

# Jesus, Son of God

## Chapter One

### A View of Jesus Christ by John the Beloved

John 1:1-5

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

Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

Love begets love. Whether Jesus' love drew John close to him or whether it was John's love that drew Jesus to him, we cannot say. But who can deny that John loved Jesus? John wrote about Jesus in a manner that has thrilled the heart of readers from the time it was written. John saw Jesus as the Son of God.

Jesus was the Word. The theology of John reached beyond human considerations of this man Jesus. John saw him in his pre-incarnation position in the Godhead. He saw that Jesus is the expressed will, mind and thoughts of God toward man.

Words express ideas. Without words there is limited expression of thought. Without language ones thoughts are limited to the recall of images alone, and communication of ideas are limited when no common language is known. It is frustrating to meet someone who speaks a different language, and try as you will, you are not understood. Jesus came from God to communicate divine ideas in human language. He was our translator, making known the heart of God toward us.

Jesus was the personification of the Godhead, living among us. He was the creator who took upon himself creation. He came clothed in a human body, but glowing with divine light. Divine light is not seen with the natural eyes, but the spirit perceives it. Divine light, like words, is truth made visible. It is observed in the expressions, deeds and demeanor of the person who has it. The term "light", in the scriptures, is used synonymously with truth, thus it is a further development of the same idea as Jesus being the Word.

In John's writings, Love, Light, and Life are reoccurring themes. I call them the three big "Ls". Each word expresses an energy that emanates from God. They are divine energies that should not be confused with natural use of the terms. When God uses these words, he is referring to spiritual dimensions that transcend anything of this world. When we use these words their meanings are very inferior in nature, but similar enough to serve as a communication tool.

When John said that Jesus had light in him, he was referring to the condition of being the very essence, or personification of truth. Jesus always spoke from the position of one knowing. There was no darkness in him, that is to say, no area of not knowing. All truth is contained in him and he contained all truth.

Sin is an expression of spiritual darkness. Darkness is the absence of light. Thus, we can say that sin is what happens when ignorance of truth exists. The ignorance I speak of is not simply the knowledge that something is wrong. For example, a person may know the law, but be ignorant of the full ramifications and reasons for the law, or the consequences of breaking the law. Knowing the law may not be sufficient to restrain a person from breaking it. Spiritual light, however, goes beyond the law; it touches the very fountainhead from whence thoughts and actions spring. If the light that is in us is divine in nature, our thoughts and actions will reflect that fact. Jesus had light in himself and that light was the light of the world.

John also introduces the knowledge that Jesus possessed life. Like light, the life of which we speak is superior in nature to life in the natural realm. When Jesus speaks of life, he does not merely speak of being alive in the natural sense because spiritual life is a condition in which a person possesses the Spirit of life. The Holy Spirit is also called the Spirit of life. It may also be correct to say that the Holy Spirit administers the divine energy "life", but the source of life for a believer is Jesus. The mission of Jesus was to provide salvation whereby we can become the recipients of life. John tells us elsewhere that he came that we might have life. When Jesus was born into the human family, the Father granted that he would have life in himself. This life was the source of light that found expression in his words, deeds and attitudes.

One can't help but sense the excitement in the soul of the writer of this gospel as he begins explaining the glory of the mystery of who Jesus is. He's the Word, he has life, and he is light, the light of the world! The wonder of these concepts will be the foundation of all he has to say about him. Jesus is the Son of God, God made manifest to humans. The invisible God now manifest in a human body so that we can begin to understand the mystery of a kingdom that is not of this world. John makes it abundantly clear right from the start that Jesus is God and that there is also God from whence he came. The understanding of the three in one is clearly taught in the Gospel of John. Jesus, though God, came from God. Later he will introduce us to the Holy Spirit who also came from God and is God.

# Chapter Two

## John Introduces Jesus

John 1:6-18

As we come to John 1:6, John introduces John the Baptist to us. John does not call him John the Baptist, but it is certain that that is who he is speaking of. He is simply John in this gospel. When the name John is used in this gospel, there is no confusion about which John is being spoken of because John the beloved, the author of this Gospel never referred to himself by name. Elsewhere the distinction had to be made, thus the use of the name John the Baptist to distinguish him from John the disciple of Jesus.

The mission of John was to be a witness of the light. Once more we see the writer using a common word with an uncommon meaning. Here he uses the term “light” to mean Jesus Christ, but by using the word light he is emphasizing the true nature of the man Jesus who he is seeking to introduce! John also accomplishes another purpose in the use of the word light, he demonstrates that light, as used in this gospel is not natural light, but rather divine in nature and that whatever light came from John did not have its origin in him. The writer clearly says of John that he was not that light, but came to give witness to the light. The writer connects these words to ideas in such a way so as to tightly mingle the concepts that light and truth and all such ideas cannot be separated from the person of Jesus Christ. There is no light or truth outside of him; he is the source and he is the substance.

As the writer progresses, he further expounds on his theme of who Jesus is, though he still has not given us his name. It is as though he does not want the name “Jesus” to distract us from these concepts about him, thus he reemphasizes them again. The fact that he is creator is mentioned again in verse 10, though he was in a human body, it was nonetheless true. He was the God of Israel, but tragically they did not recognize him because he was in a human body. God took upon himself a human body so that he could accomplish the work of salvation and communicate with us in a manner that could be understood. He not only came for Israel, but for the world; but neither Israel nor the world understood him to be God at that time; thus, they missed the opportunity of welcoming him. Nevertheless, the glory of Jesus shines brighter as a result of the difficulties he encountered.

The mission of Jesus was to bring the message of salvation to Israel first, even though they rejected him, then to all who would receive him he gave the right to become the children of God. These individuals would experience a new birth, which the writer clearly shows is not a natural phenomenon but is divinely willed, and produced.

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14) Jesus is now introduced to us in another light that is a theological cornerstone. He is called the One and Only. This theme will be further developed in the letters to the churches, especially in Ephesians and Colossians where Paul repeatedly speaks of the believer as being “in Christ” and that all knowledge and wisdom, grace and truth, and other redemptive terms are all to be found and experienced “in Christ.” The work of God toward man is all included in Christ, and outside

of Christ the work of God and the love of God is expressed in the call to all mankind to come to Jesus and receive mercy, grace and forgiveness of sins.

During the lifetime of Jesus one could not be found to be “in Christ” as he was in human form. And since salvation is found in Christ, those who came to him prior to his death on the cross received the right to become the children of God. After the death and resurrection of Jesus, those who believe on him become the children of God and are found to be “in Christ.”

This clears up the understanding of some of the ideas used in this gospel and other writings. Jesus is God’s One and Only Son, and all others receive their positional rights as a result of being included in him. God’s love for the world is expressed in the call to come to Jesus, but having come he expresses his love to Jesus Christ, and whoever is found in him becomes the full beneficiary of all that God does for him. Jesus is the heir of all things; therefore, we too are heirs of all things having received redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins. The Father loves Jesus and he loves us with the very same love. This is all the result of our faith in the One and Only, Jesus Christ.

There are no second-class citizens in the family of God. All are equally loved because God’s love is first for Jesus, and all who are found in him. No one from the least to the greatest is lacking, just as in the human body, the members most lacking in comeliness are given the greater glory. All are equally loved and the weaker are given the strength of the stronger, compensating for their lack so that all together are equally lovely. Love could have it no other way. In Christ there is no competition, self-seeking, or any other expression of the fallen nature. Our joy is made complete in the knowledge that God loves us all with the same love with which he loves Jesus.

The testimony of John was that the law came through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. And John further declared that the One and Only was preexistent with the Father and has come to reveal him to us.

# Chapter Three

## The Ministry of John

John 1:19-34

John came onto the world scene with a flamboyance that attracted the attention of the whole nation of Israel. He soon drew the attention of the Jews in Jerusalem who sent priests and Levites to question him. They wanted to know if he was a prophet or if he had a prophetic mission. They were anticipating the arrival of Christ and also realized that Elijah the prophet should reappear, so they asked him if he was either of these men.

John himself didn't connect his call to being Christ or Elijah, however he did say,

"I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" (John 1:23)

John seemed to have a limited understanding of his role in history. He knew, however, he had a job to do and he willingly applied himself to the task. He understood that he was to announce the coming of Christ, and that he was already among them, but they didn't recognize him.

John's role was a limited one. He came proclaiming the coming Messiah, and baptizing people in the Jordan, a symbol of their repentant hearts. He was a man who was willing to tell people that they needed to repent and return to God. He evidently did it with a great deal of gusto that drew the attention of people to come and hear him. He was an oddity of sorts, dressing and eating in an unusual way. John was dedicated to his mission and did what God wanted him to do, announce the coming of Christ. Though he didn't have a full understanding of the mission of Christ or whom it was he was announcing, he did, however, understand that Christ was a person to be held in the highest possible esteem. He further understood that by comparison he was not at all to be compared to Christ. Though John preached concerning the need to repent, he also felt a sense of unworthiness.

Suddenly, as John was baptizing, Jesus approached him wanting to be baptized. When John saw him, he saw a dove land on him and remain. This was the sign he was looking for as he had been instructed to watch for this identifying incident to occur. John had a visitation from which he received his instructions concerning his ministry and what to expect when he would meet Christ. "Look," John exclaimed,

"the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

What a moment in the history of man! Christ had appeared and he was going to take away the sin of the world! Many of the teachers of the law, elders, and priests were expecting Christ to come, but what they anticipated was a king to take the throne of David and establish Israel as an independent nation.

What we look for in our relationship with God depends on the condition of our hearts. If we are full of ourselves, we will want things to satisfy what it is that we deem will satisfy our needs. Making the transition from being worldly and temporal to being a part of the eternal kingdom of

God is not an easy one with respect to the internal mechanisms of our affections, drives, and interests. John introduced Jesus as the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. This was the role of first importance, all others come after the sin question has been settled.

When Jesus stepped forward from the crowd he didn't look any different than any other young Jewish man. John said that, had he not seen the Spirit come out of heaven in the form of a dove and land on him and remain, he wouldn't have recognized him. When he did recognize him as the Son of God, his heart was filled with wonderment. He then spoke of his incarnation and his exalted position. Jesus was before John (Though in the natural we know John was a few months older), and he surpassed him! John said that Jesus was the Son of God. Thus, the introduction of Jesus was complete. Now John would have to decrease so that Jesus could take front stage. John had enjoyed being the focal point of those who sought after God, but now the focus would change and he would soon pass from the world scene.

# Chapter Four

## Jesus Gathers Disciples

John 1:35-51

None of the gospels give us a consistent chronology of the sequence of events reported in the gospels. This is especially evident in the accounts of the call of the disciples. All the gospels tell the story of John baptizing in the Jordan and Jesus coming to him. Each gives us facts relating to the events as they either saw them or were told about them. After Jesus was baptized all agree he went into the desert to be tempted of the devil after fasting for forty days. All, that is, except John who doesn't report the events at all. Rather John tells us of a first encounter with some of his future disciples.

When reading the gospels we encounter words like "at once" or "the next day" which are indicators of a change of scene, but not always a reference to exact timing, as one of a western mindset would suppose. Throughout the Bible we encounter a Jewish style of writing that moves from important event to important event without always indicating what might have also happened or what was skipped over. Calendars, as we know them today, did not exist in those days; so understandably, the emphasis was not upon exact times or sequences. Occasionally, exact references to time were given, but seldom in a calendar form. In fact, it was difficult to relate time in those days so they would say something like, in the first year of the reign of – and when so and so was – thus establishing a point of reference. The Jews did have months of the year that formed a calendar of sorts but no specific years seemed to be applied to them. I say this to help us understand that when one writer skipped what another writer reported as an important event, it was not because it did not happen or that they were arguing over trivial matters. In their manner of speech time didn't have the same importance it does today.

This discussion is given because in the other gospels the style of writing does not seem to give opportunity for the events that John is relating. Reference to the baptism of Jesus and his going into the desert was prefaced by saying something like "at once" which to the western mindset would mean he left within minutes, however in Biblical usage it could mean within a day or two, or some other indefinite but short time span. Therefore, Jesus could have very likely encountered the men reported in John either prior to his journey into the desert or after his temptation that may have ended with Jesus being in Jerusalem. If that were the case he may have returned to Galilee via way of where John was baptizing and at that point in time met Andrew and Simon who would become Peter. Evidently they all returned to Galilee, albeit, not necessarily together.

This occasion of Jesus meeting Andrew and Peter at the site of the baptism is important in the gospel narrative as it indicates that Andrew believed that Jesus was the Messiah from the very start and introduce Jesus to Peter as the Messiah or the Christ. Solid belief in the fact that Jesus was the Christ was slow in coming, however. Whether Peter had this in his mind later when Jesus summoned him to follow him is not clear, but it does help us understand why Peter and other disciples would leave all and follow him when invited to do so.

All Israel was waiting for the Messiah to appear. Daniel's prophecy of 69 weeks of years to Messiah was completed at this approximate time. It was not possible to know exactly when he

would appear due to the fact that they didn't have a calendar to go by, but they knew that the approximate year had come. The problem everyone seemed to have was not in the fact of the expectation of the coming Christ, but in the manner of his coming. There seemed to be divergent ideas about where he would come from, what his coming would be like, and what his mission would be.

John had introduced him as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, but most were looking for a coming king. His role of savior was not understood, not because it wasn't prophesied, but rather because the need for the removal of sins was not regarded as important. They assumed that they were okay because they were Israelites and they had the heritage of God and made sacrifices at the temple. The eternal aspects of their religion was not of major importance, rather what bore upon their minds were temporal concerns. When would they receive their independence from the domination of Gentiles, and when would they have a king of their own again?

John the beloved wrote his gospel with the divine nature of Jesus in view. From the very start he emphasized the uniqueness of Jesus. He was determined to set him apart from all other people, pointing out the evidences of the fact that he is the Son of God. Identifying Jesus as the Word, in the first verse of his gospel, expands the concept of simply being a son of God. Adam was a son of God, but neither Adam nor any other member of the human race could be the expression of the mind and heart of God. Jesus was totally unique which is expressed in the NIV rendering of the phrase "God's one and only Son." Other translations say, "only begotten Son," which is also true, but "one and only" emphasizes the uniqueness of Jesus which the Greek implies. The heart and soul of this gospel shows Jesus to be a part of, yet separate from, all other people of the earth.

The purpose of Jesus' first coming was not for political purposes; he was the Lamb of God. Politics must wait for another day and another time. This was the hour for the atonement of the sins of the world, and afterwards the proclamation of the message to the whole world. Though this didn't fit the desires of those in leadership, it was God's plan and John was being used by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the truth.

The author of the Gospel of John uses the story of the call of Nathaniel as further proof of the divinity of Jesus. How could an ordinary man seeing someone sitting under a fig tree know about the character of the man? Though others may say he was simply perceptive, to Nathaniel he was the Son of God. Nathaniel also expressed the anticipation in the heart of Israel by saying "you are the king of Israel." In and of itself, Nathaniel's evaluation doesn't constitute proof, but taken with all the other evidences in the book, it adds weight to the argument for the divine nature of Jesus.

The glory of Jesus Christ can only be appreciated by those whose hearts are hungering for truth. All who are looking for a coming utopia, or some other temporal benefit, are not going to accurately appreciate Jesus. He will always be a son of God, or a means of receiving a blessing. Some people see him as a means by which they can attain some position of power either in this world or in the one to come. Their motives, however, being impure disqualified them for the prize they seek. Nathaniel, like all the other disciples, would have to undergo a change of view of Jesus, but for now seeing him as the Son of God was sufficient.



# Chapter Five

## Jesus Turns Water into Wine

John 2:1-11

After Jesus had been baptized by John, tempted by the Devil, and had encountered some of his future disciples; he went back to Galilee where he ministered in the power of the Spirit. He returned to Nazareth and after experiencing rejection from the people of the town, moved his place of residence to Capernaum at the north end of the Sea of Galilee.

Sometime in this time period, likely three days after leaving John the Baptist to return to Galilee, he went to Cana with his new disciples, to a wedding feast they had been invited to attend. His mother was there and soon a problem arose. The wedding master had run out of wine for the guests, an embarrassing situation. Jesus' mother learned of the problem and as mothers will often do when they have a talented child, she suggested that Jesus fix the problem. Jesus responded that his time had not come, but then proceeded to do what his mother wanted. She had instructed the servants to do whatever he told them to do, so he told them to fill their pots with water. After filling the pots with water, he told them to draw out some and take it to the banquet master. They did and when he tasted it he complained to the bridegroom that he had withheld the best wine till the last which was not according to custom.

Even though this was not the most appropriate time for Jesus to display his miracle power, he did so because his mother asked him to. The purpose of miracles, healings, and other displays of power generally are to validate the message of the gospel. However, this was an atmosphere of festivity where people were indulging in wine and whatever else their customs included, probably music and dancing and loud happy talk.

The lifestyle of these people was for the most part a rather uneventful routine of work and everyday responsibilities. On the Sabbath day they would go to the local synagogue and worship, a mainstay of their social lives. Otherwise social activity was rather limited, so when someone got married it was a very big event. It was an occasion when people got together who had not been together for some time. Jesus is not against such happy occasions as weddings, birthdays and other happy events. The celebration had nothing to do with heathen practices, or idols; it was a God ordained event in the lives of two people who, in accord with the plan of God, were being joined together in holy matrimony.

God's purpose for miracles generally dictates when they will occur. The time and place is important to God as they are not intended to be a crutch, nor are they intended to be treated lightly or irreverently. Jesus responded to the plea of his mother to do something outside the usual guidelines of ministry. It doesn't seem that the remark of Jesus about his time had not come, was intended to imply that it wasn't time for him to work miracles, only that it wasn't the right setting for him to begin to display his power.

Jesus' mother was not impressed with matters of protocol, however. She like most women, saw the need and saw no reason why it shouldn't be met. Her view of the plan of God had a more practical and immediate dimension. Men are generally more tuned into the overall picture of life and see things objectively. As a man, Jesus probably would have thought, poor fellow, he underestimated this crowd and now he is going to have to suffer the embarrassment of running

out of wine. No big deal, people shouldn't drink anyway, would be an expected reaction. Not so with a woman, especially if there is a remedy at hand.

How many women have persuaded God to act outside protocol? I think that women have a very strong influence on the actions of God! When a mother prays, heaven seems to listen. Think about it, how many sons have been spared disastrous ends to life as a result of the prayers of their mothers? Jesus acted because his mother appealed to him. Pure and simple, the setting wasn't right, but the need was there. The result was that the disciples saw his glory and believed in him. They would have seen it anyway at another time and place, but the word says to honor your father and mother. Jesus obeyed the commandment, and a miracle blessed the need of the bridegroom.

I suppose something needs to be said about the fact that Jesus turned water into wine. Should he have done this? Some who hold to a strict view that alcoholic beverages are absolutely evil say that the wine Jesus created was non-alcoholic, that it just tasted like wine. I do not know; how can we know? I am convinced that there is nothing inherently evil about the substance alcohol, and that the evil is in the heart of man determining the outcome. I am further convinced that in the present culture, the use of alcoholic beverages tends to the destruction of lives. We are a people of overindulgence. Though I personally do not judge others in this matter unless it is creating a problem, I believe that abstinence is a very wise choice for life. I encourage abstinence because I have never seen any good thing come from indulgence.

There are a number of things available that Christians have to make choices regarding. The rules are not always black and white, but for every Christian, the desire to live in the spirit of righteous conduct should never be compromised. What one person sees as being within the spirit of righteous conduct may not fit into the view of another Christian, therefore, out of love, our conduct should be tempered by the views of our peers.

Did Jesus drink wine? Yes, on occasions he did. Jesus was not an alcoholic, however. Some will argue that the wine in those days was non-alcoholic, but that does not stand up to investigation. If that were true, then why would people be warned about the evils of overindulgence? Just because Jesus turned water into wine and drank wine on occasions, does that mean that we should? It is true that he is our example, but example of what? Certainly, he did not sanction any activity that leads to death. For anyone to use this as an excuse to drink is to act unwisely and outside the spirit of truth.

Especially today, we live in a society where alcoholics abound. For an alcoholic, an alcohol free zone is important to maintaining sobriety. The Christian community, in my judgment, ought to be an alcohol free zone out of love for those to whom we are sent. If an alcoholic sees Christians indulging, even in moderation, it is easy slip back into his alcoholism. Weak individuals need restraints. We are all weak in some area of life. Wisdom is best served when we see our weaknesses and use restraints as an aid to recovery. Sometimes the weak also need the support of the strong to also live within the same restraints. If we love one another, we will bear the burdens of the weak. Christians are not commanded to drink, but there are many warnings about the evil results of alcohol in the word of God.

We should avoid the distraction of subjects just discussed in viewing the issues involved in this story. The lessons that dominate are compassion, love, respect and obedience. These are found here in this story. More important than all, we see the power of God at work validating the person of Jesus Christ, and his sanction upon the institution of marriage. We also note that he did not condemn the customs of the people, so long as they were in the spirit of legitimate festivity.

# Chapter Six

## The First Cleansing of the Temple

John 2:12-22

Once more we see a reason to question whether John wrote from a historical perspective or a theological perspective ignoring time sequences. The reason for the discussion is that John reports that Jesus went to Jerusalem and cleansed the temple in what seems to be the very early stages of his ministry and Matthew, Mark and Luke reports it happening during the last few days of his life. Some believe that John just reported the event early in his gospel because it fit into the format of the message he wanted to convey. While this could be true, it also could very well have happened twice, once in the early days of the ministry of Jesus and later as reported in the other gospels. There are a few minor differences in what is reported, however, nothing that demands a second occurrence.

Another consideration is found in the reason for the writing of the gospel of John. It has been said that people brought copies of the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke to John to read, and after reading them said that more needed to be said. Apparently he noted that a number of important events had not been mentioned in the first three gospels, thus he set out to write one with these included. John skipped over much of what was previously reported and focused upon what he deemed to be the omissions. He also wrote with a theme in mind and told his story retelling some of the previous material. It is with the idea in mind that he particularly wanted to include what had not been previously told that strengthens my contention that this was an early cleansing of the temple.

I wish to proceed with the story as a first occurrence separate from what the other gospels report. I assume that all were totally correct in what they said; therefore, they cannot be the same as John reports it happening near the beginning of the ministry of Jesus.

John reports that after the wedding in Cana, Jesus and his disciples went to Capernaum with his mother and brothers. A short time later at the time of the Jewish Passover, Jesus went to Jerusalem. Upon arriving at the temple he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, while others were exchanging money from foreign currency to be used at the temple. This angered Jesus because he saw it as a desecration of the temple. Religion should not be a commercial activity. There is something very deep in the heart of every person, a longing to know God. When an individual is seeking to find God, no one should commercialize that effort. God is seeking to save the lost and establish a communication with a lost race. This is not a commercial effort; this is love in action. Love, grace and prayer are free and God does not want any interference with these.

The temple is not a commercial enterprise, therefore, legitimate as it may have seemed, it was not the place for this activity. It was a needed service to those who traveled great distances to come to the temple. Many either didn't have animals of their own to sacrifice, or they had to sell their animals and then buy animals at Jerusalem, because their journey was long and difficult. Jesus didn't criticize the activity itself; he just did not want it happening in his Father's house!

Jesus made a whip, went into the temple court and drove the animals and birds out of the area. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers scattering their coins. This drew angry attention from the Jews who demanded to know by what authority he did these things.

It is my point of view that Jesus did this early in his ministry to draw negative attention to himself from those in Jewish authority. The mission of Jesus in his first coming was to be the Lamb of God. To accomplish this there needed to be a hostile spirit between those in leadership and him. He did not come to be accepted by them, but rather to die for them. Jesus did nothing improper in cleansing the temple area, but in doing so he angered those in authority. It was like an "in your face protest" which offended them.

Throughout the gospel of John we see the animosity between the Jewish leadership and Jesus. It likely began right here at the first cleansing of the temple. The fires of hatred and suspicion were kindled and fuel would be added at later occasions.

When asked to give a sign of his authority to do what he did, Jesus responded, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." This response drew scornful criticism from the Jews. They could only relate to the temple of stones that Herod had built, but after Jesus died and rose again the disciples remembered what he had said, and realized that he had spoke of his body! The temple was merely a shadow of what was to come; Jesus himself was the reality! Though shadow it was, still the lesson it taught was not to be confused by unauthorized activities. Jesus did the right thing in cleansing the temple, though he would ultimately pay for it with his life. That would have been tragic had it not been for the fact that it was God's purpose all along.

I am convinced that had Jesus gone to the elders meekly, showing his mighty power, displaying his wisdom, and explaining how accepting him would enhance their power and prestige that they would have accepted him and made him their king. Had he done that, there would be no plan of salvation today, sin would not have an answer, and the reign of Christ would have been no different from that of any other king.

Salvation results from repentance based on revelation. Reasoning with sinners never does the job. Change resulting from understanding the sinner, or compromising on issues results in peaceful relationships, but the gospel is not concerned with peaceful relationships alone. Our peace is found in Christ. Repentant hearts cleansed from their sins have fellowship and unity of spirit, but those outside whose hearts are not cleansed are at enmity with those so cleansed. Christian unity is found within the parameters of Christ. Peace with the world is not promised to any believer. Jesus taught us that if we were of the world, the world would accept us. Since we are not of the world, our role as peacemakers is limited to our ability to present the message of salvation.

Jesus confronted sin. Rejection of Jesus was based on sin in the heart of those who encountered him. They were offended by his actions and they failed to understand his words. No miracle could convince those whose eyes were blinded by hate. Murder entered their hearts, therefore, Jesus must die, yet it was for their sins he died!

# Chapter Seven

## Jesus the Light of the World

John 2:23-3:21

Jesus was always cautious when dealing with men. He understood their natural tendency to sin. It came as no surprise to Jesus when men acted deceitfully; therefore, he kept himself from their control. Knowing the deceitful nature of humanity did not, however, prevent Jesus from pursuing his redemptive mission.

Nicodemus a Pharisee and a member of the ruling class came to Jesus by night and confessed that he and other leaders recognized that Jesus was a man sent from God. In reply Jesus declared,

"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." (John 3:3)

Nicodemus was puzzled by this, stating that it wasn't possible to reenter a mother's womb. Jesus then told him that he must be born of the water and the Spirit. Jesus then confirmed the obvious, that flesh gives birth to flesh, but that Spirit gives birth to spirit.

Nicodemus, like most people, needed to be tutored in the fundamental knowledge of the Spirit, since his (the Spirit's) comings and goings are mysterious to man. All this amazed Nicodemus, yet as a teacher of Israel he should have known it.

In the time of Moses, while the Israelites were in the wilderness, God sent judgment because they complained against Moses and God. As a result serpents entered the camp biting many of them. Moses then prayed and God instructed him to make a bronze serpent and put it on a pole and that anyone having been bitten could then look at it and live. Jesus used that incident to teach Nicodemus the fact that he would have to be raised up as was symbolized by the snake on a pole in the desert. The incident of placing a serpent on a stake was a shadow of the redemptive mission of Jesus of which Nicodemus should have been familiar.

Jesus went on to explain to Nicodemus how it is that God loves us and how that belief in him is the means by which we receive eternal life. Jesus didn't come into the world to catch us in our sinning so that he would be justified in judging us, but rather, he came to bring eternal life. The purposes of God are redemptive not condemning. Condemnation is for those who reject him, but he will receive whosoever will come to him in faith believing.

Jesus talked in language that is beautiful to the ears of those hungering for knowledge of God, but for those who reject him, they are words of condemnation. Evil men do not receive Jesus because coming to him requires facing sin. Jesus is the light and light exposes sin.

When Nicodemus came to Jesus, he declared to him, and indeed to all mankind, that no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. The new birth experience is required for a person to understand the kingdom of God. Without a new birth experience the only spiritual kingdom that a person will be able to experience is the one that is present in the atmosphere of this present world. Satan is called the prince of the power of the air and all mankind are being deceived by his cunning.

Satan's highest achievement is realized when he is able to steal the hearts of men from the Lord God. He does this by involving people in the things of this world, or by filling their minds

with spiritual fantasies, or false religions. Many people are settling for psychic phenomenon rather than spiritual experiences that come from the Lord God. People without spiritual insight often confuse psychic displays for divinely given spiritual experiences. Even in the world of the church there are individuals who, in the name of gifts of the Spirit are manifesting psychic phenomenon. I believe in spiritual gifts but one needs to be somewhat cautious about what is being manifest.

I once went to a church service where the pastor was promoting the manifestation of gifts in his church. He had a visiting evangelist as he often did, and after the evangelist spoke he then proceeded to take an offering from the people. He began to use methods of intimidation in an effort to get people to turn over whatever money they had to him. At one point he even went so far as to tell them that he could even tell them how their money was folded in their wallets. I admit to having been somewhat gullible and not accurately discerning whether God had anything to do with that or not. I left confused and sick at heart. I was feeling the call of God to active ministry and knew that money would be needed to support any ministry effort I would make, but what I saw that night caused me to say in prayer, "God if you want me to be in the ministry you are going to have to find another way." I find some of the methods of offering taking in Christian circles offensive. I know that it takes money to pay the bills of every ministry, but I also believe that if a ministry is of God, he will provide for it.

