

Part Five

EARLY MINISTRY

18

WHY JESUS CAME

“God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son” (Heb. 1:1, 2). The voice of God unto the fathers in the prophets ceased with Malachi and remained silent four hundred years. Then the silence was broken by the angel Gabriel announcing the birth of John and of Jesus. Various inspired and prophetic utterances accompanied the birth and babyhood of John and Jesus. Then “came John the Baptist,” “in the spirit and power of Elijah,” “a prophet and much more than a prophet,” “preaching in the wilderness” “make ye ready the way of the Lord.”

“After John . . . Jesus Came”

John was the forerunner to herald the coming of the Christ, as predicted in Isaiah 40:3, 4 and Malachi 3:1; 4:5, 6. He was born about six months before Jesus, and apparently started his public ministry about six months before Jesus did. But the imprisonment of John was not the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, only of His Galilean ministry. While John’s ministry was at its height of popularity, Jesus was baptized by John, endured the forty days’ fast and temptations in the wilderness (Matt. 3:13—4:11), returned to John, called disciples, went into Galilee to the wedding at Cana (John 1:29—2:2), and with His disciples and family made His abode in Capernaum “not many days” (John 2:12). John was still preaching during Jesus’ early ministry in Judea, which began with the cleansing of the temple at the Passover (John 2:13), brought Jesus’ popular following to exceed John’s (John 3:26, 30; 4:1) and ended with the journey through Samaria eight or nine months after the Passover—“four months till harvest” (John 4:35).

He came in fulfillment of the Old Testament promises. All of the events and records of the Old Testament were to prepare for the coming of Christ. He is the “seed” of Abraham in whom “all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 22:15). He is the “Shiloh”

or the coming one to whom the ruler's staff belongs (Gen. 49:10). He is the "prophet" (Deut. 18:15-18); the "shoot out of the stock of Jesse" (Isa. 11:1-5, 10); the Son of David (Ps. 89:3, 4); Jehovah's anointed (Ps. 2:2); Jehovah's Son (Ps. 2:7); the "priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Ps. 110:4); the "Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6); the suffering Servant (Isa. 53); the "ruler in Israel" (Micah 5:2); the King that cometh (Zech. 9:9); the "most holy" and the "anointed one" (Dan. 9:24, 25); the "Branch" (Jer. 33:15; Zech. 3:8). Indeed, this was He "of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, wrote" (John 1:45). The hopes and the struggles, the judgments and the forbearance of the centuries are justified in Him (Cf. Rom. 3:25).

He came as no other ever came. Only He was ever born of a virgin; the eternal God was His Father. Only He ever came voluntarily from a previous existence. Only He was sent into the world as He was sent (John 5:36-38; 8:42; 17:8). Only He came down from heaven to earth, from glory to suffering, from Lordship to obedient service. No other ever came accompanied by a choir of angels, preceded by such ages of preparation and longing, faced with such a heavy assignment.

"Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17). Jesus did come to keep the promises of God, but those promises were made because He was coming; He did not do His works merely to follow the suggestions of a literature expounding a national dream.

"To Do . . . the Will of Him That Sent Me"

"For I am come down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38; 5:30). It is the world's salvation that He perfectly fulfilled this purpose. Every act of His was instituted of God and approved of God. Every promise He makes will be performed by the power of God. His many words approving of the Old Testament are the certifications of the God of truth.

"I am come a light into the world, that whosoever, believeth on me may not abide in darkness" (John 12:46). See also John 3:19-21; 8:12. It is still true that the "darkness apprehended it not." After nineteen hundred years of light, men still blindfold themselves because they love darkness rather than light.

"To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice" (John 18:37). He came to preach the coming kingdom; He came to make known the standards of

divine righteousness. Thank God, He proclaimed the *good news* of mercy, release and redemption! For He preached not only the rule of divine authority over the affairs of men, and not only the law of perfect righteousness, but He proclaimed pardon and redemption for all men, an expression of divine love undreamed of.

"A Ransom For Many"

"The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28), He labored day and night, going about "doing good," showing the love of God for the needy and the power of God to save. He set a perfect example of the kind of greatness which He preached in contrast to the world's twisted ideas of greatness (Mark 10:42-44; John 13:1-15).

"I came not to judge the world, but to save the world" (John 3:17; 12:47; Luke 5:31, 32). "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). See I Tim. 1:15. "Not wishing that any should perish" (II Pet. 3:9), "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" (II Cor. 5:19). Sin separates men from God, dooms them to eternal punishment in the lake of fire, Jesus knew the terrible punishment of sin, and in order to save men from it He was even willing to take their sin upon Himself. After He had shown Himself free from all sin and worthy to be the ransom, He bore the unfathomable punishment of the cross and "gave his life a ransom for many."

"God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4, 5). The great bondage of the Hebrew nation was not to foreign empires, but to their sins (John 8:31-36) which, through the responsibility which the law placed upon them, made even the law and covenant of God to be a "ministration of condemnation" (II Cor. 3:4-11). A knowledge of right is not enough to save! The knowledge of the Word of God is able to make one wise unto salvation only through the faith that is in Christ Jesus (II Tim. 3:15).

"Whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to show his righteousness . . . that he himself might be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:25, 26). He fulfilled the requirements of the law and of all holy and righteous standards in His personal life, then He satisfied all the requirements of justice in giving Himself as a ransom, in bearing in Himself the penalties from which He would set free those who come in faith to receive the gift of His mercy.

"Taste of Death for Every Man"

"That by the grace of God he should taste of death for every man" (Heb. 2:9). "For this cause came I unto this hour" (John 12:27). "The Son of man must suffer . . . and be killed" (Mark 8:31; Luke 24:26). Jesus came into the world to die. He faced the temptation to avoid it and by the word of God overcame. He succeeded in His assignment; He finished His work, for He sanctified Himself in death to give life to you and me. He seeks that we should remember His death above all the works of His life (Luke 22:19).

"I came that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). "The wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). "And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life" (I John 5:11, 12). "Man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). God would give life, not merely things. It is a shameful blasphemy that men would so pervert Jesus' statement of His benevolent purposes that they turn this verse to application to things of this world. No matter what abundance of things a man may call his own, he is poor, wretched and blind—an object of pity that breaks God's heart—until he receives the Son of God and His righteousness. "Work not for the food that perishes, but for the food that abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give you: for him the Father, even God, hath sealed" (John 6:27). Jesus will restore us to the paradise of God where is the tree of life.

