

and hide from the authorities for His own personal safety. He retired to Ephraim for seclusion and privacy in order to rest up physically and strengthen both Himself and His disciples spiritually for the tremendously burdening events about to transpire. When the appointed hour set by the Father arrived, He faced the authorities and death with divine courage.

Ephraim was a village located probably northeast of Jerusalem about fourteen miles. After resting here a while, Jesus seems to have gone on a brief preaching tour "through the borders of Samaria, Galilee and Perea" (cf. Map #6, page 117A). Between verses 54 and 55 this tour takes place and in verse 55 the passover is probably only a week or two away. Jesus would be near Jericho and the pilgrims were flocking into the city to make sure they could be ceremonially purified before the passover arrived (cf. Ex. 10:10-15; Num. 9:9-14; II Chron. 30:17-18; Jn. 18:28). The Sanhedrin undoubtedly had their subordinates out searching among the crowds of pilgrims for the Galilean and His disciples. They nervously asked one another whether He would come to the feast or stay away.

Yes, He would come all right—in fact, He was probably already on the Jericho road. And, He would die for the nation and His death would ultimately gather together the scattered sheep, even sheep not of "this fold" (cf. Jn. 10:1-16). But His death would not fulfill the evil and covetous aspirations of Caiaphas and his cohorts.

### *Quiz*

1. Why did the Council call an emergency session? What did they fear?
2. Why were the rulers interested in the temple and the people?
3. What is Caiaphas' solution? What did happen to the nation for killing Jesus?
4. Did Caiaphas become an unwilling prophet of God or did he merely make an authoritative pronouncement in verses 51-52?
5. Why did Jesus retire to Ephraim?
6. What did His death accomplish for the nation and those scattered abroad?

## EXPOSITORY SERMON NO. ELEVEN

### THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

John 11:1-53

#### *Introduction*

#### I. SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS INCIDENT

- A. This miracle second only to Christ's own resurrection.
- B. It has played a significant role in leading many to belief in Christ.

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- C. It has given strength and comfort to believers of every age.
  - D. It precipitated such a fierce animosity by the rulers against Jesus as to become their "point of no return."
    - 1. The multitudes were so taken to Jesus by this miracle that the rulers cast aside craftiness and secrecy in their scheme to murder Him (cf. Jn. 12:9-19).
  - E. It is also the climactic miracle of His ministry of miracles.
- ### II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS FAMILY
- A. They were some of the dearest friends of Jesus.
  - B. From other visits Jesus made in their home it seems that He went there especially to rest and be strengthened through the sympathetic reception He received.
    - 1. His half-brothers, His twelve disciples, the multitudes might all misunderstand Him, but here He was loved and cared for and His teachings were believed, at least by Mary and perhaps by Lazarus.
  - C. Relate the accounts of Luke 10:38-42; John 12:1-8.
- ### III. WHAT IS SEEN HERE ABOUT JESUS, THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE?
- A. His desire to be our Resurrection and Life.
  - B. His proof that He is our Resurrection and Life.
  - C. How He becomes our Resurrection and Life.

### *Discussion*

#### I. HIS DESIRE TO BE OUR RESURRECTION AND LIFE

A. His great love and compassion led Him to the tomb of Lazarus (cf. 11:3, 5, 33, 35, 36). It was His great love that led Him from the ivory palaces into a world of woe (John 3:16). He saw all the sorrow of the whole world that Satan wrought through death. His heart went out to man and He Himself partook of flesh and blood that . . . He might bring to naught him that had the power of death . . . and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (cf. Heb. 2:14ff). Our God is indeed marvelous and divine. Even though He knows He has the remedy for our tears and anguish, He weeps over the fact that we must even suffer the bitterness of death.

*Illustration:* A father, sitting in his study one evening, looked up just in time to see his tiny daughter get her fingers caught in the door as she tried to come into the room. The father was very busy and called to the mother, "You'd better come and look after this little girl." The mother came hurriedly, took her up in her arms and asked,

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"Does it hurt?" "Oh, it hurts real bad," replied the tiny tot, "but the worst is that Daddy didn't even kiss it." Our hurts seem easier to bear when we know friends are truly sympathetic. WHAT A GREAT CONSOLATION TO KNOW OUR GOD LOVES US AND FEELS FOR US.

B. There was a higher reason Jesus had for wanting to go to Bethany. He went to Bethany to do more than merely weep with the sisters—to do even more than bring Lazarus back to life. He went to perform a deed that would show beyond doubt His desire and ability to become The Resurrection and the Life. He expressed it a strange way. To thus give this gift of love He stayed away from Bethany until Lazarus had been dead a number of days. He stayed away *because* of His love for the family of Lazarus and because of His love for His disciples. An unbeliever calls Christ immoral to let Lazarus die just to glorify Himself later. But look at the great and glorious blessing Jesus gave to Mary, Martha, Lazarus, His disciples and the whole world—He revealed Himself absolutely as the divine Saviour with power of death.

### II. HIS PROOF THAT HE IS OUR RESURRECTION AND LIFE

A. To claim what Jesus claimed is easy (cf. 11:25). But to prove it is another thing! A Christian missionary and Hindu priest were each presenting the case for their religion. The Hindu priest had gone to great lengths to explain the mysticism and philosophies of concentration, reason and introspection. When opportunity came for the missionary to speak he said simply, "Could the founder of your religion say, 'I am the resurrection and the life?'" "Yes," replied the priest, "he has said that . . ." "But," asked the missionary, "has he ever proved it to eyewitnesses like my Jesus?"

B. Take a look at the evidence for this miraculous resurrection. There is no possibility of deception. (a) The friends of the family of Lazarus knew Lazarus was dead and thus their presence precludes the possibility of deception; (b) Lazarus was four days dead—his body was stinking from decomposition—this was not a case of "suspended animation," "swooning," etc.; (c) Jesus was away at his death and thus there were no schemes cooked up between them to deceive the people; (d) It would have been impossible to deceive Lazarus' sisters into believing that he was really resurrected if he had not been; (e) All present were convinced, believers and unbelievers alike.

There was no concealment, no secrecy connected with this miracle. It was done publicly, in open daylight and was witnessed by a great

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many people. The enemies of Jesus saw it and went immediately to report it to the Pharisees. Notice, however, they did not deny that Jesus had actually raised Lazarus to life. They could not deny it and, as a matter of fact, the very reason for their alarm was that Jesus had really performed such a miracle. The Pharisees did not investigate it, which they surely would have done had there been any question at all (cf. John 9). Instead, they later decided that Lazarus must be killed in order to do away with the overwhelming evidence for Jesus' claims.

C. Notice the very apparent restraint of the account of this miracle. This certainly goes to substantiate the claim for Holy Spirit guidance in the gospel record. Had any writer reported this astounding event without the guidance of the Holy Spirit we would have had pages and pages rather than a few verses. We would no doubt have had some report from Lazarus about his experiences in death, entombment, the other world, etc., etc. There would have been interviews, reports of the excitement about the tomb and words from the sisters. But **ALL OF THAT IS OF NO IMPORTANCE TO THE PURPOSE OF THE GOSPEL RECORDS.**

D. The conclusion is inevitable! Every circumstance in this account is plain, simple, consistent, factual and truthful. Jesus demonstrated His power over death and life. His claims are validated—His religion is the only religion—there is salvation in no other name but His—He IS the Resurrection and the Life!

### III. HOW HE BECOMES OUR RESURRECTION AND LIFE

A. He becomes the Resurrection and Life by faith—your faith in Him (cf. Jn. 11:25, 26). It is more than mere acknowledgment of Jesus as the "one that cometh into the world" (11:27). It is a *personal* trust and full surrender to Jesus as Lord and Saviour. It is saying with Peter, "Lord to whom shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

B. Faith is equally reason and will. Faith is wanting to believe as much as it is knowing enough to believe.

C. The rulers, although they had plenty of evidence for faith did not want to believe. If they should surrender to Jesus their wills—it meant they would have to change their deeds and motives and lives. They would rather cling to the performance of a few ceremonies and thus fulfill their religious obligations. This left them free (they supposed) to be morally as corrupt as they wished.

D. Faith means obedience. Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life to all those who will obey Him (cf. Heb. 5:9, and others).

## THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

### *Conclusion*

#### I JESUS DESIRES TO BECOME OUR RESURRECTION AND LIFE

- A. His great love and compassion led Him to Bethany and then to Calvary.

#### II THE EVIDENCE THAT *HE CAN* BE OUR RESURRECTION AND LIFE IS UNDENIABLE

- A. The conclusion that Jesus is all He claims to be is inevitable.

#### III WHETHER HE BECOMES YOUR RESURRECTION AND LIFE IS UP TO YOU

- A. This blessing of all blessings can be appropriated only by faith.

- B. What glorious words — what sweet and lovely words — founded on undeniable evidence! "I am the Resurrection and the Life, He that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die."

- C. The story is told of a missionary who had gone to Korea to preach. He preached faithfully for a number of years and then, while she was in the flower of her life, he lost his wife to one of the dread diseases of the Orient. Her last words to her husband, while the tears streamed down his cheeks, were, "Do not grieve for me, dear, you'll get me back." A month passed and again this missionary father sat beside a death bed — this time his little boy was dying. Again he heard these words . . . "Don't cry Daddy, Mommy said you'll get us back." Two Korean women were present and one was weeping softly. The other woman said to the one weeping, "Why do you weep?" She replied, "I am weeping for this poor father." The first one advised, "Do not weep for these Christians—they have a way of getting their dead back. Weep for yourself for you have lost a son and you shall never get him back." The missionary, overhearing this hopeless sigh, was challenged to many more years of zealous, fruitful preaching of the Gospel to the Korean people.

## THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

### CHAPTER TWELVE

Between chapters eleven and twelve of John's Gospel Jesus takes a preaching tour through the borders of Samaria, Galilee and Perea recorded only in the synoptic gospels. Jesus no doubt took this tour for various reasons. First, He desired another opportunity to preach concerning His kingdom to the people of the countryside. Second, there was a reward being offered for information leading to His whereabouts and arrest. His time was not yet come and He avoids arousing increased animosity of the rulers, which He would most certainly have done had He gone directly to Jerusalem. Thus He proceeds north from Ephraim (11:54) through Samaria into the southern border of Galilee and joins the multitudes of pilgrims coming to the Passover as they travel down the eastern side of the Jordan in Perea.

