

## SPECIAL STUDY NO. 2

Anticipating that there may be some question concerning the paraphrase of 3:16-21 we introduce here Special Study No. 2. This study is interjected in explanation of the substitution of "only-unique" in place of "only begotten" in 3:16, 18. It is hoped that the reader will come to a clearer understanding of the uniqueness and diety of Jesus Christ as a result of this Special Study.

The Study, in its entirety, is from an article by Sheldon V. Shirts entitled, "He Gave the Only Son He Had."

## HE GAVE THE ONLY SON HE HAD

THE MEANING OF *monogenes*.

The Greek word under fire is *monogenes*. Originally, Greek words with the common root *gen* carried the basic meaning "to beget." But, as Schmidt proves, many words built upon that basic stem soon lost this early sexual sense. Thus centuries before New Testament days, *genos*, for example, was often used to mean simply a kind of something. So in the New Testament, Jesus parabolically likens the kingdom of heaven to "a net that . . . gathered (fish) of every KIND" (Mt. 13:47), and Paul speaks of "divers KINDS of tongues" and "KINDS of voices" (I Cor. 12:19; 14:10).

*Monogenes* comes from *monos* (only) and *genos* (kind) — thus, "the only one of its kind," as such authorities as Moulton, Milligan, and Thayer show. Of course, when we speak of human beings, the translation "begotten" makes sense, but the fact remains that that is not the point — the emphasis is upon the person's uniqueness, he is the ONLY one. Thus Plato spoke of *monogenes ouranos* (the only heaven); and Clement of Rome described the legendary bird, the phoenix, as *monogenes*, not that it was the only bird begotten, but the only one of its kind, unique.

## LATIN AND SEPTUAGINT USAGE.

Accurately, the earliest Latin translators rendered *monogenes huios* by *filius unicus* (unique son), not by *filius unigenitus* (only-begotten son). It took the dogmatic Arian disputes over Christ's relation to God (318 A.D.) to give first occasion for claiming that Christ was God's "begotten Son," i.e. not a part of

creation. And there began the inaccurate Latin rendering of *unigenitus*, (only-begotten).

In the Septuagint, the word occurs eight times, referring to an only child, or to that which was unique or alone (e.g., Psa. 22:20; Judges 11:34; Tobit 3:15). Twice the King James translators render the Hebrew equivalent as "darling," showing that the word *monogenes* acquires a secondary meaning in the fact that what is unique is naturally of special value: an only son is a specially beloved son.

#### MONOGENES IN LUKE AND HEBREWS.

In the New Testament, *monogenes* appears nine times (always translated "only" in the Revised Standard Version). Only six times does the King James Version have it "only-begotten." If the rendering "only" is so inadequate, why did the King James scholars so translate it three times? An examination of the passages will make it clear. In the story of the widow of Nain, the fact that her dead son had once been begotten was of course true but now of no consequence; the important thing here was that he was her only son! What a pathetic situation! The fact that she is a widow speaks of her past sorrow, but now (Lk. 7:12) the realization that the one and only prop of her life, the stay and hope of her widowhood, had been taken from her, shows realistically her present despair. Surely few greater misfortunes are conceivable than the loss of a widow's ONLY son.

So we can understand the consuming grief of Jairus who fell at Jesus' feet and "besought him to come to his house, for he had an ONLY daughter . . . and she was dying" (Lk. 8:41-42). Likewise, we share the concern of the father of the epileptic boy who cried, "Master, I beg you to look upon my son, for he is my ONLY child" (Lk. 9:38). Can anyone mistake the significance of *monogenes* in these passages? Not even the King James translators could!

But note the strange use of *monogenes* to describe Isaac in Heb. 11:17. Though the King James Version says "only begotten," Abraham obviously had begotten other children (Gen. 25:1, 2). But the point is: Isaac was the ONLY SON OF HIS KIND, as far as God's promise to Abraham was concerned. Thus *monogenes* is justified, and the Revised Standard Version's rendering "only son."

## MONOGENES IN JOHN'S WRITING.

To render *monogenes* in John 3:16 as "only" is just as significant, and actually will more clearly reveal the great depth of God's love for us than does the more cumbersome, less accurate expression of the King James Version. For God so loved the world that He gave the ONLY SON HE HAD!

But some insist, "This is not true; John 1:12 says, 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God . . . ' To call Jesus God's only Son is confusing and false; it strips Him of his divinity and makes Him no more than other men." Then, for a moment, call Him again God's "only begotten," if you must — and then notice that in the next verse, 1:13, all the sons of v. 12 have been "born (Gr. begotten) . . . of God." Constant dilemma greets the one who cannot see beyond the horizons or a single word.

Let us see, with Schaff, in what ways all believers can be called God's children in v. 12 and yet Jesus be God's only son in v. 14: (1) Jesus is the only Son in that there is none like him; they are many; (2) He is the Son eternally; they "become" (v. 12) sons within time; (3) He is the Son by nature; they are made sons by grace and adoption; (4) He is of the same essence with the Father; they are of a different substance. Note that Jesus never unites Himself with us by saying "Our Father." John 20:17 shows most clearly how He distinguishes Himself as the essential Son from all others as only adopted sons: "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."

## NO REFERENCE TO THE VIRGIN BIRTH.

But does not "only begotten" refer to Jesus' virgin birth? Never! In John 1:14 Jesus did not become the Son; He became flesh to manifest Himself as God's eternal Son, Who "in the beginning . . . was with God and . . . was God" (Jn. 1:1). Men became sons of God because the Son of God became man. When "God sent his only Son into the world" (I Jn. 4:9), He did not send one Who became a son only when sent, any more than when God sent forth the Spirit (Gal. 4:6) did He send forth one who became a Spirit only when sent. Jesus has been eternally "in the bosom of the Father" (Jn. 1:18); the Greek even better expresses a relation of closest intimacy and tenderest affection: they are in each other's embrace.

## THE "ONLY SON" MAKES A BEAUTIFUL PICTURE.

Thus Jesus is not merely the ONLY Son, but the precious beloved Son of God's embrace, and still God gave Him up! Take all the tenderness, forgiveness and love in the relation of an earthly father to his only child, and in that earth-drawn picture you have yet but a faint approach to the fathomless love of God, as He so loved the world that He gave the ONLY SON HE HAD — and what a precious Son — an innocent Son to be slain for the benefit of guilty men — that He might redeem them from eternal condemnation. No clearer picture of the deity of Christ, or the love of God can be seen!

*Quiz*

1. What great difference between Jesus and himself does John the Baptist point out to his disputing disciples (v. 31)?
2. What has Jesus seen and heard that He bears witness to?
3. How does a person "set his seal" that God is true?
4. Who received the Spirit without measure? Explain!
5. What is the significance of the word obey in verse 36?
6. Which is the best translation — "only-unique Son," or "only begotten Son"?

## EXAMINATION

## CHAPTERS TWO AND THREE

*Multiple Choice*

1. The city where Jesus made the water into wine was :
  - a. Capernaum
  - b. Cana
  - c. Chorazin
2. Jesus made the water into :
  - a. grape juice
  - b. intoxicating wine
  - c. we cannot be certain
3. Jesus' brothers were named :
  - a. James, Joseph, Judas

## THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

- b. James, Joseph, Judas, Simon
  - c. Abraham, Joseph, Levi, Peter
4. During the Feast of Passover, the Jews commemorated :
- a. The passing over of the Death Angel
  - b. Their passing over the Jordan River
  - c. The death of Pharaoh
5. When Jesus said "Destroy this temple . . ." he referred :
- a. to His physical body
  - b. to the Jew's temple
  - c. both of the above
6. When Jesus said a man must be "born of water" He meant :
- a. An ocean voyage
  - b. born of the Holy Spirit
  - c. Baptism
7. The essential idea of "the kingdom of God," is :
- a. The second coming of Christ
  - b. The reign of God over the lives of men
  - c. A church organization
8. John the Baptist called himself :
- a. The bridegroom
  - b. The bride
  - c. The friend of the Bridegroom
9. Jesus baptized :
- a. Just His disciples
  - b. Many people
  - c. No one personally, but representatively through the apostles.

## THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

### *Match These Scriptures*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. "His mother saith unto the servants                   | a. and in three days I will raise it up."  |
| 2. "Take these things hence :                            | b. even so must the Son of man be lifted up."  |
| 3. "Destroy this temple                                  | c. but I must decrease."   |
| 4. "Except one be born anew                              | d. he is a new creature : the old things are passed away ; behold, they are become new."     |
| 5. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness | e. but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." |
| 6. "According to his mercy he saved us                   | f. he that believeth not hath been judged already."  |
| 7. "He must increase                                     | g. Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."   |
| 8. "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life       | h. through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit."                     |
| 9. "He that believeth on him is not judged               | i. he cannot see the kingdom of God."  |
| 10. "Wherefore if any man is in Christ                   | j. make not my Father's house a house of merchandise."                                       |

### *True or False*

1. \_\_\_\_ The miracle at the wedding feast was Jesus' first miracle.
2. \_\_\_\_ Jesus used His scourge of cords upon the money-changers.
3. \_\_\_\_ Nicodemus belonged to the sect of the Sadducees.
4. \_\_\_\_ Jesus told Nicodemus there was nothing required of men to enter the kingdom of God.
5. \_\_\_\_ Men judge themselves, in a sense, when they reject the light.

## THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

6. \_\_\_\_\_ Those who do evil wish to remain ignorant of the true worthlessness of their deeds.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ John the Baptist was jealous of Jesus' popularity.

### *Who said it?*

1. "They have no wine."
2. "Every man setteth on first the good wine; and when men have drunk freely, then that which is worse: thou hast kept the good wine until now."
3. "Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou raise it up in three days?"
4. "How can these things be?"
5. "Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond the Jordan, to whom thou hast borne witness, behold, the same baptizeth and all men come to him."

### *Describe the location of these:*

1. Cana
2. Capernaum
3. The temple
4. Jerusalem
5. Aenon

## EXPOSITORY SERMON NO. 3

### THE NEW BIRTH

John 3:1-8

### *Introduction*

- I Character of Nicodemus
  - A. Afraid? probably (Jn. 7:50; 19:39)  
Perhaps sought Jesus when alone — possibly his only free time
  - B. At least his mind was honest enough to accept evidence of Jesus' deity.
    1. More than other Pharisees would do
    2. Honest mind necessary to receive any truth
- II What was Nicodemus really seeking?
  - A. The kingdom of God . . . promised by his prophets
    1. Probably heard John the Baptist and Jesus both preach, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

## THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

2. There was a general excitement and expectation (Lk. 3:15)

III What does Jesus really teach Nicodemus?

- A. That the true kingdom of God is spiritual and not physical
- B. That entrance is by spiritual birth, not physical lineage

### *Discussion*

I NECESSITY OF THE NEW BIRTH (v. 3 and 5)

- A. A blow is dealt Nicodemus' religious heritage
  1. A Jew and a Pharisee, yet Jesus implies he has no part in the kingdom of God
- B. Must be "born anew" — regenerated
  1. Generate means to give life.
  2. Without regeneration (spiritually) we are without life (spiritually) **SPIRITUALLY DEAD!**  
Jesus said as much in 3:18—**LIVING DEAD MEN!**
- C. Jesus repeats, "Except" and "Ye must" **FOR EMPHASIS.**
  1. **NAME ON CHURCH ROLL, EVEN HOLDING OFFICE DOES NOT GUARANTEE ETERNAL LIFE . . . "YE MUST BE BORN ANEW."**  
**REGENERATION IS NECESSARY**

II WHAT IS THE "NEW BIRTH"?

- A. A new birth brings forth a new creature (II Cor. 5:11-17).

Note the sharp change to a new life in Saul of Tarsus

- B. The old man must die before the new man is born.
  1. "I have been crucified with Christ" etc. (Gal. 1:20)
    - a. When Christ lives in us . . . His wants are ours, His loves are ours, His hates are ours.
    - b. "I" moves out and Jesus moves in. (Rom. 8:6-9)
    - c. Our hearts are filled with fleshly desires like a barrel filled with various things  
We need to empty the barrel and fill it with Christ.
  2. Before we can be saved we must be lost!
    - a. Must first accept fact that God has just cause to demand our death because of our disobedience.
    - b. **WHEN WE VIOLATE GOD'S PERFECT STANDARD, WE JUSTLY DESERVE THE SENTENCE OF PUNISHMENT.**



## THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

- C. Now we are ready to accept LOVE OF GOD manifested in Christ's reconciliation.

### III HOW SHALL WE BE BORN AGAIN?

- A. Ye must be born of water and Spirit.

1. Both water and Spirit are used without the article "the."

Thus we see that the new birth is a single entity . . . baptism and Spirit one process

2. Compare Titus 3:4-5

- B. Spirit operates through the written and spoken Word of God.

1. I Pet. 1:23; Jas. 1:18, 21

a. Spirit came to convict men of sin — done through preaching of apostles. (Jn. 16:8, 13; 17:20)

2. When the seed (Word of God) is shown, it transforms the life.

- C. The Spirit gives life (Jn. 6:63).

But, "THE WORDS THAT I HAVE SPOKEN UNTO YOU, THEY ARE SPIRIT AND THEY ARE LIFE."

- D. We are:

1. CLEANSED BY THE WORD AND BY THE LAVER OF REGENERATION
2. SANCTIFIED BY THE WORD AND BY BAPTISM
3. LED BY THE SPIRIT (WORD)
4. PURIFIED BY OBEDIENCE TO THE GOSPEL
5. SAVED BY WASHING OF REGENERATION AND OF HOLY SPIRIT

### *Conclusion*

#### I NOW THE APPLICATION . . . NOW THE DECISION IN REGARD TO NEW BIRTH

- A. We know its necessity, what it is, how it shall be done. WE HAVE THE TRUTH, NOW WE MUST OBEY OR REJECT

## THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

II Nicodemus stumbled at not being able to see this new birth.

A. Jesus replied, "If we could not see the wind blow the trees and could not hear it, we would never know it was blowing . . . in like manner, if the Spirit through the Word did not produce reborn men we would never know His presence or working . . ."

1. MY FRIEND, YOU CAN TELL A REBORN MAN!

2. THE MIND OF CHRIST WILL MANIFEST ITSELF IN THE PERSON WHO HAS CRUCIFIED SELF AND SEEKS ONLY THE KINGDOM!

III ONE WHO HAS ALLOWED THE WORD OF GOD FREE COURSE IN HIMSELF WILL:

A. Repent like Zacchaeus (with restitution if necessary)

B. Confess like Peter and John in Acts

C. Go anywhere Jesus has commanded, even unto immersion in water . . . although not completely understood

D. If you will allow him, Jesus will come into your heart and help you live as a Christian

BUT YOU MUST OBEY HIS WORD (Jn. 14:23).

## CHAPTER FOUR

This chapter is a gold mine! There are spiritual treasures here to enrich any soul who will search and dig. Take a look at these nuggets — The Humanity of Jesus, The Deity of Jesus, The Universality of the Gospel, Spontaneous Evangelism, True Worship Defined, A Missionary Vision, and other equally precious lessons. Chapter Four is included in the First Year of Public Ministry and is outlined thusly:

- II The Word Manifested to the Jews, and Their Rejection of Him 1:19-12:50 (cont.)
  - B. The Public Ministry — First Year 2:13-4:54 (cont.)
    - 4. Labors in Samaria 4:1-42
      - a. Withdrawl from Judea — arrival in Samaria 4:1-6
      - b. Jesus and the living water 4:7-14
      - c. Jesus searches out a woman's secret 4:15-18
      - d. True worshippers of God 4:19-26
      - e. Spontaneous evangelism 4:27-30
      - f. Fields white unto harvest 4:31-38
      - g. Reaping the harvest 4:39-42
    - 5. Labors in Galilee 4:43-54
      - a. Public teaching in Galilee 4:43-45 (cf. Mt. 4:17; Mk. 1:14; Lk. 4:14)
      - b. Healing a nobleman's son at Capernaum 4:46-54

## WITHDRAWL FROM JUDEA — ARRIVAL IN SAMARIA

*Text 4:1-6*

- 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 baptized not, but his disciples),
- 3 he left Judea, and departed again into Galilee.
- 4 And he must needs pass through Samaria.
- 5 So he cometh to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near to the

parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; 6 and Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

### *Queries*

- a. Why would the situation in verses 1-3 cause Jesus to leave Judea?
- b. Where is Sychar?
- c. What significance is there in Jesus being "wearied"?