"For judgment came I into this world, that they that see not may see; and that they that see may become blind" (John 9:39). "Think not that I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34-36; Luke 12:49-53). He said he did not come to judge the world, that is, not to judge and to impose a sentence upon all the works of men. He will come again for that when the day of mercy is past, but He did come with a burning issue that divides sharply between the subjects of God's kingdom and the aliens. It is an issue that will never cease or fade in importance—the sides of it will never be compromised until He comes again to receive His followers into the kingdom of eternal peace and to destroy those who are not willing that He should reign over them. He will fully triumph over evil.

For Further Study:

Morgan, G. Campbell. *The Crises of the Christ*. New York: Fleming

WHY JESUS CAME

H. Revell Company, 1903. Pp. 84-94. Chapter considering the meaning, value and purpose of Christ's mission to earth.

Smith, Wilbur. *Therefore Stand*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1939. Pp. 45-53. In answering a liberal view on the purpose of Jesus' coming, Mr. Smith points out the Biblical teaching.

Warfield, B. B. *Biblical Doctrines*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1929. Pp. 255-324. An essay on Jesus' mission according to His own testimony.

PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

Son of God—Son of Man

Jesus had grown up as a son of man, "subject to" Mary and Joseph. His development was normal according to the true human ideal—"Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52)—but also unique, "filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him." At twelve years of age He revealed His awareness of Sonship to God and special mission in life. His foreknowledge of His ministry and of its climax on Calvary greatly affected the meaning of His baptism and His temptations which marked the beginning of that ministry. Still He was baptized and tempted as a son of man.

The Baptism of Jesus

It is very fitting that Jesus began His public life with an act of obedience to the Word of God through His forerunner. He came as one of the people to obey God's messenger. It was an act of humiliation that seems to us hard to harmonize with His divine birth and sinlessness.

John, a kinsman of Jesus (Luke 1:36), though he had lived apart from Jesus (Luke 1:80) and "knew him not" (John 1:33), still knew enough about Him (whether naturally or supernaturally) to hesitate to baptize Him. John's baptism was "of repentance unto remission of sins" (Mark 1:4); and ordinarily the people came "confessing their sins" (Matt. 3:5). When the Pharisees and Sadducees came without repentance and confession of sins, John, by miraculous insight, knew their hearts, condemned them for their pretense and demanded "fruit worthy of repentance." But when Jesus came without any sins to confess or to repent of, John said, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" (Matt. 3:14).

Jesus did not disclaim the holiness and superiority John ascribed to Him. Jesus did not insist that perhaps He had some hidden fault that needed forgiveness. He indicated the very opposite and showed the true reason for His baptism in His reply: "Suffer it now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15). "Now" He was as one of Israel; the time would come when His person and perfection would be made known. Meanwhile, even a perfectly righteous man must obey God in order to remain righteous.

The baptism of Jesus puts the stamp of divine authority upon John's ministry, while John bears witness to the sinlessness of Jesus.

The baptism of Jesus marked a turning point in His life—not a turning from sin to do the will of God, but a turning from quiet home life at Nazareth to take up the burden laid upon Him as Messiah. This is emphasized by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon him "in bodily form as a dove," and by the testimony of God's voice, saying, "Thou art my beloved Son: in thee I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22).

The descent of the Spirit upon Jesus has been compared with the anointing of the priests who began their service at thirty years of age. But exactly what it brought to Him is a puzzle to us when we remember that He was born of the Spirit and was in His own nature divine. Even John was "filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15). Jesus was not without the Spirit before His baptism. Only one purpose of this visible appearance of the Spirit is stated in the Scripture; i.e., to identify the Christ to John (John 1:32-34). However, it is likely that it meant much to Jesus; such as the full restoration to Him of divine powers and foreknowledge of which He "emptied himself" in becoming a babe. Jesus worked no miracles before this (John 2:11). The temptations that immediately follow this are closely connected with His consciousness of miracle-working power and with the foreseeing of the cross.

The Temptations of Jesus

The Spirit took charge of Jesus and led Him forcibly into the lonely wastes to be tempted. In order to help us when we are tempted, and in order to represent us before God, He was tempted as a man "in all points like as we are" (Heb. 2:18; 4:15).

He was tempted of the devil. God may try us with clear issues, but He does not tempt anyone (James 1:12, 13). The devil tempts with deceit and would ensnare us with hidden traps. The devil really exists and we must suffer his attacks (I Pet. 5:8, 9); hence, Jesus submitted to his worst blows that He might become a perfect Savior for us (Heb. 2:18; 5:8, 9). The devil came to Him, probably not in any visible form, but as he comes to us—with inward suggestions of falsehood and wrong in the guise of truth and right. It is not a sin to be tempted, but we should pray that we enter not into temptation (Matt. 26:41).

He fasted forty days. Luke says, "He did eat nothing." It has been suggested that, as an athlete trains up to the peak of his strength for a contest, Jesus trained *down* to meet the devil under the most

adverse conditions, making the victory more conclusive.

Most temptations of serious weight have more than one hook by which to catch us. These temptations were designed to trap the greatest mind and the best heart that ever was tempted. They seem to be made to lure Him in several ways at once and to hide the real sinfulness of the acts suggested. If we can't see fully and exactly how they enticed Him to do wrong, it is not surprising. We can learn this one major lesson: that Satan is very subtle and we can be safe from his lies only by following closely the Word of God. But further study will be richly rewarded. Many valuable lessons can be learned from them, in addition to those suggested here.

The temptation to make bread was to throw Jesus' will out of gear with God's will. It was an urge to distrust God's care and to act independently in looking out for Himself. While every cell in Jesus' body cried out for food, the devil said to Jesus, in effect: "You are the Son of God with miraculous power. You need not suffer so. You are the Creator of nature. Just command nature to serve you." It was a temptation to be not a son of man, but to fall back on miraculous power in meeting the tests of men. And if He had, what calamity for us! But Satan's deceits coupled with the pangs of starvation, could not wrench Jesus' will from His Father's will. This was He who later said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." All the bread in the world is not life without God. Bread is not a necessity of life, but to obey every word of God is.

