

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

2) BY IT WE TRUST HIM TO RAISE US,
IF WE OBEY!

III. HIS GLORY SHOWN AT CLEANSING OF TEMPLE

A. No miracle here!

1. Miracles not always needed to show His glory

2. Here His Majesty shown in righteousness

3. HIS SINLESS LIFE MANIFESTS HIS GLORY
When on trial . . . "If have done any evil, bear witness . . . etc."

B. His glory manifested in His wrath at ungodliness

Conclusion

I. ALL THESE MANIFESTATIONS TO INSTILL TRUST . . . FAITH

A. Faith is trust . . . hope that is seen is not hope

Faith that understands all is not faith

The testimony of honest men found here

II. THESE MANIFESTATIONS ARE WARNINGS

A. Our very thoughts seen by Jesus . . . deeds without
love unavailing

The hypocrisy of Church-going without faith and love

B. The need of obeying, not dictating to Him

C. His wrath against sin (Jn. 3:36)

III. MEN NOT REQUIRED TO HAVE ALL KNOWL- EDGE OR ALL FAITH TO BECOME HIS DISCIPLE!

A. A willing mind and honest heart and lead by Him to
growth.

B. Disciples defined as learners, trusters,

C. HIS PROMISE CAN BE YOURS . . . ONLY TRUST
HIM

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

C. WHEN DEATH COMES TO A DISCIPLE OF
CHRIST WHO HAS TRUSTED AND OBEYED
. . . . DEATH BECOMES BUT THE DOOR TO
PARADISE, A SHARING IN THE GLORY OF
THE SON!

CHAPTER THREE

The third chapter of John's Gospel is very precious to the believer. It contains the teaching of the Lord on the new birth; it contains the "golden text" of the Bible (3:16); it contains the final testimony of John the Baptist to Christ. In this third chapter may be found the grand scheme of redemption. God's part (v. 16-17) and man's part (v. 3-5) in this redemptive plan is made plain. Chapter three falls naturally into two sections as outlined below:

- II The Word manifested to the Jews and their rejection of Him. 1:19-12:50 (cont.)
 - B. The public ministry — first year 2:13 - 4:54 (cont.)
 - 2. Conversation with Nicodemus 3:1-21
 - a. Teaching on the Kingdom and new birth 3:1-8
 - b. Earthly mysteries compared with heavenly mysteries 3:9-15
 - c. More heavenly mysteries 3:16-21
 - 3. Further Judean ministry and John the Baptist's final testimony 3:22-36
 - a. John's witness concerning himself 3:22-30
 - b. John's witness concerning Christ 3:31-36

TEACHING ON THE KINGDOM AND NEW BIRTH

Text 3:1-8

1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

2 the same came unto him by night, and said to him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him.

3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born anew.

8 The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

Queries

- a. Why did Nicodemus come to Jesus by night?
- b. What does "water and Spirit" have to do with being born anew?
- c. How does the wind illustrate the birth of the Spirit?

Paraphrase

Now there was a man in Jerusalem by the name of Nicodemus. He belonged to the sect of the Pharisees and was a member of the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of the Jews. This man came to Jesus during the night, and said to Him, Teacher, we know that you are a teacher come with God's approval; for no teacher is able to substantiate his teaching with the miraculous signs which you are doing unless God is with him. Jesus said to Nicodemus, I tell you positively, Unless a person be born anew, he cannot participate in the kingdom of God. Nicodemus asked Jesus, How is it possible for a man to be born anew when he has already been born once? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born again? Jesus replied, I tell you positively, Unless a person be born of water and of Spirit, he cannot become a citizen of the kingdom of God. Physical birth, although renewal were possible, could not avail for an inheritance in the kingdom of God. Spiritual rebirth, however, brings forth a child of the Spirit and a child of Promise. Do not let the mysteriousness of a spiritual rebirth astonish you, Nicodemus. You are aware of the reality of the wind, for you see it act upon objects and you hear its sound, but cannot fathom its origin or destination. Just so may you be aware of the reality of the working of the Holy Spirit, by the action He causes in the spiritually reborn.

Summary

Nicodemus comes to Jesus, convinced that He is a teacher come from God, to see what He has to say about the glorious future of Israel. Jesus tells this Pharisee that the Kingdom of God belongs to those born of "water and of Spirit" — not the fleshly sons of Abraham. Jesus illustrates the mystery of the working of the Holy Spirit by the mystery of the wind.

Comment

What of this "ruler" who came and talked with Jesus "by night?" All we know of Nicodemus is that; (a) he was a Pharisee; (b) he was a ruler of the Jews (probably a member of the Sanhedrin — the Senate of the Jews); (c) he came to Jesus by night; (d) he was an esteemed teacher in Israel; (e) he later spoke on behalf of fairness in judging Jesus (7:50); (f) he boldly assisted Joseph of Arimathaea in removing the body of Jesus from the cross and in burying it (19:39); (g) he was willing to admit the verity of Jesus' miracles and that Jesus was a "teacher come from God."

