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BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOK

THE
GOSPEL OF JOHN, VOL. I

by
PAUL T. BUTLER

*A NEW
Commentary
Workbook
Teaching Manual*

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THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED

to

My Lord Jesus Christ Who bought me and
sought me,

to

My beloved Christian father and mother
Drew and Lois,

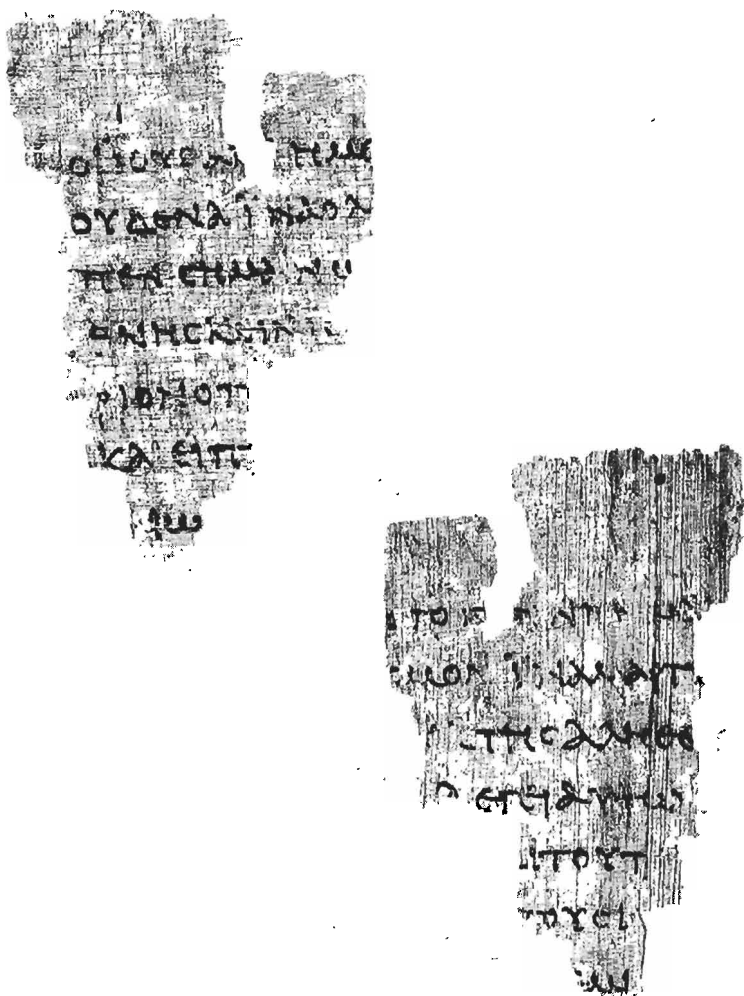
to

My devoted and cherished wife,
Gale Jynne,

and to

My loving children,
Sherry and Mark

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN



Courtesy of the John Rylands Library,
Manchester, England

This is the Rylands Greek Papyrus 457. It is not two fragments but this picture shows both sides of one fragment. At the present time this is the oldest known manuscript fragment of John's Gospel and is dated about 100-150 A.D. The fragment shows portions of John 18:31-33 and 18:37-38.

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Preface

For nearly nineteen centuries the Gospel according to John has been a tremendous source of testimony for converting the world. This wonderful Gospel has also been a storehouse of strength for the church of Christ. For almost the same length of time innumerable commentaries, translations, and critiques have been written concerning the fourth Gospel.

We entered this work humbly, aware of the great responsibility incumbent upon any who propose to teach God's Word to others (Jas. 3:1ff). We are also humbled when we consider the illustrious and scholarly company with whom we presume to associate ourselves by producing this work on the Gospel of John. In the early years of the Church such distinguished men as Origen wrote commentaries on this particular book. Later scholars have since given equally reputable works on this Gospel. We herewith acknowledge especial indebtedness to B. F. Wescott (who spent 25-30 years in this field), A. T. Robertson, William Hendriksen, R. C. H. Lenski, R. C. Foster, and the many others listed in the Bibliography.

We have not endeavored in this commentary to give to the church another technical, linguistical, and highly critical work. Our aim is to present a book that can be used by Sunday school teacher, preacher, student and layman alike. For those who desire a more technical treatise of the subject, we suggest the works of the aforementioned commentators and those enumerated in the Bibliography.

As excellent as these great works are, however, there are yet new discoveries that need to be incorporated into new commentaries on John. Manuscript discoveries, papyri finds and the

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recent *Dead Sea Scrolls* have been made available to this generation and were not, of course, available when Wescott, Lenski and others published their works.

We have embodied special studies ("The Kingdom", "Jesus as a Controversialist," etc.), maps, diagrams, outlines and photographs which we hope will both inform and inspire the reader to further study concerning the fourth Gospel.

Grateful acknowledgement is made of the assistance and inspiration of Professors Don DeWalt, Seth Wilson, and Woodrow Phillips, of Ozark Bible College, as they have contributed toward making this commentary possible.

The author further acknowledges with gratitude, the indispensable technical assistance of Mrs. Woodrow (Marjorie) Phillips.

INTRODUCTION

John the Apostle, the writer of the fourth Gospel, has been called "the apostle of love." This is indeed an appropriate title, for John, in both his Gospel and his epistles, dwells extensively and almost exclusively on the love of God as revealed through His Son, Jesus Christ. Clement of Alexandria (190-200 A.D.) said John knew that the other Gospel writers had given the historical data of Christ's life and he (John) was "urged by his friends and inspired by the Spirit" to "compose a *spiritual* gospel."

John's Gospel lends itself to both the profound and the plain. He expounds upon the deepest recesses of the infinite Mind in the simplest language. Although John omits even as much as almost a year's ministry at one place in his record (the period between John 5:47 and 6:1), his account is still the most successively chronological of the four gospels.

Form criticism will not be dealt with in this work. Separate volumes have been written on this subject alone. Neither shall we dwell at length with other introductory material. Our purpose would be defeated by an extended thesis on introductory problems. Furthermore, there are many excellent compositions now available on the precursory problems of John's gospel. A few are mentioned here for reference: *New Testament Commentary*, "the Gospel of John," pp. 3-66, by Wm. Hendriksen; *An Introduction to the Life of Christ* by R. C. Foster; *The Gospel According to John*, pp. 9-195, by B. F. Wescott; not to mention works by Godet, Dodd and Bernard.

WRITER: John, the apostle, the son of Zebedee, brother of James. Usually, two lines of evidence are presented to substantiate the authorship of John the apostle — internal and external.

a. *Internal evidence*:

1. The author of this Gospel was a Jew. This is evident by his familiarity with Jewish customs, i.e., weddings, funerals, etc., and with the feasts of the Jews (2:1-10; 11:38, 44; 19:40; 6:4; 13:1; 7:2; 10:22). He was a Jew of Palestine, for he knew the topography of Palestine as only

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one who had lived there all his life could know it (1:28, 3:23; 4:11; 5:2; 11:18, etc.)

2. The writer of the fourth Gospel was an eyewitness. He was very observant: he saw that Jesus was tired when He sat by the well in Sychar (4:6); he observed that it was even the *right* ear of Malchus which Peter slashed off (18:10). He was one of the Twelve. This is definitely shown by the fact that he was in the upper room at that last fateful Passover (13:23). His very intimate knowledge would indicate that the writer of this account was one of the "inner circle" three — James, Peter or John. Peter is distinguished by the author by name; James had suffered martyrdom long before the writing of this account; this leaves us unable to escape the conclusion that John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved, who also leaned on his breast at supper," was the writer of this fourth Gospel (cf. 21:20 and 21:4).

b. *External evidence:*

1. There are passages from the earliest writings of the Church Fathers which clearly indicate a knowledge of John's Gospel: Clement of Rome (96 A.D.), the Shepherd of Hermas (100 A.D.), the *Didache* (110 A.D.), *The Epistle of Barnabas* (130 A.D.), and a few others.

2. There is incontrovertible evidence from other writers closely connected with the apostolic age as to the authorship of John. Tatian (170 A.D.), a pupil of Justin Martyr, included John in his *Harmony* of the Gospels. Irenaeus (185 A.D.), who was a pupil of Polycarp — who was in turn a direct disciple of John — reports that John, the disciple who lay upon the Lord's breast, published the fourth Gospel while he was in Ephesus of Asia Minor.

3. Even the heretics and unbelievers attest to the authorship of John the Apostle. Tatian became a heretic after the death of his teacher Justin Martyr. Celsus (178 A.D.), the Clementine *Homilies* (160 A.D.), even Marcion, the Gnostic, quotes from it (130 A.D.) *If these heretics could have established that this Gospel was non-apostolic, they would certainly have done so!*

4. The Muratorian fragment, an incomplete list of New Testament books (180-200 A.D.) gives testimony to the fact that John, one of the disciples, was the author of the fourth Gospel.

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5. The ancient codices generally ascribe the fourth Gospel to John by prefaced inscription thusly, *kata Juanon*, or, "according to John." Especially is this a mark of the *Codex Sinaiticus* (300-350 A.D.).

DATE: Most scholars assign a period between 80 and 100 A.D. John knew the other Gospels, it is plain, and they were finished before 70 A.D. Irenaeus writes, ". . . the church in Ephesus, founded by Paul, and having John remaining among them permanently until the times of Trajan, is a true witness of the tradition of the apostles." Trajan began to reign about the year 98 A.D.

- a. *Rylands Papyrus:* In 1920, a man named Roberts found a fragment of papyrus while going through a collection of rubbish from Egypt. This fragment turned out to be portions of John 18:31-33 and 18:37-38. By paleographical investigation it has been established that this fragment is from codex written in the period 100-150 A.D. If a manuscript, written at such an early date, is found in Egypt we may assume that the original from the hand of John can be dated before 100 A.D.—the very date that the Church Fathers hold for John's Gospel!
- b. *The Bodmer Papyrus:* This is a codex containing practically every verse of John's Gospel from 1:1 through 14:26 (the missing verses being 6:12-34). It has been dated at approximately 200 A.D. It is a witness to the text of the Greek New Testament contemporary with Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria. The codex is more than one hundred years older than either the *Codex Vaticanus* (350 A.D.) or the *Codex Sinaiticus* (350 A.D.). This is a very important discovery because it reveals only a few variations between our present Greek texts of John's Gospel and itself. What few variations there are do not affect the basic tenets of the faith.

PURPOSE: John's supreme purpose is to show that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God. This he states himself in 20:31. Some see John's purpose as a refutation of the Adoptionist heresy (that Jesus was not the Son until after His baptism and the Spirit descended upon Him) and the Gnostic heresy (that Divinity could not dwell in flesh since all flesh and matter were evil—therefore Jesus was not The Word). These heresies were beginning to infiltrate the church. This may be so, but such a design was

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secondary to the stated purpose of John, which was to generate a trust and obedience that would bring eternal life to the believer. Hendriksen notes that John selects in his account "exactly that additional material (material not found in the other three Gospels) which was best suited to bring into clear daylight His deity in the most exalted sense of the term." For example, the wedding feast at Cana, the discourse with Nicodemus, the woman at the well in Sychar, the great Sermon on His deity in the fifth chapter, the feeding of the five thousand and the Sermon on the Bread of Life, the cure of the man blind from birth, the resurrection of Lazarus, and other important incidents.

JOHN AND THE VIRGIN BIRTH: Hostile critics have assaulted the fourth Gospel from the days of its infancy because of its "silence" concerning the virgin birth of Christ. A moment's reflection upon the facts will show the real significance on the supposed "silence" of John. Is it reasonable to conclude that John, who was well aware of Matthew's and Luke's account, would have *remained silent* if these two had misrepresented the facts? It is true that John does not say unequivocally that "Jesus was born of a virgin." It is also a fact that John *nowhere contradicts* the statements of Matthew and Luke that Jesus was born of a virgin. John *does* refer to Jesus as God's only — unique — (*monogenes*) Son. John *does* record the stupendous claim Jesus made for Himself (8:58, etc.) that before Abraham was born He enjoyed timeless existence. John *does* present Christ as co-equal and co-eternal with God, yet Who became flesh and dwelt among us." We contend that John very definitely complements and substantiates the virgin birth.

COMMITTING JOHN'S GOSPEL TO MEMORY: Almost everyone has remembered the basic details of numerous incidents within the life of Jesus since childhood, e.g., turning water into wine, washing the disciples' feet, etc. We would like to suggest an easy way to memorize practically the entire Gospel of John. By memorizing at least one significant event or doctrine for each chapter, one can have the whole scope of John's Gospel within memory's grasp. John's Gospel incidentally and amazingly lends itself to memorization by association.

- Chapter 1 — Prologue; John the Baptist points out Jesus, and his disciples follow Jesus.
- Chapter 2 — Marriage at Cana; Cleansing the Temple
- Chapter 3 — Nicodemus and the New Birth

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- Chapter 4 — Woman at the Well and Living Water
- Chapter 5 — Healing of Lame Man at Bethesda; and Jesus' Deity
- Chapter 6 — Feeding Five Thousand, and the Bread of Life
- Chapter 7 — Feast of Tabernacles and Living Water
- Chapter 8 — Sermon on Light of the World; Abraham's True Seed
- Chapter 9 — Healing of Man Born Blind
- Chapter 10 — The Door of the Sheep; The Good Shepherd
- Chapter 11 — Resurrection of Lazarus
- Chapter 12 — Mary Anoints Jesus; Triumphal Entry
- Chapter 13 — Jesus Washes Disciples' feet
- Chapter 14 — Many Mansions; The True Way
- Chapter 15 — The True Vine; True Friends of Jesus
- Chapter 16 — The Work of the Holy Spirit
- Chapter 17 — The High Priestly Prayer
- Chapter 18 — The Betrayal, Arrest and Trials
- Chapter 19 — The Crucifixion
- Chapter 20 — The Resurrection
- Chapter 21 — Disciples Go Fishing and See Jesus; Peter Strengthened; The Epilogue

BY WAY OF EXPLANATION: The peculiar form which this commentary takes needs a brief explanation. Since this book is designed for use in the home as well as in the classroom, certain features have been incorporated which are foreign to other commentaries.

- a. *Text:* The American Standard Version. This remains, in the opinion of most scholars, the best translation available today. We recommend, however, that the student not be enslaved by one translation. Compare as many versions as are available.
- b. *Queries:* Designed to excite the intellect of the reader to immediate curiosity. The mind must be actively interested as information is being received, else the mind will not retain or grow.
- c. *Paraphrase:* A rendering of the literal sense of the text. We have used the Greek text (Nestle) compared with numerous translations and versions at our disposal in an effort to translate the original text into the modern idiom.