There is no way to be certain how long a period was involved in this preaching tour—perhaps a month, perhaps more, perhaps less. During this time some very important instances in the earthly ministry of our Lord took place:

- a. Healing ten lepers (Lk. 17).
- b. Teaching on divorce (Mt. 19; Mk. 10).
- c. Parables of unjust judge, Pharisee and publican, laborers in vineyard (Lk. 18; Mt. 20).
- d. Jesus blesses little children.
- e. Healing two blind men and meeting Zacchaeus in Jericho (Lk. 19).

These and other incidents take place before the final and terrible last week (cf. Map #6, page 117 ).

The activities mentioned in John 12 seem to cover about four days if our chronology is comparatively accurate. We shall discuss this further in our comments.

The theme that runs throughout chapter twelve may well be summed up in an utterance of Jesus Himself when He cried aloud, "Now is my soul troubled . . ." The ominous shadows of the cross are becoming larger and darker. Everywhere He turns He is reminded of the agonizing torture just ahead—in Mary's anointing, in the entry into Jerusalem, in the coming of the Greeks. This will be His last opportunity to witness to the multitudes—from henceforth (John 13-21) He manifests Himself primarily to His chosen disciples.

Our outline continues:

- II The Word Manifested to the Jews and their Rejection of Him, 1:19—12:50.

## D. Public Ministry, Third Year

5. Last Public Presentation of the Word (Beginning of the Last Week), 12:1—12:50
  - a. An Act of Love with Ominous Overtones, 12:1-11
  - b. Thy King Cometh, 12:12-19
  - c. The Great Paradox—Death Brings Life, 12:20-26
  - d. The Magnetic Cross, 12:27-36
  - e. A Perpetual Prophecy, 12:37-43
  - f. The Imperative Words, 12:44-50

## AN ACT OF LOVE—WITH OMINOUS OVERTONES

*Text* 12:1-11

- 1 Jesus therefore six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus raised from the dead.
- 2 So they made him a supper there: and Martha served; but Lazarus was one of them that sat at meat with him.
- 3 Mary therefore took a pound of ointment of pure nard, very precious, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.
- 4 But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples, that should betray him, saith,
- 5 Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred shillings, and given to the poor?
- 6 Now this he said, not because he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and having the bag took away what was put therein.
7. Jesus therefore said, Suffer her to keep it against the day of my burying.
- 8 For the poor ye have always with you; but me ye have not always.
- 9 The common people therefore of the Jews learned that he was there: and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.
- 10 But the chief priests took counsel that they might put Lazarus also to death;
- 11 because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

*Queries*

- a. Why did Mary do such an extravagant thing?
- b. What motive was behind Judas' proposal (v. 5)?
- c. What is the meaning of Jesus' answer (vs. 7, 8)?

*Paraphrase (and harmony)\*\*\**

Friday afternoon, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany which is just outside of Jerusalem. Lazarus, the beloved friend whom Jesus had raised from the dead, was living here with his sisters, Mary and Martha. There, in the house of one of the faithful disciples, Simon the leper, they made a supper for Jesus out of love and gratitude to Him. And the resurrected Lazarus was one of those who reclined at the table with Jesus. Martha, as usual, was cooking and serving.

Sometime during the supper Mary approached Jesus with an alabaster jar containing a pound of very rare and costly perfume. Deliberately she broke the neck off the jar and began to pour the ointment upon Jesus' head. Then she poured the last of the ointment upon His feet and wiped the excess from His feet with her hair. The perfume was very precious and expensive and thus highly fragrant; so fragrant that its odor filled the whole house.

Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' disciples (the one who was later to betray Him for money), stirred up the other disciples, saying, Why all this waste? This perfume could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor. And so all the disciples began to reproach her. Judas, however, did not say this because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief. He carried the general funds of the twelve disciples and was stealing from them continually. Jesus replied, Leave her alone! Why are you troubling her? She has done a beautiful deed to me. You are not to criticize her for thus having kept this treasure with which to anoint me. You always have the poor with you and there are always opportunities to good for them. But you will not always have opportunity to perform loving deeds for me, for you will not always have me with you as I am now with you and need your loving concern. Mary, realizing that I will soon be departing in death, has shown her love for me before my departure by preparing my body for burial with this anointment. And I say to you most emphatically that, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what Mary has done will be told in memory of her great love for me and faith in me.

\*\*\*Note: We have taken the liberty of harmonizing John's account of Mary's anointing with those of Matthew and Mark in our paraphrase in order that the reader may receive the full beauty and significance of it.



When the great crowd of the Jews gathered for the Passover heard that Jesus was in Bethany many of them came to Bethany. They came, not only because Jesus was there, but also to see Lazarus whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So it was, then, that the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus, along with Jesus, because he was the reason many of the Jews were deserting the rulers to follow Jesus.

### *Summary*

On His way to the final and tragic last Passover, Jesus pays a last visit with certain of His beloved friends in Bethany. Out of their love for Him they prepare a supper for Him. Mary, the devoted and discerning one, spontaneously expresses her adoration by anointing Jesus with very expensive perfume. Judas agitates the other disciples to criticize her, wishing he could have gotten control of the money represented by the perfume. Jesus commends her and predicts that her deed will be memorialized. The multitudes flock out to see both Jesus and Lazarus, the dead man returned to life, and the rulers plan to kill both Lazarus and Jesus.

### *Comment*

We have already discussed incidents which take place in the interval of time between chapters eleven and twelve (see the introduction to chapter twelve and Map #6, p. 117-A ). Although this anointing does not occur exactly within the last week, for convenience' sake we have placed it on our map of the last week (cf. Map #7, page 263 ).

Jesus probably arrived in Bethany on Friday afternoon—the Friday of the week before the last Passover week. We believe He arrived Friday because we count backward six days *before* Thursday (excluding Thursday). Thursday happened to be the 14th of Nisan for this particular Passover (the day on which the lamb was slain and eaten) and we reckon this as the day upon which the Passover began. Furthermore, we believe that Jesus would, at this time, make a point of *not* traveling on the Sabbath. The Sabbath began, according to the Jews, Friday night just after sunset and upon the appearance of the first three stars in the heavens. Although as R. C. Foster says, "There is never a single instance in the N. T. where it is affirmed Jesus obeyed this tradition" (of not traveling over seven-eighths of a mile on the Sabbath), we think He must have exercised a cautious expediency here that the Jewish rulers not be any more agitated than they were. He had just before (11ff54) withdrawn from sharply antagonistic environments to avoid precipitous clashes with the rulers.

And so it seems most probable to us that Jesus hurried to arrive in Bethany Friday afternoon to avoid breaking the Sabbath tradition and provoking the rulers before He might have an opportunity to rest.

Arriving late in the afternoon Jesus finds that some of His closest friends have gathered at the home of Simon the leper and are there preparing a supper in His honor. It is the other gospel writers that tell us the supper was held in the home of Simon (cf. Matt. 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9). Simon's leprosy, whether present or past, seems so incidental that the gospel writers do not bother to inform us. We assume that he had been previously healed by Jesus. The gospel writers do inform us that Lazarus, the one whom Jesus had raised from the dead, was there, and that his sister Martha served and his other sister Mary gave Jesus a very costly gift. All of this indicates the supper and was being expressed by all present in their own way and gratitude on the part of Lazarus and his sisters and perhaps on the part of Simon.

The word "therefore" in verse 3 gives us a hint into the spontaneity of Mary's deed. The spirit of love and gratitude that pervaded the supper and was being expressed by all present in their own way was dwelling also in the heart of Mary. What could she do to express her gratefulness to Jesus—she was not as good at cooking and serving as Martha. Suddenly she thought of the very precious and expensive perfume which she had purchased for use at the Master's burial. The Greek word used here is *nardou* (*nard*) which is a fragrant oil, procured from the stem of a plant that grows in India. One pound of it, due to its genuine (*pistikes*) essence and the great distance from which it was imported, was worth three hundred denarii (cf. verse 5) (about \$51.00 then, or, multiplied by 100, about \$5,100 now) which is about a year's wages!

According to both Matthew and Mark, she began to pour the precious *litran murou* (Greek for litre of myrrh) upon the Lord's head. This was usually the extent of customary anointing. Yet, so John supplements the synoptics, she used the entire pound (a large amount of perfume) and anointed His feet also. Abandoning the proprieties of the day, she let her hair down in public and wiped the excess of the ointment from Jesus' feet. It was bad enough to violate the custom of the day and loosen her tresses in public, but to wipe a man's feet with it was unthinkable! Her love and gratitude was uninhibited and unreserved indeed! She gave, not a part,

but all of her treasure. She would not cease until she had also laid her pride and honor at His feet in worship and adoration.

One can well imagine why perfume of such quality and quantity is described as filling the entire house with its fragrance. If Judas and the others had not seen Mary's deed, they certainly would have known when the jar was broken and its contents poured out. Perhaps it was the fragrance of the *nard* that caused Judas to estimate its value.

Whereas the two other gospel writers tell us that all the disciples were indignant and complained of what they called waste, John informs us that Judas was the instigator of the murmuring. Judas had persuaded the others to criticize Mary as being extravagantly wasteful. He even suggested that the money should have been given to the poor. But Judas was not at all interested in the poor! He was interested in Judas. He was the treasurer for the general fund of the Master and His twelve disciples. It seems that good people everywhere were eager to help Jesus in His ministry (cf. Luke 8:1-3) or, through Him and His disciples, give their alms to the poor. Judas was appointed treasurer of the little band. It is recorded here by John that Judas was stealing from the purse all the while he was keeping it. He allowed his heart to be obsessed with the inordinate desire for money — that was all his mind dwelt on. The very moment Mary began to anoint Jesus with the precious perfume, Judas began to estimate the value of the perfume and enviously criticize because he had no opportunity to get his hands on the money. We wonder why Jesus, knowing Judas to be a thief all along, allowed him to continue as the treasurer. Why does the Lord allow men to go on stubbornly in their own willful ways today—why does He not strike them dead as He did Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5)? For the same reason He allowed Judas to continue. He is longsuffering toward all men, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Judas was given a superabundance of grace and divine motivation to change, but he would not. Judas was not forced to steal. He was given every opportunity to exercise his free will to choose between good and evil. He simply chose to sell his soul to the devil for a few pieces of money. Judas was not only a thief, but he was a hypocrite. He pretended to be concerned for the welfare of the poor when he was not the least interested in them. Judas is not only criticizing Mary but is pointing his inuendo at Jesus, also, inferring that Jesus is allowing to be lavished upon Himself what should have been given to the poor. It is the way of sinners, should each of us admit

it, to seek to justify one's own sins by finding fault with another (cf. II Cor. 10:12).