### *Paraphrase*

So when the Lord learned that the Pharisees had heard that He was making and immersing more disciples than John the Baptist (although Jesus Himself was not immersing but His disciples were), He left Judea and went away again into Galilee. It was necessary for him to pass through Samaria. He came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground which Jacob gave to Joseph, his son, and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, having become tired from His journey, was sitting wearily by the well. It was about six p.m.

### *Summary*

To avoid a premature crisis with the Pharisees, Jesus departs Judea for Galilee, stopping to rest during the journey at Jacob's well near Sychar, a city of Samaria.

### *Comment*

The gospel writer now resumes the chronology of the story where he left it in 3:22-23. He has paused in telling the movements of Jesus to tell of the testimony of John the Baptist, but now he takes up the story of Jesus' travels again.

Beginning with His cleansing of the temple of Jerusalem (Jn. 2:13-22), including a considerable public ministry in the environs of Jerusalem and ending with the Lord's departure into Galilee, a period of approximately eight or nine months have transpired. Jesus arrived in Jerusalem at Passover-time (2:13 — also "harvest-time"). The next notice of time is "yet four months, and then cometh the harvest" (4:35 — which would be four months away from the next Passover-time). Thus we conclude that Jesus spent approximately eight months in Judea — from one Passover-time until about four months before the next Passover-time.

Just prior to the Lord's departure into Galilee, John the Baptist is imprisoned (cf. Mt. 4:12; Mk. 1:14; Lk. 3:19-20). The Baptist's arrest probably also influenced Jesus' decision, as recorded here (4:1-3), to go into Galilee. There are two probable reasons for His change of location: (a) He may have feared a premature death at the hands of the authorities. This would not allow Him to fulfill the earthly ministry which the Father had sent Him to accomplish; (b) or, possibly, He feared a reaction from the multitudes much like that which was to happen later in Galilee (Jn. 6:15). He must yet teach the multitudes of the spiritual nature of His kingdom. Political revolution and bloodshed must be restrained. In His Divine mission a definite time had been appointed for the supreme crisis — He must avoid a premature crisis. So Jesus withdrew from His work of baptizing in the Jordan (somewhere near Jericho) and traveled toward Galilee.

The parenthetical statement of verse 2 is to explain that Jesus did not personally baptize, but is said to have baptized through His agents — the disciples. Compare our comments on John 3:22.

Why does John say Jesus "must needs pass through Samaria"? A brief geographical survey might offer one possible answer. There were three geographical divisions of the land of Palestine in Jesus' day: Galilee in the north, Judea in the south, and Samaria in between (see maps in the back of any Bible).

At first, it would appear to be the natural route of travel to Galilee. If Jesus was in Judea and wanted to reach Galilee, naturally He would have to go through Samaria. But due to an age-old hostility between the Jews and the Samaritans, the usual route of travel between Judea and Galilee was not so. The Jew going north usually crossed to the eastern side of the Jordan river (probably at the Jericho ford) and went up the Jordan Valley to avoid Samaria, and re-crossed the river into Galilee (probably at Bethabara).

There are two possibilities as to why Jesus *must* go through Samaria: (a) it was the shortest route to Galilee, and He was not restricted by the prejudices of the Jews, or (b) He purposely passed through there to "break down barriers" and plant the seed of the gospel that Philip might later reap (Acts 8).

Traveling the Roman road that leads through Samaria, Jesus would come to a fork in the road. At this fork in the road there is a well called Jacob's Well. About one-half mile northwest is the village of Sychar. About the same distance to the west

are Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, a short distance north of Gerizim, with a natural amphitheatre in between where Joshua stood and shouted the blessings and curses of the Law to the nation assembled on the slopes of these two mountains (cf. Deut. 27:12-13; Josh. 8:33-35). Also in the immediate vicinity is a burial plot, purchased by Jacob but given to his son Joseph, and Joseph subsequently had his bones buried there (cf. Gen. 33:18-19; 48:22; Josh. 24:32).

This location is of great significance in Jewish history. Nearly all archaeologists and scholars of the geography of Palestine agree that Jacob's Well is one place to which we may point with certainty and say, "Jesus sat on these stones." Grooves are worn deep into the stones around the opening of the well where ropes have, for centuries, been let down and pulled up drawing water for thirsty Palestinians.

In verse 6 we meet again the problem of John's method of counting time. This problem was discussed briefly in our comments on John 1:39. There can be little doubt that John counts time by the Roman method (modern method), i.e., from twelve-midnight to twelve-midnight. Some commentators have a problem with the account of the crucifixion. Jesus was crucified at 9 a.m. and died at 3 p.m. John 19:14 describes the trial in progress at the "sixth hour" (6 a.m.). Such an hour (6 a.m.) is *not* too early for sentence to be pronounced and it does *not* leave too long a lapse between sentence and crucifixion as some think. Do not forget the many events that took place between the sentence and crucifixion. Jesus struggled under the burden of the heavy cross probably a mile or more; large crowds pressed on every side slowing progress; He stopped to allow Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross part of the way; He held at least one conversation with some women. Do not forget also that the gospel accounts are fragmentary. After Pilate had pronounced sentence at six a.m., considerably more conversation and discussion may have transpired between Jesus and Pilate, or Jesus and the Sanhedrin.

We are to conclude, until better information comes forth, that John followed the Roman method of counting time. Thus, when Jesus sat by the well "about the sixth hour," it was either 6 a.m. or 6 p.m. The later hour fits the circumstances better.

The significant phrase of verse 6, however, is "Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus by the well." The Gospel of John is "the Gospel of Deity," that is, its primary purpose seems to be to prove the deity of Jesus. But the Fourth Gospel also shows

very clearly the humanity of Jesus. He knew exhaustion, thirst, sorrow, joy, temptation; He Who "left an example that we should follow his steps" knew suffering, poverty and opposition, and yet he was without sin. He took the form of a servant and the vessel of human flesh for a number of reasons: (a) that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest (Heb. 2:17); (b) that He might be able to succor them that are tempted (Heb. 2:18); (c) that He might be touched with our infirmities and give us help in time of need (Heb. 4:15-16); (d) that He might deliver us from the bondage of the fear of death; (Heb. 2:15); (e) and especially that He might condemn sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:3).

Incidentally, this passage shows the writer to have been an eyewitness to what he wrote. The mention of the Lord's posture, and even the hour of day shows the deep impression the events in Samaria must have made on John. Peter and John later enjoyed quite an extensive preaching tour in the land of Samaria (Acts 8:14-25).

### Quiz

1. How long was Jesus' first Judean ministry? How do we know?
2. What two possible reasons may be given for His decision to leave Judea and go into Galilee?
3. What are two possible explanations for "He must needs go through Samaria"?
4. Locate Jacob's Well.
5. What time of the day did Jesus stop at the well?
6. Give three reasons for Christ's taking the human form.

## JESUS AND THE LIVING WATER

### *Text 4:7-14*

**7** There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.

**8** For his disciples were gone away into the city to buy food.

**9** The Samaritan woman therefore saith unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, asketh drink of me, who am a Samaritan woman? (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans).

**10** Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

11 The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: whence then hast thou that living water?

12 Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his sons, and his cattle?

13 Jesus answered and said unto her, Everyone that drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

14 but whosoever drinketh 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 unto eternal life.

### *Queries*

- a. What called forth the woman's first question?
- b. What or Who is the "gift of God"?
- c. How does the "living water" become a "well of water springing up into eternal life"?

### *Paraphrase*

Presently a woman of Samaria comes all alone to draw water. Jesus says to her, Give me a drink (for His disciples were gone away into the city to buy food). The Samaritan woman asks Him, incredulously, How can you, being a Jew, ask me for a drink — I am a Samaritan and a woman also! (This she said because Jews do not use vessels together with Samaritans). Jesus said to her, If you only knew the gift of God and Who it is that is saying to you, Give Me a drink, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water. The woman replied, Sir, you have no bucket and the well is very deep, where will you get this living water? Surely you do not mean to say that you are greater than our illustrious ancestor Jacob, who never sought any better water than this, either for himself or for his sons or for his cattle!? Jesus answered and said to her, Everyone who drinks this water will grow thirsty again; but whoever shall drink the water that I, Myself, shall give him, he will never, no never, be thirsty again, but to the contrary, the water that I shall give him will become within him a bubbling spring of water welling up unto eternal life.

### *Summary*

Jesus, out of His need for natural water and a woman's need for "living water," teaches His messiahship in Samaria.



*Comment*

The woman evidently came from the city of Sychar. Every day she would walk half a mile or so to the well, and as far back again carrying her waterpot either on her head or her shoulder. According to the custom, the women of those days met at a certain time of the day at the public watering place to exchange news and "small-talk" as they drew the next day's supply of water. This woman came alone! From subsequent information concerning her adulterous situation we assume she was a social outcast. None of the respectable citizens dared associate with her. She was an outcast—an unclean adulteress—a Samaritan—a woman! How would Jesus approach her? How would He overcome these barriers and reach her without raising more barriers?

The Master Teacher uses His need as an opening to gain her interest. He is tired and thirsty, and He asks her for a drink. It is a natural request, and one which could not raise any barrier. Had His disciples been there, they would have provided for His thirst. But they had gone away into one of Samaritan cities to "market" for food. (The Greek word translated "buy" is from the same word which is often translated "market.")

In verse 9 we see that for Jesus to ask a drink, even to speak to her, was not the ordinary custom of that day. The woman is plainly astonished. She probably recognizes Jesus as a Jew either from His speech or His dress.

Part of her astonishment comes from the fact that Jews did not use the same vessels as Samaritans. They considered the Samaritans as unclean as the Gentiles, and, according to Pharisaic interpretation, they would have to purify themselves ceremonially should they thus defile themselves. If Jesus is to get a drink He will have to drink from her bucket, for He has none of His own. The above interpretation is better than "have no dealings with" and this is evident from the fact that the disciples did go into a Samaritan city and did purchase food from the market-place.

A brief history of Samaria is in order here to show why the Jews considered the Samaritans unclean. When the kingdom of Israel was divided in about 926 B.C. (I Kings 12), the northern kingdom, under Jeroboam, embraced all the territory originally allotted to the ten northern tribes. This kingdom was known as Israel, and encompassed the provinces of Samaria and Galilee. Hoshea, Israel's last king, spurned the powerful nation of Assyria and made a political alliance with Egypt. About the year 722 B.C. the Assyrian king besieged the capitol city and later carried

nearly all the people of the northern kingdom away into slavery and captivity ((II Kings 17). A small remnant of the ten tribes was left. The Assyrians, in order to better control the conquered territory, imported foreign peoples into Samaria (II Kings 17:24). The remnant of Jews intermarried with the foreign peoples, and this mixed people was given the name Samaritan.

This heathen mixture worshipped idols. God sent wild beasts, and many Samaritans were slain. They attributed the plague of lions to their failure to know the Law of Jehovah, and they appealed to the king of Assyria for help. He sent them a Jewish priest "to teach them the manner of the God of the land." Although the Samaritan religion was very nearly the same as that handed down by Moses, it was probably tainted with some paganism. This would be one reason for the aversion of the Jew toward the Samaritan.

Approximately 200 years after the captivity of the northern tribes, the kingdom of Judah was taken captive by Babylon. Judah was subsequently allowed to return to her homeland in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. The first thing the people of Judah did was begin reconstruction of the Temple at Jerusalem. In the fourth chapter of the book of Ezra we are told the Samaritans wanted to join the Jews in rebuilding the Temple. The Samaritans were told with contempt, "You have nothing to do with us in building a house unto our God." The ire of the Samaritans was aroused against the Jew.

Hostility continued and increased between the Jew and the Samaritan. About 409 B.C. Manasseh built a rival temple on Mt. Gerizim. The Samaritans were generally inhospitable toward pilgrims from Galilee going to Jerusalem for the feasts (cf. Lk. 9:52-53), and many of these pilgrims journeyed to the feast by the way of the eastern side of the Jordan valley. The rivalry became so intense that the Samaritans would often set rival fires to perplex and confuse the Jews as they watched for their own signal fires which were to announce the rising of the Passover moon. Someone has written, "The Samaritan was publicly cursed in the synagogues of the Jews . . . and was thus, so far as the Jew could affect his position, excluded from eternal life."

In addition to this centuries-old hostility, no Jew would speak to any woman in public—not even his own wife or daughter. This foolish tradition was carried to such an extreme that some Pharisees would close their eyes when they saw a woman on the city streets. As a result, they often bumped into walls and houses,

and they came to be known as "the bruised and bleeding Pharisees." Thus we can see the woman's astonishment that Jesus should even speak to her. If He had been a normal Jewish rabbi, He would have gone home immediately and washed himself because He had been in her presence.

The Greek idiom of verse 10 gives us an insight into the thoughts of Jesus. He sees a certain pathos in the woman's situation. He is saying to her, "If you only knew (but you do not) Who it is . . . He would have given you living water (but He cannot because you know Him not)." No man can receive the living water until he "knows" Jesus. Faith comes by hearing, and the hearing that brings faith comes from the Word of God (cf. Rom. 10:17; Phil. 3:8-11). Jesus is the source of life, and we must partake of Him (cf. Jn. 6:53, 63) through His word to have that life!

Notice how, having gained her sympathy, He gradually raises her thoughts from the temporal to the spiritual, ever holding her interest and ever leading (not driving) her into new light.

The woman is a little cynical in her reply. Jesus implies He can supply her with some sort of perpetual source of water better than what is in this well. Yet, even the great patriarch Jacob used this well. Does He insinuate He is greater than their ancestors (they claimed descent from Joseph and his two sons)?

The water the woman is thinking of (v. 13-14) never completely quenches even the physical thirst. But the water which Jesus gives completely and perpetually quenches the soul's thirst. This is what Paul meant when he said, "our inward man is renewed day by day."

The Old Testament is permeated with the idea of God supplying His new people with living water. Jesus was not uttering a new idea. Of course, the Jews rejected the idea that the Nazarene could be the "living water," just as they rejected anything connecting Him with the Messiah. Jesus was claiming to be the fulfillment of these messianic prophecies concerning the "living water" (cf. Isa. 12:3; 35:7; 44:3; 49:10; 55:1; Psalm 42:1; 36:9; Jer. 2:13; 17:13; Ezek. 47:1-12; Zech. 13:1; 14:8). Read these references; they are important!

Some commentators do not connect this living water with the living water of John 7:37-39. But it is improper to disconnect the two. In 7:37-39 Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit as the living

water, and adds, "this life-source shall flow out from the believer." Neither passage, 4:13-14 or 7:37-39, is contradictory of the other.

### Quiz

1. What were some of the barriers Jesus broke by talking to this woman?
2. Why may we assume that Jews *did* have some dealings with Samaritans?
3. Where did the Samaritan people originate?
4. What was the beginning of hostilities between Jew and Samaritan?
5. Why was Jesus unable to give this woman living water?
6. What was Jesus claiming when He claimed to be able to give living water? Give 5 Old Testament references.
7. What does John 7:37-39 add about the living water?

### JESUS SEARCHES OUT A WOMAN'S SECRET

#### *Text 4:15-18*

**15 The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come all the way hither to draw.**

**16 Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.**

**17 The woman answered and said unto him, I have no husband. Jesus saith unto her, Thou saidst well, I have no husband:**

**18 for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: this hast thou said truly.**

#### *Queries*

- a. Is the woman's answer sincere?
- b. Why does Jesus change the subject?
- c. What made the woman say, "I have no husband"?

#### *Paraphrase*

The woman said to Him, Sir, give me this living water, that I may never thirst again nor have to come here day after day to draw a new supply of water. Jesus replied, Go call your husband and come here. The woman answered, I have no husband. Jesus then said to her, You have said well, A husband I have not, for you have had five husbands, and the man whom you now have is not your husband. This is indeed a true thing you have said!

*Summary*

The woman fails to comprehend the nature of the living water, and does not realize her need for it. Jesus shows her that she ought to be thirsting for righteousness.