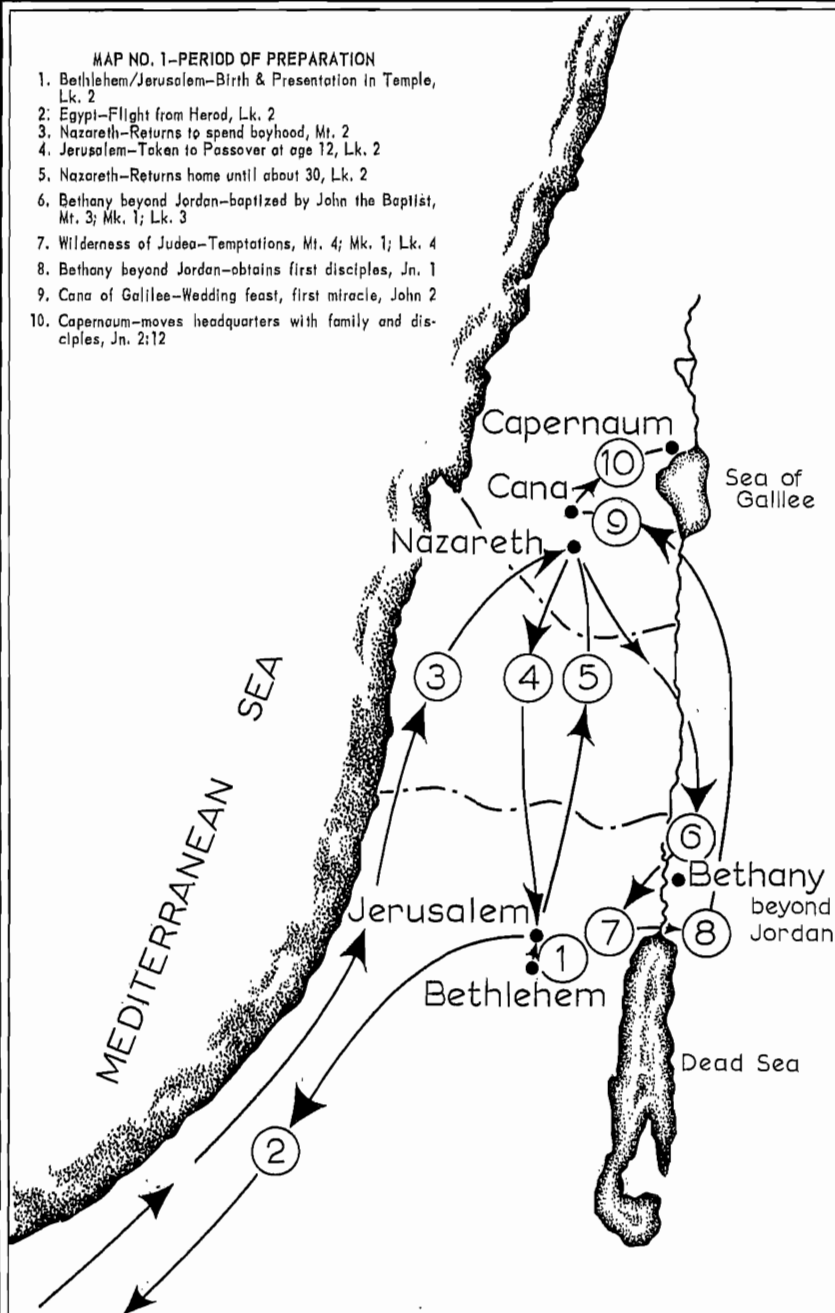
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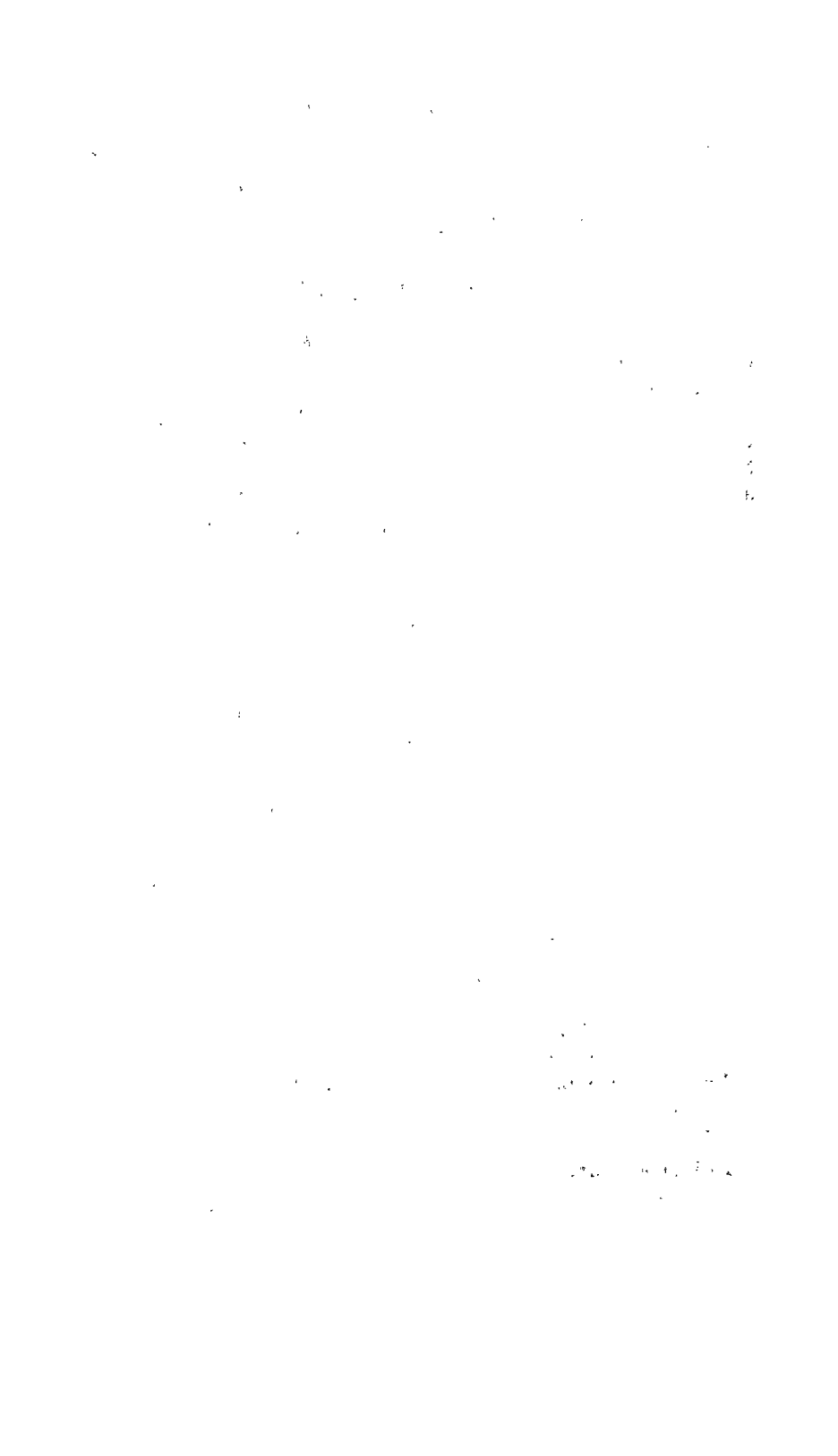
- d. *Summary*: We have endeavored here to put before the reader the kernel, or the heart of the text. One of the basic rules for interpretation of any book, Bible or otherwise, is to seek to understand what the *author* intends to say.
- e. *Comment*: An amplification of the text. Our exegesis is aimed not only at understanding the text, but also toward application to life wherever possible.
- f. *Quiz*: Questions on the text as amplified by the Comments with a view toward letting the reader test himself as to knowledge of the text gained. These questions also serve as a future aid for one who desires to use this book to teach the fourth Gospel.
- g. *Additional features*: At the end of each chapter, one or more *expository sermon outlines* will be found for the chapter as a whole or parts of the chapter. The *maps* and outline of the life of Christ are included as one of the best means to memorize a chronological life of Christ. Of course, some of the places on this series of maps must remain arbitrary. In order to facilitate memorization, however, we have conjecturally located certain places incident to the travels of Jesus in Palestine. Included at appropriate intervals are *special studies* to aid the student's grasp of this wonderful Gospel "according to John."

We now commend you to a serious and prayerful study of the Word of Life as revealed in the fourth Gospel. Our prayer is that you may gain higher experiences in faith and eventually eternal life through your committment to Him.

MAP NO. 1—PERIOD OF PREPARATION

1. Bethlehem/Jerusalem—Birth & Presentation in Temple, Lk. 2
2. Egypt—Flight from Herod, Lk. 2
3. Nazareth—Returns to spend boyhood, Mt. 2
4. Jerusalem—Taken to Passover at age 12, Lk. 2
5. Nazareth—Returns home until about 30, Lk. 2
6. Bethany beyond Jordan—baptized by John the Baptist, Mt. 3; Mk. 1; Lk. 3
7. Wilderness of Judea—Temptations, Mt. 4; Mk. 1; Lk. 4
8. Bethany beyond Jordan—obtains first disciples, Jn. 1
9. Cana of Galilee—Wedding feast, first miracle, John 2
10. Capernaum—moves headquarters with family and disciples, Jn. 2:12





CHAPTER ONE

The first eighteen verses of the Gospel according to John contain an abridgment of what John intends to record in detail in the body of his Gospel. First he describes the pre-existent nature of the Word with the Father. Then he briefly relates how the Word became flesh and manifested Himself among men. Some men hated and rejected Him, while others loved and accepted Him. We shall outline the Prologue thus:

- I The Prologue, 1:1-18, an abridged history of the earthly ministry of the Word
 - A. The Pre-existence of the Word described, 1:1-5
 - 1. Co-existent, v. 1, 2
 - 2. Co-equal, v. 3-5
 - B. The Word manifested to the Jews, and their rejection of Him, 1:6-11
 - 1. John the Baptist's witness for Him, v. 6-8
 - 2. His own witness rejected, v. 9-11
 - C. The Word manifested to others, and their acceptance of Him, 1:12-18
 - 1. The spiritual reborn made children of God, v. 12-13
 - 2. These beheld the glory of God in Him, and recognized the grace of God in Him, v. 14-18.

THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF THE WORD DESCRIBED

Text 1:1-5

- 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- 2 The same was in the beginning with God.
- 3 All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made.
- 4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.
- 5 And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not.

Queries

- a. Who is the Word?
- b. What relationship does the Word have to God?
- c. Is the Word a created person, or is He Creator?
- d. In verse 4 John uses the past tense, "was". Does this mean that "life" and "light" no longer exist in the Word?
- e. What is the darkness?

Paraphrase

When the cosmos was created, the Word was already existent, and the Word was equal, intimate, and face to face with God. This same person was existing eternally in the bosom of the Father. All things came into existence through him, and separate from him not one thing was created that has been created. In the Word was the very essence of all life; and the life was the source of illumination for men. And this light is shining in the darkness and the darkness appropriated or perceived it not.

Summary

The Word (the expression of God), Jesus Christ, existed eternally with God. The Word was co-equal with God. The co-existent and co-equal Word was the agency with the Father in the creation of the universe. In the Word is the source of Life and Illumination. The Darkness does not wish to appropriate the True Light.

Comment

Our finite minds cannot comprehend eternity. John is condescending to our level of understanding. He gives us a point in time (the beginning) from which to reflect upon the eternal existence of the Word. All other things came into being, but the Godhead has enjoyed timeless existence. Jesus said the same thing in John 8:58 . . . "before Abraham came (*genesthai* — was begotten), I am (*eimi* — timeless existence)." Jesus also laid claim to pre-existence with the Father in His high priestly prayer, John 17:5.

The discerning reader will notice that John makes no argument for the existence of God. He boldly assumes that God does exist — just as the writer of Genesis (Gen. 1:1) begins by assuming the existence of God. Either God exists and is Creator of the cosmos — or the universe just happened!

What is the *Logos* (Word)? Probably the best way to define the Word is to say that in the Word we see the expression of the mind and the thought and the purpose of God. Just as our thoughts and purposes are made known when we communicate through words (Matt. 15:18), God's ageless purposes are made known through His Word. cf. Heb. 1:1-2; Matt. 11:25-30; John 5:19-20.

How is the Word "with God"? The Greek word translated "with" is the word *pros*. As John used it here and other places it represents equality and intimacy. The *Logos* was "face to face with God"; He was "in the bosom of the Father" (v. 18), and was "on an equality with God" (Phil. 2:6). There was perfect fellowship (sharing) by the Father and the Word. The same Greek word *pros* is used in I John 2:1 . . . "we have an Advocate (face to face, intimately, etc.,) with the Father."

"And the Word was God" means that the *Logos* is of the very essence and nature of God. As the writer of Hebrews expresses it . . . "the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance," (Heb. 1:3a). Paul wrote to the Colossians that "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," (Col. 2:9).

When we understand that Jesus existed eternally in such a state of oneness with the Father, we begin to understand that God *was* and *is* always like Jesus Christ (minus His earthly body, of course). Certain sects would teach today that Jesus Christ did something to change God's attitude toward men. Jesus changed a God of wrath in the Old Testament, they say, to a God of love in the New Testament. Nothing could be more foreign to the entire Bible. God has always been, and still is, a merciful, graceful and loving God (Heb. 13:8). Jesus Christ came to change men's hearts and attitudes toward God!

In verse 3 of our text we have the astounding information that the Word was the exclusive agent in the creation of our universe. Whether John wrote this Prologue to combat Gnosticism or not is a moot question. Be that as it may, this Prologue does refute Gnosticism and many other "isms." The Gnostics were an heretical sect arising at the very time some of the Apostles were still alive. They believed and taught that matter is evil, and only spirit is good. God is spirit, therefore God Himself could not have created the world. Their philosophy was that God, at some time or another, sent forth successive emanations from Himself. Each successive emanation was further away from,

more ignorant of, and more hostile toward the Eternal Being. At long last there came an emanation (the "Demiurge") far enough removed from God that it could create evil matter, and God would be free of the taint of evil. Accept their absurdities and one must conclude that this world was created by a being who is ignorant of and hostile to, the One True God!

On the other hand, John's doctrine of the creation is the most reasonable. The *Logos* is the expression of the purposes and mind of God. The *Logos* enjoyed perfect fellowship with the Father. The *Logos* was the exclusive agency in the creation. Therefore, creation is an expression of the mind of the One True God. Jesus manifested the attitude of God . . . an attitude of infinite love. Matter is *not* evil! This universe is *not* antagonistic toward God! Of a truth, man's sin turns God's beauty into ugliness; man's foolishness turns God's gifts into instruments of his own destruction. This world was designed for man's good, but alas, man has abused it.

Other Scriptures testify that Jesus was Creator and is now Sustainer of our universe. Cf. Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 1:1-4; Gen. 1:26. JESUS IS THE GOD WHOM WE WORSHIP! Any church or organization that does not honor Jesus Christ as Deity does not honor the One God! "He that, honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father that sent him" (John 5:23b).

Verse 4 informs us that in the *Logos* was, and is, that unfathomable essence called LIFE. The Greek word *zoe* means "the very principle or essence of life." Jesus Christ not only created the universe, but He imparted to it life. This Life also includes "eternal life." Here is one place where science must humbly acknowledge its limitations. Science may be able to synthesize the elements until it comes near to composing a body — human or animal. But it cannot give that body life. It was the Godhead that created the body of man from the dust of the earth, and it was also the Godhead that "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). Paul said, "in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28a). There is the answer to that impenetrable substance called LIFE. Science cannot furnish the answer. The famous Theory of Relativity and Einstein's formula revealed to us that our universe was created and does now subsist from the power or energy that is within the atom. But where does that power and energy come from? Hebrews 1:3b tells us that the Son is "upholding all things by the word of his power." As the Psalmist also said, "By the

word of Jehovah were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." Cf. *Psa.* 33:6-7; 148:5. Philosophy, history and science cannot search it out. God's Word reveals it, and this is all that anyone can know about Life!

Jesus gave many discourses on the Eternal Life that was His to give to men and how He would give it. Cf. *John* 5:21, 26; 6:50-65; 10:1; 11:25-26, etc. The Lord also attested His authority to dispense this inscrutable substance when He reinvested the decaying body of Lazarus with life. Cf. also His raising of the widow's son at Nain (*Lk.* 7:11ff) and the raising of Jairus' daughter (*Mk.* 5:2ff).

In the phrase "the life *was* the light of men," John uses the Greek Imperfect tense for "was," which means continued action in past time. The best commentary on this would be Peter's indication that Christ by His Spirit illuminated the prophets of the Old Testament period (and consequently all Israel), cf. *I Pet.* 1:10-11.

One author says that this phrase is interchangeable. "The *light* was the *life* of men" is also true. Life, when it is revealed, becomes light. Power turned into electricity and made manifest becomes light. Christ, the Power of God and the Word of God manifested for us truth, love, knowledge, life and light. His light is a revealing light. It reveals man as he really is. It also reveals the love of God which is able to change man into what he ought to be. His light is a guiding light that leads man through the darkness of sin, ignorance error and death. Cf. *Psa.* 119:1, 2, 105; *Prov.* 6:23.

In the fifth verse, as may be noted from the paraphrase, the word "shining" is in the present tense . . . continuing action. The Light which illuminated men of old keeps on giving light. John wrote in his first epistle, " . . . the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining" (*I Jn.* 2:8b). The Life and Light existed when the Spirit of Christ abode in the prophets of old and shone forth. It existed in Jesus of Nazareth when God became incarnate, and it shone forth. Life and Light is now shining forth through the inspired Word of the apostles, and the lives of men and women who have this Word "written and engraven on their hearts."

There seem to be two schools of interpretation on the fifth verse. Darkness, in John's writings, is synonymous with ignorance, hate, error, sin and death. So light is synonymous with knowledge, love, truth, holiness and life. Here John records that

the Light is shining in the darkness and the darkness did not apprehend (*katelaben*) it. Some would translate the Greek word "overcome or overtake," while others say it means "apprehend or appropriate."

The first interpretation would have John mean that the darkness warred with the Light and made strong attempts to overcome the Light (John 12:35). Yet the Light kept on shining in spite of the darkness.

The second interpretation, which we have chosen in our paraphrase, seems to fit the context better. John seems to be speaking of the same Light and the same rejection and failure to appropriate in 1:9-11. Evil and darkness will, by its very nature, actively oppose truth and light and thus refuse to perceive it.

If darkness is opposed to all truth, opposed to all good, love and holiness, what then shall be the lot of those who are going to be sentenced to ETERNITY in "outer darkness"? For the redeemed, "the glory of God will lighten" the heavenly city . . . there will be no more sin, pain, tears, mourning or death. "And there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 22:5). What do YOU want for yourself and others? Eternal LIGHT with God, or eternal DARKNESS with Satan and his angels?

Quiz

1. When was the Word in relationship to time?
2. What is a good definition of *Logos*?
3. How does v. 1-3 refute the Gnostic philosophy?
4. Where does life, in essence, originate?
5. Name two things light does as "the light of men."
6. How do you think the darkness "apprehended not" the light?

THE WORD MANIFESTED TO THE JEWS — THEIR REJECTION OF HIM

Text 1:6-11

- 6 There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John.
- 7 The same came for witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him.
- 8 He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light.

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

10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world knew him not.

11 He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not.

Queries

- a. Which John is meant in verse 6?
- b. How could "all . . . believe through him"?
- c. Who is the "true light"?
- d. Who are "his own"?

Paraphrase

There came a man with a commission and message from God; this man's name was John. John came for the purpose of giving testimony to what he had heard and seen concerning the Light. John's witness was given in order that all might come to believe on the Light through him. John was not the Light, but came for the express purpose of pointing out the genuine Light. The perfect Light, which reveals God to every man who will receive the revelation, was coming into the world. The Light was in the world prior to His incarnation, and the world which was made through Him testified to Him, but the world would not recognize Him. He came incarnate unto His own nation, and they that were His own peculiar people rejected Him.

Summary

John was not the Light, but was sent purposely to point out the Light. Even when the Light was manifested in the flesh, those who should have received Him rejected Him.

Comment

The Greek word for "sent" used here is *apostello*, from which we get our word "apostle." It usually means "one sent with a commission." *John* is a Hellenized form of *Jonathan*, which means gift of God. There is a great similarity between John and his Old Testament namesake. Both he and Jonathan gave up a great glory that could have been theirs in order that God's Anointed might have the pre-eminence. With Jonathan, it was David; with John the Baptist, it was Christ. Whenever the name John is used in the fourth Gospel it is always used to refer to

John the Baptist. The name of "John the son of Zebedee" is never mentioned.

Do you wonder why the Gospel writer would have to point out that John the Baptist was not the True Light? John had a tremendous following (Matt. 3:5). Many persons believed John to be the Christ (Lk. 3:15; Jn. 1:19). John even had disciples long after Christ had ascended, and in Ephesus, the very city where John was writing his Gospel account (Acts 19:1-3). In spite of the Baptist's continual affirmation that he was not the Christ, it was necessary to emphasize that Jesus Christ was the True Light. There were "preacher lovers" when John the Evangelist wrote his Gospel (I Cor. 1:12-13). John the Baptist's unfeigned humility in seeking to decrease and let Jesus increase prompted Jesus to remark, "Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist" (Matt. 11:11). Every Christian ought to study intently the life of this "greatest of all born of women" and emulate his humility, self-denial and courage.

The grammar of the original Greek language in verse 7 indicates that John came for the very purpose of testifying. John was to point out the True Light and give what evidence he had that this was the Light. The object of belief was Jesus Christ—the agency or instrument through which the object is revealed was John. Faith still comes through the agency of the preached Word, (cf. Rom. 10:14-17; Jas. 1:21; I Pet. 1:22-25). The first disciples won by Jesus were of John's training (Jn. 1:35-42). Thus John was instrumental in bringing faith to all who subsequently believed on Jesus through the preaching of these apostles. John was *a* light (Jn. 5:35) but not THE Light.

In verse 8 we have repeated what was said in verses 6 and 7. What an opportunity John had to pass himself off as the Christ! John showed more unselfishness, perhaps, than any man that ever lived. More preachers today need to pattern their ministry after John the Baptist's. It is imperative that all Christians heed the injunction of these verses that no preacher or teacher, however great, is to be worshipped or followed . . . only Jesus Christ Our Lord.