Jesus rebukes the disciples for their carping at Mary. Mark reports that Jesus ordered them, "Leave her alone." Both Matthew and Mark report Him as saying, "Why do you trouble her?" The phrase, "Suffer her to keep it against the day of my burying," probably means, "Do not criticize her and destroy her happiness but allow her the joy of knowing that the purpose for which she has kept this precious ointment, the anointing of my body for burial, is now being accomplished." Jesus certainly did not mean that she was to be allowed to keep part of it for a later anointing of His dead body, for she did not keep any of it, but broke the jar and poured it all out upon Him here.

Evidently, Mary had purchased this costly perfume for the very purpose of preparing the Lord's body for burial. The plain predictions Jesus Himself made concerning His death (cf. Matt. 16:21; 20:17; Mark 10:32, 33; Luke 18:31-34; John 7:33; 8:21-23; 10:11, 17, 18) and the very evident hostility of the Jewish rulers gave Mary cause to expect His death soon. The other two gospel writers tell us that Jesus said she was "anointing His body beforehand for burial." Perhaps she felt, in view of the hostility of the rulers, she would be unable to perform the loving deed of caring for His body after death—so she would throw propriety to the winds and perform this beautiful deed upon Him now before His death.

The second part of the Lord's reply is also interesting. Mark records it this way, "For ye have the poor always with you, and whenever ye will ye can do them good but me ye have not always." Jesus would not always be with them in the flesh—but while He was with them in the flesh He desired their companionship, their support and their loving concern as He faced the horror of the cross. There would always be opportunities to help the poor, but there would only be a few opportunities to help the Son of God bear the burden of the cross. Yes, He would be with them always, even after His death by His Spirit, but during His earthly ministry He was with them in a special dispensation and needed their fellowship in a special way. As Hendriksen puts it, "He is telling them that just now anointing him in anticipation of His burial is more important than the care of the poor." It is always correct to worship and adore Jesus — it is never out of place. No gift given to Him is ever too extravagant. As one writer has said, "Where Jesus is anointed the

poor will never suffer." If all the Judases would become Marys the Lord's church could take care of the poor.

How the disciples must have regretted their actions here in later days. How they must have felt the shame of criticizing Mary when they themselves allowed these precious opportunities of showing loving concern pass by. All are guilty of it—especially Christians.

There is a story about Thomas Carlyle which illustrates this so very well. Thomas Carlyle loved Jane Welsh Carlyle, but he was a cross-tempered, irritable creature and he never made life happy for her. She died very unexpectedly one day. A biographer tells us of Carlyle's feelings when he lost her. "He was looking through her papers, he notebooks and journals and old scenes came mercilessly back to him in the vistas of mournful memory. In his long sleepless nights, he recognized too late what she had felt and suffered under his childish irritabilities. His faults rose up in remorseless judgment, and as he had thought too little of them before, so now he exaggerated them to himself in his helpless repentance . . . 'Oh!' he cried again and again, 'if I could see her but once more, were it but for five minutes, to let her know that I always loved her through all that. She never did know it, never.'" There is a time for doing and for saying things; and, when that time is past, they can never be said and they can never be done. My friend, is this you? Is it me? Are we like the carping, childish disciples letting golden opportunities to worship and serve the Lord slip by, or are we like the devoted and faithful Mary, giving ourselves and our treasures extravagantly, unreservedly out of our deep love for His salvation. If you have something to do for the Lord that you are putting off—do it today!

This anointing by Mary certainly expressed a greater comprehension and understanding of the Lord's teaching on her part than the disciples manifested. When He plainly predicted His death to them they refused to believe Him. They stumbled at the idea of a cross for their Messiah (cf. I Cor. 1:23). But Mary believed Him and did what she could to express her loving concern .

Matthew and Mark tell us Jesus promised that Mary would be memorialized throughout the world because of her deed of faith and love. And indeed she has been, for her story, as John recorded it, has been told in the four corners of the earth and men and women have been drawn to Christ through it.

Great numbers of the pilgrims going up to the Feast of Passover and of those already in Jerusalem learned that Jesus the miracle-

worker and Lazarus, object of His most astounding miracle, were in Bethany. So they came, in great numbers, to see both of these men whose names and deeds were on the lips of the hundreds of thousands gathered for the feast. They were intensely interested, as one might imagine, in seeing and, if possible, talking to Lazarus who had been called back from the realm of the dead. You would be that interested, too—especially if the former dead man had been restored to life by one claiming to be Messiah, King, Saviour. There before their eyes stood irrefutable proof to substantiate Jesus' claims.

Word of the swelling tide of popularity toward Jesus and the increasing following He was gaining quickly reached the ears of the chief priests. Immediately they met in their council-chambers and made plans to kill Lazarus just as they had before put into action their plan to kill Jesus. The evidence presented for Jesus by the presence of a living Lazarus was so powerful that great multitudes of the common people were aligning themselves with Jesus. The rulers could see only one solution—kill Lazarus and get rid of the evidence. As Bro. Seth Wilson puts it, "Can you imagine trying to kill a man (Lazarus) who will not stay dead?" Lazarus has been dead once—usually enough for most men—but now he is alive again and the chief priests plan to put him to death again!

The same procedure is used, in a less violent manner, by the enemies of Christianity today. Rather than surrender to the overwhelming quantity and irrefutable quality of evidence for Christ and His claims, unbelievers spend fortunes and talents of a lifetime trying to discredit the evidence.

Before closing this section we quote a few outlines of this anointing by various authors:

*"Reasons for recording this?"* by R. C. Foster

- (1) It was an extraordinary example of supreme devotion to Jesus.
- (2) The particular fitness of the event (preparation for burial).
- (3) It offers explanation for the fall of Judas (cf Matt. 26:14-16; Mark 14:10-11). (Matthew and Mark introduce the anointing where they do, out of chronological order, for the purpose of giving a connected account of the conduct of Judas.) (All parentheses mine.)

*"Mary's Noble Act"* by Wm. Hendriksen

#### I. Its Character.

- A. It was prompted by thankfulness . . . love answered love.
- B. It was unique in its understandingness.
- C. It was regal in its lavishness.

D. It was beautiful in its timeliness . . . Now was the proper time for Mary's noble act.

## II. Its Evaluation.

A. By Judas: "To what purpose is this waste?" (Matt. 26:8)

B. By Jesus: "She has performed a noble deed" (a beautiful work, Mark 14:6). ". . . what this woman has done will be told for a memorial of her" (Matt. 26:13).

*"In this action of Mary we see three things about love."*

by Wm. Barclay.

- (a) We see love's extravagance.
- (b) We see love's humility.
- (c) We see love's entire unselfconsciousness.

## Quiz

1. Upon what day did Jesus most probably arrive in Bethany? Why?
2. What is nard? Where does it come from? How expensive was the jar of nard which Mary had purchased?
3. What is the significance of the fact that Mary anointed both His head and His feet? What is the significance of Mary's wiping the feet of Jesus with her hair?
4. Was Judas the only one who objected to the anointing? Why did he criticize? What was the "bag" that Judas carried?
5. Jesus knew that Judas was stealing—why allow him to continue with the band of disciples?
6. Why did Jesus say, ". . . but me ye have not always."?
7. Why did the chief priests plan to kill Lazarus?

## THY KING COMETH

### *Text 12:12-19*

12 On the morrow a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,

13 took the branches of the palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried out, Hosanna: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.

14 And Jesus, having found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written,

15 Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.

16 These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.

17 The multitude therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb, and raised him from the dead, bare witness.

18 For this cause also the multitude went and met him, for that they heard that he had done this sign.

19 The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Behold how ye prevail nothing; lo, the world is gone after him.

### *Queries*

- a. What day did Jesus enter Jerusalem riding on the colt?
- b. Why the great excitement and popularity toward Jesus?
- c. Why did Jesus ride upon a colt to enter the city?

### *Paraphrase (and harmony)*

On the next day, which was Sunday, a great crowd of pilgrims on their way to the feast heard that Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem. This multitude had been lodging in Bethany and the environs of Jerusalem and they took the branches of palm trees and went out to join Him as He walked toward Jerusalem, shouting, Save us now! Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord—God bless the King of Israel!

And shortly, when they drew near to Bethphage, a small village on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of His disciples into the village, saying, Go into the village of Bethphage and straightway you will find a donkey tied and a colt with her upon which no one has ever ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone asks you, Why are you taking this colt, you shall reply, The Lord has need of them. The owner will not question you further, but will send them to me at once. The disciples went into the village and found the donkey and her colt tied at the courtyard door, out in the open street. As they were untying them the owner questioned them, saying, Why are you untying our colt? Then the disciples repeated what Jesus had said, The Lord has need of it! The owners then allowed them to take the animals. And so the disciples returned to Jesus bringing the colt and its mother along with it. When they got to where Jesus was waiting with the crowd some threw their cloaks upon the donkey and some upon the colt, not knowing which animal the Master would ride. Then some of the disciples assisted Him as He began to mount the colt.

All of this took place in fulfillment of that which was spoken by the prophet Zechariah, who said, Tell the daughter of Zion, Fear not, for behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (Now His disciples did not realize the significance of what was happening at the time nor that prophecy



was being fulfilled, but after the resurrection and glorification of Jesus, then they recalled that these things had been written about Him and that they had participated in the fulfillment of prophecy.)

And as He rode along, most of the crowd spread their garments on the road and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road before Him. And among the multitudes following Him were many who had been with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb. They kept telling others about this astounding miracle and witnessing to His power so excitedly that a great crowd came out from Jerusalem also and met Him as He approached the city.

The crowds that came out to meet Him turned and went before Him toward the city and the multitudes from Bethany were following Him. Together they raised a tremendous ovation and cried, Send us, now, salvation! Jehovah bless the one who is coming in the name of the Lord! Jehovah bless the kingdom of our father David which is about to come! Save us now from on High!

As Jesus drew nearer to Jerusalem, at the place where the road begins to descend the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of thousands began to shout for joy and praise God with even more enthusiasm and clamoring as they recounted loudly the many mighty miracles they had seen Jesus do. They shouted with one voice, Blessed be the King who is coming in the name of the Lord! There is peace in heaven and glory in the highest! And some of the Pharisees among the multitude, beside themselves with envy, commanded Jesus, saying, Teacher, rebuke your disciples and tell them to stop this blasphemous tumult! Jesus replied, I tell you that if these people were to cease acclaiming my Messiahship, the very stones would cry out in acclamation! The whole creation should be acclaiming my Lordship.