The temptation to jump off the temple. The devil can quote Scripture, or misquote it. Here he tries to make a conditional promise appear unconditional. Here he tries to turn Jesus' trust into presumption. It is as if Satan said:

Yes, you are the favored Son of God for whom the Father will not fail to care. You may count on all His angels to serve you. You may go without food and not starve. Just show your complete confidence in His promises. Test and attest your trust in God. Cast yourself down from the height of the temple and show the people the proof of your Sonship.

But Jesus could not be enticed to tempt God in an exhibition of false "trust." *Obedience is the only real expression of trust in God.*

To go before God is to go without God, and to go without Him is to go against Him; and as to the angels bearing Him up in their hands, that depends altogether upon the path and the errand. Let it be the divinely ordered path, and the unseen convoys of

heaven will attend, a sleepless, invincible guard; but let it be some forbidden way, and the angel's sword will flash its warning, and send the foot of the unfaithful servant crushing against the wall.¹

The temptation to rule the world

was an appeal to reveal Himself in the fulness of His power and authority as above generals, princes, kings . . . An appeal to obtain by physical rather than by spiritual power; by the short-cut path of policy rather than by the long road of suffering and martyrdom. Jesus came to obtain the kingdoms of the world . . . He must reign until He puts all His enemies under His feet, and until all the kingdoms of the world become His kingdom. Satan's way to obtain this kingdom differed from God's way.²

If Satan could not prevent the kingdom of Christ, he would, if possible, change its character—from kingdom of heaven to kingdom of earth, from regeneration to regimentation. It was a many-sided appeal. It looked like a way to *avoid the cross*. It offered easy and quick results. How many reforms He could accomplish immediately with power over the nations and all their resources. Alas, how often the churches have fallen for this bait, and how many men have! "Many parents, in encouraging their children to seek earthly glory and distinction, unconsciously assist Satan in urging this temptation."³

But Jesus was not led to do wrong for the price of power and reward, nor for "the good He could do" thereby. Moreover, He didn't argue with Satan the relative merits of methods; He just kept God in sight and God's Word in mind and the love of God in His heart. All was settled without argument when God had spoken. "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." "No other gods." It is all the same whether we worship Satan, or mammon, the gift that he offers.

Jesus overcame by the *sword of the Spirit* and the *shield of faith*. In Him was truly fulfilled the saying, "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Ps. 119:11).

This momentous contest means much to us. Our champion was

¹ Henry Burton, *The Gospel According to St. Luke: Expositor's Bible* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1902), pp. 125-126.

² J. W. McGarvey and P. Y. Rendleton, *The Fourfold Gospel* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., n.d.), p. 97.

³ *Ibid.*

victor. The temptations overcome were representative. We see in them "the world, the flesh and the devil." They were physical, intellectual and spiritual. He was tempted in the first as a man, in the second and as a divine Son and in the third as the Messiah. He was asked to use power over nature and coerce stones; over the angels and coerce God; over the world and coerce men—all for self. Yet He overcame them all by a simple reliance upon God's Word rightly applied. For us there is with every temptation the same way of escape (I Corinthians 10:13).

For Further Study:

- Foster, R. C. *Studies in the Life of Christ*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971. Pp. 314-337. Discusses the Biblical accounts of Jesus' baptism and temptations and answers questions relating to these events.
- Fowler, Harold. *The Gospel of Matthew*, Vol. I, Joplin, MO: College Press, 1968. Pp. 111-153.

JESUS DEMONSTRATES HIS AUTHORITY (John 2)

When Jesus was about thirty years old, He was baptized by John in the Jordan River, down near the Dead Sea. The Holy Spirit descended upon Him in a visible form like a dove, and the voice of God spoke from heaven to approve Him and to acclaim Him God's own Son.

Then He went into the wild and barren regions nearby and fasted for forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was victorious over all the temptations and returned to where John was baptizing.

John the Baptist pointed out Jesus as the one about whom he had been making predictions. John told his disciples that Jesus was the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world, that He was the one who would baptize in the Holy Spirit and in fire, and that He was the Son of God. John told how he knew these things by a special message from God and by the visible sign of the Holy Spirit coming down and abiding upon Jesus (John 1:29-37).

Two of John's disciples followed Jesus and spent most of the day with Him. One of them was Andrew, who then found his brother Peter and brought him to Jesus. The other seems to have been either John, the writer of this Gospel, or his brother James; and it is implied that he also brought his brother to Jesus. Then Jesus called Philip, and Philip brought Nathanael. These six men were probably the disciples who went with Jesus to the marriage feast at Cana.

Following His first miracle in Galilee, when Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Passover feast He cleansed the temple, the first great public act of His ministry. In these two events at the beginning of His ministry He dramatically demonstrated His authority as the Son of God.

The Miracle At The Marriage in Cana (John 2:1-11)

Cana was the home town of Nathanael. It was only a few miles from Nazareth, where Jesus grew up. It was not more than twenty miles from Bethsaida and Capernaum, from which the other disciples came. Jesus and His disciples were invited to the marriage. Perhaps Mary was more an assistant at the feast than a guest. She evidently felt a need to do something about the shortage of wine. It is not strange that she was bold enough to be on the verge of telling Him what to do. Her words to Him, "they have no wine," seem to be

taken by Him to mean that she expected Him to do something about it.

The idioms of His reply sound strange to us and are likely to be misunderstood. His word of address, "Woman," was not disrespectful, or harsh, or rude (see John 19:26; 20:13; Luke 13:12). "What have I to do with thee?" is the common meaning of an idiom which says literally, "What is it to me and to thee?" It is used in Mark 1:24; 5:7; Matthew 8:29, and Luke 8:28 idiomatically, but here in John it may mean "What is it to us?" Then He said, "Mine hour is not yet come," which apparently means that the hour for a public and miraculous display of His powers as Messiah had not yet come. Certainly it implies that something more significant was contemplated by Mary and Jesus than merely leaving the feast, or making some other humble human attempt to relieve the embarrassment of the host. The whole answer of Jesus was probably intended to suggest to Mary that she had no right to dictate to Him what He should do. He was directed by God; and He showed no favoritism toward His family or His home town (Matt. 12:46-50). Jesus came to do God's work in God's way, at the time and place that God would direct. It was not yet time for Him to make a public display of His supernatural power. Jesus' ministry was conducted in keeping with God's timetable (John 7:6, 8; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1; 17:1).

