But remember, she is sobbing. She is not expecting to meet a risen Saviour. She is occupied with her sorrow.

It's very natural that she came to the conclusion that the person she saw there was the caretaker of the garden.

How she was going to carry the body away, I don't know. But she was determined to find Him.

Let me say it again. I can't read this passage

without being convicted in my own heart. How much devotion do you and I have for Him? We do so little for Him. We give so little. We say so little. We serve so little. God give us some of this devotion to Christ personally—a devotion that will not be sidetracked by anything in this world.

16. Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher).

That one little word, "Mary," transformed deep sorrow into joy. That one word transformed hopelessness into hope. It transformed Mary from a sobbing woman into a joyous woman. "Rabboni!" Only He could meet such a heart's need—hers, yours, mine.

What did you say when you heard His voice the first time? What is this risen Christ to you, believer? Is He your Master? Is He your Lord? Is He your Teacher?

Now it is true in Matthew's Gospel that the Lord revealed Himself to the women who came together to the sepulchre and they touched Him. They thus found it to be really true that He had been raised from the dead. But with Mary there was no such need. Once He had said, "Mary," and she had said, "Rabboni," there was no unbelief here. So when she tried to lay hold of Him,

17. Jesus said to her, "Stop clinging to Me; for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren, and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'"

He is saying, "Touch me not. Don't hold me back. I've got something far better for you. Go and tell my brethren. I've got a ministry for you." The revelation of His person to her brought her an opportunity for immediate service.

Now there is also a new relationship. In the first fifteen chapters of John's Gospel, his followers were called disciples.

In John 15:15, He calls them friends: "No longer do I call you slaves (servants) . . . but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you."

But now, after resurrection, the new relationship with Him is as brethren. That's why we read in Hebrews 2:11 and 12, "For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will proclaim Thy name to My brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will sing Thy praise."

The Father is determined that we shall be "conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren" (Romans 8:29).

But, listen. His brethren we are. And, yes, we are brought into a wonderful, wonderful intimacy of relationship: "I ascend to My Father and your Father; and My God and your God." But we are never to call Him "Brother." He's not our Brother. He's our Lord.

18. Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and that He had said these things to her.

The very first witness of the resurrection of Christ was a woman, and the very first convert in Europe was a woman. Mary's message concerned His words; and His first words after resurrection were personal words, words of comfort, words of love, words of instruction and inspiration.

Appearing to the disciples (20:19-23)

19. When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in

their midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."

You remember the message of the heavenly host in Luke 2 was, "On earth peace among men with whom He is pleased." The testimony of the angels was for peace. And the first word of our Lord to His assembled disciples after His resurrection was, "Peace."

Now, there is no question but that this was a natural thing for these disciples to be in a room with shut doors and shut windows. Three or four days before this, our Saviour had been crucified. I believe they were together because they had heard the testimony—of the women and of the two who had seen the Lord on the road to Emmaus—that Jesus was alive. You can well imagine the consternation in their hearts and minds. And how like the Lord to zero in to their essential needs with His first words, "Peace be with you."

His last words to them in the upper room had been, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). God wants men and women to experience peace.

Paul reinforces this: "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). The first experience for a person who accepts the Saviour is peace. His sins are forgiven. Condemnation is past. Eternal life has been given as a free gift. He has been transformed from being a child of wrath into a child of God. This brings peace.

"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful" (John 14:27). All through His ministry, He has ever brought peace to troubled hearts.

20. And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side.

The disciples therefore rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

21. Jesus therefore said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

It is the same Jesus they knew and loved, the same Lord they had seen crucified. "The disciples therefore rejoiced when they saw the Lord."

What an understatement! Death had been conquered. Life and immortality had been brought to light. Their Saviour had burst the bands of the tomb. He had finished the work of redemption. He proved His deity, being marked out from everyone else as the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead.

Notice, He didn't say, "Peace," and then scold them for leaving Him. He didn't remind them of their cowardice. He didn't remind them of their boasts, when they said, "Though all forsake You, I'll never forsake You." And they all said this. He didn't remind them of their frailty or their failure. He just said, "Peace." What they needed was not a rebuke. They needed to have their hearts comforted. They needed certainty and assurance of the redemption He had accomplished.