And as He drew nearer still to the city, He looked upon its magnificence and wept over it, sobbing, Ah, if you only knew, even at this final hour, on what your peace depends—but your eyes are blinded by worldliness and you cannot see it. The time is soon coming when your enemies will encircle your city with battlements and they will surround you and besiege you on every side. Your enemies will dash you and your children to the ground and they will so devastate your city that one stone will not be left standing upon another! This is going to happen to you because you did not know when God Himself was visiting you!

When He entered Jerusalem, with the multitude of thousands accompanying Him, the entire city was stirred with great excitement and people were asking everywhere, Who is this one to whom the multitudes are shouting and acclaiming king? The multitudes who

had accompanied Him were answering back, This is the prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee!

Then the Pharisees began to say to one another, You see? There is nothing that any of us can do now! The whole world is running after Him!

But Jesus proceeded directly to the temple and entered its courts. He looked around at everything going on in the temple and then, since it was already late in the evening, he went out to Bethany taking the twelve disciples with Him.

### *Summary*

Jesus heads for Jerusalem planning to deliberately force the issue of His spiritual Messiahship. The multitudes of Passover pilgrims, excitedly recounting His miracles, shout acclamations of Messianic triumph. The rulers, momentarily frustrated in their scheme to murder Jesus, can only watch helplessly and bide their time. Jesus enters the temple, surveys the activities there and then returns to Bethany for the night.

### *Comment*

"On the morrow" in verse twelve means Sunday—the day after the Sabbath. Jesus arrived in Bethany on Friday afternoon (cf. 12:1) and His friends prepared a supper in His honor, either that evening or the next evening (Sabbath). The supper was most probably on Friday evening while Jesus and the twelve disciples observed Saturday as a day of rest. Then on the first day of the week, about midday, Jesus started walking toward Jerusalem.

We believe, from a composite study of all four gospel accounts of the Triumphal Entry, that those whom John says "went forth to meet him," were the multitudes of Passover pilgrims temporarily housed in Bethany and other suburban villages of Jerusalem. At the Passover festival there were some two and a half to three million pilgrims and it would be almost impossible to provide lodging for that many people within the walls of Jerusalem proper. And so, many would find lodging just outside the walls in the villages. All pilgrims must, of course, go to the temple, obtain a lamb or have their own approved and sacrificially slain, purify themselves and do all the other ceremonial necessities connected with the feast. There seems to have been a multitude of people accompanying Jesus as He proceeded toward Jerusalem and later a great throng that went out from the city to meet Him and they also accompanied Him into the city. We have followed this interpretation in our paraphrase (which is also a harmony of the four accounts).

Some of those leaving Bethany with Jesus were eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Lazarus. They were telling over and over among the multitude the marvelousness of this mighty miracle. The news of this miracle had spread even into the city and eventually was the cause for the exodus of a great crowd from the city to meet Him (v. 18). Enthusiasm swept through the throng following Him up the dusty road. It was a happy, festive time. The common people were well aware of the claims of the Man from Nazareth. He had called Himself the Son of God—He had talked much about His kingdom. And if this Jesus was able to raise a man from the tomb who had been dead four days, one could expect Him to make all His other claims assured. Who could resist His power? He had not said emphatically that He is going to Jerusalem to assume the throne, but some of the crowd had heard Him talking in parables about the kingdom (cf. Luke 19:11-28).

The emotional tension was contagious! The entire crowd was caught up in the exuberance of the hour. Some of the more daring climbed the lofty palms along the road and flung down branches which others took up, waving them in His train. Palm branches were waved for rejoicing in triumph and victory (cf. Lev. 23:40; Rev. 7:9). Conquering kings and princes were usually honored in this manner at their triumphal entry—evergreen branches and garlands of flowers were strewn along the parade route. Josephus says that Alexander and Agrippa were received at Jerusalem in this manner. Simon Maccabeus and later his brother, Judas, were both accorded this honor (cf. I Macc. 13:51; II Macc. 10:7).

"Hosanna!" they shouted. Hosanna means literally, "save now, we pray." It seems to have been used as a prayer or shout of praise for help from on high. This is the way it is used in Psalm 118:25. This was a part (Psa. 118) of the great Hallel (Psa. 113—118) which was sung at all the great festivals commemorating triumph and victory (especially at the Feast of Tabernacles). Psalm 118 is emphatically a Messianic Psalm! The shouts of the people are replete with quotations from this Psalm. There can be little doubt that this multitude is anticipating in Jesus the long-awaited Messiah who is about to set up His throne in Jerusalem in all the earthly splendor of David (cf. John 12:13b; Mark 11:9-10). In essence, this is what the crowd was shouting: "Hosanna, now is the long-awaited hour of salvation and prosperity about to be realized through establishment of the kingdom of our father David. God bless this One who is coming with the authority of Jehovah.

Far from stifling this charged situation, Jesus gave approval and impetus to its continuation by riding the rest of the way into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey. Although the ass was symbolic of peace (cf. Judg. 10:4; 12:14; II Sam. 17:23; 19:26; Isa. 1:3), whereas the horse is symbolic of war (cf. Ex. 15:1, 19, 21; Psa. 33:17; 76:6; 147:10; Prov. 21:31; Jer. 8:6; Rev. 6:4), still by the very fact that He entered the city riding emphasized more strongly His Messianic claims. Furthermore, God had predicted such an event hundreds of years before through His prophets (cf. Zech. 9:9 Isa. 62:11). Hendriksen points out that the entire section of Zechariah from which this particular prophecy in verse 15 is taken is all Messianic. Says Hendriksen, "The daughter of Zion is told that its king, its spiritual Messiah, the One who will open a fountain for sin and for uncleanness (Zech. 13:1), is coming. To emphasize the peaceful character of his approach and of his reign it is added that he is mounted upon the colt of an ass. He comes as the Prince of Peace, not as a war-lord. Hence, the daughter of Zion should stop being afraid."

However, a meek (cf. Matt. 21:5) and spiritual Messiah was the farthest idea from their minds. As Jesus rode up the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives a multitude of people from within the city had come out to meet this palm-waving, shouting procession. Thus with a multitude following Him and one in front of Him (cf. Matt. 21:9; Mark 11:9), Jesus proceeds toward Jerusalem surrounded by exuberant, festive thousands, hailing Him as their Messiah-Deliverer. The ovations of, "Hosanna! Blessed be He who comes in the name of the Lord! God bless the kingdom of our father David which is about to come to us! Hosanna in the highest!" increase in enthusiasm and volume until the hills of Judea echo them back. The people by the hundreds strip the cloaks from their backs and throw them in the dusty road for the colt upon which Jesus rides to walk. Many also ran and cut branches from nearby trees (olive and palm?) and spread them in the roadway ahead of Jesus.

As always, there were the Pharisees, spying on Jesus and His disciples (cf. Luke 19:37-40). This was more than they could bear and so they commanded Jesus to rebuke this multitude for what they undoubtedly termed blasphemous conduct. They demanded that He silence them. Jesus replied, "I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the very stones would cry out!" There is more here than simply a highly figurative way of saying, "It is impossible to restrain them." It is a stern rebuke by Jesus toward the Pharisees that they

do not realize the significance of what is being shouted. Jesus is saying, "I will not restrain them for they are but speaking that which God decrees must be spoken." In other words, His Messiahship was something the whole Divine creation should have been acclaiming.

As He rounded Olivet and came to the point where the road begins its descent into the Kedron valley, He paused. The splendor of the Holy City with the afternoon sun glistening on the temple and other buildings caused the divine heart to quicken with emotional upheaval. His whole body was wracked with sobbing (cf. Luke 19:41-44) and He wailed, "Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace!" The multitudes were now shouting "Hosanna," but they would soon be shouting "Crucify him." They saw in Him now a worldly ruler but after His arrest, humiliation and shame, they utterly despised Him. Their eyes were blinded by their worldly desires to the fact that God had visited them incarnate in Jesus. God had visited them with salvation and peace, but they knew it not! Soon they would cry, "His blood be upon us and upon our children."

Jesus, by divine prophetic wisdom, could see ahead some thirty-seven years to the day when their shouts of exuberant joy would be turned to cries of agony and wails of despair. Visions of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D. passed vividly before His minds-eye. Josephus records the blood-curdling horrors of this siege when more than a million Jews were cruelly slain. Men were disemboweled; so many Jews were crucified the Romans ran out of wood with which to make crosses; women ate the flesh of their own children, and while other, equally horrible, atrocities were occurring, the city of Jerusalem was utterly leveled until as secular historians record, "not one stone was left upon another." In fact, this prophecy of Christ's and others was literally fulfilled when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. It came upon them because they rejected God's Christ. As the prophet said, "Sow the wind, reap the whirlwind." The Jews have brought all the misery and judgment they have endured through the ages upon themselves because they rejected the "Prophet like unto Moses" (cf. Deut. 18:15-19; Acts 2:22-26). How shall *we* escape if *we* neglect so great a salvation?

The multitudes were so carried away with their own hopes and carnal desires that it seems they were oblivious to the wailing and sobbing of Jesus. It seems strange that only Luke records the lament while two of the apostles who were eyewitnesses did not recall it.

The shouting, rejoicing multitude proceeded on into the city. The whole city was stirred up (cf. Matt. 21:10-11). This caused frenzied consternation among the rulers. The Pharisees began to say to one another, "See? Ye prevail nothing; behold, the whole world has gone after him!" They had laid careful plans which probably called for subtle but quiet watching and waiting to spring a cleverly conceived trap. But now all these plans have been upset by the overwhelming popularity He has gained. It seemed as if the whole world had deserted the leadership of the Pharisees and had gone over to this reactionary. All they could do for the moment was wring their hands in helpless frustration. But they would soon find a solution. They would side with the hated Sadducees in their bold and unscrupulous schemes.

Jesus proceeded directly to the temple. There, with the air of one in authority, He looked around at the things going on in her courts. As the hour was already late (cf. Mark 11:11), He left the city with the twelve and returned to Bethany where, it is probable, He spent most of His nights during the last week.

The Triumphal Entry is extremely significant. It is the climax of His teaching ministry. He approved of the surging enthusiasm of the crowd and their testimony to His Messiahship. In fact, He deliberately mounted the colt of an ass to emphasize what the people were shouting. The time had now come to make clear to the nation His claim to be its King. Jesus knew such a demonstration would cause violent reactions by the rulers. Better, however, to put them on the defensive and show the world just how satanic they were. We are not sure just why Jesus chose this particular day and hour—we do know that it was not by chance, but all things were happening in strict conformity to the divine timetable.