Some students of the Scriptures are inclined to question Nicodemus' courage from the single phrase, "the same came unto him by night." Of course, there is the reference in John 19:39 to this same incident, but as a matter of fact, we do not know why this ruler of the Jews came to Jesus by night! It may be that he came in the night simply to have privacy and leisure. The Sanhedrin had religious jurisdiction over every Jew in the world (Mt. 23:1-3) and they were to investigate everyone suspected of being a false prophet — was this his reason? Contrariwise, Nicodemus leaves us with the impression that he did not believe Jesus to be a false prophet but a true prophet! It is remarkable that Nicodemus came at all! It may be that Nicodemus was too busy during the day to come; it may be that Jesus was too busy during the day for Nicodemus to get sufficient answers for his questions. Even though we must guess as to the reason why Nicodemus chose the night for his visit instead of the day, one fact stands out plainly — Jesus did *not* reprove him for his night visit. He who came to "seek and to save that which was lost" never smothered the faintest spark of belief but ever strove to fan it into a burning fire of faith and devotion.

We pause here, in the continuity of the context, to give the reader a brief history of Pharisaism. It was a sect which seems

(according to Josephus) to have originated some years before the Maccabean wars. This party began with a group of men whose righteous indignation had been aroused against the worldliness and paganism creeping into Israel through Hellenism (Greek cultural influence). About 200 B.C. this group of men reacted against the infiltration of idolatry and immorality and were called *hasidim* or Pietists. It seems they acquired the name Pharisee or Separatist about 135 B.C. In order to join this party, a young man had to take a pledge of entry "that he would devote all his life to studying and observing every detail of the traditions of the elders and the law of Moses." The Pharisees produced men of high morality, in most instances, and they were essentially a believing sect. They believed in God, man as a free moral agent, a general resurrection, angels, rewards and etc. They produced men like Saul of Tarsus who "lived in all good conscience" as to the letter of the Law. Their main fault was in swinging the religious pendulum, through reaction to evil, to the opposite extreme. They rebelled from the extreme liberalism of the Hellenists—but they fell into the extreme of self-righteousness and meritorious conservatism. They made religion a matter of outward conformity to traditions, rites and ceremonies. As Jesus said, "outwardly they appeared beautiful, but inwardly they were full of hypocrisy and iniquity." They changed the great principles of God's law into legalistic by-laws and a meritorious keeping of regulations. They "strained the gnat and swallowed the camel"; they tithed to the last tiny dill seed but neglected the weightier matters of the law—justice, and mercy, and faith, (cf. Mt. 23: Lk. 11). One good example of their emphasis on externals is their absurd regulations concerning the Sabbath. The Law merely says, "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," and that no servile work shall be done on that day. The Pharisee decided to define work. One form of work, he decided, was tying knots. Then he had to define which knots were work and which were not. "The following," says the Mishnah, "are the knots the making of which renders a man guilty; the knot of camel drivers and that of sailors; and as one is guilty by reason of tying them, so also of untying them." Knots which could be tied or untied with one hand were legal. "A woman may tie up a slit in her shift and the strings of her cap and those of her girdle, the straps of shoes or sandals, or wine skins." Notice now the absurdity of their regulations carried to a logical

end: If a man wanted to tie up a goat or donkey, he could not use a rope. He might tie up his animal with a woman's girdle or her shoe strings, for these were legal knots. A woman could not look in a mirror, for she might remove a fallen hair from her shoulder, which would be classified as "bearing a burden on the Sabbath." No one could gargle on the Sabbath, for that would be practicing medicine. Such rules and regulations were matters of life and death; by conforming to such absurdities they were sure they were pleasing God! To such a religious sect belonged Nicodemus.

For an honest-minded man, with a sensitive conscience, such a religion soon becomes unsatisfying and often disgusting. It is a religion of sham. Nicodemus appears to be an honest and sensitive man. Could it be that this "teacher of all Israel" had been dissatisfied with his externalized religion for the last few years? Could it be that he had secretly, but eagerly, listened to the preaching of John the Baptist? Perhaps he had also heard the teaching, as well as having seen the signs, of Jesus and wanted to earnestly discuss them with Him.

There also seems to be leaping within his heart of the hope that these signs of Jesus somehow proclaim the impending arrival of the kingdom promised to the Branch out of Jesse and the Son of David. He, as one of the chief Pharisees, wants to make preliminary arrangements, perhaps, for his place of honor in that kingdom.

Whatever the cause of Nicodemus' coming, Jesus brushes aside his inadequate estimate of Him, and answers the thoughts of this man's heart. Jesus knew his problem, even if we do not!

There are two problems in verse three: (a) does the Greek word *anothen* mean "from above" or "anew"? (b) what does Jesus mean by "cannot see"? As to the first problem, Nicodemus' reply (v. 4) seems to indicate that he took Jesus to mean "anew" or "again." But we cannot definitely prove that this is what Jesus meant merely by Nicodemus' reply. The Greek word may mean both "from above" or "anew." Actually, Jesus seems to indicate both meanings — a heavenly or spiritual birth which is a new birth. By the word *see* Jesus probably means participate or have part in. The same Greek word is used to express participation in death (cf. Lk. 2:26; 9:27; Acts 2:27; Heb. 11:5). Thus, any man who is not born again has no part in God's promised kingdom. Physical lineage will not do. Just because

Nicodemus was a Jew, a descendent of Abraham, did not mean he would be a member of Jehovah's new dispensation (cf. Gal. 3rd and 4th chapters). His circumcision as an Israelite was useless in the new kingdom (Gal. 5:15) — he must become a new creature.