He is saying to them, "I have finished My work which the Father has sent Me to do. It is completed. I came with authority. I came with power. I demonstrated that authority. I've proved to the world and I've proved to My people Israel that I am their Messiah, that I am the Son of God as well as the Son of Man. I've finished the work of redemption, a work that will bring peace to troubled hearts.

"But I'm going back home to Glory. And as My Father sent Me with authority to do a work, so send I you."

He changes the word here. "I have the authority to send you now with My power to finish the job that is to be done. I send you now as My representatives. I send you in union with Myself to do the job of bringing men to redemption."

What was the purpose of God when He sent His Son? He “sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). What is His purpose now? To gather out a people “for His name” (Acts 15:14).

One isn’t surprised to find in Acts 1:8 that He gathers His disciples together just before His ascension and says, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

His final words then are the same as we have here: “My Father sent Me. I send you.” He has given them the ministry of reconciliation. We are “ambassadors for Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:18-21).

22. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.

23. “If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.”

This is the only time in the New Testament where this word is used, “He breathed on them.” It was used in the Old Testament in Genesis 2:7, where God breathed into man’s nostrils “the breath of life; and man became a living being.” Man was nothing, a body but no soul, with no life until God breathed into Him. The same thought is in Ezekiel 37, regarding the valley of dry bones when Ezekiel said to the Spirit of God, “Breathe on these bones; blow on these bones.” And life came.

Now Jesus breathed on these disciples and said, “Receive ye the Holy Spirit.” Here’s something new. He’s been raised from the dead, and He’s going to send them into the world. They are to be His representatives. But they can’t go as they are. They must have authority.

Now, I’m well aware that there are certain theological groups that believe when Jesus breathed on the ten disciples (Thomas was not there) they

received apostolic authority and were given power to forgive or not forgive sins. I question if God ever gave any man the authority to remit sin. This is His own prerogative.

The Jews corroborated that, you remember, when Jesus said to the man with the palsy, "My son, your sins are forgiven." They said in their hearts, "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Matthew 9:2-3, Mark 2:5-7).

You and I may forgive each other, but we don't put away, give away, or take away sin. Nor is this something that is handed down from generation to generation in an apostolic succession. There is no such thing in the Book. If these men received something at this time, it would possibly be apostolic authority in the early church. Peter in Acts 5 pronounced judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira. He exercised apostolic authority. So did Paul with the Corinthian church when he talked of delivering "such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 5:5).

But I question whether this has to do so much with that as it has to do with the fact that we have a new responsibility. Not only these ten men, but every believer has a responsibility.

But what about the authority? What about the power to do this job? I believe here He has given to us the authority to bear testimony to men in sin that their sins can be remitted by their faith in the risen Son of God. He has given us the authority to declare nothing short of judgment for those who refuse the Saviour (2 Corinthians 2:15,16).

Appearing to Thomas (20:24-29)

24. But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

I do not know why Thomas was not there. I take it

from the context that Thomas came after the Lord had left them the same evening. I gather that either Thomas had loitered on the way or was concerned about his own sorrow. There are people like that.

Thomas loved the Saviour. You remember in John 11:16 when the Lord spoke about going to the resurrection of Lazarus, he said, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." He believed that if Jesus went into the environs of Jerusalem the Jews would take Him and kill Him, and he was willing to pay the ultimate sacrifice for Him.

He was also the one in chapter 14 who said, when the Lord told them He was going to the Father's house, "We do not know where You are going; how do we know the way?"

This is the third mention of Thomas in John's Gospel.

Did you ever stop to think what Thomas missed? He missed the peace the Lord had brought. He missed meeting Jesus face to face. He missed the gladness and joy the other disciples had. He missed those wonderful words of responsibility: "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." He missed this marvelous commission to be His living representative.

My friend, many Christians miss wonderful opportunities of blessing. They miss the gatherings of the saints. They miss meeting together with the Saviour because they loiter elsewhere or because they are in sorrow or possibly because their feelings have been hurt by someone. Some stay away because they don't feel too well or they've been misunderstood or they're afflicted or perhaps they have become sour.

Thomas should have been with the disciples. The place we Christians ought to be when we're down is in fellowship with God's people. That's where the Lord is, "for where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst" (Matthew 18:20).

True, we may be weak. True, we may have failed.

But the Lord hasn't failed. Hebrews 10:25 says that we're not to neglect "our own assembling together, as is the habit of some."