Spiritual deceptions abound, false religions are turning the hearts of good people away from the Lord God. I saw a TV commercial that used the Biblical passage where Jesus said that he had other sheep. They then introduced the Book of Mormon placing it beside the Bible, as they proceeded they faded the Bible away leaving only the Book of Mormon. Their claim to legitimacy is based on this book that, in my judgment, is a fraud. Their religion is also a fraud based on a concoction of ideas that come from humanistic thinking, lust for power, and a strong influence from the Masonic lodge. They teach enough Bible to deceive those who are ignorant of the truth, but who would never accept these teachings unless they were convinced that it was in some way Biblical.

I believe that there will be some Mormons in heaven, but it won't be because of the Mormon Church, but rather, in spite of it. To their credit they sometime teach about the redemptive work of Christ and his great love. This is the basis of saving faith, so a person could become a Christian in spite of the fraudulent aspects of the church.

There are many excesses being practiced today that confuse people concerning the true and valid manifestations of the Holy Spirit within his church. These range from the use of so called "gift ministries" to raise money, to purely human methods of intimidation, and extortion. I believe God is able to move the hearts of people to give and that when they give because he has commissioned their giving, he will abundantly supply their needs.

As pastor, I teach the principle of tithing. I believe the practice is the God ordained method of financing the needs of the church. I teach that 90% of the money we receive will accomplish more when applied to our personal needs with God's blessing, than 100% without it. I also believe that money given to a church for wrong reasons is worthless in God's sight. As pastor, I would rather have less money come into our treasury, and have it be blessed by God, than to have an abundance of money that is the result of crafty money raising methods. I tell the people in my church that I do not covet their money; I want them to enjoy what is theirs. I want what is theirs to be blessed by God. Giving tithe should not be burdensome, nor should people be made to feel guilty for not giving more to God than the tenth he has asked for. If the Holy Spirit commissions additional giving, and it is given joyfully to the Lord, it will also be abundantly

blessed. I place no limits on giving; however, I insist that it is the Lord who is calling for the extra giving. It's easy for people in the administration of a church to be motivated by necessity, greed, or carnal ambition to go beyond what the Spirit is calling for, but if we are Spirit led, all that we do will prosper.

The kingdom of God is a realm of blessing where there is love, joy and peace. Entry into this kingdom is through the door, Jesus. When we by faith enter through him, we experience a wonderful change called the new birth. The Holy Spirit takes up residence within our hearts, and from that day onward we are privileged to accept his leading and teaching in our lives.

Manifestations of the ministries of the Spirit are also available as a believer learns to know and trust the Holy Spirit, yielding to him for supernatural manifestations. This realm of manifestation usually begins with an experience of speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance. This is the realm of the power of the Holy Spirit in manifestation that is different experientially from the experience of the indwelling Spirit that all believers experience. This experience is referred to as the baptism of the Holy Spirit that is distinguished in the scriptures by two different Greek words, pneuma and dunamis. When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about being born again, he spoke about the Spirit [pneuma] and when he breathed on his disciple after his resurrection and told them to receive the Holy Spirit, again it was pneuma. When Jesus was ready to be taken into heaven prior to the day of Pentecost, the disciples were told to go to Jerusalem and await the promise of the father, when that would occur they would receive dunamis or power after that the Holy pneuma or Spirit is come upon them. Dunamis is used to indicate the special enabling of the Holy Spirit that result in a number of different manifestations commonly called the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The source of all true gifts of the Spirit is the Holy Spirit; therefore, any manifestation that does not minister life, joy, peace and deliverance from evil is not of him. The baptism with the Holy Spirit is not receiving a second spirit, or receiving a spirit different from the work of salvation, it has to do with the delivery of gifts to the believer, packages of special enabling.

Some individuals receive the gifts of the Spirit in varying degrees as a result of their faith or lack of faith. Some people have been taught against certain manifestations; therefore, God will give them what they can accept by faith. God does not force people to accept what they do not wish to accept. He will however, seek to persuade us to receive his gifts, because all good and perfect gifts come from above. Some people shy away from gifts because they have either seen or heard of excesses and unwise use of the gifts. People who misuse the gifts of the Holy Spirit have, unfortunately, given them a bad name.

The use of gifts in the church, when properly used, is a very powerful thing. The fourteenth chapter of First Corinthians is written explaining how the gifts, though powerful and beneficial can also be damaging if they are improperly used. Tongues when properly used in the church on the day of Pentecost resulted in about 3,000 people being saved. But the improper use of tongues results in confusion, causing people to shy away from the Lord. The proper use of tongues is a powerful sign to unbelievers, but the improper use is negative. The proper use of prophecy in such a case is a stronger sign to unbelievers, but that was not the intent of prophecy. Whatever is done within the church should be for the benefit of all who are in attendance. Manifestations of the Spirit should validate the message of salvation to those who are seeking. The gifts have a two-fold purpose in the church, one is to validate the message of the church, and the other is to aid in the development of the individual Christians.

Jesus came as the light of the world and his coming involved the Holy Spirit who is the agent of all that he came to accomplish. Jesus and the Holy Spirit are tied together inseparably,

working for the salvation of man. Jesus is the light of the world and men come to him because they hunger for the light. Those who love their sin will not come to him, but to all who will come to him, he will give the gift of life.



# Chapter Eight

## Baptism of John

John 3:22-36, 4:1-3

After Jesus had cleansed the temple and met with Nicodemus, he took his disciples into the Judean countryside and spent some time with them. While at the Jordan River, people came to him desiring to be baptized. A Jew noticed what was going on and went to John's disciples and reported the matter to them. They were arguing about the matter of ceremonial washing, so they took the matter to John.

Isn't it interesting how matters of ceremony, custom, and tradition stir the emotions of people? Who gives authorization to perform religious ceremonies? John had been baptizing people and that was evidently tolerated by the Jews, but when they heard that Jesus was also baptizing this seemed to stir attention to the matter. From the tone of the text, it sounds as though the whole matter of baptism was being called into question. If baptism was a ceremonial washing, shouldn't that be part of the temple function, performed only by priests? What then are these laymen doing baptizing? When John did it, it could be regarded as somewhat of a novelty, prophets often did unusual things, but now another group formed around still another teacher was performing the practice. From the viewpoint of the leaders of the nation, the Jews, this was a matter of concern. If this was the beginning of a new pop religion, forming around a practice of questionable origin, then it should be called into question. The concern about such matters is usually centered on how this will effect the established institutions. When people start looking in a different direction from what is established to receive what they should be getting from the establishment, it can be regarded as a sort of alienation, something to be concerned about.

God often works outside established institutions. This is not because he is disavowing the institutions, but rather because when he wishes to do something out of the ordinary, institutions often lack the flexibility needed. Churches face this dilemma whenever someone gets a good idea that has never been done before. There are always those individuals who feel it their obligation to preserve the status quo. Even when the idea has been born of the Spirit, attitudes can stand as a preventative to implementation.

Jesus continued the practice of baptism because it did not belong to John; it was the result of God's instructions to him. Baptism would become a vital part of the church that was yet to be born. Jesus himself did not baptize, the gospel tells us, but his disciples did. Its purpose was both ceremonial and symbolic.

When the matter was brought before John, he was not alarmed, but rather delighted. Some of John's disciples were concerned partly because it appeared that Jesus was attracting more attention than John. Who has the largest following? What size congregation do you have? Look that fellow is building a bigger and more beautiful building than ours. How dare he, doesn't he know we were here first? Maybe Jesus should find another river to baptize in; this is our river. These are attitudes often expressed when something new begins to happen. And why? Isn't it because we are worried about carnal matters rather than spiritual matters? John could have become jealous of Jesus had he loved the attention of the crowds.

When this controversy arose, Jesus did a remarkable thing; he left the region and returned to Galilee. I don't believe it was because of John that Jesus left, his attitude about Jesus was a correct one, but rather, it was because the whole issue of baptism was about to be called into

question and that would have been a distraction to the missions of both Jesus and John. Baptism, while important, is not the message of the church. The message is about Jesus of whom baptism speaks.

John understood his ministerial calling to be, preparing the way for Christ. God had commissioned him and matters pertaining to his mission had evidently been discussed. John's attitude toward Jesus was unassuming and gracious. Though they could have known each other as children growing up because they were cousins, they evidently weren't close friends. John and Jesus were related and Mary and Elizabeth were not only cousins, but friends. In spite of all that could have been known about Jesus, John didn't know that he was the one until he saw the spirit descend upon him in the form of a dove. Even though they were raised within a few miles of each other, there is no record of them ever meeting. When John and Jesus met at the river Jordan, no indication was given of a prior meeting. Even if John did know Jesus as a cousin and friend, he now saw him as the Lamb of God, thus he really met him for the first time.

What John understood about the whole scenario was that ministry isn't a contest of popularity, but rather the fulfillment of the will of God. John was happy that Jesus was increasing in popularity. He saw everything that happened as happening because it is given from above. He was in proper relationship to the will of God; therefore, he could accept whatever happened as the will of God.

John gave us additional important information as an addendum to the previously written gospels and part of that additional information had to do with the words of John the Baptist concerning Jesus. The author of this gospel was concerned about the establishment of theological witness concerning the divinity of Jesus. Jesus was not like other men who were born of women, he was preexistent. Jesus was not a product of reincarnation, a heresy; he was the man from heaven. Those who are of the earth could only speak of the earth, but the man that is from above speaks of that which is above. His position is also above all others, yet John said, no one accepts his testimony. Jesus was from above and was the recipient of the Spirit who is from above.

Having established his support of baptism, Jesus left the region and returned to Galilee.

# Chapter Nine

## A Woman of Samaria

John 4:4-34

Jesus lived his life in direct obedience to the plan of God. His life was not the result of trial and error, nor was it up to him to devise a method of fulfillment of God's purposes. Every day was important in the life of Jesus. Every person he encountered for ministry was important as well. Some encounters were important because the Lord loved to minister to the needs of suffering humanity. Others had additional importance because they served to illustrate points in the message of the gospels.

In addition to the stories told in the other gospels there was still a story that needed to be told; the story of the woman of Samaria. When Jesus left the area where John was baptizing, he returned to Galilee via way of Samaria, a route often avoided by Jews because they hated Samaritans. Racism, prejudice, and class envy are not new to the human race. Jesus didn't come to solve social problems, but he didn't conform to the established social attitudes either.

Jesus and his disciple came to the town of Sychar that was near what was known as Jacob's well. Jesus sat down by the well while his disciples went into the town to buy food. Soon a woman came out of the town to draw water from the well. Jesus then asked her for a drink of water. The woman was surprised that he would ask her, since she was a Samaritan. Her response was that Jews don't associate with Samaritans. It apparently wasn't that she minded giving him a drink so much as that she was taken back by the fact that he would stoop to asking her, of all people, for a drink.

This response opened the door of opportunity for Jesus to introduce himself to her. Jesus answered her,

"If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." (John 4:10)

This was not the anticipated response from Jesus. The woman must have looked at him as though he had lost his good senses. How did he think he could draw water from the well without a rope or a bucket? The well was deep and the man who dug it was a great man, did he think he was greater than Jacob, who in spite of his greatness, had to draw water with a rope and bucket? If it appeared that Jesus was playing with this woman's thoughts, he was, but not maliciously. He wanted her to recognize spiritual truth and was using natural circumstances to teach a spiritual lesson.

Jesus answered,

"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (John 4:13-14)

Putting the woman's response into our terminology we would say, "Okay if your water is so good I want some of it. I would love to not have to come out here every day to draw water." I don't think her response indicated faith, it seemed to be more of an "okay, show me," response.

Everything that Jesus had said so far seemed like idol babble and maybe she figured it was time to put him on the spot to either put up or shut up.

What Jesus said next amazed her even more. First he told her to go get her husband, to which she responded that she didn't have a husband. Jesus then told her that she had told the truth, that she had had five husbands and that the man she now had was not her husband. Evidently she was perplexed by what she saw in life. What sorts of men had victimized her, and what experiences she may have endured, we can only guess. The fact that she had had five husbands indicated that she had gone through a lot of trauma, either they had all died or she was a divorced woman. She may have been wrestling with conflicting ideas about why things happen the way they do and was searching for answers. Quite possibly her self-esteem had been lost somewhere along the road of life.

Now the woman recognized that Jesus was more than just a man playing with her mind. She immediately acknowledged that he was a prophet, so she brought up a fundamental difference of opinion regarding the appropriate place of worship.

Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

Jesus declared,

"Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

She responded revealing her knowledge of the expectation of the coming of Christ. The woman said,

"I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." The fact that Jesus told her all about her past still didn't bring her to the full realization of who Jesus really was. Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."

Before the woman could fully appreciate what Jesus had just told her, she needed to realize that he was the Christ. What he said was revolutionary and to be taken seriously she needed to understand his credentials. This was one of the rare occasions where Jesus plainly revealed his identity to someone. What was said here was a revelation of truth about God that when understood was liberating. God did not belong to the Jews, nor could he be contained within their narrow view. A drastic shift in God's dealings with humanity was about to emerge. The understanding that God is Spirit was vitally important and understanding of the truth was needed to appreciate what was emerging on the world scene. The fact that Jesus selected a woman, and one of a questionable lifestyle, added to the fact that her national origin was less than ideal, indicated that Jesus viewed things differently than those in Jewish authority.

When great men reveal important messages that affect the lives of humanity, it is important to whom they reveal it and under what circumstances. Jesus selected the most unlikely person to be the recipient of this important message! The message he gave her was a pivotal message, one that would change the thinking of all Christianity about God and worship. Never again would the Christian world wonder where they could find the appropriate place of worship. Jerusalem or

Mt. Gerizim would no longer be a matter of discussion among the followers of Jesus Christ. The Islamics have their Mecca, and their mosque in Jerusalem, while Jews still want a temple in Jerusalem, but Christians know that places are not important because God is Spirit, and those who worship him worship in Spirit and in truth.

This message was not given to religious men to arrogantly hold to themselves. It was given to one who represents the otherwise down trodden. This woman was among the lowest of the low in the esteem of mankind. Being a woman, a Samaritan, and a person living in adultery, with a religion that was not accepted by the Jews, placed her as the most unlikely person that God could have chosen to be the recipient of such a great message.

What quality did she possess to make her God's choice? She was hungry for truth, able to receive truth, and was void of all airs that would distract from it. She was not affected by the fact that she had just received one of the greatest messages of the gospel, nor was she aware that when Jesus said that he was the Christ, that she was the only person recorded to whom he declared himself in this manner.

The woman was unaware of the importance of the message she had just heard. She, however, was thrilled beyond words because she had found the Messiah. The reason she gave for believing in him was not the message or even the fact that he had just boldly declared himself to be the Christ, but rather because he had told her about her life! It was the gift of knowledge in operation that validated the message she had just heard. She was a believer through and through. She spread the news and the people of the town came to see, and having seen they too believed, not because she said so, but because they also experienced him.

The disciples were perplexed when they return and found Jesus talking to a woman! Jesus, however, had just experienced one of those exhilarating experiences that only those who are used of God understand. Nothing satisfies our souls like being used by God in a life changing experience. There is no greater "high" than that experienced when you know that a very supernatural event has just taken place that has affected someone's future. The disciples wanted Jesus to eat, but Jesus was already satisfied.

# Chapter Ten

## Witnessing

John 4:35-45

The weariness of the journey had now given way to the joy of a task well done. A woman of Samaria had believed on him, the prerequisite of salvation. Even as he spoke, she was gathering the town together to meet Jesus. It was harvest time! Others had sown, holy men of old had prepared the hearts of people to receive the message of salvation, and now was the time to publish it. Spiritual hunger abounded; they must harvest.

It's easy to become involved with the affairs of daily life and to forget that the work of God is the most important part of living. Jesus called attention to the harvest that is ever before us. Souls are being readied for harvest, but few do the harvesting. The work of preparation goes on as a result of many factors. In the day of Jesus it happened through the teachings in the synagogues and in the homes of the people of Israel. They had been taught to watch for the coming of the Messiah. He was now among them and the people needed the opportunity to meet him.

The hard work of preparation is in the efforts bestowed in training and witnessing. The followers of Jesus are called upon to be both witnesses and harvesters.

When I was in India, I was taken to a village that was not accessible by road. We had to walk perhaps a mile or two from the nearest road, but when we got there, the people of the village gathered to hear me preach. The service was held in the courtyard of a home, and the only light was from flashlights or lanterns. It was an inspiring situation, standing in the semi-darkness, with the stars visible above. I remember preaching about the kingdom of heaven and the reality of eternal matters. After I finished preaching the man who was responsible for my being there, gave a call for salvation. Many of the men present came to receive Jesus, meaning that their whole families also were receiving Jesus. It was an exciting time seeing a whole village receiving the Lord.

The reason this had occurred was that a local man who had been a witch doctor, had received Christ. He had gone there and witnessed to the people in the village and had arranged for the meeting. The labor had been bestowed, the people were ready; all that was necessary was the harvest invitation. Once the call was given they accepted Jesus and were making plans for the next step in their walk of faith, baptism.

Men like Billy Graham have traveled the world, gathering people and preaching the message of salvation. People receive Christ, but those who prayed, handed out invitations, and gave their personal witnesses have done the work of preparation. It looks good for the evangelist when hundreds respond to an altar call, but without the work of those who prepare for the harvest, the harvest would not be very exciting.

Jesus wanted his disciples to start looking at the possibilities that were present all around them. The harvest is not some future event; it is now.

The woman who encountered him at the well told the people of the village in Samaria about Jesus. They in turn came to see Jesus. After spending time with him, hearing his words and seeing the signs he performed, they too believed. This was the result of the witness of one woman who had encountered Jesus and believed. Of all the ways the gospel is proclaimed, personal witness is still the most important means by which the message is spread.

After completing his work in Samaria, Jesus returned to Galilee where he continued his ministry. The remark is made in passing in the gospel of John about a prophet not being honored in his hometown. Jesus had, at one time, gone back to his hometown of Nazareth and was rejected by the people who knew him best. The reason for the rejection was that he claimed to be the one the scriptures foretold. When he pointed out evil in their hearts, they tried to kill him.

The Galileans, however, welcomed him and he made his home among them.

# Chapter Eleven

## Healing and Faith

John 4:46-54

The miracles of Jesus were numerous; however they occurred at specific times and for reasons that pertained to the gospel message. They often had symbolic value, but many times they simply demonstrated the compassion and love of the Lord for hurting people.

Jesus, upon returning to Galilee, was encountered by a Roman official whose son was sick. When the man had heard that Jesus was in the area, he went to him asking that he might come and heal his sick boy. Jesus replied that unless they saw a miraculous sign they would not believe.

Faith is a condition of heart in which belief in God spontaneously arises effecting the thoughts, actions and words of an individual. One can have belief without biblical faith. Faith is a gift given to all men who come to Christ, a measure if you will, (Rom 12:3, Eph 2:8) however, the gift can be suppressed to inactivity through sinful living, neglect or rebellion. The gift can also be stimulated upon hearing the word of God, in fact; faith comes through the hearing of the word. (Rom 10:17) Faith can be built up just as one would cultivate a crop to increase productivity, so faith increases with care and use. God is its author, or creator, and the one who brings it to fullness and completion.

Faith is a temporary condition of heart that has as its goal the completion of all things. Faith will have no place when all that has been planned and promised has been fulfilled. When what has been promised is possessed, hope ceases, and reality of possession takes its place. The time is coming when all needs have been supplied, and no desires remain unfulfilled; that is heaven.

Hell is where no desire is fulfilled, where every heart is in torment, because what has been embraced is now denied, and yet the need for it is amplified. (See Luke 16:19-31)

The opposite condition of faith is when an individual trades it for present and immediate fulfillments. Failure to accept the promise of something better and waiting for it, leads to the pursuit of present pleasures, and the embracing of temporal values.

Because faith is a gift from God the recipient of the gift has the prerogative of use or misuse. When faith has as its goal present temporal fulfillments, springing from desires of the fallen nature, it is being misapplied. Misapplication of biblical faith leads to disappointment and disillusionment, and ultimately to the abandonment of it, resulting in denial. Since biblical faith is found in Christ, denial of it is to deny Christ himself. To deny Christ is to deny the effectiveness of his sacrifice, since there is no other sacrifice; hell awaits the tormented soul.

The ultimate achievement of faith is restored fellowship with God. When a heart hungers to know God, faith reaches for him. The knowledge of God is found in Christ, therefore everyone who hungers to know God must come to him. He is the way, the truth and the life. (See John 14:6-7 Hebrews 6:4-6 Hebrews 10:26-27)

There are many teachers today who are teaching faith as though it is a mystical opportunity to achieve any desire one might have. It is a means by which individuals seek to employ God as their servant and use his power to achieve their goals. Since this sort of desire springs from evil in the heart of man, this misapplication has an evil result.



Faith is only pure in application when it has at its heart the pursuit of God. When it is attached to a temporal need, the need should be in conformity to the purposes of God. When that purpose is not clearly understood, "Your will be done," should preface any prayer. Hearts in submission to God are always subject to his will. A statement of submission does not hinder biblical faith.

Non-biblical faith is hindered by any thought of the possibility that what is pursued is not possible. The reason being, it is dependent upon the use of mystical powers from the realms of the fallen. The implementation of this kind of faith requires such things as positive confessions, positive thoughts, concentration, and is primarily an activity of mind control. The use of the name of Jesus does not negate the evil content, since it springs from a heart in rebellion to the purposes of God as expressed by the unwillingness to preface prayer by "Your will be done."

The Roman official had a need; his son was ill and about to die. Jesus had a reputation for being able to do the miraculous; he had turned water into wine here at Cana, and had performed miracles in Judea. Based on this, the official evidently reasoned that Jesus could heal his son. The official apparently lacked Biblical faith when he came to Jesus causing Jesus to say that unless he saw signs and wonders he would not believe. It seems evident that he did not come to Jesus to get closer to God, but rather to have a condition taken care of in his home, a common motive that draws people to prayer.

There is nothing evil about coming to Jesus because we have a need in our lives; he is always there for us, however, having received the answer to the immediate needs a pursuit of God is evidence of true faith. God often answers the cry of sinners who lack Biblical faith in the beginning, but answers to prayer should result in an awareness of the reality of God and end in a pursuit of him. It is at this point that our faith should be directed to more important issues. For many of the people who came to Jesus, belief was dependent upon what could be seen. The Roman official and his family believed as a result of the miracle of healing his son received. Belief in Jesus is the prerequisite of salvation.

"He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."  
(John 1:11-13)

Jesus enabled the Roman official to believe in him by granting a healing in his household. God's love reaches out to us despite our inability to believe in him without seeing evidence. This is one of the primary reasons for miracles both then and now.

# Chapter Twelve

## A Healing at the Pool of Bethesda

John 5:1-15

An undetermined amount of time lapsed between the time Jesus healed the Roman official's son and the story about a man who was an invalid for 38 years and was now lying helplessly at the pool of Bethesda. This pool was believed to be a place where people were sometimes healed, therefore people who were sick gathered there.

There is an explanation about when and why people were healed added in some of the manuscripts from which translation work is done, but they all are from 500 AD and newer, all the older transcripts do not have verse 4 which says that an angel came once a year and stirred the water, therefore the more accurate translations have deleted it. Whether it was fact or fiction that an angel came once a year and stirred the water, is unknown, however; it is evident that the people there believed that healings occurred at the pool when the waters were caused to move. It was for this reason people gathered there, but it was also believed that only the first one to enter the water would be healed.

Jesus came to the pool while visiting Jerusalem at the time of a feast. The feast was likely the Passover feast that would have occurred about a year after the healing of the Roman official's son.

The reason for Jesus' visit to the pool is not known, however, after learning that the invalid had been there a long while, Jesus initiated a conversation with him. He asked him if he wanted to be healed. The man then explained his problem, he was unable to get into the water quickly enough, and someone always got in ahead of him. At the time of the visit of Jesus, there was no evidence recorded of faith on the part of the man other than the fact that he was at the pool. Did the man have faith for healing, but due to continual disappointments, become discouraged? In this case it seems that Jesus acted out of compassion for the man, as he made no effort to seek Jesus out, or ask for healing. The man evidently was totally unaware of who Jesus was, and therefore didn't expect to be healed by him.

“Then Jesus said to him, ‘Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.’ At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. (John 5:8-9)

How startled that man must have been! Suddenly strength entered into his body and he was able to do just what Jesus had said for him to do.

As the man was walking along carrying his mat, someone stopped him informing him that he was in violation of the Sabbath! Imagine that, after 38 years of being unable to carry his mat, now he is told not to because it's the Sabbath! He was evidently taken off guard and so he replied that the man who healed him told him to pick it up and walk. Did God care if he carried it on the Sabbath? Of course not, it was Jesus who told him to do it.

Jesus temporarily avoided the controversy that arose as a result of the Sabbath infraction by slipping away through the crowd, leaving the man unaware of who he was. Later, Jesus found him at the temple and instructed him to stop sinning or something worse may happen to him.

Was his sickness because he had sin in his life? This is a question that is often debated. What is the source of sickness, is it judgment due to sin in a persons life? I am convinced that sin is the cause of many sicknesses; however, judgment still awaits the sinner.

The presence of sickness in the world is the result of the sins of mankind. This world is a cursed place. The curse is the reason for sickness. Our human bodies are in a weakened state as a result of the curse. Not only does it affect mankind, but also all life on this planet is weakened because of it.

Under the law sickness was visited upon the nation of Israel as a result of their failure to obey the law. This was part of the covenant of the law. If they obeyed the law, God would protect them from the sicknesses of the nations around them, but violation would result in pestilences, famines, and sickness. It is not clear how God accomplished this, whether the blessings were due to divine intervention and disobedience canceled divine intervention, thereby leaving them subject to whatever natural dangers would occur, or whether God would also cause judgment to happen as a result of direct involvement.

On one occasion the question was raised concerning a man born blind, was it because of his sin or his parent's sin. Neither, Jesus replied, but rather that the Son might be glorified. From this we learn that not all sickness is the work of the Devil, nor is it because of sin in a direct sense. God has reasons why things exist that defy the logic of man.

This world is a temporary dwelling place of man where divine purposes are being worked out in the lives of those who respond to his call. God is still molding his creatures into vessels to be placed in his kingdom. Whatever is useful to obtain a desired result will be employed. His will is that we all grow up into the full stature of Jesus Christ and be complete in him in every way. The accomplishment of this is a complex endeavor that the Holy Spirit is committed to completing. Sometimes struggles are of use, so we are subjected to struggle. At other times it is his love we need to experience, thus divine blessings come our way. It isn't necessary to understand why things happen to us, it is only necessary to understand that God loves us and that he is working out his plan in our lives.

Did sin have anything to do with the man's condition that lasted 38 years? We don't know because we weren't told. What we were told was that the man was warned by Jesus not to continue sinning. The man must have needed the warning or Jesus wouldn't have sought him out. The warning wasn't recorded just for him, but for all who receive benefits from knowing the Lord. It's a dangerous thing to take God for granted, and to assume that it's okay to continue to sin. Doing so leaves one wide open and unprotected to whatever dangers lurk. Continuing to sin also invites divine discipline to be brought to bear upon us.

It is better by far to cooperate with God's plan for our life and to avoid sin at all cost.

# Chapter Thirteen

## Jesus the Son

John 5:16-30

Controversy is a necessary ingredient in the plan of God. Without it there would not have been a crucifixion. Jesus never avoided controversy but seemed to step into it while always controlling it.

Jesus came to be the Lamb of God, the sin bearer of mankind. The accomplishment of his role necessitated anger being kindled against him from the leaders of Israel. The emotion of anger has the capacity to act as a catalyst for action. The actions taken can either be constructive or destructive. Jesus had to be a sort of lightning rod attracting controversy to him so that the evil of the world would be expressed against him resulting in his death on the cross, God's sin sacrifice for the world.

The incident of Sabbath breaking, as viewed by the elders of Israel, was a serious violation of their tradition. Keeping the Sabbath was an important part of their religious and national life. The ability of the elders to enforce the observance of the Sabbath was symbolic of their authority, and any allowance for infractions was viewed as permissiveness. Religion can be hard and unbending. Institutions that allow for flexibility are regarded as soft and vulnerable. Since sin in the human heart is always seeking an opportunity to express itself, flexibility is regarded as dangerous.

Jesus came to bring the viability of institutionalized religion to an end and to introduce the concept of a living experience.

The energy of spiritual life produces newness, growth, development, and positive change. Life produces upward mobility, as God is its source. When death occurs, all motion is in a negative direction. Corruption and decay are evidences of the lack of spiritual life.

Efforts abound to institutionalize the living experience of a relationship with Christ, something that must not be done. All Christian institutions that are authentic in nature, serve the process of growth in Christ as their only legitimate function. All leaders should be examples of what a life lived "in Christ" is like, and are to be servants of the body of Christ. Christian institutions are legitimate when the function of leadership is the nurturing, protecting, and cultivating of the life experience of the members. It is when the institution gets in the way of the personal development of the individual that it is wrong.