Verse 9 is said to be the "Quaker Text" because they use it to substantiate their "Inner light" theory. Every verse of Scripture *must* be interpreted in the light of other Scriptures. The Bible nowhere teaches that every single person is enlightened whether he wants to be or not. Even here in this context (1:1-11), both

before and after verse 9, the writer speaks of men rejecting this illuminating Light. Luther says of this passage, "There is only one light that lights all men, and no man comes into the world who can possibly be illumined by any other light." This interpretation takes account of the rest of the New Testament. Just as Jesus is the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," He is also the "light of the world." But just as all the world will not avail themselves of His purifying blood, neither does every man receive His Light of Life. The word "true" in this verse could be better translated "genuine" or "perfect," as opposed to unreal and imperfect.

There is some disagreement among commentators as to *when* the Light was in the world (v. 10). In the Greek text, "was" is in the imperfect tense (continuous existence in past time). The world was made through Him, and He gave it Life and Order. This should have been enough evidence to direct men's minds toward One Eternal Being (Rom. 1:20-23). Yet the world (men) "refused to have God in their knowledge."

Verse 11 shows the extreme perversity of men in that even when The Light became Incarnate, His own (generally speaking) rejected Him. The pathos of the situation comes out in a literal translation of the text — "he came unto his own nation and they that were his own people did not receive him." He came to a nation that should have prepared itself for Him. He should have been welcomed like a king — but He was rejected. Israel, her people and all her institutions, existed only for His glory and His eternal purposes (cf. Zech. 2:12; Hosea 9:3; Jer. 2:7; 16:18; Lev. 25:23; Ex. 19:5; Psa. 135:4; Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18 32:9).

They knew Him all right! The whole history of Israel was a training school (Gal. 3:24) to prepare the Jews to receive the world's Messiah. But they didn't want a meek, unmilitaristic and uncorruptible Messiah. The Jewish leaders wanted a Messiah that would help them in their graft — the Jewish people wanted a King that would put bread on their tables, and plenty of it. The parable of the wicked husbandmen (Matt. 21:33ff) represents the Jews as killing the Heir, not in ignorance, but because they *did* know who He was.

Here is the great tragedy: A people that had so long been nursed, disciplined and prepared to present the Messiah to the world for salvation, scorned and finally shamefully crucified the Incarnate Word. This is why Jesus' body was racked with great

sobs over the city of Jerusalem (Lk. 19:41ff). . . . this is what caused Him to wish agonizingly that He could give them His protecting love, but "they would not" (Matt. 23:37ff). What pathos there is in this verse "he came unto his own home — and his own people gave him no welcome." It happened to Jesus long ago with Israel — and it is still happening today within New Israel, the Church!

Quiz

1. Why should it be emphasized that John the Baptist was not the Light?
2. Was John a light in any sense? Are we lights (Matt. 5:14)?
3. What is meant by "the light which lighteth every man"?
4. Can we see the evidence of a Creator in nature (cf. Rom. 1:20; Psa. 19:1; Job 12:7-10)?
5. Why is Israel's rejection of Christ so pathetic?
6. Do you think the Jews knew that Jesus was the Messiah (cf. Acts 3:17; I Cor. 2:8)?
7. Is Christ still rejected by "His own" today?

THE WORD MANIFESTED TO OTHERS AND THEIR ACCEPTANCE OF HIM

Text 1:12-18

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name:

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

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

15 John beareth witness of him, and crieth, saying, This was he of whom I said, He that cometh after me is become before me.

16 For of his fulness we all received, and grace for grace.

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

18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

Queries

- a. What is meant by :
 - (1) "born not of blood"?
 - (2) "nor of the will of the flesh"?
 - (3) "nor of the will of man"?
- b. Why is there emphasis upon "grace and truth" in these verses?
- c. Has any man ever seen God (cf. Ex. 33:17-23)?

Paraphrase

But as many as received the Light and trusted in His name and obeyed His commandments, He gave them the privilege and authority to become children of God; that is, those who have been born of God by spiritual rebirth and not physical birth. Physical lineage — blood descent, whether of the baser desire of the flesh or the nobler purposes of man — cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. And the Logos-Light took the form of a physical body and dwelt temporarily amongst us (and we saw with our own eyes His glory which is the same glory as of the Only-Unique Being from the presence of the Father) full of favor, mercy and truth. John bears witness of Him and has cried aloud, saying, This is He of whom I said, the One coming on the scene later than I, really comes before me, for He outranked me from eternity. For from His abundance all, including John the Baptist, received; and all give gratitude in exchange for that grace. For the Law, which was not merciful, came through Moses; but mercy and truth through Jesus Christ. No man has seen God at any time, the Only-Unique God, the One residing in perfect intimacy with the Father, That One has interpreted the mercy and love of the Father for us.

Summary

Those who received the Light were given the privilege and shown the way to become children of God. The Light became flesh, temporarily, to show them the way to the Father. The ultimate of grace and truth came only through Him. Neither the Law of Moses nor John the Baptist could reveal the way. The Only Son who enjoyed perfect union with the Father must alone show the way.

Comment

In verses 12 and 13 John puts "as many as received him" in opposition to them that were his own who did not receive Him. To those who received Him, He *gave* the right to become children of God. To "receive Him" is to "believe on His name." To "believe on His name" is to trust Him and obey Him. God offers us sonship of His own free love — we can never merit sonship by our works. What God offers, however, man must appropriate if he is to enjoy. As in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:11-32), the prodigal merited disinheritance by his self-willed rebellion — the father *gave* him back his sonship — the son had to "come to himself" and return to an obedient walk with his father to appropriate this sonship. Oh, what a joy it is to be sons of our Heavenly Father (I Jn. 3:1-3)!

Some would have verse 13 refer to the virgin birth of Christ, but the best contextual rendering would indicate that it refers to "as many as received him." Verse 13 is a climactic arrangement to show that it is utterly impossible for physical lineage to inherit the Kingdom of God. The Jews were sure that their descent from Abraham gave them sonship in the Messianic kingdom, but they were wrong (cf. Mt. 3:8-10; Jn. 8:31-44). For explanation of each phrase of verse 13 see the paraphrase of this section.

To become sons of God, we must be born of God. Without doubt, John is talking of the New Birth here. Jesus talks to Nicodemus of the same subject (Jn. 3:1-15). In essence, the New Birth is ours when we surrender our will to the will of Christ as revealed in the New Testament (read carefully I Pet. 1:17-25 in this connection). We cannot be born anew, or from above until the Spirit of God abides in us. The New Testament is explicit as to how this is initially accomplished. Jesus said, "If a man love me, *he will keep my word*: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (Jn. 14:23). The Word of Christ which offered the life-giving Spirit was preached by Peter and the other apostles on that great day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Some 3000 people were convicted of their sins and believed the testimony concerning a risen Lord. Having been convinced of their sin in rejecting God's Son, they cried out for forgiveness. Peter then told them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38; cf. also Titus 3:4-7). We shall deal more

fully with the New Birth in the notes on John 3:1-5. Suffice it to say here, the new-born babe in Christ is to be continually led by the Spirit else he forfeits his sonship (cf. II Cor. 5:17; Rom. 8:1-17). The new creature must either grow, or wither and die (cf. I Cor. 3:1-3; Heb. 5:11-14).

The next verse (14) might be considered the greatest single verse in the whole New Testament. In the grammatical construction of the Greek language here John makes a point of saying "the Word became flesh". Since he does not use an article with *sarx* (flesh), this sentence cannot be translated "flesh became the Word". Many modern cults would have us believe that our Lord began from a human birth, like all mankind, and rather evolved into someone divine. This verse also refutes the Docetists (ancient and modern) who theorize that Jesus was only a phantom. His human body was not a real body, they say He could not really feel hunger, weariness, sorrow and pain. He was rather a ghostly apparition, and not flesh. They are loathe to apply the word *flesh*, with its connotations of weakness and frailty, to God.

It is even a weakness of many Christians today to emphasize so strongly the deity of Jesus that they tend to forget that Jesus Christ was fully a man as well. What a glorious meaning this has for us — "the Word became flesh". Since we are flesh and blood, and enslaved by the fear of death, Jesus shared with us this nature in order that He might relieve us of this terrible fear which chains all humanity. He conquered Satan and took away his power of death! Furthermore, Jesus shared in our fleshly nature, without sin, that He might become our Eternal High Priest. We have a High Priest interceding before God on our behalf Who has been "touched with the feeling of our infirmities . . . tempted in all points like as we are . . ." (cf. Heb. 2:14-15; 4:14-16). Manifold are the blessings we partake of through the incarnation. We see God's power *demonstrated* — to forgive sins (Mk. 2:9-12), over death (Jn. 11:43-44), over disease (Lk. 17:11-19), over the elements (Mt. 14:22-33).

This Word "became flesh and dwelt among us". The word "dwelt" is translated from *skenao* which means literally "tabernacled or tented." John goes on to say parenthetically that "we (the disciples) beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father . . ." This phrase would be full of meaning to Israelites. When the "glory of God" dwelt with Israel, He dwelt in their tabernacle and in their temple in the Holy of Holies (Ex. 40:34; I Kings 8:11). The "glory of God" means simply the

presence of God. God's presence was among men in bodily form — he ate, drank, conversed, slept, prayed with them. These twelve men, in particular, saw and "handled" the "Word of life" for approximately three years (cf. I Jn. 1:1-4). What the *Shechinah* had been in the tabernacle (the dwelling of God in the midst of God's people), the Word was then in human flesh — and the Holy Spirit is now in the Word written on the hearts of men and women (II Cor. 3:2-3; Heb. 8:10). Jesus says that His disciples are given this glory — this presence of God (Jn. 17:22-23).

There seems to be a reference in "we beheld his glory," etc., to the transfiguration of Christ. John was one of the three privileged to be an eyewitness to this glorious event (cf. I Jn. 1:1-4; II Pet. 1:16-18). This glory which the disciples beheld (throughout the earthly ministry of Jesus — Jn. 2:11; 5:41; 11:4) was so awesome and magnificent that it could be nothing less than divine glory. Glory that an ONLY UNIQUE (*monogenes*) SON has from His divine Father. (See *Special Study* on "He Gave The Only Son He Had," pp. ¹³⁵.)

Endless application could be made concerning verse 14. But we shall never drink of its sweet nectar to the full until we "know as we are known." It can be accounted for on no less than divine inspiration that John could express this great profundity in such terse and simple words — a mystery on which the greatest philosophers have spent lifetimes — "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us"!

Verse 15 is a quotation from John the Baptist. It has already been pointed out in verse 8 that John the Baptist was not the Light. It was necessary for the Gospel writer to make sure that the *Voice* not be mistaken for the *Light*. Time and time again John the Baptist cried aloud that he was not the Christ; he pointed to the Nazarene, Who began His ministry after John. He emphatically stated that Jesus of Nazareth outranked him because Jesus was the Lamb of God, the promised Messiah, the One Who was eternal. John preached that he was merely a "way-preparer," and that his ministry would give way to that of the Christ.

The phrase in verse 16 seems to be partly explanatory on behalf of the quotation from the Baptist. It is strange that John the Evangelist would interject a quotation in the middle of such a profound dissertation on the Incarnation. The author of this Gospel, however, wants to show that *all*, including the "greatest born of women (John the Baptist) received of the fulness of the Son. Yea, even he who was "more than a prophet" needed grace

from the Lamb of God. The word for "fulness" is *pleroma* and is the same word Paul uses in Colossians 2:9. There Paul says that in Christ dwells all the fulness (*pleroma*) of the Godhead (Deity) in a bodily form . . . and in Him are *all* made full. In Christ dwells the ultimate of wisdom, power and love. His grace is inexhaustible. We "have not because we ask not" (cf. Jn. 15:7; 16:23-24).

The next phrase, "and grace for grace," is one of varied interpretation. The most prevalent interpretation is "grace upon grace," or "abundance of grace." One writer puts it, "like manna fresh each morning — new grace for the new day and new service." It can also mean "grace in exchange for grace." The same Greek preposition *anti* (for) is used in Luke 11:11 "a serpent *for* a fish," and in Hebrews 12:2 where Jesus *in exchange for* the joy set before Him endured the cross. Such an interpretation would not be contrary to the tenor of New Testament teaching. We give loving gratitude by our obedience in exchange for His loving favors. The New Testament does teach that we only love Him because He loved us first (cf. I Jn. 4:19).

We ask ourselves now, what is the connection between the foregoing and verse 17? To some of his readers, John's statement that the fulness of God was in the incarnate Word would disparage the Law of Moses. John explains — the Law was given through Moses, and it was good and holy. Yet it was a law of condemnation. Its purpose was to bring men to a trust in God and not in themselves. The Law was given to demonstrate to men that they did not have the ability to be righteous enough to earn salvation (cf. Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:10-11; 3:21). On the other hand, through Jesus Christ came "grace and truth." Jesus brought the favor of God which man *could not nor cannot* earn; The Law said, "Do all this and live", Man could not do it (Jas. 2:10); therefore, man merited the Law's penalty, death, eternal death. Jesus says, "I *give* you life, eternal life; accept it by trusting and obeying My words". (See Jn. 6:63). We have in Christ *grace*, without which we stand condemned by the Law; we have in Christ *truth*, which is the reality of all the shadows cast by the Law of sacrifices and ceremonies.

The closing verse (18) to the Prologue is very well chosen. It is a resume of the entire Prologue. John simply declares that apart from Jesus, the incarnate Mind, no man has seen God (cf. I Jn. 4:7-14). Not even the great lawgiver and prophet, Moses, has had immediate knowledge of God. No man can ever see God

physically, for God is spirit. Moses merely saw the fading glory of God as God passed by him. Paul was blinded by that glory (Acts 9). But Christ has declared, revealed and interpreted God to us. John uses an interesting word in the Greek for "declared". He uses *exegesato*, from which we get our English words *exegesis* and *exegetical*, meaning literally to lead out, or interpret. In other words, Christ, through His incarnation, has interpreted God for us. The Prologue is simply describing the interpretation which the Word gave concerning the unseen Father (cf. Jn. 14:8-9).

This One, who has declared the Father for us is continually in the bosom of the Father. To be "in the bosom" of someone is an ancient way of saying "in perfect intimacy." It is used of husband and wife, father and son or two friends who are in the closest of communion with each other. There is perfect, continuing communion between the Father and the Son. He knows whereof he declares. Proverbs 8:30 speaks of the close, intimate relationship between God and Wisdom: "Then I was by him (during the creation) as a master workman; And I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." Compare also the intimate contact between Jesus and the Father in John 12:27-30.

Notice, in closing this great section, the awe-inspiring boldness with which John writes concerning things that are beyond human comprehension. Could we say that John claims inspiration for his account of the Gospel? Indeed we could — indeed we *must*!

Quiz

1. What must we do to receive the sonship which God gives us?
2. What is a simple definition of the New Birth?
3. Which heretical sect in the early church denied that God came in the flesh?
4. Give at least two things which the Incarnation means for us.
5. How does the presence of God dwell in the church today?
6. What is the connection of verse 17 with the rest of the Prologue?
7. How may we say from the Prologue that John claims inspiration for his Gospel?

We come now to the second main division of the Gospel of John. From 1:19 through the last verse of the twelfth chapter (12:50), John the Evangelist shows how the Word was manifested in the flesh to His own and how they rejected Him. Jesus is still in the "preparational phase" of His ministry (cf. Map No.

1, p. 17). We shall outline the remainder of Chapter One in this manner:

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

A. Preparation, 1:19-2:12

1. Ministry of John the Baptist, 1:19-34
 - a. The Jews investigate John's identity, 19-22
 - b. John's answer, 23-28
 - c. The Baptist's evidence for the Lamb of God, 29-34
2. Gathering of His first disciples, 1:35-51
 - a. Andrew, Peter and an unnamed disciple, 35-42
 - b. Philip and Nathanael, 43-51

THE JEWS INVESTIGATE JOHN'S IDENTITY

Text 1:19-22

19 And this is the witness of John, when the Jews sent unto him from Jerusalem priests and Levites to ask him, who art thou?

20 And he confessed, and denied not; and he confessed, I am not the Christ.

21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elijah? And he saith, I am not. Art thou the prophet? And he answered, No.

22 They said therefore unto him, Who art thou? that we may give answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?

Queries

- a. What are Levites?
- b. Why ask John the Baptist about Elijah and "the prophet"?
- c. Why would the "committee" need an answer?

Paraphrase

Now this is what John testified, when the Jewish Sanhedrin sent priests and Levites to John to obtain an answer from him concerning his identity, and they asked him, Who are you? And John vigorously and fully declared, I am not the Christ. Then they asked him, What then is the case? Are you Elijah? And he said, I am not Elijah as you look for him. Are you the prophet like unto Moses? And he answered, No! Then they said to him, Tell us then just who you are, for we must have an answer to

take back to them that sent us. Tell us, what do you say about yourself?

Summary

The Jewish leaders demand to know whether John the Baptist is the Messiah, Elijah or the prophet. John denies all three identities.

Comment

The Sanhedrin, largely controlled by the Pharisees, was the religious authority of that day. It was a council of 70 or 71 learned and influential religious leaders. The council was a mixture of Pharisees (strict law-keepers — traditionalists), Sadducees (skeptics, worldly, politicians), and Scribes (interpreters, lawyers). In the "committee" that was investigating John there were also Levites. The Levites were a sort of secondary priesthood. They performed the more menial tasks of the temple service, baking bread, leading temple music, etc. One of their main functions was to enforce the Law. They were the temple police force, and they carried out the sentences of the Sanhedrin when punishment was to be inflicted.

This great, magnetic, eccentric character was attracting multitudes. Crowds were trekking into the wilderness just to hear him preach. The whole nation was on tiptoe expectation because of his powerful message (Lk. 3:15). Thus the rulers of the Jews felt they must take this matter in hand before certain religious and political repercussions occurred. There had been certain religious fanatics before who claimed to be the Messiah (cf. Acts 5:36-37). These had mustered a small force of followers and revolted against their conquerors, only to suffer disastrous results to themselves and the nation at large. A revolt now, touched off by John the Baptist against Rome, would be disastrous. The Sanhedrin might be deposed! In fact, some of them might even lose their heads! This is what Caiaphas had reference to when he said of Christ, "it was expedient that one man should die for the people" (Jn. 18:14). Basically, this is why the rulers crucified Jesus. They feared that the popularity of Jesus might cause revolt and subsequent Roman intervention (Jn. 11:48). They would lose their hold on the nation's purse strings.

In addition to the fear of revolt, the rulers were interested in questioning John because of his frankness. He had said some very candid and revealing things about Pharisees and Sadducees (Mt. 3:7). Sending the Levites along indicates this committee would stand for no more attacks upon the character of the illustrious Doctors of Divinity of that day.