How we miss the presence of God. How we miss the spiritual uplift. How we miss wonderful truths that we need by failing to assemble with God's people.

Thomas was the loser. For a whole week following this, the disciples were filled with joy and blessing. They had seen the Lord. He had appeared unto them. He had challenged them. And they were living in the joyous thrill of meeting a risen Saviour. Thomas for that whole week was so far down that he challenged their statement.

25. The other disciples therefore were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I shall see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

"I know you fellows have given a testimony and I know you're my friends and I know the women brought the same testimony, but for me—I will not believe except I see, except I feel. I won't believe!"

Notice that Thomas laid down the terms for his belief. I've had people say the same things to me, "Unless I can see God do something, unless I feel it, unless God answers my prayers, I won't believe." They are laying down their terms for faith instead of believing what He has declared. This is not just blind doubt or even honest doubt. It is nothing else than intellectual pride.

My friend, there's not a day that you don't live by faith. You don't sit down and examine everything. We take the word of people in many things. Teachers, salesmen, mechanics, referees—we trust them to know their business. Is faith dependent upon feeling or does faith depend upon the Word of God?

I'm not holding anything against Thomas. I can understand his position. But the people who are this

way do not carry that doubt through in every sphere of life; they wouldn't be living if they did.

How did the Lord meet this? If ever there were a picture of the tenderness and understanding and the love of the Saviour, it is right here.

26. And after eight days again His disciples were inside, and Thomas with them.

Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst, and said, "Peace be with you."

27. Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing."

The Lord came this next time, not because of the ten. He came especially for one person. He came especially to see Thomas. He didn't rebuke him. He didn't call him down for running away. He didn't even criticize him for not being at the last meeting; but the Lord, ever omniscient, did go right to his challenge. He gave him unmistakable proof that He was indeed alive from the dead.

My Christian friend, you may be weak and stumbling. You may not know very much about the power and presence and fellowship of the Lord. You may be one of the lame sheep or one of the dull students or one of the wayward children. He'll come especially, just for you. He understands you. If you mean business, He'll even meet you on your terms—if you mean business, if you're real in it. I say, He came especially just for Thomas.

28. Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

Thomas was a pious Jew who had been trained all his life in these words: "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one . . . whose Name is holy" (Deuteronomy 6:4 and Isaiah 57:15). Now he stands before Jesus, before His face, and says to Him, "My Lord and my God." You

talk about a testimony to the deity of our Saviour!

And the Lord didn't say, "Stop it, Thomas, stop it!" He accepted it.

Oh, how wonderful that we can say, "He is my Lord, and He is my God." He is a real Man. He is touched with the feeling of my infirmities. He is able to succor those of us who are tested and tried. He is really God, and "He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him" (Hebrews 7:25).

"My Lord and my God."

29. Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."

I love that verse in Isaiah 53:1, "Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" The Lord is revealed to the man or woman who believes the report.

"Thomas, you have seen Me, and you are blessed because you have. You have cried out, 'My Lord and my God.' In that one little statement you have manifested your repentance and your faith, love and devotion. That's because you have seen Me. More blessed are they who have not and yet have believed."

My friend, you and I are more blessed than Thomas.

"Ah," you say, "I would like to have had what Thomas had. He saw the Son of God with his eyes. He saw the body that had been nailed to the cross and was now in resurrection. If I could see that—oh! my faith would be strong."

My friend, listen. Your faith is far stronger, and your blessing is far richer because you have believed even though you haven't seen. The man of the world says, "I'll believe it if I see it." The man of God responds when he hears God say, "Believe and thou shalt see."

The purpose of the writing of John's Gospel

(20:30-31)

May I close with these last two verses:

30. Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;

31. but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

Many believe that when John wrote this he had reference to all the four Gospels, or even the whole Gospel through John. And that may be true. It is true that in these four Gospels there is not a record of all that Jesus did. But may I suggest that John here was referring to this one chapter?

The Lord had appeared to Mary, to the women, to the apostles, to Thomas, and there are many other signs which He did to prove the certainty of His resurrection.

But, says John, “I have chosen just these three instances of Mary Magdalene, of the apostles, and of Thomas to prove to you that the resurrection of our Lord is God’s testimony to the world and to you personally that this Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of God. By believing in Him, you will have everlasting life.