Jesus was not against the keeping of the Sabbath, only the narrow legalism that was associated with it.

The Sabbath, as observed in the time up to the end of the life of Jesus, was a type of what was to be a living experience after his resurrection. The attitude of legalistic oppression is now out of place because Sabbath keeping, as all the law, was a shadow of what was to come. The Sabbath was supposed to be a life giving observance, serving the needs of mankind. The human need to rest from labor one day in seven was intended to be a positive blessing serving mankind. Jesus taught that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. The Sabbath as a type was foreshadowing how man would be able to enter Christ, the real Sabbath, and cease from the struggle of self-willed existence. He would be able to rest from his self-directed labor, his self-

serving ways, and his rebellious running from God, and to rest in a relationship of faith, knowing that all his needs are now being provided for by God. When Jesus healed on the Sabbath he was acting in harmony with the intended purpose of the Sabbath that was healing and restoration.

Controversy over the Sabbath was serious, but not enough to inflame murder in the hearts of the leaders. There was another issue that was hotter still; their concept of God.

The Jewish concept of God was a very rigid one God concept. The nations around them were pluralistic in their view of God, having many objects that symbolized many gods. The Lord God had revealed that he was one God, and this was a distinguishing truth that kept them from the concepts of the heathens. The concept of one God, however, had within it the truth that God though one was still plural, but not like the heathens believed. The heathens believed that there were many gods and that they were in competition with one another. When God said that he was one God, he used the Hebrew word that means one closed plurality with well defined boundaries. As an example we may speak of a family as one, a church body as one, a married man and a woman as one, or a nation as one. In the case of God, Jesus began showing that he was a part of God, was God, and was from God. In-depth studies of God, as revealed in the Bible, show that God is one, yet is three, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is a limited plurality, one in unity, purpose and totally dependent one upon the other. Jesus is not God apart from the Father, nor is the Holy Spirit God apart from the Father or the Son.

The Father was exclusively central in the minds of the people as God, but this concept needed to be expanded, thus Jesus taught that he was the only way to the Father. In this way Jesus showed that not even the Father stands alone. In the passage, John 5:16-30, Jesus teaches that he is on equal par with the Father working in tandem with him within his creation. He taught that he is also the source of eternal life and gives life to whomsoever he pleases. Jesus also spoke of the unity within the Godhead by speaking of how it is that he cannot act independently of his Father. When God is spoken of as one God, that truth is magnified by the words of Jesus indicating unwillingness to speak or do anything that does not originate in the heart of the Father. Jesus also indicated that no one would be permitted to take him lightly, that all judgment was committed to the Son.

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out -- those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me. John 5:24-30

# Chapter Fourteen

## Wrong Expectations Result in Wrong Conclusions

John 5:31-47

The dialog of Jesus with the Jews who were unwilling to accept his deeds as legitimate continued. He had just spoken to them about his relationship to the Father and how it is that he was given authority to judge, and to give life to anyone he chooses, because he has life in himself.

These were hard sayings. The Jews were overwhelmed by his words. Everything they believed about God, and the Sabbath was being challenged. They either had to change their theological beliefs or reject Jesus. The words of Jesus were defensible so Jesus presented a defense so that those who wished to believe on him would have a basis for their faith.

Blind belief is not Biblical faith. Biblical faith has as its foundation the word of God. The recipient of the message must be willing to accept the testimony of what has been written and what is being given as supportive evidence; this is faith. In giving his defense Jesus brought forward witnesses. First he mentioned John the Baptist, and then he referred to one whose testimony is even greater, the Father. The evidence was the miraculous deeds Jesus was doing because the Father was working with him, validating his message. The scriptures are full of messages about the coming of Christ. These men searched the scriptures diligently to know what had been said about the coming of the messiah. All that had been said was being fulfilled right before their eyes, but because accepting Jesus meant changing some of their erroneous views, they found rejection of Jesus more acceptable.

The word of God is written in such a way that the only method of understanding is for the reader to accept it as a revelation of God, and to approach it humbly, and be taught by it.

Those who approach the Bible as though it is merely the writings of man, or a historical document, will miss the message of it. The evidence of that fact is seen in many current writings.

I have read books, especially reference books, that come from the perspective that the Bible is a record of man's search for divine understanding and that the history of the Jews was merely the result of a more refined view of God than that of the heathens around them. They see history in a reverse perspective, seeing similarities of worship between the worship of God by Israel and their neighbors as evidence that Israel was simply evolving faster in their knowledge than others. They believe that they carried over certain practices or borrowed them from the heathens.

Evolution sees everything moving from chaos to order, an unscientific phenomenon, or from corruption to perfection. The Bible, on the other hand, pictures everything moving from order to chaos, and perfection to corruption with only occasional interventions reversing the process in the presence of repentance and true worship. Everything in all of creation is moving from positive to negative; this is the natural flow of all things, and verifiable scientifically. It is only in the presence of a work of God that new positives are formed.

Man began with a pure understanding of God, but because sin entered the picture, movement toward chaos began. This movement was interrupted at the time of the flood, but soon resumed as men's hearts continued to wander from the knowledge of God because of sin. Evidence of this slide away from the knowledge of God is seen in the history of the nations. The similarity between the worship practices of Israel and the other nations of the world reflect that they had a

common origin. Because sin was so prevalent, God chose Israel to preserve the knowledge of God in a pure form.

The Bible is the record of God's interventions in the history of mankind preserving the pure knowledge of truth. The Bible demonstrates the difficulty of accomplishing this in a fallen world as the nation of Israel constantly moved toward corruption and chaos. God had to continually deal with them through disciplinary measures correcting them and sending prophets to them. It was not easy because the tendency in every person is to corrupt unless God intervenes with life giving power. The reason for the difficulty was the lack of the Spirit of life because the redemption of humanity had to be paid for before it could be given. Jesus came to pay that price. The message of his coming was recorded in the scriptures, but failure to understand the basic need of humanity for a redeemer, blinded their eyes.

Approaching the scriptures incorrectly is to miss its message of salvation. If those critics of Jesus had understood the need for a redeemer, perhaps their expectations would have been different. Had they been seeking God instead of knowledge, knowledge would have been given just as it was to Simeon at the temple in Jerusalem when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus there after his birth. Knowledge of the ministry of Jesus was written all through the scriptures, but they missed it because the only need they had before their eyes was for political change. If they had been in tune with the heart of God, they would have recognized Jesus.

Jesus wasn't seeking the validation or praise of men; he sought to bring them understanding so that they could be saved. They needed him, and believing on him was the only means of salvation available to man. Jesus provided a defense so that if they wished to, they could be saved. All his efforts, however, only added fuel to the fire of opposition.

As a final effort Jesus brought up one more witness, Moses, but pointed out that if they wouldn't believe Moses, how would they believe him now? Moses laid the foundations for understanding Jesus, but they were not able to see it, therefore; rejection was the only alternative.

# Chapter Fifteen

## Feeding the Five Thousand

John 6:1-15

The miracle of the feeding of the five thousand is recorded in all four gospels. This outstanding miracle marked the point in the ministry of Jesus when opinions about him began to crystallize.

None of the gospels ever give all the details of any story, only what is important to what they are relating.

John fast forwarded, so to speak, skipping over an undisclosed period of ministry and takes us directly to the scene of the feeding of the five thousand. John skips telling us about the death of John the Baptist, the reason for him being in this remote region, to be alone with his disciples.

They had traveled by boat to this remote place but when they arrived people were there who had followed him on the shore. Upon seeing them, he had compassion on them and taught them, a most remarkable thing since his desire was to be alone. At the end of a long day of ministry, they evidently decided to take a break. He and his disciples sat down together on a hillside when seeing the crowd coming toward them, Jesus began discussing with his disciples what they were going to do about food to feed the people. He asked Philip who responded that eight months wages wouldn't be enough to feed this crowd! Since they only counted men in those days when designating crowd sizes, the crowd was probably somewhat larger, counting women and children. Philip was overwhelmed but someone found a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish. They had the men sit down, about five thousand of them, and then taking the bread and the fish, Jesus gave thanks and distributed them until all the people were satisfied. After this was finished, Jesus sent his disciples to the other side of the lake by boat, dismissed the crowd, and withdrew to a mountain to pray.

While this was happening, the people made a decision that he should be crowned king and Jesus was aware of their intentions. This, however, wasn't Jesus' time to be crowned king so he avoided the crowd's intentions. Jesus was always in control of what was happening because he knew what was in the hearts of men. Had Jesus had political intentions this would have been a wonderful opportunity to make his move. The people were now convinced that he would be a wonderful king; he could even multiply the food supply! Since this was not the time for him to be crowned king, he must avoid allowing the crowd an opportunity to do it by force.

The hearts of men are easily manipulated by concerns for food, shelter, and protection. People like a government that will take care of them, so when an individual, or a political party, is seen to be capable of this, people will want them in power. There is an inherent laziness in humanity's fallen nature. Only a few resist the tendency to want to be taken care of. Men want good kings so that the nation will take care of them satisfying their every need. Both men who want to be kings and people who want a good king, feed on the other's need, but real devotion is seldom the motive. Jesus was aware of the reason for the devotion of the people, so he avoided coming under their power.

When people find a man like Jesus, they turn to him desiring to give him their loyal support. This is not always appropriate, as God's will must be considered. God had a different plan than



any of them had understood, but Jesus understood and separated himself from their carnal desires. Seeing miracles is an exciting event and being the recipient of a miracle is even more exciting. Once people experience miracles the human thing is to want to continue in the miracle flow. Whereas this attracts great crowds of people, great crowds do not always indicate that God's will is being done. Jesus did not come to attract crowds, but rather to die for the sins of the world. Jesus loved the people who made up the crowds, therefore; he fed them lovingly. Jesus always did his Father's will whether it was to touch one person or feed five thousand, each were equally important.

# Chapter Sixteen

## Why not Crown Him King?

John 6:16-28

After Jesus finished feeding the five thousand and sending them away, he went into the hills to pray, thus avoiding the intentions of the crowd to crown him king. The disciples had been rowing for some time and were about three and a half miles from shore when a severe storm arose. Jesus, who had been in the hills praying, came walking to where they were, right through the storm. Understandable the disciples thought that they were seeing a spirit, or an otherworldly manifestation, and were terrified. Jesus then spoke to them identifying himself, thus calming their fear. Realizing it was Jesus, they took him into the boat and immediately they were on the other side of the lake, no small miracle in itself.

John doesn't give a lot of attention to some major miracles, not that they weren't important, but because they were amply covered in the other gospels. His focus was upon his message rather than the telling of stories in detail. John apparently wanted to communicate the glory of who Jesus was and only tells us enough to orient us to the time and place of the important issues he had upon his mind.

The issue that John has on his mind is the state of mind and heart of the people who had been fed on the other side of the lake.

After the people had been fed, the disciples left for the other side of the lake in the only boat at the location. Jesus dismissed the crowd and then slipped away into the hills to pray. Upon realizing that Jesus was no longer where he had fed them, the people began to wonder where he had gone. They apparently realized that Jesus had in some way escaped them. Since he had disappeared, other boats had arrived at the scene. Some of the crowd got into the boats and went out in search of Jesus and his disciples. They soon found him at Capernaum on the other side of the lake with his disciples. Amazed, they asked him when he had arrived.

Jesus didn't answer the question, but instead began to address the issue of their heart's condition. He went straight to the issue of why they had followed him. He had feed them. This was what was motivating their thoughts. Jesus had demonstrated an ability that could solve the problem of their food supply. Can you imagine what must have gone on in the minds of these people? Five loafs feeding five thousand men plus women and children! It doesn't take a genius to figure out that if he could do this once, he could do it again and again and again. Perhaps they could all retire and he would be able, by his miracle power, to multiply and multiply their resources. No one would have work for the necessities of life. All their time and efforts could go toward building cities, preparing the food he would give them, and in general; life would be heaven on earth. He could heal their sick, cast out all demonic oppression, and provide a utopian atmosphere in which to live.

Jesus, however, saw the evil in their hearts. They were not there because they recognized who he was, nor did they want to put him in his rightful place in their hearts. They had ulterior motives that Jesus understood. It was greed not worship that motivated them. Jesus was not interested in satisfying desires springing from greed. Jesus said to them, "Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him

God the Father has placed his seal of approval," (John 6:27) thus; Jesus pointed them to the real value of eternal life, the reason for his coming.

Since their appeal was not working, they tried another approach. They asked him,

"What must we do to do the works God requires?" (John 6:27) Okay, our hope of a free ride isn't working. So, what kind of work does God require?

Quite without realizing it, these people had opened the door for a discussion that touches the very heart of the gospel message. This message is not about eating and being full, nor is it about work and wages. It is about how to receive God's gift, eternal life; a concern that not to many people seem to hold in high esteem.

This people's faith in Jesus was still very shallow and Jesus knew it. So he went on and said to them, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." (John 6:29) Believing is work? Yes, it isn't easy to believe when what you believe for is not of this world. Any preacher who wishes to be popular must in some way feed the multitude. Relevancy to real life problems and needs is essential to acceptance. Jesus was aware of this, and though he often healed people, cast out devils, and even on occasions raised the dead; this was not the purpose of his ministry. He constantly battled against the temporal view that held the minds and hearts of the people to whom he ministered. How could he lift their heart's vision to a higher kingdom that by comparison made all other considerations non-important? These people thought they believed in him, but they didn't. He would sift them.

# Chapter Seventeen

## The Body and Blood of Christ

John 6:28-63

In the midst of controversy great eternal truths are taught. Often in our lives, it is in the midst of controversies and difficulties that we learn great lessons. Before divine revelation can be given the stage must be set. At the feeding of the five thousand, and now upon encountering the same people filled with wrong motives, Jesus was setting the stage to expose their evil hearts. They wanted to know what work God requires, yet their motive seemed to be getting what they wanted; what they wanted was a temporal fix to the needs of their lives.

The work that God requires is that we believe in Jesus, but though these people had eaten the bread that had been multiplied, they still were not ready to put their full trust in him. Jesus saw through their thinly veiled unbelief that they revealed in their next question. "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" If they truly believed in him, they would not have asked this question. He had just shown them a sign by feeding them on the other side of the lake, but their conversation had taken a turn that they didn't anticipate. He was now claiming to be sent from God.

The theological mindset of these people had been cast by the teachings of the elders, and it forbid that any human claim equality with God. This was correct theology, however; Jesus was not an ordinary man. He was the Son of God, a fact, that they recognized made him God. If the story of the virgin birth of Jesus was true, then his claim to Godhood was a valid one. It was this claim to being the Son of Man that caused this discussion to take on a serious note. (This term indicated the incarnation. John 6:27) Somehow multiplying the bread, in their minds, wasn't sufficient evidence; they wanted more proof before they could accept him on this level of belief.

These people looked back at Moses and the story of the manna as proof of his divine mission. They accepted his words and lived under his law because they recognized that he was God's spokesman. Now Jesus had come and was claiming a status higher than that of Moses.

If they accepted Jesus, they would have to accept his authority as being above that of Moses. This was becoming increasingly more difficult the longer this conversation went along. They were willing and ready to make him king. That was acceptable to them, but when he spoke of being the Son of Man, and that God's seal of approval rested upon him, they began to pull back in their hearts. Jesus would not let the issue die, however, and went on to proclaim that they should not labor for bread that perishes, and that he was the bread of life and that anyone who would come to him would never go hungry, or thirst again. He then told them plainly that they didn't believe in him even though they saw him. Nevertheless, everyone that the Father gave to him would come to him and everyone who came to him; he would never drive away.

As Jesus proceeded, his strong language concerning himself and what he had come to accomplish, continued. He had come down from heaven to do the will of him who sent him. This again was plain language referring to his incarnation. This left no doubt about his claim that he was God incarnate, the Blessed Son of God, a truth they could not accept without changing a very basic tenet of their faith.

They claimed that their scriptures were the inspired word of God. Yet those very scriptures gave full support to the claims of Jesus.

They could not accept him because they had over applied a theological point, and in doing so, had closed the door of understanding that would lead to their salvation. They held that the scriptural teaching concerning one God did not allow for a Son of God, a point of stumbling to this very day. As I have already explained, the word used in their scriptures referring to "one" was Echad that was often used in connection with a group. Everywhere God is referred to in the Old Testament, the door is open to the full understanding of the trinity. God said, "let us," over and over again, always referring to himself in the plural singular.

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." (Duet 6:4-5)

The very reference to God (Elohim) is in itself a foundational concept as it is a plural form of the word God. The correct understanding of this often-quoted scripture is that the Lord God is a plural singular. Christians and Jews agree that God is one; the difference is that we believe Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one God in three persons. One God, not three, yet three persons comprise this one God, not many gods as the heathens believe. We believe that the Godhead is a complete unity, and that without the three it would not be complete. Jesus taught that the only way to favor with the Father is through the Son, thereby making acceptance of Jesus essential to a personal salvation.

These people wanted a sign so that they could believe; yet they rejected the signs that he had been giving them all along. Jesus didn't provide them with any further signs at this time, but rather, gave them further food for thought. They began to grumble about all this, first referring to the fact that he was of a common origin known to them, from Nazareth, and that he was the son of Mary and, they assumed, of Joseph. If this was true they reasoned, how could he say that he was the bread come down from heaven? The bread issue was a valid point of discussion.

Jesus didn't yield to a discussion about his parenting, but rather gave another great truth to them, that unless the Father drew them, they could not come to him; and further, that he would raise them up at the last day. Their efforts to understand were useless, if God did not make it real to them, they would not understand.

This passage is cast in the atmosphere of controversy, and yet it is the seedbed of great doctrines of the church! We have here clear teachings about the role of Jesus as the Son of God, the one sent from heaven, the answer to the hungering and thirsting of the souls of mankind, the only way to the Father, and the essence of what his body and blood were to mankind.

As if it wasn't enough that Jesus had referred to himself as the bread of life, he then proceeded to tell them that they were to drink his blood.

That did it; they could stand no more. He had crossed the line and now it was useless; he was beyond hope. Didn't he know that drinking blood was forbidden in the law? Nothing he could have said would have been anymore offensive than this, and yet; this is the very reason for the teachings in the Old Testament concerning blood.

The scriptures teach that the life is in the blood. They were not to drink it, a practice of the heathen, but they were to make blood sacrifices. All of this was preparatory thought to the teachings of the New Testament. They could not understand how he could give them his body and his blood, even if what he said about himself was true. There was still a void of understanding that hadn't been given yet, that the body that Jesus was giving to them was his word, and that the blood that was drink was the coming Spirit. The basis of understanding that

Jesus contained the divine energy of eternal life and that that life energy was in his blood and in his words had not yet been given. Nor was it understood that he would transfer that energy into the cup that would be poured out on the day of Pentecost. Nor was it possible to understand that the cup of communion that we share is to be taken in remembrance of him.

There was so much to be learned and so little willingness to try to understand. It was easier to reject him than to ponder his words, and to search for understanding.

Was he really teaching them to literally drink his blood? Of course not, but it did sound that way. Their thinking always related to the physics of the matter. They could not separate what is of heaven from what is of earth. Somehow the two were one and the same. That, though God was Spirit, he still dwelt in a house that was made for him, and that the Ark of the Covenant was also an important substance, being the focal point of where God resided. Blood was blood to them, and a body was flesh, not spiritual concepts. When Jesus spoke of eating his flesh as eating bread, it was a concept that they could relate to since Moses had given them bread from heaven. They were accustomed to parabolic language, but what he was saying about drinking his blood didn't sound like a parable and even if it was, it was forbidden.

One by one they slipped away. His teachings continued on this theme, and though it isn't clear how many time breaks may have occurred during this series of teachings, some of it at least was taught in the synagogue at Capernaum. Then he went on to explain that having eternal life within them was the prerequisite of being raised on the last day. He taught them that they must eat his flesh and drink his blood because doing so results in staying in him, and he in them. He then went on to point out that their forefathers had eaten the manna in the wilderness and had died, but that those who ate on him would live forever.

These were hard sayings, difficult to understand, but Jesus must die for the sins of the world. He was fueling the fires of rejection, anger, hate and murder while giving understanding concerning who he was and why he had come. .

# Chapter Eighteen

## Eternal Life

John 6:63-71

The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him."

From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

"You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.

Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

Then Jesus replied, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!" (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)

After John gives the teachings of Jesus concerning his mission, his body and his blood, he now makes a profound statement that makes what he has been saying understandable. As was the case with so much of what has been said, this is another landmark teaching. Job, in the Old Testament, said, "The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life." (Job 33:4) However, the concept that the Spirit was now the source of eternal life was not previously understood. Jesus went on to say that his words are spirit and they are life. Jesus is making a case for what would later be understood in the church, that the new vehicle of conveyance of the spirit of life would no longer be blood, but would be an action of the Spirit. In 1John 5:6-7 we read, "This is the one who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement."

Let's consider what is said here; first Jesus came by water and blood. Water is often used to symbolize cleansing. It is also a necessary ingredient of life. Without water life is not possible. Water is the means of conveyance of the necessities of life in the vegetable kingdom, and is an important substance in blood, the means of conveyance of the ingredients of life in the animal kingdom. Jesus used these symbols as teaching tools to enable us to understand that what is seen in the natural realm is symbolic of the spiritual realm. The connection of water, blood and Spirit, is that they all perform the same function, two are in the natural realm, and one is in the spiritual realm. They are all witnesses of Jesus Christ, all telling us the same basic truth.

What is missing in the nature of man is the spirit of eternal life. This was lost when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden. Sin kept man separated from God, the only source of eternal life since the tree of life had been removed from this world. This essential life energy is now found in the realm of the Spirit. The ministry of the Holy Spirit to the church is to bring all that Christ is to us, just as blood carries the necessary nutrients for life to the cells of a body. In like manner, the Holy Spirit brings Christ to his church through the application of the words of Jesus into our life experience.

The function that takes place within us in the practical manner is what Jesus described to the Samaritan woman at the well. He told her that the water that he would give would be a spring of water welling up to eternal life. If we view the spirit of man as the deepest part of man, and that next it is the soul, and finally the body, then we can see that the Holy Spirit enters the spirit of man, and that the soul is effected by it as it bubbles up effecting the thoughts, and the intents of the heart, and finally is expressed in the body in various manifestations. The word of Jesus that we must worship in Spirit is because he is the means by which worship is conveyed back to Jesus and the Father.

The intent of all of this is to enable us to see and understand that the Holy Spirit is vital to the life of a believer because it is through his ministry to us that we receive Christ and all that he is. Worship is no longer centered on rituals, places or things; it is centered on a heart relationship with Christ. This is made possible through his redeeming work at the cross and the resultant presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.

This all seemed too difficult for the people to understand, and from that time on many of his disciples turned away. He reminded those who hadn't left that unless the Father enabled them, they could not come to him. His closest disciples, the twelve, still remained, however. Just the fact that they didn't leave didn't mean they were all truehearted believers. He warned them that one of them was a devil. Jesus then opened the door for all of them to leave by asking them if they wanted to leave too. Peter replied,

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God." (John 6:68-69)

There was struggle in the hearts of the disciples to believe. They had seen too much to deny their faith in him, but all of these teachings were hard to understand. Their association with Jesus was coming at a personal price of alienation from common acceptance. Though they were not the targets of criticism it must have affected them as they witnessed his decline in popularity. What they had hoped for was now looking more and more like a fading dream. Would he ever be a king?



# Chapter Nineteen

## Jesus was Sent from God

John 7:1-18

The controversies surrounding the ministry of Jesus were centralized in Judea where the more influential members of the ruling bodies resided. As long as Jesus stayed in the area surrounding the Sea of Galilee, resistance to his ministry was limited.

The Feast of Tabernacles was one of three feasts that Jewish men were required to attend annually.

John picks up the narrative after an undisclosed amount of time. Actually, John only gives us a limited account of the ministry of Jesus, selecting those incidents that are useful in the development of the theme he is setting forth. The Book of John is a rich resource of great and vital theological truths without which the story of Jesus would not have been properly understood. In the development of the teachings, John traces the controversies that led to his arrest and crucifixion.

Jesus was aware of the level of opposition in Judea; it was like a controlled burn, when it needed more fuel Jesus would give it more, when it was about to rage out of control, he would slip away. The Feast of Tabernacles presents both a problem and an opportunity.

The brothers of Jesus obviously were not tuned into what was happening between Jesus and the elders of Israel. They were aware that he had supernatural power, but they didn't believe in him on the level of accepting him as the Son of God. Later, after the resurrection, they would believe, James (not the apostle) became a prominent leader of the early church being the pastor of the church of Jerusalem, and Jude wrote the Book of Jude. Both of these men were blood brothers of Jesus, however, some believe that they were older stepbrothers from a previous marriage of Joseph, a teaching not supported by the gospels.

When the Feast of Tabernacles was near, his brothers suggested he attend it because they saw it as an opportunity for publicity. Jesus, however, didn't operate on the basis of publicity. He moved about according to the schedule set by the Father. Nothing was chance driven in the ministry of Jesus. He would attend, but not at this time; he would come later by himself. What the brothers suggested was for Jesus to seize the opportunity, and become a great leader. Everyone around him seemed to be consumed with the idea that his mission was to be a king.

When Jesus did go to the Feast, he slipped in quietly, because his enemies were looking for him to come. Evidently because he didn't come with the delegation as expected, their plans were foiled. When he did come, he was able to control what would happen.

To those who are committed to doing the will of God, chance is not a dimension of concern. Nothing is left to chance if we place God in control of our lives living to please him and seeking his direction. It is when we try to mix God's ways and man's ways that confusion results. Jesus always sought the direction of his Father, thus; chance was never involved in any situation or outcome.

As the crowds gathered there was widespread whispering concerning him. About halfway through the feast, Jesus went up to the temple and began to teach. The people were amazed at his knowledge, because he wasn't from the schools of the learned.

Jesus replied to their whisperings about him that he had received his knowledge from his Father, and that he did not speak on his own, and further; that if they chose to do God's will, they would know that he did not speak on his own. Men who speak on their own do so to gain honor, but the man who speaks because he has been authorized to do so is an honest man, there is nothing false about him.

Many people in Christianity have taken it upon themselves to be spokespersons of God, meaning well, but shining through their efforts is the love for the attention and the acclaim of people. Those, on the other hand, who have been sent with a message they have received from God, do not do it for acclaim, but rather to please God.

Jesus didn't need the acclaim of men to bolster his ego; he was confident in who he was. No one had to tell him he was the Son of God; he knew it and proclaimed it. He came for our benefit, not his own. He wanted us to understand his mission because it is vital to our salvation.

God is not an egotist. His desire for worship is related to his love for us. We need to be in this kind of relationship with him, because it is the kind of relationship that stands up under any and all tests.

God is wise in his dealings, knowing that authority that is given from the heart is lasting authority. God is in charge because he is God, not because he wants to be God. He is not aspiring to anything, he already is and we are already his subjects, knowing that and accepting it, is vital to our escaping judgment. He has every right to judge us if we resist him because he is already our God. Any effort to deny that is an act of rebellion, an act worthy of death. Jesus came to set the record straight, and help us understand that God loves us, is willing to forgive us all our sins, and to pay the penalty for us, if we will just accept his offer of amnesty. We are already prisoners of our misdeeds, and lost in sin. He is willing to open the prison door for us if we will simply give him his rightful place.

There were no hidden motives when Jesus came, no subtle agendas or tricks. He came to save us, pure and simple, all we have to do is accept him, believe on him, and he will save us.

# Chapter Twenty

## Belief in Jesus is Essential

John 7:16-36

Our concepts about eternal matters are the strongest determining factors shaping our personalities, behaviors and attitudes. The concept of the Jews, like that of all the nations, was limited largely to what could be seen, touched, tasted or smelled. In other words, their concepts were limited to what their senses told them about what surrounded them.

The Bible is the only accurate and reliable source of information about the beginnings of humanity, and reveals that all men had the knowledge of God in the beginning. Because of sin they were scattered across the face of the earth at the time of Babel, and as they became separated from one another, the knowledge was largely lost. Their vain imaginations began to create ideas, partly from what had been handed down from their ancestors and partly from their imaginations, thus; different concepts of God began to emerge. The drive to know God was still existent in their hearts, but since the true knowledge had been lost, an inferior concept emerged.

Many of our present day analysts of archeological information, holding to the theories of evolution, have wrongly interpreted what they see in the ancient world. Because of the view of evolution, they have concluded that the religions of the past came solely from the imaginations of man. Not so, the knowledge of God once belonged to all humanity, but wanderings from God caused men to forget from whence they came. Everyone has a common beginning. We are all children of Adam and Noah.

The struggle that was going on in the hearts of the people of Jesus' day had to do with the knowledge that what I have just spoken was true. They understood the tendency in the heart of man to wander from the truth, and felt a God given responsibility to preserve the true knowledge of God. The problem was that they didn't possess a totally pure concept. The knowledge they had was pure, but their understanding of the knowledge was flawed because they didn't know the God from whence the knowledge came.