Jesus' answer undoubtedly startled Nicodemus. That any descendent of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob should be excluded from the kingdom of promise was absolutely foreign to the Jewish thinking. Nicodemus could not comprehend what Jesus meant. It was not the Lord's fault. Nicodemus was simply carnally minded — he could not think spiritually. "Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged (discerned)" (I Cor. 2:14). Thus in verse four Nicodemus exclaims incredulously, "How"?

Just what does Jesus mean by born anew? There are veiled references to the new birth in the Old Testament. Ezekiel, chapters eleven and thirty-six, speaks of a new heart and a new spirit which God will give His people. He will "put His Spirit within them and cause them to walk in His statutes." In Ezekiel 18:31, Israel is commanded, "Cast away from you all your transgressions, wherein ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

The phrases, new birth, regeneration, new creature, born again, run through the New Testament as its absolute requirement for entering the kingdom of God!

1. "Begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (I Pet. 1:3).
2. We purify our souls by obedience to the truth, and we are begotten again, of incorruptible seed through the Word of God (I Pet. 1:22-23).
3. We are brought forth of God by the Word of truth (Jas. 1:18).
4. God saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).

5. We have "put off the old man . . . and have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:10).
6. We are to "put away . . . the old man . . . and be renewed in the spirit of our mind . . . put on the new man that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth (Eph. 4:22-24).
7. Circumcision or uncircumcision avails nothing . . . "but a new creature" (Gal. 6:15).
8. If any man is in Christ, "he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold they are become new" (II Cor. 5:17).
9. When we have buried the old man through repentance and baptism, we "rise to walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:1-6).
10. "Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3).

In verse five, then, Jesus answers Nicodemus' "How"?

The new birth is one of "water and Spirit." There cannot be a separation of the terms "water and Spirit." There is no article (the) in the original language with either word. Regeneration is one single action. That is, the initial act of the new birth is completed at the time a person submits in faithful obedience to baptism in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Of course, after having become babes in Christ, we must continue to feed on His Word and grow spiritually (I Cor. 3:1-2; Heb. 5:11-14; I Pet. 2:2) — baptism does not make a person "eternally secure."

As will be seen from the ten Scripture references to the new birth, regeneration comes when the Holy Spirit confronts a man through the preaching or reading of God's Word and when that man crucifies (puts to death) self (cf. Gal. 2:20; 5:24; 6:14) and comes forth from the world into the kingdom of God. When

the seed, which is the Word of God, falls upon good and honest hearts, men will change their minds and their lives (by faith and repentance) and will change their state (by baptism). Such men have been spiritually transformed (cf. Rom. 12:2).

We do not propose to limit the working of the Holy Spirit to the agency of the written or spoken Word alone! He may work in and through men and women apart from the Word as He pleases. Of one thing we are certain—the Holy Spirit is the One who convicts men of “sin, of righteousness, and of judgment” (cf. Jn. 16:8). This He does through the agency of the written Word of the apostles, for He is the Holy Spirit of promise which should “guide the apostles into all the truth.” He is the same Holy Spirit which spoke through Peter and the eleven on the day of Pentecost and three thousand souls were “pricked in their hearts” from conviction of their sin (Acts 2:36-38) and were subsequently “born anew of water and Spirit.” The Holy Spirit did not act there apart from the spoken Word, nor does He now, in both convicting sinners and showing them the way of salvation.

It is unquestionable that Jesus means baptism in water when he says “born of water . . .” This is the same Jesus who later *commands*, “Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you . . .” (Mt. 28:19-20). The New Testament is plain that the apostles understood Jesus to mean baptism in water (cf. Acts 8:36-39; 10:47; 1 Pet. 3:20-21, etc.). To refuse to repent (change the mind, the will and the actions) and still claim to have been born anew would be mocking God. And, in like manner, to refuse the positive command of Christ to be baptized (immersed) in water and still claim to have been born anew is sheer mockery!

In verse six Jesus shows Nicodemus the impossibility of his suggestion of physical rebirth (v. 4). Even if it were possible to have a physical rebirth, it would produce only flesh, “and they

that are in the flesh cannot please God" (cf. Rom. 7:18 — 8:17). This leaves Nicodemus and all the Jews, with their physical birthright from father Abraham, outside the kingdom. Paul says that only those born after the Spirit are children of promise (cf. Gal. 3:7, 14; 4:6, 7, 28).

Jesus must have seen astonishment in the face of this learned teacher. Nicodemus cannot grasp the *how*. He is stumbling over the *how* as so many after him have. "Do not be astonished," says Jesus in verse seven, "at the mysterious working of the Spirit, for He is invisible." The Master Teacher then illustrates the Spirit's unseen nature by the wind. No man knows where the wind originates, nor its ultimate destination. Yet we know the reality of the wind from the effect it has upon certain objects. We see it blow the leaves from the trees in the fall and we hear it whistle and moan through the branches and we know the wind is there. Just so, we may know the reality of the working of the Holy Spirit when we observe the conviction and the change wrought in the lives of men through Him and hear His voice speaking forth from those who speak the Word of Christ in the spirit of Christ. Those who have experienced the birth of the Spirit will let flow from within their inner life, rivers of living water unto thirsty men (Jn. 7:38-39), and such a life will bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-24).