“I write these things,” says John, “that you might believe, and in believing you’ll have life in His name.”

The Book starts, “In Him was life” (John 1:4). And all the way through we have the revelation that Christ is life. Then he closes with the evidence of the resurrection: “I’ve written these things—I’ve picked these out—for you to see that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God; that by believing, you might have—life—through His name.”

John 21

Christ, The Great Shepherd

It seems as if John closes the Gospel at the end of chapter 20. Personally, I'm not fully persuaded about that. I feel he had another purpose. He has selected an incident when the Lord in Galilee met seven disciples beside the sea. It was one of the eleven recorded post-resurrection appearances of the Lord Jesus.

His final words to His disciples (21:1-25)

You remember the Lord had told Mary to tell the disciples He would meet them in Galilee. I'm sure these disciples were very happy to get out of Jerusalem and back to their old haunts in Galilee.

And while they were waiting for the coming of the Lord,

3. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing."

They said to him, "We will also come with you."

They went out, and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing.

Now, you may blame Peter for this. You may say, "Well, in Matthew 3, Peter was called to catch men, not to go and catch fish." You can analyze it all you want to; but it was quite a natural, normal thing for these men to do. They were fishermen, here's a lake, here's a boat, here's the net. What's the logical thing? Go out and fish, of course.

One of the hardest things believers have to do is

to wait God's time. It is so hard to wait. Just to wait. This was the downfall of King Saul. It caused Elijah to fail. We want to go our own pace and do things our own way. The Lord is so wonderful with us. He understands, even when nobody else does.

I can appreciate Peter, whether you do or not. I'm a fisherman, too.

Now we have two cases of fishing, where the Lord tells the men to let down a net, one at the beginning of His ministry and here. Peter was the outstanding character among the disciples then as well as now. In Luke 5 they were in Peter's boat.

It was to him the Lord said, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch."

And it was Peter who said, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but at your bidding I will let down the nets. I acknowledge you as the captain of the boat. I obey orders." So he let down the nets. And, you remember, they were so full of fish, their nets began to break. Their partners in the other ship had to come help them.

Peter fell down before the Lord and said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

Then the Lord Jesus said to Peter and the disciples, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men."

But now they are at the lake without the Lord. They have fished all night and have caught nothing. And if you have gone out fishing all night, you're cold, you're discouraged, you're tired. There's no fish, and it is a gloomy outlook when you row toward shore.

The miraculous draft of fishes (21:4-14)

4. But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.

5. Jesus therefore said to them, "Children, you do not have any fish, do you?"

They answered Him, "No."

6. And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you will find a catch."

They cast therefore, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish.

Obedience brought a harvest here just as it did in Luke 5. Obedience to Him always brings a harvest. He knows where the fish are. He knows where to put the net. He knows what to do.

We talk about soul-winning. We talk about personal work. We talk about Christian service. All He asks is obedience; and, when we obey Him, He guarantees a harvest.

When the nets become full of fish, John is the one who has the eyes to see; and Peter is the one who acts. You notice that with these two friends. They are as different as night and day. John is the man of vision. Peter is the man of action. John says, "It is the Lord." Peter jumps overboard. He forgets the boat, he forgets the fish, he forgets John. The Lord is there.

How eager are we Christians to come into the presence of the Lord? You and I may find fault with Peter. He denies his Lord with oaths and curses. He makes the biggest boast and falls the lowest of the eleven. But there is love there. There's a yearning for the Saviour.

7. That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord."

And so when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea.

8. But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging the net full of fish.

9. And so when they got out upon the land, they saw a charcoal fire already laid, and fish placed on it, and bread.

You can see the Lord there on His knees, blow-

ing on the charcoal and getting the flame up. And when they come to shore, He has their breakfast all ready for them.

I tell you it is a wonderful thing to go out fishing all day. You catch nothing and you're hungry and you're cold and you come home and find the pot's on the fire and the meal is ready. Wonderful thing this.

You've missed something if you've never had that experience.

The Lord didn't go right after Peter here. He just fed these men.

10. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have now caught."

11. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn.

12. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast."

None of the disciples ventured to question Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord.

13. Jesus came and took the bread, and gave them, and the fish likewise.

14. This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead.

Here was their resurrected Lord on the beach with their breakfast, waiting on them. They just sat there. They didn't ask a question. They were full of awe. But they were perfectly content, full of peace, full of satisfaction. They were at the very place where the Lord had preached to the people from the boat.