We do know that it took the greatest courage this world has ever known for Him to thus enter the city. The alarm had already been sent all over the countryside for His arrest. The cautious thing to do would have been to enter the city secretly, but Jesus entered the city in such a way that every eye was focused upon Him. Barclay says, "It was an act of the most superlative courage, for it was the defiance of all that man could do; and it was an act of the most superlative love, for it was love's last appeal before the end."

Indeed it was an appeal of love! He wanted the crass, materialistic multitudes to accept Him as Lord, Saviour and King of their souls. He made symbolic gestures (riding on the colt) and prophetic utter-

ances (Luke 19:41-44) to guide the people toward this end, but their ears had been stopped. R. C. Foster suggests the following attributes of the kingdom suggested by the Triumphal Entry: (a) Humility; (b) Love; (c) Power; (d) Righteousness; (e) Peace; (f) Joy.

Hendriksen outlines the significance of the Triumphal Entry thusly: (1) By it Jesus definitely indicates that He will die voluntarily; (2) He forces the Sanhedrin to change its plans to conform to His and the Father's; (3) He sets Himself forth in no uncertain terms as the Messiah; (4) He also shows the multitudes, what kind of a Messiah He is. We submit here a brief sermon outline entitled, "Behold Thy King Cometh Unto Thee."

### *Introduction*

- I. Describe Events of the Preceding Year of Popularity.
  - A. Teaching spiritual aspects of the kingdom.
    1. Many refusing to accept this interpretation of the kingdom.
- II. Describe the Immediate Events Just before Triumphal Entry.
  - A. Raising Lazarus, events at Jericho.
  - B. Anointing by Mary.
- III. The Triumphal Entry will be by divine purpose—no accident.
  - A. Time had come to publicly declare His Messiahship.
  - B. Time had come to challenge openly the public conception of the kingdom.
  - C. Time had come to offer Himself to the people as their promised king.

### *Discussion*

- I. He Came to Claim Lordship Over Men's Hearts.
  - A. He sought to win men by teaching and meek, lowly example.
    1. He is very unlike the type of king men expect.
  - B. He came saying, "Give me your heart . . ."
    1. By preaching and showing the love of God.
    2. By teaching that the kingdom is within.
    3. Prophets taught this over and over.
  - C. But man's heart is most difficult thing to win.
    1. Man will surrender almost anything but his will, heart and soul.
    2. Jewish multitudes would have willingly given Jesus their bodies in a death-struggle, but not their hearts.
    3. When a man gives God his heart it means that he can no longer do as he pleases . . . man will let God be his God as long as he can tell God what he himself will or will not do!

## THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

- II. He Came to Establish a Kingdom of Peace and Joy.
  - A. These multitudes were prepared to do much rejoicing when the Messiah should come.
    - 1. They were waiting for the Messiah to bring prosperity.
    - 2. For centuries they had endured enslavement and poverty eagerly waiting for the prophesied Messiah.
  - B. Jesus came as the King of Joy to bring joy in the Holy Spirit.
    - 1. Christianity is not just for the times of peace and plenty.
      - a. Rom. 14:17.
    - 2. Christianity is not just for times of freedom.
    - 3. There is joy in serving Jesus whatever be the economic or political status, because it is a joy not of this world!
  - C. Real joy is found by abiding in the Lord's word.
    - 1. Fruits of the Spirit bring joy (Gal. 5).
    - 2. Joy in bearing fruit (John 15:1-11).
    - 3. Joy in serving others.
- III. He Came as Saviour-Deliverer From Sin.
  - A. This was abundantly foretold by the prophets.
  - B. He came to accomplish salvation for all men.
    - 1. Not just a select few or a select nation.
  - C. His salvation was to be found in righteousness.
    - 1. Righteousness bestowed by grace and righteousness lived by obedience.
    - 2. Salvation is not from trials or tyrants as the Jews wanted.
    - 3. Salvation from sin, hell, judgment.
      - a. But men cannot see or feel these in this world and therefore they do not desire to be saved from them.
  - D. Indirectly, however, the nation could have been saved by receiving Him by faith (cf. Lk. 19:41-44).
    - 1. So today, godliness exalts a nation but sin brings its downfall.

### *Conclusion*

- I. He Came the First Time, Meek and Lowly.
  - A. Lowly in birth, life and death.
- II. But He is Coming a Second Time as King of Kings, Lord of Lords.
  - A. He comes with all the royal hosts of heaven at His side.
  - B. He descends with a shout and blast of the trumpet.
    - 1. With angels to render vengeance in flaming fire.
    - 2. HE IS NOT MEEK AND LOWLY WHEN HE COMES AGAIN!



C. He comes:

1. As the Householder demanding accounting of each stewardship;
2. As the King to punish those citizens who refused His reign;
3. As the Creator who will rejuvenate His creation by destroying the old and making a new for His newborn creatures.

III. And what is Required of a Man that He Let Jesus Become His King?

- A. Be born again into the kingdom.
- B. Behold Thy King Cometh Unto Thee—art thou ready to shout Hosanna, Blessed be the One who comes in the name of the Lord!

### *Quiz*

1. Where did the two-part crowd come from?
2. Name a least four factors which tended to build up enthusiasm among this multitude.
3. What does "Hosanna" mean?
4. What was Jesus' reaction to the behavior of the crowd?
5. Why did the Pharisees demand silence?
6. What event did Jesus prophecy in Luke 19:41-44? Was it fulfilled?
7. Name three significant things Jesus sought to accomplish by this demonstration.

### THE GREAT PARADOX — DEATH FOR LIFE

#### *Text 12:20-26*

20 Now there were certain Greeks among those that went up to worship at the feast:

21 these therefore came to Philip, who was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.

22 Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: Andrew cometh, and they tell Jesus.

23 And Jesus answereth them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.

24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit.

25 He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

26 If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be; if any man serve me, him will the Father honor.

### *Queries*

- a. Where did the Greeks come from?
- b. Why did they wish to see Jesus?
- c. Why did Jesus answer them thus?

### *Paraphrase*

Among those who had come up to worship at the feast of Pass-over were some Greeks, proselytes of the gate. These proselytes approached Philip (who was from one of the Greek-oriented cities of the Decapolis, Bethsaida in Galilee) with the request, Sir, we would like to see Jesus. Philip first consulted with Andrew and together they informed Jesus. It was then that Jesus answered, The hour has now come in which the Son of man is going to be glorified. Now I point out to you a positive principle of God's law—unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains a single, unfruitful grain of wheat; but if it dies, it germinates and yields much fruit. Again, another principle is that the man who loves this earthly life to the exclusion of spiritual life will ultimately lose his life for the earthly life is destined for dissolution. But to the contrary, the one who longs to be rid of this earthly life and loves the life to come will preserve it forever. If any man wants to serve Me, he must follow My way; and then where I am, safe in the bosom of the Father, there will my servant be also. For my Father will honor every man who serves Me.

### *Summary*

A group of Greek proselytes, intrigued with the teachings and spontaneous popularity of Jesus, seek Him with the purpose, probably, of learning His philosophy of life. Jesus answers them with the great paradox that He must die to provide Life and those who follow Him must die to self to appropriate that Life.

### *Comment*

No doubt Jesus returned to the temple courts each day of the last week from His lodging in Bethany. It would be the temple courts that would afford Him the largest, most sympathetic audiences. Furthermore, it would be here in the temple courts that He would be able to challenge the rulers to either surrender to His Messiahship or openly make their move against Him.

There seems to have been three courts in the temple of Jesus' day. The extreme outer court known as the "court of the Gentiles," the next court known as the "court of the women," and the court immediately surrounding the sanctuary known as the "court of Israel." Only Jewish males were allowed in the innermost court. The Gentiles were prohibited from all but the extreme outer court. Gentiles frequently became *proselytes* (converts to the monotheistic religion of the Jews). They are referred to in the Old Testament as "strangers" and in the New Testament usually as those who "fear God" (cf. Kings 8:41-43; Isa. 56:3-8; Mark 11:17; Acts 10:1, 22, 35; 13:16, 26, 43, 50; 17:4).

According to both Lenski and Hendriksen, the present participle in the Greek, *anabianonton* (the ones going up), means "those accustomed to go up" to the feast. This would mean the Greeks were worshippers of Jehovah according to the Hebrew religion. Out of despair and hopelessness brought on by their lifelong association with Greek philosophy and religion they were probably attracted to the Jewish religion because of its reasonableness and high moral standards. The idealism of Plato was cold, unfeeling and hopeless; the materialism of Aristotle was unreasonable and contrary to man's higher nature; the determinism and sensuality of Epicurus led to chaos and despair. The Hebrew religion of One True God, Creator, loving Father, the Personal Unmoved Mover of the universe offered a more reasonable explanation of the cosmos than their mythical, polytheistic religion. So they, like Cornelius (Acts 10), became "proselytes of the Gate."

They had come to the temple to worship during Passover week and had probably heard for themselves or through others of the astounding doctrines being taught by the Man of Galilee. Perhaps Jesus was in a section of the temple where they could not go, so they sent Philip to ask an audience with Him. Just why Philip went first and informed Andrew we are not sure. Perhaps Philip was not certain, as Hendriksen suggests, that Jesus would want to speak with them. To associate with Gentiles, especially in the temple precincts, would only incite the wrath of the Jews. So they both approach Jesus with the request.

No doubt these Greeks had been a part of the glorious entry of Jesus into Jerusalem the day before, either as spectators or participants. There were many questions on their mind. They wanted to know about the salvation this Galilean Rabbi promised — was it merely political and connected with His kingdom? When would His kingdom be established? What was His connection with the

God of the Hebrews—His concept of truth, of life?

They wondered about His doctrines of life and salvation and their seeking reminded Him vividly of the manner in which He was going to provide Life and Salvation for all mankind—the cross. It also reminded Him that the agonizing night was almost upon Him! The hour had come when the sinless Son should be glorified—glorified in humiliation. It was when the Son of man was lifted up on the cross that the glory and wisdom of God was made manifest; when the glory of God and His love would draw men unto Him. The cross and the empty tomb, foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling-block to the Jews, became the wisdom and glory of God! Perhaps the title Jesus used of Himself here, "Son of man," is significant, perhaps not. It was a favorite title He applied to Himself. It has certain Messianic significance from the prophets (esp. Daniel and Ezekiel), but He may have used it to especially identify Himself as the Saviour of all mankind.