Here is an analogy of the new birth as compared with the physical birth. This analogy is given merely in the interest of stimulating thought and meditation. It is axiomatic that an analogy cannot prove any argument — it merely illustrates. Further, we do not presume to say that Jesus had such an analogy in mind when He said, "Ye must be born anew." Remember, however, that John says of this same Jesus, "all things were made through him (physical life) . . . in him was life; and the life was the light of men (spiritual life)." He is the Giver of life in both realms, and it may be that such a comparison was in His mind as He spoke to Nicodemus.

AN ANALOGY OF THE "NEW BIRTH"

BIRTH CYCLE	NATURAL BIRTH	SPIRITUAL BIRTH
Seed	Living sperm	Living Word of God Lk. 8:11
Place of planting	Womb	Heart (the will) Lk. 8:15
Signs of life	Action	Repentance and Con- fession Lk. 3:8-15 Lk. 19:8-9
Change of state	Delivered forth in water — translated into the world	Baptized in water — translated into the kingdom of God Rom. 6:1-6
Life comes by Circumcision	Breath of life Of the flesh	Holy Spirit Rom. 8:11 Of the Heart Rom. 2:28-29
Nourishment	Milk — then solid foods	Sincere milk of the gospel I Pet. 2:2, then solid food — Heb. 5:13-14; I Cor. 3:1-2
Relationship	Son, child of the father, heir	Son by adoption, child of God the Eternal Father, joint heir with Christ Gal. 4:5-7

It is interesting to note that the phrase "kingdom of God" is found only twice in the entire Fourth Gospel (verses 3 and 5 of the third chapter). In John 18:36 Jesus tells Pilate that His kingdom is not of this world, but one must go to the Synoptics to find "kingdom of God" repeated again and again.

In view of the supreme importance of this subject, we introduce here, before continuing our commentary, a "SPECIAL STUDY" entitled "The Kingdom of God" by Seth Wilson. Bro. Wilson is Dean of Ozark Bible College, Joplin, Missouri, and it is through his Christian courtesy that we reproduce his essay here.

SPECIAL STUDY NO. 1

The Kingdom of God

—by Seth Wilson

The New Testament says much about the kingdom, mentioning it 140 times by the term "kingdom," besides the other terms and phrases used. The whole message of the great prophet, John the Baptist, was the importance of the coming kingdom and of personal preparation for it. Jesus taught more about the kingdom than He did about any other subject. He taught men to pray for the kingdom to come (Mt. 6:10). He said it was the greatest treasure in the world, one for which any one should joyfully sell all other possessions that he might gain the kingdom (Mt. 13:44-46). He told us all to "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mt. 6:33). He made it more important than the food and clothing which are necessary to physical life. Surely it matters much whether we believe in the kingdom and know it, not only in theory, but in vital experience.

What is the Kingdom of God?

It is not easy to give a definite and brief answer which would be satisfactory to all students or true to all the Scriptural uses of the phrase. *Its essential idea is the reign or government of God over the lives of men.* Sometimes it comprehends the characteristics and advantages of the complete submission of an individual life to the rule of God. Sometimes it refers to the whole community of men who obey God on earth. Sometimes it has reference to heaven itself as a place where God reigns in perfect peace, wisdom, and glory. But regardless of all other circumstances, it is always essentially the rule of God in the hearts of men.

Other terms and phrases are used for the same idea, and are freely interchanged with "the kingdom of God." Matthew uses the words "kingdom of heaven" about 29 times, although it is not used in any other New Testament book (cf. Mt. 13:11 with Mk. 4:11; and Mt. 13:31 with Mk. 4:30-31, etc.). It is also called "his kingdom (the son of Man's)" (Mt. 13:41; 15:28); "my kingdom" (Christ's) (Jn. 18:36; Lk. 22:29-30); "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet.

1:11); "the kingdom of God's dear Son" (Col. 1:13); "the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph. 5:5); "my (Christ's) church" (Mt. 16:18); the "church of God" (I Tim. 3:5, 15); "the church" (Eph. 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23-32); "the church of the first born (ones)" (Heb. 12:23); or as congregations viewed distributively "churches of God" (I Cor. 11:16); (I Thess. 2:14), and "churches of the saints" (I Cor. 14:33), and "churches of Christ" (Rom. 16:16).

These various expressions are not identical in their limits and points of emphasis, but they do overlap in that all of them have reference to the realm of God's rule through Jesus Christ. That reign will some day be complete and unchallenged, and will continue so eternally; but it also exists now and has for many centuries in the midst of those who resist it or deny its present reality.

The kingdom is not represented as coming all at once fully formed and in its ultimate glory, but this term is used for the rule of God in different stages, and for the growing control of Christ over men through the gospel — "first the blade, then the ear, and then the full grain in the ear" (Mk. 4:26-29). Study the other parables of the seed and of the leaven. Chiefly, of course, it looks forward to the glorious consummation, the complete subjection of all things to God, the eternal state of righteousness, peace, and blessedness that will result when God is given full control. Jesus came to establish the kingdom by revealing the righteousness, mercy, and goodness of God's will, and by winning the hearts of men to surrender themselves to Him — by redemption of sinners and reconciliation of their hearts to God, by putting the law of God into their minds and hearts through faith and love and regeneration of the Holy Spirit — (Heb. 8:10-11; Jn. 3:5). The government of God is truly desirable. Pray that it may prevail upon earth as it does in heaven (cf. Psalm 19:7-14).