It was here they had seen Him still the storm and muzzle the wind. It was on the edge of this lake He had fed 5,000 with five loaves and two fishes. From here He had gone to Jerusalem, had been crucified, had been buried, and had risen again.

And here He is now—feeding them.

What a Saviour!

He is the Chief Shepherd (21:15-25)

15. So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?"

He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You."

He said to him, "Tend my lambs."

16. He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?"

He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You."

He said to him, "Shepherd my sheep."

17. He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?"

Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do You love Me?"

And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You."

Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep."

Three times Peter, before an open fire, had denied his Lord in Luke 22. And now, three times before an open fire, Christ gives him an opportunity to reverse that declaration. He says to Peter, "Do you love Me? Feed my lambs."

When these six men heard the Lord give Peter a responsibility, they may have thought, "Why Peter? He hasn't any right to be a leading apostle after he denied the Lord."

Yet Jesus picked him out and in front of the others said, "Peter, I give you a responsibility to feed My lambs, to shepherd and to feed My sheep."

Why Peter? He had the prerequisite for service—whole-hearted devotion to the person of Christ Himself.

The Lord didn't say, "Simon, son of John, will you preach for Me? Will you suffer for Me? Will you evangelize for Me? Will you sacrifice for Me? Will you believe in Me?"

He didn't say that.

"Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these? Do you really love Me?" That is what He is after.

Do we REALLY love Him?

Listen, Christian friend, our danger is this. If we find some Christians who don't believe exactly what you and I believe, we push them to one side. That isn't the ground of fellowship.

Many believers are weak in faith and not very enlightened in doctrine. But if you ask them, "Do you love the Saviour?" there is no hesitation.

If I am to be a servant of the Lord, if I am to be one who is to feed the lambs and to shepherd the sheep and feed them, the first thing He asks of me is whole-hearted devotion to Him personally. There are a great many bruised, wayward sheep needing to be guarded and shepherded. Now you might not be able to preach or teach or be an evangelist or pastor. But you can guard and guide and feed some of these little lambs, these newborn babes in Christ. Can't you shepherd some of these dear wayward sheep back into the fold? back into fellowship? Can't you take the Word of God and give it to someone else in the best way you know how? All He asks is love.

And may I say, our service will be the expression of our love for Him. Christianity is not a dead thing, not a passive thing. It is an active thing. Life is always active. That doesn't mean I'm going to shout from housetops; but it does mean I will reach out to the weak, the wayward, and the stumbling. Shepherds must have concern for the little lost ones and be willing to search for the sheep that get lost.

What did the Lord mean when He said, "Do you love Me more than these?" These what? These fish? These boats? These other disciples? He wanted to be first in Peter's affections before both things and others.

Now, I'm not going to take up the two Greek words for "love" that are used here, except to say that the Lord Jesus used the word "agape" in His first two questions. This is a high, intensive form of love.

Peter answered with "phileo"—"Lord, I've got affection for You. But the love You're asking of me—Lord, it is so beyond me."

"Peter, do you love Me more than anything else in the world? Am I first in your devotion, in your affection?"

Peter said, "Yea, Lord, You know that I love You."

He didn't say, "I love You more than these fellows." He couldn't say that.

One time he did boast and say, "Though all forsake thee, though these other fellows may run away, Lord, You can sure count on old Peter. I'm the one You can bank on, Lord."

He doesn't say that now.

And Jesus said, "Do you love Me more than these?"

Actually, you can take it two ways—either He meant, "Do you love Me more than you love these other fellows? Am I first in your affection before all others?" or "Do you love Me more than these fellows love Me? You boasted before that you did. What about it now?"

Love is the greatest experience in the world, but it carries the greatest responsibilities. It is the prerequisite for service. If your service is not an outflow of your love for the Lord personally, it will become a chore. You will soon give it up.

And conversely, the less I love Him, the less I'll serve Him, and the less I'll talk about Him.

One of the greatest needs among Christians is for shepherds. Why is so little said in the Bible about praying for the unsaved? Now, it is in there; but there is so little about praying for the unsaved. But, my, there is a lot about praying for the saved.