The only way we can know the meaning of the words of the Bible is to know the God who inspired its writing. If we know God, it isn't hard to understand his book. Those who had a heart that hungered to know God didn't find it hard to accept Jesus, because his words and works were recognizably from God.

As Jesus taught them, he pointed out that his teachings were not his own, an important point because Jesus was not the product of evolutionary development. The knowledge of his coming had been given to the nation of Israel, a little here and a little there, thus the revelation of the coming Christ was a progressive revelation. When Jesus came it was said of him that he was the word made flesh, that is, a personification of all that had been spoken of him.

He was a special divine creation differing from all who had preceded him because Adam was not his ancestral father, though Adam is ascribed direct lineage through Mary. In Jewish thought, the ancestry is passed through the father, and since God was the father of Jesus; he differed from all other men with reference to ancestry.

Blessings and curses were also transmitted through the father, so that a curse upon a family didn't come through the mothers, only the fathers. Since God was the father of Jesus, he didn't inherit the curse of the sin nature, or the spirit of spiritual death that was upon all other men.

In him was pure righteousness and the spirit of life was in him. He was indeed the light of the world. He came to restore to us the pure understanding of his word and to prepare the way for us to have a relationship with him. He would die for the sins of the world, but his time had not yet come for them to seize him and kill him.

Jesus always knew what to expect in every situation, thus efforts of the crowd to take advantage of him was to no avail. The crowd argued among themselves about Jesus, some saying, when the Christ came no one would know where he came from, but they knew where Jesus was from. Jesus responded that, yes, they did know where he was from in the natural sense, but that he really came from his Father, and that where he was going they could not come. Jesus would ascend to his Father and only those who put their trust in him would be able to go to be with him. Their unbelief disqualified them from entry into heaven. If we search for him with wrong motives we will never find him. Everyone who searches for him repentantly, believing in him, always finds him. The truth about who Jesus was was always concealed from those who didn't choose to believe in him.

It is still the same today. We know where he is, however; he is sitting at the right hand of the Father making intercession for all of us who believe in him. When we search for him, hungering to know him, the Holy Spirit reveals him to us.

# Chapter Twenty One

## The Water that Satisfies

John 7:37-53

The feasts of Israel were significant events as they had prophetic significance relating to the life of Jesus and his church in what was to follow. At the time of this incident in the life of Jesus, four special religious events of the calendar year had already been observed. Beginning in the first month, Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, and Pentecost had been observed. There was a lapse of time until the beginning of the seventh month on which they were to gather for the Feast of Trumpets. (Trumpets were sounded in Israel to signal that something important was about to happen.) The Day of Atonement followed this on the tenth day of the month. Then the Feast of Tabernacles began on the fifteenth day of the same seventh month. The first and eighth days of this feast were days of rest. The Israelites were to live in booths to commemorate their wanderings in the wilderness.

The seventh month was a very significant month on the Jewish calendar and sometimes all three of these events were referred to as the Feast of Tabernacles, thus; it isn't clear just when Jesus actually went to the feast. Perhaps his brothers went for the feast of Trumpets, and the Day of Atonement and Jesus waited for the closing week of the event known specifically as the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus had an important message to give and this feast provided the right backdrop for the announcement.

Each day during the Feast of Tabernacles, the priest went up from the temple in a procession to the Pool of Siloam to draw water to pour out at the altar as a libation, chanting, "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." (Isaiah 12:3) It was on this occasion at the last day of the feast that Jesus stood up and declared, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." (John 7:37-38) The water he referred to was the Spirit that would be given on and after the day of Pentecost.

Jesus had spoken similarly to the woman of Samaria, he said to her; "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (John 4:13-14)

The time was rapidly approaching for Jesus to die for the sins of the world. His death being the only acceptable sin sacrifice would usher in a new era of God's dealings with mankind. Once sins were atoned for, humanity could approach God by faith in him without the guilt of sin upon him. God was then in a position to bestow upon us his good gift that he had held in reserve for us, the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that he would be like a well springing up from within, but that this water would be living water, or life giving water. Jesus was introducing the understanding concerning the mission and ministry of the Holy Spirit, who was about to come.

Year after year, the priests had been repeating the ritual. Going from the temple to the pool and back again, chanting about how it is that people would be able to draw from the wells of salvation. They could only hope for such a day, but Jesus was now announcing that belief in him was the means of fulfillment in the life of any believer who would care to come and drink. By

their very words they were admitting to the inferior nature of the water they drew, it could neither satisfy nor cleanse. Jesus had water to give, but not H<sub>2</sub>O. The water of this world is only symbolic of the water that Jesus has to give. His water is of a different structure, and does what natural water cannot do. This water is able to cleanse the interior of a man's heart and mind. It changes the value structure, affections, drives, and desires that regulate behaviors and attitudes. Once a person has drawn water from the Jesus well, he is a new creation, old things pass away, and he becomes a new creation in Christ Jesus. He was once an outsider to God's favor, and family, but now he is an insider, a child of God, enjoying favor that resulted from forgiveness of sins.

This water though drawn once, becomes a constant source of satisfaction, sustaining life on an ongoing basis. It is the source of life giving energy that springs from within the very spirit of the person so filled. What it does for us is both mysterious and wonderful. It is a source of strength, cleansing, deliverance, counsel and teachings to be drawn upon at will. The source of all that is spiritually beneficial in our lives comes from the Father through Jesus and is brought to us by the Holy Spirit himself. We are connected to a limitless reservoir that flows from God to man through Jesus by the Holy Spirit into our innermost being, affecting our minds, emotions and wills, bring healing, cleansing, and nurturing sustaining our spirits. Our minds and bodies are affected by this flow of divine energy that bubbles up from within.

Whether or not this source is beneficial, once given into a person's life, is dependent upon his participation. We are in control of the flow within our lives. It's like being plumbed into the city water system, the source is there, but the use of the source is at the discretion of the occupant. Many people, who have been plumbed into the source of divine energy through the experience of receiving Jesus into their hearts by faith, have never drawn upon the resource in any practical way, remaining ignorant of its potential. Others have started upon the journey of a spirit filled life, only to become discouraged or distracted by the trials of life. Some individuals have tried to apply this resource from wrong motives and found that the water didn't flow through those pipes. It is only plumbed into the heart when the valve of submission to the purposes of God has been turned on. When we have established a true connection with Jesus through acceptance, faith and repentance, the water is conducted through the valves of a right relationship to God's purposes. The result is both satisfying and eternal in nature.

These men who took it upon themselves to judge Jesus, didn't have a clue about the spiritual lessons their rituals taught. They would, through ignorance and wrong motives, open the gate to the wells of salvation so that all people may come and drink freely of the water of life.

# Chapter Twenty-two

## An Adulterous Woman

John 8:1-11

Pointing the finger of accusation is always a risky business. A woman was brought to Jesus one day who was evidently guilty of committing adultery. She didn't deny it, nor did Jesus defend her. The problem did not concern her guilt; it concerned the qualifications of the accusers. Which of these men who brought her to Jesus had clean enough consciences to stand there and accuse her? What it was in the lives of these men that disqualified them was not revealed. Perhaps it was what Jesus bent over and wrote about that pricked their consciences, but we will never know. Suffice it to say, none of them were without sin, nor are any of us.

All men are the victims of the plague of sin. Like a disease, sin has taken all humanity captive. It is a fatal disease unless an antidote is administered. The result of this disease is spiritual death, however; premature natural death also is a frequent result. The devastation experienced as a result of sin is incalculable, diseased bodies, tortured minds, emotions out of control, violence on every hand, profiteers exploiting the weak and vulnerable, and lustful pursuers taking advantage of innocent victims. Such is the ugly picture of fallen humanity. Devious, crafty, deceitful mankind moves on from generation to generation, sometimes trying to repair the wrongs of past generations, and at other times creating new problems to be solved by generations yet to come.

Who among us hasn't at some time stood in a crowd, stones in hand ready to pass judgment on sinners? How easy it is to simply throw people onto the reject pile, and go on never noticing that they are creations of God, and that he loved them enough to die for them?

The woman brought to Jesus was worthy of death. She had committed a capital offense according to the Law of Moses. Jesus, however, had already taught that if a man looks lustfully upon a woman, he has committed adultery with her in his heart. These men may not have been guilty of the act of adultery, but if the desire to commit the act had ever been entertained in their hearts, they were just as guilty as she.

The place to deal with sin is in the heart when the temptation first comes to us. Playing with the thought of sin is to enter into the spirit of the sin. Once the spirit of the sin finds lodging in the heart it is only a matter of time until opportunity will allow it to be expressed. Some people take great pride in the fact that they have never committed the sins that are in their hearts, as though not doing what they desire to do is in some way evidence of character. It may be evidence of character, but they are trusting in the power of restraints in their lives, to keep them from the act of sin.

Without restraints this world would be an intolerable place in which to live. Laws are restraints, and are necessary as long as men have sin in their hearts. Not all sins are illegal, but all sins devastate nonetheless. The devastation may not affect society in an immediate way, therefore; it may remain legal. Or, the devastation may be deemed to be controllable by laws and so allowed, as in the case of alcohol consumption, but the toll is paid by society in the cost of broken homes, and wounded lives. These sins add additional costs to the burden of law

enforcement, medical staffs and facilities, care for orphaned or abandoned children, and a welfare problem that won't go away.

Jesus came to bring the antidote to sin, not to allow its presence. When Jesus dismissed the accusers of this woman, he didn't mean for his actions to be interpreted that sin should be tolerated or sanctioned. Allowing for a legitimate expression of sin may seem to some to be a wise answer, but Jesus came to bring a real answer, a changed of heart.

At the time of this writing in the state in which I live, our state legislature was considering a bill to address the problem of same sex marriages. I went to the capital along with a group of ministers and concerned citizens to express our opposition to having such marriages. When we got there we were confronted by a, unique to us, dilemma. In committee an amendment was attached to the bill that stated clearly that same sex marriages were illegal in our state, changing the name of such marriages to domestic partnerships. It declared same sex marriages illegal on the one hand and allows domestic partnerships on the other, with only slight differences. We felt that we had been treated badly and had been denied an opportunity to register our objection at the hearing, so we went to our state senator who was the chairman of the committee and complained. In response he came to the town where I live and arranged for a meeting with the ministers. In the meeting he explained his reason for supporting the bill with the amendment. He expressed that the homosexual life style is a bad one but that those who lived this way are unable to help it, therefore; allowing a legitimate outlet for their behavior was a compassionate and correct alternative to living promiscuously. I don't think anyone agreed that that was in any way an answer, but it does serve to demonstrate how flawed the thinking of humanity has become.

Jesus didn't come to legitimize sin; he came to cure it. What is needed is the antidote that he provided when he went to the cross and gave us his life's blood. This antidote is available through the ministry of the Holy Spirit into the life of every person who will come to him and seek him for it.

Jesus didn't say to the crowd that they should understand her and be patient with her, because she was born that way, or that she was a victim of the society into which she was born. Nor did he say that we should provide an alternate life style that allows for such behaviors. The argument that says that people were born a certain way, therefore we should accommodate their perversity, is an inaccurate one. Truth is all men were born sinners, some with a predisposition to one kind of sin and other to other sins. This does not mean that we should sanction any form of sin. Some people have a predisposition to violence; should we sanction their violence? Others have a predisposition to deceitfulness; should we legitimize lying? It doesn't take much intelligence to see how flawed this sort of thinking is. I asked the senator how what he proposed, would affect those other problem people standing in the wings with their favorite sins, wanting to be legitimized? Where does society stop when it begins to legitimize sins?

The proof of where Jesus stood was expressed in his words to the woman, "Neither do I condemn you, go now and leave your life of sin." (John 8:11) Jesus' answer was plain; she was to leave her life of sin.

Jesus didn't leave society without an answer to the problem of what to do about the internal battle with perverse desires. He came to bring us life, that wonderful divine energy that when drawn upon, produces righteous desires. These desires override the internal problem with sin.

All men have a sin nature, sometimes referred to as the lower nature or the dark side.

Jesus came and made available a new nature, holy and acceptable to God. This new nature is found in the realm of the Holy Spirit that believers receive when they are born again. This



presents us with an interesting challenge; do we live by the rules and desires of the lower nature, or do we yield to the call of the Holy Spirit to live in the realm of the new nature. God's Spirit is always calling us upward, away from the morass of the lower nature, to the freedom of life in the Spirit.

Societies as a whole resist this call and hence their lives are filled with confusion and vain efforts to solve the complex problems that result from living in the lower regions of a sinful heart. Some people try to provide sanctuary for troubled souls, but their efforts are futile. The only answer is found in the Spirit, where the teachings of Jesus are combined with the enabling power released to us through the cross.

I sympathize with politicians who grapple with the complex issues resulting from a society that has rejected the only real answer, a cure, and has chosen rather to treat the symptoms of the disease.

To avail oneself of the cure requires choosing to reach for the higher power of the Holy Spirit and to fellowship with God in the spirit of his nature. Jesus is the only way for us to enter into this realm. Therefore, we who preach Jesus are considered narrow and out of touch, but are we when there is no other cure available to mankind?

# Chapter Twenty-three

## The Light of the World

John 8:12-30

How can a man be the light of the world? In the writings of John, light is synonymous with truth. Thus, the light of Jesus was seen in his life and teachings. He was a true witness because he was not of this world. What he taught was heavenly knowledge. Its origin was from outside the parameters of this realm of matter. Jesus was from a higher realm, and therefore, spoke from a perspective reflecting that truth.

We are of this earth, and therefore; our understanding is limited to this realm. We must be instructed about the existence of a higher realm because we lack any means of understanding it. Without the teachings of Jesus and his apostles, we are limited to what can be learned from observation. This is the reason for the existence of spiritual confusion in the religions of the world. When viewing the existence of the spiritual realm without the aid of the light of the teachings of Jesus, observation was the only means of knowledge. Religions claiming to have “enlightened teachers,” lack the credentials to speak as one sent from God. Since there are both good and evil spiritual beings, one cannot always be sure that what is being taught has divine sanction. How can any man be sure that the one he is listening to is sent from God? Can we trust a subjective feeling to be our guide, such as a burning in the bosom?

Jesus taught as one who knew the truth, and as being the very Son of God. This was a claim that caused the leaders of the nation of Israel to shudder. How could any man claim God as his Father? Jesus claimed that the Father was his witness as was evidenced in the miracles, which he credited to his Father who worked with him. Jesus never used physic techniques to accomplish his miracles; they were done with the same creative power he used in the original creation of the world. Jesus was the creator of all, and as a member of the human family, displayed that power in the healing of the sick, and raising the dead.

The Pharisees who were challenging Jesus questioned him about his Father; who was he? If Jesus had been referring to Joseph, then Joseph would have been a prominent participant in the ministry of Jesus. Jesus made it sound as if his Father was by his side as a constant companion. They were a Father and Son team. What they do they do together. If it were Joseph, there would have been no discussion. It's interesting that none of the gospels ever mention Joseph after the beginning of his ministry. This has led to the belief that Joseph evidently died sometime during the pre-ministry years of Jesus' life. There was never any confusion about who Jesus was talking about when he spoke of his Father; it was God.

How can we be sure that Jesus was who he claimed to be? Can we trust miracles alone? Obviously not. Many have come making claims and demonstrating unusual abilities, but that does not make them valid. We as Christians are warned about those who come claiming to be the Christ. We are told not to follow them. How then can we be sure that we are not following a fraud? It's the resurrection. Had Jesus not risen from the dead, we would be left without definitive evidence of his divine mission. This is what sets Christianity apart from all other religions. The evidence concerning the resurrection of Jesus then becomes vital to the story.

Jesus' time on earth was limited. He would soon return to his Father. He said that where he was going they could not come. This caused quite a stir of speculation concerning what that might mean; would he go preach to the Greeks? Or, was he going to kill himself? Jesus, however, was speaking of his death on the cross saying that, when he would be lifted up, they would know that he was who he claimed to be. The death of Jesus was a planned event, known in the heart of God from the foundation of the world. It was redeeming love that conceived the plan. The creation of man would require it, but God was willing to pay the price so that whosoever among men would receive him could come to him.

# Chapter Twenty-four

## Jesus is the “I Am”

John 8:31-59

Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31) Truth sets men free. There is no prison greater than the prison of the mind. If we deem ourselves to be in prison, then we are in prison. If we deem ourselves to be free, then we are free even if we are in a prison. Many people are in prison today, imprisoned by their fears, prejudices, false visions, selfishness or pride. Jesus stands at the door of our prison with key in hand ready to open the door. All we have to do is allow him access to our inmost heart.

Truth is liberating, that is why no one can be truly set free until they face the whole truth about themselves. Any program that has a section on full disclosure as a part of their treatment truly helps people. People who are willing to pull back the curtain and expose their own need, not only to their own view, but also to the view of another, will take an enormous step toward healing and restoration.

The truth that is liberating is the truth that Jesus proclaimed about himself and the road to salvation. The truth about Jesus is the only truth that gives eternal life. You can be free and yet doomed. Truth that gives life is Jesus truth. Facing ones need is the popular thing to do in our present society. Through psychological techniques, people are being enabled to attain sobriety, overcome fears, find self-confidence, learn to accept people who they once hated and forgive those who have wronged them. Good psychology calms the mind and brings people to peace with the world in which they live, but it doesn't bring them to eternal life. People can forgive and not be forgiven, but we cannot be forgiven unless we forgive. All efforts toward self-improvement fall short of leading to eternal life unless Jesus is the center of that effort.

The people of whom Jesus spoke were slaves to sin. They would never acknowledge that, but it was true. Herein lies the problem, accepting that it is we who have a need is a hard thing to do. It seems to be true that, the greater our need is, the greater we feel the need to hide. People who are basically good people find little difficulty in giving full disclosure. It's when we have done some heinous deed that we seek refuge in lies. You can always tell when a person is having difficulty with telling the truth, all disclosures are glossed over, and even sin is made to look as pretty as possible.

Why do people resist full disclosure? Isn't it because we fear what truth might do to us? If we tell all, it could result in rejection, or perhaps it could result in being sentenced to prison. People opt for the prison of fear, rather than the liberty of truth. Telling the truth always sets the stage for mercy where God is concerned, and it can also result in mercy in the hearts of people, however; not all people can be trusted to have mercy even where genuine repentance exists.

I once spoke to a group of men about the need for making full disclosure. One of the men sent me a letter questioning the wisdom of doing such a thing because he didn't know anyone he could trust. This can be a problem. Human ears are faulty ears. Tongues sometime disclose what should be kept in confidence. Is the risk worth the result? We must ask ourselves, who or what will the truth hurt? Is it simply our pride, or are we concerned with our public image? Will the truth hurt others, and if so why? Not all truth needs to become public knowledge. This is

why members of the clergy are sometimes sought out. If they are reputable, they can listen and not speak.

As for myself, I have been told some people's deepest secrets with the result that they are now held in higher esteem, in my heart, than before. Some people fear that the hearer will reject them. If it is a minister or priest and is reputable, he will never reject anyone based on a heart felt disclosure. He will recognize that this is the road toward healing.

If the disclosure involves the sort of problem that should require limited access to temptation, such as child molestation, a good minister will deny such a person access, but will respect the person for their honesty. Any person who is honestly seeking healing and restoration will not expect the minister to grant access to children, or any other area of temptation, to a person so afflicted. Sincere people understand that sin has consequences and do not run from those consequences. This is a part of the healing process. When people attach unreasonable restrictions to disclosures, sincerity is questionable.

If a person has a sin in his past that has legal ramifications, seeking out the advice of an attorney prior to disclosure to anyone may be advisable. Not every sin needs to be spoken to human ears; however, not confessing to man may indicate that a person is also hiding from God. Every sin or crime will ultimately have to be judged, if not by man, certainly by God.

Jesus was talking to people who were experts in hiding their sins and as a result they were doomed to hell. It is a sad thing when people place their reputations ahead of their salvation.

The audience that listened to Jesus had taken up a false premise of security. They believe that, because they were Jews, they had an automatic place of peace with God. Many people have assumed similarly that their eternal salvation is guaranteed because they belong to a church, or they were baptized, or their families have all been Christians, and so, they too must be a Christian. There is only one way that any person can have peace with God, and that is to accept his Son, Jesus. Believing in him is essential if we are to have eternal life.

Many people have been captured by the false teachings of the day in which we live. They believe that any person, regardless of what they believe about God will be saved so long as their beliefs are sincere. That's an easy belief to embrace, but is it an accurate one?

Jesus taught otherwise. He was specific about who could expect to be saved, those who believe in him. This teaching excluded many of the people who listened to Jesus that day though they were passionately practicing their faith in God. I know it can be difficult to believe, that anyone who does not embrace Jesus Christ as Savior, will perish and die in their sins, but that is what the Bible teaches. That truth excludes millions of otherwise religious people, Hindus, Mohammedans, those who believe in the Great Spirit, or any other concept of God that is not based on Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world. Even the Jewish religion, though the foundation of Christianity, does not qualify for the same reason.

If this sounds hard, it is, and for that reason the people who heard him wanted to kill him. Jesus spoke very plainly telling them they were of their father the devil. To this they responded that Abraham was their father, but Jesus told them that if that were true they would act like Abraham, who rejoiced at seeing his day. The people were quick to pick up on what Jesus was telling them, they retorted that he wasn't even fifty years old and so how could he have seen Abraham. Jesus replied, "Before Abraham was born, I am!" There could be no further doubt; Jesus was declaring himself to be the incarnate Christ. Since they had judged him to be false, they felt duty bound to kill him so they picked up stones to stone him, but he escaped from their midst.

# Chapter Twenty-five

## Blindness Healed

John 9:1-41

Jesus had just escaped the anger of the Pharisees at the temple grounds by hiding himself, and now as he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life." (John 9:2-3)

Jesus was providing unmistakable evidence about who he was, thus establishing a legal position for future judgment against the nation of Israel. At the same time he is teaching another important truth about the need to do the work of God while it is still possible. By example Jesus taught us not to allow controversy to prevent us from staying focused on the main thrust of the gospel message. Jesus didn't allow controversy about who he was to distract him from the fact that he is the light of the world.

The disciples had asked Jesus why this man was born blind. Was it because of sin, if so whose sin? Neither, Jesus told them, but so that the works of God could be displayed. At this moment, Jesus needed an object of proof. This man was placed there by God's purposes so that Jesus could display his position as God.

In previous views of Christ, from Matthew, Mark and Luke, we have seen Christ from the perspective of the king, the anointed servant, and the Son of Man. Now here in John, we are viewing Christ as the Son of God, but not an offspring of God, but rather, God the Son. This Sonship only pertains to his relationship within the Godhead, and humanly speaking refers to his incarnation. Jesus is the offspring of God only in reference to the fact that God fathered the body he occupied. It does not imply that Jesus was a created being given God status. He always was the Son; that is a relationship statement, descriptive of his position in the Godhead. Within the Godhead are a Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These three are separate yet one.

Standing before Jesus was a man born blind. Jesus was about to display his creative power; he would restore his sight to him.

Jesus was the teacher of mankind. Healing this man would provide evidence concerning his mission, but just healing him was not enough; he had a lesson to weave into the event.

The day was a Sabbath, but Jesus as usual would demonstrate their faulty concepts. He bent over, spit on some clay and made some mud! To the Pharisees this was clearly work! In their eyes, Jesus was now a Sabbath breaker. This had been an issue before, Jesus was known to heal on the Sabbath, but it was a marginal deed that might be allowable in their view of things, but making mud was clearly not. If making mud is part of the healing process, is it not also allowable? It's easy to be so legalistic that we condemn the righteous. The Sabbath was made for man, and therefore anything that is involved in the healing process is allowable work.

Jesus made mud and put it on the man's eyes. What a strange thing to do! Adam was created from the dust of the earth, and this man received sight from Jesus through some clay he placed on him. Was it necessary or was it symbolic? I think it was symbolic. Though it could have been to show that it was he who made Adam, I think it was for a different reason.

Clay is a substance of the earth, therefore symbolic of the world. The world is a term used in the New Testament for that that pertains to this present life. Water is symbolic of the Spirit as was seen in John 7:38-39. Saliva comes from the mouth and therefore could be symbolic of the words of Jesus. When Jesus made mud by mixing clay and saliva, he could have been symbolizing how it is that when his words are mixed into the needs we have in this present world, change results. This change is not complete, however, until we wash in the pool of Siloam. Siloam means sent. Much is accomplished when the words of Christ are mixed into the everyday affairs of life, however, the full healing we need does not manifest until we visit the pool sent. It is there where the Spirit does his work as we wash the world from our eyes and yield to the meaning of the pool, leaving to proclaim what the Lord has done for us.

The man left and did just that, first to his friends and then to the Pharisees. His friends were amazed and perplexed. How could this be the same man, yet he looked like him. How different people look after washing in the pool of Siloam! Their faces are still the same, but there is something very different about their countenance. This man could see, but the man they knew was blind. This confused some because of their unbelief, but to the man born blind it was a simple thing, he had been blind but now he could see.

How hard it is to believe! The Pharisees had come to the conclusion that Jesus was a fraud, and now standing before them was a man claiming that he was born blind, but that Jesus had healed him! They asked him how it had happened to him, and he told them the story about the clay and the pool. This clearly meant that Jesus had violated their interpretation of the Sabbath. He was therefore a sinner in their eyes. Yet, if he was a sinner, how was it that God would hear him, and grant such a miracle? This sort of miracle could only be done creatively, therefore; God had to be involved in it. They were in a corner, so to speak. If it was really him and he had been healed, what would they do about Jesus?

Since Jesus had violated their interpretation of the law, their decision was to treat him as an outsider. If they couldn't disprove his miracles, then they would just have to separate themselves from him. At this they began to insult the man. Then they threw him out. In throwing out the man, they were throwing out Jesus as well. They were in the uncomfortable position of either acknowledging the miracle as being of God and therefore adjusting their doctrine to allow for the miracles of Jesus, or to continue rejecting Jesus by throwing out the man and his miracle.

Call it jealousy, fear, resentment, anger or hate, whatever; it was all adding up to murder in the first degree. They couldn't disprove him, but they weren't interested in doing an investigation of him either. They said that they didn't know where he came from, but his place of origin was no secret. Earlier others had complained that when the Christ would come, they wouldn't know where he came from, but they knew where Jesus came from. Now these men were complaining that they didn't know where he came from, therefore, they couldn't accept him. These men were as blind as the man standing before them had been. They needed to go to Jesus and get some clay for their eyes so that they could wash at the pool and come away seeing. They had the world in their eyes, and therefore they were blind.

The Pharisees were not blind from birth; they had chosen blindness. That is what men do when they reject Jesus. He is the light of the world. No one is able to see spiritually without the light of Jesus shining in them. All other light is darkness! That is to say, all truth that does not come directly from God through Jesus is not pure light. I have spoken before about how it is that light can come from God and be used by Satan in false religions and teachings. It is as though Satan has a mirror, and he is reflecting the light of God through false religions and teachings. That is why false religions have so many good things to say, and yet are false. They make a

pretense of righteousness, but it is coming from the wrong direction. The only way to receive the true light of God that results in eternal life is to look to Jesus directly. Reflected light does not contain the Spirit of eternal life. All pure truth has as its origin Jesus Christ, nevertheless, truth is truth and can be borrowed and used by other sources, but eternal life comes from one source, and only one source, Jesus Christ.



# Chapter Twenty-six

## Jesus, the Only True Shepherd

John 10:1-21

The people came listening to the words of Jesus and they bore witness in their hearts. The Pharisees, however, were of a different heart having been hardened by their love for power and praise.

John was a fisherman, but in this chapter he writes about the relationship of sheep and shepherd. The relationship of Jesus to his people is like that of a shepherd for his sheep.

When shepherds arrived at a town where they wanted to tend to personal needs or get supplies, they took their sheep to a sheepfold and left them in the care of the attendant. This was a safe place for their sheep and when they returned they would enter by the gate. If a stranger came wanting to steal sheep, he crawled under the fence or climbed over it, but when the shepherds came, they called to their sheep and they followed them. They knew the voice of their shepherd and wouldn't follow the voice of a stranger. The sheepfold may have sheep from several shepherds, but when each shepherd came all he had to do was call his own by name and they would come out from the other sheep. He knew his sheep and his sheep knew him. This is how the keeper of the pen knew which sheep belonged to which shepherd.

The real people of God know the voice of the Lord. When he calls to them, they follow him because they belong to him. Once a person has been born again, he belongs to Jesus, and deep within his heart is planted voice recognition much like a newborn baby experiences with its mother. As a new Christian grows in his experience in Christ, he learns to know the difference between the voice of Jesus and the voice of a stranger. It is through relationship with the shepherd that voice recognition is solidified.

There are so many voices calling to the sheep of God today. Sadly, there are many who haven't had enough relationship with the true shepherd to know the difference in the voices. Satan loves to come to God's people with a tone of voice and words that mimic Jesus' voice, but those whose hearts are hungry to know the real shepherd, will be instructed by the Spirit to know the difference. As a pastor it is heart rending to see people leave the safety of a good church, knowing that they are not following the voice of the true shepherd. Voices are calling to people today, some claiming divine power through their teachings, others offering prosperity or success. Jesus is also calling, but his voice is a different voice. He calls us away from the cares of life, the struggles caused by greed, or the pains resulting from selfism unfulfilled, to a life of peace where love is found in relationship with the shepherd.