John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles (before the cross) preached that the kingdom was just at hand, to be expected and prepared for immediately. It was certain to come before that generation died (Mt. 16:28; Mk. 9:1). In a sense it was already come (Mt. 12:28) in the person of the King, and it was suffering violence from the days of John the Baptist (Mt. 11:12; Lk. 16:16). The rule of God and the principles of His realm were being presented in the preaching of Jesus, and Jesus could say, "Lo, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Lk. 17:21).

This was said to the unbelieving Pharisees who did not have the kingdom in their hearts, but it was in the midst of them, in that its King was there proclaiming its laws and swaying His authority over them or at least some who were standing among them. Moreover, whenever it came to men, it was to come not with great demonstrations of force, "not with observation, but as in inward growth (Mk. 4:26-28). It was to spring from seed, which is the Word of God (Lk. 8:11), and to be brought about by preaching of the Word (Mt. 13:18-23). It was to begin small and grow to be very great (Mt. 13:31-33). During the growing stage it takes some "bad" as well as "good," who have to be separated by the angels at the end of the world (Mt. 13:47-50). The sons of the kingdom are the righteous (Mt. 5:20), who grow in the world side by side with the wicked (Mt. 13:38-41). Yet it is not a kingdom of this world (Jn. 18:36). It must be entered by a new birth of the Spirit (through faith in and submission to the word of the Spirit) and of water (baptism into Christ) (Jn. 3:5; Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5; I Pet. 1:23). And the least in the kingdom is greater than the greatest born of women (Mt. 11:11). Having part in it is equivalent to having "eternal life" and being "saved" (Lk. -8:18, 25, 26).

One thing is evident—that Jesus did not mean to set up a worldly, materialistic, or military kingdom. The devil offered Him the kingdoms of the whole world, but He refused them (Mt. 4:8-10). The Jews and even the apostles wanted that kind of kingdom, but Jesus disappointed them. After the feeding of the five thousand, they sought to take Him by force and make Him king, but Jesus refused. The very next day He preached a sermon on the spiritual and eternal purpose of His ministry which was so unacceptable to them that multitudes went away and followed Him no more (John 6). This same idea presents itself at the time of the Triumphal Entry, when the people in all the clamor and excitement of a mob, gathered together as a whole nation at Jerusalem for the Passover, and welcomed Jesus into the city as "the King that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Lk. 19:38), and as bringing in the kingdom of His father, David (Mk. 11:10). If he had wanted a kingdom of force, or of material wealth, or of political organizations, He could have had it (cf. Mt. 26:53; Jn. 18:36-37). Because of materialistic ambitions of the people regarding the Messiah, Jesus avoided telling plainly that He was the Christ, and He had to teach of His life's purpose and His kingdom by parables in order to hold their

attention and try to make plain the unwelcome message of a spiritual kingdom, instead of temporal.

One group of passages represents the kingdom under the figure of a place. This is the case in all expressions involving the act of entering into the kingdom (Mt. 5:20; 7:21; 18:3). It is better to enter into the kingdom of heaven with one eye than, having two, to be cast out (Mk. 9:27). Men are said to be near or far from it (Mk. 13:34). Those who enter are those **who** are reborn and who do the will of God, who have by **relationship** with the Saviour and by their characters a certain fitness for it (Lk. 9:62; Mt. 7:21; Jn. 3:5). But after entrance has been secured, it is a place of enjoyment, as in Mt. 25:34, and a place where even Jesus Himself eats and drinks, as in Mt. 26:29.

In a second class of passages the kingdom is represented as a possession. It is said to belong to the poor in spirit and to those persecuted for righteousness (Mt. 5:3, 10; Lk. 18:16). It will be taken from the Jews and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof (Mt. 21:43). It is the gift of God (Lk. 12:32). It is the most valuable of possessions, and it is the height of wisdom to seek and the summit of prosperity to secure it (Mt. 6:33; Lk. 12:31).

A third class of passages represents the kingdom as an organization, or body, composed of a certain class of men.

A fourth class designates it as an order of things, or a dispensation. The special new feature of the dispensation thus announced was its spirituality. Its members are in it by choice and by their perfect willingness to do God's will. Thus its law is written on their hearts and in their minds (Heb. 8:10-12; Rom. 12:1-2).

The kingdom did come in the generation of the apostles as Jesus said it would (Mk. 9:1). It did come with power on the day of Pentecost after His resurrection. Peter was given the keys (Mt. 16:19). Paul went everywhere preaching the kingdom of God (Acts 20:25), although he determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified (I Cor. 2:2). Philip preached the kingdom of God, and the faith of the Samaritans caused them to be baptized into Christ and become members of the church (Acts 8:12). Paul says God "translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13), and John says "he made us to be a kingdom" (Rev. 1:6). The church is a kingdom. Today, in our dispensation, it is **THE** kingdom. It is certainly not a

democracy as to its nature. Christ is the absolute monarch over all things pertaining to the church and to the kingdom (Eph. 1:22).