*Comment*

Is the woman's request (v. 15) sincere, or is it cynical? It is easier to assume that she is sincere. Whatever be her attitude, she has missed the point! She interprets Jesus as speaking of physical water. She has made the same mistake the great crowds made later when Jesus said, "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the signs, but because ye ate of the loaves, and were filled" (Jn. 6:26).

In verse 16 comes the next approach of the Master Teacher. He must use more dramatic and personal means of bringing the woman to an understanding of the living water. First He must make her soul thirsty for this refreshing and revitalizing water. The truth of God reveals two things: (a) our sinful and unrighteous state that causes the honest-hearted to thirst after righteousness; (b) it reveals God, manifested in Jesus, as the Living Water which quenches that thirst (cf. Mt. 5:6; Jn. 6:35; 7:37; Rev. 7:16).

Before men and women can be saved, they must be lost! The man who has not recognized his lost estate cannot be saved. This Samaritan woman must have the full light of God's perfect standard focused upon her immoral life to show her the need for living water. The gospel, of course, can be rejected. When the light of God's truth shines upon good and honest hearts, they will become thirsty and hungry to partake of the nature of God. But the results are different with evil hearts — they are increased in their hardness the longer they reject.

Jesus cannot give the woman of Samaria the living water until she has a thirst for it. Thus Jesus with His omniscient perception forces the woman to see herself as one who needs this vivifying water. Without a word of forewarning, Jesus casts a thunderbolt into the conversation. He says, "Go fetch your husband!"

Verse 17 stands in sharp contrast with the other verses narrating the woman's speech. Before, she had been very eager to converse. Suddenly she becomes very reticent. She speaks (in the Greek) only three words.

A few scholars believe the woman to be making a humble confession of her sin rather than seeking to conceal the fact that she was living with a man in an adulterous relationship. The entire narrative, however, seems to point to a studied attempt by the woman to evade the issue. In fact, her very next move was to raise a theological question for dispute concerning the two national religions.

The reply of Jesus (v. 17-18) is very sagacious. He continues to probe. He knows just how to proceed. The construction of the sentence in the original language gives emphasis to the word "husband." It is as if Jesus is saying, "You were correct when you said, 'I do not have a *husband*.'" She is living with a man, but he is *not* her husband.

Jesus then proceeds to tell her the story of her life. There are two important blessings this woman receives. Jesus, by His power to search her heart and reveal her past has (a) revealed her sin and made her desirous of righteousness, and (b) manifested, to some extent, His omniscient and divine nature, and thus provided her the way to righteousness.

### Quiz

1. How does the woman interpret Jesus' "living water"?
2. What two things does the truth of God reveal?
3. What must a person recognize before one may be saved?
4. How does the woman react when Jesus reveals her sin?
5. What is the significance of Jesus' answer (v. 17-18)?

### TRUE WORSHIPPERS OF GOD

#### Text 4:19-26

19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father.

22 Ye worship that which ye know not: we worship that which we know; for salvation is from the Jews.

23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers

shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers.

24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

25 The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh (he that is called Christ): when he is come, he will declare unto us all things.

26 Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

### *Queries*

- a. Why did the woman ask about the place of worship?
- b. How is salvation "from the Jews"?
- c. What is worship "in spirit and truth"?

### *Paraphrase*

The woman then said to Him, Sir, I can see that You are a prophet. Our forefathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where it is necessary to worship. Jesus says to her, Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You Samaritans are worshipping what you do not know. We are worshipping what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. But the hour comes, in fact that hour has arrived, when the genuine worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. For the Father is seeking just such people as these to be worshippers of Him. God is a Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. The woman says to Him, I understand that Messiah is coming, the One called Christ, and when He has come He will declare plainly to us everything we need to know. Jesus said to her, I, the One speaking to you, am He!

### *Summary*

Jesus takes a definite side in a religious controversy. The worship of the Samaritans is condemned because it is contrary to God's revealed truth. Worship of the One True God must be in spirit and truth.

### *Comment*

Undoubtedly the woman was visibly shocked. It is characteristically human to try to justify one's sins or change the subject. Notice that this woman does not deny what Jesus has

revealed concerning her life. She realizes that Jesus must have some supernatural power — in fact, she thinks Him to be a prophet!

There are two popular interpretations of the motives behind the woman's interjection of the question about the proper place of worship: (a) some believe the woman to have asked the question because she was intensely interested in the question, while others hold that (b) she was still evading the very embarrassing subject of her sins. When Jesus had before asked her to call her husband she deftly evaded the truth and said, "I have no husband." Thus the second interpretation seems to be the most plausible. It is possible, however, that she would also be interested in the proper place to worship.

By saying, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain," she evidently refers to the erection of the Samaritan temple on Mt. Gerizim nearly 400 years before her time. However, she may also be referring to the fact that Jacob built altars at Shechem (which was practically on the slopes of Gerizim) (cf. Gen. 33:20). Of course, the Samaritans would be constantly preached to by the Jews that the scriptural place of worship was in the Temple at Jerusalem.

According to the Old Testament Scriptures, which were even then the rule of faith and practice for God's people, there was only ONE place of worship. Moses legislated that there was to be just ONE acceptable altar (cf. Deut. 12:1-14). Later the tribes east of the Jordan (Gad, Reuben and Manasseh) built their own altar, but they made it plain they did not intend to erect an altar upon which to sacrifice (Josh. 22). Still later, in the time of Hezekiah, Judah is reminded of the ONE place to worship God (cf. II Kings 18:22; II Chron. 32:12; Isa. 36:7).

But, according to Jesus in verse 21, the time is coming when it will not be a question of the proper *place*. The time is coming when God will "break down the middle wall of partition," and "abolish . . . the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances," that all who seek to worship God may "have access in one Spirit unto the Father."

For the present, however, He reminds her (v. 22) that the Samaritan people are worshipping in ignorance. On the other hand, the Jews are worshipping that which they know. This is strikingly true when we realize the Samaritans only recognized the first five books of the Old Testament as authoritative. How could the Samaritans know of the prophetic promises concerning



salvation from the Jews through God's suffering Servant? How could they know the devotion and prophecies of the Psalms? That salvation comes exclusively from the Jews is abundantly verified in practically all the prophetic books.

Jesus does not mean to say in verse 23 that at that moment it was permissible to worship God anywhere. He uses the phrase "the hour is coming, and now is," because in His mind the future is already perfected, (cf. also Jn. 5:25; 16:32). In just a few short months He will have fulfilled the Law, and the veil in the Temple will have been rent from top to bottom (Mt. 27:51), and the "hour will have come" when men will no longer be required to worship at ONE place.

What does Jesus mean by worshipping "in spirit and truth"? What has He just been explaining to the woman? It is that (a) the time will soon come when *place* makes no difference and (b) the Samaritans are wrong because they worship in opposition to revealed truth. Thus, to worship in spirit and truth is (a) to make it a matter of the heart, the will, the spirit and the emotion and not merely a matter of physical atmosphere, and, (b) to worship in accordance with the revealed will of God in the New Testament. Some believers have over-emphasized one or the other, spirit or truth, and such unbalanced worship is wrong. Any worship which is contrary to what is revealed in the New Testament is divisive and disobedient. It is true that mere formalism is as surely an abomination before God.

William Barclay makes the following lucid remarks in his commentary, *The Gospel of John*, Vol. 1, pages 152-154:

"1. A false worship selects what it wishes to know and understand about God, and omits what it does not wish. One of the most dangerous things in the world is a one-sided religion.

"2. A false worship is an ignorant worship . . . In the last analysis religion is never safe until a man can tell, not only what he believes, but why he believes it.

"3. A false worship is a superstitious worship. It is a worship given, not out of a sense of need nor out of any real desire, but basically because a man feels that it might be dangerous not to give it . . . There is too much religion which is a kind of superstitious ritual to avert the possible wrath of the unpredictable gods.

"If God is Spirit, God is not confined to things; . . . if God is Spirit, God is not confined to places; . . . if God is Spirit, a man's gift to God must be gifts of the spirit . . . True and genuine

worship is not to come to a certain place; it is not to go through a certain ritual or liturgy; it is not even to bring certain gifts. True worship is when the spirit, the immortal and invisible part of man, speaks to and meets with God, who is immortal and invisible."

God has always yearned for heart-felt worship that is according to truth from His people. He has always abhorred ritualism and formalism, and has sought "willing and obedient" worship (cf. Isaiah, chapter one). Paul says essentially this same thing in Phil. 3:3 and Rom. 2:28-29.

What would a Samaritan know of the Messiah? Josephus, the Jewish historian, seems to indicate there was a vague messianic expectation among the Samaritans (*The Life and Works of Flavius Josephus*, 18:4:1). They were not so far removed from the Jewish nation that they could not be well aware of the general teaching of the Prophets through what little intercourse they had between themselves.

The woman has had her thirst aroused for living water. She wants to know how she may overcome her sin and be cleansed. So, she says, "When Messiah is come, He shall reveal these things to me." She has recognized Jesus as a prophet, but not yet as *The Prophet* — the Messiah.

Jesus, knowing she has now come to a realization of her need and is, in fact, yearning for the One who can supply that need, declares Himself to be the Living Water . . . the Gift of God . . . the Messiah.

What did the woman do? Evidently she did not say anything more to Jesus, but rushed into town, forgetting her water-jar to spread the good news (cf. v. 28).

### Quiz

1. What motive do you think the woman had for asking the question about the proper place of worship (v. 20)?
2. Who were correct — according to the Old Testament — the Jews or the Samaritans? Why?
3. Why were the Samaritans worshipping in ignorance?
4. When did the "hour come" that God's people were no longer required to worship in one place?
5. What is worshipping "in spirit and truth"?
6. Name three characteristics of false religion.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN  
SPONTANEOUS EVANGELISM

4:27-30

*Text 4:27-30*

27 And upon this came his disciples; and they marvelled that he was speaking with a woman; yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why speakest thou with her?

28 So the woman left her waterpot, and went away into the city, and saith to the people,

29 Come, see a man, who told me all things that ever I did: can this be the Christ?

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

*Queries*

- a. Why were the returning disciples reticent?
- b. What was the significance of the forgotten waterpot?

*Paraphrase*

At this junction His disciples returned from the market, and they were astonished to find Him talking to a woman. However, none of them asked Him, What do you want? or, Why are you talking with her? The woman, forgetting her waterjar, hurried off unto the city and began telling the people, Come, see a Man Who has told me everything that I ever did. You don't think this Man could be the Christ, do you? So the people came out from the city and were coming toward Him in a continual procession.

*Summary*

The Woman hurries excitedly into the city telling her discovery. The townspeople come immediately in search of a man who may be the Messiah.

*Comment*

This is one of the first examples of spontaneous evangelism. Perhaps a better title would be "Evangelism by Compulsion." Certainly, as will be discussed later, this woman was "constrained" to tell of the One she had met at the well.

When the disciples returned from market they were taken aback to find Him freely conversing with a woman. The restrictive barriers between men and women were discussed in our comments on 4:9.

One noteworthy statement of the gospel writer in verse 27 is the reticence of the disciples to question openly the Master's actions. Either their respect for His wisdom would not allow them to brazenly question Him; or they feared He might upbraid them. The disciples were momentarily interested in eating (v. 31) and not in a long discourse on the emancipation of women. Perhaps this accounts for their silence.

Their conversation having been interrupted by the returning disciples, the woman hastens off to tell the townspeople of her experience (v. 28). In her excitement and soul-gripping conviction she forgets the waterjar sitting on the well-curb, and rushes off down the road toward the city. The verb used by John here, *apheken*, lends itself to the idea that she forgot the vessel. It is the same word which is translated remission, forgiveness, and means a forgetting of our sins by God.

Verse 29 records for us, at least partially, her testimony to the people of the city. We also receive insight into the compelling force that causes her to testify. She had just undergone what some people might call "a religious experience." This experience, as we have commented before (vs. 15-18), consisted in a personal conviction of her sin and a beginning trust in His person as the omniscient One. These two factors were the motivating and compelling force that caused "spontaneous evangelism" in her life. As the apostle Paul said, "Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men," . . . and, "the love of Christ constraineth us . . ." (cf. II Cor. 5:11, 14).

In the concluding phrase of verse 29 the woman puts the question in a hesitant form. As Robertson says, "With a woman's intuition she . . . does not take sides, but piques their curiosity." She is in no social position to make theological decisions and dogmatic conclusions. Who would accept her convictions — a woman who is an outcast of the community! So she deftly plants the seed of curiosity and allows them to form their own conclusions.

The tense of the verb *erchonto* (were coming) in verse 30 is one of John's word pictures. The picture is of a long stream of excited people coming toward Jacob's Well.

*Quiz*

1. Why do you think the disciples hesitated to question Jesus openly?
2. What caused the woman to leave her water pot?
3. What are two factors which form motivation for spontaneous evangelism?

## FIELDS WHITE UNTO HARVEST

*Text 4:31-38*

31 In the meanwhile the disciples prayed him, saying, Rabbi, eat.

32 But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not.

33 The disciples therefore said one to another, Hath any man brought him aught to eat?

34 Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work.

35 Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest.

36 He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

37 For herein is the saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.

38 I sent you to reap that whereon ye have not labored: others have labored, and ye are entered into thier labor.

*Queries*

- a. What lesson does Jesus teach the disciples in verses 31-35?
- b. Who are "he that reapeth" and "he that soweth"?
- c. How may the disciples "reap where they have not labored"?

*Paraphrase*

In the meantime the disciples continued to beseech him, saying, Master, eat something! But He said to them, I have food to eat which you do not understand. The disciples therefore said among themselves, Has anyone brought Him something to eat?

Jesus replied, My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to completely fulfill His work. Will you not say that it is yet four months and the harvest comes? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes and contemplate the fields, that they are white already for harvest. He that reaps receives and gathers fruit unto life eternal, in order that the one sowing and the one reaping may rejoice together. In this way the saying is true, One sows and another reaps. I have sent you to reap a harvest which your labor did not produce. Others have labored and you have entered in to reap the result of their labor.

### *Summary*

Jesus teaches the disciples two lessons: (a) Doing the will of God is spiritual food more satisfying and sustaining than physical food; (b) It is not important whether a disciple be a reaper or a sower — only that he be a laborer in the Lord's field. Both sower and reaper rejoice when the harvest is gathered.

### *Comment*

Jesus sits in silent meditation watching the woman reach the city, and then watching the crowds begin to come. The disciples have set the meal in order. They are hungry and, knowing He must be also, they hesitantly interrupt His meditation, advising Him to eat.

The Master's reply (v. 32) is beyond their perception. Jesus is so engrossed in the great opportunities and apparent victories in Samaria He has only the appetite for a food which the disciples do not comprehend. He is anxious for the crowds to arrive so that He may begin imparting living water to them also. His whole being is so immersed in His mission of saving souls He can think of nothing else.

The disciples either speak loudly enough (v. 33) for Jesus to hear, or He reads their thoughts. Theirs is a natural reaction of Jesus' statement (v. 32). Perhaps they think the woman had left Him something to eat. But Jesus very deliberately explains to them what His food was.

In verse 34 Jesus indicated how completely saturated He was in the will of the Father (cf. Jn. 2:17). We have a saying today illustrative of this. We say, "That person eats and sleeps his occupation." Doing the will of God was the very essence of Jesus' being. He was sustained by it. The Word and will of God was the bread upon which He fed (cf. Mt. 4:4). Barclay

points out two blessings in doing the will of God (a) peace, and (b) power. These blessings become obvious when one beholds the perfect peace and victorious power which Christ enjoyed. It is also obvious that He enjoyed these blessings because of His complete submission to, and harmony with, the will of the Father. We shall gain or lose these two blessings in proportion to our unreserved trust in His will (cf. Mt. 26:39; Mk. 14:36; Lk. 22:42; Jn. 5:30; 6:38; 8:29; Heb. 10:7-9). The "accomplishment" of God's work means the fulfillment or completion of the Son's mission upon earth. Jesus, in His atoning death and justifying resurrection, completes and fulfills God's mission for Him (cf. Jn. 17:4; 19:28).