But I won't pray for the saved and I won't pray for the unsaved unless I'm really devoted to the Lord and unless his love floods my heart.

We need more intercessors. We need more shepherds. We need folk who love the Saviour and whose love for the Saviour overflows to feed and shepherd others—in your neighborhood, in your church, in your town.

But loving Christ, serving Christ, can bring suffering.

18. "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself, and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go."

19. Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death He would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me!"

"When you were a young man, Peter, you were self-willed; you were independent; you went where you wanted to go; you were full of what you wanted to do; you were self-sufficient. But when you are old, you won't be; for, if you follow Me and love Me and walk in My steps, it will mean suffering. I suffered. I died, but I was raised again. Peter, the time is coming when you will suffer and die."

20. Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; the one who also had leaned back on His breast at the supper, and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?"

21. Peter therefore seeing him said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?"

22. Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!"

23. This saying therefore went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die; but only, "If I want him to remain until

I come, what is that to you?"

Dear Peter did a very normal thing when he asked the Lord about John. The answer was perhaps abrupt, "What is that to thee?" It was a sort of "Mind your own business" answer.

But the Lord is speaking to the point. "Peter, your job is to follow Me. Never mind John. Never mind Thomas. Never mind the rest of them. Your job is to follow Me."

Many of us say, "If I follow the Lord, He will lead me in a certain way that may include suffering. Why do I have to suffer when that other believer doesn't? You think that is fair?"

He says, "It doesn't matter what happens to the other believer. You follow Me."

There are three reasons for death in the Bible. I can die because my work is done (2 Timothy 4:6-8; 2 Peter 1:13-14). Paul says, "The time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

Or one can die under the chastisement of God. It is possible for a believer to die prematurely as you have in 1 Corinthians 11:30: "For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep." You have it also in 1 Corinthians 5 and 1 John 5, in 1 Timothy 1:20 and in Acts 5 where physical death became the experience of a Christian because of a moral issue. In Timothy it was because of a doctrinal issue.

Or one can die for the glory of God, which we have here in John 21. It is not for you and me to judge when one dies. We can well afford to leave that with the Lord. Suffice it to say that death can be for the glory of God, and it can come when our work is finished. Actually, a believer living in the will of God is immortal until his job is finished. God wants you and me to follow Him.

I would like to refer to Bishop Handley C. G.

Moule's little verse in this connection:

I heard the call, "Come follow."
 That was all.
 My gold grew dim;
 my soul went after Him.
 I rose and followed.
 That was all.
 Who would not follow
 if they heard Him call?

Do you really love Him? That's what He wants. But, remember, love brings responsibility. His call to follow may mean suffering. But it is enough that He calls. And it is enough for us to rise and follow Him.

This may be the year when our Lord will come. When one sees the tremendous needs of the hour—the need for undershepherds, the need for people who love the Saviour—we need to follow Him and manifest our love for Him by caring for His sheep, by feeding the lambs, by shepherding the sheep and feeding them.

Is Christ the center of your affection? of your devotion?

May this be your experience and your joy.

* * *

Now, as I come to the very last part of the last chapter of the Gospel through John, let me read two or three verses from the first chapter, a couple of verses from the 20th, and then the last two verses of the 21st chapter.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him; and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. . . . And the

Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

I would like to repeat that verse and leave part of it out:

"The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth. . . . No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him" (John 1:1-4, 14, 18).

Now turn to chapter 20, the last two verses:

"Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."

And then to chapter 21:

24. This is the disciple who bears witness of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his witness is true.

25. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books which were written.

And now, while the book of John is fresh in your mind, I would like to take the whole 21 chapters and refer to the things John emphasized in order that we might know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing we might have life in His name.

Now He says there are many other signs which Jesus did. That is, there are many other miracles He performed.

John picked up seven distinct miracles our Lord performed. Three are miracles that have to do with our Lord as Creator, having authority over

creation. Three have to do with the healing of the body. One has to do with His authority and power over death, when He raised Lazarus from the dead.

The first three, where He exhibits His authority over creation, bring to mind the third verse of chapter 1, "All things were created by Him," as well as Hebrews 1:3, "He upholds all things by the word of His power," and Colossians 1:17, "In Him all things hold together."

The first of the first series of miracles appears in chapter 2 where the Lord took water and transformed it into wine. By so doing, He brought joy to those who were present.