Quiz

1. Tell five things you know of Nicodemus.
2. Why do you think Nicodemus came to Jesus by night?
3. What was the main fault of the Pharisees?
4. Did Jesus say, "Ye must be born *anew*," or did He say, "*from above*"?
5. Give at least five Scripture references in the New Testament concerning new birth, or regeneration.
6. How is one born "*anew*" (cf. verse 5)?
7. In what way did Jesus illustrate the working of the Holy Spirit in the new birth process?
8. Essentially, what is the kingdom of God?
9. When did the kingdom of God come?

EARTHLY MYSTERIES COMPARED WITH HEAVENLY MYSTERIES

Text 3:9-15

9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou the teacher of Israel, and understandest not these things?

11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

12 If I told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?

13 And no one hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man, who is in heaven.

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up;

15 that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life.

Queries

- a. Who is the "we" of verse 11?
- b. What are "earthly things" and "heavenly things"?
- c. Why is the comparison made with the "serpent in the wilderness"?

Paraphrase

Nicodemus said to Jesus, How is it possible for all these things to come to pass? Jesus replied to Nicodemus, Are you *the* teacher of Israel and do not understand these things? I tell you positively, that John the Baptist and I are speaking that which we fully know, and we are testifying to that which we have actually seen with our own eyes, and yet none of you are receiving our testimony. If I have told you the earthly things of the kingdom which happen within the realm of human experience and you continue to disbelieve, how shall you believe if I tell you of the heavenly counsels of an Omniscient God? No mortal has ever ascended into heaven to obtain first hand knowledge of God's eternal will except He that has come down from heaven, even the Son of Man. And in like manner as Moses lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, even so it is necessary that the Son of Man be lifted up in order that everyone who looks unto Him in believing obedience may be cured of sin's deadly bite and may have eternal life.

Summary

Nichodemus is curious as to the exact manner of working of the Holy Spirit in the new birth. Jesus tells him that inability to comprehend the secret actions of the eternal God is no excuse for unbelief. What is necessary for man to know, God has revealed through His Son.

Comment

Nicodemus' continual "how"? (v. 4, 9) is like that of so many men and women today. He cannot understand the secret doings of an Infinite God and therefore he refuses to obey the mysteries of this God which have been revealed and which may be empirically known. There are those today who will admit the historical verity of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth but they will not give their souls over to God in trustful obedience to His Word because they cannot probe into and prove to their senses every unveiled mystery of an omnipotent God.

In verse 10 Nicodemus is informed that he should have had some knowledge concerning the subject under discussion, i.e., regeneration. The use of the article *the* in the Greek language emphasizes identification. Since the article is used with both "teacher" and "Israel" in verse 10, the emphasis is that Nico-

demus was one of *the* esteemed teachers in all Israel. He may even have been *the* leading teacher of the day, as Gamaliel was a few years later. The Pharisees were supposed to be the spiritual leaders of the nation — they were supposed to be the experts in the Scriptures. Nicodemus' ignorance of the subject of regeneration was inexcusable and should have been embarrassing. The "law and the prophets" spoke again and again of Jehovah's demand for a renewal of heart and mind (cf. Deut. 30:6; Psa. 51:10-12, 17; Isa. 1:16-20; 57:15; Jer. 24:7).

There are various interpretations of the plural *we* in verse 11: (a) Jesus speaks of Himself and the twelve disciples; (b) Jesus refers to Himself and the Old Testament prophets and writers; (c) Jesus means Himself and His forerunner, John the Baptist. We prefer the latter of the three as the most likely meaning. Both Jesus and John the Baptist knew the Spirit for they were filled with the Holy Spirit; both had seen the Holy Spirit in a visible manifestation (Mt. 3:16; Mk. 1:11; Lk. 3:22; Jn. 1:33-34); both were sent to testify as to the work of the Holy Spirit and to preach repentance and regeneration. Both were eyewitnesses of the working of the Holy Spirit — Jesus' testimony being greater than John's, of course, for He had descended from Heaven and from intimate communion with the Father. Jesus and the Baptist went about testifying as eyewitnesses to the reality of the Holy Spirit, but the Pharisees rejected their testimony and their message of repentance and were, in essence, calling both Jesus and John liars! The cause for rejection by the Pharisees is made plain in Luke 7:29-30. When the outcasts of society heard John's message of repentance they "justified God" (put God in His rightful place of Divine authority) and were baptized of John. But when the Pharisees heard, they "rejected the counsels of God" (dethroned God) and refused John's baptism. The Pharisees rebelled because they did not want to "bring forth fruits worthy of repentance" (cf. Lk. 3:7-14).

The omniscient Teacher now shows the mortal teacher it is useless to discuss Heavenly mysteries. Nicodemus cannot even understand earthly things. There are two general interpretations of what is meant by "earthly things" in verse 12: (a) that Jesus means the wind, or (b) that He means the earthly things within the kingdom of God, e.g., things that may be experienced such as faith, repentance, baptism, and renewal of mind and heart. We prefer the second interpretation, for it fits the context better. If

Nicodemus could not understand that a "new heart and a new spirit" was necessary to be pleasing unto God (something he should have known from the Old Testament), how much more incredible would be God's eternal purposes to such a carnal mind! It was evident even then to Jesus that the cross would be a "stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles." How could Nicodemus understand it was necessary that the Son of Man be lifted up, like Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness — he could not even understand the Prophets whom he had pledged to study all his life!