Be that as it may. He proceeds to give an answer to the great questions that were perplexing the Greeks. We do not know whether the Greeks were within hearing distance of Jesus' speech or whether He answered the two disciples and they in turn told the Greeks. However His answer was delivered to them, it was rather enigmatic and paradoxical. It was in the form Jesus used most—a figure of speech from nature! Although this form obscured the message for those who *did not want* to hear (cf. Matt. 13:10-17) it made His doctrines very lucid and easily comprehended by those who did want to hear.

The doctrine plainly taught by Jesus is the *substitutionary* atonement. However, it was not nearly so plain to them as it is to us on this side of the cross. Just as the grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die to bear fruit, so must the Son of God give Himself up in death to make atonement for man and thus bear fruit by calling many to be sons of God through faith and obedience. They sought an answer to the question of salvation—He answered that man would be saved by His death. They sought an answer to the question of His glorious reign as Messiah—He answered that the Messiah would be glorified by death! All of this was prophesied of the Messiah (cf. Isa. 53, esp. verse 10). If He should not die, there would be no atonement and no salvation.

Next, Jesus turns to the question of man's appropriation of this substitutionary atonement which He shall provide. Man must make the things of this world secondary to the pursuit of the other world. As one sage has so aptly put it, "Life is more than a living!" The

man who makes food, drink, shelter and the vanities of worldly fame his ultimate goal is bound to lose, for this flesh and the world and its works are destined for destruction. To the contrary, the man who longs to be rid of this earthly tabernacle (cf. II Cor. 5:1-10; Phil. 1:20-24; II Pet. 1:12-15) and by faith looks forward with eager anticipation to the life to come—he will preserve (or “guard” as the Greek text has it) his real Life forever. The man who makes the getting of earthly life his ruling passion forgets God, forgets that the things of earth are temporary, forgets the judgment to come (cf. Luke 12:15-21). Compare other parallel Scriptures with this passage, such as Matthew 10:37-39; 16:24-26; Mark 8:34-38; Luke 9:23-26; 17:32-33.

Verse 26 is further amplification of the way man comes into the saving grace provided through the atonement. Those who desire to follow Jesus and become His disciples must, as Barnes puts it, “imitate me; do what I do, bear what I bear, and love what I love.” Men who desire to have the Life eternal which Jesus obtains for them must follow in His steps of self-renunciation and obedience to the will of God. Jesus died to bear fruit. His followers must die to self to bear fruit (cf. Gal. 2:20). When we crucify self we put to death that which must ultimately die and receive that Life which is Life abundantly. Thus the great paradox—to die is to live!

The concluding phrase of verse 26 is one of promise and comfort. Those who choose to follow Jesus, even to death, need not fear, for where He is there will His servant be. Jesus dwelt ever in the constant care of the Father and taught His disciples that they should expect the same care (cf. Matt. 6:19-34). The same promise was made in the great commission (cf. Matt. 28:19-20). Furthermore, the one who will leave all to serve Him will be rewarded by the Father. The word translated “honor” is the Greek word *timao* which is translated in other places, “honor,” “hire,” “value,” “reward” and other similar terms (cf. Matt. 27:6-9; Acts 4:34; Matt. 15:4 [children are to support their parents, not merely honor them with words]; I Tim. 5:17). When a disciple of Jesus leaves all to serve Him, the Father rewards with certain blessings in this life (cf. Luke 18:28-30) and the most precious reward of all—the crown of life (cf. Rev. 2:10; 3:21).

So in this brief discourse we have the gospel in miniature: (a) the glorification and substitutionary atonement of Jesus in His death; (b) the appropriation of that atonement by man through man’s crucifixion of self and following the word of Christ; (c) the safety and reward provided by the Father.

*Quiz*

1. Were the Gentiles ever known to have worshipped the God of the Hebrews? List some Scriptures to prove your answer. Were these Greeks such people?
2. Why did the Greeks seek Jesus?
3. Why did Philip not take them straightway to see Jesus?
4. Why would their request to see Him remind Jesus so vividly of His approaching crucifixion?
5. What is the teaching of Jesus in the metaphor of the grain of wheat?
6. How does the man who loves his life lose it? And the one who hates his life find it?
7. How does man appropriate the salvation provided by Jesus through His atonement?

## THE MAGNETIC CROSS

*Text 12-27-36*

27 Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour.

28 Father, glorify thy name. There came therefore a voice out of heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

29 The multitude therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it had thundered: others said, An angel hath spoken to him.

30 Jesus answered and said, This voice hath not come for my sake, but for your sakes.

31 Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

32 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself.

33 But this he said, signifying by what manner of death he should die.

34 The multitude therefore answered him, We have heard out of the law that the Christ abideth forever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?

35 Jesus therefore said unto them, Yet a little while is the light among you. Walk while ye have the light, that darkness overtake you not: and he that walketh in the darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.

36 While ye have the light, believe on the light, that ye may become sons of light. These things spake Jesus, and he departed and hid himself from them.

*Queries*

- a. Why tell the people that the voice of God was for their sake?
- b. How will He draw men to Him by being lifted up?
- c. Why hide from the people?

*Paraphrase*

Now my own soul is deeply distraught at the present reminder of my impending death, and shall I say, Father (if it be possible) save me from this hour? But (not My will but Thine be done) for this very purpose I came unto this hour. Father, I pray only that your name may be glorified. There came a sonorous voice booming from heaven, saying, I have glorified My name in the past and will glorify it again through You. The multitude standing near heard it and some said it had thundered but others said, An angel has spoken to Him. Jesus said, That voice from heaven came for your sake, not for mine, that you might have faith in me by this supernatural manifestation. Now is the critical hour coming in the entire history of the world in which it will be judged for its rejection of the Son of God; but at the same time and through the same means will the prince of this world, the Adversary and Accuser, also be defeated and rendered powerless. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth upon a cross of death, will draw all men who allow themselves to be drawn unto myself. (This He said to show what sort of death He would die.)

The multitude understood his figure of speech and said, We have heard teaching from the Law that the Christ lives forever. Why do you say in contradiction to this that the Son of Man must be lifted up in death? Who is this Son of Man of whom you speak? Jesus answered them by saying, You have the Light with you only a little while longer. You should walk in the illumination of the Light while you have the Light in order that the darkness of unbelief may not overwhelm you and imprison you. The person that walks in the darkness of unbelief is blind to his spiritual destiny. While you have the Light with you, walk and believe in the Light in order that you may become sons of Light and know your eternal destiny. Jesus said all these things, and went away and hid Himself from the multitudes.

*Summary*

The Greeks seeking Jesus remind Him of His impending sacrificial death. His sinless soul shrinks from the coming sentence of sin He must bear, but He is surrendered to the will of the Father.

The Father strengthened Him by a manifestation to the multitude. Jesus warns that His death will be the critical point in all history for the world and that the Accuser's power will be broken. He is the Light of the world and men must believe in Him and walk in His light to know their eternal destiny.

### *Comment*

The Lord now becomes more explicit in showing the agitation of His own soul which has been caused by the seeking of the Greeks. Their request has reminded Him of the fast-approaching hour when the barrier between Jew and Gentile will be taken out of the way. He is reminded of the moment when all men will be provided a way of reconciliation with God—He is reminded that the very purpose for His coming, just a few hours away, is death for all sin!

There are two major interpretations of verse 27. One makes Jesus utter a prayer similar to His agonizing prayer of Gethsemane, i.e., "Father, save me from this hour (let this cup pass from me), but for this cause came I unto this hour (nevertheless, not my will but thine be done)." The other interpretation places a question mark after the phrase, ". . . what shall I say, Father save me from this hour? No, I will not say that because for this very purpose came I unto this hour."

Either interpretation, as far as we can see, is in perfect harmony with other accounts of the Lord's deep feelings concerning the hour of the cross. The matter of punctuation (whether declarative or interrogative) is academic anyway, since the original Greek contained no punctuation marks. Jesus was tempted from the very beginning of His ministry, by the devil himself, to forego the way of the cross (cf. Matt. 4:8-10). Again, when Peter refused to accept the doctrine of the cross for the Messiah (cf. Matt. 16:21-28) it was a temptation that disturbed the depths of the Master's soul. When Mary anointed His head and feet with perfume at Bethany it reminded Him of His imminent death (cf. Jn. 12:7). So His agitated soul again considers the cross and He prays, "Father, save me from this hour (if it be possible), but for this cause came I unto this hour (and so my prayer is not my will be done, but thine), Father, glorify thy name." It was the same prayer He would cry even more strongly in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:39; Heb. 5:7-8). The shadow of the cross was upon Jesus from the day of His birth (cf. Luke 2:34-35). It was not the physical torture from which He shrank, but the curse of sin He took (II Cor. 5:21) which caused the Father to turn His face from the Son (Matt. 27:46).



There is one other interpretation of this 27th verse. It is based on the Greek preposition *ek* (out, from). It might be paraphrased thusly: "Father, bring me safely out of this conflict" (a prayer for glorification through resurrection from the death of the cross).

Whatever be the interpretation we cannot fail to see the unwavering determination of the Son to carry out the eternal purpose of the Father! (cf. Jn. 4:34; 5:30; Heb. 10:7, 9). The utmost concern of Jesus was to glorify the name of the Father. Throughout His earthly life He glorified the Father, but the culminating glorification was to be the death and resurrection of the Christ, and the establishment of the church. The death of Jesus was no accident. It came by the deliberate foreknowledge and counsel of God (cf. Acts 2:23; Rev. 13:8).

God's answer from heaven (v. 28) includes more than the approaching suffering. God repeatedly glorified His name through the miraculous ministry of Jesus (cf. Jn. 5:23; 11:40); but especially in the crises of Jesus' ministry: (a) The Baptism (Mt. 3:17; Lk. 3:21-22); (b) The Transfiguration (Mt. 17:5); (c) and here. The promise of future glorification includes the death, resurrection exaltation of Christ and the world-wide proclamation of the gospel of which Jesus was reminded when the Greeks sought Him in the temple.

God's voice speaking from heaven must have been a great booming, thunderous crash (cf. Exodus 19:16-20). Many of the multitude that stood near Jesus heard only the sonorous thunder-like sound and thought that it had thundered (cf. Acts 9:7; 22:9; 26:13). Others thought they heard articulate language, perhaps of an angel, being spoken to Jesus. John the Apostle heard the words and later the Holy Spirit caused John to remember and record them in his gospel.

The voice was not primarily for the benefit of Jesus (v. 30). But how could the voice benefit the people if they could not understand what was spoken? Evidently the sound was of such magnitude and extraordinary character that it showed itself to be a supernatural phenomena. Thus it was manifestly a supernatural response to the heavenly-directed prayer of Jesus. The voice was to engender faith in Jesus. To show that Jesus was in direct communication with heaven.