Jesus warned us that the thief comes to steal, kill and destroy. I have witnessed a number of these false voices calling to the people of God. They come subtly emphasizing some point of doctrine which when taken to an extreme, causes destruction of faith, devastation, and even death. Their appeal is not to submissive love, but rather to physical or financial needs, or the need to be recognized or fulfilled. Jesus cares about all of these needs, and in due time ministers to them, but first he must call us to himself if there is to be a lasting peace.

The lessons of this passage are simple ones; a heart relationship with God that once established is forever; Jesus as the gate, a reference to being the only way to fellowship with the Father; and his being the owner of the sheep.

He has no cause for concern over who is who in this pen of life because his sheep know his voice.

There are people today who are being taught that when they die they should follow a light, as though that is what will grant them safe passage to heaven. They forget that Satan is an angel of light, therefore it is not a light that we are to follow; we are to look to Jesus the author and finisher of their faith. It is his familiar voice that calls to them and they follow it because they have been following it all their life with him.

I have heard many voices since I have become a Christian. Some voices are exciting charismatic voices promising great and mighty things. Others are voices that allow for fleshly sins in the name of liberty. But, I have followed the voice of the one who called me to the cross, and there took away all the bondage of my sinful heart with its affections for the pleasures and treasures of this life. There I have found love, life, fulfillment, security, sustenance and healing.

It is at the cross when our hearts bow in total submission to the love and care of God through Jesus that every need is met. It is only when people have reservations in their life preventing them from a full commitment that their experience with Jesus is less than adequate. When evil lurks within a heart, God will find a way to expose it so that it can be cleansed. He will not rest until all the enemies of the cross are brought down in our lives.

In this passage we learn about the heart of the true shepherd who willingly laid down his life for the sheep. Jesus is that shepherd, having given his life for his sheep. He has also given under-shepherds who also are willing to lay down their lives for the sheep that belong to Jesus. Those sent by God to be under-shepherds do not run away from the flock when it is under attack. Hirelings will run, but not those who are genuine under-shepherds; they will always care for the sheep.

# Chapter Twenty-seven

## Jesus the Son of God

John 10:22-42

The scene changes as we approach this passage of scripture, but the subject under discussion remains somewhat the same. It is now December 25th, the Feast of the Dedication, or Hanukkah, as it is now known. This feast was established in 165 BC to commemorate the rededication of the temple after Antiochus Epiphanes had desecrated it when he sacrificed a sow on the altar to Jupiter. After the Maccabean revolt the Jews having gained their independence, cleansed the temple and established Hanukkah as a memorial of the event.

It was winter and while Jesus was walking in Solomon's Colonnade people gathered around him to ask him if he was the Christ. They had come to recognize that he was no ordinary man, and they remembered the words of John the Baptist concerning him. They said that all he had spoken about him had come true and more, but he had not yet taken a public stand declaring himself to be the Messiah. They evidently wanted him to either act upon his call or renounce those who believed him to be the Christ. What they were looking for was a leader to free them from Roman domination and to restore the glory of their nation once more. This is what they conceptualized was the mission of the Messiah.

It's easy to misinterpret the prophecies of the Bible. The temptation of Bible interpreters is to try to fit current events into a Biblical frame of reference so that some sense can be made of otherwise perplexing events. This often falls short of the mark because our motives are not always pure. Questions about subjects such as, when will Christ return, or when will the Tribulation start, have taunted men for generations. These things will come to pass, but thanks to some ambitious interpretations; we may miss recognizing some of the most important features of their fulfillments. Such was the case when Jesus came to Israel, their preconceived ideas blinded their eyes to what was happening right in their midst. Here they were standing in Solomon's Colonnade talking to Jesus, God's one and only son, the Messiah, the Savior of the World, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and they were oblivious to the event because their concerns were political in nature!

All the evidence needed to understand who Jesus was had been abundantly supplied. All that was lacking was a hunger in the heart of the people to know God, and to learn of his plan from the perspective of human need. If they had understood the real problem, they could have accepted God's answer. The real problem was not political; it was the sin in their hearts. The mission of the Messiah was redemptive not political at this time. First things must come first.

God has a redemptive plan for all of humanity and the second coming of Christ is a part of that plan. For many people, the reason to look for the return of Christ is either from a point of view of intrigue, or a frustration with life as we presently know it. When times are hard or evil abounds, we tend to look for Christ's coming with greater fervor than when things are going well.

The people who gathered were evidently not just asking in a casual way what Jesus' intentions were, they had rocks ready to stone him. Jesus answered their question by pointing out to them their unbelieving hearts. He told them that he had already told them, but that they

wouldn't believe him. He then pointed out how he had done miracles in his Father's name and these verified his claim. Then he said something that really angered them, he told them that the reason they couldn't believe was that they were not his sheep.

He told them that his sheep listen to his voice and follow him, that he gives them eternal life, that they are secure in his hand, and no one would be able to pluck them out; and further he told them, that he and the Father are one! At this they picked up the stones to stone him.

Why did they want to stone him? They said it was because he claimed to be God. They had made it a capital offense to make such a claim. Jesus however, pointed out that the scriptures themselves sometimes referred to people as being gods. His purpose was not to validate erroneous claims by ambitious people about being a god, or being in God's class, but rather to expose their folly and inadequate understanding of the Scriptures. Nowhere in the Scriptures did it say that the Christ would not or could not be God incarnate. It said that we were not to have other gods before him. Jesus was not another God; he was God.

Being a God is not possible unless you are God. Humans are humans, angels are angels, Satan is Satan, but Jesus is God. Jesus did not attain Godhood; he became a man taking upon himself our humanity so that he might become the sin sacrifice of the world. Jesus was God incarnate from the moment of conception. He didn't earn the right, though he did have to fulfill all righteousness for us. This was a part of his redemptive work, not an effort to attain his position of Godhood. Some point to the scripture in Psalms that Jesus quoted to justify their misguided quest for god status. A careful reading of the passage reveals that this is a foolhardy pursuit because it indicates arrogance and presumption on the part of those who aspire to be a god. Truth is, anyone who wishes to may be a god, but to do so is to sever connection with God the source of life! This is what happened at the fall; Adam and Eve wanted to be as God, and therefore disobeyed him and ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. By acting in this rebellious way, they became a god unto themselves. This resulted in spiritual death that ultimately resulted in physical death. God is the only source of eternal life. No created being has been given life in itself. Only Jesus, who was God incarnate, had life in himself. Though his body was created, he was not.

Jesus understood the evil in the hearts of these people, therefore; he left and crossed to the other side of the Jordan River. There, hungry hearts gathered to hear him, and they believed.

# Chapter Twenty-eight

## Jesus Raises Lazarus from Death

John 11:1-57

The time was drawing near for Jesus to be crucified. Since his last visit to the temple, he had returned to the region where he had baptized in the beginning of his ministry.

As our story in John 11 begins, Jesus gets word that his friend Lazarus was very sick and his sisters are asking for Jesus to come. After staying two additional days, he informed his disciples of his intention to return to Judea. His disciples were aware of the dangers involved, so were reluctant to go. Thomas, rather fatalistically, decided to go and encouraged the others to do so as well. Thomas seemed to feel that it was a fool's errand, but if Jesus was going to get killed they just as well go and die with him. Jesus however, reminded them that there were plenty of daylight hours to move about and as long as it was day, they would be safe.

Jesus loved Lazarus and his sisters, yet he allowed time enough for Lazarus to die before returning. When they arrived in the vicinity of Bethany, Martha came out to meet him. Meanwhile, Jesus had heard that Lazarus had been dead for four days. Before they left to come, Jesus had told the disciples that this would not end in death. Then he told them that he was asleep, they thought he meant natural sleep, but he meant that he was dead. Jesus had spoken about death in these terms before; to Jesus death and sleep were used interchangeably. The concept of death in the Old Testament was that the dead are dead period. They don't know anything; they don't feel anything; they are non-persons. The only hope for the dead was a future resurrection. The intervening days were seen as a void. There was a story, however, that had been introduced into Jewish thought that is recorded in the book of Antiquities written by Josephus that was strikingly similar to the story of the rich man and Lazarus that Jesus had told previously. In this story it is revealed that the dead do indeed have conscious thoughts, but at that time were housed in a place called Abraham's bosom. In the Old Testament the scripture references were focused upon the physical body. When it died it was dead. The soul and spirit are another matter. When Jesus spoke of death as being sleep he was calling attention to the fact that death, as we know it, is not a permanent state, that there is a day of resurrection coming.

When Jesus met Martha they discussed this point, and Jesus reminded her that resurrection is a state that is ever present with him because he is the resurrection and the life. The notion that this is all future is not accurate; all those who are in Christ are already recipients of resurrection life. It is on this basis that the Christian community largely believes that when we die we immediately go to be with the Lord. Our bodies are in a state of dormancy or even decay, but our soul and spirit are with the Lord, very alive and aware. Jesus demonstrated the fact by calling Lazarus back into his body and out of the tomb.

Mary and Martha were distraught with Jesus, blaming him for the death of their brother. Had he come when they called for him, he could have healed him. They like so many, saw death as finality and had accepted that their brother was gone. Normally this is true; however, Jesus did this deliberately because it was part of the plan that was leading to the salvation of the world.

When Martha went to meet Jesus, Mary had stayed at home. It isn't clear why she didn't go with her, but it seems that her grief was so great that she didn't want to see anyone, not even

Jesus. Jesus however asked for her, and upon hearing that, she immediately went to him. Upon seeing him, she fell at his feet weeping. Seeing the pain that his dear friends were enduring was very moving to Jesus. He asked her where they had laid him. Come and see, they said, and when they arrived Jesus wept.

It's interesting that Jesus would weep when he knew what he was about to do. I think it was partly because he saw the ignorance of those around him about eternal matters, and partly because it was important to demonstrate how deeply God feels about the pain we suffer in this world. Mary and Martha were players in the greatest story ever played out in human history. This event was a vital part of the plan of God, but to Mary and Martha who didn't understand such lofty ideas; it was pure pain. I am sure that God allows things to happen to people that are very painful, but when viewed from an eternal perspective, are manifestations of the wisdom and love of God. How can we appreciate such lofty ideas when it is our child lying in a comma? How could Mary and Martha understand that Jesus is the resurrection and the life, when they saw the finality of the situation right before them? Jesus understands the feelings of our infirmities, and he cares. He will not permit anything to happen to one of his that is not in their best interest, as seen from eternity.

Seeing Jesus weeping caused the Jew who were with them to marvel. They questioned among themselves why this man who could heal the blind man didn't come and heal his friend. Many have wondered similarly. Why doesn't God heal everyone? Since there is no limit to God's power over the affairs of men, why doesn't he always heal? Is it lack of faith? Is it sin in our lives? Or, could it be that, though healing is absolute and the heritage of all the saints, it is a matter of time?

Jesus did not fail Lazarus; it only appeared that way at the time. Healing would come to him in the form of a resurrection. The Lord would raise him up, but the element of time was involved here. This has perplexed many people who have read in James to anoint the sick with oil and that the prayer of faith would save the sick and that the Lord would raise them up. They have followed those instructions and the person anointed has died. Is the scripture not true because our understanding is faulty? It's hard to see that the resurrection is more important than a temporary healing. We are so fixated upon this present life that to understand that God sometimes withholds a temporary healing in wisdom, and chooses rather to wait for the resurrection. Healing is healing, but God's timing often confuses us.

It is perplexing to the enemies of Jesus when he does great and mighty deeds. About the time they think they are getting a handle on defeating him, he does something really spectacular. Jesus was not doing the sort of miracles now that could be explained away as some psychological cure. What form of psychology ever healed a man born blind? And now there was Lazarus a man they all knew! There was no argument about whether it really happened, they knew it did, but what were they going to do about Jesus? Their concerns were not because he was a bad man, but rather, he was too good. Everyone was beginning to believe in him. They could see trouble brewing as a result. Their fear of Roman now came into play. First they were critical of his doctrines, then they were upset by his claim of being the Messiah, and now the quality of his miracles was seen as a potential problem.

There was a solution to the problem; just kill him! Caiaphas, the high priest that year, reminded them that it is better for one man die, than for the nation to perish. That's the sort of rational that has justified the killing of unborn children, ethnic cleansings, assassinations, and when allowed to flourish will result in the killing of the elderly and the disabled. When China became a communist nation they committed mass genocide to reduce their population because

they thought they were unable to feed so many people. Since then, they have committed forced abortions to limit the number of children born to a family. Evil likes to cloth itself with robes that look righteous. In some twisted way, humanity justifies the murder of innocents. Murder is okay if the general society benefits, is the rational.

Jesus would die to save the nation, but putting him to death was no righteous act. They did not do it to complete his redemptive mission; they did it to get rid of him. The result of their meeting was an order that, if anyone knew his whereabouts, they were to turn him in.

The feast of Passover was just days away and people were gathering. Some of the Jews wondered if Jesus was going to attend since it was mandatory that Jewish men attend. What they didn't know was that he would, but that it would be under his terms and for redemptive purposes.

# Chapter Twenty-nine

## Mary Anoints Jesus

John 12:1-11

The days were rapidly approaching for Jesus to be crucified, and those who loved him planned a dinner in his honor. They weren't aware of what was about to take place, but as is so often the case, the Spirit stirs even natural desires within us to bring about the fulfillment of the plan of God. It was likely that they wanted to thank Jesus for the ministry that he had bestowed upon them.

There were those in attendance at this dinner who had stories to tell. Simon who had been a leper had been healed. Lazarus who had been called from death was there as well. Martha, who previously had been so troubled by her sister's behavior, was peacefully serving while Mary as usual was caught up in the occasion, a note worthy miracle in itself.

Mary, we are told, took some perfume, about a pint of nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus. Matthew tells us that Mary anointed the head of Jesus; while John tells us it was his feet. No doubt both were correct, as a pint of nard was enough to do a thorough job of anointing someone. In just a few days Jesus was going to be arrested and crucified, and due to the manner and time of the crucifixion, she would not be allowed to properly prepare his body for burial. Nard was commonly used in preparing a body for burial. It was very expensive, but Mary was no doubt moved by the Holy Spirit to give Jesus this final expression of her love and gratitude.

This occasion should not be confused with an earlier time in the ministry of Jesus when a woman came to him while he was eating at a Pharisees house. On that occasion the woman wept shedding tears upon his feet, wiped them with her hair and anointed him with perfume. The similarities in the story were that a woman came up behind him while in a reclining position, his feet being extended behind him, and anointed him with nard. The differences were that the first woman wept on his feet, wiped his feet with her hair and anointed him with nard; the first was in the house of a Pharisee, the second was at Simon the Lepers house with no mention being made of a Pharisee. It was unlikely that, because of the persecution, a Pharisee would have dared to have him for dinner at this point in time. The woman seems to be different as well as the woman in the first case was a known sinner and in the second case was Mary, a dear friend of Jesus along with Martha and their brother Lazarus. Jesus had gone to their home on a previous occasion, and likely was a frequent visitor when he was in the area.

Mary was a player in the great drama at the center of human history. All those who lived righteously before this point in time were dependent upon the success of the mission of Jesus. Mary's role, though not redemptive in nature, was still a vital part of the story. Her love for Jesus is what drove her to perform this act of love upon him. He was receptive to this sort of display of love showing that when we give our expressions of love extravagantly, he will accept them as well.

There is a will of God, and all of history revolves around that will. Not everything that happens is predetermined, only those things which are necessary to the overall plan of God. Even on that issue predetermination is in question. Is it predetermination or is it foreknowledge? Questions of this kind have divided Christians for centuries. Great doctrinal disputes have



revolved around some very vague issues that are more philosophical than practical. What difference does it make, really, whether God knows every detail about everything on planet earth before it happens; or whether Mary acted because it was God's will; or whether she acted out of love and gratitude which fit beautifully into the plan of God.

The mind of God is not fully known to man. We do not know, for example, how comprehensive his knowledge is regarding every detail of what human behavior will ultimately do. The word does not tell us that God knows all in the extreme sense, nor that he has always known all, nor does it suggest that God never has a new idea. The closest scripture on the subject is in 1 John 3:20 where John says concerning the heart of man, that God knows everything. The mind of God is truly incomprehensible, a total marvel, never to be fully understood by man, because the full scope is not fully revealed. God does have foreknowledge or prophecy would be reduced to a good guess, but if everything were totally preprogrammed, free will would no longer exist, justice would become injustice, and God would be guilty of creating wickedly. If sinners were sent to hell without recourse, where would justice be in that? Obviously, whether God knows every minute detail about everything, and always has, we must do what we do out of free will and our own choice, otherwise punishment would be unjust. Since God does not take pleasure in evil, there must be a righteous purpose for all that happens here. There is, and it will be shown more clearly in the teachings yet to come in the Gospel of John.

# Chapter Thirty

## The King is Coming!

John 12:12-19

Every year large crowds gathered at Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover feast. Jesus was no doubt the topic of conversation as the news of the raising of Lazarus had galvanized their attention upon him. The leaders of the nation were losing control and those who enjoy power will do desperate things to retain it. The evidence of their eroding influence was demonstrated when Jesus was approaching Jerusalem. The crowd heard he was coming and went out to meet him with palm branches, shouting, “Hosanna!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Blessed is the King of Israel!” (John 12:13)

This display must have sent shivers down the backs of the elders of Israel. If news of this reached Rome they could expect a serious reprimand. Not only were the elders of Israel losing control, but it appeared that Rome was as well.

What a celebration! Prophecies were being fulfilled that day, though no one seemed to be aware of it. Jesus was at the pinnacle of popularity with the people, but how soon this would change. On this day, Jesus was the most popular man in Israel. Something would have to be done; this, however, was Jesus’ day. The hearts of the people were open to him, and many of them would come to him again after the day of his resurrection. These were the people spoken of as being foreknown, that is, they were the group that he knew during his lifetime that had been given to him. There were righteous people who died before Jesus’ lifetime and there were some who lived during his lifetime. All of these were included in his redemptive death. There were also those who weren’t even born yet; these also were included. When Jesus died, it was for past, present and future, as many as the Lord our God would call. There are no limits upon who can come to Jesus, because;

“The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.” (Rev. 22:17)

Jesus was the king of Israel, but the minds of the people were not ready for this kind of king. Jesus was different from every other king that ever lived because he ruled in the hearts of men. His kingdom was not of this world, but the people looked for a king like the kings of other nations. The idea of a kingdom that would bridge all national boundaries, cross all cultural divides, ignore color and ethnic backgrounds, and embrace all people no matter whether rich or poor, healthy or handicapped, important or obscure, that would include slaves and criminals, was unthinkable. Jesus was every bit a king and he was gathering the elements of his kingdom. He had been sowing the precepts of his kingdom into the hearts of those who would be his apostles, and demonstrating the power of this kingdom.

Men want a king they can see and who will speak to them in a voice heard by the ear, one who will deliver them from the power and authority of those who would dominate them. Jesus would rule in another dimension. He would live and rule in the realm of spirit. His voice would

be heard with the heart rather than the ear. Jesus was about to transition from the visible to the invisible, from the substance of the earth to the substance of heaven. He would die, but not cease to exist. He would be a king; they would crown him, but not like they thought on this day.

Making the transition from a life focused upon the temporal to a life focused upon the eternal is not easy. All of God's dealings with man up to this point in time were expressed in material things. When the people of God obeyed his commands, he would bless them in material ways. They would become rich and powerful, but pride would enter their hearts. Pride would lead to disobedience, and disobedience would lead to judgment.

Now God was ready to do a new thing in the earth. He was going to change his mode of dealings. First Jesus must become the Lamb of God; pay the penalty for the sins of all men; then send the power of the Holy Spirit into the hearts of those who would believe and receive, changing them in the inner man.

Once changed, Jesus would be their king. He rules with the scepter of righteousness and those who police his kingdom are called teachers.

There is no need for men to rule others by force in this kingdom, because the true citizens desire to please their king. All that is needed is instruction and example, because sheep follow their shepherd. Those who rule by intimidation, and exercise authority by demanding obedience to them are not of this kingdom. For example, the authority of a pastor over his church is exercised through his teachings and example. If his teaching and example is of God, people will follow; they are of this kingdom. If he resorts to gimmicks or demands allegiance, he is in violation of the spirit of this kingdom. The spirit of this kingdom is love. Loving compassion is the lubricant between its members and faith is the power that holds them together.

The people of Israel were not ready for this kind of king, or are many today, unfortunately. People still clamor after those who will strut their stuff and boast about their power or wealth. Promises of worldly prosperity, health or success are still the strongest drawing factors.

The message of "love one another," is only popular if those being loved are of our same skin color, or cultural status, or behave in a manner that is pleasing to us. When Jesus came, he associated with all people so long as they desired to learn from him. He avoided publicity, never sought out favor, and only recognized unity based on righteousness.

"Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the King of Israel!" the crowds shouted. Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written, "Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt." (John 12:13-15)

This is how he came. He came without displays of power, pride, or wealth. He was gentle and seated on a donkey's colt. The people proclaimed him as their king, but not because he rode on a donkey's colt. It was because he could raise the dead. They would see their king's glory, but not until after the day of Pentecost. Their minds and hearts would have to change, but not all would accept him.

# Chapter Thirty-one

## His Hour has Come to be Glorified

John 12:20-26

What does it mean to be glorified? Some Greeks had come to Jerusalem to be at the Passover Feast, and having heard about Jesus, wanted to see him. This request brought Jesus to the subject of glorification. The view of natural man is that glorification involves popularity. When one who is outstanding has achieved some goal, honor will be rendered for their attainment. It means to cause the dignity and worth of some person or thing to become manifest and acknowledged, to praise, extol, magnify, and celebrate.

Jesus, however, had a different meaning in mind. Words take on different meanings when applied to spiritual matters. Actually, they often have an opposite meaning. This is one of those examples. Jesus had attained the mark of perfection required to be the Lamb of God. He had faced temptations of every sort that fallen men face, yet without sin. Glorification had to do with divine approval, not the approval of man. Glorification often is associated with a graduation or award ceremony. One is then ready for a new level of service or a new status of honor. For Jesus, glorification meant he was now ready to die, but not just any kind of death, but rather, a death like unto the sowing of a seed.

Jesus was a single life, or seed. It was time for him to reproduce. When humans desire to reproduce they normally get married, and being united in marriage, offspring results. Had Jesus done this in the natural way, he could have fathered a pure family on the earth since the sin and curse of Adam would not have applied because Jesus was God's son. As great as this might have been, it wouldn't help one lost soul. The whole race of Adam would still be lost. The creation of a pure race through natural reproduction was not God's plan.

Jesus was, not only a seed, he was the Seed. He was the Seed of Abraham, the Seed of the woman, passed down through a lineage of natural men to come to fruition in Christ. The nation of Israel carried the hope of the world within a natural lineage. They didn't know who carried the precious Seed nor were they even fully aware that one existed. The knowledge of it was manifest from time to time, however; they didn't understand the words of the prophets. David wrote about him in psalms and hymns. Moses proclaimed his coming, and words of hope concerning his coming were given through many prophets, yet Israel remained ignorant of him.

Jesus was the Word made flesh, another concept that is very similar to that of the Seed. This seed carried all the traits described in the words of the stories and prophecies of the Bible. All that was in the heart and mind of God was personified in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus was the visible part of God, manifesting the true nature, character and love of God.

God had a plan to redeem humanity from the curse that had come upon them as a result of Adam's sin. This plan would involve a miracle based upon a price paid. Jesus would die for the sins of all mankind, and as a result would make the miracle of forgiveness of sins, and the impartation of the Holy Spirit possible. This gift of God would result in a new creation in each person who comes to him. Each person who comes dies to the old natural descent from Adam, and becomes the offspring of God. This newness is called the new birth. We are to look upon

ourselves in a new light, once we have come to Jesus, realizing that we are a new person in Christ Jesus; the old is gone, the new has come.

John had said that life was in him. The reproductive ability of Jesus as a man was through natural means, but God wanted to do a new thing and provide for the transfer of life in a new way, thus faith would become the means. First, Jesus would have to die, but before he died, the life that was the light of the world, the power that enables righteousness, would have to be preserved. The life was in his blood, as was testified to in the scriptures and it must be transferred to all who would be born again. This was accomplished at the last supper, when he took the cup and said that it was the new covenant in his blood. His blood was the blood of the covenant, but before it was shed, that part that was needed in the life of each believer was symbolically set aside; that part was the energy of divine life. Up to this point in time the transfer of life was through natural reproduction, but from now on the Holy Spirit would transfer this life.

Like a seed that must fall into the ground and die so that new life may spring forth, Jesus must go to Jerusalem, die on the cross, paying the penalty of our sins, thus making life available to us through faith in him.

# Chapter Thirty-two

## It Takes Hardened Hearts to Crucify Jesus

John 12:25-50

Sometimes I get the impression that people expect Jesus to follow them. They pray for him to bless their ideas, plans, goals, and go with them to whatever entertains them. The idea that we are to follow him seems like an idealistic symbolic thought to only be embraced as religious rhetoric. Following him in a real life-altering manner is not viewed as practical.

Jesus spoke of the need to view our life with hatred, a very unnatural emotion when applied this way. This hatred is not the sort that causes people to despair of life, nor is it self-loathing; it is redirection. It is the setting aside of self-will, pride and self-sufficiency, and is the reassigning of priorities so that nothing is in the place where God belongs in our hearts, minds, or bodies. Hating our lives is an attitude that reflects the fact that we loathe what would distract us from following Christ in a total life-altering quest.

What we are asked to do is to give up an inferior life, so that we can partake of that which is enduring. We give God our present pain filled life that is going nowhere eternally, and he gives it back to us transformed and eternal.

Jesus was going to die for the sins of the world, and whenever that message is proclaimed it will draw men to Christ. Though we preach the message of a living resurrected Christ, it is the message of the cross that is essential to salvation.

Being willing to go to the cross wasn't an easy choice for Jesus to make. It was a bitter experience that would involve more than just the pains suffered in his physical body. He would suffer the realization that some of those he loved would not accept his sacrifice. The sorrow of that hour was settling in upon him, and he could not escape the emotion. Feeling emotions are normal experiences. None of us can avoid them. Feeling emotions of sorrow, pain, anger and even anxiety are unavoidable at times, but it is what we allow those feelings to do to us that make them good or bad. Jesus also felt emotions, but he always stayed in command of their result. Feeling sorrowful did not keep Jesus from the pursuit of God's will. The knowledge of the pains awaiting him did not divert his attention from his mission.

Jesus was a Son who pleased his Father. He pleased him because he never sought his own fame, fortune, or self-fulfillment. He came to do the will of his Father and sought to glorify him. He prayed "Father, glorify your name!" To which the Father replied, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." (John 12:28-29) This voice from heaven was not for the sake of Jesus; it was for those listening. The purpose was so that they might believe on Jesus.

Believing on Jesus is not easy, especially when our hearts are still attached to the present world. Many of the elders believed in Jesus, but proclaiming their faith in him would have resulted in being put out of the synagogue. The hour for Jesus to die was now only a few days away, and it was necessary that Jesus die. For that to happen, an environment of hostility was necessary. God hardened the hearts of the elders and people so that they would be able to cry out for his crucifixion, however it isn't possible to know how many of these same people came into the church after the day of Pentecost. Healing of their hardened hearts had to wait for the day of

healing. They would all get their opportunity to come to him receiving the salvation he was here to provide, but for now they would go on with hardened hearts.

Jesus was never disconnected from the purposes of his Father, and belief in him was belief in the God of Israel. It was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that was Jesus' Father. Believing in Jesus did not mean that they were changing religions, only moving on into the salvation they had been awaiting for from the fall of Adam and Eve so many years before. Jesus was God's light of truth, and while he was here they had the opportunity to see him up close and personal. They had an opportunity that men desired before and after—to meet him personally in the flesh, but because they were hard hearted, they missed so much of what might have been.

Even though God allowed a spirit of hardness to afflict the people, they still had the option of believing, and many of them did enjoying knowing him. Hardness of heart is no defense on the judgment day; we also have a mind that is capable of making decisions. Although we must believe with our hearts, we make the decision to do so with our minds! All the evidence was visibly before them. All they had to do was examine it and they would have found it overwhelming, yet many of them chose to walk in rejection of him.

# Chapter Thirty-three

## Jesus, as a Servant, Washes Feet

John 13:1-17

The Love that God has for his people is beyond our comprehension. It is remarkable that God cared enough for Adam and Eve in the beginning to spare them. It seems that it might have been easier for God to have simply destroyed them and started again with a new man and woman. Perhaps a second man would have done better, and this Bible story would not have been necessary. Not so however, God loved Adam and Eve so much he could not bear to be without them eternally, so he had a plan to save them from the destruction that they deserved. The plan and the story of how it is played out is the content of the book, The Holy Bible.