Verse 35 has been the subject of much discussion among Biblical scholars. Was this a proverbial saying quoted by Jesus, or was it actually "yet four months" until the harvest? Nearly all commentators agree that no such proverb has been found to exist. The best interpretation has Jesus implying a question to which He expects the disciples to answer, "Yes." Jesus says to the disciples, "You will probably say that in four months it will be time to harvest, won't you? But I am telling you to open your eyes to the spiritual fields which are ripe *already* for harvest."

Another question of interpreters concerning this verse is "Where does the word *already* belong, to verse 35 or 36?" As R. C. H. Lenski points out, "The contrast is between the attitudes of Christ and the disciples." "You will say yet four months . . . but I say already . . ." Thus, the word *already* rightfully belongs in verse 35.

The spiritual impact of this verse (v. 35) is apparent when we remember Jesus' constant reminder to the disciples of the overabundance of harvest and pathetic lack of laborers. Near the end of His second year of ministry Jesus was "moved with compassion" for the multitudes "because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd." There, as He traveled among the cities and villages of Galilee, He said to the disciples, "The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest" (cf. Mt. 9:35-38). This is certainly one prayer the church needs to pray today, but one which is appallingly absent.

Jesus has been deep in thought concerning the opportunities soon to be available for harvesting souls. His next instruction (v. 36) to the disciples is to combat jealousy among them as co-

laborers in the Lord's fields. They are about to reap a harvest here in Samaria where they had not sown. Others had even sown before Jesus, i.e., the prophets and John the Baptist. In this verse, the emphasis is upon the mutual sharing of the reward by both sower and reaper.

The one reaping receives a reward. What is this reward? The rewards of the spiritual laborer are the souls harvested. Paul's crown and glory were to consist of his converts at the Lord's coming (cf. Phil. 2:14-16; I Thess. 2:19-20). But even Paul reaped at times where others had sown. And, vice-versa, he sowed where others later reaped. In the spiritual realm, both sower and reaper rejoice together at the harvest, for both shared in it. This was John the Baptist's understanding also when he spoke of rejoicing that the Bridegroom had come (cf. Jn. 2:29-30). This was the principle Paul announced in his letter to Corinth, "Paul planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase" (I Cor. 3:6-9).

The saying of verse 37 is interpreted in a number of ways. Verses 36, 37, and 38 must all be taken into account in interpreting this saying. The burden of the Lord's teaching is to instruct the reaper not to exalt himself as the one solely responsible for the harvest of souls. There have been sowers doing their work in advance of the reaper. They are equally responsible for the harvest, and they shall be equally rewarded. So in the spiritual sphere it is true: one sows and another reaps where he has not sown, but both rejoice together at the harvest.

What does Jesus mean by the past tense (v. 38), "*I sent you to reap . . .*"? There are two possible answers: (a) Jesus was using prophetic past tenses, i.e., the disciples would soon reap this Samaritan harvest where they had not sown, but Jesus speaks now of their reaping as already past; or (b) He speaks only of their previous reaping when they "made and baptized more disciples than John" (Jn. 4:1-2). They had not sown this earlier harvest of 4:1-2 either, but others, such as the Baptist, had sown, and they reaped.

The first interpretation seems to fit this context better. Jesus had just exhorted His disciples (v. 35) to get a vision of the field which was even at that moment ripe unto harvest. Is not this a form of commissioning, a sending forth? Certainly, the disciples had not labored in these fields, for they had gone away to buy food. But now, as the multitudes approach, and, in the two days to follow, the disciples would act as reapers. Jesus and



the woman were the sowers, and the disciples would "enter into their labor." There would be others following these first disciples to reap these same fields (Acts 8:5-7, 14ff). The disciples reaped, but they also sowed seed which those who followed them would reap.

It is true in our day also. The Sunday school teacher sows, and the minister reaps, or the minister sows and the revival evangelist reaps—but both should continually rejoice together in view of the harvest. In the last day, when the accounts are rendered, it will not be a question of how many talents one possessed—but what he accomplished with the talents he did possess. There will be no asking by Christ whether we were sowers or reapers—only whether we labored or not!

### Quiz

1. What was the food which Jesus had to eat?
2. Name two blessings derived from doing the will of God.
3. What contrast does Jesus make by His question concerning the harvest (v. 35)?
4. Matthew.....also speaks of "harvest" and "laborers."
5. What is the emphasis of verse 36?
6. How should the past tense "I sent" (v. 38) be interpreted?
7. How is this passage of Scripture (v. 31-38) applicable to Christians today?

### REAPING THE HARVEST

#### *Text* 4:39-42

**39** And from that city many of the Samaritans believed on him because of the word of the woman, who testified, He told me all things that ever I did.

**40** So when the Samaritans came unto him, they besought him to abide with them: and he abode there two days.

**41** And many more believed because of his word;

**42** and they said to the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy speaking: for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world.

### Queries

- a. How could the people believe "because of" the woman's testimony?

- b. What was the significance of their "hearing for themselves"?
- c. Why do they say "Saviour of the world"?

### *Paraphrase*

And many of the Samaritan people from that city trusted and obeyed Jesus because of the personal witness of the woman who testified, He told me all things which I ever did. When the Samaritans came to Him they begged Him to stay with them. So Jesus remained there two days. And many trusted and obeyed because of His reasoning, and they told the woman, We no longer believe merely through your testimony, but we have heard Him for ourselves and know that this One is truly the Saviour of the world.

### *Summary*

Many of the Samaritans are firmly persuaded that Jesus is the looked-for Saviour, because of both the woman's testimony and Jesus' reasoning with them.

### *Comment*

B. F. Westcott points out the great contrast between these Samaritans and the people of Jerusalem who believed on Him. The Samaritans had, so far as we know, only the testimony of the woman and Christ's reasoning with them for the ground of their faith. On the other hand, the Jerusalem believers had many miracles and signs (Jn. 2:23) upon which to ground their belief. The woman told the townspeople of Jesus' prophetic insight, but they had to trust her testimony, for they had not witnessed the conversation.

Why would they trust her? When one considers her probable reputation, it seems little short of amazing that they would believe her. Doubtless her enthusiasm played a major part in gaining their ears. Furthermore, she would be unlikely to admit that Jesus had prophetically revealed her immoral past, were it not true! But they did not rest their trust in Him solely upon her story, but investigated for themselves. They were like noble Bereans (cf. Acts 17:11).

Verse 40 presents another contrast. Contrast the hospitality of the Samaritans now and the uncharitable attitude of some Samaritans later in the ministry of Jesus (cf. Lk. 9:51-56). Of course, Jesus made disciples only in this one city, and the return

trip spoken of in the ninth chapter of Luke may have taken Him through other cities.

One note of interest here is John's taking almost the entire fourth chapter to record only two days' happenings while the timeless events of eternity are grappled with in eighteen short verses of Chapter One!

Some see in the Lord's evangelistic efforts here a contradiction of His later commission to the apostles to "not enter into a city of the Samaritans; but go rather unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt. 10:5-6). But the commission of Matthew 10 was: (a) subsequent to the Samaritan event; (b) temporary in nature; (c) cancelled by even later commissions in Matthew 28:19-20 and Acts 1:8. It is also well to remember that Jesus stopped in only one village of the Samaritans, and then only after their continued insistence!

In verse 41, the Samaritans state definitely the cause for their belief—the word of Jesus. The Greek word which has been translated word is *logos*, which may also be translated as discourse of instruction, or expression of reasoning. (See our comments on 1:1-18). In two days' time He had ample opportunity to present His claims and show His fulfillment of the Pentateuch. This incident is illustrative of the principle stated by Paul . . . "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

Lenski makes a good point in verse 42 by contrasting two kinds of faith: (a) the fledgling's faith based on the testimony of others, and (b) the satisfying faith based on personal investigation and experience. The former is the faith of many children who have been taught by parents and Sunday School teachers; the latter is the type of faith into which the former should grow—a faith which is firmly grounded in one's own personal investigation and contact with Christ and His Word.

Those critics who wish to deny the historicity of the Fourth Gospel claim the Samaritans did not say "we know that this is the Saviour of the world," but that John puts these words into their mouths on his own accord. This is absurd! Jesus told the woman (v. 26) that He was the Messiah. Would not two days be sufficient for Jesus to tell this city of His universal Redemptorship? This universality is really the lesson He proceeds to teach the woman in verses 20 through 26! As is usually the case, the destructive critics have failed to read and understand the context!

*Quiz*

1. How do these Samaritans compare with the believers of Jerusalem (2:23)?
2. Give two reasons to show that Jesus does not contradict His commission of Matt. 10:5-6 by entering a Samaritan city.
3. Would it be possible for the Samaritans to understand Jesus to be a universal Saviour? Explain.

## PUBLIC TEACHING IN GALILEE

*Text 4:43-45*

43 **And after the two days he went forth from thence into Galilee.**

44 **For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honor in his own country.**

45 **So when he came into Galilee, the Galileans received him, having seen all the things that he did in Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast.**

*Queries*

- a. Why did Jesus say "a prophet hath no honor . . . "?
- b. How did the Galileans receive Him?

*Paraphrase*

After these two days Jesus went out from Samaria into the province of Galilee. He Himself declared as the reason, A prophet is not famous in his own country. But when He came into Galilee, the Galileans welcomed Him with acclaim, having seen everything that He did in Jerusalem during the Feast of Passover, for they also had attended the Feast.

*Summary*

Jesus goes to Galilee anticipating an unpretentious arrival, but receives public acclaim.

*Comment*

In verse 43 the Lord seems to be in a hurry to get to Galilee. With such success in Samaria, He is in danger again of arousing the jealousy of the Pharisees. He proposes to go into Galilee, His home country. The Pharisees were not above following His every movement in order to force the issue, for they later do just that.

Verses 43 and 44 are John's way of resuming the narrative where he left it in 4:1-3. Jesus left Judea originally because His growing popularity was about to bring about a premature collision between Him and the rulers (see our comments on 4:1-3). Add to this the recent success in Samaria, and one begins to understand His determination to go into Galilee. To avoid further antagonizing the rulers, He departs for His own country where He anticipates a quiet arrival, for no prophet is overly-honored in His own country.

He will not always seek to avoid this clash, however, for when the appointed time comes for Him to fulfill all things, He will "steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem," and force the issue with the jealously blind leaders there.

When Jesus arrived in Galilee, however, the people welcomed Him openly (v. 45). They had been to the Passover (2:23) and seen the many signs He did there. Again we see the contrast between the Galileans and the Samaritans. Those of Samaria eagerly welcomed Jesus into their homes, although they had been given no signs; the Galileans received Him primarily because He was a "wonder-worker" (cf. 4:48 also).

So Jesus now embarks on a public ministry in Galilee. The ministry which follows, however, seems to speak of a "guarded revelation of Himself" as compared with the open declaration of Himself in Samaria as "the Messiah — the Saviour of the world." This Galilean ministry will last approximately sixteen months. There will be only one interruption — a brief trip to Jerusalem for a Passover feast recorded in John 5. It is a ministry almost completely left out of John's gospel except for John 4:43-54 and 6:1-7:10. But this early Galilean ministry is reported extensively by the Synoptic Gospels (cf. Mt. chapters 4-14; Mk. 1-6; Lk. 4-9). See Map No. 3, page 170.

### Quiz

1. Why did Jesus go into Galilee?
2. What does He mean by saying "a prophet hath no honor in his own country?"
3. Why was Jesus popular in Galilee?
4. How long is the Galilean ministry to last?
5. What portion of the great Galilean ministry is reported by John?

## HEALING A NOBLEMAN'S SON AT CAPERNAUM

*Text 4:46-54*

46 He came therefore again unto Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.

47 When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son; for he was at the point of death.

48 Jesus therefore said unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in no wise believe.

49 The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

50 Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. The man believed the word that Jesus spake unto him, and he went his way.

51 And as he was now going down, his servants met him, saying that his son lived.

52 So he inquired of them the hour when he began to amend. They said therefore unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.

53 So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.

54 This is again the second sign that Jesus did, having come out of Judea into Galilee.

*Queries*

- a. Why would this nobleman think Jesus could heal his son?
- b. What degree of faith did this man display?
- c. What is the significance of Jesus' manner of healing here?

*Paraphrase*

So Jesus came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water into wine. Now there was a certain royal official whose son was desperately ill in Capernaum. This official, hearing that Jesus had come from Judea back into Galilee, went to Him and begged Him to come down to Capernaum and heal his son, for the boy was at the point of death. Jesus said to the man, Unless you Galileans see signs and wonders you will never believe. But

the official said to Him, Sir, please come down at once before my little boy dies. Jesus replied to him, Go your way, your son lives! The man trusted what Jesus had said to him and began his journey home. But while he was still on his way home, his servants met him and said, Your little boy lives! So he immediately inquired of them the time when his son began to improve. They answered, Yesterday evening, about seven, the fever left him. Then the father knew that it was at that very hour when Jesus had said to him, Your son lives. Then the nobleman and his entire household believed on Jesus. This is the second sign which Jesus did after He had come from Judea into Galilee.

### Summary

A desperate father seeks the Man of Whom it is rumored, that He is a miracle-worker. Jesus fans the spark of faith within this man and heals his little boy. This, incidentally, is His second miracle in Galilee.

### Comment

Why would Jesus go to Cana? (a) He had friends there. Perhaps the same family who invited Him to the wedding feast (2:1-2) had opened their home to Him now; (b) Cana was the home of Nathanael (21:2); (c) There would be better opportunity to preach there first since He had already performed one great miracle there.

Jesus seems to have been in Cana a day or so before the nobleman came, at least long enough for the royal officer to learn of His whereabouts and come seeking Him. The word translated nobleman is *basilikos* (related to *basileus* which means king) and means an official of the King's court. This royal official lived at Capernaum about twenty miles distant from Cana over mountain terrain.

News of the Nazarene's arrival back in Cana, where He had once made water into wine, would spread swiftly from village to village. This nobleman of Capernaum heard that Jesus had come to Galilee and went away from his son's bedside seeking the miracle-worker. The courtier may have already spent great sums on physicians to no avail (cf. Lk. 8:43). His son was "at the very point of death."

What would cause this man to go to Jesus? (a) First, his desperate situation. What parent cannot sympathize with him? (b) All of Galilee would be filled with the reports of Jesus'

amazing miracles performed at Cana and Jerusalem. It is not impossible for this officer to have been at the feast in Jerusalem himself when Jesus performed many miracles (2:23).

It is uncharitable to say the man had no faith to begin with, yet his faith is imperfect at the start. He is persuaded that Jesus can heal only if He come to his son's bedside.

Verse 48 shows again the Lord's perfect method of fanning the tiniest spark of faith into a reckless, burning trust. Jesus replies seemingly unconcerned, "Unless you Galileans see signs and wonders you will never believe." As one commentator points out, however, Jesus is not so unconcerned and unsympathetic as it may seem. He has a way of testing men and women to determine the sincerity of their faith. He tested the Syro-Phoenician woman severely. Had this royal official turned away in exasperation and indignation, his faith would have been shown to be superficial, not able to stand testing. Notice the plural "ye" in verse 48. Jesus addresses the thrill-seeking crowds as well as the nobleman. Theirs indeed does turn out to be a superficial, pleasure-seeking faith.

But the nobleman will not be denied. He cries out to Jesus with the clutching intensity of a drowning man. The Nazarene is his last hope. "Come down ere my child dies!"

What faith is exemplified in the man's action! It must be evident from this incident that faith without implicit obedience is dead, useless and no faith at all. Jesus' words of verse 50 are a mighty test of the nobleman's faith. The Nazarene bade him "Go thy way, thy son liveth." This certainly shows that faith means both trust and obedience. The man believed Jesus and started immediately for home.

The incidental mention of "as he was . . . going down" shows the author of the Fourth Gospel to be familiar with the topography. Cana is approximately 2850 feet above normal sea level. Capernaum is on the north-west shore of the Sea of Galilee which is 682 feet below sea level. The man would truly be "going down" to Capernaum.

Verse 52 raises again the question of John's method of counting time. We must remember, however, he here reports the words of the servants. Since they were probably Jewish, this mention of time might be the Jewish seventh hour, which would mean the boy was healed at 1:00 p.m. the day before. The Jews counted their new day as beginning after sunset. It would take the man at least eight hours to walk the short, though



mountainous, 20 miles. He would then, according to Jewish reckoning, be near Capernaum the next day, although shortly after sunset. John could also have used the Roman method of time. Had Jesus pronounced the word of healing at 7:00 p.m., the nobleman would not near Capernaum until early the next morning, approximately 3:00 a.m.