So they began their questioning by asking him if he was the Messiah. John emphatically stated that he was not the Messiah. The word used for "confess" in verse 20 is *homologeō* which literally means "to speak the same thing; to agree." Thus John's denial that he was the Christ was in perfect agreement with the truth. When we learn that we must "confess" Christ in order to be saved (Mt. 10:32-33), it means that our lives and our words must "speak the same things, or agree with," the commandments of the Lord (cf. Rom. 10:9-10). To confess Christ is not the mere mouthing of Scripture, formula or creed, but a profession by both word and action! (cf. Jas. 1:22; I Jn. 3:17-18).

What a man of God this John was! He willingly and joyfully kept himself in the background in order that all might see the only Son of God. The Baptist was what every true follower of Christ ought to be — a servant willing to lay all the acclaim and honor given him of men at the feet of Jesus.

"If you are not the Messiah, then you must be Elijah!" This was the next conclusion of the investigating committee. The Jews had a tradition that Elijah was to precede the Messiah and that he, Elijah returned in the flesh, was to set all matters aright. He was even to settle disputes between property owners and money lenders. They taught that anything disputed must wait "until Elijah comes". Of course, this is merely tradition, but is probably based on Malachi 4:5. They expected a literal, flesh-and-blood Elijah to come and prepare the way for the Messiah. Therefore, John's denial here does not contradict Matthew 11:14 and 17:9-13, or Luke 1:17, where John the Baptist is said to have come "in the spirit and the power of Elijah."

COMPARISON OF JOHN THE BAPTIST AND ELIJAH

	<i>Elijah</i>	<i>John</i>
1. Place of abode	"Hide thyself by the brook" (I Ki. 17:3).	In deserts (Mt. 3:1).
2. Food	Ravens fed him (I Ki. 17:6).	Locusts and wild honey (Mt. 3:4).
3. Appearance	Hairy man (II Ki. 1:8).	Raiment of camel's hair (Mt. 3:4).
4. Message	Calamity to nation; call to Repentance (I Ki. 18:39).	Judgment to come; call to Repentance (Mt. 3:4).
5. Influence Over Multitudes	Personality tremendous and compelling (I Ki. 18).	Brought whole nation into wilderness (Mt. 3:5; Lk. 3:15).
6. Firey wrath on Enemies of True Religion	(I Kings 18:40).	(Matthew 3:7).
7. In the presence of Kings	Ahab and Jezebel (I Ki. 21:19).	Herod and Herodias (Mt. 14:4).
8. Rage of an Evil Woman	Jezebel (I Ki. 29:2).	Herodias (Mt. 14:5-8).
9. The Dark Hour	(I Ki. 29:4).	(Matt. 11:2).
10. Extraordinary End of Career	(II Ki. 2:11).	(Matt. 14:11).
11. Loyalty of Disciples	(II Ki. 16:17).	(Matt. 14:12).

The next question by these Jews was, "Are you *the* Prophet?" Moses had promised them *the* Prophet, like unto himself (cf. Deut. 18:15). This was a promise that the Jews taught their children as soon as they were old enough to understand. It was a promise no Jew ever forgot. Moses was their great deliverer, and ever since the captivities of the Jews they longed for *the* Prophet, Who they prayed would deliver them from their oppressions. Maybe the Jews thought the Prophet was another forerunner of the Messiah (Jn. 7:40) — maybe they thought he was to be the Messiah Himself. Whatever their ideas, John denied being *the* Prophet. It seems that even John himself was later puzzled as to whether Jesus was only a forerunner, and questioned whether he should look for another (Lk. 7:19).

This delegation from Jerusalem was getting nowhere fast! Their mission thus far was a failure. John's flat denial will not satisfy the "powers that be." They must bring an answer or suffer censure and embarrassment. The manner in which they ask, and the admitted purpose of their questioning shows they were not at all interested in the message of John and what it should mean to their spiritual condition. All they ask is, "What do you claim to be — the Sanhedrin wants to know?"

Quiz

1. Name three religious parties that make up the Sanhedrin?
2. Why would the Jewish rulers fear revolt against Rome?
3. What is the full import of the word "confess"?
4. In how many ways does John the Baptist compare with Elijah?
5. Give the Scripture references for Old Testament promises of "Elijah that was to come", and "the Prophet like unto Moses".

JOHN'S ANSWER

Text 1:23-28

23 He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said Isaiah the prophet.

24 And they had been sent from the Pharisees.

25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why then baptizest thou, if thou are not the Christ, neither Elijah, neither the prophet?

26 John answered them, saying, I baptize in water: in the midst of you standeth one whom ye know not,

27 even he that cometh after me, the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose.

28 These things were done in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Queries

- a. What would the prophecy which John applies to himself mean to his questioners?
- b. Why do the Pharisees ask him about the fact that he is baptizing people?
- c. Why does John emphasize that he baptizes in water — does he imply that the “one coming after him” will *not* baptize in water?

Paraphrase

John answered his questioners by saying, I am a voice of one crying loud and forcefully in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, just as the prophet Isaiah has prophesied. Those who had been sent to question John were from the Pharisees. And they asked him, Why then are you immersing if you are neither the Christ nor Elijah nor the Prophet? John answered them, saying, I am immersing in water: in your midst is standing One Whom you have not recognized, the One coming after me, Whose sandal thongs I am not worthy to untie. These things came to pass in Bethany which is on the eastern side of the Jordan river where John was immersing.

Summary

John's answer to the Jew's question is: “I am the prophesied ‘way-preparer’ for the Lord.” Then John intimates that the Christ they seek stands unrecognized in their midst.

Comment

John takes Isaiah's prophecy (Isa. 40:3-5) and applies it to himself. The prophecy is given more fully in Luke 3:4-6; in Matt. 3:3, John the Baptist shows that the prophecy definitely foretold his ministry (cf. also Mk. 1:3). This committee undoubtedly interpreted Isa. 40:3-5 as Messianic, but they would hardly accept such a religious fanatic as John for the forerunner of their ideal Messiah. Their Messianic fancy was that of a king of military, political and economic grandeur. The custom of the country at that time sheds light upon the prophecy. When a conqueror was

about to travel through his province, the roads were leveled and made straight and put in order for his journey. A delegated subordinate always preceded the monarch to take care of this preliminary preparation. Thus, John the Baptist was the appointed "road preparer" for King Jesus. But the Jewish rulers hardly looked for either a spiritual king or a spiritual "way preparer."

It is interesting to note the word used by John for "one crying." It is the Greek word *boao*, an onomatopoeic word (a word formed by imitating the sound associated with the thing described, i.e., the name "Whippoorwill" to describe the bird), which came to describe the bellowing of oxen. In John's case it indicates that he was in the wilderness crying out with a strong, forceful and arresting voice, "*Repent*, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

John was literally in the wilderness of Judea doing his preaching. But there seems to be a spiritual application to the phrase "a voice of one crying *in the wilderness*." Especially is this true considering its prophetic background. This herald of God was also crying in a *wilderness* of wasted souls. "The wilderness" (a pathless, fruitless waste) fitly describes the spiritual condition of Jehovah's people. John sought to prepare the way by preaching, "Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance" (Mt. 3:8; Lk. 3:8).

It is still true today! All the preaching and teaching in the church must be done toward this end; that is, toward preparing the way for the Lord's entry into the heart of individuals. Genuine conviction of sin, a need for the Saviour, and a submissive will is preparing the way for the King of kings. That is what John the Baptist preached, and that is what the world needs preached today!

Verse 24 seems to be furnishing the reader the reason why the next question (v. 25) was asked of John. It would be within the realm of the Pharissess to ask such a question. Further, it is doubtful that the Sadducees would be the least bit interested in why John was baptizing.

Most critics hold that John merely adapted the Jewish "proselyte baptism" to his ministry. Ecclesiastical history, however, gives no clear-cut evidence that the Jews practiced proselyte baptism. To the contrary, ancient records seem to indicate that the Jews appropriated baptism to the ceremonies of making proselytes from the practice begun by John, and later from Christian baptism (cf. *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, pp. 985). It lends more force to the question of the Jews to John if we assume John is doing something foreign to religious custom and practice of that day.

Here was this desert hermit attracting the whole countryside to his preaching. And he brazenly set aside all the present customs and traditions of the ecclesiastical heads and commanded, "Repent and be baptized for the remission of your sins" (cf. Mk. 1:14; Lk. 3:3). Only as important a personage as the Messiah, Elijah or the Prophet would dare assume such authority as to introduce a new religious doctrine.

Furthermore, the Jews expected a general purification at the coming of the Messiah. At least they were inclined to interpret some of the Old Testament prophecies in this vein (cf. Zech 13:1; Ezek. 36:25). If John were not the Messiah, why then did he demand purity of life and practice baptism?

In studying verses 26 and 27, one must also consider parallel passages such as Mt. 3:10-12; Mk. 1:7-8; Lk. 3:15-17; and the next few verses of John (Jn. 1:29-34). John the Baptist emphasizes that he will baptize only in water because the One coming after him will have authority and power to baptize whom He will in the Holy Spirit and unquenchable fire. The Baptist does not imply that Christ will disregard water baptism. The New Testament plainly records that Jesus Himself was baptized in water, that He and his disciples taught water baptism, and that Christ commanded baptism for all subsequent believers (Mt. 3:13-17; Mk. 1:9-11; Lk. 3:21-22; Mt. 28:18-20; Jn. 4:1-2; Acts 2:38).

It would be well to pause here and define the word *baptize*. Every Greek Lexicon of any repute defines *baptizo* as having a primary meaning of "dip, plunge, immerse, submerge." In the Greek language (the original language of the New Testament) this word *baptizo* can never mean sprinkle or pour. It is to be feared that the translators of our English versions of the Bible have allowed religious prejudices to guide their translating. It is interesting to note how these translators contradict themselves. In II Kings 5:14 our English translators have rendered the verse thusly: "Then went he down and *dipped* himself seven times in the Jordan . . ." (speaking of Naaman and his cure of leprosy). The amazing fact is that they interpreted the word *baptizo*, here used in the Septuagint, to mean *dipped*. When these scholars came to the New Testament they merely transliterated (change of characters of one alphabet to corresponding characters of another alphabet) the word *baptizo*. "Consistency, thou art a gem!"

When John baptized, he immersed men and women in the

Jordan River. When men and women were told by the apostles that they must "repent and be baptized," the apostles meant that they must "repent and be immersed" in water. (Cf. Acts 2:38; 2:41; 8:34-38; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:15; 15:33; 18:8; 22:16, etc.) No man or group of men has ever had nor will ever have authority to alter the scriptural plan of salvation (cf. Gal. 1:6-10). No "latter day prophet," no "earthly vicar," no, not even an "angel from heaven" is permitted to preach a revised gospel. Everyone who names the name of Christ as Lord is committed to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all time delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

John the Baptist said, "I immerse in water: but in your midst is standing One whom you do not recognize." In verse 28 John humbly explains that the multitudes are recognizing and acclaiming the wrong person. The One they are not recognizing is so far above John that John is not even fit to perform the lowliest servant's task for Him. The Eastern custom of taking the sandals from a guest's feet and bathing his feet was delegated to the lowest of the servants.

No man is a fit messenger of the Lord until he is able humbly to recognize his unworthiness. Let us remember the words of the Master, "Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do" (Lk. 17:10).

The next matter for consideration is one of geography. Verse 28 speaks of "Bethany beyond the Jordan" as the location for these momentous events. Almost all the ancient manuscripts have "Bethany beyond the Jordan" here in place of the King James translation "Bethabara". One of the early Christian writers (Origen) could find no place in Palestine named Bethany when he visited there, but was directed to a village called Bethabara east of the Jordan. Origen is accused of taking the liberty of changing the original text. It is impossible, this far removed, to determine the definite geographical location. The attendant circumstances, however, point to a place on the east side of the Jordan, immediately north of the Dead Sea, in the vicinity of Jericho. There is a ford in the Jordan there, presumably the one used by Joshua and the children of Israel in their crossing (Josh. 3:16). For a more detailed presentation of this matter see Andrews, *The Life of Our Lord*, pages 146-151; McGarvey, *Lands of the Bible* pages 341-343.

Quiz

1. What does the prophecy in Isaiah 40:3-5 indicate of the nature of John the Baptist's ministry, i.e., how John could "prepare the way for the Lord"?
2. Why does John mention that it was the Pharisees that had been sent (verse 24)?
3. Was John's baptism an adaptation of Jewish proselyte baptism?
4. How must the Greek word *baptizo* be translated?
5. Must all who believe in Jesus be baptized? Give 3 Scripture references.
6. How do we know the Scriptures cannot be changed?
7. Where is the most probable location of "Bethany beyond the Jordan"?

THE BAPTIST'S EVIDENCE FOR THE LAMB OF GOD

Text 1:29-34

29 On the morrow he seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!
30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man who is become before me: for he was before me.

31 And I knew him not; but that he should be made manifest to Israel, for this cause came I baptizing in water.

32 And John bare witness, saying, I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven; and it abode upon him.

33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize in water, he said unto me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon him, the same is he that baptizeth in the Holy Spirit.

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

Queries

- a. Why does John call Jesus the Lamb of God?
- b. Did the descending Spirit really look like a dove?
- c. Why does John emphasize "I knew him not"?

Paraphrase

The day following the questioning by the Jews, John sees Jesus coming toward him and says, Look! There is the Lamb of God, Who is taking away the sin of the world! This is the One

of Whom I said, a Man is coming on the scene after me Who outranks me because He existed in eternity before me. I did not know He was the Messiah at first; but in order that He might be made manifest unto Israel, so Israel might know Him, I purposely came immersing in water. And John testified, saying, I have seen the Spirit coming down as a dove out of heaven and abiding upon Him. And I did not know Him, before this incident, as the Messiah; but the One who sent me to immerse in water, that One said to me, the One upon Whom you shall see the Spirit descending and abiding — this is the One Who immerses in the Holy Spirit. And I have seen and have testified that this One is The Son of God!

Summary

John the Baptist points the multitudes to Jesus of Nazareth as The Lamb of God. John then sets forth the God-given evidence for his testimony.

Comment

It would be well to remark here that the author of the Fourth Gospel bridges a gap of almost thirty years between verse 18 and 19. The boyhood, baptism and temptation of Jesus in the wilderness are all omitted between the account of the Incarnation and that portion of John's ministry here recorded. Therefore, when John the Baptist sees Jesus coming toward him, Jesus is returning to the scene of His baptism after having been in the wilderness of Judea for the temptation. It is only natural that Jesus would come here to link up His ministry where that of John was beginning to fade. Jesus took up "preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye and believe in the gospel, (Mk. 1:14-15)" where John left off.

There are a number of inferences connected with John's utterance, "Look, the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world." (a) That John was thinking of the Passover lamb (Ex. 12:13; I Cor. 5:7; I Pet. 1:19) since the Passover was near; (b) that, being the son of a priest, he thought of the daily offering of a lamb (Ex. 29:38-42; Num. 28:4); or (c) that the Baptist was reminded of the lamb in Isaiah 53. We must agree with Hendriksen when he says, ". . . why is it necessary to make a choice?" Was not Christ the antitype of all three (I Pet. 1:19; Acts 8:32-35)?

In the Old Testament, the priests were to place their hands on the head of each lamb offered, thus signifying that the lamb was suffering God's penalty upon sin which the Jew had merited by his disobedience. The lamb bore the sentence of death in place of the Israelite who deserved it. Amazing grace! This was the atonement of the Old Testament. It was typical of the atonement of the Lamb of God and the New Covenant. The atonement of the Hebrew was accomplished by the grace of God and the ransom of a lamb's blood. The Hebrew, however, had to appropriate that atonement to himself. He appropriated God's mercy through faith — a faith that caused him to obey God's plan of atonement. He might not understand fully the "how and the why" of placing his hand upon the head of the sacrificial lamb (Lev. 1:3-5), but trusting and believing in Jehovah to fulfil His promises, the Israelite obeyed.

When John the Baptist said that Jesus was the Lamb of God that makes atonement for the sin of the world, he did not mean irresistible or universal atonement. Such assumption contradicts plain scriptural teaching (cf. Mt. 7:14, 20-23, etc.). When, by faith, we are obedient to the plan of atonement or salvation ordained in God's New Testament, we are promised complete and eternal atonement. When we obey Christ's commands, we, like the Israelite of old, "lay our hands upon the Lamb of God" signifying that He pays the ransom for us — He suffers the penalty in our stead. We may not understand all the reasons for His commands, i.e., immersion in water (Acts 2:38), but if we TRUST Him, we will OBEY Him.

The atonement is a subject of "unsearchable riches." No commentator has yet fathomed its depths. As one reads the Scriptures concerning the subject, it becomes both awesome and beautiful. Christ took away our sin by bearing in His own sinless body the penalty of the Father upon sin (cf. Rom. 3:21-26; 5:1-11; 6:23 — Heb. 5:7-9; 10:1-39; Isa. 53). Christ bears away, potentially, every sin that shall ever be committed (cf. II Cor. 5:14-15).

In verse 31 John says that he did not "know" Jesus. Whether John knew Jesus as he would a kinsman, or whether he knew Him as a fellow Israelite, we do not know. The emphasis which the Baptist wishes to place is that he did not know Jesus as the Messiah — did not know Him thus until after the baptismal experience and the dove descending upon Him. At the baptism of Jesus the Spirit descended upon Him "in a bodily form as a dove and a voice spoke from heaven saying, Thou art my beloved

Son; in thee I am well pleased" (cf. Lk. 3:22). John really saw a dove descend upon Jesus. These (the dove and the voice) are the Divine manifestations which John saw and heard and which he now bears witness to.

John also explains in verse 31 that one of the purposes of his baptizing was that Jesus of Nazareth should be made manifest to Israel as the Lamb of God — the promised Messiah. That Jesus of Nazareth was the Saviour of the world was not the private idea of John the Baptist, but He who sent John to baptize gave him the signs of the dove and the voice from heaven. The testimony of John is that of an eyewitness, and rests upon miraculous revelation. The fact that John was not aware of the deity of Jesus beforehand precludes any possibility of collusion or agreement between Jesus and John to deceive the people.

Some comment is in order here regarding John's apparent contrast between his water baptism and the baptizing which the One following him shall perform. In the Synoptics, when John is preaching to the public in general and the Pharisees in particular, he says, "I indeed baptize you in water . . . but he that cometh after me . . . he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire, etc.," Mt. 3:11 (cf. also Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16-17). There are those today who claim John meant that he baptized only in water, but that Jesus would baptize (immerse) all believers in the Holy Spirit and in fire. We believe that the Scriptures teach a baptism of the Holy Spirit and of fire, but neither one are to be administered to all believers. By reading Luke 24:49, and by further connecting it immediately with Acts 1:1-5 it becomes plain that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is that which Jesus promised and administered to the apostles on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). This was also administered to the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:44-48), signifying that the Gentiles were to be accepted into the kingdom of God by the heretofore prejudiced Jews (cf. Acts 10:47; 11:16-18; 15:7-11). These are the *only* instances where the Scriptures definitely speak of immersion in the Holy Spirit after the ascension of Christ. Others received special gifts of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the hands of the apostles, but there were no other baptisms in the Holy Spirit.