Even when mortal man asks, "How can these things be?" God's wisdom is so infinite and unsearchable that none can know except they ascend into heaven and sit in personal conference with him. None except the Son of man and the Holy Spirit have ever enjoyed this intimate bosom-acquaintance with the Father. Paul informed the Corinthians the wisdom he spoke was God's wisdom, infinitely greater than men's eloquence. Such wisdom God had "hidden since the foundations of the worlds," but it had been given unto the apostles by a special revelation of the Spirit "which searcheth the deep things of God," (cf. I Cor. 2:6-11). The last phrase of verse 13, "who is in heaven," is omitted in many ancient manuscripts. It is omitted in the most recent Codex — the Bodmer Papyrus (see Introduction). Most authorities believe it to be a scribal gloss and we have, upon textual evidence above, omitted it from our paraphrase.

The incident referred to by Jesus in verse 14 is found in Numbers 21:4-9. The Israelites were in the wilderness country south of Mt. Hor, near to the Red Sea and the land of Edom when they began to rebel against Moses and God. The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and many were bitten and died. The people repented of their murmuring and came begging Moses to intercede on their behalf for mercy. Jehovah God then revealed His plan of salvation to Moses who was to tell it to the people. Moses would fashion a serpent from bronze and raise it up on a pole or a standard. Every Israelite who obeyed God's plan and looked upon the brazen serpent would be cured and restored to life. Commentators have wrested Jesus' use of this incident as an illustration in order to carry out their own analogies. There seems to be at least two main points of analogy or illustration which are revelant to the context: (a) just as the brazen serpent was the *only* cure for the deadly bite of the fiery ser-

pents, so the "lifting up" of the Son of Man is necessary — a must — as the *only* remedy for the deadly bite of sin (cf. Jn, 8:28; 12:32); (b) God provides the remedy for sin through His Son and only that man who looks upon Him in trusting obedience will be saved. Although God provided the children of Israel with a cure for snake bite, not one would have lived had they stubbornly refused to look upon the brazen serpent. "Obvious!" a reader says. Yet how many today who have been bitten by "that old serpent, the devil" are refusing to do the obvious thing and obey the gospel? Did the Israelites hold back, like Nicodemus, harping on the "how can this be?" Did they demand an explanation of the scientific and medical relationship between a bronze serpent and cure of snake bite? Indeed they did not! These people were saved, not because they understood God's requirement, but because they trusted God and obeyed His demand to look upon this brazen serpent. Whom among mortals can explain fully the relationship between Christ's death on the cross and His commandment to "believe and be baptized" with salvation? How is this possible? — it is not possible for us to fully comprehend — but it is possible for us to trust and obey! This was the lesson Nicodemus needed to learn, this was the lesson the disciples had to learn and the lesson we must all learn. "Trust and obey, for there's no other way . . ."

Quiz

1. Why should Nicodemus have known of the subject of regeneration?
2. Give three Old Testament Scripture references that speak of regeneration.
3. What is the best interpretation of *we* in verse 11? Why?
4. What are the "earthly things" that Nicodemus could not believe?
5. Give the two main points of comparison between the brazen serpent and the "lifting up of the Son of Man."

MORE HEAVENLY MYSTERIES

Text 3:16-21

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.

17 For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him.

18 He that believeth on him is not judged: he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God.

19 And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil.

20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reproved.

21 But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God.

Queries

- a. Why did God "so love the world?"
- b. How is the unbeliever judged already?
- c. What is the significance of the contrast between "doing evil" and "doing the truth?"

Paraphrase

For God so dearly loved mankind, that He gave His Son, His Only-unique son, in order that everyone continuing to trust in Him may not be eternally separated from the presence of God, but may have eternal life. For God's primary purpose in sending His Son into the world was not to sentence and condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through the agency of His Son. The man who continues to trust in Him is not condemned. The man who continues to disbelieve is condemned already because he has not trusted himself to the Only Son of God in whose name only is salvation possible. But this is the inevitable condemnation of the unbeliever, that the Light has come unto the world and men deliberately chose to love the darkness rather than the Light; for their works were evil. For everyone who practices worthless things hates and resists the Light and comes not unto the Light in order that his works may not be shown for what they really are. But the one who continually does the truth comes to the Light in order that his works may be made manifest because they have been wrought in God.

Summary

God, motivated by infinite love, sent His only Son unto fallen mankind, not to condemn but to save everyone who believes in His Son. The unbeliever brings condemnation upon himself by purposely rejecting the *only* life-giving light. The believer purposely manifests his works to glorify God.

Comment

Verse 16 has been called the Golden Text of the Bible, Everyman's Text, and other equally descriptive names. It is probably the most famous verse of the New Testament, and the most often quoted. In fact, verses 16-21 do contain the heart of God's new will. We see in this Golden Text that "God is love." Until we have experienced, in a measure, the same unselfish love, we cannot know God as we ought (cf. I Jn. 4:7-12). We see (v. 16) God's love wooing mankind back unto His glorious fellowship, for He made the initial advances — we love Him only because "He first loved us" (cf. I Jn. 4:19). This text shows God loving us, not for His sake alone, but for our sakes. True love "seeketh not its own" (cf. I Cor. 13:1-7). God's love is that of a Father who is happy only when His prodigal child has returned to His fellowship (cf. Lk. 15:11-24). Augustine said, "God loves each one of us as if there was only one of us to love . . . Love is the highest characteristic of God, the one attribute in which all others harmoniously blend. Although our finite minds cannot grasp the limitlessness of His love, we are informed of it in His revealed Word. God's love for men is declared in both the Old Testament and the New Testament (cf. Deut. 7:13; Isa. 63:9; Hos. 14:4; Rom. 5:8; I Jn. 4:10). Here are outlines of this famous verse by two famous men:

Wm. Hendriksen, author of *New Testament Commentary*
 "God's Love": 1. Its character (so loved, 2. Its Author (God), 3. Its object (the world), 4. Its Gift (his Son, the only-begotten), and 5. Its purpose (that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life).