Nevertheless, Mary was not totally discouraged. Somehow she so trusted in His ability and in His readiness to help that, although she did not try to persuade Him, she prepared the servants with her words of wonderful faith in the Master, who had been her son: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it" (John 2:5). Mary had complete faith in Jesus' ability to do whatever was best to do. While she was completely willing to leave to Him the decision about what He should do she had sensed in His answer to her that He was ready to act at the proper time. She communicated her faith to the servants so that they would be ready to carry out instructions that might seem strange and out of order, coming from a guest.

* Certainly Mary was not accustomed to seeing Jesus work miracles to relieve His family and friends of need or embarrassment. John distinctly says that this miracle at Cana was the beginning of Jesus' signs. If she did expect a miracle (and it seems hard to avoid that conclusion) it must have been some demonstration or announcement of His Messiahship, such as Jesus was not ready to make at that time. The fact is, He did go ahead and work a miracle; but it was one which was known only to the servants and the disciples (John 2:9).

JESUS DEMONSTRATES HIS AUTHORITY

Jesus told the servants to fill the waterpots to the brim. These waterpots for ceremonial washings held twenty to twenty-five gallons each. The servants gave a sample of this newly created wine to the ruler of the feast. He was the chief waiter, one in charge of the banquet, or a master of ceremonies. Evidently the ruler of the feast was not in the same room as the waterpots when Jesus had them filled. Jesus did not attract attention of anyone except the servants that drew the water and the apostles. The ruler of the feast was surprised. He does not affirm that anyone was drunk at this feast, but only that men usually serve the good wine first; then when people have had plenty to drink, they serve what is not so good. The verb may mean either to be intoxicated or to have drunk freely. This verse certainly does not say that Jesus made intoxicating wine, but it indicates that what He made was of exceptional quality.

No one should neglect the good things in this lesson to argue over the kind of wine Jesus made. John, writing as directed by the Holy Spirit, did not consider it necessary to explain what kind it was. A discussion about it is fruitless because of the lack of facts to settle it. Moreover, the question usually arises from the desire either to excuse selfish indulgence or to judge rather than to edify a brother. Either motive is legalistic and unworthy of a Christian. Wine was regularly an important food item in those times. Grapes were the third most important fruit of the land. Jesus ate and drank in a normal manner, in contrast to John the Baptist. He was even abused for it (Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34). Their wine was not always strongly intoxicating, and seems to have been called wine when it was not intoxicating at all. But when it was intoxicating its use was restricted or forbidden; excessive drinking and drunkenness were definitely condemned (Lev. 10:9; Prov. 23:29-32; 31:4, 5; I Cor. 6:10; I Tim. 3:3, 8). Surely Jesus would not approve the modern liquor traffic with its terrible results. New Testament teaching is firmly against all the selfishness, irresponsibility, lawlessness, and associated evils involved in the use of alcoholic beverages. Drunkenness could not be more clearly condemned (I Cor. 6:10; 5:11; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:18). The New Testament teaches the Christian out of love to have nothing to do with anything, though it be a liberty, that causes so many to stumble and fall into sin (I Cor. 8:10; Rom. 14 and 15).

The first "sign" apparently was (1) a work of kindness to a friend who had invited Him and His followers to a feast although the provisions were quite limited; (2) an answer to the unwavering and reverent faith of Mary; (3) a sign for the benefit of the disciples and

for all of us to whom it has become known; (4) but not a great public display at that time. This beginning of miracles showed His great power over nature, the power to create, His goodness in the use of His power, His wisdom, self-restraint, and perfect mastery of the situation. His disciples had indicated and expressed faith in Him before this. But seeing the miracle made their faith in Him much more than the acceptance of words the meaning of which they could not fully grasp.

Cleansing the Temple in Jerusalem

Jesus really began His public preaching and manifestation of Himself at Jerusalem at the Passover feast, just three years before His crucifixion. He drove the grafting merchandisers from the temple courts twice—at both the first and last Passovers of His ministry (John 2:13-15; Matt. 21:12, 13). It was an outrage to turn the house of the righteous God, built for worship in repentance and contrition, into a place of greed and robbery.

This was a bold assertion of His authority in the affairs of the nation and in the things of God. Jesus spoke with authority on the right use of God's temple. Although the meetinghouse of a church should be a house of prayer, and certainly not a den of graft, still no church building of today is really equivalent to the temple in Jerusalem. The New Testament gives us no precedent of any special building set apart for church and worship purposes. God's temple in the Christian age is not made with hands (Acts 17:24). It is the body of the individual Christian (I Cor. 6:19, 20; II Cor. 6:16) and the whole congregation of believers (I Cor. 3:16, 17; Eph. 2:20-22). Let us not destroy the holiness or strength of our bodies with drugs, indulgence, or any corruption. Let us not strain at gnats such as eating in a "church" basement while we swallow camels, like destroying the congregation's fellowship and effectiveness with envy, pride, and parsimony, or using a church to exalt men rather than God.

When Christ comes into our lives as He did into the temple and puts out everything selfish and unsuitable to the service of God, it is no intrusion, but it is His natural right to do so.

Authority

Both the miracle at Cana and the cleansing of the temple reveal Jesus' authority. Christ's authority is supremely important. *Jesus means nothing to us unless we acknowledge His authority.* Christianity is essentially authoritarian. It is not to be denied, of course, that between man and man Christianity promotes mutual respect

JESUS DEMONSTRATES HIS AUTHORITY

and brotherliness, hence democracy in the affairs of men; but Christ's church is not a democracy. The church is not a society of men; it is the kingdom of Christ, and He is head over all things pertaining to it (Eph. 1:22).

Jesus' life and ministry were full of gentleness, love, lowliness, and self-sacrifice. He "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). But at the same time He constantly asserted unlimited authority. He claimed and exercised authority over the temple of God, over the realm of nature (John 2:19; Matt. 8:27), over the forgiveness of sin (Mark 2:10, 11), over the lives of all men (Matt. 7:22, 23; 10:32, 33; 12:30; Luke 9:59; John 5:22-29; 8:24), over death and the grave (John 5:25-29; 10:17, 18; 11:43, 44), over demons and angels (Luke 4:36; 9:1; Matt. 26:53). He "taught as one having authority," indeed (Matt. 7:29). *In fact, He claimed all authority in heaven and on earth! (Matt. 28:18). If He did not actually have supreme authority unquestionable, then He was not a good man, but a usurper, an imposter, and the world's biggest liar.*

Jesus' authority was not assumed; neither was it delegated; it was inherent in His person. All who believe that He is the eternal Son of God must acknowledge His authority. So Mary, the mother of His human flesh, knowing well His supernatural origin and character, expressed her confidence and respect toward Him in her words to the servants at the marriage: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it" (John 2:5).