Now we come to what is commonly called The Last Supper, a time in the ministry of Jesus for him to demonstrate the enormity of his love for them. The evening meal is being served but Jesus, creator, sovereign ruler of all, King of kings and Lord of lords, takes off his outer garments and puts on the cloth of a servant, and washes his disciple's feet!

All the kings that had preceded him had to battle with pride. Kingship meant absolute power over the subjects of the kingdom. Kings did not hesitate to kill those who opposed them; it was part of their job. Heads of state who act thus today are regarded as corrupt, but in the day of Jesus; it was accepted behavior.

Christians to this day are still confused about what sort of king Jesus is really like. We are called kings and priests, but are confused about what that means, looking at the kings of the world we try to compare ourselves to them. Jesus, however, was a different kind of king, not at all like the kings of this world. He is our example, our pattern; the one we emulate. He did not come in the pomp and pride of the world, but rather came humbly. Though he was all-powerful (at his word nothing is impossible), he took a bowl of water and a towel, and washed his disciple's feet! In Matthew we read these words concerning Jesus:

“This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: 'Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory. In his name the nations will put their hope.’” (Matt. 12:17-21)

In this passage we see both the gentleness of Christ, and the power of Christ. God is a gentle giant, yet when roused to anger is capable of severe and eternal judgment. To those who love him he is very gentle, caring for and loving toward us like a shepherd caring for his flock.

Jesus was not ashamed to be in this world as a participant, doing all the ordinary things people do. He worked, ate when hungry, and had to look after hygiene and bodily functions. He was a man while all the while still being God. Despite the fact of his Godhood that had been temporarily set aside in many respects, he was still capable of exercising divine authority if he so chose. He did on occasion demonstrate that side of himself, but chose to leave it hidden most of the time. He wanted to show us by example what its like when men live in peace, love, patience,



and caring for one another. He is our example, demonstrating love through service. He did not find it beneath his dignity to take the role of a servant, identifying with those considered the lowest of the low. There is nothing eternal about being a slave, but there is something eternal about being an overcomer slave!

One by one Jesus went to his disciples washing their feet, but when he came to Peter, Peter objected.

“‘No,’ said Peter, ‘you shall never wash my feet.’

Jesus answered, ‘Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.’

‘Then, Lord,’ Simon Peter replied, ‘not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!’

Jesus answered, ‘A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean.’” (John 13:6-10)

What Jesus was doing was more than just a display of servant-hood, there was also spiritual significance to what he was doing. In washing the disciple's feet, symbolically he was showing what ought to be happening among Christians.

The feet represent the daily life of the believer, sometimes referred to as our walk. As we go through life's activities, the dirt of the world contaminates us. What we see, hear, and encounter, either minister spiritual edification or contamination. We are constantly having to process, within our minds and hearts, information taken in through our senses. What results will be behaviors reflecting how we have processed that information.

If, for example we are watching the daily news and a story appears touching a subject about which we are knowledgeable, we may react in anger or pleasure depending on its nature, our past experiences or training. Information can excite emotions of anger, fear, lust, hate, or compassion, love, hope and determination. If we are watching something that is lustful or seductive in nature, we must process the information very carefully, so as to avoid the seeds of sin from entering our hearts; turning away is a good response. That is why it is wise not to allow ourselves to be in a situation where we are being bombarded by evil messages. Sooner or later, we will not be able to process out everything that has the power to contaminate our spirits resulting in the need for divine help in the process. This is where foot washing as a symbol comes into play. We go to Jesus for cleansing from the contamination that results from life encounters, but not for repeated salvation.

Peter was resistant to Jesus because he didn't understand the significance of what was taking place, but once he realized it was significant, he went to the other extreme and wanted a bath, but Jesus pointed out that that was not necessary, it was just his walk that needed attention. It is the continual exposure to the ministry of the word through reading, teaching and preaching along with the ministry of the Holy Spirit that results in cleansing.

We need times of refreshing from the presence of the Holy Spirit as he fills the atmosphere with his presence, sometimes giving the sensation of rain falling upon the congregation of Christians. These times result in uplifted spirits and a sense of refreshing and strengthening.

# Chapter Thirty-four

## Judas the Betrayer

John 13:18-30

This night of the Last Supper was without a doubt the most important night in the ministry of Jesus thus far. It was the last meal he was to spend with his disciples, yet a cloud hung over the gathering and it was now time to dismiss Judas Iscariot. Satan too, was lurking nearby, not exactly an atmosphere conducive to ministry.

Jesus is so long suffering. All through the ministry of Jesus, Judas had been stealing from the moneybag. Jesus knew it, and so did the other disciples, yet he continued to steal the money.

Repentance is difficult when your sin is no big deal in your eyes. As long as sin can be brushed off as unimportant or irrelevant, how can it be taken serious? Apparently Judas didn't take it seriously, though, I am sure, he knew it was breaking the law.

There are a lot of people who sin habitually who don't see it as a big deal. Judas was only one among many potential candidates to be the betrayer of Jesus. The scripture had to be fulfilled and Jesus would be betrayed, but it didn't necessarily have to be Judas. Anyone with a heart that takes sin lightly is a candidate to do something like Judas did. All that Jesus had to do was find someone—anyone—whose heart allowed sin to go unrepentant of, and when the appropriate time would come, Satan would seduce that person into the sin he wanted him to commit.

It happens all the time. People go about with sinful hearts and whenever Satan wants to have someone do his dirty work, he finds one of them, and begins to feed thoughts into their minds that lead to the activities he wants committed. Lives, churches, homes and businesses are torn apart as a result of this sort of activity. Judas was no special vessel of dishonor; he was merely one among thousands, of potential candidates. These individuals think nothing of breaking bread with Jesus and then going out into the night to commit some sin that, to them, is no big deal.

I have seen fathers or mothers who while raising children, openly sin before them. Some of the activities are the use of foul language, lying, cheating on a spouse, or using substances that they know are not right for Christians. These same parents later wonder why their children don't take sin seriously, and watch them go into deep sin. Sometimes parents repent, but never realize the damage that has been done to their children while they were in sin. These parents have never taken the time to counsel with their children concerning the seriousness of the sin they committed.

I have heard of individuals who have had affairs, but have said that they were not sorry they did it, only that they knew it was wrong. How tragic; that is not repentance, and a Judas heart is in them!

When Jesus offered Judas bread that night, it was one more gesture on Jesus' part opening the door for Judas to consider his ways. Every time Jesus referred to one of them as a devil, Judas should have known that the sin in his heart made him the one, yet he didn't repent. Judas left the presence of Jesus that night he left the light of Jesus, and entered the darkness of sin.

When Judas dipped deceitfully into the cup with Jesus, Satan entered into him. What had been a condition in principle; now became a hardened fact. He was now taken over by Satan.

Every time someone acts in a devilish way, they are preparing the soil of their heart to be taken over at will by a demonic force. Judas played with fire, and the fire got him.

I don't think Jesus rejoiced when Judas left, the word says, he was troubled in spirit. I think that when Jesus offered him bread this last time it was with a longing in his heart for Judas to repent. Perhaps openly discussing it would bring him to his senses, but no; when sin is no big deal, and the money is good; why not? Sin now, repent later; but could he? If we can't repent over little sins, how can we hope to repent when the sins get big?

# Chapter Thirty-five

## Love One Another

John 13:31-38

Judas Iscariot had left the presence of Jesus, going out into the night to get the authorities so he could show them where Jesus was and arrest him. The attention of Jesus now focused upon what he needed to share with his disciples before leaving them. His attitude was now more upbeat, focusing upon his glorification. It had been a rending experience for Jesus, watching Judas turn his back on him and walk into the night; after all he had been a dear friend.

This scene has been played out many times in Churches that have had troublemakers in their midst as instruments of Satan causing dissention. A point arrives and the troublemakers leave leaving a calm behind them, a renewed love and unity and a need for healing.

Jesus now turned his focused upon those who were left. They were the ones who would be instruments of the Holy Spirit to build the Church. He had many things on his heart that night and grieving over Judas was not one of them. Jesus and his disciples would soon be separated because he was going where they could not come.

The age of the Mosaic Law was coming to an end, and now Jesus had a new command to give his disciples. It would be the foundational precept of his kingdom. "Love one another," Jesus commanded them. This is how the world would know they were his disciples.

There is no place for bickering among the people of God. Fights, quarrels, arguments, and debates over meaningless issues, are all manifestations of the flesh and have nothing to do with the Spirit filled life. If we are to please the Lord, we must look after the fellowship of the brethren. "Blessed are the peacemakers," Jesus had said to them in the Sermon on the Mount.

It was no casual passing concern for Jesus when he spoke to them of their need to love one another. It is the tendency of humanity to have problems with the issue of love. We are so selfish, fearful, and egotistical that when someone is not like ourselves, or disagrees with us over some issue, we tend to pull away unto ourselves rather than buck the tide and love that person.

Jesus understood our humanity very well thus he urged us – no commanded us – to love one another. It's so easy to allow some petty issue to divide us into warring factions.

In counseling with people I have learned how destructive conflicts can be. I have seen marriages torn apart because the parties are at war with one another. Marriages usually start out with some level of love and enthrallment with each other. Then after the wedding is over, and sometimes even before, issues begin to surface that unless they are resolved will result in a warring attitude between the spouses.

I have counseled with people at war, and it's always a difficult situation. Before any progress can be made, they must enter into a peace agreement. There is no peace where there is conflict. Somewhere along the way, issues will have to be faced, but to start a constructive dialog peace and love must be restored. I counsel them to forgive one another and leave the past and start over from where they are now.

The only value of the past is in the lessons it has taught us. If we will recapture peace, we will almost certainly recapture love. As long as we hang onto past memories of pain, struggle, bitterness, or glory, it will be an enemy of peace in the present.

The only way for Christians to love one another is to embrace what is present, forgetting what is behind because it can't be changed only forgiven. God wants us to move on focusing on what is present.

Crying over past mistakes is detrimental to the peace process. Wanting our own way is also a problem because it is founded in selfism. When we can shift our concerns from what we want, to the needs of others desiring that their needs be met, love is the resultant emotion.

It's the mature, courageous, and confident in whom they are in Christ that can obey the Lord's command to love one another. Unforgivingly hanging onto concerns over petty issues in bitterness and anger are indications of immaturity in Christ. If we are to grow up into his stature, we will grow up in forgiveness, compassion and love.

When we realize how loved we are by God, we will be able to love others. Understanding the love that God has for us is fundamental to our ability to function in his kingdom. Knowing that we are loved with a love that is deep and eternal, that is not fragile or easily offended, gives a sense of security in our relationship with God. It is easier for us to love others when we feel this kind of love. Our faith will also be a reflection of the sense of love we feel. Those who are insecure in their thoughts about God's love, often waiver in their faith. They are not sure if God will hear them when they pray because they are not sure God loves them. As a result they will then likely resort to some fleshly technique to get their way; when this happens wars often erupts.

Jesus was going to be leaving his disciples soon, and they would have to learn to function in a new way. Where he was going they could not follow. Peter protested claiming he was willing to lay down his life for Jesus. Questioning his resolve, Jesus went on to prophesy that before the rooster crowed he would deny the Lord.

It's often easier to die for someone, or something, than to live for them. Peter was willing to die for Jesus, that was true, but was he willing to lay down his life, that is, his preconceived ideas about what ought to happen and trust Jesus even if it looked all wrong? Could Peter trust that Jesus knew what he was doing and follow faithfully? History tells us he couldn't. It was still important to Peter to be in command of what was happening. Trusting Jesus was not easy for Peter when what Jesus was doing was not in accord with what he wanted or understood. Peter was quick to rebuke the Lord when the Lord spoke words out of harmony with what he understood to be sound theology.

People are still rebuking the Lord when he is doing something, or failing to do something in their lives that they think he ought to do. Oh, they don't say, "I rebuke you Jesus," rather they will say, "I rebuke you Satan." I am concerned when I see Satan being blamed for everything that happens, as if Satan is more involved in their lives than Jesus! I do recognize that Satan does attack people, but his attacks are usually more in the realm of discouragement, fear, anger, frustration, and bitterness, rather than in the realm of controlling the events of a Christian's life.

I chose to give God the credit for being the one directing the events of my life. When difficult circumstances challenge that faith, I ask, what now Lord, what are you saying and doing? Are you setting the stage for change through this circumstance? If so, what is the next step that will take me in the direction of that change? Like a mother eagle takes feathers out of the nest of her young when it's time for them to learn to fly, so God takes the feathers of our comfort zone away signaling that the time of change has come. Resisting the change that God is bringing about only frustrates his plan and makes his purposes more difficult to achieve.

If we have truly laid our life down for Jesus, we will go through all varied circumstances with an ease that reflects the commitment to his purposes, and a love for his eternal kingdom.

Human attachments to worldly things will not even slow our progress. Once we have made the transition from serving our own interests to serving his interests, we will be able to maintain peace at all times.

Loving one another will also come to us with ease. It is our flesh that resists God, failing to accept the reality of his cross, but when we do accept the cross in our lives, peace results.

The disciples wouldn't be able to maintain peace in the coming storm because they were still in their flesh having resisted the message of the cross.

# Chapter Thirty-six

## Jesus Gives Final Instructions

John 14:1-31

The disciples were undoubtedly troubled, first by Judas' abrupt departure into the night, and now by the tone of Jesus' words. Jesus had just announced that he was leaving them and that where he was going they could not come. In the minds of the disciples, the words of Jesus were mysterious. They were obviously struggling to understand what it was that he was saying to them. Jesus never held the knowledge of his redemptive mission from his followers, but the full understanding of it was beyond them. Their minds were clouded by their concern for this present life, and the idea that Jesus had a redemptive mission to fulfill eluded them.

If we don't understand the extent of our need as fallen creatures, we will not appreciate the value of what Jesus was sent here to do. The disciples of Jesus weren't concerned about their eternal destiny because they felt secure being of the Jewish faith. The need for a redeemer apparently had not occurred to them. It was taken for granted that when Jewish people died, they would go to be with their forefathers. Their hope of salvation was connected to the sacrifices being offered at the temple in their behalf. For this reason, their interest in Jesus had been more political than spiritual, at least in the beginning.

The words of Jesus fell upon puzzled minds, what could he mean when he spoke of going away and preparing a place for them that where he was they would also be? Was he going to flee to a remote region somewhere and establish a base of operations from where he could organize an uprising against Rome?

The disciples were accustomed to hearing Jesus speak in apparent riddles, so when he spoke of his Father's house as having many rooms they may not have connected that to heaven at that time. When he continued by saying that they knew the way to where it was, their bewilderment increased. Thomas asked how they could know the way because they didn't know the destination. Adding to their consternation Jesus replied, "I am the way and the truth and the life." (John 13:6) What kind of instructions were these? How could they follow him if he was going to leave them? Adding to their confusion of mind, now he spoke further of his Father as one they knew and had seen.

The words that are being recorded here are filled with wonderment. Today we see them from our perspective with the advantage of history and the traditional teaching of churchmen, but to the disciples whose minds were still fixated upon the present world with only a sketchy understanding of eternal matters, confusion was mounting with every word. Had they understood that Jesus was going to the cross to die for the sins of the world, would be buried in a borrowed tomb, rise on the third day, and ascend to the Father to prepare a place for all believer's and that he would come again to take us to be with him; it would have all been very clear. When he said that he was the way, the truth and the life, they would have rejoiced in that knowledge.

Jesus proceeded with the teachings despite the fact that his audience didn't understand his words; they would soon enough, but for now, they would have to take it on face value and believe in him. These men had crossed the line of no return. There was no turning back now,

what would be was now happening. Jesus was giving them their final instructions and though they still didn't understand, they would experience the reality soon.

All the great events that these men had witnessed, miracles, healings, exorcisms and teachings, were all to be transcended by what was yet to happen. The things that Jesus had been doing were to continue being done by those who believe, but greater things were still to come, Jesus told them.

A new era was about to begin. God was about to send the Holy Spirit into the world and all that Jesus had done would no longer be the main event of the Church. All that Jesus had been doing was in preparation for the coming Holy Spirit, here called the Counselor, or Parakletos that means, parakletos {par-ak'-lay-tos} a root word; 1, summoned, called to one's side, esp. called to one's aid 2, one who pleads another's cause before a judge, a pleader, counsel for defense, legal assistant, an advocate 3, one who pleads another's cause with one, an intercessor 4, of Christ in his exaltation at God's right hand, pleading with God the Father for the pardon of our sins 5, in the widest sense, a helper, succourer, aider, assistant 6, of the Holy Spirit destined to take the place of Christ with the apostles (after his ascension to the Father), to lead them to a deeper knowledge of the gospel truth, and give them divine strength needed to enable them to undergo trials and persecutions on behalf of the divine kingdom. [Summarized from Strong's Concordance]

What Jesus had been doing in demonstrating the power of the kingdom through miracles, was now going to be visited upon all believers in the spiritual dimension. The blind had been healed in the ministry of Jesus but now the spiritually blind would be given their sight. The lame had been healed, but now those who were weak in their walk would be enabled to live free of debilitating sins. The unclean lepers were cleansed, but now those who were unclean because of the involvement in life's problems would be cleansed of the record and consciousness of sin. A mighty miracle was about to occur, greater than anything that had ever happened, Jesus would pay the price for the sins of the world and sinners would be forgiven all the sins they had ever committed.

The work of redemption on the cross was the prerequisite for the coming work of the Holy Spirit. Without the remission of sins, the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer was not possible. That was about to change. Jesus was now ready for the next step. He and his disciples would be leaving the room where they had been sharing this final meal. They would walk out into the night and go to the olive grove where he liked to pray, after which he would go through the ordeal of the trial, crucifixion, death and burial.

Jesus had been with his disciples for about three and a half years. They had spent most of that time together, sharing meals, walking along through the countryside, traveling across the Sea of Galilee by boat, and listening to the teachings of Jesus and watching him in action as he healed the sick and cast out devils. They had heard him teach the crowds, but they had also talked as friends. They knew Jesus, but they didn't know the Father. It was time for him to reveal the Father. What they needed to know was that in knowing Jesus, they knew the Father. The Father was so intertwined in the personage of Jesus that to say they knew Jesus was to say they also knew the Father. The Father had been with them all the while, but because he is Spirit, they couldn't see him, yet they heard Jesus speak to him on many occasions. It's hard to relate to the presence of God when he can't be seen. Perhaps the thought that God was right there in their midst had never occurred to them. Jesus also wanted them to know that the words he had said and the deeds he had done, were all the Father in action through him. Jesus didn't come to reveal himself to the world; it was the Father he came to reveal! Now the Holy Spirit is in the



world, and he has come to reveal Jesus to us, who in turn reveals the Father. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are so alike, that in knowing one we know all.

There is an intimate relationship available to all who love Jesus. First, if we love Jesus it will be evidenced by our obedience to his teachings and it will also be evidenced by the presence of God in the life of the believer. We have this promise, that he and the Father will reveal themselves to us. When we become Christians, we enter into a unique relationship to God. We are not just members of a club or some secret order; we are considered dear children by Almighty God! Like earthly parents who love their offspring watching over them, dotingly observing their every sign of progress in growth and development, so God watches over us with an even greater love.

The vantage point of God's observance is not only from without but also from within. Jesus taught us that not only are we in God, but that he is in us as well. There is an external and an internal fellowship with God that goes on all the time. We pray to our Father who art in Heaven while all the while feeling his presence within. When we pray to our Father which art in Heaven, we are conscious of his high and Holy dwelling and the essence of who he really is, while at the same time experiencing the internal witness of his presence reminding us that he is not only in heaven high and lifted up, but also in our hearts, ever present in us. On the one hand we are to always hold him in highest reverence, while he also reminds us of his immediate presence with us. How awesome it is to ponder such love as was revealed to us by Jesus, that the great God of heaven, creator of heaven and earth, would be so intimately involved in our individual lives.

# Chapter Thirty-seven

## Abiding in the Vine

John 15:1-18

While Jesus was preparing to leave the upper room where he and his disciples had eaten the last supper, he continued talking with them, still having some things to say to his disciples. It was the love thing that was on his mind. Herein lies the essence of the heart of God. John wrote in his first letter to the churches.

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. (1John 4: 7-18)

God is love, and if we are to bear fruit, we must remain in him. The fruit of God is Love, or to quote the scriptures accurately,

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Gal. 5:22-23)

Since the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all essentially the same and are included in the declaration that God is love, they are all love. If we are “in Christ” we are living in love.

Jesus used the illustration of a vine to demonstrate the seriousness of what he was saying. It is essential that we remain in him if we are to bear fruit. The fruit is love, which is manifest in joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

To gain an applicable insight into the meaning of this, we should do a little exercise. Say you are a man married to a woman named Mary and your name is Tom. Now say this, “I Tom am always joyful toward Mary, I am always at peace with her, I am patient with her, I am always kind to her, I am always good to her, I am always faithful to her, I am always gentle with her, and I always exercise self-control toward her. I love her.” If you cannot do that in good conscience, then you are not abiding in the vine. You may say, “Oh, but she has these irritating ways, or she is irresponsible with time or money. If love cannot bear up and transcend these

sorts of things then love is deficient from its intended strength. Love will be challenged and tested, that is the reason it is pointed out to us that this God kind of love is kind, gentle, faithful, patient, and good. If love were easy why would these characteristics be pointed out to us? Anyone can love a person who is mature in Christ; it's the carnal Christians who are the test of love. They are the ones who haven't yet applied the principles of the cross to their motives, affections, desires or goals. They're lives are a mix of flesh and spirit, and are not yet fully abiding in the vine.

The vine is love, because Jesus is love. If we cannot put the issues of life to this sort of test and receive a passing grade, then we are not abiding in the vine. Another exercise comes from this passage,

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.” I Corinthians 13:4-8

Now insert your name before each statement and see if it fits. Read it like this, “I Tom [only use your name] am always patient and kind, I never envy, I do not boast, I am not proud, I am not rude. I never seek what is best for me at the expense of another; I am not easily angered. I keep no records of wrongs done to me, nor do I enjoy hearing about my enemies' misfortunes, but rather rejoice when the truth is manifest. I always protect the integrity of others, I trust them, and hope for good things, and persevere in righteousness, never failing to show love.”

It's a dangerous thing for Christians to ignore such teaching as this, because Jesus said that if we don't bear fruit we would be cut off and cast into the fire. I am sorry if that offends your theological point of view, but I didn't say it, Jesus did. It is obvious what Jesus has said here; before a person can remain in Christ he must be in him. If he is in him and does not remain in him, it will be evident because we cannot bear fruit without him. Love is the fruit in this passage. Jesus didn't suggest it as the ideal way to live, a better option to warring with one another; it is a command. This command bears a penalty for failure to obey it, cut off and cast into the fire. What can I say?

Is this fire eternal fire or is it the fire of divine judgment upon the events of our lives? I think I have seen that it does sometimes refer to the here and now, but I do not exclude the possibility of a more enduring judgment.

Telling it as it is stated is the gentle and loving thing to do. Ignore it at the risk of it actually being true. Do we think that God loves us so much that he will ignore his own words to us? If he cast Satan and a third of his angels out of heaven for revolting against him, will he do less to a Christian who rebels against his command? If I have failed to tell the truth on this issue, please forgive me, I have no ax to grind. I don't take pleasure in discomfort, nor am I trying to make anyone feel unnecessarily uncomfortable, or insecure. We are secure in his love; all we have to do is abide in it. If we cannot, God help us.

Sometimes people struggle with the application of these truths about love. It's hard to love someone who doesn't measure up to our expectations for them, especially if we have persevered in giving them all the benefit of our loving support and made provisions for them to accomplish what we wished for them. Sometimes people fail sinfully, doing some forbidden sin that violates everything we have taught them about what are good and acceptable behaviors. Forgiveness can come hard sometimes, and showing love toward someone who has hurt us is very hard to do. It

seems to me that the only way we can deal with the disappointing behaviors of others is to recognize from whence sinful behaviors come, the fallen nature.

Sin is a manifestation of the fallen nature, and whenever anyone is not living in Christ, he is living in his fallen nature. It is from the fallen nature that the disappointing behaviors of sin arise, and other behaviors that are less than desirable are the result of living in a fallen world, in bodies that have been affected by the fall. We are not all capable of the same attainments, nor can we successfully live by the same standards. What works well for one person is bondage and death to another. Each of us is a special creation of God and must be allowed to be the person God created us to be.

The fallen nature is expressed in many ways and wherever there is conflict the fallen nature is somewhere in the mix. Pride is the driving force behind unrealistic expectations. Parents enjoy seeing their children excel; others drive themselves because they want to be better than their peers. Whenever we are doing anything from a desire to create an illusion of success, we are in our fallen nature.

It is only when we recognize the full scope of the problem within that we can genuinely change. It is only when we see that to be in Christ means forsaking all the fallen nature that we can successfully forgive and love one another.

Forgiving one another doesn't mean that we approve of another's sins or failures; it only means that we will not allow their fallen nature with its manifestations to rob us of our love, joy and peace. As long as we stand as the person to be pleased in someone else's life, they cannot grow into the person God wants them to be. How can people grow up into Christ if we stand before them as the object to be pleased? We must decrease if he is to increase. We must step out of their way and let them own their own destiny, allowing them to fail or succeed based on what is in their heart. When children are small they must be protected, but as they grow parents must decrease and allow God to replace them as the object to be pleased. The transition is sometimes a delicate balancing act, but those who are successful will produce strong well-directed adults. To the child so raised, living in Christ will be the natural thing to do.

It takes faith in God to abide in the vine. Sometimes things happen that are very challenging to our position in Christ and we are tempted to try to help God out when he has not commissioned us to do so. It takes faith in God to allow someone to learn the consequences of bad decisions. There comes a time when we must let go and allow things to happen.

I think of an incident in the book of 1 Samuel when the Philistines had captured the Ark of God due to the sinfulness of the nation of Israel. After God dealt with the Philistines because of the Ark they decided to return it to the Israelites. They put it on a cart and sent it back. Later when the Israelites wanted to move it to another location, instead of handling it like they were instructed in the book of the law, they put it on a cart like the Philistines had done. While in route, the cart began to shake when the oxen stumbled and Uzzah reached out his hand to steady the ark. God smote him and he fell dead as a result. One might ask, "Why would God do that?" The priest's intention was honorable, but the lesson here is that when people are misapplying or mishandling those things that belong to God we are to let God do his own correcting. If the ark had fallen to the ground, wasn't God able to protect it? The Israelites needed to learn the lesson of consequence for their wrong behavior, and Uzzah got in the way of the lesson. He saved the ark from falling but lost his life because he didn't allow it to happen.

It takes a lot of faith to allow someone we love to learn that sin bears consequences. Letting go does not mean that we stop trying to teach them the right path, nor do we stop caring about

what is happening. It means that we do by faith in God what we would have tried to do by our own feeble methods.

Our faith in God is in direct relationship to our understanding of the love of God. When we understand how much God loves us, we can trust him to do his work. If parents really love their children, they will commit them to the love of God. He is not a detached being off somewhere in distant space; he is right here in the person of the Holy Spirit, pleading the cause of Christ.

With understanding of the love of God and the effectiveness of the work of the Holy Spirit, we can abide in the vine. In him we will learn to know our Father and his great love for us, and we will learn to love one another leaving, God's work to God. We are called to love, and sometimes love means, in faith, letting go of what we cannot change anyway.

# Chapter Thirty-eight

## The Counselor

John 15:19-27

It's a fact; darkness and light cannot coexist. Darkness is the absence of light, therefore when the light comes darkness is no longer present. Jesus came into this world and being the light, exposed all works of darkness that had not been previously seen.

Since the heart of fallen man has been infected with the love of sin, he hates the light because what he does is evil. Evil exists in the hearts of all men, and is manifest in selfishness, greed, lust, pride, self-will, hate, violence, larceny and the like. Some manifestations are culturally acceptable, but they are still manifestations of evil. There are manifestations of evil that are sins of action, such as murder, lying, stealing, committing adultery, and such like. There are also sins of reaction, such as unforgiveness, bitterness, anger, and all such sins. These are often internalized with nothing outward being said or done, however; a closing off of the heart toward the relationship, will occur due to hurt or pain. Some of these sins are sins that involve actions, but they were reactionary in the beginning. Reactionary sins are usually more culturally acceptable, however; they, without intervention, do irreparable psychological and spiritual damage.

I once read a book by Dr. Tournier, *The Strong and the Weak*, in which he develops the premise that whenever a person has experienced being the object of evil, he is forever changed. Of course, Dr. Tournier being a Christian believes that Christ does heal us, but prior to that experience, a person will react either negatively or positively, but that there always is a reaction. Living our lives in a reaction mode is not what our creator has purposed for us. Some feel that their reaction is a wholesome one because they are a better person because of it, but they are still living out of their wounds. Christ came to heal us so that our existence is freed of these kinds of limitations and stimulations. When Christ heals us, we will evidence it by demonstrating the qualities of love that we discussed in Chapter 37.