As he approached the city, his servants ran to meet him and excitedly related to him the strangely instantaneous recovery of the young lad. The joyous father's faith took another leap forward. This man had found another King and had surrendered to His service. He related the wonderful story of Jesus to his family, and they too surrendered to Him. We would like to hear more about this nobleman. How difficult it must have been to maintain a Christian witness in the court of Herod! How would his Jewish associates receive his testimony concerning Jesus of Nazareth? But John is not writing a story of men, but a history of the Son of God.

There are four exemplary traits in this nobleman which all men would do well to copy: (a) He did not let position, pride or effort prevent him from coming to seek Christ's aid; (b) He stood the test of his faith; (c) He showed the reckless type of faith (not ignorant) which Jesus desires — the only way to receive the full benefit of the promises of God's Word is to believe in Jesus unreservedly; (d) He became a witness for the Lord.

There are number of facts which make this a notable miracle: (a) it was a cure performed at a distance from the sick child; (b) it was performed for a distinguished officer of the king's court; (c) Jesus said no peculiar "healing formula"; (d) the child evidently did not have any faith in Jesus; (e) the child was at the point of death.

Modern faith-healers are not known for any such miracles. Today's "healers" insist that faith is an established condition for healing. Search the Gospels as you will, and you will find only one time in thirty-one instances of healing where the Lord required faith (cf. Mt. 9:28). In nine cases of healing there is no evidence at all of faith; in four instances faith is very unlikely; in four other healings performed by Jesus there is no faith possible! (cf. Lk. 7:11-17; Jn. 5:2-13; Jn. 11:1-46; Mt. 9:18-26).

Others have attacked this miracle upon the grounds that it was not a miracle at all but Jesus was merely giving the father a reassuring word, like any modern physician, that his son would "pull through." But John definitely states that it is a miracle.

## THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

### *Quiz*

1. Give three reasons for Jesus' going first to Cana.
2. Can you locate Cana and Capernaum on the map of Palestine?
3. What was the degree of illness of the son?
4. Why did Jesus answer as He did in verse 48?
5. List four traits of the nobleman worthy of practicing.
6. Give four reasons why this is a notable miracle.

## EXPOSITORY SERMON NO. 4

John, Chapter 4

"YOU CAN BE A SOUL WINNER"

### *Introduction*

- I THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT EVERY CHRISTIAN MUST BE SOUL WINNER.  
Plainly commanded (Mt. 28:18-20; John 15:1-6).
- II REALIZATION OF DUTY, NOT THE PROBLEM  
Some realize, but are downright lazy and indifferent.  
These will have blood of many souls on their heads (Ezek. 18 and 30).
  - B. Most Christians lack confidence or courage.  
"Me, a personal witness . . . I just couldn't . . . How?"
  - C. Every Christian who really wants to can be a soul winner.  
There is nothing in the New Testament that says you cannot get a decision, hear a person's confession of Christ, and baptize him yourself!
- III JESUS THE PERFECT EXAMPLE OF A SOUL WINNER IN JOHN 4
  - A. He had a deep LOVE FOR THE SOULS OF MEN.
  - B. He was PREPARED.
  - C. He was UNSELFISH.

### *Discussion*

- I HE LOVED THE SOULS OF MEN AND WOMEN.
  - A. Not just "interested in people" . . . but having an OUTGOING LOVE
  - B. He let nothing stand in His way of speaking a word to her soul.
    1. Not hunger, not race, not social barriers

## THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

### 2. WE LET MANY THINGS STAND IN OUR WAY.

- a. How many outcasts of society have gone to Christless graves because we loved our reputation more than their souls? . . . JESUS WENT INTO THE HOMES OF TRAITORS, PROSTITUTES, INSANE, BEGGERS, ETC.
- b. How many of the upper class have died without the Lord because we have been ashamed to witness (Rom. 1:16)?

### C. Jesus found a way to begin witnessing.

1. How does one start?
2. Jesus said to the woman at the well, "Give me a drink."  
To Mary and Martha He used the subject of their beloved Brother's recent death!
3. Paul in Athens mentioned the city's idols
4. Most parents can be reached through their children

## II CHRIST WAS PREPARED

### A. Unpreparedness is the major reason people lack confidence.

#### WE MUST DRILL ON THE SCRIPTURE REFERENCES TO THE PLAN OF SALVATION

It is shocking the number of long-time Christians who do not know where to find these Scriptures!

### B. He knew His prospect (by divine insight).

1. We must get to know people.
  - a. Their fears (of water, etc.), their beliefs
  - b. Must build up and encourage, not tear down what little faith some do have
  - c. Must win people's confidence and trust
  - d. Must, many times, dissolve barriers others erect
2. Jesus knew how to keep on the subject

### C. He knew His message

1. The woman tried to bring up old family traditions
2. Jesus did not compromise the truth
3. He did not argue, but always came back to her personal responsibility!
4. Peter said, "BE READY ALWAYS TO GIVE ANSWER TO EVERY MAN THAT ASKETH THEE CONCERNING THE HOPE THAT IS WITHIN THEE."

## THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

We need to learn by heart these basic things :

- a. How to show the Bible as the word of God, infallible
- b. How to show the New Testament as the Book for Christians
- c. How to show the Scriptures explaining the plan of salvation
- d. How to show that this is the only gospel (Gal. 1:8-9)
- e. How to show that Christ demands unity in essentials of all who profess belief in Him.

HE HAD A MESSAGE WHICH HE KNEW MEN NEEDED MORE THAN THEY NEEDED EVEN FOOD AND CLOTHING, AND HE WAS CONSUMED WITH A DESIRE TO GIVE THEM THIS WORD.

III HE WAS UNSELFISH IN HIS VISION OF THE LOST

- A. This holds many Christians back from witnessing.
- B. His vision encompassed the world.

What will the Lord say about expensive church buildings while millions are going into their building simply out of pride? The church should have adequate space and up-to-date facilities, but there must be good stewardship here as well as anywhere else.

- C. He was not jealous
  1. Told His disciples :
    - a. They would reap where they hadn't sown.
    - b. They would sow and others would reap.
  2. Many a Christian has sown, never seeing results, and as a result has ceased to sow.

MUCH OF EVERY PREACHER'S REAPING IN ANY CHURCH IS DUE TO SOWING BY BIBLE SCHOOL TEACHERS, ELDERS AND OTHER MEMBERS.

IF ONE SOWER DOES NOT SEE RESULTS, OTHERS WILL . . . LET US REJOICE TOGETHER!

3. Paul said he rejoiced over men preaching the gospel even if they tried to defame him and take honor away from him . . . still they were converting people to Christ (Phil. 1:15-19).
4. Few people get more jealous than preachers and church members.

## THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

THERE IS NO ROOM FOR SELFISHNESS, JEALOUSY OR DESPAIR IN CHRISTIAN SOUL WINNING . . . THE LORD KNOWS HOW TO REWARD HIS FAITHFUL SOLDIERS. SOME MAY GO UNNOTICED BY ANYONE ELSE IN THIS WORLD, BUT THE LORD KNOWS HIS OWN, AND THEIR WORKS OF LOVE!

### *Conclusion*

#### I THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF REWARD

- A. Heavenly reward not able to be expressed in human language says Paul (II Cor. 12:2-4)
- B. Neither can we know fully the terrors of Hell!

#### II THERE WAS A MAN WHO DECIDED TO BE A SOUL WINNER . . . ALAS, TOO LATE!

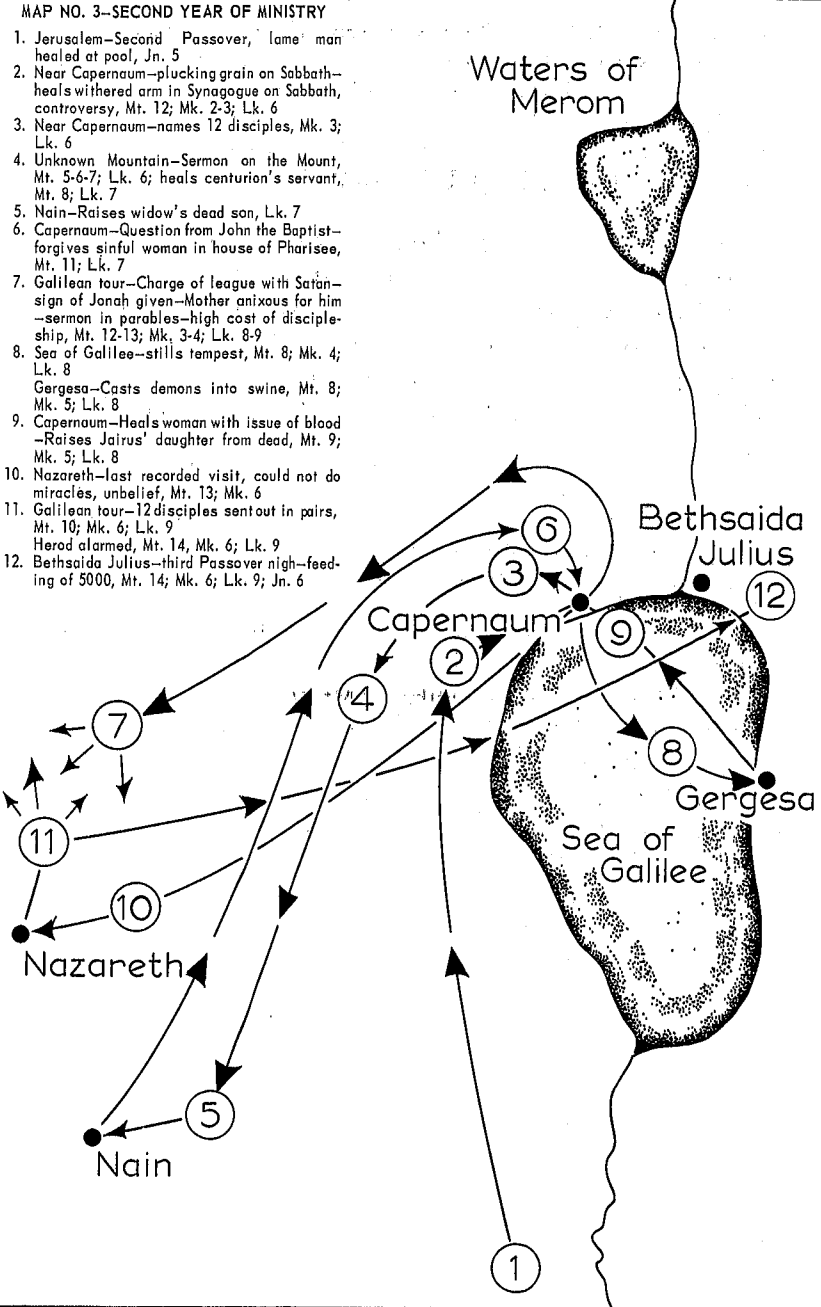
- A. Parable of Lazarus and rich man . . . "just let me go tell my brothers."
- B. We must work the works of God while it is day, for the night comes when no man can work.
- C. Paul said, "knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men."

#### III JESUS NEVER MADE UP ANYONE'S MIND FOR THEM.

He presented the glad tidings, and he presented the only alternative. THEN HE LET MEN AND WOMEN MAKE THEIR OWN DECISION. *WHAT IS YOUR DECISION?*

MAP NO. 3—SECOND YEAR OF MINISTRY

1. Jerusalem—Second Passover, lame man healed at pool, Jn. 5
2. Near Capernaum—plucking grain on Sabbath—heals withered arm in Synagogue on Sabbath, controversy, Mt. 12; Mk. 2-3; Lk. 6
3. Near Capernaum—names 12 disciples, Mk. 3; Lk. 6
4. Unknown Mountain—Sermon on the Mount, Mt. 5-6-7; Lk. 6; heals centurion's servant, Mt. 8; Lk. 7
5. Nain—Raises widow's dead son, Lk. 7
6. Capernaum—Question from John the Baptist—forgives sinful woman in house of Pharisee, Mt. 11; Lk. 7
7. Galilean tour—Charge of league with Satan—sign of Jonah given—Mother anxious for him—sermon in parables—high cost of discipleship, Mt. 12-13; Mk. 3-4; Lk. 8-9
8. Sea of Galilee—stills tempest, Mt. 8; Mk. 4; Lk. 8  
Gergesa—Casts demons into swine, Mt. 8; Mk. 5; Lk. 8
9. Capernaum—Heals woman with issue of blood—Raises Jairus' daughter from dead, Mt. 9; Mk. 5; Lk. 8
10. Nazareth—last recorded visit, could not do miracles, unbelief, Mt. 13; Mk. 6
11. Galilean tour—12 disciples sent out in pairs, Mt. 10; Mk. 6; Lk. 9  
Herod alarmed, Mt. 14, Mk. 6; Lk. 9
12. Bethsaida Julius—third Passover night—feeding of 5000, Mt. 14; Mk. 6; Lk. 9; Jn. 6



## CHAPTER FIVE

This chapter is the really great chapter on the deity of Jesus. Here He brings to testify undeniable witnesses to His Sonship. In this chapter we also see the first of open controversy on the part of the Jewish rulers. In connection with this we have included a Special Study on "Controversies and Objections in Jesus' Ministry," by Seth Wilson at the end of this chapter.

Between the incidents in Cana of Galilee (chapter 4) and His return to Jerusalem for the unnamed feast of 5:1, Jesus carried on a considerable ministry in Galilee. He returned to His home town Nazareth, preached in the synagogue, and was rejected (Lk. 4); He called the four fishermen the second time and healed many (Mt. 4; Mk. 1; Lk. 5); He made a Galilean tour among great crowds (Mt. 4; Mk. 1; Lk. 5); He healed a leper (Mt. 8); a paralytic (Mt. 9); called Matthew (Mt. 9); and ran into controversies about eating and fasting (Mt. 9; Mk. 2; Lk. 5). See Map No. 3 page 170.

We outline the fifth chapter of John as follows:

- II The Word Manifested to the Jews and Their Rejection of Him, 1:19-12:50 (cont'd)
  - C. Public Ministry — Second Year 5:1-47
    - 1. Open controversy begins
      - a. A helpless man healed 5:1-9
      - b. Sabbath controversy 5:10-18
    - 2. Jesus claims deity
      - a. The deity stated 5:19-23
      - b. Powers inherent in that deity 5:24-29
    - 3. Jesus gives evidence for His deity
      - a. Jesus' own witness 5:30-32
      - b. John the Baptist's witness 5:33-35
      - c. The Father's witness 5:36-38
      - d. The witness of the Scriptures 5:39-47

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN  
A HELPLESS MAN HEALED*Text 5:1-9*

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 porches.

3 In these lay a multitude of them that were sick, blind, halt, withered.

5 And a certain man was there, who had been thirty and eight years in his infirmity.

6 When Jesus saw him lying, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wouldest thou be made whole?

7 The sick man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.

8 Jesus saith unto him, Arise, take up thy bed, and walk.

9 And straightway the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked. Now it was the sabbath on that day.

*Queries*

- a. Why were the people gathered at this pool?
- b. Why would Jesus ask such an obvious question?
- c. What did the man mean by "when the water is troubled"?

*Paraphrase*

After a considerable ministry in Galilee, there was the (Pass-over) feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is a pool in Jerusalem near the sheep gate which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five covered porches. In these porches lay great crowds of sick people, some blind, some crippled and some shrunken and emaciated. There was a certain man there having had a lingering illness for thirty-eight years. Jesus, seeing him lying there, and knowing that for a long time he had been an invalid, said to him, Do you want to be made healthy? The sick man answered, Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is troubled, and when I try by myself to get down to the pool another person steps down to it before me. Jesus said to him, Arise! take up your pallet and walk. Immediately the man became well, and took up his pallet and walked. But that day was a Sabbath day!



*Summary*

Jesus heals a helpless man who was hopelessly ill and manifests His deity. But it was performed on the Sabbath, and the Jews will attack Him for breaking the Sabbath.