As for the baptism in fire, the context demands that we interpret John the Baptist's statement as referring to eternal punishment. In both Matthew 3:12 and Luke 3:17 John interprets his foregoing statement concerning baptism in fire by saying, "the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire." This is also true

of the verses preceding the mention of baptizing in fire. John first tells the Pharisees that "every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire"; then he goes on to tell Who is going to do the "casting into the fire" (cf. Mt. 3:10-11; Lk. 3:9-10). John is saying, "I am not the anointed One you are asking about — I merely baptize in water." The Baptist wants it emphatically understood that the One coming after him "is mightier than the forerunner," that it is He Who has authority to immerse in the Holy Spirit and in fire!

Quiz

1. What portion of Jesus' life is omitted between John 1:18 and 1:19?
2. How is the atonement provided for by Christ (the Lamb of God) appropriated to our souls?
3. Give two reasons why John "came baptizing."
4. What is the baptism in the Holy Spirit? in fire?
5. Only.....has authority to administer these two baptisms.

ANDREW, PETER AND AN UNNAMED DISCIPLE

Text 1:35-42

35 Again on the morrow John was standing, and two of his disciples;

36 and he looked upon Jesus as he walked, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

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

38 And Jesus turned, and beheld them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? And they said unto him, Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Teacher), where abidest thou?

39 He saith unto them, Come, and ye shall see. They came therefore and saw where he abode; and they abode with him that day: it was about the tenth hour.

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

41 He findeth first his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, Christ).

42 He brought him unto Jesus. Jesus looked upon him, and aid, Thou art Simon the son of John: thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation, Peter).

Queries

- a. Was the place where Jesus stayed near there?
- b. Why did the two disciples say they were following Jesus? Was this really their purpose?
- c. What did Jesus and these two talk about all that day?

Paraphrase

Again, on the next day, John and two of his disciples were standing near where John was immersing and John gazed intently at Jesus as He was walking near by. And John said, Look — the Lamb of God! And two of his disciples heard him speaking and they followed Jesus. Having turned suddenly, Jesus beheld them following Him and said to them, What purpose have you in following Me — what are you seeking? And they said to Him, Rabbi, (which is interpreted, Teacher) Where are You abiding? Jesus said to them, Come and see! And at about ten a.m. they went and saw where He was abiding, and they were with Him for the remainder of that day. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two disciples who heard John speak and followed Jesus. Andrew was the first of the two disciples to find his own brother, Simon, and say to him, We have found the Messiah (which is interpreted, anointed One). Then Andrew led his brother Simon to Jesus. Jesus gazed into his heart and said, You are Simon, the son of John. You shall be called Cephas (which is interpreted Peter — meaning Stone).

Summary

Two of the Baptist's disciples set about investigating the One whom he points out as "the Lamb of God." Having conversed with Him they are convinced that He is the anointed One of Israel. They allow no delay in leading their brothers to Him.

Comment

Again we marvel at the self-denial of John the Baptist. Did he not know that once he pointed out the Messiah he invited disaster to his own popularity? Did he not realize that once he proved Jesus of Nazareth to be the anointed One that his disciples would be likely to leave him and follow the King of Israel? Cer-

tainly he did; and yet he pointedly showed Jesus to his disciples! There is nothing harder than to willingly take second place when one has enjoyed first place.

Verse 38 shows an apparent hesitancy on the part of the two disciples to join themselves rudely to Jesus uninvited. The tense of the Greek word *strapheis* indicates to some commentators that Jesus turned suddenly. When He turned, He asked them an important question, "What seek ye?" Notice that He said "*What*," not "*Whom* seek ye?" It has also been pointed out that Jesus met these searchers halfway. It was God Who took the first step in wooing man back to Himself. We still love God because He first loved us (I Jn. 4:19). For those following Jesus today, the Lord's question still rings true: "What seek ye?" — a good reputation? a set of religious rules? a Sunday club? or is it Jesus Christ, the Son of God to be Lord of your entire being? (See Gal. 2:20).

There are two interpretations of the disciple's reply, "Teacher, where are you abiding?" One meaning behind the question might be that they were caught unawares when Jesus turned suddenly, and that was the only reply they could think of on the spur of the moment. The other interpretation is that the disciples sincerely sought His lodging place in order that they might go aside with Him, away from the crowds into quiet and earnest conversation concerning His messiahship.

The Lord was eager to satisfy their sincere and honest search after the Christ of God. Lenski contrasts the ardent, "Come, and ye shall see," of the King of Heaven and earth with the postponements and procrastinations of earthly potentates. He did not invite them merely to see His lodging place, but to "behold" the One for Whom their hearts, as well as the hearts of their ancestors, had longed (I Pet. 1:10-12).

If the world could know where Jesus stayed; it would build a shrine of stone and mortar. No one knows where it was. Perhaps it was the home of a friend, perhaps an inn — it may even have been a booth (tabernacle) made of palm leaves. This day and its revelations *were enshrined*, however, in the hearts of the disciples who were there. For John (the other disciple), as he writes this Gospel, remembers even the hour they arrived and just how long they stayed with Him. John seems to use the Roman mode of counting time, which would mean that 10 a.m. was the hour of their arrival. Others contend that John uses the Jewish notations of time, which would make the hour of

arrival 4 p.m. We refer you to the various works listed in the Bibliography for a more extended study of the Evangelist's method of counting time.

The Greek word *para* is the word used by the author to describe the visit of these two disciples. This word means primarily "by the side of," and reveals the intense conversation that must have been carried on.

In verse 40 the author finally mentions the name of one of the two disciples. Andrew will always be known as Simon Peter's brother (cf. Jn. 6:8). Almost immediately we ask, "Who was the other disciple?" We are given no definite statement from Scripture, but there is strong inference that it was John, brother of James, son of Zebedee and author of the Fourth Gospel. It is a trait of the author of this account never to mention his own name or that of his relatives (cf. our Introduction, section on "Authorship").

We are introduced to an outstanding characteristic of Andrew in verse 41. Andrew was a personal evangelist. He was always leading others to Jesus (cf. Jn. 6:8-9; 12:22). This is a characteristic that Jesus would have *all* His disciples cultivate (cf. Mt. 28:19-20). What a man this was that Andrew led to the Lord! We shall never fully know the fruit we bear indirectly through those we lead to Christ until we "meet them in the air." Andrew shares in all the subsequent fruits of Peter's labors!

In the phrase, "He findeth his own brother . . ." are also two possible interpretations. The most prevalent one is derived from the word *proton*, which means that Andrew sought his brother *first*, before he did anything else. Some manuscripts, however, have *protos* which means, perhaps, that Andrew was the "first" disciple who went after his brother, and implies that John also went after his brother James. We have chosen the latter interpretation in our paraphrase, for it fits the later call of the fishermen at Capernaum more readily (cf. Hendriksen on John, pp. 105-106, Vol. 1).

Andrew and John had made the greatest discovery of the ages — they had found the Messiah of the Jews, the Son of David. Andrew was excited, but the text seems to indicate that he could not excite Peter with this news. The Greek word *egagen* implies that Andrew had to coax Simon Peter — had to "lead" him to where Jesus was. The zeal of Andrew is often found in new converts. It is to the everlasting shame of the Church that this

zeal is often quenched by the pessimism and lack of faith of those older in the faith.

Jesus, with a searching gaze, looked on Peter's heart. The word John used to describe the Lord's manner of looking here is *emblepsas*. It is the same word used by Luke to describe Jesus' "look" at Peter in the courtyard after Peter had denied Him (Lk. 22:61). When Jesus looked upon Simon Peter, He saw not merely a fisherman from Bethsaida, but He saw the future steadfast "Rock" (cf. Acts 4:19; 5:41). In the Greek language, *petra* was used for a "massive ledge of rock," while *petros* was a "detached fragment of the ledge, smaller." Simon is first nicknamed *Cephas*, which is Aramaic for Rock. Cephas is in turn interpreted in Greek as *Petros*, meaning small rock. The reader is referred to Matthew 16:17 where the distinction between the two Greek words is very clear. Simon is there (Mt. 16:17) called *petros*, but the truth contained in his confession is called *petra*.

Thus far we are told that Andrew, his brother Simon Peter, John, and probably his brother James, are the only disciples following Jesus. We shall see next how others join themselves to this little band. The conversation these first four had with Jesus becomes even more important, however, when one considers the Synoptic's account of their call (cf. Mt. 4:18-22; Mk. 1:16-20; Lk. 5:1-11). It is rather difficult to understand how four fishermen would leave their livelihood and immediately and unquestioningly follow an obscure Galilean as is pictured by the Synoptical accounts. This passage in John shows that there was a period of inquiry and association with Jesus before the Galilean call.

Quiz

1. Why did the two disciples following Jesus ask where He was abiding?
2. What was the time of day when they arrived at Jesus' lodging place?
3. Who was the "other disciple" with Andrew?
4. Give the basic characteristic of Andrew as shown in v. 41.
5. Give two possible interpretations of the phrase, "He findeth first his own brother" (v. 41).
6. How could Jesus know Simon's future character enough to call him "Rock"?
7. What bearing does this first call of the four fishermen have on the later Galilean call?

THE CALL OF PHILIP AND NATHANAEL

Text 1:43-51

43 On the morrow he was minded to go forth into Galilee, and he findeth Philip: and Jesus saith unto him, Follow me.

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

45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

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

48 Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.

49 Nathanael answered him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art King of Israel.

50 Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee underneath the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.

51 And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

Queries

- a. What did Moses write of Him "in the law and the prophets"?
- b. What did Nathanael mean when he said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? (v. 46)?"
- c. What is the meaning of verse 51?

Paraphrase

The next day Jesus decided to go north to Galilee. Before leaving, however, He discovered Philip and said to him, Follow me. (Philip was from Bethsaida, the same city that Andrew and Peter were from). Philip, the same day, found Nathanael and said to him, We have found the One of Whom Moses wrote in the Pentateuch and of Whom the prophets also wrote. This One is none other than Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph the carpenter. But Nathanael said, The Scriptures do not say, do they,

that the Messiah shall come out of Nazareth? Philip answered, Come and see for yourself. As Nathanael was coming to Jesus, Jesus said, Look! A true son of Jacob in whom there is no deceit nor guile! Nathanael said to Jesus, How do you know what my character is? Jesus answered him, saying, Before Philip found you, when you thought yourself concealed under the fig tree, I could read your heart. Nathanael said to Jesus, Teacher, you are indeed the Son of God — the King of Israel. Jesus said to Nathanael, You believed when I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than these. I tell you truly, You shall see the way into Heaven and a measure of its glories revealed through the Son of man.

Summary

Jesus gathers two more disciples. Philip, neighbor of Andrew and Peter, and Nathanael, a true Israelite. Nathanael's quick faith is to be rewarded by visions of Glory.

Comment

This is the fourth day from the time the Jews questioned John the Baptist. Jesus has spent almost a week in the vicinity of John's place of baptizing. Time is drawing near for Him to commence His public ministry. The Lord has decided to go north into the province of Galilee. It may be that while He is preparing to go Philip comes to Him. It may be that Philip had called Andrew and Peter aside and was talking to them when Jesus approached him with the challenge, "Follow me." The two from Bethsaida (Andrew and Peter) had probably told Philip, their fellow townsman, the Messianic news. Philip seems to be the type of man who always wants to "get to the bottom of things" (cf. Jn. 6:5-7; 12:21; 14:8-9), and was probably seeking Jesus when Jesus found him.

Philip, too, is a personal evangelist. We cannot help noticing a strong emphasis on personal evangelism in this first chapter of John. Each one wins one. *Now* it takes more than one hundred to win one.

Who is Nathanael? The best answer is that he is the Bartholomew of the Synoptical Gospels. The name Nathanael means gift of God. His home town was Cana of Galilee (Jn. 21:2). We assume Nathanael and Bartholomew to be the same man since Bartholomew is never mentioned in John's Gospel, and Nathanael is never named in the Synoptics. It is amazing that Nathanael

lived his youth at the same time Jesus lived His, in Cana of Galilee — only about 3 miles from Nazareth the boyhood home of Jesus — yet he had never heard of Jesus. This fact shows how perverse the wild fantasies of the Apocryphal Gospels are.

These two men, Philip and Nathanael, were undoubtedly students of the Old Testament Law and Prophets. Nearly every male Israelite studied them from childhood through old age. When Philip told Nathanael of finding the One of Whom Moses and the prophets wrote, Nathanael's heart must have pounded as he recalled the words of Deuteronomy 18:15, Isaiah 53, Daniel 9:24-27, Jeremiah, the Psalms and a host of other references. There is an invaluable lesson here for students of God's Word today. The Old Testament cannot be properly understood without seeing Christ as the very core and substance of the Law and prophets (cf. Lk. 24:27, 32, 44; Jn. 5:39, 46; Acts 3:18; I Pet. 1:10).

Verse 46 has always been one of varied interpretation. Three interpretations are usually offered: (a) that Nathanael was expressing civic pride and rivalry since he was from the neighboring village of Cana, (b) that Nazareth was notoriously evil and Nathanael was uttering a proverbial denunciation, or (c) that Nathanael is questioning, what seems to him, a wrong interpretation by Philip of the Messianic prophecies. The third interpretation seems to have the weight of the context in its favor (cf. Jn. 7:52). Philip does not try to argue Nathanael into his position but bids him, "Come and see!"

Nathanael, being a man with an "honest and good heart" (Lk. 8:15), comes to see. Jesus, seeing him coming, tells His other disciples, "Look! a true son of Jacob." The word Jesus used for "guile" here is *dolos* which means "bait, snare, deceit, or guile." It is evident that throughout the entire conversation with Nathanael Jesus keeps referring to the history of Jacob, father of all Israelites. He contrasts the guileless character of Nathanael with the deceitful practices of Jacob. Such trickery was also found in most of the descendants of Jacob (cf. Gen. 34; Mt. 23:16-22). Many of the Jews of Jesus' day had no scruples against cheating and deceiving in their business transactions. Few of the rulers had guileless characters. Nathanael's moral excellence caused Jesus to exclaim, "Look! a true Israelite, in whom is no deceit" (cf. Rom. 2:28-29, 9:26).

Nathanael is surprised that Jesus knows how he thinks and how he lives. Those who seek to follow Jesus now would do well

to remember that He still sees the most hidden recesses of their hearts (cf. Jn. 2:24-25; Psa. 139). The guileless Israelite frankly asks Jesus where He received His information. Perhaps Nathanael silently wonders if Jesus had learned of him through Philip. The Master quickly shows that this would be impossible for He saw Nathanael's heart before Philip found him.

Jesus even names the place where Nathanael thought he was hidden from the eyes of strangers. It seems to have been the custom of the Jews to seek the shade of the fig tree as the most peaceful and obscure place to sit and meditate and pray (cf. I Ki. 4:25; Micah 4:4). Was Nathanael praying and meditating under the fig tree? Did he often pray that the Holy One of God should soon come? From the Lord's estimate of his character these things could not be far wrong. Now Nathanael is face to face with One Who knows his secret longings — Who has heard his prayers — Who reads his heart. This must be the Son of God — the King of Israel.

Most of our English versions have translated verse 50 as a question. This interrogative form tends to disparage the value of Nathanael's unhesitating faith. We might get the idea from a question that Jesus doubts that Nathanael could believe so soon — or that Jesus doubts the surety of his faith. To the contrary, Jesus praises the man's faith by promising to reward it with even greater manifestations of His glory.

Verse 51 is hard of interpretation. The best exegesis is that Jesus means He is the antitype of Jacob's ladder. In other words, He will be revealed to Nathanael as the Way to Heaven (Jn. 14:1-6). He will be shown to His disciples, and eventually the world, as the Mediator between God and man. The Lord could hardly have reference to a literal ascent and descent of angels upon His Person. There were times when the angels did literally minister unto Him (cf. Mk. 1:13; Lk. 22:43; Mt. 28:2-4; Jn. 20:12, 13), but Nathanael was not sufficiently close to Jesus at any of these incidents to see the angels.

"This record of the actual opening of Jesus' ministry is full of victory. He does not declare Himself in spectacular fashion to the multitude, but a little group of select and eager men begin to have an insight into His glorious personality. They recognize Him as the Lamb of God, the Messiah, The Son of God and the King of Israel. He declares Himself the Son of man, and opens up an absorbing vista of His coming ministry." (R. C. Foster in *Studies in the Life of Christ*, Vol. 1).

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Quiz

1. What type of man was Philip?
2. Who was Nathanael? Where did he live?
3. What is the necessary relationship of Christ to the Old Testament?
4. Who does Jesus think of as He talks to Nathanael?
5. What is the teaching of Psalm 139?
6. What do we assume Nathanael was doing under the fig tree?

EXAMINATION

(Introduction and Chapter One)

1. Who wrote the Fourth Gospel?
2. Give 4 evidences to substantiate your answer to question one.
3. Name the two papyri which are so important to the Fourth Gospel.
4. How near to the original manuscript of the Fourth Gospel do these papyri take us?
5. Give two reasons for saying that the Fourth Gospel is not "silent" about the virgin birth of Christ?
6. How is the Prologue (1:1-18) an abridgment of the entire Fourth Gospel?
7. What does the author mean by saying that the "world was made through" Christ (cf. Jn. 1:10)?
8. Name two heretical sects whose doctrines are refuted by the Prologue.
9. Give the scriptural limitations for the second main division of the Fourth Gospel.
10. What was the essence of the preaching of both John the Baptist and Jesus (cf. Mt. 3:1-2; Mk. 1:14-15)?

Fill in the blanks:

1. John the apostle has been called "the apostle of....."
2. John's purpose in writing his Gospel is to show that Jesus is
3. "In the.....was the Word, and the Word wasGod, and the Word was....."
4. God.....and.....always like Jesus Christ (Heb. 13:8).
5. "He came unto his....., and they that were his..... received him not."

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

6. Every verse of Scripture must be interpreted in the light of the entire.....
7. "And the Word became....., and..... among us."
8. "For the..... was given through Moses ;..... and..... came through Jesus Christ."
9. To become sons of God we must be..... anew of God.
10. "Behold,, that taketh away the sin of the world!"

True or False?

1.Our finite minds cannot comprehend eternity.
2.John the Baptist was very unpopular.
3.The baptism of fire is promised to believers.
4.Nathanael was Andrew's brother.
5.James was Simon's brother.
6.Philip was Andrew's brother.
7.The four fishermen received only one call from Jesus.
8.The Old Testament may be very clearly understood without a knowledge of Christ.
9.Nathanael was the brother of Bartholomew.
10.Jesus declared Himself in a spectacular manner to all of Judea immediately after His baptism.