The fishermen of Galilee set us a good example. When Jesus came by in the morning after they had washed their nets to put them away for the day, and told them to put out into the deep for a catch, Peter answered: "Master, we toiled all night, and took nothing; *but at thy word I will let down the nets*" (Luke 5:5). Their deference to His authority was amply rewarded. The modern scientific spirit would have said: "We have experimented. What you say to do will not work; for we have tried it." Experiment is necessary where all parties concerned are ignorant. But faith is able to reach far beyond the limit of human observation and experiment when it has a teacher with authority in whom to put confidence safely. Peter recognized in Jesus an authority greater than his experience.

For Further Study:

- Butler, Paul. *The Gospel of John*. Joplin: College Press, 1961. Pp. 63-84. Helpful comment on John 2:1-22.
- Foster, R. *Studies in the Life of Christ*. Grand Rapids: Baker, Book

EARLY MINISTRY

House, 1971. Pp. 352-365. Discussion of the wedding feast in Cana and the cleansing of the temple with answers to unbelieving critics.

Geldenhuis, Norval. "Authority and the Bible" in *Revelation and the Bible* ed. by Carl Henry. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958. Pp. 371-386. Shows that respect for the authority of Christ leads to respect for the authority of the Bible as well.

Taylor, William. *The Miracles of Our Savior*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, n.d. Pp. 28-45. Explanation of the miracle of changing water into wine, John 2:1-11.

THE NEW BIRTH (John 3)

Bible readers overlook the extent and significance of Jesus' early ministry in Judea, which occupied nearly one-fourth of His entire public career. Only John tells of it, and he gives but a brief summary.

After the wedding at Cana, Jesus moved to Capernaum, then went to Jerusalem for the Passover. There He really began His public ministry with the cleansing of the temple. During the eight or nine months Jesus was in Judea He worked many miracles and drew many disciples to Him (John 2:23; 3:2, 26). During the same time, John the Baptist was still preaching and baptizing multitudes about forty miles northeast of Jerusalem. People who believed and repented at Jesus' preaching were baptized by His disciples, and they became more numerous than those being baptized by John (John 4:1, 2).

The ruling Pharisees and Sadducees had looked with disfavor upon the early popularity of John (John 1:19-28; Matt. 3:7-12). Their opposition to Jesus was aroused by His cleansing of the temple because that injured their prestige and disturbed a profitable monopoly. Jesus' increasing ministry near Jerusalem caused their hostility to grow. Therefore, when John was imprisoned by Herod, Jesus went into Galilee.

"Nicodemus . . . Came To Him By Night"

In the early part of this Judean ministry, Nicodemus, one of the ruling Pharisees and one who had seen Jesus' miracles, came to Jesus by night, saying, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2). As a Pharisee, he was part of the elite ruling class. Pharisees were firm believers in the Old Testament and were strict in their observance of many traditional regulations. They believed in life after death and in the coming kingdom of the Messiah. Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin, a body of seventy men which was the supreme court and senate of the Jews (John 7:45-53).

Nicodemus rightly judged that Jesus' miracles were evidence of the power of God working through Him, yet Nicodemus feared men. He received a wonderful opportunity that night. He heard words of infinite wisdom from the divine teacher. But Nicodemus seemed to want to investigate Jesus from a distance, as it were, semi-officially

and impersonally, rather than to submit himself to Jesus in faith, to learn by experience in following Him, and to receive the full light and power of His divine teaching by following it step by step. We do not know why he came at night: perhaps to have more time with Jesus when there was no crowd, perhaps to avoid criticism.

Two and a half years later, Nicodemus was still in the Sanhedrin, among the enemies of Jesus, daring only to suggest that Jesus should receive a fair trial before He was condemned (John 7:50). Finally, after the crucifixion, Nicodemus appeared the third and last time in the Bible records (John 19:38-40). He helped Joseph of Arimathea, another secret disciple, to bury Jesus, and he furnished a large quantity of costly spices or perfumes. We do not know whether he ever entirely overcame his timidity or desire for the favor of men and really became a fruitful Christian.

"Except A Man Be Born Again, He Cannot See The Kingdom."

Of the most interest to us is what Jesus taught Nicodemus concerning the necessity of a new birth for all men. The Kingdom of God is the reign of God, the realm in which God's rule is recognized and obeyed and in which the blessings of His grace are enjoyed. To see the kingdom is to have part in salvation and eternal life. No one can be a part of that kingdom without a spiritual change, without beginning a new life with and in Christ.

Jesus' deity is shown in the uniqueness and superiority of His ideas. His purposes were eternal, universal, worthy of God. His understanding was perfect. He "needed not that any one should bear witness concerning man; for he himself knew what was in man" (John 2:25). Jesus *solved* problems no philosopher had been keen enough to see. The idea of reforming or renovating men by regenerating them was a superior and original idea. The fact that Ezekiel (36:26-31) and Jeremiah (31:33) has mentioned the making of a new heart and a new spirit in men only emphasizes that it was a divine purpose; and the fact that they did not carry out the idea, but predicted it as an ideal, emphasizes the truth that such regeneration could be accomplished only by the divine Son and Savior.

Jesus' teaching on the new birth well illustrates His divine ability to put the most profound meanings into available form with simple approach. He is the wisdom of God to every one that believeth.

Our lives have been broken, condemned, forfeited, lost by sin. But Jesus came to give us life. We sold ourselves into the grip and under the doom of sin. Jesus came to release us from the grip and

THE NEW BIRTH

redeem us from the doom. He had to settle the matter of that old life with its ingrained sin and its obligations incurred by sin. He had to establish the new—to bring forth life that is not under the dominion and the curse of sin—life that is subject to God so that God can maintain it and sustain it eternally.

Therefore, the gospel of Christ has a twofold function. It puts to death, and it brings to life. Read Romans 6:2-14; II Corinthians 5:14-17, and Galatians 2:20. Now look over Colossians 2:20—3:17, noting such expressions as these: "If ye died with Christ, . . . If then ye were raised together with Christ, . . . For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. . . . Put to death therefore your members . . . put off the old man . . . put on the new man."