The word "judgment" in verse 31 is, in the Greek, *krisis* from which the English language gets "crisis" and "critical." The "hour"

of His death about which Jesus has been speaking and praying is to be *the critical hour of all the history of the world!* To quote Barnes, "Now is approaching the decisive scene, the eventful period—the crisis— when it shall be determined who shall rule this world." Satan had very effectually ruled the souls of men in ages past, especially among the Gentile nations. He ruled through ignorance, superstition, fleshly passion and fear (cf. Heb. 2:14-15). It is rather presumptuous for us to think we can understand the infinite relationships between the devil's domain and God's omnipotence. The devil is called here "prince of this world" and in other places "god of this world," etc. (cf. Luke 4:6; II Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; 6:12). But even in ages past, before Christ defeated him at the cross, the Scriptures indicate the devil's power was subject to the omnipotent restrictions of God (cf. Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6). Of one thing we may be certain—the death of Christ was the moment of "casting out" for the devil. Satan's power was broken when Jesus suffered the penalty and condemnation of sin for man. Satan is the Adversary (cf. Zech. 3:1; I Pet. 5:8)—the Accuser (Rev. 12:10). But the atoning blood of Christ which paid the debt for man's sins nullified the accusations of the Accuser and defeated the Adversary. The glorification of Jesus (His death, resurrection and exaltation) would be the supernatural power that would destroy the rule of fearful bondage the Accuser held over all mankind and would be the drawing power whereby the Son of God would set up His kingdom of love, righteousness, faith and hope.

Hendriksen has connected this "casting out" of the prince of this world (cf. John 12:31-32) with the "binding" of Satan for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-3), in his commentary on Revelation entitled, "More Than Conquerors." We believe Hendriksen has the most reasonable, sensible and Scriptural approach to the book of Revelation yet made. Mr. Hendriksen's view is that before the birth of Christ, the nations (all except the Jews) were in bondage to the kingdom of darkness—of Satan (by their own choosing, of course). There was no way for them, of their own merit, to break the shackles of the Adversary. But God spoke through His prophet Isaiah (and others) that those who were enslaved to darkness would one day see a great light (Isa. 9:1-7; 42:1-7—cf. Lk. 1:79; 4:16-32). The Old Testament prophesied that the spiritual bondage of the Gentiles to the prince of this world would be broken—light would come. Jesus is born and demonstrates His power to cast out the demons (emissaries of Satan) (read carefully, Matt. 12:29—note the word

"bind"). The work of binding Satan begins with the ministry of Jesus (cf. Lk. 10:17:18; Col. 2:15 and our passage here in John, 12:20-32). This binding and casting out or falling of Satan is in some way associated with the first coming of Jesus. It is immediately connected with the work of preaching the gospel to all nations throughout the world. The binding of Satan begins with Christ's first coming and extends *nearly* to His second coming (at which time the devil will be loosed for a short season). But the devil is not bound completely and in every sense. A vicious dog securely bound to a tree with a long, heavy chain can still do great harm within the circle of his imprisonment if a person becomes flirtatious or unaware by indifference. Satan is definitely chained, but within the sphere in which he is permitted to exert his influence for evil he rages most furiously and woe to the man who wilfully or indifferently steps inside that circle! In other words, Hendriksen believes that the Scriptures substantiate best the "amillennial" view of Revelation, i.e., we are now living in the millenium (the thousand year reign of Christ). Whether our readers agree with this view or not, we are persuaded they would profit from reading Mr. Hendriksen's book, "More Than Conquerors," published by Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Of one thing we are certain, because of the death and resurrection of Christ we are more than conquerors (cf. Rom. 8:31-39). The lifting up of the Redeemer has accomplished the victory over the Accuser—"If God be for us, who can be against us? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."

It is said of Napoleon that toward the end of his life as he lived it out in exile, he pointed one day to a red dot on a map that marked the place called Waterloo and said to a friend, "Had it not been for that small red dot there on the map I would have conquered the world." Satan and his cohorts are pointing to the one red, blood-stained moment in history called Calvary and saying, "Had it not been for that moment, I would have conquered the world."

Some commentators believe that because the Greek preposition *ek* (out) is used again in verse 32, Jesus means to include not only His death on the cross in the "lifting up" but also His being lifted up out from the earth (i.e., His resurrection also). The drawing power of His resurrection certainly cannot be denied, and neither can it be denied that His resurrection is also a part of His glorification (along with His ascension and exaltation). But perhaps it is wiser to simply take John's clear statement (v. 33) that Jesus was

speaking of the manner of His forthcoming death, and let it go at that.

The multitude understood plainly what Jesus meant by being "lifted up." But they stumbled over the idea that the Son of Man should die. It is the ever recurrent stumbling-block of the Jews—they simply could not comprehend the Messiah dying a humiliating death. Perhaps they even thought the Son of Man was to remain an eternal, temporal ruler (cf. *Psa.* 110:4; *Isa.* 9:6-7; *Ezek.* 37:25; *Dan.* 7:14)—they had heard that the Christ would remain forever. For an excellent discussion of the title "Son of Man" and other Messianic titles, see "The Self-Disclosure of Jesus," by Vos. The title, Son of Man, is a term used by the prophets to speak of the Messiah. Jesus seems to have a special fondness for the term, perhaps because it indicated more clearly His divine-human nature.

The main point of verses 34-36 is the misconception by the multitudes of the nature of the Messiah and the explanation Jesus gives. The significance of the three verses hinges on the "therefore" of verse 35. What follows the "therefore" is Jesus' explanation of the spiritual nature of the Messiah.

The figure of light Jesus applies to Himself as He has done before. The contrast is between His doctrine concerning the Messianic kingdom which is truth and their ideas of the Kingdom which are false. The difference is between belief and unbelief. The person who walks in the darkness of unbelief is blind to his spiritual destiny. He does not know where he is from, why he is here nor where he is going. On the other hand, when men believe in the true Light and become sons of light they know their purpose and eternal destiny (cf. *Jn.* 1:4, 8:12; 9:5). These Jews were warned that they should make use of the privilege of having the Light while He is still with them. Days of darkness were soon to come upon the nation because it rejected its Saviour.

The situation was becoming critical. The events of the latter part of John 12 probably took place on Tuesday of the last week, the great day of questions and challenges—the day when Jesus eluded the traps of the Herodians, Pharisees and Sadducees; the day when He publicly denounced them as hypocrites (cf. *Matt.* 23) (cf. *Map #7*, page 263.). But there was an appointed hour for His death and He would not permit Himself to be put to death until the time and in the manner ordained by the Father. He did not hide because of cowardice; to the contrary, His complete mastery of the situation

shows His omnipotence! He would not use miraculous means to prevent His death when the natural would suffice and so He retired, probably to Bethany (cf. Lk. 21:37), and hid from His enemies.

### Quiz

1. What are three interpretations of verse 27?
2. Why did the prospect of the cross trouble the soul of Jesus?
3. How could Jesus say the voice out of heaven was for the benefit of the multitude when they did not hear the words?
4. To what extent was the prince of this world cast out at the death of Jesus?
5. What is the drawing power in the lifting up of Jesus?
6. Why would the people say they had heard the Christ abides forever?
7. What is the light Jesus speaks of in verses 35-36? Why does He answer their question about the Son of Man in this manner?

### A PERPETUAL PROPHECY

#### Text 12:37-43

37 But though he had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on him:

38 that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord who hath believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?

39 For this cause they could not believe, for that Isaiah said again,

40 He hath blinded their eyes, and he hardened their heart; Lest they should see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, And should turn, and I should heal them.

41 These things said Isaiah, because he saw his glory; and he spake of him.

42 Nevertheless even of the rulers many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue:

43 for they loved the glory that is of men more than the glory that is of God.

### Queries

- a. Did the people believe in order that the prophecy of Isaiah might be fulfilled (v. 37)?
- b. Was it impossible for the people to believe (v. 39)?
- c. Did God deliberately blind their eyes (v. 40)?

### Paraphrase

Although Jesus had been doing and was continuing to do a great

multitude of miraculous signs in the presence of these Jews, they refused to believe in Him and the word of Isaiah the prophet was fulfilled, which he spoke, saying, Lord who has believed our message? And to whom has the saving power of the Lord been revealed and who has understood and accepted this salvation? And Isaiah, prophesying in another place, gives the reason they were unable to come to belief, saying, God has allowed their eyes to be blinded and their hearts hardened when they refused to see with their eyes and perceive with their hearts and turn in repentance and God was unable to heal their wickedness. These words Isaiah prophesied when he saw the Messianic glory, in the temple, and spoke of Him. Nevertheless many of the rulers believed in Him but they would not publicly confess their belief because they were afraid the Pharisees would have them excommunicated from the synagogue. These rulers desired the approval of men more than they desired the approval of God.

### *Summary*

Isaiah is quoted as a commentary on the unbelief manifested by the Jews who were beholding the miracles of Jesus. The half-hearted belief of many of the rulers is recorded by John.

### *Comment*

The writer of the fourth gospel, John, now makes a parenthetical statement and quotes Isaiah (53:1 and 6:9-10) who prophesied God's foreknowledge of the unbelief of the Jews in the Messiah. John is not saying, nor did Isaiah intend to prophesy, that God predestines that men will disbelieve whether they want to or not. That is, God created every man with a free will to exercise in the matter of belief or unbelief and God will not overrule that free will and force a man to believe or disbelieve. Here, in the prophecy of Isaiah, we stand once again in the presence of the omniscient foreknowledge of Almighty God and are made aware again of our infinite limitations.

In verse 37 the Greek participle *pepoiekotos* (had been doing) is in the perfect tense indicating that Jesus had been doing many signs and was continuing to do many signs in the presence of the Jews of Judea and Jerusalem. But the multitudes still refused to believe in Him in spite of the miraculous signs He gave them.

And so in verses 38-41 John quotes Isaiah, to show not only that God foreknew this unbelief, but the cause for an unbelief so stubborn that it resists even divine manifestations of miraculous signs. Isaiah's prophecy states that unbelief, as an effect, may also be the cause of further increase in unbelief.