*Comment*

What feast is this? There is great diversity of opinion among scholars. Andrews, Hendriksen, and Foster, among others, hold that it is probably the Passover. It cannot be Purim, for Jesus would hardly celebrate such a riotous, unspiritual festival as Purim. Furthermore, Purim came sometime in February and would not allow sufficient time for the early ministry in Galilee. Jesus arrived in Galilee in December (four months before harvest). The feasts of Tabernacles and of Dedication are ruled out because they come in October and December respectively. Were this feast either of these two, it would allow only four or six months for the later great Galilean ministry. It is extremely improbable that all the events which transpired in this great Galilean ministry took place in only four to six months. Between the two feasts (John 5 and John 6), Jesus traveled extensively in Galilee. He returned to Capernaum from Jerusalem, went into the mountains and delivered the Sermon on the Mount, healed the Centurion's servant, went to Nain, returned to Capernaum, toured the cities and villages of Galilee, crossed the Sea of Galilee to Gergesa, recrossed the sea, went to Nazareth, toured again the cities and villages of Galilee, and finally crossed the sea to Bethsaida for the sermon on the Bread of Life after feeding the five thousands. See Map No. 3, page 170, for an outline of this great Galilean ministry.

This feast could be either Passover or Pentecost (50 days after Passover), but hardly any of the other feasts will fit the chronology. Passover makes more allowance for the subsequent ministry in Galilee. As R. C. Foster says, "The identification of the feast is a decisive factor in determining the length of Jesus' ministry. If it was the Passover, then there are four Passovers in the ministry of Jesus which must have lasted through three years and a fraction."

Verse two also poses its problems: (a) There is no word in the original for the word gate. Literally, this verse would be translated, “. . . there is in Jerusalem by the (place or thing) belonging to the sheep, a pool . . .”. Some have surmised the *probatikos* (place belonging to the sheep) to be a sheep-gate, others a sheep-market, still others a sheep-pool. It is difficult to determine just what John speaks of when he says “the place belonging to the sheep.” Most scholars claim that sheep-gate is the meaning, since Nehemiah 3:32 and 12:39 mentions a sheep-gate. This gate would depend for its location upon the location of the pool of Bethesda. (b) Various names have been given this pool. The word for pool comes from *kolumbethra*, and means a pool large enough to swim in. Some manuscripts have Bethesda (House of Mercy), some have Bethzatha (House of the Olive), and others have Bethsaida. Bethesda fits the evident use made of

**POOLS OF JERUSALEM**

1. Upper Gihon
2. Lower Gihon
3. Pool of Hezekiah
4. Jeremiah's Pool
5. Pool of Lady Mary (Bethesda?)
6. Church of St. Anne
7. Pool of Israel
8. St. Stephen's Gate
9. Virgin's Pool (Bethesda?)
10. Pool of Siloam
11. Job's Well

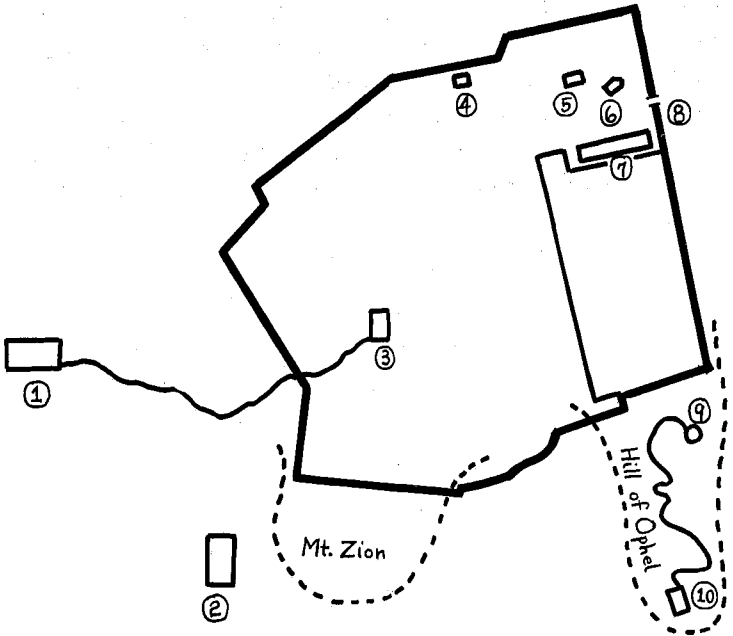


Fig. No. 1

11

this pool. Certain archaeologists locate the pool just inside the gate of St. Stephen (on the east wall, just north of the temple area); Robertson and Foster claim Bethesda to be none other than the Virgin's Pool. See Figure No. 1, page 175. The reason for associating Bethesda with the Virgin's Pool is that the latter periodically bubbles over from a natural spring, which also forms a sort of natural syphon. It is called "the Gusher." The Virgin's Pool is south of the Temple, on the east side of the Hill of Ophel. The bubbling nature of the Virgin's Pool might account for the man's description in verse 7. On the other hand, the former pool (north, near St. Stephen's gate) has in its favor the recent discovery of five arches seemingly indicating the five porches, and a fresco depicting the troubling of the water by an angel. (c) These five porches were ancient versions of present day hospital wards. The sick were brought on their stretcher-pallet beds and laid there. There were no nurses, and it seems as if every man was left to care for himself. In Palestine then, as in most Asian countries now, the incapacitated were the cast-offs of society. Their only means of livelihood was begging or stealing.

In these five porticoes lay crowds of sick people. What man could walk among these helpless, hopeless masses and not have compassion upon them? How the Lord's heart must have gone out to the multitudes, but, as far as we know, He healed only one man. The infirm here are classed in three sicknesses; blind, crippled and withered (shrunken or shriveled — a sort of paralysis).

The latter half of verse 3 and all of verse 4 (as they appear in the King James Version) have been omitted in the American Standard Version. All the most ancient and best manuscripts omit these verses. And now we have further evidence in the Bodmer Papyrus II for their omission, for this very ancient Codex also omits John 5:3b-4. See our Introduction for the value of the Bodmer Papyrus.

Verse 5 tells us that the man had suffered thirty-eight long years. We wonder how long he must have lain in one of the five porches trying to get someone to help him down to the pool. How would he survive? What a bitter cup to drink! Some commentators guess that the man's infirmity was due to "youthful excesses" (cf. v. 14). We wonder why Jesus healed only one man from such a multitude. We can only guess, but the severe

hopelessness and helplessness of the case offers Jesus an opportunity to demonstrate His great power.

Singling out this man, Jesus asks him a most obvious question. We are told that Jesus knew the man had been a long time infirm. John does not tell us how He knew, but what need is there to conjecture when He Himself knew "what was in man." Could He not know this by reason of His omniscient nature? Jesus' question to the man is probably to call the attention of the crowd to the miracle He is about to perform. The Lord's question was also to arouse hope in the heart of the man, but the man is resigned to hopelessness. The man's answer seems to say, "Sir, it is not a question of whether I want to be healed or not, but it is a question of opportunity or inopportunity."

Although verses 3b and 4 seem to be the invention of some scribe who inserted them in late manuscripts, verse 7 tells us the water was disturbed in some manner. The man felt there was some therapeutic value in the bubbling water. This should present no problem, for today we have our "whirlpool baths," and our mineral springs, etc. This invalid's problem was that no one would help him into the pool. The word he used for put is *ballo*, and usually means to throw. Perhaps the man means he has no one to take him, even roughly if need be, and roll him off his pallet into the pool. Whatever be the case it is plain that the man expresses no faith. As Lenski says, "Here is a plain instance where the miracle precedes the faith . . ."

It is strange to some commentators that Jesus would heal anyone without some evidence of faith. What of the widow's son at Nain — of Lazarus — of Jairus' daughter? After Jesus commanded the man, "Get up, pick up your pallet and walk," verse 9 informs us the man was made whole immediately. John's use of the particular adverb "straightway" seems to indicate his desire to emphasize the immediacy of the miracle. Note also the completeness of the cure. An invalid who had not walked in thirty-eight years arises to walk at once. There is no experimenting, no learning all over to walk again.

The last phrase of verse 9, "Now it was the Sabbath on that day," is very significant. Surely Jesus knew of the absurdly strict Sabbath laws of the Pharisees. Why then would He open Himself to controversy by commanding this man to carry his bed on the Sabbath? We should like to quote here a paragraph from R. C. Foster's *Studies in the Life of Christ*, Vol. 1, page 246.

“Why did Jesus heal the man on the Sabbath day, if He knew it would bring such bitter criticism upon Him? Jesus made a deliberate choice in the whole matter as to the man and the time, for He approached the man, and He commanded the man to take up his bed and carry it home, even though He knew that the sight of this man carrying such a burden through the Sabbath day crowds which thronged the temple would create controversy. The difference in the methods of Jesus is most pronounced: in Galilee, where such intense excitement prevailed over His ministry that it threatened to get out of hand, He counseled a leper to tell no one of his cure; here in Jerusalem which was so full of hostility on the part of leaders that even the people who favored Him only dared to talk of Him in whispers, Jesus boldly threw down the gauntlet to the cold and callous unbelief of the leaders by sending this man right through their midst on the Sabbath day carrying his bed in proof of the miracle. Moreover, Jesus did not attempt to hide behind the man when the storm of criticism arose. The man evidently acted in harmony with the will of Jesus when he immediately reported to the Pharisees who had cured him. This completed the testimony of the man to them concerning the miracle.”

In addition to the external evidence (omission in oldest manuscripts), there are three internal reasons for rejecting the spurious verses 3b and 4: (a) Miracles of the Bible are always connected inseparably with the gospel message. Neither Jesus nor the apostles healed primarily to relieve suffering. As R. C. Foster points out, the best way to show the unscriptural nature of modern faith-healers is to point to the fact that there are a great number of religious sects claiming to heal — yet they teach absolutely contradictory doctrines. If their so-called miracles are genuine, they make God the author of division, confusion, and thus a liar. Miraculous healing by the waters of a pool, without a gospel message, is unscriptural. (b) If people had actually been healed by the pool, then only the rich and the strongest would have been able to obtain. This also contradicts the tenor of Scripture. (c) Again Foster points out, “Four hundred years of silence concerning miracles since the close of the Old Testament emphasizes the miracles of Jesus.” Not even the great man who came in the “spirit and power of Elijah” worked miracles. If miracles were being worked by a pool of water before and during Jesus’ ministry, this emphasis is lost.

*Quiz*

1. What feast of the Jews is referred to in 5:1? Give reasons for your answer.
2. What does the identification of this feast have to do with Jesus' ministry?
3. Which pool of Jerusalem today is more likely to be the pool of Bethesda?
4. Give 4 reasons why verses 3b and 4 are not a part of the inspired record of John.
5. What measure of faith in Jesus Christ did this man have before his healing?
6. Why did Jesus choose the Sabbath day to perform this miracle?

## SABBATH CONTROVERSY

*Text 5:10-18*

10 So the Jews said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath, and it is not lawful for thee to take up thy bed.

11 But he answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk.

12 They asked him, Who is the man that said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk?

13 But he that was healed knew not who it was; for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in the place.

14 Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee.

15 The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who made him whole.

16 And for this cause the Jews persecuted Jesus, because he did these things on the sabbath.

17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh even until now, and I work.

18 For this cause therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only brake the sabbath, but also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

*Queries*

- a. Why did the Jews ask the man about his Healer?
- b. What prompted the man to tell the Jews that Jesus healed him?
- c. What does Jesus mean by the word working in verse 17?

*Paraphrase*

But the Jews told the man that had been healed over and over again, Today is the Sabbath day and it is not permissible according to law for you to take up your stretcher. The man answered, The Man Who made me well, that Man spoke authoritatively and told me, Lift up your stretcher and walk. The Jews asked him, Just Who is this fellow Who told you to take up your stretcher and walk? But the man did not know Who his benefactor was, for Jesus had quietly slipped away unnoticed because there was a great crowd there. Afterwards Jesus finds the man in the temple and says to him, Look! You are well, stop sinning lest a worse thing come upon you. The man went away and said to the Jews, It is Jesus of Nazareth who made me well! Now because of this the Jews stalked Jesus to persecute Him because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus replied, My Father is working even now on the Sabbath and therefore I also am working. On account of this the Jews were more determined to kill Him because He not only violated the Sabbath traditions but He also said God was His own unique Father, making Himself equal with God.

*Summary*

The Jews discover that Jesus healed the man and also commanded the man to break their Sabbath traditions. They increase their hate and determination to kill Jesus, for He has made Himself equal with Jehovah God.

*Comment*

Sabbath laws are legislated in Exodus 20:10; 23:12; 31:12-17; Jer. 17:21 (cf. also Neh. 13:15). An example of punishment for Sabbath breaking is found in Num. 15:32-36. Rabbinical tradition said one who inadvertently carried a burden on the Sabbath could sacrifice for his sin. But wilful disobedience brought interdict and death by stoning. These Jews cared not a bit that the man had been relieved of his long and helpless condition. As we



have commented before (3:1), the Pharisees had added manifold and ridiculously impractical regulations to Sabbath-keeping laws. Their purpose, of course, was to make a system of meritorious law-keeping, hoping thereby to attain righteousness. Mercy and love upon a hopelessly ill man was beside the point with them — someone had broken the Sabbath traditions and he must be punished. Jesus told the Pharisees later that they neglected the essential matters of the Law such as justice, and mercy, and faith (cf. Mt. 23:23-24).

The man did not even so much as know Jesus' name. But verse 11 gives us insight into the man's attitude. The Jews have attacked him for violating the Sabbath, but the man points out to the Jews that the Man who healed him had told him to take up his bed. It is not that the man is seeking to lay the blame on Jesus, but he thinks the Jews ought to see that if a Man was able to miraculously heal him, that same Man ought to be able to give commands concerning the Sabbath!

Contemptuously, in verse 12, the Jews asked the man, "Just Who is this fellow that told you to pick up your bed?" The Jews undoubtedly knew who the "Healer" was. They probably asked His name to get legal testimony to use against Him later. Who else was traversing Palestine healing the sick and restoring sight to the blind? The rulers of the Jews were not above reverting to deceit!

But the man could not answer (v. 13), for Jesus had silently glided from the midst of the great multitude gathered there. The word *exeneusen* comes from a Greek word which means to swim, glide, float. The crowd was the reason for Jesus' departure. The Lord's action here certainly shows that His primary mission was higher than the mere healing of every infirm body. Notice also from this instance that Jesus is able to heal even when the person does not know Him as Christ.

The present tense of the verb *finds* in verse 14 seems to indicate that Jesus was looking for the man. Now we see His higher purpose for this man — the healing of the man's soul. Most commentators think this verse indicates the man's illness was due to his previous sinful life. All sickness, however, is not the result of personal sin; but much sickness can be logically and scientifically traced to indulgence and immorality. Jesus uses the present tense again (continued action tense) when He says "Do not continue sinning." If this man now wilfully continues

in sin something worse than thirty-eight years of infirmity will befall him — he will be lost forever in the abyss of Hell to suffer eternal and excruciating punishment.

There are two views as to the man's running to the Jews upon discovering Jesus' name: (a) The man sought to clear himself with the authorities. He felt if Jesus had the power to heal, He also had authority to issue commands to break the Sabbath traditions. The man may have been referring the Jews to Jesus in all innocence. He could not defend his actions, but Jesus could! (b) He was ignorant of their intense hatred and determination to kill Jesus and unwittingly betrayed Jesus. Whatever the situation, the man's actions must have conformed to the purposes of Jesus for He did not chastize the man.

The antagonism of the Jews toward Jesus really began in 2:13, and was fanned by His increasing popularity in 4:1. But now it turns into a white-hot hate. They stalk Him like wild beasts of prey (indicated by the verb *ediokon*). Henceforth they will pursue His every move, seeking occasion to trap Him and do away with Him (cf. Mk. 2:23-3:2).

Jesus' answer (v. 17) definitely shows His recognition of Sonship early. In performing this work of mercy on the Sabbath, He is merely doing what His very own Father-God is continuing to do each day of the week (Sabbath included). The Father causes the rain to fall, the sun to shine and the grain to grow on the Sabbath as well as on Monday or Friday. Jesus, being equally a part of the Godhead, works also on the Sabbath. What a strange paradoxical contrast! The Jews, by placing legalistic prohibitions against work on the Sabbath, put a heavy yoke of meritorious work upon the necks of the people which they were not able to bear. Jesus, on the other hand, by doing works of mercy and love, found the genuine rest and peace in doing the will of the Father! As the Pharisees understood it, man was created to be a keeper of Sabbath laws — Jesus knew the truth that the Sabbath was made for man (cf. Mk. 2:27).