EXPOSITORY SERMON NO. 1

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST INTERPRETED

John 1:1-18

Introduction

- I. TELL BIRTH STORY BRIEFLY (Luke 2).
 - A. John's Prologue gives the definition of Christmas.
 - B. Especially consider verse 14.
- II. WHO IS THIS CHILD BORN 2000 YEARS AGO IN A STABLE IN BETHLEHEM?
 - A. Who is He, that men have celebrated His birth for 2000 years?
 - B. Who is He of Whom thousands of books have been written?
 - C. Who is He in Whom all of history centers, past and present?

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

III. JOHN STATES THREE THINGS ABOUT THIS CHILD IN HIS PROLOGUE

- A. He is the eternal Word of God.
- B. He was made flesh to bring life to men.
- C. He is the complete and final opportunity for man's salvation.

LITTLE DID THE SHEPHERDS OR THE WISE MEN KNOW THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS CHILD . . . EVEN WE DO NOT REALIZE THE FULL SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS BIRTH BECAUSE MANY DO NOT RECOGNIZE THE FINALITY OF HIS REVELATION!

Discussion

I. HE IS THE ETERNAL WORD OF GOD

- A. *Logos* is defined as "the thought, purpose and expression of the mind of God."

Just as our thoughts and purposes are made known when we communicate by words,

SO GOD'S AGELESS PURPOSES ARE MADE KNOWN THROUGH CHRIST (Eph. 3:9).

- B. "The Word was with God" — the Word was of the very essence and nature of God.

1. Heb. 1:3.

2. Col. 2:9.

3. GOD WAS, AND EVER SHALL BE, ALWAYS LIKE JESUS REVEALED HIM — merciful, graceful, loving, yet wrathful against sin and hypocrisy.

- C. The Word was an equal agent in creation (v. 3).

1. Heb. 1:2-3.

2. JESUS IS THE GOD WHOM WE WORSHIP! HE WAS THE CREATOR COME IN THE FLESH!

a. Let that knowledge burst afresh on our minds.

b. We cannot deny the divinity of Jesus and still honor God (cf. Jn. 5:23).

c. WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE ALL RELIGIONS THAT BELIEVE JESUS TO BE A PROPHET . . . A GOOD MAN, BUT NOT DIVINE?

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

II. HE BECAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US TO BRING LIFE AND LIGHT

A. Blessed word! . . . "He *tabernacled* among us."

1. Our God is not aloof . . . not unsympathetic.
 - a. Every heathen concept of gods is of unsympathetic gods always seeking to do harm and hurt to man.
 2. God could have sent Logos into world and then quickly withdrawn Him.
 - a. BUT HE CAME . . . HE KNEW WEARI-
NESS, THIRST, SADNESS, TEARS,
TEMPTATION, PERSECUTION, YEA —
DEATH.
 - b. He is not a high priest that cannot be touched
with our infirmities.
WE ARE DRAWN CLOSER TO HIM
BECAUSE HE DID COME AND TARRY
IN THE FLESH.

B. In Him was life.

1. It was necessary for Him to come in the flesh . . . in order to condemn sin in the flesh.
 - a. MAN COULD NOT FULFIL THE LAW OF GOD . . . THUS THE LAW BECAME A CON-
DEMNATION TO MAN.
 - b. THEREFORE, GOD SENT HIS SON . . . IN
FLESH . . . TO CONQUER SIN AND SUF-
FER THE PENALTY OF SIN.

C. Many rejected Him . . . and still do . . . BUT TO ALL WHO RECEIVE:

1. HE GIVES THE RIGHT TO BECOME CHILD-
REN OF GOD.
Notice that He gives — we do not earn.
2. YET WE MUST ACCEPT HIS GIFT.
 - a. This we do by being born of God (new birth).
 - b. Compare Jn. 3:3-5; Titus 3:5; I Pet. 1:22-23, etc.
3. Jesus gives both authority and power to live this new
life . . . faith, hope, prayer and obedience.

III. HE CAME AS A COMPLETE AND FINAL REVELA- TION OF GOD

- #### A. In times past God spoke partial revelations (Heb. 1:1).
1. But at the end of the ages, in the fulness of time He
spoke to man in His Son (Heb. 1:2).

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

- a. The Law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
- B. The Law was only a shadow of the reality of God's truth.
 - 1. It was all realized in Christ.
- C. He is the only opportunity for men forevermore.
 - 1. "Except ye believe that I am He, ye shall die in your sins."

THIS MEANS THAT MEN WILL BE SEPARATED FROM GOD, AND THE WHOLE WEIGHT OF THE PENALTY FOR THEIR SIN WILL FALL UPON THEIR OWN SHOULDERS . . . THEY WILL PAY THIS PENALTY FOR ETERNITY.

- 2. All men will eventually live eternally — either in heaven or hell.
 - a. But Jesus gives Life with a capital L. He brings life and immortality to light through His resurrection.

HIS BIRTH WOULD MEAN LITTLE WITHOUT HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION!

OUR HOPE AND FAITH AND POWER TO LIVE A CHRISTIAN LIFE IS ALL BASED UPON HIS VICTORY OVER DEATH!

JESUS HAS COME . . . AND GOD IS LIKE JESUS . . . WE OUGHT TO SHOUT WITH THE MULTITUDE OF THE HEAVENLY HOST: "GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST!"

Conclusion

I THUS WE SEE THAT THE BABE BORN 2000 YEARS AGO WAS:

- A. He who put the stars in the heavens;
He who created our delicate bodies from dust and breathed life into them;
He who upholds all creation by the word of His power.
- B. It means that:
We no longer need to fumble and miss the way; HE IS THE WAY.
We no longer need to grope for the truth; HE IS THE TRUTH.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

We no longer need wonder how life ought to be lived ;
HE IS THE LIFE.

II BUT WE ONLY BELIEVE THIS ON THE BASIS OF
HIS RESURRECTION.

- A. IF THERE WERE NO KNOWLEDGE OF RESURRECTION TO INCORRUPTION, there would be very little sense to life on this earth. It would then be sensible to adopt Solomon's philosophy.
- B. Jesus has proved that there is an eternal life beyond the grave. Thus we see that all his statements about heaven and hell are true!

SOME MAY LAUGH AND SCOFF NOW, BUT WHEN DEATH COMES, WHO IS GOING TO TAKE THEIR HANDS AND LEAD THEM ACROSS THE DARK, BLACK CHASM WHERE NONE BUT HE HAS RETURNED TO TELL ABOUT?

SURRENDER AND TRUST HIM . . . JESUS WILL LEAD YOU ACROSS! THAT IS THE REASON WHY THE CHILD WAS BORN IN BETHLEHEM 2000 YEARS AGO.

CHAPTER TWO

Some commentators make the first miracle of Jesus recorded in this chapter the beginning of His public ministry. We prefer, however, to consider the miracle at the marriage feast as the final preparation for His public ministry. Verse eleven of this chapter indicates that He performed this miracle especially to prepare His disciples for the public ministry to follow. Furthermore, this miracle goes unnoticed as far as the multitudes are concerned, and was not intended to be an open manifestation. Therefore, we continue in our outline with the Preparation Period:

A. Preparation (cont.) 1:19-2:12.

3. First miracle 2:1-11.

a. Mary's expectations rebuked by Jesus vv. 1-5.

b. Miracle performed vv. 6-11.

4. Residence moved to Capernaum 2:12.

MARY'S EXPECTATIONS REBUKED BY JESUS

Text 2:1-5

1 And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there:

2 and Jesus also was bidden, and his disciples to the marriage.

3 And when the wine failed, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.

4 And Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.

5 His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.

Queries

- a. Why would Jesus go to a wedding?
- b. What was Mary expecting from Jesus?
- c. Did Jesus rebuke His mother?

Paraphrase

The third day after finding Philip and Nathanael, Jesus arrived in Cana of Galilee. There was a wedding feast in Cana, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, was attending the feast. Jesus and His disciples, having also been invited, were in attendance. And when the wine was all gone, the mother of Jesus said to Him, The hosts have no more wine. Jesus replied, Woman, what have you to say about My work? This is not the proper hour for My public manifestation. His mother then said to the servants, Whatever He may say to you, do it!

Summary

Jesus, His disciples and His mother all attend a wedding feast in Cana of Galilee. Mary is anxious for Jesus to declare Himself. Jesus warns His mother that she is not to lead Him but to follow Him.

Comment

Cana was a small village about three or four miles northeast of Nazareth. The place is now called Kefr Kenna. J. W. McGarvey, author of *Lands of the Bible*, visited there in 1879 and inspected an ancient building which had been converted into a chapel. This building was alleged to have been the very place where Jesus made the water into wine. They even pointed out to Brother McGarvey two stone mortars containing water which were used to immerse infants. They were supposed to be the very jars used by the Lord in His miracle. The caretakers of this chapel seemed to be unaware that these two jars could hold only about six gallons apiece, whereas the scriptural water jars held approximately 20 gallons each.

By "the third day" John probably means it was the third day after Jesus "decided to go into Galilee" (1:43) that He finally arrived in Galilee. He went directly to Cana of Galilee where he had been invited to a wedding. Cana would be about 60 or 70 miles north of Bethany beyond Jordan (as located on Map 1, pp. 17). Contrary to the contention of some commentators, it would be possible for Jesus and His disciples to walk 70 miles in two full days and a part of a third. Besides, He could have been advancing north toward Galilee day by day as He gathered His first disciples.

Mary was probably there as one invited to assist, much as certain ones are invited today to attend to the festivities of the wedding reception of a relative or a friend. It is not certain why Jesus was invited. Perhaps the newlyweds were personal friends or relatives of His mother; maybe the invitation came through Nathanael whose home was here in Cana.

The point is that Jesus took His disciples to Cana that they might see His glory. There is also the possibility that He took this opportunity to show these former disciples of John the Baptist the contrast between His type of ministry and that of their former teacher. The Baptist's disciples came later and asked Jesus why His disciples did not fast (Mt. 9:14ff), i.e., why His ministry differed from that of John the Baptist. Jesus was not eccentric and ascetic like John the Baptist, but neither was He a "glutton and a wine-bibber" (Mt. 11:19). As Trench points out, Jesus had a "harder and a higher task" than the Baptist. Jesus mingled with men in their daily living and sought to sanctify and purify their everyday activities (cf. Lk. 14:7-14), while John withdrew from the common activities of men. Jesus gives divine sanction to the joyous activities of human existence — profitable activities such as marriage, family life and etc. Our Lord never countenanced revelry or sensual gratification. His paramount emphasis was that of the Spirit (Mt. 6:33; Jn. 6:63). Jesus gives sanction to the wholesome activities of this world only insofar as they constantly lead us to a higher and holier walk with God.

If Mary was there as one assisting in the affairs of the festivities, her concern was only natural when the wine began to "fail". This would be very embarrassing according to the Eastern customs of hospitality. Just what Mary expected Jesus to do we are not expressly told. It may be safely inferred, however, from Jesus' answer (v. 4) that she desired something extraordinary from Him. For years Mary had observed such things as the astounding miracles surrounding her Son's birth — the prophecies of Simeon and Anna, Jesus confounding the teachers in Jerusalem — and she "kept all these sayings in her heart" (cf. Lk. 2:51). She had probably been informed of the miracles surrounding His baptism. Now Jesus appears with six disciples, and it seems to her that He is ready to announce Himself to the world and make some drastic changes in the present social order. Mary has decided that this is His opportunity to do so, and she hints

that He should avail Himself of this moment. Mary felt that the Lord needed some "motherly advice" on how to carry out His work.

In verse 4 we see that Jesus understood Mary to be dictating the course of His ministry. A literal translation of His answer would read "Woman, what to me and thee?" As Lenski puts it, Jesus was saying, "Woman, what is there in common for us in this matter?" or, "This is my affair, not thine." In the word "Woman" there is no rebuke or insult for He used the same word tenderly remanding her to the care of the beloved John (cf. Jn. 19:26). But in the phrase "what have I to do with thee" there is a rebuke. He cannot allow even His mother to dictate His affairs. It was necessary for the Lord later to remind His family that they must not interfere with His ministry. When His friends thought Him "beside Himself" they seem to have reported to Mary and her sons (Mk. 3:21). His family came seeking Him apparently to take Him home for a forced rest. But Jesus would not even walk through the crowds to talk to them. They came, it appears, to interrupt His work, and He was very explicit in showing that He was subject to the influence of no human, not even His mother (cf. Mk. 3:31-35). Jesus is Lord of *all*! Everyone must depend upon Him as the *only* mediator (I Tim. 2:5). Much earlier than the Cana incident, we remember, Jesus as a lad of twelve indicated to His mother and Joseph that he was not to be restricted by parental interference because "he must be about his Father's business" (Lk. 2:48-50).

He informs His mother that His "hour is not yet come." He has an hour set in the Father's economy for each task which has been given Him. When that hour comes, He acts, and not until then. Jesus never allows anyone to rush or hurry Him (cf. Jn. 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1; 17:1).

It is inspiring to witness such immediate submission as was evinced in Mary's directions to the servants. Her decision to simply trust Jesus has now prepared her for a manifestation of His glory. It is not inconsistent, therefore, for Jesus to perform the miracle when He had previously rebuked Mary's impertinence. Mary's lesson can be applied to our lives today. James writes, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures" (Jas. 4:3). When we seek the Lord's blessings for carnal pleasure or vanity we "receive not." But when we resign ourselves to His will (I Jn. 5:14-15) we receive "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

Quiz

1. Where is Cana?
2. Explain how Jesus could have made the journey to Cana in three days.
3. How did Jesus' ministry differ from that of John the Baptist?
4. Why do we think that Mary expected a miracle from Jesus?
5. Name two incidents where Jesus rejected the intervention of His family into His affairs.
6. What is the lesson for us in this section?

THE MIRACLE PERFORMED

Text 2:6-11

6 Now there were six waterpots of stone set there after the Jews' manner of purifying, containing two or three firkins apiece.

7 Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.

8 And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the ruler of the feast. And they bare it.

9 And when the ruler of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and knew not whence it was (but the servants that had drawn the water knew), the ruler of the feast calleth the bridegroom,

10 and saith unto him, Every man setteth on first the good wine; and when men have drunk freely, then that which is worse: thou hast kept the good wine until now.

11 This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

Queries

- a. What is "the Jews' manner of purifying"?
- b. Was this a drunken feast?
- c. Is this Jesus' *first* miracle?

Paraphrase

Now there were six stone water-jars which had been set there for purifying purposes (Jewish ceremonial purification) and they were capable of containing about 20 gallons apiece. Jesus commanded the servants, saying, Fill the water-jugs with water. The servants then filled the jars full to the brim. Jesus

next commanded the servants, saying, Draw out a portion and carry it to the ruler of the feast. The servants carried a portion to the ruler and when he tasted the water which had been made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants that had drawn the water knew), the ruler of the feast called the bridegroom and said, You know the proverb that says, "A man sets his good wine out first then when the taste is blunted, he sets out the poor wine," but you have kept the good wine until last. This is the first sign that Jesus did and He did it in Cana of Galilee, and He manifested His glory and His disciples believed on Him.

Summary

Jesus miraculously changes water into wine, primarily to manifest His divine glory. His disciples believed on Him as a result.

Comment

Six 20-gallon water-jugs, set aside for purification rites, indicates a large crowd. John, writing for Gentile readers, feels it necessary to note that the jars were there "according to the Jews' manner of purifying." The Jews washed their hands and their pots and pans before and after eating to cleanse themselves ceremonially, (Mt. 15:1-11). This was one of their traditions added to the law of Moses (cf. Mk. 7:1-9; Lk. 11:37-41). The Jews were very careful to wash before meals in case they had touched a Gentile, or rubbed against a publican or a harlot in the marketplace.

What would be the thoughts of the servants and Mary when Jesus commanded that the jars be filled with water? It would be fruitless to speculate. Just as it is pointless to speculate about the extent of the miracle, i.e., whether the water became wine only when they drew it out of the jars, or, whether all the water in each jar became wine and remained so. The point is, Jesus performed a miracle! The radical critics claim this miracle runs counter to the laws of nature; therefore, they attack the credibility of the account.

Trench, in his *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, page 116, explains it this way: "He who each year prepares the wine in the grape, causing it to absorb, and swell with, the moisture of earth and heaven, to transmute this into nobler juices of its own, did now concentrate all those slower processes into a single moment, and accomplish in an instant what usually He takes many months

to accomplish . . . He was working in the line of His more ordinary operations, the unnoticed miracles of everyday nature."

We cannot doubt the miracle of the grape as it grows through the "slower processes" before our very eyes though we cannot explain it. We ought not to doubt the same result attained in an instant by your Lord when the record rests upon irrefutable testimony of eyewitnesses.

The skeptics and the sensualists consider this miracle to be ammunition for their attacks upon the Bible along another line. They charge Jesus with immoral action, and claim that He made intoxicating wine. The burden of proving that Jesus did make intoxicating wine is with those who make the accusations. They are the ones who say the wine was intoxicating. John does not say so! It is a prejudiced and unscholarly determination that says the Greek word *oinos* (the word used here) must always mean intoxicating wine wherever the word is used. In fact, New Testament and classical usage show that the word may mean a number of things. Thayer shows that *oinos* is even used of the vine itself (cf. Rev. 6:6) rather than the juice. In classical Greek, usage may be cited to show *oinos* designating the grape itself, the juice still within the grape, the fresh pressed juice, and un-intoxicating drinks. A corresponding word in the Hebrew language is *yayin*. When Hebrew scholars translated the Hebrew Old Testament into the Greek language (known as the *Septuagint*), they used the Greek word *oinos* to express the meaning of their word *yayin*. The word *oinos* is used in the Septuagint as a generic term for wine — fresh, cooked, fermented juices alike. (Cf. Num. 6:4; Judges 13:4 where "wine" is used for the grape itself).

Aristotle, Pliny and Nicander speak of *oinos* that does not intoxicate. Classical writings could be cited to show that the ancients knew of five ways of keeping grape juice from fermentation, and they called such preserved juice *oinos*. No one should use this instance to justify drinking today unless he can prove absolutely that the wine Jesus made is *just like* the wine they propose to drink!

Of course, the question is always posed as to what the ruler of the feast meant by his speech in verse 10. The ruler seems to be chiding his host in verse 10 by reminding the bridegroom of a well known custom. It was, and is, a common practice to pass off an inferior wine when men's taste becomes blunted by even a small amount of drinking. It is obvious that the ruler was not drunk. He recognized the difference in the juice instantly. It is

only the perverse mind that could imagine Jesus condoning drunken revellry, let alone using His power to furnish men something destructive to their physical and spiritual well-being.