If Christ is to save us from the just condemnation and inherent weakness of our Godless lives, then we must die in Him and He must live in us. Does that sound mysterious? But it is not impossible. Jesus said it another way: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me (Matt. 16:24).

He died not His death, but ours. His death as a sacrifice is offered a standing offer to us to be reckoned our death (of the old man and his condemnation) if we will accept it. To accept it is to give consent that my life—my private life, my alien-to-God life—is done for. It is condemned, and that condemnation is laid upon Jesus, my Friend. But I must join in that death, the pain of which He bore for me. My pride, my desire, my will must perish from the earth. And the life that I live (because He died for me), the life that is left by mercy unto me, must be His. His Spirit must supplant mine. I must be a branch of Him, the vine, and receive my life and bear my fruit in Him. I must be inseparable from Him, a member of His body. I have life only because He died for me, and my life is sustained only because and while He lives in me.

" . . . The whole world lieth in wickedness" (I John 5:19, KJV. ASV has "in the evil one."). The whole world is guilty before God and under sentence to die (Rom. 3:19; 6:23). The state of man in sin is such that it repenteth God that He hath made man. A comprehensive contemplation of man in his sins makes us to say, "Why doesn't God wipe out this sin-degraded race and make a creature that is not subject to sin's dominion and seduction? Why doesn't He make a *new race of men* that will do His will?" That is *exactly* what He is doing! Thank God that He was not willing to lose what could be saved out of the burning! Thank God that we have an opportunity through Christ to *choose* to be of that new creation; to

cut off the old man voluntarily and let the Lord of life remake us. Thank God that He has designed to use this life and this race as the seed bed for the new; and that we may sow this life, that out of its perishing a new and fruitful one may grow by the grace of Jesus who hath life and immortality in Himself.

"Be Born Of The Water And Of The Spirit"

Nicodemus evidently did not understand what Jesus meant. He was thinking only of the impossibility of being born again in the same way that one is born the first time. When Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say," He meant to show that He was speaking with all authority and assurance. He did not expect Nicodemus to understand these things by logic or experience but to take them as a matter of divine revelation to be accepted because their Teacher came from God.

If it all sounds very deep and mysterious; if we cannot understand how we are born again, just remember this: It is God's work to bring us forth as new creatures unto eternal spiritual life; it is our part to follow step by step where He leads. It is for us by faith to receive what He offers and submit ourselves to His loving power to remake us. It is easier for us to understand these words than it was for Nicodemus, because we have the whole New Testament to help us. Jesus was indicating the spiritual nature of the kingdom by saying that it requires a new birth of all who enter it. He said the new birth was one of water and the Spirit, not a second physical birth, as Nicodemus was thinking. A physical birth produces a new physical body, but Jesus was talking about a birth that produces a new spirit in the same physical body (verse 6). This is mysterious, but so is much in the natural realm (verses 7 and 8).

The full instructions and practices of the apostles show us the meaning of "Born of water and of the Spirit." When Jesus sent the apostles to preach in all the world, He said "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). On Pentecost, Peter preached, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Paul wrote, "He saved us, by the washing of regeneration (new birth) and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

We are begotten of the Spirit when we believe that Word that comes from the Spirit. That Word has the life of the Spirit in it. In the parable of the sower Jesus explained, "The seed is the word"

THE NEW BIRTH

(Luke 8:11). "It is the spirit that giveth life; . . . the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life" (John 6:63). Paul says "For in Christ Jesus I begat you through the gospel" (I Cor. 4:15). James adds, "Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth" (James 1:18). Peter writes, "Having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God" (I Pet. 1:23). See also Acts 11:14; 20:32; I John 5:1. We must be born of the Spirit; the Spirit begets us through the Spirit's word. There is no true experience of this new birth that leaves out the Word of God.

Obedience to that Word brings forth new creatures, even as it brings us into Christ. When the Word is believed, the mind is changed. When the truth of the Word is felt in the heart, the desires and emotions are changed. When, through faith in the Word, we become willing that Christ should possess and rule our lives, the volition is changed. When, by overt obedience, we are buried in baptism, and we come forth from that watery grave, even our physical nature is changed in its relationship to Christ. When in the spirit of repentance we give Christ consent that He should come into our lives and rule them, the first command He gives is that we should be baptized. And in that baptism the old man is buried with Him into death, and the new creature is brought forth to begin the actual existence and activity of the new life (II Cor. 5:17). We must be born of the water (John 3:5), and out of the waters of baptism we come forth to live in newness of life (Rom. 6:4, 11; Col. 2:12, 13). "According to his mercy he saved us, through the *washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit*" (Titus 3:5). "Christ loved the church, and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it *by the washing of water with the word*" (Eph. 5:25, 26).

In answer to Nicodemus' wondering question: "How can a man be born when he is old?" Jesus explained just enough to identify the birth He meant—"be born of water and of the Spirit," and "that which is born of Spirit is spirit." Later in the same chapter He says that whosoever believeth should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16, 36). He is not there speaking of some other salvation outside the kingdom, or apart from the new birth. The new birth will be accomplished in all who believe in Him with all their hearts and obey His Word, as faith demands they will.

At the close of His earthly sojourn, Jesus gave the commandment to the apostles to preach the gospel to every creature, and "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:15, 16). Surely

EARLY MINISTRY

Jesus was not changing His requirements, but was speaking of the same thing as the new birth, only in different words. Actually, faith in and obedience to the Spirit-inspired gospel brings forth life in us that is new, life that is spirit, life that Jesus lives in us. (See Rom. 8:1-15; Gal. 3:27; II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 5:16-26; 2:20).

To be begotten of the Spirit is equal to believing.

To be born of water is equal to being baptized.

To be in the kingdom of God is equal to being saved.

For Further Study:

Butler, Paul. *Gospel of John*. Joplin: College Press, 1961. Pp. 91-115.
Comment on John 3.

Campbell, Alexander. *The Christian System*. Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., n.d. Pp. 153-240. Thorough study of the New Testament teaching on the plan of salvation.

McGarvey, J. W. *Sermons*. Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., n.d. Pp. 44-121. Sermons concerning God's plan of salvation.