Give the Jews credit for more intellectual honesty than some of our modern "scholars." The Jews at least understood Jesus' claim of equality with God, and they saw the alternatives. Either Jesus was telling truth and must be worshipped as God, or He was a blasphemer worthy of death. Some of our modern "Doctors of Divinity" would have us believe Jesus' claims for equality with God to be a philosophy evolving from the second century church.

The word *equal* in this verse comes from the Greek word *isos*. The Anglicized form of this word is used in the English language as a prefix meaning equal. Thus, an isosceles triangle is a triangle with two equal sides. Paul used the same word (*isos*) in Philippians 2:6 where Jesus, "existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped . . ."

### Quiz

1. What does the Law of Moses legislate concerning the Sabbath?
2. Why would the man think Jesus had authority to command him to take up his bed on the Sabbath?
3. What was Jesus' higher purpose in seeking the man in the temple?
4. How does the Father "work until now"?
5. What is the difference between Jesus' view of the Sabbath and the view of the Jews?

### THE DEITY STATED

#### *Text 5:19-23*

19 Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing: for what things so ever he doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner.

20 For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and greater works than these will he show him, that ye may marvel.

21 For as the Father raiseth the dead and giveth them life, even so the Son also giveth life to whom he will.

22 For neither doth the Father judge any man, but he hath given all judgment unto the Son;

23 that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father that sent him.

### Queries

- a. What are the "greater works" of verse 20?
- b. To whom does the Son give life?
- c. What is the significance of honoring the Son?

*Paraphrase*

So Jesus answered the Jews, saying, I tell you truly, The Son is not able to do anything of His Own accord, but He does only those things which He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father is doing, these things also the Son is doing in like manner. The Father loves the Son and discloses to the Son everything which He Himself is doing; and the Father will disclose greater works than these which you have just seen. He will disclose these greater works to the Son in order that you may be caused to wonder. Just as the Father raises the dead and makes them live, so also the Son gives life to whomever He wills. Furthermore, the Father judges no one; but He has given all the prerogatives of judgment unto the Son in order that all men may honor and worship the Son just as they honor and worship the Father. The man who does not honor and worship the Son does not honor and worship the Father Who sent the Son.

*Summary*

Jesus claims equality with the Father, and bases His claim upon His power to give life and His authority to judge.

*Comment*

Jesus' answer to the Jews' accusation that He makes Himself equal to God is "Yes, absolutely yes." His answer is a tremendously daring claim that He does exactly what God does. He said much the same in 5:30; 7:28; 8:28; 14:10, and already implied it in 5:17. Unless He sees the Father doing something, He does not do it. Although He is on earth, Jesus is aware constantly of what the Father wishes to have done, and He fulfills only what is the Father's will (cf. Mt. 11:27; Jn. 8:29). Whatever Jesus does emanates from the Father. When, therefore, the Jews attacked Him for breaking their Sabbath traditions, they were in reality declaring war on God. Notice here that the Son sees all that the Father does; in the next verse (v. 20), the Father shows the Son all that He is doing. There is absolute harmony and oneness.

Verse 20 shows the active part of the Father in this relationship. The Father is not passive — He does not merely allow Jesus to discover what He can of the Father's will, but the Father discloses His will to the Son. Jesus then tells His enemies of the greater works the Father will show them. If the Jews are aston-

ished at the healing of a helpless invalid, they will be caused to wonder even more at the greater works to come. What are these greater works? Some think (a) Jesus refers only to the general resurrection and judgment; (b) others, that He speaks of specific resurrections, e.g., Lazarus, the widow's son, etc., plus the final resurrection of all and the judgment; (c) still others, that He refers to the raising of the spiritually dead, the raising of the bodily dead, and the judgment. The last interpretation seems to be more compatible with the entire context. It is interesting to note the promise of Jesus to the disciples (Jn. 14:12) that they shall do even greater works than Christ in His earthly ministry. Did not their tremendously fruitful labors in giving life to dead souls overshadow the Lord's restoring life to mortal bodies? How can making dead souls live be greater than restoring life to mortal bodies? When Christ seeks to give life to the spiritually dead, they are able to exercise their wills and reject life. But in the final bodily resurrection, *all* will be fitted with bodies in which to spend eternity whether they desire them or not — the saved unto eternal bliss, the disobedient to eternal condemnation.

The emphasis of verse 21 is on ascribing to Jesus equal power with God to "make alive" (as the source of life). The Israelites ascribed to Jehovah's being the source of life, especially having the power to raise the dead (cf. Deut. 32:39; I Sam. 2:6). Jesus is simply claiming again to be equal with Jehovah God. The emphasis of this verse is not on any particular resurrection of the dead, but upon the astounding claims of Jesus. Not only has Jesus the power to give life, but He also exercises the prerogative of arbitrary choice. He will give life to whomsoever He desires. In the light of the entire New Testament revelation we know that Jesus desires to give spiritual life to all who trust and obey Him. It is not the Lord's will that stands in the way of any man's eternal destiny, but man's own stubborn will (cf. Jn. 5:40).

The Father has also relegated to the Son all the prerogatives of judgment (cf. Jn. 3:17; Mt. 25:31-46). If the Son has authority to establish the church, to legislate its terms of entrance and its sustaining ordinances, He necessarily judges all who refuse His church. All who are not receiving life through His kingdom are necessarily condemned by their refusal (cf. Jn. 3:18).

Verse 23 seems to be the climax to this particular context. First, there is the statement that the Father and Son are equal in Person; second, the claim substantiated by equality of works; now, the result — equality of honor. To honor is to do homage

to, to reverence, to worship. Jesus is God! This was pointedly directed toward the unbelieving Jews, but every professing Christian ought to etch these words upon his heart! Any person professing to follow the One True God must also reckon with this very plain demand. This *must* be the test of every religious profession and practice, whether by individuals or organizations. Any that do not honor Jesus Christ as Lord are dishonoring God, and are condemned by this verse. Those who do not worship Jesus Christ do not worship God at all. Jesus Christ is ALL or nothing! He cannot be followed as a mere human teacher, nor esteemed even as a prophet commissioned by God . . . He must be exalted and worshipped as Creator, Redeemer and Judge.

### Quiz

1. How does Jesus claim deity here?
2. Give three interpretations of "greater works" (v. 20).
3. How is making dead souls live greater than restoring life to physical bodies?
4. Name two prerogatives which the Father has given to the Son.
5. Does any person honor God if he does not worship Jesus?
6. Can a Christian conscientiously belong to any organization which refuses to honor Jesus Christ as Lord?
7. Explain your answers to questions 5 and 6.

### POWERS INHERENT IN THAT DEITY

#### *Text 5:24-29*

24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life.

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

26 For as the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself:

27 and he gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is a son of man.

28 Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice,

29 and shall come forth; they have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment.

### *Queries*

- a. Will the believer be exempt from appearing at the judgment?
- b. How many resurrections are spoken of here?
- c. What is meant by "he is a son of man"?

### *Paraphrase*

I tell you truly, The one who hears and obeys my Word and trusts and obeys the Father who sent me, does even now possess eternal life. Such a one will not incur the penalty or sentence of judgment, but he has already been translated out of the state of eternal separation from God into the glorious state of eternal life with God. Again, I tell you truly, the time is coming and has already arrived when the spiritually dead shall hear and obey the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear and obey shall be made spiritually alive. For even as the Father is the eternal source of Life, so He has also given to the Son to be the eternal source of Life. The Father has given the Son authority to execute judgment because He is partaking of human nature. You should not be amazed at these claims, for the time is coming when all those who are in their graves shall hear His voice and they shall come forth; those that have done good unto the resurrection of eternal life with God, and those that have done worthlessly or uselessly unto a resurrection for sentence and condemnation.

### *Summary*

Jesus claims power to give eternal life to any who believe. He further claims power to resurrect and judge the dead — both believer and non-believer. The believer will live eternally present with God; the unbeliever will be condemned to eternal banishment from God.

### *Comment*

Those who will hear Jesus' teaching and obey His Word (14:15) may have eternal life. Although Jesus does not use the word obey here, obedience is implied in the word *akouo* (hear). If one truly hears Jesus, one will obey His voice (cf. Jn. 10:14, 16, 27). The one who believes in Jesus must also accept His deity

— that He came forth from the eternal Father. He was sent from God in a unique manner. He was, in fact, God incarnate.

There are tremendous implications in this verse (24). The man who trusts in Jesus enough to keep His Word will not come into condemnation. In other words, the Christian is even now in a state of eternal life. He is restricted, to be sure, having to dwell in an earthly tabernacle (cf. II Cor. 5:1-8; Phil. 1:21-24), but he enjoys a present salvation. The believer (from the moment of his acceptance of the gospel) passes out of the state of a living death (Jn. 3:18) into a present condition of eternal life restricted only by flesh, time and space. But when this mortal shall have been changed, he will put on immortality and incorruption (cf. I Cor. 15:42-58). The man who persists in unbelief is, even while physically alive, in a condition of separation (death) from God, and this condition, persisted in beyond physical death, becomes permanently fixed (Lk. 16:26).

This verse excuses no one, not even the sanctified, from the general resurrection and appearance before the judgment seat of Christ. All of God's creatures will be there (cf. II Cor. 5:9-10; Rom. 14:10; Acts 17:30-31; Rev. 20:11-15, etc.) Saved and unsaved alike will be there, but the saved will be clothed in Christ's righteousness and under no sentence of condemnation (Rev. 3:5, 18; Rom. 8:1).

The reader of this section of Scripture must be careful, for Jesus speaks of a spiritual resurrection as well as a bodily resurrection. Many scholars take the spiritual regeneration (Titus 3:5; Jn. 3:1-8, etc.) or the new birth to be the first resurrection, and the future resurrection of the body to be the second resurrection.

How is it possible for a man to be dead while physically alive? What is a spiritual resurrection? Notice that the prodigal son was said to have been dead when separated or alienated from his father, but alive upon his repentance and return to the father's house (Lk. 15:32). The Gentiles were said to have been dead while living in an unregenerate condition (Eph. 2:1; 5:14) but made alive in Christ. Thus, the one who has sinned (and all have sinned, Rom. 3:23) has incurred the sentence of God upon sin, which is death or separation from God Who is the only source of life. The sinner is, in reality, dead — alienated from God, (cf. Isa. 59:2; Ezek. 18:4, 20; Rom. 6:23). But, as Jesus says in verses 24 and 25, the time has come that all who are spiritually dead may hear His voice, obey it and be quickened (made alive)



from the dead. Notice the following comparison:

*First Resurrection* (Spiritual)

John 5:24

Time has come when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God . . . and live and not come into condemnation.

Revelation 20:5b-6

This is the first resurrection. Blessed is he that hath part in the first resurrection; over these the second death hath no power.

*Second Resurrection* (General, Bodily)

John 5:28

Time is coming when all who are in tombs will hear His voice and come out — the good unto resurrection of life — evil unto resurrection of condemnation.

Revelation 20:13-15

And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

Verse 26 is a continuation of the preceding thought. Just as the Father is inherently the source of all life, so also is the Son. The Son has been sent to reveal the way of life eternal. Incidentally, in so doing He demonstrated Himself also, through miracles, to be the source and regulator of all that is alive in the physical creation.

Verse 27 has been the subject of various interpretations. There is no disagreement over the fact that Jesus is spoken of as "a son of man," or that Jesus has the authority to judge. But the commentators cannot agree upon the meaning behind . . . "he is a son of man." The absence of the definite article (the) before "son" perplexes them. The verse does not say "because he is *the* son of man." Below are the three main interpretations: (a) Jesus has been given the authority to judge because He is a son of man — "son of man" being a Messianic title (cf. Dan.

7:13; Mt. 12:8; Mk. 8:31; Lk. 21:27; Rev. 1:13; etc.). This would be synonymous with "the Son of man." (b) Jesus has been given the authority to judge because He appeared in human form, presented the gospel, and necessarily judges all who reject His message. By his appearance among men in man's form, men were caused to stumble and to think His claims absurd. Thus He judges because He is a son of man. "The eternal love condemns no one because he is a sinner; . . . it leaves it to men to judge themselves through rejection of the Saviour who is presented to them." Expositor's Greek Testament. (c) Jesus has been given the authority to judge because He was born man and partook of man's nature, was tempted as man, yet without sin, suffered the limitations and weaknesses of flesh, and is able therefore to judge justly and mercifully. The last interpretation harmonizes more perfectly with other New Testament teachings (cf. Phil. 2:9-11; Heb. 2:13-18; 4:14-16). If our High Priest must be taken from among men, so must our Judge (cf. Heb. 5:1-10).

Jesus speaks next (v. 28) of the universal resurrection of saved and unsaved — the bodily resurrection where departed souls will be reunited with new bodies. He not only has power to supply spiritual life and authority to judge, but He also claims power to raise the actual dead unto new bodies fitted for eternity. The Jews were told to stop marvelling that He claimed to be able to impart spiritual life and to judge, for the day would come when He would raise their dead ancestors by the power of His voice. When that day comes, they will no longer reject His claims — then every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of the Father (cf. Phil. 2:10-11) — but too late for some!

Then (v. 29) will *all* men be given a body prepared for their eternal destination. Then will the saints be pronounced "not guilty" because they have appropriated to themselves the atoning blood of Jesus. Then they will be dwelling in God's eternal tabernacle (cf. Rev. 21:1-4).

It is interesting to note the word evil is the Greek word *phaula* which means worthless; vain, useless, and not necessarily "immoral" or "vile." The saved are those who have, by faith, done righteous and profitable works of truth. The condemned are those who have, by unbelief, done worthless, vain and unprofitable works of darkness. How *careful* one must be to occupy himself with works that are profitable and glorifying unto God! Even "worthless" and "idle" words will be judged (cf. Mt. 12:36).

The Greek word *krisis* (judgment) can mean either the activity or process of judgment, or the condemnation and punishment that follows the process. It is evident from the light of other Scriptures that the word means punishment in both verses 24 and 29, for while the saints will appear before the judgment seat of God, they will not suffer the punishment.

The Bible reveals that the judgment will be:

- a. Universal (Rom. 14:10; II Cor. 5:10, etc.).
- b. Individual (Rom. 14:12; II Cor. 5:10, etc.).
- c. According to the New Testament (Jn. 12:48; Rom. 2:2, 16).
- d. According to man's works (Rom. 2:6; II Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:12, 13).
- e. As certain as the resurrection of Christ (Acts 17:31).

### Quiz

1. How does the believer enjoy a present salvation?
2. How is it possible for a man to be "dead" while physically alive?
3. What are the first and second resurrections?
4. State briefly three interpretations of "because he is a son of man."
5. Which resurrection does Jesus refer to in verse 28-29?
6. What is another definition of "evil" as used here?
7. Name at least 5 characteristics of the future judgment.

### JESUS' OWN WITNESS

#### Text 5:30-32

**30 I can of myself do nothing; as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is righteous; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.**

**31 If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.**

**32 It is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true.**

#### Queries

- a. What makes Jesus' judgment righteous?
- b. Why would Jesus' witness of Himself not be true?

*Paraphrase*

I am not able to act strictly from My Own will, but as I hear directly from the Father, so I decide and act, because I have no desire to please Myself; My only aim is to act according to the will of the Father Who sent Me. So if I testify to Myself and My Own glory, apart from the Father, then My testimony is untrue. There is Another Who is testifying concerning Me, and I know that His testimony is true.

*Summary*

Jesus and the Father are absolutely One, and thus Jesus' judgment is righteous. He is therefore bound to testify to His own deity, or be untrue.

*Comment*

Jesus, in verse 30, re-states the fact of His oneness with the Father, as He had previously declared it in verse 19. The reason His judgment is righteous (just, infallible, perfect) is that He sees what the Father does, and the Father shows Him all things. As Wescott points out, Jesus' judgment is absolutely just because He has no regard for His own will in any judgment, but He abides altogether within the will of the Father. Human judges often do not know how to judge justly. They may at times seek their own will or let their emotions rule instead of that which is just and right. Not so with the Son. He is omniscient.