Verse 38 is a quotation of Isaiah's cry unto the Lord (Isa. 53:1) of the almost total lack of belief in Jehovah's prophetic message of the coming Messianic gospel. Isaiah denounced the sins of the people in his day and prophesied the downfall and captivity of the nation. But by and large his message was a prophetic message of hope, strength and a glorious destiny for the faithful remnant through whom would come the Messiah and His kingdom. But in the midst of his prophetic message concerning the Servant of the Lord (the Messiah), Isaiah cried out, "Who has believed our message—who has been able to see and believe in the prophesied Saviour of the Lord?" In Isaiah's day only a very small remnant believed. Yes, even in spite of many miraculous signs to substantiate that Isaiah's message was from God, many multitudes refused to believe. So, when John beheld the unbelief of the Jews, in spite of the many miracles of Jesus, he claims the prophecy of Isaiah to have reached another stage in its fulfillment. Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled in his own day, in the days when Jesus was manifested in the flesh and when Jesus was being preached by the apostles (cf. Acts 28:26-28).

And now, after a statement of the *fact* of unbelief, John again quotes Isaiah to comment upon the effect of unbelief which in itself becomes in turn cause for increased unbelief.

First let us establish that men disbelieve because they will to do so, not because it is impossible for them to do otherwise. To declare that some are predestined to be irresistably saved and others predestined to be lost when the gospel of Christ commands, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," — and "If any man would come after me . . ." — and "Whosoever will may come . . ." is absurd, to say the least!

Man is a free moral agent. Even in Eden man was given freedom to choose to obey or disobey. God makes known His covenant requirements and then man responds. The holiness of God and His message of salvation is of such a character, coupled with the nature of the will with which God created man, that the more man believes and obeys God, the easier it becomes to believe and obey. And, on the other hand, the more a man rejects and disobeys God, the easier it also becomes to reject and disobey. So it depends upon the way man responds to the message of God as to the effect the message may have upon him (cf. Jn. 3:19-21; 7:17).

The Jews of Isaiah's day responded to his message of repentance, punishment by captivity, and a future kingdom of spiritual salvation by scoffing unbelief. They wilfully and deliberately rejected the demands of God (speaking through Isaiah) because they "took pleasure in unrighteousness." They haughtily resisted the promised spiritual blessings of God for their self-righteousness, military alliances, material possessions, and indulgent pleasures. Their unbelief comes first of all because they harden their own heart against Isaiah's message. Then, the message, because it shows evil for what it really is and demands purity, humility, obedience, etc., causes men to love it more or hate it more as their faith increases or their unbelief increases. Furthermore, man's will, the spiritual force within him for good or evil, is a force that increases in power the more it is exercised in either direction—for good or for evil.

So in the hardening of man's heart all factors (man's will, God's message, the deceitfulness of sin) are involved. It is advisable that Romans, chapter 1 and 2, and II Thessalonians, chapter 2, be read in connection with the truth that men and God both are involved in the hardening of man's heart (cf. also Ex. 7:3, 8:32, 9:12; Rom. 9:17; Heb. 3:8; Heb. 3:13-15; 4:7).

In verses 39-40, then, John is pointing out first the effect of the materialistic, self-righteous, self-indulgent rejection of Jesus upon the hearts of the Jews. They had blinded their own eyes and hardened their own heart against the message of a spiritual kingdom and a spiritual salvation which Jesus preached (just as their fathers did in Isaiah's day). And with the nature of God and His message such as it was, coupled with their continued willful rejection in the face of continued evidence and appeals we see that God gave them up to the lusts of their heart and hardened their hearts. God was unable to save them because they would not allow Him to save them (cf. Isa. 1:10-20; 59:1-2; Jn. 5:40-44).

Who is the "him" of verse 41? John evidently means to say that Isaiah saw Christ. Isaiah said of his own vision, "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple" (Isa. 6:1). John, then, is affirming that Jesus is one and the same as the Jehovah God whom Isaiah saw in the temple. This passage is conclusive proof that the apostles did not hold Jesus to be a lesser deity, but proclaimed Him equal with the Jehovah of the Old Testament.



In passing it is also worthy of note concerning verse 38, that the conservative view that Isaiah is the author of Isa. 53 is correct. John, who knew more about the Old Testament than the higher critics, does not even say, "It is written in the book of Isaiah," but John says, "the word of Isaiah the prophet . . . which he spake . . ." For John, a Jew, who lived in the first century and had tremendous advantages over the higher critics of the twentieth century in availability of textual material, there was only one Isaiah and that Isaiah wrote the entire book of Isaiah. The liberal, modernistic critics may divide the book of Isaiah into two or three parts all they want, but for John there is only one book and Isaiah wrote it all.

Verses 42 and 43 (along with John 18:15-16) indicate to us that John was well known and trusted among the rulers and priests. Some may have confided to him that they believed Jesus but would not dare to publicly confess it for fear of excommunication. These verses show again that so much of unbelief is moral and not intellectual. These rulers could see (as did Nicodemus) that Jesus was sent from God Himself for One who did miracles must be a Teacher come from God. But because of cowardice and selfish love for the honor and approval of men, they rejected the approval of God and willfully seared over their own consciences! Westcott says, ". . . the conviction found no expression in life . . . such ineffective intellectual faith (so to speak) is really the climax of unbelief" (cf. Jn. 9).

Thus the prophecy Isaiah made by the Spirit of God concerning the hardening of unbelief became a "perpetual" prophecy. In all generations of mankind when men have hardened their hearts by willful rejection of the spiritual nature and demands of God's revelation they have fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah. It has always been true, further, that when men "refuse to have God in their knowledge," then "God gives them up to the lusts of their hearts . . . unto vile passions . . . unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting" (Rom. 1). And the more a man refuses, the more calloused and hardened his heart and the more vain he becomes in his reasoning and his senseless heart is darkened and, while professing to be wise, he becomes a fool!

In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (cf. Col. 2:3) and when man loves the honor and wisdom of men more than the honor and wisdom of God he turns his back on an everlasting, sumptuous, soul-satisfying feast in order to eat husks with the swine.

*Quiz*

1. Where are the two excerpts from the prophet Isaiah located in his book?
2. Why did Isaiah cry, "Who hath believed our report . . ." etc.?
3. Are men predestined to belief and unbelief? Prove your answer.
4. How does the gospel harden the heart of some men?
5. Name five Scripture references that have to do with "hardening the heart."
6. How many authors are there to the book of Isaiah ?
7. Did the rulers mentioned in verse 42 believe in Jesus or disbelieve?

## THE IMPERATIVE WORDS

*Text 12:44-50*

44 And Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.

45 And he that beholdeth me beholdeth him that sent me.

46 I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me may not abide in the darkness.

47 And if any man hear my sayings, and keep them not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day.

49 For I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

50 And I know that his commandment is life eternal: the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak.

*Queries*

- a. Why is Jesus repeating in verses 44-46 what He has said so many times before?
- b. How shall we reconcile verses 47-48 with John 9:39?
- c. What is the "commandment" which the Father had given to Jesus to speak?

*Paraphrase*

And Jesus cried aloud and said, Every man who believes in me, is in reality believing in Him who sent me; and every man who beholds my words and works and nature is beholding Him who sent me. I have come into the world as the Light and whoever continues

to believe in me will not abide in the darkness of ignorance and sin. Yet, if anyone hear my teachings and does not keep them, I do not judge him now, for I have not come now to judge the world but to save the world. But every man who rejects me and will not accept my teachings certainly will be judged—and the very words that I have spoken will be his judge at the last day when I shall come again. For I have not spoken on my own authority: the Father sent me and He has given me a commandment and told me what I should teach and speak. And I know that His commandment is the only way to eternal life. Therefore, the doctrines which I speak are exactly the commandments which the Father has given me.

### *Summary*

This cry from the heart of Jesus is a last public appeal for men to believe in Him and obey His teachings before the judgment comes. It is almost a summary of His whole public teaching.

### *Comment*

It seems most probable that this cry of Jesus is directly related to the terrible unbelief just manifested by the Jews. It also is a fitting climax to His public ministry. What Jesus says in these last few verses are a concise summary to all that He taught publicly: (a) His equality with the Father; (b) His coming into the world to be the Light of the world; (c) His primary purpose in the first advent was to save the world; (d) rejection of His teaching brings eventual judgment; (e) His message was given to Him by the Father.

For comments on verse 44 see our comments on 7:16. For parallel teaching on these verses see our comments on John 5, 7 and 8. For comments on verse 47, see our comments on John 9:39. There is no contradiction here. Jesus did not come into the world the first time to judge the world, but to save the world. However, the mere fact that He came, inevitably involves judgment. Every man must answer the question, "What think ye of Christ?" Every man shows what he is by his attitude toward Jesus and, therefore, judges himself. Jesus is God's touchstone of judgment. By a man's attitude to Jesus a man himself stands revealed for what he truthfully is—by his reaction to Jesus and His teaching, man passes judgment on himself.

But whoever rejects the person of Christ and will not obey His teachings will be judged by the teachings of Christ on the last day. The word that Christ has preached and that which He inspired the apostles to teach (His atoning death, His oneness with the Father, that He is the only way of salvation), will be that standard by which

the world will be judged in the last day (cf. Rom. 2;16; II Thess. 1:8-9).

That which Jesus taught was exactly the scheme of redemption which God the Father had planned before the foundation of the world. The Son became the Great Apostle (One sent) of the commandment which was eternal life. But what is that commandment? "And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ . . ." (I John 3:23). So in this one great commandment is a summary of the whole public ministry of Jesus.

Thus the self-revelation of Christ to the Jews has now been concluded. The remainder of the gospel of John records Christ's revelation to His disciples in a special way. R. C. Foster summarizes in this manner:

- I. The Self-revelation of Christ to the World, 1:19—12:50
  - a. The Proclamation, 1:19—4:54
  - b. The Conflict, 5:1—12:50
- II. The Self-revelation of Christ to the Disciples, 13:1—21:23
  - a. The Last Ministry of Love, ch. 13-17
  - b. The Victory Through Death and Resurrection, ch. 18-20
  - c. Epilogue, 21

We especially like the comments of Barnes here, "It is such a close as all his ministers should desire to make—a solemn, deliberate, firm exhibition of the truth of God, under a belief that on it was depending the eternal salvation of his hearers, and uttering without fear the solemn message of the Most High to a lost world."

### *Quiz*

1. What apparently made Jesus cry out this closing discourse?
2. Make a list of the things which summarize the ministry of Jesus in these verses.
3. How did Jesus' coming judge men?
4. What will the standard of judgment be for the world in the last day?
5. What is the great commandment which the Father gave to the Son?

## EXPOSITORY SERMON NO. TWELVE THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

John 12:1-50

### *Introduction*

- I. DAVID WROTE OF HIS TRUST IN THE GREAT SHEPHERD
  - A. Psalm 23