CHRIST FOR ALL PEOPLE (John 4)

When Jesus had been for some time working miracles and preaching repentance in the region of Judea, the Pharisees were informed "that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (although Jesus himself baptized not, but His disciples)" (John 4:1, 2). Then Jesus departed from Judea and started for Galilee. It seems probable that Jesus left Judea to avoid arousing at this time the strenuous opposition of the rulers until He had ministered among the common people in the other provinces. Later, He came back and faced to the showdown the bitter antagonism and hatred as well as the burning issues of right and wrong that raged between Him and the rulers, and that finally caused them to put Him to death. His ministry was planned and timed by infinite wisdom. Jesus had His time to avoid persecution and His time to face it.

Another factor in Jesus' trip into Galilee was the imprisonment of John the Baptist by Herod, the ruler of Galilee (Matt. 4:12; Mark 1:14; and 6:17-20). Therefore, Jesus left Judea and went to Galilee also to help John's followers avoid any rash action that might involve them in serious conflict with the Pharisees. In John 4:35 Jesus speaks as if it were then four months till the harvest. Since the harvest began between Passover and Pentecost, it would indicate that Jesus was returning to Galilee eight or nine months after coming to Jerusalem for the Passover at which He began to show Himself as a prophet and public teacher.

Samaria and Samaritans

Samaria lay between Judea and Galilee. Jesus had to go through Samaria or take three or four days longer going around it. Because of the hatred between Jews and Samaritans, many Jews would go from Judea to Galilee by going eastward and crossing the Jordan and then going north through Perea. Jesus made another trip through Samaria (Luke 9:51-56). Josephus said that Galileans often passed through Samaria on their way to and from the Jerusalem feasts (*Antiquities*, xx, 6, i).

This territory of Samaria had once been the very center of Israel, inhabited chiefly by the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. Just after the death of Solomon, the northern tribes were separated from Judah under Rehoboam (931 B.C.). When the northern kingdom was

carried away by the Assyrians in 722 B.C., Gentiles were brought in and settled in the country (read II Kings 17:6, 23-41; Ezra 4:2, 10). These Gentiles mixed with the remaining Israelites. After the Jews returned from Babylon to rebuild Jerusalem, further enmity developed between them and the mixed people of Samaria (Ezra 4; Neh. 4 and 6). About 400 B.C. the Samaritans built a temple on Mount Gerizim, a rival to the one at Jerusalem. They had a copy of the Pentateuch (the five books of Moses), and they claimed it as the basis for their religious system and their only sacred book. Even though they claimed to follow the law, their religion was never true and scriptural.

In 128 B.C. John Hyrcanus of Judah extended his reign to Samaria and destroyed the temple on Gerizim. From generation to generation for many centuries the traditional hatred between Jew and Samaritan was handed down and was buttressed by many local incidents arising from it. In Jesus' day the Jews generally had no dealings with the Samaritans (John 4:9). Among the Jews it was a first-class insult to call a man a Samaritan (see John 8:48). The Samaritans claimed that the Jews were all wrong in worshiping at Jerusalem, that they themselves were the true upholders of the law, that Gerizim was the place where Abraham sacrificed Isaac, that Gerizim was the highest mountain in the world and the only mountain not covered by Noah's flood, etc. The Samaritans have continued to worship on Mount Gerizim, and to this day they have a small group that keeps the annual Passover feast there, following old custom.

Although Jesus knew well the sins and false traditions of the Samaritans, He did not share the hatred and prejudice of the Jews toward them. He knew also the sins and failings of the Jews. He did not refuse to teach on that ground. He did not make it a matter of indifference whether or not one obeyed the law, but He dealt with individuals according to their ability to receive His mercy, not according to a prejudicial attitude toward a race, class, or nation. While His short ministry was concentrated upon the Jews to lay a foundation for sending the gospel to all nations and peoples, He did not reject the believing pleas of Gentiles or Samaritans (Matt. 8:5-13; Mark 7:25-30; Luke 17:16; John 4:40).

"Salvation Is From The Jews."

As Jesus traveled across Samaria, He came to Jacob's well in the plain beside Mount Gerizim. Here He met a Samaritan woman, whom He surprised by asking for a drink of water. In the ensuing conversation Jesus informed her that He would give her living water;

one drinking it would never thirst again, and it would become a spring of everlasting life. She said, in effect, "O.K., give me this water." She was perhaps flippant, calling the bluff of a boastful Jew. Jesus said, "Go, get your husband." Evading Jesus' command, she answered, "I have no husband." To her surprise, Jesus said, "You have had five husbands and the one you have now is not yours. You have told the truth." At that she became serious and said, "You are a prophet." Then she brought up the old argument between Jews and Samaritans, whether it was lawful to worship at Jerusalem or on Mount Gerizim.

Jesus did not evade the question or refuse to "take sides." He did not hesitate to tell her that the Samaritan worship was not according to knowledge, and that "salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22). Under the Old Testament law, God required sacrifices and services of the priests for all the people to be performed at one central location. Jesus explained that the day was soon coming when His own death would put an end to sacrifices, and God could be approached through faith in Him by anyone at any place. Even Jerusalem would no longer be God's special dwelling place. Jesus took issue with false religion. Worship at Jerusalem followed God's law, while Samaritan worship did not. God sent the Savior through the people who obediently worshiped at Jerusalem. It is notable that Jesus did not say to her that God is the Father of all, anyway, and cares for all men the same, regardless of customary standards and traditional forms of worship. Jesus offers to all men *opportunity* to become the children of God; He does not give to all *approval* as being already such unconditionally.

Jesus pointed out to the woman that then, and always, true worship is in the heart (in spirit) and in obedience to God's word (in truth). God wants individuals to worship Him sincerely. There are formal actions that express the right spirit according to God's revealed will; but the actions alone without the spirit are not acceptable worship. Psalm 51 may be read as a good commentary on this principle. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). The necessity for spiritual worship is grounded in the nature of God. He is not simply a force to be controlled at a certain place or by ceremonies and charms. God is a person. He is the source and maker of the human spirit. To worship Him we must have the right personal relationship with Him.