The second one is in chapter 6 where He took five loaves and two fishes and fed 5,000. Twelve basketsful remained. Here is the Creator satisfying the hunger of people.

The third also occurs in chapter 6 where at nighttime He walks on the water. It is rather amazing that John, out of the seven, should choose three that have to do with creation.

But remember what he is doing. He selected these signs out to prove that Jesus of Nazareth is none other than God the Son.

Then He gave us three signs concerning His authority over the physical body. One is in John 4 where a nobleman's son was sick, and our Lord healed him with a word. The Lord didn't even go to his house. He just spoke the word, and the son was healed.

In chapter 5 we have a man sick for 38 years, totally helpless. Our Lord just said, "Take up your bed and walk." He stood and walked.

The third one is in chapter 9 where He met a man born blind.

Our Lord asked for cooperation from him. After He made clay and put it on his eyes, the man went and washed in the pool of Siloam and came seeing.

Three cases and two of the three were performed on the Sabbath day. Why did John choose

these two? And why did the Lord perform them on the Sabbath? Both the man who was sick for 38 years and the blind man would have been where they were the next day. Why the Sabbath? The Lord wanted to open the eyes of the people as to His person.

In the first chapter, He came unto His own and His own received Him not. The people of Israel had spurned the God of the covenant. There was no further need of keeping up the sign of the covenant when the covenant had been pushed to one side; for, you remember, the Sabbath day was the sign of a legal covenant between God and the people of Israel, as spoken of in Exodus 31.

The seventh miracle was the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead, and here our Saviour manifested Himself clearly as the Son of God.

In chapter 5 He declared He had the authority to raise the dead, even as God can raise the dead.

In chapter 11 He proved His statement by raising Lazarus. He proved His authority over death and the grave.

Now John just picked up those seven signs to show that this Jesus is the One who is the Son of God, God the Son, having authority over nature, authority over the physical body, authority over life and death, authority over death and the grave.

Now from these seven great miracles there proceed the great claims of Christ.

In John 1:4 the Gospel starts with "in Him was life." And the book ends, as we have noted elsewhere, with "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."

In between, we have His marvelous claims through practically every chapter.

Take chapter three. He says to Nicodemus, "There is something wrong with you. You're born wrong. You must be born again."

Nicodemus says, "How can I be born when I am

old? How can I have life that is eternal?”

“God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

When our Lord stood by the well at Sychar in Samaria, He said to the woman, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.”

“Well, where have You got it? The well is deep, and You’ve got no pitcher to draw with. Where have You got this living water?”

“Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”

He could say in John 5, “Truly, truly, I say unto you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life.” He could say, “As the Father has life in Himself; even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself” (verses 24, 26). He is the source of all life. “In him is life.”

In chapter 6, having fed the 5,000, He could say (verse 35), “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger.”

He said, “The bread that I give you is eternal life. The life that I give you is satisfying life, resurrection life. Death doesn’t even cast a shadow over it. The life that I give you is indwelling life. It means union with Me.”

So we are not surprised at the end of chapter 6 when Peter says, “You have words of eternal life. And we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”

When you come to chapter 8, He says, “If anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.”

When you come to chapter 10, He says, “I am the good shepherd. I lay down my life for the sheep.” And, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know

them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand" (verses 27-29).

He tells us that "the life I give is abundant life." In John 11 He says, "I am the resurrection and the life." In John 14 He says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

In John 15 He tells us we are in vital union with the Son of God.

In John 17, we have His prayer, asking His Father to give eternal life to the men He has given Him. "And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (verse 3).

John ends by saying, "Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples" (20:30). They heard His claims. They heard Him claim that all life was in His hands and that all power and all authority are His.

Christianity concerns a Person, One who claims to give life, One who claims to have the authority of life—One who gives eternal life, satisfying life, resurrection life.

He said, "I am equal with God in nature," for He had said, "I and my Father are one," and "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working," and "Whatever the Father does, that's what I do."

He also has authority as Judge. Every individual who has ever walked the face of the earth will have to stand before Him.

I am glad I belong to the Judge. I am in vital union with Him. He is my life, and I have been accepted in Him, made complete in Him, perfected in Him. This is true of you, as well as of me.

No created intelligence in the heavens or on the earth or in hell will ever be able to produce any

evidence whereby God will judge us with respect to sins because they are under the blood of Christ.