There are a number of interpretations for verse 31: (a) The sentence should be interrogatively punctuated . . . "If I bear witness concerning Myself, My witness is not true?" (b) "If I should testify to My Own deity without other witnesses, My testimony would not be according to Mosaic law, therefore, I adduce the following witnesses . . ." (the Father, John the Baptist, the Scriptures, etc.). (c) "If I bear witness to Myself, My witness is not true in your estimation.

It is more in harmony with the context, however, to assume that Jesus is making another claim to Oneness with the Father — in a negative sense . . . "If I should testify to Myself as doing these works independently of God I would be a liar, for I can of Myself do nothing, etc. . . ." The Jews had given indication that they expected Him to disclaim any equality with God (cf. 5:17-18), but this He could not do and remain true!

John 5:31 and 8:14 have been ridiculed for years by unthinking critics as "contradictions in the Bible." The critics, as usual, take Jesus' words out of context and interpret them, having already decided beforehand what He says. A careful study of the two passages *in their respective contexts* will show that on both occasions He affirmed exactly the same thing from opposite angles.

5:31

My witness is untrue if given independently of God.

8:14

My witness to Myself is true because I and the Father are One in knowledge and will.

In verse 32 Jesus is expressing His confidence in the witness of Another. This other One is even His Father, God. Jesus briefly introduces the Father as His witness here, and later (v. 36-37) elucidates. Jesus will rest His case upon the testimony of the Father, which the Father is continuing to witness through signs and wonders. When the Father bears witness to Jesus' deity, there can be no question — one can only accept the testimony, or reject it and judge oneself.

### Quiz:

1. Why is Jesus' judgment absolutely just?
2. How should verse 31 be interpreted?
3. Does John 5:31 contradict John 8:14? Explain.
4. What is the significance of verse 32?

## JOHN THE BAPTIST'S WITNESS

*Text 5:33-35*

**33 Ye have sent unto John, and he hath borne witness unto the truth.**

**34 But the witness which I receive is not from man: howbeit I say these things, that ye may be saved.**

**35 He was the lamp that burneth and shineth; and ye were willing to rejoice for a season in his light.**

### Queries

- a. Why does He not receive witness from man?
- b. How did they rejoice in the Baptist's light?

*Paraphrase*

You yourselves have sent unto John, and he has testified the truth concerning me. Although I am not dependent upon mere man for witness, I am telling you these things in order that you might accept John's witness and be saved. John was the lamp that was burning and shining to guide you to the Way, and you were willing for a time to bask yourselves in his light.

*Summary*

Since they stumble at His self-witnessing, He refers them to John the Baptist's witness that they might be led to accept Him.

*Comment*

They had, indeed, sent unto John asking him of his preaching (1-19), and John confessed to the truth (1:20, 26, 29, 35, 36, etc.) that Jesus was the Son of God. John also testified that Jesus and the Father were one (3:31-36).

On the other hand, Jesus did not need any mortal to take the witness stand on His behalf. He could call upon divine witness. Yet, because of the hardness of their hearts and their spiritual blindness, He urged them to consider John's witness. The Baptist's witness was true, and they had shown some interest in his message at first (v. 35b).

Barclay gives an interesting analogous comparison of John the Baptist and a lamp: (a) A lamp bears a borrowed light. It is not the source of light, but is lit. (b) John's message was warm — not coldly intellectual or ritualistic. (c) John had light — light guides — he guided men to repent in preparation for the coming King and His kingdom. (d) A lamp burns itself out. John decreased while Jesus increased — the true witness for God burns himself out in the service of God.

The emphasis upon the attracting nature of the lamp is in this passage also. The Jews flocked to John the Baptist in the beginning of his ministry, just as insects flock to a lamp (cf. Mt. 3:5; 21:26; Mk. 1:5; 6:20; Lk. 3:15). They rejoiced in his message (of the coming Messiah) until that light turned upon them and revealed their worldliness and sin. They were also attracted to John because of his eccentric and spectacular mode of dress, life, and the presentation of his message. The spectacular in John's ministry soon lost its drawing attraction, however,

when he boldly challenged the nation to "bring forth fruits worthy of repentance," and they rejected him (cf. Mk. 6:19; Lk. 7:24-35). There are people like that in every age. As long as a preacher will make himself or the gospel into a spectacle they will "rejoice for a season in his light" (the spectacle), but once the light illumines their unworthiness and pricks their consciences by openly denouncing their sins, they haughtily reject both the preacher and the message (cf. II Tim. 4:1-4).

### Quiz

1. Where is the record of the Baptist's witness to Jesus?
2. Why did Jesus call their attention to the witness of John?
3. How is John "the lamp burning and shining"?
4. How did the Jews "rejoice in his light" for only a "season"?

### THE FATHER'S WITNESS

#### *Text 5:36-38*

**36 But the witness which I have is greater than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to accomplish, the very works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.**

**37 And the Father that sent me, he hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his form.**

**38 And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he sent, him ye believe not.**

### Queries

- a. What works did Jesus accomplish (v. 36)?
- b. Why had they not heard the Father's voice nor seen His form?
- c. How does the Word of God abide in a person (v. 38)?

### Paraphrase

But I have continually the witness of One Who is greater than John the Baptist, for the miraculous works which the Father has given unto Me to complete, these very works which I am doing are bearing witness concerning Me that the Father has sent Me. And the Father Who sent Me has Himself testified concerning Me. You have never at any time heard His voice nor perceived what He is like; and because you do not believe and obey

Him Whom the Father has sent, you do not have the Father's life-giving Word dwelling within you.

### *Summary*

The miracles of Jesus and the testimony of the Father are now introduced as the "greater witness". Rejection of Jesus by the Jews gives evidence of their ignorance of God. Furthermore, by rejecting Him they show their hearts to be bereft of God's Word.

### *Comment*

The miracles of Jesus are undeniable evidence for His deity. Nicodemus could not deny them (Jn. 3:2); Jesus' own brothers admitted them as factual (Jn. 7:3); and the Jewish rulers could not deny the miracles of the apostles (Acts 4:16). But they would not accept Jesus as the Son of God. This is a strange dilemma! Jesus said that the very miracles He *was then doing* (present tense — continuing action) were testifying on behalf of His Sonship. He undoubtedly had in mind especially the lame man just healed by the pool of Bethesda.

The Son had previously introduced the Father as a witness (v. 32). Following that, He introduced two very obvious witnesses (John the Baptist and His own miracles) to ease their animosity against His claiming the Father as a witness. The Jews should have accepted these obvious witnesses.

Verse 37 is a connecting verse. By this verse the witness of the Father is inseparably connected with both Jesus' miracles (v. 36) and the Scriptures (vs. 38-39). But what does Jesus mean by "Ye have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen his form"? It is evident that He does not mean literal failure to hear and see, for some had heard His voice at Jesus' baptism (cf. Mt. 3:17; Mk. 1:11; Lk. 3:22) on the Mount of Transfiguration (cf. Mt. 17:5-6; Mk. 9:7; Lk. 9:35) and in the Temple area (Jn. 12:28). Jesus is referring to spiritual hearing and spiritual perception (cf. I Jn. 4:12).

Their failure to hear and see God has also special connection with their refusal to hear and discern Jesus as God incarnate (v. 38): "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9; cf. also Jn. 1:14; II Cor. 4:4; 5:19; Heb. 1:3). Had God's revelation by types, shadows, prophecies and promises (Old Testament) gained possession of their hearts, they would have readily accepted Jesus as Emmanuel (God with us). It is



significant that Jesus makes acceptance of Himself the condition of the indwelling of God's Word. Except a man accept Jesus as the Son of the living God he has no part with God's Word—neither its commands nor its promises (cf. I Jn. 4:15; 5:1, 9:12).

### Quiz

1. Give three Scripture references to show that miracles of Jesus cannot be denied as factual.
2. In what two ways has the Father witnessed concerning Jesus?
3. In what sense had the Jews not heard or seen the Father?
4. Why did God's Word not abide in the Jews?

## THE WITNESS OF THE SCRIPTURES

### Text 5:39-47

39 Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me;  
40 and ye will not come to me, that ye may have life.

41 I receive not glory from men.

42 But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in yourselves.

43 I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.

44 How can ye believe, who receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh from the only God ye seek not?

45 Think not that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, on whom ye have set your hope.

46 For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote of me.

47 But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?

### Queries

- a. Why did the Jews search the Scriptures?
- b. Why would Jesus not accuse them?
- c. Where did Moses write concerning Jesus?

### Paraphrase

You are searching the Scriptures because you think you have eternal life through searching them; and these very Scriptures which you search so diligently are testifying of Me. But still, you are not willing to come unto Me so that you might have eternal

life. The glory of men is not My motive in making these claims to deity, but I know you do not receive Me because you do not have the love of God in your hearts. I have come with the authority and nature of My Father, and you do not receive me, but if another come in his own authority and seeking the glory of men, you will accept him. How is it possible for you to believe, seeing that you are always seeking approval from one another, and not the approval of the only true God? Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father, for Moses, the very person upon whom you have built your hopes, he is the one accusing you. If you really believed Moses you would believe in Me, for he wrote concerning Me. But if you do not believe what Moses wrote concerning Me in the Scriptures, how can you believe what I say?

### Summary

The incomparable and irrefutable witness of the Scriptures is called to testify to the deity of Jesus. This same testimony also produces judgment upon the unbelieving Jew.

### Comment

The Greek verb *eraunte* (search) of verse 39 may be interpreted two ways. It may be either in the indicative mood (mood of stating a fact) or in the imperative mood (mood of command). The verb has been translated both "Ye are searching the scriptures . . ." and "Search the scriptures . . ." The context, however calls for the indicative mood rather than the imperative for the following reasons: (a) They were searching the Scriptures for a reason, e.g., "because ye think, etc. . . ." which would preclude the necessity for a command for them to search the scriptures. (b) Jesus is basing His whole argument as to their unbelief on their perverted use of the Scriptures. (c) The practice of the Jews at that time was to study each word minutely, and to build absurd mystical and allegorical interpretations around these word studies.

With all their diligent searching, their tedious allegorical interpretations, and their rote memorization of the Law, the Jews rejected the Messiah when He came to them. There are at least two reasons for this: (a) Their minds were made up as to what the Messiah must be before they read the Scriptures. Then they read the prophecies and perverted them to conform to their prejudiced ideals. (b) They were Bibliolatrists (Bible

worshippers): they worshipped the words of the Bible. The Bible should NOT be worshipped. Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life—the Bible is merely the INSPIRED RECORD of God's revelation. The true function of the Scripture is expressed by Jesus Himself, "These are they which testify concerning me." Only when we have the Scriptures in our minds and written on our hearts (cf. Heb. 8:10)—only when they bring us into a personal relationship of trust and obedience to the Person of Christ do we have life from them. Entrance into the promises of God's Word comes by the free gift of God, but only to those who have become sons of God through the adoption covenant recorded in the New Testament, i.e., the plan of salvation.

Verse 40 very definitely shows salvation to be more than a passive acceptance of a "sovereign, irresistible grace" of God. Jesus affirms the free will of man. Man is partially responsible for his own eternal destiny (cf. Jn. 7:17; 8:44).

Jesus rebuked the Jews for their superstitious and fruitless searching of the Scriptures in verses 39-40. The Jews then probably reasoned: "He is angry because we did not give Him our praise and approval for healing on the Sabbath." Jesus anticipates their reasoning and answers, "I receive not the glory of men." What the Lord is saying is this, "I am not making these claims to deity and doing these works for ambition's sake (to win the applause of men). I am claiming deity and showing you your error because I want to save you" (cf. Jn. 5:34). The statement of verse 41 does not mean that we should refuse to praise the name of Christ. Christ's *motive* in doing His works and making His claims was not selfish glory-seeking, but deep self-sacrificing love. This very sacrificial motive, however, earned for Him exaltation from God and praise from men (cf. Phil. 2:5-11).

What was the real reason for their failure to acknowledge Him as the Messiah? It was not that He was a praise-seeker. The real reason was their lack of the love of God in their hearts (cf. I Jn. 2:5; 4:7-9; Rom. 5:5-8). They had no real spiritual knowledge of God or love for God's will and purpose; thus it was impossible for them to recognize the presence of God in Christ.

Verse 43 shows the correctness of the statement of verse 42 (complete lack of fellowship of the Jews with God's will). Jesus

came in the effulgence of God's glory and was the very image of His substance, but they rejected Him. If a mortal comes in his own authority, patterning his programs after their desires, they will receive him. Jesus may have had in mind all the false Christs and insurrectionists who came before Him, and would come after Him (cf. Acts 5:36-37). The worldling offers men a comparatively easy and glorious path to fame or satisfaction. Jesus offers only the strait (confined) and humiliating road to satisfaction.

"The root of their unbelief was their earthly idea of glory, what they could win or bestow. This incapacitated them from seeing the glory of Christ, which was divine and heavenly, which men could not give or remove" (The Expositor's Greek Testament). According to verse 44 the Jews made the praise and glory of men their goal and standard. So long as they sought only the praise of men and measured themselves by human comparisons it was impossible for them to believe (cf. II Cor. 10:12) . . . they were, by such action, "without understanding". In order to trust in the mercy of God and believe His promises one must *need* to believe in God. One can only *need* to believe in God when one has compared himself with God and has seen his lost estate. The next step one must take is to desire the approval, or praise, of God and His salvation. The Jews were not interested in God's approval (cf. Mt. 6:1ff; Mt. 23:5; Jn. 12:43).

Jesus says in verse 45; "Do not complacently suppose that in rejecting Me you have done away with the possibility of being accused before God! The very Moses in whom you base your hopes will accuse you through his writings, for he prophesied of My deity which you have rejected". The Greek word *kategoroso* has been translated accuse here. It is a composite of *kata* (against) and *agoreuo* (speak in the public assembly), hence, bring a public accusation against. We have the English word categorize from this word.

Jesus would not need to condemn or accuse them for their rejection of Him, since the prophesied Messiah of the Pentateuch would cause their esteemed Moses to condemn them. In spite of their claiming to be the disciples of Moses (Jn. 9:28), they did not believe his writings.

Verse 46 is another of the numerous places where Jesus bears witness to the fact that Moses was the author of some portion of the Scriptures, and further that Moses prophesied concerning the

Christ. In other instances, Jesus establishes Moses as the author of the Pentateuch (cf. Lk. 24:44).

If they had believed Moses they would have believed Him (v. 46). The converse is now given — if they believe not the words Moses has written how shall they believe the words of Jesus? If they could not believe Moses' words, and seek the approval of God — how could they believe the words of Christ which came to them without the recommendation of use and age?

That which had been the greatest advantage and privilege of the Jew (cf. Rom. 3:1-4) became their accuser and condemner (cf. Rom. 2:1-29). Knowledge carries with it responsibility. The greater one's privilege or position is, the greater is the responsibility and condemnation for failure (Jas. 3:1).

### Quiz

1. Is Jesus commanding them to search the Scriptures, or merely stating the fact that they do so, in verse 39?
2. Give two reasons why the Jews could not come to Jesus even though they searched the Scriptures diligently.
3. How does verse 40 refute the doctrine of "irresistible grace"?
4. In what way does Christ *not* seek the praise of men?
5. Why do they receive one who comes in his own name, but not Jesus Who came in the name of the Father?
6. How does Moses accuse the Jews?
7. Give two Scripture references which show "the greater the position, the greater the responsibility".

### SPECIAL STUDY NO. 3

Christianity stands or falls with the deity of Jesus. The Fourth Gospel is vigorously attacked by hostile critics because it so plainly declares the deity of Jesus of Nazareth. The unbeliever assumes that once he has destroyed the historicity of John's Gospel, he has destroyed the deity of Jesus, since the remainder of the New Testament (according to the unbelieving critic) makes no such claims as the Gospel of John.

We introduce here a term paper written by Miss LaDonna Woods, student at Ozark Bible College. Her paper is a very comprehensive and well-organized compilation of facts gathered from many sources. The author gratefully acknowledges Miss Wood's permission to reproduce the study. The reader will notice that Christ's deity is asserted and substantiated throughout the entire New Testament.