Modern man cannot possibly use the Cana miracle to justify indulgence in any of the detestable liquor of today (cf. ICor. 8:13; 10:31-33; Rom. 14:15-17, 21). Those who buy from liquor manufacturers today are supporting an industry which has contributed to the loss of thousands of lives physically, and the eternal damnation of thousands of souls spiritually.

In verse 11 we learn that this is the first miracle Jesus performed. His second was the cure of the nobleman's son (cf. Jn. 4:54). One commentator defines "sign" as "a miracle viewed as proof of divine authority and majesty." A "sign" points to the divine Doer instead of the deed. This seems to be the very purpose of the miracle—to point His disciples to the divine Son. Note how John, one of the eyewitnesses of this miracle, puts everything else secondary to the manifestation of Jesus' deity.

It would be well to here define the word disciple. Disciple comes from the word *manthano*, which means "I learn." A disciple then is one who learns, a pupil, a follower. It is best defined as a learner, one who accepts the instruction of his teacher and makes it his way of life. The miracle at Cana shows us that Jesus did not require His disciples to have perfect knowledge or perfect faith in order to begin following Him. What the Lord wants is a disciple with a willing mind and an honest heart—willing to learn and honest enough to apply the lesson to his own life!

Quiz

1. Why did the Jews purify themselves before meals? Was this a law of Moses?
2. Why should we believe miracles recorded in the Bible when we cannot understand them or explain them?
3. Name three things that the Greek word *oinos* (wine) may mean other than intoxicating wine.
4. Give two reasons why men today may not use this miracle to justify drinking intoxicating beverages.
5. Is this Jesus' first miracle? Explain.
6. Give a good definition of the word disciple.
7. What was the primary purpose of this miracle?

JESUS MOVES HIS HEADQUARTERS TO CAPERNAUM

Text 2:12

12 After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples; and they abode there not many days.

Queries

- a. Where is Capernaum?
- b. Why did He go there and what did He do?
- c. Who are "his brethren"?

Paraphrase

After the wedding feast at Cana was over, Jesus went down from the hills of Galilee unto the city of Capernaum on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. And He remained there a few days, He, and His mother, and His brothers and His disciples.

Summary

Jesus moves to Capernaum, abiding there a few days with His entourage as He awaits the time of the Passover.

Comment

We have entitled this part of the outline, "Jesus Moves His Headquarters to Capernaum" because He ever after makes this city a pivotal point for the larger portion of His ministry. One must, of course, study the Synoptics to realize this, since nearly all of His Galilean ministry is recorded in those accounts. One thing seems evident—He never returns to Nazareth to live, only to preach and be rejected. After John the Baptist was delivered up to prison, Jesus "withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea . . ." (Mt. 4:12-13). The Gospel of Luke tells us that Jesus did not own a residence (Lk. 9:58). He probably made Peter's home His headquarters here in Capernaum (cf. Mk. 1:31). Whatever the case, Capernaum seems to be the headquarters for all His activities until He finally ends His public ministry in Galilee and comes to the Feast of Tabernacles (Jn. 7:2, 3, 10). Once He arrives in Judea at this feast, He never again returns to Galilee except for a few days preaching "in the borders of Galilee" (cf. Lk. 17:11 and Map 6, p., Vol. 2).

There is a great deal of controversy among commentators as to the most probable location of Capernaum. The two most likely places are the ruins of modern Tell Hum or Khan Minyeh. Most scholars prefer Tell Hum. For extended discussion on this subject consult any good Bible dictionary (cf. also Andrews, *Life of Our Lord*, pp. 224-230). Capernaum was located on the north side of the Sea of Galilee, west of the Jordan River entrance into the sea. The ruins of Tell Hum are very interesting. Most of its buildings were built of black basalt with the exception of a white synagogue. This synagogue probably dates back to about 200 A.D. but it was built on still more ancient ruins which date back to the very time of Christ. These ancient ruins may be those of the same synagogue that the centurion erected for the Jews (cf. Lk. 7:5) and the one in which Jesus healed the withered hand (Mk. 3:1-6). Capernaum was the home of the four fishermen; it was a customs station (Mt. 9:9), and a residence of a high officer of the king (Jn. 4:46). A Roman garrison was probably stationed there under the command of the centurion mentioned above. So completely has this city perished, as was prophesied by the Lord (Mt. 11:23), that the very site is a matter of much dispute today.

This verse (12) affords an opportunity to discuss the question of the Lord's brethren. The question would probably never have been raised had not the Roman church made the perpetual virginity of Mary a dogma. First consideration must be given to what the New Testament reveals on the subject of the Lord's brothers and sisters. They are mentioned in Mt. 12:46-50; 13:55-56; Mk. 3:31; 6:3; Lk. 8:19; Jn. 2:12; 7:3; Acts 1:14; I Cor. 9:5; Gal. 1:9. There were four brothers, James, Joseph, Simon and Judas. None of the accounts tell us how many sisters He had or what their names were. The Greek is very precise concerning this matter. His brothers and sisters are always called *adelphoi* (brothers and sisters) — not *anepsioi* (cousins) or *sungeneis* (kinsmen). Notice also they are always called His brothers and sisters, not sons and daughters of Mary. Further, they are always

connected with Mary in the particular relationship of being her very own children; members of her household and under her direction — not merely her nieces and nephews.

Amazingly enough, the theory of the perpetual virginity is even held by many Protestant writers. There is strong inference against this theory in the Scriptures. First is the inference that there were later sons born to Mary because Jesus is called the “firstborn son” in Luke 2:7. Secondly, there is the inference that Joseph later “knew” Mary in the husband-wife sexual relationship after the virgin birth of Jesus — “he knew her not until she brought forth a son” (Mt. 1:25).

The number of days Jesus stayed in Capernaum is not certain. We are told that it was “not many days.” The couple in Cana had a spring wedding, probably sometime in April. Jesus attended this wedding, spent a few days in Capernaum then joined the thousands of pilgrims going to Jerusalem for the Passover, which was also in April.

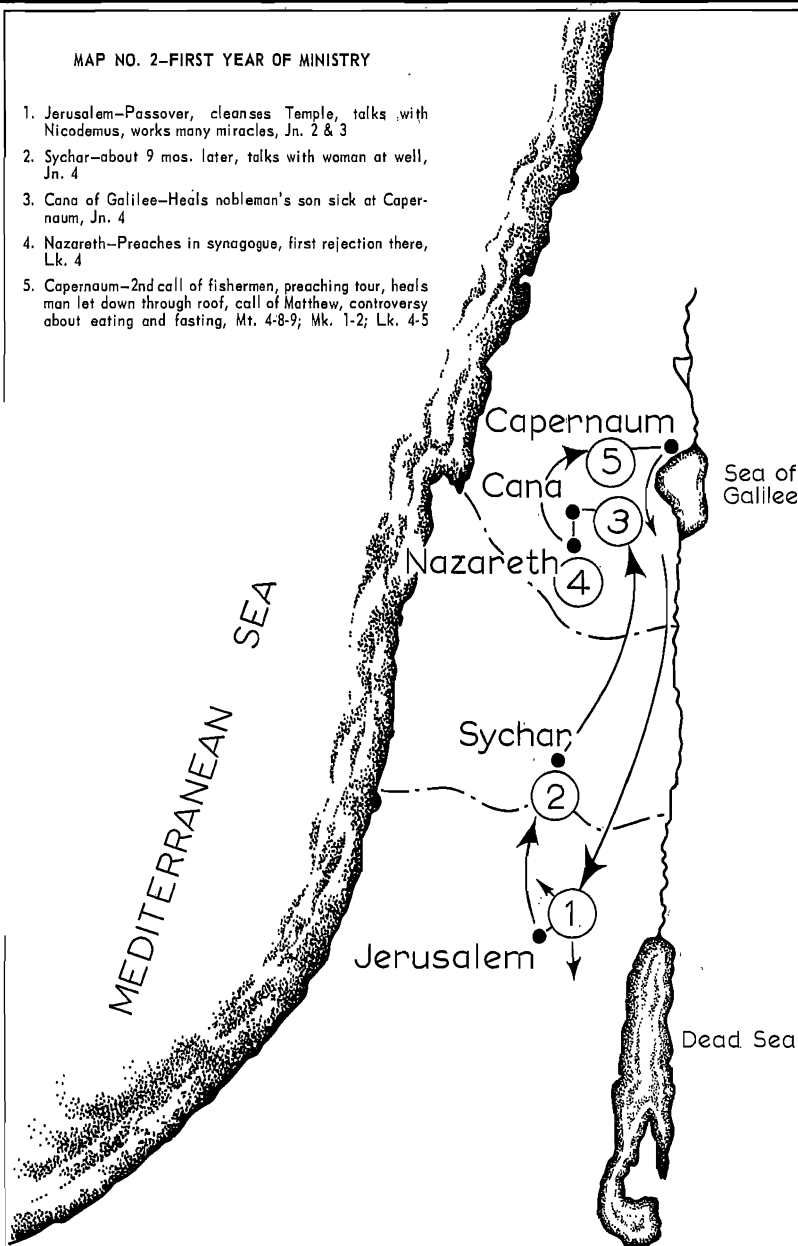
And so we come to the end of the period of preparation. When Jesus arrives at the Passover He will declare Himself to the rulers in no uncertain terms. There He will begin His public ministry — His open manifestation to the multitudes and the Jewish rulers.

Quiz

1. Describe Capernaum.
2. Why does John mention that Jesus went to Capernaum?
3. Tell all that the Scriptures say about Jesus' brethren.
4. What does the New Testament say about the “perpetual virginity” of Mary?

MAP NO. 2—FIRST YEAR OF MINISTRY

1. Jerusalem—Passover, cleanses Temple, talks with Nicodemus, works many miracles, Jn. 2 & 3
2. Sychar—about 9 mos. later, talks with woman at well, Jn. 4
3. Cana of Galilee—Heals nobleman's son sick at Capernaum, Jn. 4
4. Nazareth—Preaches in synagogue, first rejection there, Lk. 4
5. Capernaum—2nd call of fishermen, preaching tour, heals man let down through roof, call of Matthew, controversy about eating and fasting, Mt. 4-8-9; Mk. 1-2; Lk. 4-5



In our outline we are still under the second main division of the Fourth Gospel. We come now to the next point under that main division, namely, The Public Ministry — First Year. A primary purpose of John in writing his account was to supplement the other three gospel accounts. Therefore, many of the incidents of His public ministry will have to be obtained from the Synoptics. We shall endeavor to mention these omitted incidents from time to time as we connect the events of the Fourth Gospel. It is suggested that the reader frequently consult the maps in this commentary to get a comprehensive view of Jesus' public ministry as the text is being studied.

II The Word Manifested to the Jews and their Rejection of of Him. 1:19-12:50 (cont.)

B. The Public Ministry — First Year 2:13 - 4:54

1. Early Judean Ministry 2:13-35

a. Cleansing of the Temple 2:13-17

b. Results of the Cleansing 2:18-22

c. General Judean Ministry 2:23-25

CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

Text 2:13-17

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

14 And he found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting:

15 and he made a scourge of cords, and cast all out of the temple, both the sheep and the oxen; and he poured out the changer's money, and overthrew their tables;

16 and to them that sold the doves he said, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise.

17 His disciples remembered that it was written, Zeal for thy house shall eat me up.

Queries

- a. What is the "passover of the Jews"?
- b. Why were oxen, sheep and doves being sold in the Temple? Why were money changers there?
- c. How was Jesus able to cleanse the Temple unresisted?

Paraphrase

Now the time for the passover of the Jews was near and Jesus left Capernaum and went up to Jerusalem. There, in the temple courts, He found some who were selling, for sacrificial purposes, oxen, sheep and doves. He also found some who had set up their change-making enterprise in the temple and were sitting, conducting their business there. Jesus made a whip of ropes and drove the sheep and the oxen out of the temple courts. Then he scattered the money of the money-changers, turned over their tables, and said to the ones who were selling the doves, Carry these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market place! His disciples then remembered what had been written in the Scriptures, "Zeal for thy house will consume me."

Summary

Jesus goes up to the Passover to worship. He finds the Temple being desecrated, and he manifests His wrath at such hypocrisy. His disciples interpret it as a fulfillment of messianic prophecy.

Comment

The majority of commentators agree that this cleansing of the Temple is the first of two such incidents in the ministry of Jesus. The very nature of John's gospel would indicate this. (a) John writes to fill in what the other Gospel writers have omitted. He omits some events of greater significance than the cleansing of the Temple, i.e., the transfiguration, the birth of Jesus, etc. Would it fit John's pattern then to repeat what all three of the other writers record (cf. Mt. 21:12-13; Mk. 11:15-18; Lk. 19:45-46)? (b) John is the most chronological of the four. Why would he violate all of his chronology and insert here at the beginning of Jesus' ministry an event which the other three definitely place at the last Passover of His ministry? (c) John gives the most detailed account of the last Passover of the four writers. If John is merely repeating the Synoptical cleansing, why did he not put it in his detailed account of the last Passover? (d) Again, in all three accounts of the second cleansing the Jewish rulers are represented as seeking to destroy Jesus. There is no mention of such an intensified animosity here in John's account of the first cleansing of the Temple.

Jesus left Capernaum, some 680 feet below normal sea level, and traveled "up" to Jerusalem, some 2500 feet above sea level. When people are said to be going "up" and "down" by the Gospel writers, it is meant that the people are going "up" and "down" in altitude—not in a north-south map-wise manner. The Lord's reason for going to Jerusalem was that the time for the Passover was near. We shall deal with the details of this feast in later chapters. Here it will be sufficient to notice only a few significant things connected with the Passover: (a) it was one of three feasts which every male Jew above the age of twelve must attend—the other two being the Feast of Tabernacles and the Feast of Pentecost; (b) Passover was the most important of all the feasts; (c) it commemorated the Israelite deliverance from Egyptian bondage, and more specifically the passing over of the death angel (cf. Ex. 12 and 13); (d) the feast was to be held on the fourteenth day of the month Nisan (corresponding to our April); and, (e) many sacrifices were required for those who worshipped at the feast (Num. 28:16-25).

Great multitudes of Jews attended the Passover. Jews from all over the civilized world made pilgrimages to Jerusalem for this feast. Josephus, in his account of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., tells us that there were approximately 3 million Jews in the city when Titus the Roman general besieged it at Passover time. This Jewish historian adds that some 260,000 lambs were slain that year during the one week of the Passover celebration. Remember, also, that a great number of oxen would be sacrificed that week.

We begin now to get a picture of the magnitude of the scene which greeted Jesus as He entered the city of David. Some three million people there for the "Independence Day" celebration of the Jews—all crowded into Jerusalem until her very walls were groaning. People slept on the housetops and in the courtyards—anywhere they could find a place that was reasonably safe from robbers. The Law of Moses provided for the people to bring their own animals (if they had any) to the Passover. They were to present them to the priests for approval and subsequent sacrifice on the worshipper's behalf. Most of the worshippers preferred to purchase a suitable animal (one without spot or blemish) at the feast. This was much more convenient than bringing their own animal. Money-hungry priests had taken advantage of this attitude and they abused their authority to

approve or disapprove the sacrificial animal until they had cornered the market! It is probable that had the worshippers gone to the trouble to present a lamb of his own flock the priests would have rejected it as unfit for sacrifice. The people's only recourse then was to purchase an animal from the vending stalls of these racketeers. Of course, with such a complete control of the market, the racketeers would be able to coerce exorbitant prices from the starving populace. One commentator says the Sadducees made a profit of about \$300,000 each year from this market. It is also said that, at one time, the price of a pair of doves was about four dollars when they were really worth only about a nickle a pair. The people were being fleeced in the name of religion.

The changers of money also had a racket. Every male Jew above 20 was required to pay a Temple tax (cf. Ex. 30:11-16; Mt. 17:24-27) of a half-shekel. Only Jewish coinage was acceptable for the tax—Gentile money was polluted. Everyone who did not have Jewish money was obliged to get it changed. This afforded another means of extortion for the Jewish rulers.

There are two Greek words used in the New Testament which are translated "temple." One word (*hieron*) signifies "the entire building with its precincts, or some part thereof"; the other word (*naos*) usually means the inner sanctuary of the Temple. John uses the former word (*hieron*) here. Most scholars think that the animal markets were in the court of the Gentiles. This was the outermost precinct of the Temple. The rulers would most likely set up their markets here, not wishing to desecrate the courts where only Jews were allowed. Jewish pride shows its haughty contempt for the Gentiles by bringing the stench and filth of the animals into the court of the Gentiles. One writer describes the scene thusly: "And this was the entrance court of the Most High! The court which was a witness that that house should be a House of Prayer for all nations had been degraded into a place which for foulness was more like shambles and for bustling commerce more like a densely crowded bazaar; while the lowing of oxen, the bleating of sheep, the babel of many languages, the huckstering and wrangling, the clinking of money and of balances (perhaps not always just) might be heard in the adjoining courts, disturbing the chant of the Levites and the prayers of the priests!" (Farrar, *The Life of Christ*, pp. 445ff). It was not merely the presence of the animals that was offensive

to the Lord. His righteous ire was aroused because of the dishonest merchandizing and the desecration of the only place the Gentiles might seek the presence of God. Men seeking God (cf. Jn. 12:20) were denied His presence! We would do well to search our own practices as the people of God today. Is there anything in our lives — pride, carelessness, irreverence — that keeps the seeking stranger from the presence of God? Remember the wrath of the Lord as he displays it here against such action. Compare also Matthew 23:13.

Zealous for His Father's house and His Father's children, Jesus deliberately fashioned a whip from some rope-like pieces of twisted reeds. Then He quickly and decisively drove the animals out as the traders were fleeing from His countenance. In almost the same motion He turned and began upsetting the tables of the money-changers. It was a scene of bedlam; the animal traders trying to control and protect their property — sheep and oxen running helter-skelter — men shouting and swearing — bankers on their hands and knees greedily scurrying after the tinkling coins as Jesus went from table to table overturning them. The Lord then issued two thundering commands: "Take these things out of here! . . . Stop making my Father's house a market place!" The word translated "house of merchandise" is the Greek word *emporion*, from which we have the English word emporium. The Jews were literally making God's holy Temple an animal emporium. It was a scene so suddenly violent that the disciples were fearing for the Lord's safety, and they remembered an appropriate prophecy of Scripture, "Zeal for thy house will eat me up." Another interpretation is that the disciples saw further manifestation of the Deity of Jesus in this incident and remembered the Messianic prophecy of Psalms 69:9. Why not apply both interpretations to the utterance of the disciples? They recognized His fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy, but on the other hand they feared that His fanatic zeal would eventually bring about His death. The Greek word for zeal is *zelos* from which we also get the word jealous. Christ was very jealous for His Father's house — that it not be made a shelter for unrighteousness.