"The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh (he that is called Christ): when he is come, he will declare unto us all things" (John 4:25). Messiah is a Hebrew word meaning "anointed

one." The more familiar word "Christ" is the Greek translation of it. Prophets, priests, and kings were anointed in ancient Israel. The Messiah or Christ was to be the supreme prophet, the eternal king, and priest over all. His coming was prophesied in many ways in the Old Testament. The Samaritans did not have all the Old Testament and consequently had less understanding of the Messiah than did the Jews; but they shared the expectation of His coming. In Deuteronomy 18:15-19, God foretold the coming of the great prophet, saying "I . . . will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." The Samaritan woman may not have known just where she got this idea, but apparently she began to desire His coming to bring more knowledge of God's will on the matter of worship.

Jesus answered, "I that speak unto thee am he" (John 4:26). Now Jesus could announce himself to her because she had begun to feel the need for the word of God and to express faith in the promise of the coming great messenger of the Lord. Still, no doubt, she was surprised at His announcement, but His manner of speaking and His miraculous insight into her life made it easier to believe His words than to deny them. Salvation came from the Jews because the Messiah and Savior came through the Jews.

Jesus and Gentiles

When Jesus sent out His chosen apostles to preach of the coming kingdom, He commanded them strictly not to go to any city of the Samaritans or of the Gentiles "But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:5, 6). When He planned the course of His three packed-full years of ministry on earth, He concentrated almost exclusively on the people of Israel. But this did not arise from any lack of love for the rest of the world. It was rather the plan of wisdom to complete the preparation and revelation of the long-promised blessing to all the nations (cf. Gen. 12:3; 18:18; Gal. 3:8, 14).

When Gentiles sought His help with prayers of faith, Jesus praised and rewarded their faith (Matt. 8:5, 13; Mark 7:25-30). He responded to their needs and desires at least enough to make it plain to us that he did not exclude them just because they were Gentiles. When the Samaritans besought Him to abide with them, He gave them two days of His busy life. His personal ministry and His *first* commission to the apostles were limited to the house of Israel, not at all in the way of favoritism, but in the way of laying a foundation, or of making a blueprint, or of preparing an instrument for work

to come. Jesus often spoke of the "other sheep . . . not of this fold" (John 10:16), or of the many from the east and the west who would come and sit with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 9:11; Luke 13:29). Jesus did give the *great commission*, sending the full love and saving power of the gospel unto every creature.

As the maker of all men He was keenly interested in the redemption and regeneration of all. If He ministered especially to relatively few, it was to teach them to minister to all. He gave His life a ransom for all men of all races, classes, and times. He was not willing that any should perish, wishing that all should come to repentance (II Pet. 3:9; I Tim. 2:4). He is "no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34, 35). *We need to learn that those whom we despise are as dear to the heavenly Father as we are; and that we are not true to Christ and His will if we do not minister to all with impartiality.*

Christ and Women

When the disciples returned from Sychar "they marveled that he was speaking with a woman." Such conduct was surprising because it was contrary to the etiquette and attitudes of the time. The rabbis contended that "a man should not salute a woman in a public place, not even his own wife," and daily thanked God that He had not made them women. The disciples marveled, but said nothing, being convinced that whatever Jesus did was right and wise. One of the true marvels of Jesus' life and ministry was His free and graceful, but entirely blameless and dignified relationships with women. His dealings with women show the perfect purity and total impartiality of His heart. Women were among His most faithful disciples. They ministered unto Him of their substance (Luke 8:2, 3). They shared in His miraculous healing and feeding, and in His teaching. They became bold to ask for His help (Matt. 15:22-28; John 11:3, 20). They anointed His feet, they wept over His agony, they followed Him to the cross, they were early at the sepulcher. Their faithfulness was rewarded with the first appearances of the risen Christ. They received a place in the church, both giving and receiving of its fellowship of love. Some of them shared miraculous powers of the Spirit (Acts 21:9). In Christ "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Christ's saving blood, His sustaining grace, His everlasting love are given alike to all that will receive Him. He does not, however, make all to have the same personal qualifications nor

the same duties in His service. We are all members of one body, but have not all the same office (Rom. 12:3-8; I Cor. 12:12-27). He has made us all brethren and has forbidden us to lord it over one another, but He has given to some the responsibility of oversight, and to others the obligation to be subject to them willingly and with love (Heb. 13:7-17; I Pet. 5:1-7; 3:1-7). He did not remove the divine order in the divine and human families (I Cor. 11:3). He did not choose any women for apostles, nor did His Spirit permit in the church women to serve in authority over men as overseers or teachers of the church (I Tim. 2:8-15).

Savior and All Mankind

When the disciples returned from town the woman left her waterpot and went into the town. Either she was so excited by the wonderful news that this was the Christ that she forgot the waterpot, or she left it purposely to make a quick trip to tell the news and to return. "Come, see a man, who told me all things that ever I did: can this be the Christ?" (John 4:29). She urged the people to come and see for themselves. She exaggerated, but she conveyed the right idea—that Jesus knew all and could tell all that she ever did. In the Greek the form of her question indicated that she expected a negative answer: "This is not the Christ, is it?" Her actions show that she was convinced that Jesus was the Christ, but she tactfully suggested that others could judge better than she could. Some believed on the basis of her report; many more believed when they saw and heard Jesus for themselves. They concluded, "This is indeed the Savior of the world" (John 4:42).

The universality and impartiality of the gospel of Christ, and of the entire Bible, as well as of Christ himself, is a striking evidence of divine authorship. The Bible is everybody's book. This is true to a surprising degree, in view of the fact that it is so largely written about one nation of people that are very distinct from others and very little understood and appreciated by others. But in every part it is God's book. Even so, Christ, while limiting His earthly ministry to Jews, was and is everybody's Savior, everybody's ideal man, and everybody's manifestation of God. He was perfectly true to the essentials of human nature, as man is made in the image of God.

How completely Christ fulfills the needs of all men! In Him they of every time and place that believe on Him find such a supply of the water of life that they need never thirst. He not only offers himself to all men, but He is perfectly adapted to every kind and condition of man, and perfectly sufficient for all their needs.

CHRIST FOR ALL PEOPLE

For Further Study:

- Coleman, Robert E. *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. 2nd ed. Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1964. Sets forth Jesus' plan and principles of evangelism.
- Edersheim, Alfred. *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954 (reprint of 1886). Pp. 404-421. Good background information and insightful comment.
- Tenney, Merrill C. *John in The Gospel of Belief*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948. Pp. 91-99. Interesting explanation of the events in John 4.