The natural condition of heart and mind of the Christian is to act out of love for the Lord, and our love for what concerns him. We are not at all like the world in which we live, though outwardly there are very similar concerns. The difference between Christians who have the Holy Spirit living within and worldly persons is found in how we process information and experiences. The worldly person processes based upon survival instincts, needs for love, or other world based concerns, whereas; Christians ideally processes based upon what is best for the cause of Christ and the welfare of others before themselves. When a Christian is acting like the world, confusion results both in his heart and in those observing.

When a person is a true follower of Christ Jesus, a distinct line is drawn between him and those around him. Christians lives within boundaries of love established by the life of Christ within, while those around them live within boundaries imposed by either society or others in their lives. This difference becomes a source of conflict, in many instances, resulting in rejection. Jesus taught us to accept this as normal and as evidence of the fact that we are really his disciples.

The people of Jesus' day hated him—oh, not usually outwardly. They brought their sick to him, and followed him around waiting to see the next great miracle he would do. It was his teaching that revealed what their hearts were like. He was focused upon the eternal and they were focused upon the here and now.

The worldly attitude is; who cares about eternal matters when what is needed is a cure for the ills of humanity. The idea that the cure is found in making the shift from being present world concerned, to eternity concerned, makes no sense to them. Jesus was demonstrating what was missing in human experience, but he didn't give it in a way that changed the culture politically, or economically.

Think of what would have happened if Jesus had used his intellect by applying it to the problem of providing for the poor. Poverty could have been eliminated. If he had multiplied their coins instead of their bread, they could have financed great humanitarian endeavors. Had he used the spirit of authority against Rome instead of demons, he could have freed the nation. If he had used his power over death to destroy their enemies, they could have lived in peace, but no; he had eternity on his mind and wanted them to learn to live peacefully in a troubled world. He saw the real need of mankind as being his sinful heart and set out to change that by giving his life so the Holy Spirit could come and teach us how to live godly lives in a sinful world.

Jesus identified the problem in humanity as being that of parentage. If those to whom he had come were truly children of the heavenly Father, they would have had a kindred spirit and accepted him. When the new birth occurs a kindred spirit with Christ is received and we experience a life-changing shift in our outlook, affections, desires, goals and motives. This puts us in conflict with the world. Imagine the effect upon a supervisor if a salesperson becomes more concerned with the welfare of a prospective customer than selling his product, and seeing their need, recommends they not buy his product, but rather save their money for a more pressing need. That is the Christ spirit in action, but it doesn't fit most consumer-based philosophies.

Despite the effect our experience has upon those around us and us, we are still responsible to proclaim the message of the kingdom. Causing discomfort goes with the territory. Unless the differences are seen, they will never be understood. That is why we must persevere and never give up or give in. We are the Bible seen and read by the world. If what it teaches is not in evidence in our lives, we have failed in our mission. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit into the world to be our counselor and our enabler; now we have the responsibility to share the knowledge of him. Doing so will cause conflict, but the conflict is minimized when it is presented in love.

In this passage we see the Holy Spirit being referred to as the Counselor. The subject matter has been light and love. If these qualities are to be seen in the life of a Christian, he must learn the means by which they are seen.

We saw in the previous chapter that love is manifest in joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Dissimilarly, the sinful nature is manifest in sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissension, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. (Gal 5:19-21) Knowing the difference as revealed in a list is quite different from the application of the difference into the daily scheme of life. This is where we need the Counselor to help us.

When, in the course of life, we fall into sin, and we all do, we need the help of the Counselor to come to our aid, ministering healing to our wounded spirit, and instruction on how to avoid future failure. In some cases it is correction that is needed, and correct us he does.

It is the Holy Spirit that puts faithfulness in our hearts when the tempter is enticing us to commit adultery. Just as faithfulness is a manifestation of love, adultery is a manifestation of hate. If adultery is to happen, love for one's spouse must be abandoned. Where love is not, hate is. Adultery is an act of hate toward one's spouse and an act of selfish pursuit of gratification with a forbidden object.

In like manner we can examine all manifestations of the flesh and see that they are departures from the spirit of holiness. Until the Holy Spirit has taught us to walk in the Spirit, we make the shift from wanting to please God, to pleasing ourselves, as easily as one draws a breath of air; thus we need the Holy Spirit to correct us and counsel us.

Before we receive Christ, sin is as natural to us as breathing. We may have been taught to resist certain forms of sin, and thus avoid their manifestation, but there are always others that are socially acceptable to us that we practice without thought. Sometimes people sin more out of habit than desire; these individuals need to be tenderly taught as only the Holy Spirit can. The Holy Spirit also uses people who have been filled with his power and anointing through the gifts and ministries of the Spirit to teach and instruct those in need of understanding.

Before we can repent of sin, we must be aware that a sin has been committed. The Holy Spirit is able to bring this to our attention if we are willing to be taught. Our part in the process is to desire change and to be receptive when the voice of the Spirit is heard. The Holy Spirit does not shout in our ear; he nudges us in the heart. If we don't want to listen, he won't speak. The Holy Spirit is gentle and never pushy, however; at times he does get rough with us if he sees that we want change but are having difficulty responding to the nudges in our hearts. Some of us only listen when God speaks through means that cause us pain. When we feel the pain, we listen. This may work well, but it's not the way God wants to deal with us. If we learn to live with our heart attentive to his nudges, we will experience a joy filled relationship free of pain.

The Holy Spirit was sent into this world to prepare a bride for Christ. Christians are that bride. If we are to be ready, we must allow the Holy Spirit to work in us. The choice is ours; the reward is great.



# Chapter Thirty-nine

## Living in the Spirit

John 16:1-15

It is an ongoing frustration for Christians to see the world floundering in a sea of ignorance. They wrestle with problems that seem to be without solutions. I suppose we have all seen little signs that read, “The faster I go, the behinder I get.” So it is with the pursuit of solutions to problems when a society has forgotten its God.

All wisdom and knowledge are to be found in Christ. (Eph. 1:8) In fact, outside of Christ there is no true knowledge or wisdom. The world hates Christ because they are children of darkness. The world has a system of knowledge that they think is truth, but it is impure knowledge. Jesus observed that when the light within a person is darkness, how great is that darkness. What is meant here is simply this, for knowledge to be correct, it must acknowledge God in all his sovereignty, creativity, holiness, righteousness and every other characteristic that makes him God. When knowledge either ignores God or denies him, it is outside the boundaries of pure truth.

It’s all a matter of positives and negatives. God is the positive, and without The Positive all is negative. Any time God is taken out of an equation; it becomes negative. Just as a body without life is dead so knowledge without God is dead. Death is manifest in decay and corruption, thus; a society that rejects the Spirit of Life is a dead society, manifesting corruption of every sort.

Our news media is filled with evidence of the problem that dominates human experience. Wherever and in whomever there is no life of Christ, evil exists. Crimes are committed by people who are allowing their fallen natures to manifest. They do this because there is no light of truth within. Even some who claim to be Christians, but don’t live in the Spirit manifest the evidence of their fallen natures.

Living in the Spirit is a concept that few seem to understand. The Bible uses various words and ideas to describe a condition variously described as, “Being in Christ,” or “Being in the Spirit.” It is taught in type in the Old Testament as the Promised Land, the tabernacle and more perfectly the Holy of Holies into which we are invited in the Book of Hebrews.

Living in the Spirit is a condition in which we are living in the Spirit of Jesus; carrying out his purposes in every aspect of our lives. We are in constant fellowship with him even when we are involved in the menial tasks of the day. There is no conflict between Jesus and the ordinary tasks of one's life. It is only when he has a task he desires us to do, or our intention is to do something outside of the spirit of holiness or truth, that conflict arises. When we are children of God, his Spirit leads us. Ordinary life experiences are expected to occupy much of the Christian's activities and thoughts. The Holy Spirit guides us in these activities maximizing their benefit to us, teaching us through what we experience, and guiding us toward greater fulfillments in the Spirit of holiness.

The Holy Spirit, referred to here in John 15-16 as the Counselor, and the Spirit of truth, was sent by Jesus into the world to convince the world of the existence and scope of sin, righteousness and judgment. It is as important to the mission of the Holy Spirit that sin be seen

as the ugly monster that it is, as to show forth the righteous holiness of Jesus. It is also necessary that the reality of judgment be pressed home upon people either through experiences or conscious persuasion. Showing the reality of the existence of sin in human hearts is a task that needs little assistance. It is the task of showing the answer to a fallen world that is the most difficult and challenging task. For one to see the answer to the dilemma caused by sin; we must look to Jesus. The answer is hidden in him, and is only discovered and appreciated by those who enter into him. In Christ is a space in which all true born again Christians dwell. Those outside only know of its benefits by the hearing of the ear, or by seeing the evidence in the life of a Christian. The manner in which the reality of the existence of the Spirit filled life is seen is through daily conduct that reflects the glory of the light and life of Christ within. It is the Holy Spirit's task in the life of a Christian to refine our behaviors so that the reflection the world sees is a pure one.

The hatred the world has for us is related to their resistance to the Holy Spirit's prompting to receive Jesus. Satan has done everything in his power to stop them from receiving, including; planting hatred for Christ in their hearts. If a person hates what Jesus means to them in their minds, they will hate us as well. It is the love for sin that causes people to walk away from Christ. It is a distorted view of what serving Christ is that strengthens that rebellion. Whenever a Christian fails in some way to be a pure reflection of the Christ Spirit, Satan puts the spotlight of attention upon it so that he can accuse us of fraud. Despite this attempt, those who hunger for something better, that are ready for a revelation of truth, will come to Jesus and find life. It is to this end that the Spirit searches hearts to find one that wants to enter into this life of love in Christ. When he finds them, he will work perfecting the vision.

# Chapter Forty

## You Have Not Been This Way Before

John 16:16-33

As we open this chapter, the Lord is in the final stages of instruction to his disciples before leaving the upper room. They will soon be on their way to the garden of Gethsemane where Jesus will agonize in prayer. Like a parent tries to prepare a child for some life-changing event they are about to experience, Jesus is trying to prepare his disciples for what is about to happen to them. Confused and not understanding, the disciples began to sorrow due to the tone of the conversation. They understood that what he was talking about was leading to a separation of some kind.

The Lord reassured them that it would only be a temporary separation, but could they remember that when he lay in a tomb? In retrospect it is easy to understand the words of Jesus on this fateful night, but to the disciples who were living out the drama, it was not at all clear. From our vantage point it is hard to see how the Lord could have explained what was happening much more plainly than he did. Why then could they not understand? Did they think that he meant that he was going into seclusion and that they wouldn't know where he was? Did they think that the talk of death was only figurative? Jesus often spoke in parables, so if they thought that this was parabolic language, it would be understandable.

We expect each day of our lives to be similar to the ones that have preceded it. There are however, those totally unexpected events that though we are warned concerning cannot be prepared for them. It's the events in life that are new to us that we don't clearly understand until after they have happened.

The scriptures have instructed us concerning events that could happen in our lifetime, yet who among us can fully understand what we have been told? All my life I have heard teaching concerning the second coming of Jesus. I have lived in the expectation of his soon return, and yet time has gone by, and that expectation has not been realized in the manner it was proclaimed to me. I still live in that expectation, but I am not as certain as I once was, that I understand all the words I read. I have not been this way before, so my expectation is vague, and my efforts to understand are limited to my knowledge of the past, and the meaning of the predictions of the future.

As Jesus instructed his disciples that night there were times when they thought they understood, but the future events would clearly demonstrate that they didn't understand. Even after his ascension, the disciples lived in the expectation that he would return in their lifetime to setup his kingdom.

In the midst of their sorrow, Jesus had some vitally important instructions to give concerning the mode of their prayers in their future relationship with him and the Father. Up to this point, prayer was often associated with sacrifices, or was done in their behalf by a priest or religious leader.

The scriptures don't reveal much about the prayer life of the disciples while he was with them. Apparently, they left much of the praying to Jesus, or if they did pray, they addressed the Father directly.

Jesus was now initiating a shift in the manner of prayer; they were to pray in his name. Jesus said, "In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God." (John 16:26-27)

The disciples, along with all believers, would soon experience a different relationship with Jesus than was previously possible. Intermediators would no longer be needed, because of what Jesus would do on the cross. Access to our heavenly Father is available to us when we are in Christ. Using the name of Jesus is our acknowledgment of what he is to us, and that it is through him that we come.

When the priests would enter the presence of God, it always was with blood. In like manner, when we enter the presence of God, it is in the name of Jesus. It is our pass as it were, gaining us access to the Father. When the name of Jesus is properly used, we are received as dear children, but without the name of Jesus; we are aliens to God. Does he hear prayers prayed without the name of Jesus? Probably, but he relates to those individuals differently. Those who come into relationship with Jesus and acknowledge him before the Father are co-inheritors with him, being a part of his body. The proper use of the name of Jesus is acknowledgment of that relationship. It is a statement of faith; it is acknowledgment of the blood sacrifice he made and our faith in it.

# Chapter Forty-One

## Jesus' Prayer

John 17:1-26

John chapter seventeen is probably the second most famous prayers in the Bible. The first is without question The Lord's Prayer. The prayer of chapter seventeen is not a prayer we are taught to pray, but rather is a priestly prayer in preparation for his departure. It is an intimate dialog between Jesus and his Father. The main thrust of the prayer is that the Father would keep the ones that belonged to Jesus, and also all believers who were yet to come.

Jesus is about to go to the cross and his concern is for the disciples who had come to depend upon him being with them in the flesh. Jesus humbled himself by taking upon himself weak human flesh, yet dwelt among us as God with us. Though while living among us, he was in weak flesh, he was still God. The weakness was only weak as compared to his original glory, not as compare to us, for we are not only in weak flesh, but also in a sinful state. The only personal contact Jesus had with the sinfulness of man was from the point of observation until he became the sin sacrifice, at which time he would bear our sins on the cross. Jesus was one of us in the sense that, he had a physical body identical to any of ours in its material composition, yet he was different from all of us in that, he possessed eternal life. Since Jesus had eternal life, he very well could have lived in his physical body among us forever, however that was not the plan.

Jesus was about to be glorified, a subject we encountered earlier, where Jesus spoke of dying as being the means of glorification. Here in this passage he takes it a step further to the completion of his mission and return to the Father. Jesus is now anticipating resuming his heavenly position with the Father that had been his from the beginning. Only now he was bringing those who were his, home to be with him.

Meanwhile, between the time then present, and the time when each of them would gather having passed through the death gate to heaven, he desired that they be kept in the unity of love. Jesus acknowledged that his disciples belonged to the Father first, but that he had given them to him, now he desired that they be kept by the power of his name, the name he had been given, Jesus. He had used the name "I Am" without hesitation identifying himself with the Father, not saying he was the Father, but rather demonstrating his equality with the Father. It was this point that had angered the religious leaders to the point of murder.

Jesus came in a transparent mode, living among us in the Spirit of his Father. The ministry of Jesus was to show us the Father, which he successfully accomplished. He did not come to reveal himself, but rather the Father. The two are so alike that it is difficult to see a clear distinction, however; there are differences. The difference has to do with function and position, not character. Functionally the Father is the Father and the Son is the Son. This is never confused. The Son has a role in the life of every believer, and so does the Father, but they are different. The Son is the bridegroom, the head of the Church, and the high priest in the order of Melchizedek. He made the sacrifice of his own life and blood and the Father is the one to whom it is offered. While Jesus was here on earth he conscientiously showed forth the Father's love, righteousness, compassion and healing and delivering power. Jesus attributed the miracles he did to his Father working with him. We often attribute the miracles of Jesus to Jesus, but he attributed them to the Father.

Jesus recognized that the disciples needed protection, not from the world, but rather from the evil one. They also needed an internal work of sanctification that was dependent upon him. Before the disciples could be sanctified, Jesus must be sanctified. He is our sanctification; we find it when we are in him. Sanctification is death to the flesh. Jesus' death was real physical death; ours is positional. We deem our flesh to be dead and live after the Spirit. Jesus died an actual physical death to the flesh; thus, releasing us from the power it had over us as we appropriate his substitutionary sacrifice as the payment of our sin debt.

The Father loves everyone who comes to Jesus with a love that is the same love with which he loved Jesus. Hear in this prayer we learn that God's love has boundaries; he loves those who love Jesus. The love of God for the world is a love that calls men to come to Jesus. When individuals come to Jesus, receiving forgiveness of sins, and by faith enter into a relationship with him, they are then said to be "in Christ." All the treasures of God's provisions for the eternal destiny of mankind are hidden in Christ. Outside this relationship are wrath, judgment and eternal separation from the love of God.

It was the desire of Jesus, expressed in prayer, that we receive the same love from the Father that he had always enjoyed. The fulfillment of this prayer is through our entry into Jesus. Once within the boundaries of Christ, we are full recipients of all the favor of the Father and are, in fact, co-inheritors with Christ. We are his body, and as such are as inseparable as any part of a natural body is to the body to which it belongs. What he is, we are. He is seated together with the Father in heavenly realms; we are seated with him positionally. He was raised from the dead; we are alive in Christ.

There is a future personal resurrection coming, but we are already in a spiritual state of resurrection by reason of our position in Christ. This is why Paul could say,

"Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. (2Cor. 5:6-8)

While we are in this present body of flesh our position in Christ is still not a fully realized reality, but upon leaving this body it is our immediate experience because we cannot be separated from him. He prayed that we would be where he is.

While we are in this body of flesh, we are in a transitional state. We have renounced sin and embraced Jesus as our Savior. We are now living in his Spirit; however, this may not be evidenced in every life experience at this stage. This is why we are told to live in the Spirit, and to walk in the Spirit. Being in transition we are learning how to apply these wonderful Biblical truths to our everyday life. It may at times seem like an on-again off-again experience, but as we learn to obey him, it becomes more pure and consistent every day. On the day when we leave this body of flesh, the transition will have been completed, and we will be in the presence of the Lord. What we call death is entry into his presence, a further development of the resurrection process that is already at work in us.

Because we are one with Christ, we are one with one another. Any manifestation of sin that separates us from fellowship is evidence of the work of Satan in our midst. The work of the Holy Spirit always results in unity among the brethren. We are to be vigilant in maintaining the Spirit of unity with one another. This was the great concern of our Lord on this night before his departure. He wanted us to be kept in close relationship with himself, the Father and with one

another. This would be accomplished by the work of the Holy Spirit they were sending into the world.

The invitation is to come into Jesus that we might come to the Father, the goal of all the work of Jesus.

# Chapter Forty-Two

## Arrested

John 18:1-13

Jesus and his disciples left the upper room where they had shared the last supper. They crossed the Kidron Valley, and enter the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mt. of Olives where Jesus liked to go to pray.

Judas knew the location and was busy conspiring with the enemies of Jesus so he could turn him over to them and collect his pay. While Jesus agonized in prayer, a group of priests, Pharisees and soldiers were led across the Kidron Valley to the garden. The number of individuals in the group is not known, but it was enough to overwhelm the situation. The soldiers were likely temple police rather than Roman soldiers.

When they entered the area, Jesus approached them and asked who they were looking for, to which they replied, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said, "I am he." They immediately fell to the ground when he said, "I am he." It is not at all uncommon to see people fall to the ground when they encounter God's power being manifest. Some people feel that Jesus used the name "I Am" rather than I am he. "He" is a supplied word in the translations that coupled with the fact that the band of soldiers fell backward when he said this, lends credibility to the idea. It seems that the use of the name with the accompanying demonstration of power, provided one more visible opportunity for any of the arresting mob to consider what they were doing.

John doesn't speak of the prayer time spent in the Garden of Gethsemane, but rather concentrates on information about the actual arrest.

When the men came to where Jesus was, being led by Judas; Peter tries to resist them. He had already declared his willingness to die for Jesus, and now he was putting actions to his words. With a swift motion he struck out at the servant of the high priest. I suppose his intended target was his neck, but being a fisherman, the best he could do was cut off his ear!

I once read a sermon that said that Peter cut off the hearing. At the time the sermon was written, the Catholic Church that claims Peter as its first Pope, was doing all its services in Latin and for many years the people had been kept in ignorance of the actual teachings of the Bible, a practice that has since changed. The writer of the sermon said that Jesus in effect said, "No Peter, not the hearing!" Without the hearing of the word the people remain in darkness. Christ is the light, and the word is truth and light. The proclamation of the word makes it possible to walk in the light. There were practices in the Catholic Church at that time that had pagan origin, and perhaps they were afraid of the light. Since the time of the writing of the sermon, some of these practices have been eliminated and the Catholic Church has been moving back toward a more Biblical Christianity. It's wonderful to behold the changes that occur when the gospel is proclaimed. Out of fear, Peter cut off the hearing, but Jesus healed the man, restoring his hearing!

John gives no further attention to Judas; he only mentions that he was there with the crowd. From this point onward, the attention is on Peter, the man who denied him. Judas had sold out, and in doing so had lost his heritage among the saints for all time. Sin had taken its victim, but Jesus would die for the sins of all mankind who will believe on him.



They arrested Jesus and led him off to go to trial to see if they could find legal justification to commit the deed that was in their hearts, murder.

If a deed is legal, does that make it right? People often use this ploy to try to find justification to commit some sin that is in their heart. Any action taken in the flesh that has a sinful desire as its source is sin. You can dress it in righteous robes declaring that the scriptures allow it, but sin is sin because it comes from wrong motives in the heart. To Judas, it may have seemed right to sell Jesus; to the crowd, they were just taking orders; to the priests, protecting the integrity of their religion may have been their perceive motive, but call it what you will, they were condemning God. Jesus, God made flesh and dwelling among us, was being led off to trial; a scene often repeated in human history!

Many people put God on trial in their hearts whenever something goes wrong in their lives. Some people blame God for all the problems in the world, indicting him as though it is somehow his fault. Never mind that we are still under the curse that resulted from sin and that as people we have not accepted Jesus. Sin is what separates us from God, and sin dominates the hearts of the people of the world. Jesus came with a remedy for the sins of mankind, but the remedy has not been universally received. It takes judgment to soften most people's hearts, but some cannot be softened. Judas stood with the condemning crowd because, though seeing the miracles, and hearing the teachings, still would not give up his sin. In his mind, he was a better judge of what ought to be than God. Others would tell the story of his tragic end, but the story of Peter must be told.

# Chapter Forty-Three

## The Trial

John 18:12-27

The drama surrounding the crucifixion begins with Jesus being taken to Annas' house. He was a high priest and father-in-law of Caiaphas the current high priest that year. He evidently was very influential so gaining his approval would be necessary to proceed.

John, it seems, was an acquaintance of the high priest. (John never mentions his own name in his writings, but rather refers to another disciple, taken to mean himself.) John and Peter followed Jesus to Annas' house and because he and his servants knew John, he was given permission to go in. Some believe that John's mother was the sister of Mary and therefore related to Elizabeth and Zechariah the parents of John the Baptist. Zechariah was a priest and would have been acquainted with the high priest. John was a fisherman and likely could have delivered fish to them from the Sea of Galilee. When fishermen caught fish they would pack them in salt to keep them from spoiling and then they could deliver them to their customers. Since John was still young he likely was the one who made the deliveries. If this is true it accounts for why he was known at the house. Peter, however, had to stay outside. John then went back to the door and spoke to the girl gaining entrance for Peter. While she was showing him in, she asked him if he was one of the disciples. Peter denied that he was, and continued into the courtyard where a fire was burning because it was cold.

Peter stood warming himself by the fire as he witnessed the proceedings. Isn't it interesting how, when we are in a sinful frame of mind, that we are concerned with matters of our personal comfort? Imagine, Peter standing warming himself with the enemies, while observing his Lord being abusively interrogated! This was Peter who boasted that he would die for Jesus. Something seems wrong with this picture, and it is soon manifest what it is. Peter had experience a change of heart somewhere between the incident of cutting the high priest servant and his entry into the courtyard. Maybe Peter's feelings were hurt. He may have felt put down or humiliated.

Have you, or someone you know experienced something like this? About the time you muster all the courage you have, and do some deed meant to be in defense of some righteous cause, and those in leadership don't understand or agree and correct you publicly; how did you take it? Did you leave the church or fellowship? Sometimes people don't actually leave the church or fellowship, but in their hearts they leave. Some people spend years of their lives warming themselves by some fire of sinful desire because someone has hurt their feelings. They leave the fellowship, and sometimes deny they ever were a part of him.

Peter left the fellowship of his brother disciple and joined the crowd at the fire where someone asked him if he wasn't one of them? Once more he denied being one of them. One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man who had his ear cut off, said that he thought he saw him in the garden, but Peter denied it again. This was the third denial, and at that moment a rooster began to crow. Peter's memory of the words of Jesus began to come back, and with them the realization of what he had done. We are told in another gospel that Jesus looked at Peter, and that he then went out and wept bitterly.

When a person begins to act out of their wounds, actual or perceived, they find company with the enemy, a comfortable zone. A person, who is out of fellowship with God or his people, has unwittingly taken up a position at the fire of satanic comfort until something arouses awareness and conviction. Many Christians, who have never developed a sense of relationship with the Lord, can easily become involved in activities that are satanically inspired, never realizing they have lost contact with the fellowship of the Lord. Unless we develop a conscious fellowship and love, we will not know when it is lacking. Peter evidently was acting out of his wounds, unless of course, it was cowardice, which I doubt. He had temporarily lost his spirit of fellowship with the Lord but one look from Jesus is all it took to bring him back to awareness of his need.

After John tells us about Peter's denial, he drops the subject shifting his attention to what was happening to Jesus. Perhaps he didn't even notice Peter leaving torn and weeping, that wasn't his concern at this time. Jesus was being mistreated, and John loved him.

# Chapter Forty-Four

## The Man Called Truth

John 18:28-40

Quite possibly, Annas and Caiaphas both, being high priests and being close relatives, lived in either the same house or adjoining houses with a common courtyard. John doesn't indicate any real change of location, but simply mentions that they went to Annas' house and left Caiaphas' house, leaving the unfamiliar reader wondering, when did they change locations? Probably they didn't, it likely was both of their residences. There must have been some commonality involved because all the other gospels agree it was where the priests gathered to make their decision regarding Jesus. No mention is made of a different location.

Having made their decision regarding Jesus; they took him to Pilate the Roman governor. When they got there, they all stayed outside because entering into the governor's house would have made them ceremonially unclean! How remarkable it is that they were worried about some surface issue, while doing violence to the Son of God. It never computed that condemning an innocent man was far more defiling in God's sight than breaking any of the ceremonial laws. I am always amazed at how people strain at some literal interpretation, such as keeping the Sabbath, or what is God's real name or what words were spoken over you at baptism, all the while breaking fellowship with some parts of the body of Christ. Which is more important, being right or loving one another in the Lord?

The Jews were unwilling to accept that sin in their hearts motivated them in the killing of Jesus, therefore; religion became a cover for evil. It is no different today. Churches that are unwilling to forgive some past sin have wounded many people, holding the dogma of the church in higher esteem than the healing of the soul.

Pilate looked at this mob of people standing in front of his house disturbing his early morning rest, and must have wondered what they were up to now. The issues that disturbed them were probably regarded as trivial to him most of the time. Issues like someone breaking the Sabbath, or eating without a ceremonial washing, all seemed quite strange to a gentile, so what was it this time?

Pilate not wanting to be bothered with this whole affair told them to take him and try him themselves by their own laws. They retorted that they didn't have authority to put a man to death. Now things were beginning to sound serious.

Pilate went back to Jesus and asked him if he was the king of the Jews! He had evidently heard some rumors about this, but Jesus asked him if that was his idea or did someone else suggest that he was the king. Pilate evidently didn't want to be put on the spot so he shifted the subject to the present reminding Jesus that it was they that had brought him in. Pilate then asked Jesus what he had done.

Jesus replied that his kingdom was not of this world, that if it were, his servants would fight to prevent his arrest. He told him that his kingdom was from above.

Pilate responded, "You are a king, then!" Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." (John 18:37)

"What is truth?" Pilate asked. Many are still asking that question. Some people speak of their reality, as though truth is somehow an option or multiple-choice question that whatever you think is truth is truth. Then there are those of scientific persuasions that only recognize truth as being something tangible that can be determined by approved scientific methods.

Jesus had a different definition of truth; he said that he testified to the truth. Earlier Jesus had said that he was the truth, the way and the life. In other words, Jesus was saying that he was the personification of truth. Truth thus had boundaries, and those boundaries were his. Now let's examine that concept. If truth is Jesus, then it originated with him. That could only be true if he was God and God incarnate. Truth obviously was visible in creation long before Jesus was born, so if he was truth he had to be involved in creation. This means that all truth emanates from his mind. If it is truth, it came from him in its original form.

Much of what we call truth today is a perversion of the original truth. Satan, that great enemy of God, has done everything he can to pervert truth. He is the master of deception. Satan doesn't always tell blatant lies, he will tell as much pure truth as is necessary to deceive us into believing that he knows what he is talking about.

Satan's lies are being foisted upon us by every conceivable means. From an educational system that denies he is the creator, to the entertainment media. Jesus is largely left out, and even if it is a subject being discussed that involves God, it generally is void of any mention of Jesus. The only acceptable mention of his name is when it is used as a curse word.