There are those who would have us believe that Jesus struck the men with His "scourge of cords." It is true that the Lord revealed holy anger at the conduct of these men, but striking them with a whip would not be in keeping with the character

of His teaching. His answer to Pilate would seem to preclude such physical combat on His part . . . "if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight . . . but now is my kingdom not from hence." (Jn. 18:36). Compare also His instruction to Peter concerning "taking up the sword" (Mt. 26:51-56). His only use for the whip was to drive out the dumb beasts, for they could not respond as He would have them to His spoken commands. In the second cleansing of the Temple the hucksters fled before His righteous countenance—He brandished no scourge there. The awesome manifestation of His glory drove the men out—just as it was manifested to the officers who could not arrest Him because "never man so spake" (cf. Jn. 7:45-46).

The public ministry of our Lord begins with explosive suddenness. No doubt the multitudes, along with the disciples, were electrified. Some of the multitude might even have recalled the prophecy, "*Behold I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, will suddenly come to his temple . . .* But who can abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? . . . and he will purify the sons of Levi . . ." (Malachi 3:1-3). The rulers were probably so surprised and so shamed that they were not able to grasp immediately the significance of this manifestation. Nevertheless, they counterattacked at once, touching off a controversy that grew and increased in fierceness until they were satisfied with nothing less than His death. This was the beginning of a struggle that continued for three years. The rulers would hardly let it rest for a moment. They followed Jesus wherever they could, seeking ever to ensnare Him . . . to destroy Him. The world hated Him because He "testified of it, that its works were evil" (Jn. 7:7).

Quiz

1. Give three reasons for believing that this is the first of two recorded instances where Jesus cleansed the Temple.
2. What was the Passover feast to commemorate?
3. About how many people attended the feast in Christ's day?
4. How were the animal traders taking advantage of the worshippers?
5. Why were the money-changers there?
6. Where was this merchandizing probably taking place?
7. Do you think Jesus struck the men with His scourge? Explain.
8. Give two Old Testament prophecies connected with this incident.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
RESULTS OF THE CLEANSING

2:18-22

Text 2:18-22

18 The Jews therefore answered and said unto him, What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?

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

20 The Jews therefore said, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou raise it up in three days?

21 But he spake of the temple of his body.

22 When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he spake this; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

Queries

- a. Why did the Jews ask the question (v. 20) ?
- b. What is the meaning of Jesus' answer in verse 19?

Paraphrase

The Jews said therefore to Jesus, What Messianic sign do you show us? do you have any credentials for these presumptuous actions in our temple? Jesus answered them, saying, Destroy this Sanctuary of God, the place where God's Presence dwells, and I will raise it up in three days. The Jews therefore said, It has taken forty-six years to erect this Sanctuary, and do you claim to be able to re-erect it in three days? But Jesus was speaking of the Sanctuary of His body, and when He was raised from the dead His disciples remembered these words of Jesus and applied them to His resurrection. When the disciples had witnessed the Resurrection and had seen this prophecy fulfilled, they believed more firmly that the Old Testament Scriptures were fulfilled in Jesus, and that His Word was the Word of God.

Summary

Jesus' authority to reform their Temple is challenged. The rulers demand from Him a wonderful sign of Messianic proportions. Jesus predicts a future sign. They are now destroying God's typical Sanctuary by evil practices and will eventually seek to destroy the Incarnate Sanctuary of God by crucifying Him. But in three days He will raise the new Sanctuary up!

Comment

At every manifestation of Jesus' glory the "wheat" is separated from the "chaff." The cleansing of the Temple is no exception. Those of honest heart find spiritual nourishment for their faith ((vv. 17, 22). Those concerned with satisfying the vanities of life become more hardened in their carnality (v. 20). Here Jesus gave an answer at which the Jews scoffed and used to reject His authority. The disciples, however, laid His answer up in their hearts and later their faith was strengthened! Jesus often clothed His greatest spiritual lessons in enigma for the very purpose of separating the spiritual followers from the carnal followers (cf. Mt. 13:10-16; Jn. 6:60-65).

When they regained their composure, the Temple traders turned on this presumptuous Galilean (v. 18) and demanded that He show proper credentials for His reformatory actions. Undoubtedly some of the rulers of the Temple were among those asking for His authority. There seems to have been a general expectation that a prophet (Elijah or Jeremiah) would come to prepare for the Messiah by confirming present religious practices or changing them. Perhaps they even recognized that this Galilean might possibly be the Messiah Himself!! If so, they must have some amazing and extraordinary signs to confirm their suspicions. According to Jewish tradition, the arrival of the Messiah was to be heralded by great wonders and upheavals. These rulers are like the great multitudes of followers in Galilee (Jn. 6). Jesus told them that they were only following Him because He had filled their hungry stomachs. When He told the multitudes that He came to feed them on His Word (Jn. 6:63), they turned away from Him. These rulers in Jerusalem refused all the signs of His deity because He would not conform to their carnal ideas concerning the Messiah of the Jews. Christianity is not primarily concerned with relieving hunger or suffering. The New Testament church is not primarily concerned with national or international politics. Christianity IS concerned primarily with saving men's souls by bringing them to trustful obedience to the doctrines of Christ (Jn. 14:15, 21, 23; 15:1-6, 14; Heb. 5:9, etc.).

There is a tendency on the part of some interpreters to apply the answer of Jesus (v. 19) exclusively to His physical body. However, the context demands that a certain amount of literal application to the Jewish temple be included in His answer. As Wescott sees it, "there are two distinct ideas which have to be

brought into harmony here." Jesus is referring to both the actual Temple and the Sanctuary of His body. The Jews were at that very moment destroying God's Temple, the place where the presence of God dwelt, by their unholy desecration of it. But this Sanctuary of stone was only a figure of the Person of Jesus Christ — the Incarnate Presence of God dwelling among men (Jn. 1:14). They are now desecrating the typical Sanctuary and will eventually destroy the fulfillment, even Jesus.

When they shall have rejected and put to death the Christ — the fulfillment of the type — what further use will there be for the type (the Sanctuary of stone)? The crucifixion of Jesus, in Whom dwelt the fulness of God, brought with it necessarily the destruction of the Temple. Why should God allow a rebellious Israel to keep the type when they spurn the Antitype? Thus the Jews brought about the destruction of their Temple and the judgment of God upon themselves (cf. Mt. 27:25). When the Lord expired upon the cross, the veil of the Temple was torn in two, signifying that it was all over with Israel and their typical Sanctuary (Mt. 27:51). Henceforth God may be worshipped anywhere if the worship is "in Spirit and in truth" (cf. Jn. 4:23).

Jesus warned that the unfaithfulness of the Jews and their rejection of Him would end in terrible judgment upon the nation and complete destruction of their Temple (Mt. 23:37; 24:1-28). He intimated that these very rulers of the Jews would see such judgment come upon their nation (Mt. 26:64). As Lenski so aptly puts it, "Thus the sign the Jews demanded will be theirs indeed . . . a sign of final judgment."

The Messiah perishes — the Temple and the Jewish economy falls — the Presence of God is withdrawn from His people. The Messiah lives again — the true Sanctuary of God rises — the Presence of God is restored among His new people. God's presence among men was restored by the glorification of Christ and the giving of the Holy Spirit to believers (Jn. 7:37-39; Acts 2). God does not dwell in temples made with hands (Acts. 7:48; 17:24), but the church (the universal body of Christ) is the temple of God. Every Spirit-filled believer is a living stone in God's spiritual house (I Pet. 2:5; cf. also I Cor. 3:16; II Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21-22). Every Christian's body is individually a "temple of the Holy Spirit" (I Cor. 6:19-20).

The Jews scoffingly interpreted His words literally. It had taken them forty-six years to partially reconstruct the temple.

Would this Galilean rebuild it in three days? Preposterous! The reconstruction of the Temple was begun by Herod the Great in about 20 B.C. This is forty-six years later, and it is still unfinished. It was not completed until 64 A.D., thirty years after the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. And then, only six years after its completion (70 A.D.) it is so levelled by the Roman destruction that, according to the Jewish historian Josephus, "one stone was not found upon another."

The Jews, their carnal minds closed to any spiritual comprehension of Christ's words, scoff at Him for predicting that He will do in three days what they have not even finished in half a lifetime. When Jesus was on trial for His life, bribed witnesses brought lying testimony against Him by perverting these words of prophecy (cf. Mk. 14:57-58; 15:29-30).

Even the disciples did not then realize the significance of His words. John, writing years after His death and resurrection, records that the disciples remembered this prophecy after they had witnessed the resurrection. Their retrospective look at a fulfilled prophecy was spiritual food — nourishment for their faith.

Quiz

1. Why did Jesus clothe His answer in enigma?
2. What kind of sign did the Jews demand of Jesus?
3. Is there any reference to the literal Temple of the Jews in Jesus' answer? Explain!
4. Give three Scripture references which show that the Jews brought about judgment upon themselves.
5. Where is the Sanctuary of God today? Cite Scripture references to prove your answer.
6. How long did it take to complete the Jewish temple? When was it destroyed?
7. Was this prediction of Jesus ever repeated? Where?

GENERAL JUDEAN MINISTRY

Text 2:23-25

23 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, during the feast, many believed on his name, beholding his signs which he did.

24 But Jesus did not trust himself unto them, for that he knew all men,

25 and because he needed not that any one should bear witness concerning man; for he himself knew what was in man.

Queries

- a. Why did Jesus "not trust himself unto them"?

Paraphrase

Now when Jesus was in Jerusalem, He did many signs during the seven days of the feast. Many of the people at the feast marvelled at these signs which they beheld Him doing and believed Him to be a prophet sent from God. But Jesus did not entrust them with the essence of His message and cause, for He knew the heart of every one of them. Jesus did not need that anyone should tell Him of the nature of man, for He was able to search their hearts and know what was in their very thoughts.

Summary

Jesus knows who His true believers are by looking on their hearts.

Comment

In John 2:23 through 3:36 we have recorded a rather general Judean ministry. There is one exception — the specific conversation with Nicodemus (3:1-21). The Judean ministry begins, of course, in Jerusalem, in the Temple, and continues for at least the duration of the Passover in the city. This ministry branches out into the land of Judea (3:22) and it lasts for about eight or nine months. We are able to calculate the length of time from the fact that Jesus began the Judean ministry at Passover time, and He is next found in Samaria about four months before the harvest (Jn. 4:35). Harvest time and Passover time are identical and the Jews count their religious year from Passover to Passover. Thus Jesus was in Samaria about four months before the end of the year, or about eight months after the beginning of the year.

During the Passover feast (also called the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and which lasts seven days) Jesus performed many marvelous signs. What they were, we are not told. One of the Jewish rulers was convinced by these signs that Jesus was "a teacher sent from God" (3:1-2). The multitudes also beheld these signs and many are said to have "believed on his name." Just how sincere their faith was seems to be debatable,

considering the attitude the Lord had toward them (v. 24). Jesus had very little success in Judea throughout His entire ministry. It appears that those who believed on him here were interpreting His signs as harbingers of an impending militant Messiah who would spark a revolution and throw off all their oppressions. The serious student of the life of Jesus must familiarize himself with the situations and the expectations of the times in which Jesus lived, or he cannot appreciate the attitude of the multitudes toward Christ's marvelous signs.

The average Jew was poverty-stricken. He suffered at the hands of the Roman overlords, at the hands of the tax-collectors (publicans), and under the heavy yoke of the religious bigots in Jerusalem (cf. Lk. 11:46). The Jewish nation had a proud heritage. It had enjoyed pre-eminence under David and Solomon, but during the hundreds of years since Solomon, this nation had suffered oppression and slavery at the hands of her conquerors. Israel had become the byword (Deut. 28:37; I Ki. 9:6-7) and the laughing stock of the heathen and the barbarian. It had been some four hundred years since God's last direct communication with His chosen nation. The people had doubtless heard and repeated rumors of the miraculous signs attending the birth of the son of a priest down in Jerusalem (John the Baptist). The multitudes would tell over and over again the story which had been started by some shepherds, of a babe born some thirty years ago in the city of David, and of the signs surrounding His birth. Suddenly, the one who came "in the spirit and power of Elijah" burst on the scene with his soul-searching preaching. Josephus says of him that "he had great influence over the people who seemed ready to do anything that he should advise." One day when the crowds had come out to hear him, he pointed to a Galilean and cried, "Behold, the Lamb of God." A few days later this same Galilean appeared suddenly in the Temple at Passover time and challenged the very throne of religious authority. And so this multitude of Judeans who were beholding His signs were anticipating these signs as omens that He was about to declare Himself the long awaited King, the One who would forever relieve their poverty, their political oppression and their religious burdens.

This is what Jesus saw when He looked on their hearts, and this is why He would not entrust them with His cause. He could not trust such carnally minded people with the full revelation of His teachings. Many would follow Him only as long as He would produce miracles and signs, but when He began to talk

about their making His Word their spiritual food — about self-denial and surrender — they would “go back and walk with him no more” (Jn. 6:66). Men were never able to deceive Jesus by outward appearance — He knew just what was in the heart of anyone with whom He came in contact (cf. Jn. 1:42, 47-48). He later read the thoughts of His disciples, of Nicodemus, and of the woman of Samaria (cf. Mk. 9:33-35; 14:30; Jn. 3; Jn. 4). Enthroned in heaven, He still sees the motives and schemes of men’s hearts (cf. Acts 5 and 9; Rev. 1-3).

There is a second possible interpretation of Jesus’ refusal to trust Himself to them. Some commentators believed that Jesus avoided a situation where He must trust His physical person to them because of the enmity He had aroused in attacking the merchandizers of the Temple courts.

These three verses offer an excellent study of the meaning of the word believer. The English words believe and faith are derived from the Greek word *pisteuo*. It generally means “believe, trust, be persuaded, adhere to and have faith.” The Greek noun *pistis* (faith, belief) is used in the New Testament in a number of ways. It may be used to mean obedience (cf. Rom. 4:12), or it may be used to mean the enlightened conscience of the individual Christian (cf. Rom. 14:22-23). But in the context before us we have two other clear definitions of the word. In verse 23 many believed on his name without really surrendering their wills to Him. Although they beheld the miraculous signs which He did, their belief was probably a carnal hope in a worldly Messiah. It is possible to accept the miracles of Jesus as actual facts and still not trust Jesus with one’s soul to the point of surrender and obedience. The brethren of Jesus accepted the fact that He was doing miraculous works (Jn. 7:3-4), but since He did not fit their ideal as the materialistic type of Messiah, they would not believe on Him. In verse 24, the same word, *pisteuo*, is used, and the translators translated it trust. Trust is the best definition of *pisteuo*. There can be no faith and belief without trust. When we trust someone, we have confidence in his person and in his word — confidence that his word is true. When the Lord invites us to believe in Him, He invites us to have confidence in His Word. When He promises us eternal life, it is always conditioned upon our confidence and trust in His Word as the Truth. How can one completely confide in and trust His Word without obeying its commands? It is impossible — faith without obedience is dead!

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Jesus had no confidence in these Judeans, and would not trust them because their belief was only superficial and carnally motivated. Their faith was one of accepting the factual evidence but refusing to surrender their hearts in trusting obedience to His Word. How do *you* believe in Jesus? Do you trust Him with a confidence that loves to obey?

Quiz

1. How long was Jesus' first Judean ministry? How do we know this?
2. Considering the expectations of the people in Jesus' time, what would they believe, having beheld His signs?
3. What is meant by "he knew all men"?
4. What does the word believe (*pisteuo*) means?

EXPOSITORY SERMON NO. 2

John 1, 2

JESUS MANIFESTS HIS GLORY

Introduction

- I. PROLOGUE
 - A. A condensed version of the entire Gospel of John.
 1. Pre-existence of the Word
 2. The Word manifested to Jews; their rejection
 3. The Word manifested to others; their acceptance
 - B. The Prologue summarized in 1:14
- II. JOHN THE BAPTIST'S WITNESS TO THE LAMB OF GOD
 - A. Jesus' glory evidenced to John
 1. The Spirit's descent seen by John
 2. God's voice heard by John
 - B. John taking second place to Jesus
 1. John pointing out Jesus to his own followers
 - C. John's disciples following Jesus
 1. Talking with Him for whole day
 2. Beginning to get a glimpse of His glory

Discussion

- I. HIS GLORY SHOWN IN SEARCHING HEARTS OF DISCIPLES
 - A. Peter nicknamed "Rock": Peter's future known (Lk. 22:31-32; Acts 4:19; 5:29)

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

- B. Nathanael — prime example
 - 1. Seen by Jesus as an Israelite without guile (Something to strive for today)
 - 2. Thinking himself hidden under fig tree
 - 3. Nathanael convinced of Jesus' glory (v. 1:49)
- C. The Holy Spirit still manifesting God's glory through the Word
 - 1. The living and active Word of God . . . (Heb. 4:12)
 - 2. The converting power of the Word of God
TO THE GLORY OF GOD . . . NOT OF THE PREACHER

"JESUS NEEDED NOT THAT ANYONE SHOULD BEAR WITNESS CONCERNING MAN: FOR HE HIMSELF KNEW WHAT WAS IN MAN" (Jn. 2:25).

II. HIS GLORY SHOWN AT CANA WEDDING FEAST

- A. Majesty shown in rebuking His mother Jn. 2:4
 - 1. Mary seeking to dictate His affairs
 - 2. At age 12 His warning to Joseph and Mary that He has a task to perform
 - 3. Later warning to Mother and brethren He is not to be influenced by men (Mt. 12:46-50)
 - 4. Obedience to Jesus enjoined upon ALL . . . EVEN HIS MOTHER (cf. Lk. 11:27-28.)
- B. Mary's resignation to His will 2:5
 - 1. Jesus then not inconsistent in performing miracle
 - 2. NECESSITY OF DOING THINGS HIS WAY . . . ACCORDING TO HIS WILL
 - a. Not asking to spend in own pleasure
 - b. Mary's desire . . . her own pleasure
- C. The Miracle 2:7ff
 - 1. Disciples belief on Him as a result 2:11
 - 2. Skeptics rejection of the miracle
 - 3. Same One able to step up wine process by miracle still glorified in nature every day
 - 4. FAITH PRODUCED BY ALL OF HIS MIRACLES
 - a. To show His control over nature, etc.
 - b. HIS SUPREME MIRACLE, THE RESURRECTION
 - 1) RESURRECTION THE BASIS OF OUR FAITH