Our Lord said in John 5:24 that we shall not only have eternal life but we shall never come into judgment and we are passed from death into life. He, our Judge, has authority over life and authority over death. He claimed this. And He proved this.

He claimed to be omnipotent. He claimed to be omniscient. He knew what was in man. You have this in chapter 2. He could say to Judas in chapter 13, "Judas, don't you know that I know what you are going to do?"

For that night He had said to the disciples, "One of you shall betray me."

And they were horrified. "Betray the Saviour? Betray our Lord, our Rabbi, our Master? This One who has gone about doing good, healing all who were oppressed of the devil, who cleansed lepers, fed the hungry, healed the sick? Betray Him?"

The Lord starts the book manifesting His omniscience, and He ends the book manifesting His omniscience. He manifested His equality with God. He claimed deity. I've had preachers tell me that Jesus never made any such claims.

Oh, yes, He did.

In John 5:17-18, He said, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.' For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God."

And the Lord didn't hold up His hands in horror and say, "You've made a mistake."

He said, "You're right. I'm equal with God in nature, for as the Father has the power to do certain things, that's what I can do." He threw down the challenge. In John 10:30 He said, "I and my Father are one."

Why did the Jews kill Christ? They crucified

Him on the ground of blasphemy because He claimed to be the Son of the Highest. He claimed to be the Son of Man. He claimed to be the Son of God. He accepted worship. In John 9, the grateful man once blind fell at His feet and worshiped him.

He claimed to be the Eternal One. This is why, the second time, they picked up stones to stone Him. For I read in chapter 8:56, after having claimed Himself to be sinless, He said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad."

"You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?"

"Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM."

And they picked up stones to kill Him.

Jesus of Nazareth was claiming to be El Shad-dai, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. He claimed to be the Eternal One. He is always the "I AM." He told Moses His name, "I AM THAT I AM."

So one could go on through the book from chapter 1 right on down through to the end and find one great theme: "That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."

That is His person. And when you come into relationship with this person, Jesus, the Son of God, it means life eternal.

More than that, it means you belong forever to the One who is God, the One to whose image the Father seeks to conform you. You belong to the Beloved of the Father, the One who is full of grace and truth. You belong to the One who manifested forth His glory here on earth and who will throughout eternity manifest His glory to the delight of the myriads of blood-bought ones He has brought in triumph into His Father's House.

In its ultimate expression, my friend, you belong to the Altogether Lovely One.

Have you gotten this far and realized that all is

not right with your soul? You may be religious, you may be moral, you may be a wonderful person. But, my friend, I say it very frankly and very simply and honestly, that unless you are in right relationship, unless you have put your trust in this Jesus, the Son of God, as your Saviour and as your Lord, you have no life in you.

“Why, you’re drawing it pretty fine, are you not?” I hear you saying.

That’s true. Broad is the way that leads to destruction. Narrow is the way that leads to life; and, if life is in Him, if these claims of His are true (and He proved these claims by rising from the dead), then it is required of you to turn to Him to be saved. Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins (Hebrews 9:22).

He is your sacrificial Lamb, slain at Calvary, to pay the penalty that you deserve. Receive His death as your death. He died so that you would not have to die eternally in punishment for your sins. Receive Him. “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12).

But supposing I don’t believe.

What then?

Then, my friend, you shall die in your sins. Hebrews 9:27 says, “It is appointed for men to die once, but after this comes judgment.”

The difference between life and death is Jesus Christ. He is the difference between heaven and hell. He is the difference between entering the presence of God with joy or standing before Him in your sins.

“These things “have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that (by) believing ye might have life in His name.”

My Christian friend, may I say a word to you? If you believe this to be true, then it is high time

we Christians imparted this truth to others.

I question if there is much time left to us to do a job for God. It has pleased the Father to use men and women. He does not use angels. He does not use the great of this world. He takes redeemed sinners.

Let us be wise Christians, understanding the will of the Lord, redeeming the time, being filled with the Spirit, walking carefully.

I would plead with you, men and women. I would plead with you, young people. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, pass the good news on to sinners that they may know the Saviour.

Our Saviour has said to all men, "Come unto Me—and I will give you rest."

He is ever the Seeker.

He is the One who was lifted up so that He might draw all men unto the Father.

He is the Altogether Lovely One.

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