When Jesus said that he was truth on an earlier occasion, he was going right to the heart of what it is that makes truth, truth. Anything that denies his existence, his role in creation, and his continuing authority over the affairs of humanity is outside the boundaries of truth.

Jesus said that he was indeed a king; in fact, he is called the King of Kings. His rule is from above and all the affairs of this realm are subservient to his will. That is why he has the authority to judge all humanity regardless of their beliefs.

He came to us, proved who he was by many signs and wonders, spoke his message and paid the price for the redemption of our souls, left and sent his Holy Spirit into the world so that anyone who wishes to truly understand might be taught the pure form of truth. The boundary of this truth is love, pure love, and involves all the true sciences, arts, and human endeavors that are honorable. Jesus is the source of everything that is positive and good. If it is good he made it. If it only has good in it, it has been perverted.

Pilate didn't want to be bothered with such thoughts; he only cared that his day be as unsettling as possible. He went back to the people and asked them if they wanted him to release their king. They called out, "No, not him! Give us Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a criminal, a man who was a part of a rebellion.

They were evidently more comfortable with a criminal than the man called truth. Sin is that way; the heart that is wicked will accept any form of perversion as natural and therefore good. Murder in the hearts of these people was deemed righteous and the Man of Truth was deemed unrighteous. They called for his execution because they didn't want to accept his claim to authority over them. He would be crowned king albeit in mockery, yet that coronation stands eternally.

# Chapter Forty-Five

## Jesus Before Pilate

John 19:1-17

Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged, apparently trying to appease the people who were gathered at his door demanding that he crucify Jesus. Flogging was part of the crucifixion process, but Pilate's heart was not in it, since he saw no reason for crucifixion.

Flogging involved a very extreme form of punishment in that it was done with a whip of leather thongs with pieces of bone tied to the end of these thongs. It was sometimes referred to as the cat-o-nine-tails. They would often give thirty-nine lashes because forty was considered deadly. I am told that many of these victims died as a result of the beatings they received. This was done that the words of Isaiah might be fulfilled, "By his wounds we are healed." (Is. 53:5)

While they were administering this sadistic form of punishment some of the soldiers entertained themselves by placing a crown of thorns on his head, placing a discarded purple robe upon him, and giving him a reed for a scepter, then bowed before him declaring him king. This was an act of mockery, but as I wrote in the book, *Jesus the King and His Kingdom*. I believe this was indeed his coronation day. What man intended, and what God was accomplishing, were two completely separate happenings.

Jesus was God incarnate standing before a simple Roman administrator. God was involved in an act of redemption for the human race; Pilate was involved in his own self-interests. Pilate seemed bothered by the inconveniences thrust upon him. He likely would have rather slept in or enjoyed a leisurely breakfast at this time of the morning, but here came this mob of Jews all worked up about this Galilean. Although he was not anxious to see anyone suffer or die for that matter, he was still doing his best to resolve this matter in some way that would appease this mob.

Men often do things without any real understanding of the unseen drama being played out. There are unseen forces of both demons and angels all about us as we live out our natural lives here. The general atmosphere of this planet has become the habitation of the fallen angels. They are materially intangible, and occupy the unseen realm called spirit. Since we are assigned to the same area only in the tangible realm, and since we are subject to their influence, God has assigned angels to assist and protect us. Because most people seem oblivious of this reality, they are easily influenced by spiritual beings to do either good or evil.

Pilate was oblivious to the reality of who Jesus really was, although when the subject of his divine origin came up it frightened him. Pilate was apparently too anxious to appease the people to care much about a serious investigation of the facts of the matter. I wonder what the outcome might have been had he investigated the facts of the case.

The reaction of Pilate to the subject of the divinity of Jesus, and the implications involved if it was true, is one that is very common among fallen humanity. It sometimes stops people momentarily, causing them to reflect, but the issues of everyday life soon erase any serious thoughts. The screams of the mob seemed to deafen his heart, so Jesus was scourged and offered to the people for crucifixion.

Pilate seemed intent upon bringing some kind of justice to the matter so he brought him out dressed like a clown king evidently hoping to shame them into changing their minds. It seems that Pilate never saw anything in Jesus that he deemed to be a threat to Rome, so why kill him? Yet, the people were not to be denied. When they saw him dressed that way and heard Pilate say, "Shall I crucify your king?" They responded, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar." That did it; Pilate couldn't have word get back to Rome that he was supporting a man who claimed to be a king. He would now have to make an official decision so he took the judge's seat and started the proceedings.

“‘Here is your king,’ Pilate said to the Jews.

But they shouted, ‘Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!’

‘Shall I crucify your king?’ Pilate asked.

‘We have no king but Caesar,’ the chief priests answered.

Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.

So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha)”. (John 19:14-17)

# Chapter Forty-Six

## Crucifixion of Jesus

John 19:16-30

The serenity of Jesus throughout the crucifixion experience could only be attributed to the fact that he was God. What the Jews refused to accept was very unsettling to Pilate. It seems that he was very concerned that Jesus was really who he said he was. Imagine the turmoil that must have been in the heart of Pilate that would cause him to make a sign and put it over Jesus saying, "JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS." Was he playing with the Jews, or was he expressing his disgust for their behavior? Perhaps the qualities of character and serenity that Jesus demonstrated, spoke volumes to him. Is it possible that a gentile observer could see what they could not see?

The Jews were blinded by their hate resulting from their wounded pride. Time and again they had challenged Jesus, only to have their ignorance made manifest. Jesus was a king in every sense of the word, only not like any king of the earth. He did not come with a personal agenda, or to become a great one in the eyes of the world, he came to reveal the Father, and to establish a kingdom according to the divine agenda. That agenda involved the plan of salvation for all humanity.

The soldiers took Jesus to the place marked by the blood of a ram some 2000 years previous when Abraham the friend of God offered Isaac on a crude stone altar. As Abraham raised his hand to slay Isaac in obedience to what God had asked of him, God stopped him and provided a ram in Isaac's place. Was it the same exact place? I believe that it was, though there were no surveyor's markers. It was a place that God showed Abraham and therefore, it is a fair assumption of faith that it would be exactly the spot! God hollowed the ground even though the event hadn't taken place yet; it would and did. There on Mt. Mariah, Abraham and God stood, two old friends who had walked together through the good times and the bad. Abraham walked through this land with his unseen God at his side, through places that would one day be inhabited by his offspring, even before he had any. They walked over ground that would see great battles, over land that his children would live on and die on. Their would be high points of triumphs of faith and miserable times of failure, but it all must happen so that on Mt. Mariah a man named Jesus would be led by soldiers to a place, a specially marked place where the debt of sin for all humanity would be paid in full.

Great kings had lived nearby in the City of Jerusalem, David his ancestral father; Solomon the king with a glorious reign, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, Jotham and Hezekiah all served the Lord and enjoyed varying degrees of blessings. There, however, were many sins that were committed, not only by the kings of Israel, but by the people of the land as well. The people of this land had failed to walk uprightly before the Lord and had fashioned idols like those of the heathen nations around them. The desire to fit in, or the notion that they might be missing out on something, drove them to conformity.

As Abraham and God walked through this land, God knew about all of it, though Abraham didn't. God also knew what this friendship was going to cost him, the death of his own Son Jesus, but he was committed to Abraham's faith and that of all men everywhere who would



believe on him. Jesus would come, therefore; a ram was provided as a promissory note, as it were, guaranteeing that the price of redemption would be paid.

They took him to the spot and laid him on the cross, drove spikes into his wrists and feet and as the pain mounted offered him vinegar to drink.

On the ground around the spot where he was dying, soldiers, oblivious to the significance of the eternal drama unfolding, amused themselves by casting lots for pieces of his clothing.

How easy it is to shrug off what Jesus did as though it really doesn't matter. There are many roads to heaven, they say, all that matters is that you are sincere. If that is true, then Jesus died in vain. If that is true then there is no need for a savior. Mohammed will due just fine, but did he die for anyone's sins? What is the legal ground upon which a believer in Mohammed can trust? Where is redemption except in the name of Jesus?

It's all just a throw of the dices; who gets his seamless undergarment to wear? That was the sum of the concern at the foot of the cross that day. Little did they know that multitudes would gather on that hallowed ground by faith. Some would come, though standing on the soil of distant lands, through the eye of faith, would see themselves at the foot of that cross where blood flowed for them and believe that his death was their death, and receive the redemption that he paid for, for them.

Move out of the way, you light hearted soldiers of fortune. A man is here dying that you might have eternal life, and all you can see is cloth! Forget your petty pride, forsake your stupid greed, eternity beckons you to come and bow your knee, this man is Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, Savior of the World, and Lord of Lords.

The song writer wrote, "there is room at the cross for you," and so it is friend, "though millions have come, there is still room for one." Won't you come to Jesus today and invite him into your heart?

# Chapter Forty-seven

## The Death of Jesus

John 19:31-42

Jesus had fulfilled all that had been spoken concerning him by the prophets and the will of the Father was completely satisfied. The only thing left now was death itself.

Jesus was the sinless Son of God; he had had life. Now death must enter, not for him but for us. He was going to die my death, and yours too. We were the guilty ones. At some point the transaction had been made; somewhere in the process, my sin had been imputed to him so that his righteousness could be imputed to me. I believe it began to happen in the upper room when he held the cup and said that it was the new covenant in his blood. I believe it was further developed in the garden where he prayed concerning the cup that he was to drink. Likely the cup involved the guiltiness of us all that passed upon him. It was also a cup of suffering, the suffering of one man for the guilt of us all. He had become a curse, because the scripture said that cursed is the one that hangs on a tree. (Cross)

It was time for death to take its toll, but he could not die as a result of natural causes, because death is the penalty for sin. He had never sinned and so the penalty was not his. He must die as a voluntary act on our behalf. He had said that no man could take his life from him, but that he would lay it down, and take it up again. Thus, the scriptures declare that Jesus said, “‘It is finished.’ With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” (John 19:30) It was his priestly act; he made himself an offering for sin. The price of salvation was now paid in full.

The soldiers had one last duty to perform; because they were in the Jewish nation, they could not allow the bodies to hang on a cross over the Sabbath. It was requested by the priests that they be removed before sundown, the beginning of the Sabbath. To hasten death the soldiers went to the victims and broke their legs preventing them from raising their bodies to breathe, thus suffocating them. When they came to Jesus they found that he was already dead. That the scriptures might be fulfilled, One of the soldiers took a spear and thrust it into his side. There was a sudden burst of blood and water that issued forth. Some say that blood and water should not have gushed forth. They say that a dead body does not bleed, that once the heart stops there is no pressure. Others give one explanation or another, no matter; John saw it and declared it was true! Even if it was a supernatural manifestation, which it probably was, that is all right with me.

There is special significance in the facts that John relates, and his personal credibility is attached to the truths that he reported.

To the Jews blood was a big part of their worship because, without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. Water likewise has Biblical significance. Water was used in the process of cleansing; thus we have in this scene, blood for remission, and water for cleansing. All that is needed for a lost soul is found at the cross! We, lost humanity, have been visiting this scene of suffering and death from that time onward, finding peace with God based on what he did for us there. All things were now ready; the first stage of the redemptive plan had been fulfilled.

They took his body down and prepared him for burial. Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus who had met Jesus at night, went and asked for the body of Jesus that they might bury him. Quickly they prepared his body with spices and wrapped him for burial. There was a new tomb nearby where no one had been laid and so they put him in it.

From other accounts we know that soldiers were placed there to watch it, and a Roman seal was placed on it. Jesus' body was there, and soldiers watched to make sure no one entered the tomb where it lay. Death was complete and they made sure no one could interfere.

# Chapter Forty-eight

## An Empty Grave

John 20:1-18

“Up from the grave he arose, with a mighty triumph o’er his foes,” the songwriter wrote. Another songwriter spoke of Jesus as being a song that they tried to kill, but on that morning it began to play again!

To the Jews who crucified him, this day was a day of their worst horrors. Where was his body? Did he actually rise from the dead? I think, deep in their heart of hearts; they knew he had risen. Why else wouldn’t they have searched for him? Why concoct a false story about the disciples stealing his body, when anyone in their right mind knew they couldn’t do that, with a Roman seal and a detachment of soldiers guarding the tomb. They were in trouble now and they knew it. Too many things had happened to be a coincidence. Darkness had fallen while he hung on the cross. The veil in the temple had been torn from top to bottom, and now this; he was no longer in the tomb! What were they to do?

Early that morning Mary Magdalene came to the tomb, and seeing the stone rolled away, ran back to Peter and reported that Jesus was missing.

Other women were also there, but John didn’t write to give us all the facts, only to give us what he was most familiar with as an eyewitness.

Upon hearing the words of Mary Magdalene; Peter and John set out running to the tomb. When John arrived at the tomb, because he out ran Peter, he stood outside peering in, but Peter went past him right into the tomb! He then saw the linen grave clothes lying there, and the burial cloth that had been around Jesus head, lying folded by itself. After seeing these things, they returned to where they were staying.

Mary Magdalene returned to the tomb as well, but she stood outside weeping, then looking in, she saw two angels, one seated where his head had been and the other where his feet had been. Seeing her weeping they asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

"Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). (John 20:15-16)

Mary then reached for Jesus, but he didn’t permit her to touch him. He must first ascend to the Father and complete his priestly duties, after that he would permit them to touch him. Jesus sent Mary to the disciples to tell them that she had seen him, and that he was going to the Father. She left and went to them and Jesus ascended to the Father. A little while later he would be back and show himself again, only this time they would be permitted to touch him.

# **Chapter Forty-nine**

## **Jesus Provides Proof of His Resurrection**

John 20:19-30

The first day of the resurrection, Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene and then to a group of women. After that, he revealed himself to two men walking on the road to Emmaus. That evening he came to where his disciples were assembled and entered the room though the doors

were locked and showed them his hands and side. He wanted them to know that he was a real person with a real body.

This is important to all people who lay a loved one to rest. Our resurrected state is in a real body, and we continue to be real people, not just a memory living in the minds of those remaining, or a name on a wall, but rather, real vital living beings with real tangible, though different, bodies.

Some say that the spirit of the person who dies sleeps waiting for the resurrection day, but Jesus said to Martha after Lazarus had died, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" [John 11:25-26] We are also taught that as believers we are partakers of his resurrection just as we are partakers of his death. If we are partakers of his death, then we are partakers of his resurrection in the same way. [Rom. 6:5] If one is present tense so is the other, meaning that it is an ongoing experience. When we pass from this life, we are then with the Lord. I admit that there are unanswerable questions surrounding the subject of the resurrection of the saints, but one thing is clear; Jesus has already experienced resurrection and we are promised the same.

When Jesus came to his disciples his first words to them were, "Peace be with you!" Jesus didn't say, "Where were you guys when I needed you, now look what happened, they killed me!" Or, "Why did you run?" There were no reprimands given here, only love. What he did, he did because it was his mission, and it was for them and all who would believe in him.

Having reassured his disciples of his love, Jesus commissioned them, sending them forth: he then breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

The price of sin had been paid in full and now the disciples of Jesus were ready to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. On this occasion, they were receiving Holy Pneuma or Spirit. There was more that was needed and later they would be sent to Jerusalem where they gathered in the upper room awaiting the promised power or dunamis of the Holy Spirit.

The study of the subject of the gift of the Holy Spirit and what it is that a believer can and should expect to receive has long divided the church. I suppose that more errors have been made theologically on this subject than any other.

Some people believe that unless a person receives the gift of the Holy Spirit with the manifestation of speaking in tongues as they did on the day of Pentecost, they are not saved. Others believe that salvation and the speaking in tongues are two separate experiences. Still others believe that all the manifestations of the Holy Spirit were only for the first Christians.

The discussion will doubtless go on for some time to come or until Jesus returns to set the record straight.

I have observed that most of those who believe that the manifestations of the Spirit were only for the early Christians are people who have never spoken in tongues or prophesied.

Those who have experienced the manifestations of the Holy Spirit are also divided into groups, one that believes that the dunamis experience produces the manifestations of the gifts, but that all believers must receive Divine Pneuma or the Holy Spirit as the breath of life in order to be saved. Still others don't see a difference as being possible saying that the Holy Spirit is a person of the Godhead and therefore you either have him or you don't. Dunamis and Pneuma are thus seen as one and the same. If this is true, why then did Jesus breath on the disciples and then later send them to Jerusalem to await the promise of the Father? One thing is sure, the Holy Spirit is the third person of the trinity, and must be received in the process of the new birth since

he is also called the Spirit of Life. It is my personal belief that the two are separate experiences, but they are of the same Spirit.

I have a friend who is also a medical doctor. He is also my doctor, but he is also a recipient of my ministry. When teaching a course on doctrines, he attended my class as a student. On some occasions he is thus my doctor, on other occasions he is my friend. Sometimes I am his minister, at other times I am a teacher, but on others I am his patient. So it is with the Holy Spirit, sometimes he is the giver of life, at others he is counselor, teacher, one who comes along side, and at other times he is the enabler manifesting himself in power through manifestations of the gifts of the Spirit. When one is baptized in the Holy Spirit it is not because he does not have the Spirit, it is an experience with the Spirit in which we are submerged in the power of the Spirit and given divine enablements in the form of gifts.

I see a difference between living in the Spirit, and the manifestations of the Spirit. There are some who seem to think that the power of the spirit should be a constant in their lives and that that is living in the Spirit. I thought that way at one time in my life until the Holy Spirit began to teach me the true meaning of living in the Spirit. It was at that point that I began to recognize that what I thought and did was what walking in the Spirit was all about. It was at that point that I learned that living and walking in the Spirit had to do with fellowship, and that the power was to enable me to both live victoriously, and to be a witness to the world.

Jesus was preparing his young church for their future role as proclaimers of his truths, but before they could do this, they had to be possessors of the Spirit of life themselves.

When Jesus first appeared to the disciples, Thomas was not present. Evidently this meeting was while the disciples were still in Jerusalem, but then they must have left in obedience to the command of the Lord and returned to Galilee, where Thomas rejoined the group. We don't know why Thomas was not present the first time, but I think it was because he had already left for Galilee. In times of sorrow or trouble, some people want to be alone to sort out their thoughts. I think Thomas was feeling let down by Jesus and had fallen into unbelief. It was unbelief that he expressed upon hearing about the resurrection. There are some forms of unbelief that Jesus deals tenderly with knowing what it is that we must deal with as people. Thomas needed reassurance in his faith, and Jesus came to him tenderly and provided the proof that he needed. Later, Thomas carried the gospel message all the way to India where there are believers to this day who claim him as their source of faith. It is said that Thomas went to a river to demonstrate the power of the Spirit to the people so that they might believe. He then took water in his hands from the river and in the place where he took the water, a hole was left in the river. He then threw the water into the air where it stayed suspended. This man who is known as doubting Thomas thus didn't remain a doubter. He was later killed by some radical Hindus and buried in India.

Jesus told Thomas that the reason he now believed was because he saw, but blessed are those who believe without seeing. A brother once said that the way we win people is the way we keep them. What he meant was that if we win them with entertainment, we will have to entertain them to keep them. If we win people by lifting up the message of Jesus, then he will likely be the one who keeps them. Those who upon hearing the words of Jesus, believe in him, are blessed. Others need proof, Thomas did, and Jesus gave him proof. It is when proof has been given and we persist in rebellion that God is displeased.

John said, as he is bringing his gospel to a conclusion, that Jesus did many other signs that he didn't include in this gospel, but that these were told about so that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing we may have life in his name.

# Chapter Fifty

## Jesus Appears at the Sea of Tiberias

John 21:1-31

The grief the disciples felt had been softened by the appearances of the Lord, yet some uncertainty seemed to be in their hearts concerning the question of, "What now." Jesus was alive, but he would only appear and then he was gone again. It wasn't like before when he was with them continually. What were they to do now?

Peter had been a fisherman as had James and John, so they did the logical thing, they returned to what they had known before all these things happened. They got in a boat and set out for a night of fishing. Even though they knew all the places fish were likely to be; their fishing was to no avail. As they neared shore a man was there who called to them and asked if they had any fish. "No," they replied. This is not unusual; fishermen are often asked how they have been doing. The man then instructed them to throw their nets on the right side of the boat. They did and their nets filled to capacity with large fish. John then said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Peter made himself presentable and jumped into the water, going to Jesus.

When they joined Jesus on the shore they saw a fire with some fish already on it. Jesus was preparing a meal for them! The Lord was demonstrating his ability to function as one of them even though he was in his glorified body.

I suppose all of us want to know about our future state, whether we will be recognizable or are we just going to be a spirit floating about? A resurrected body is just as real as the one we now live in; only the composition is different. It is without pain, or any other discomfort of this world and our place of residence is in Heaven, a real place. Its exact location geographically is not known, but I personally believe that it is a realm with physical laws that, though different, are just as real as the one we now live in. I believe that the natural laws of that realm are such that it could very well coexist with this present realm and never ever be detected. Death then would be the process of the soul leaving this realm of matter to be joined with the realm in which God lives. We know this realm as spirit. We call it spirit because in this present realm we react to our surroundings according to the laws of physics that govern this world. Our bodies were not given the means of perceiving the realm of spirit except where spiritual gifts allow some insight. In the Bible we see occasions where angels come into this realm as temporary visitors. They take on a form that people are able to see and perhaps even touch. They do whatever mission they have been assigned and then return to the realm of spirit. I am convinced that, to those who occupy the realm of spirit, it is every bit as real and tangible as this present realm of matter is to us. According to the scriptures, angels still visit this realm, though most are never visible to us.

Jesus and his disciples sat and had breakfast together. You may wonder if Jesus ate with them? He very likely did! He had already demonstrated his ability to eat as one of the proofs of his resurrection, showing that a resurrected body is just as real as those we now live in.

Peter had failed miserably on the night of crucifixion, and though Peter had sought and received forgiveness, a wound was still in his heart. Jesus knowing this came by that day to visit with Peter and the other disciples who were present.



The things that happen to us, or the acts of sins we commit, linger within us often causing pain, sorrow, low self esteem, self loathing or other psychological complications. They are wounds like those suffered in our physical bodies when something hurts us. If a foreign object enters our bodies, it will likely have to be removed before healing can be complete. Likewise, when we are wounded by sin, correction is needed before healing can be complete.

Peter needed additional attention before the wound of that night could heal. Peter was evidently suffering a loss of confidence in the position he held with the Lord. Finding confidence in our role in the body of Christ is essential to our ability to perform confidently. Mistakes take a deadly toll in the area of confidence. If we are to progress after experiencing a bad defeat in some area of life, confidence must be restored.

Many men suffer in their marital relationship with their spouse because they lack confidence in their manhood. No man can function in his relationship with his wife if the household members do not honor him in his role within the home.

No woman can function in her relationship with her husband unless she understands her role of womanhood and has confidence that her husband is worthy of her trust.

The anatomy of marriage requires a woman to give herself physiologically as well as psychologically to her husband. There is surrender in the act of marriage. Without total surrender to the will of the male, there is no real intimacy in the marital act. The ability of a woman to give herself without reservation is tied to her perception of her husband's needs and worthiness. If worthiness is in question in her heart, she will not be totally intimate with him. She may surrender physically, but inwardly she is still withholding herself.

In wounded relationships, neither partner is able to find fulfillment. The man is denied his position in the heart of his wife, while the wife is unable to give him the respect and honor required for fulfillment. The reasons for this lack of intimacy vary from marriage to marriage, but the results of the lack are devastation.

Some women are victims of the attitudes of other women or society as a whole. If she has been taught that no man can be trusted, then she will not trust. If she has only seen unworthy men, doing sinful things to their wives and other women, she will never have confidence in a man no matter what he does or does not do.

Men, who have never been instructed in proper male behavior and given respect for their masculinity, will lack the ability to act confidently and appropriately. Those who have never been adequately prepared for marriage will walk down a miserable self-defeating road. They will wonder what is wrong, or what it is about marriage that is supposed to be so wonderful? Many have given up on marriage because they have only seen bad examples of what it is supposed to be. Is there any hope for a marriage that has lost intimacy?

Jesus understood the need of Peter. He not only had let Jesus down, but himself as well. He really believed that he was capable of standing by the side of Jesus no matter what would happen, but when things started happening that defied his understanding, he failed. Peter went forth and wept, restoring his commitment of love to Jesus, and now after the resurrection everything was beginning to make sense. Peter's love for Jesus was not all that had been lost in his denial, however; he also lost his sense of position with the Lord. What would be his role now? Would he have the confidence to take the initiative and resume his role as a leader?

Jesus engaged in an interesting dialog with Peter about his love and his future role. First, Jesus asked Peter if he loved him more than these? [These meaning the fish since he had returned to his previous occupation, fishing.] Peter's response was affirmative. Jesus then asked him to feed his lambs. Then a second time, Jesus asked Peter if he loved him? Again,

Peter replied in the affirmative adding, "You know that I love you." Jesus then asked him to take care of his sheep. Then a third time, Jesus asked Peter if he loved him, Peter was hurt because Jesus had repeated the question, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!" (John 21:17-19)

In this dialog we have a progression of thought. Each time Jesus asked the question concerning Peter's love for him, he followed it with a request. Peter's love for the Lord was not really what was in question, though Jesus required a right confession for each act of denial the night of the crucifixion. Often it is necessary to reverse all wrong confessions with right ones in healing processes, but it was the restoration of Peter that seemed to concern the Lord. First, Jesus was concerned that Peter understands that he still trusted him with his lambs (young Christians). Next, he wanted Peter to know that he was also worthy to take care of the mature ones as well. Then he reaffirms that trust and adds that Peter would also have to suffer. This is important because it goes back to the night of the betrayal when Peter reacted negatively to the Lord's surrendering to arrest. The picture is one of triumph over previous failures. Even though Peter had failed, he too would triumph in the end surrendering to the will of others, even though it would mean his death. Whatever self-doubts might have been in Peter's heart, he now knew all would be well.

This is the glory of Jesus the Son of God. He always knows how to cut to the heart of every issue. Peter still wondered about what he had just heard; was he being singled out? Peter then asked Jesus, what about John, what would happen to him? Jesus replied that it didn't matter about John, it only mattered that he follow him. He was not to worry about other people's roles or fates. It is enough that each person works out his own salvation. All people are primarily responsible for their own actions. What others do is their own responsibility. They must answer to God for their own lives.

John wrote these things about Jesus, so that the world might know who Jesus really was, God's One and Only Son. All who would come believing on him would also be called sons, but their sonship would be based upon their relationship to Jesus. Believers become sons of God when they embrace Jesus as their personal Savior becoming a part of him. By this means they receive relationship with God because they become a part of Jesus, his body, his bride. We have become a partaker of all that he is, though not all is an experiential reality at this time. We are co-heirs with Christ receiving sonship because he received Sonship. This is why even women who are believers, are also referred to as sons, gender having lost its purpose in the spiritual kingdom.

The view of Jesus presented to us in this gospel is, Jesus, God's One and Only Son; thus we have seen him in one triumphant scene after another. He was always in full command of every circumstance and though he presented himself in the role of humility, he always maintained his dignity. There was a serenity about Jesus that his humility only magnified.

He came to show us the Father, and in doing so, he showed us his glory. Jesus came with an apparent transparency so that what was seen was the character, love and compassion of the Father. He could have claimed his words and deeds as his own because, as the Father is, so is the Son, but it was needful for us to see that the Father is not one who delights in judgment. The

Israelites lost sight of the love of God during the era of the Old Testament where, due to the unfaithfulness of Israel, judgment is a reoccurring theme.

Love is what God the Father is really about, and Jesus came to make that known. Judgment was thrust upon God contrary to his nature because, righteousness demands that sin be dealt with, but God takes no pleasure in it. The messages of Love, Light and Life, are reoccurring themes in John's writings. These exemplify the nature of God. Death, disease, famine, wars and all that causes sorrow and unrest, are the result of the love of God having to be removed from this present realm of experience. All such manifestations are due to the absence of the positives of God's nature. When we walk in righteousness, favor is upon us, and thus; the positive characteristics of God manifest about us.

The coming of Jesus marked the end of the era of the Law of Moses, and the beginning of the era of Grace. This new era brought changes in how God would deal with humanity. The precedents were set in the ministry of Jesus and were further developed during the ministries of the early apostles. The law was important to the development of the doctrines of the church, because the new is built upon the old. The new would be very different, however; the old had walls of prejudice that kept gentiles out of their form of worship. It wasn't God's intention that it be that way, but that is what the nature of fallen man does, he corrupts whatever he embraces. Jesus came that out of the remnant of the old, he would create the new; the new being built upon higher principles would include all humanity, the dividing walls having been abolished at the cross. No longer would God's people be seen as a nation, now they would be seen as a church. Twelve men had been chosen to head up this new church; now eleven remained. The story of Jesus would be the centerpiece and the story of the cross the crowning jewel of the message they would bear.

These men, with one added later to take the place of Judas Iscariot who betrayed the Lord, would go forth to sow the seed of the gospel message into the nations of the world. And from what they did, God would form a church that would endure the test of time and from it would form his eternal heavenly kingdom.