R. C. Foster, author of *A Syllabus of the Life of Christ*
 "Doctrinal Elements of John 3:16": (1) Love of God (2) Jesus, the Son of God, deity of Jesus (3) Atonement (gave His Son) (4) Man lost in sin (5) Plan of salvation suggested (6) Eternal reward and punishment.

A few commentators have contended that Jesus' words cease at verse 15, and that from verse 16 through 21 we have the reflective words of the author, John. There are two reasons for believing to the contrary, that these words are further words of teaching by Jesus to Nicodemus: (a) the conjunction "for" establishes a causal relation between this and the preceeding discourse (vs. 1-15); (b) the close connection of thought, i.e., "heavenly things" concerning the "scheme of redemption"; and, further, there is not the slightest notice indicating that the record has passed from direct conversation in v. 15, over to the writer's reflection in v. 16. Before passing on to the next verse, it will be well to note that "perish" does not mean "annihilate." That the wicked who die merely cease to exist, or are annihilated, is absolutely denied by the Scriptures. The New Testament is plain and positive in its teaching that those who refuse to believe and obey and who depart this world in such a state look forward to a "certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire . . ." (Heb. 10:27). The unsaved dead will be condemned to eternal punishment (cf. Mt. 18:8; 25:41, 46; Jn. 5:29; II Thess. 1:7-9; Jude 6-7). We must also note that the promise of eternal life is to whosoever *continues* to believe in the Son. The word "believe" is in the Greek present tense, and indicates continued action.

From the sublime contemplations of the love of God, we are abruptly faced with judgment — condemnation. Verse 17, according to one commentator, "is an attempt by Jesus to correct a Jewish misinterpretation of the prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah." A long standing Jewish interpretation of Messianic prophecies held that the purpose for the coming of the Messiah was to "condemn the world," i.e., to judge the Gentile nations which had oppressed Israel. Amos, the herdsman-prophet from Tekoa, seems to be crying out against such a gross misinterpretation (Amos 5:18-20). The verse before us (v. 17) clearly teaches Christ's primary purpose in the first coming into the world was to provide a way of salvation for mankind. Skeptics are quick to seize upon this verse and compare it with John 5:22, 27; 9:39; 12:47, 48 and declare the Bible contradicts itself. A moment of unbiased contemplation of all the passages dealing with the purpose of Christ's coming will show there is no contradiction. Jesus came to save, not to judge the world. He came to judge the world (at the Incarnation) only insofar as it would not allow

itself to be saved. He still judges (condemns or sentences) the world when His good news of salvation is rejected by men. This same principle is applied in our everyday living. It is possible for us to offer to share something with a fellow-man, and, when he deliberately rejects our offer, his rejection turns out as a judgment upon him. A favorite illustration of this same principle goes: "A visitor was being shown around a famous art gallery by one of the attendants. In the gallery were masterpieces beyond all price, works of genius and fame. At the end of the tour the visitor said: 'Well, I don't think much of your pictures.' The attendant answered, 'Sir, I would remind you that these pictures are no longer on trial, for they are masterpieces, but those who look at them are '." When the Jews rejected Paul's message they "judged themselves unworthy of eternal life" (cf. Acts 13:46). The gospel is *never* on trial, but those to whom the gospel is preached are *always* on trial. Jesus Christ was not on trial as He faced Annas, Caiaphas, Herod and Pilate in succession — but these judges were being judged!

In verse 18 comes the wonderful news of pardon for the believer, and the awful sentence of doom for the unbeliever. This verse shows why God did not need to send His son to condemn the world. Since the Son was sent with the message of salvation, the man who disbelieves and disobeys brings about his own condemnation. On the other hand, the man who accepts the testimony of Christ and obeys His Word "has passed out of death into life." The word *kekritai* is the Greek word for judged — condemned and the word from whence comes the English critic, crisis, critique, etc. That this word means condemned here is evident from verse 17 where it is placed in apposition to saved. The tense of the Greek in verse 18b shows that the unbeliever is condemned just as long as he continues to disbelieve and disobey. The men or women who even now refuse to surrender in loving obedience to the demands of the gospel walk the face of this earth with the sentence of eternal condemnation ever present upon them! God does not need a special day to determine a man's destiny — that is determined by the man's own will and sealed at death. Notice that Jesus places all of mankind in only two categories: the believer and the unbeliever — the saved and the condemned. We cannot here enter into a lengthy discussion of the possibility of the unevangelized heathen being saved through ignorance of the gospel. Suffice it to say the New Testament

indicates even the heathen has had sufficient law of conscience given to him so that "he may be without excuse" (cf. Rom. 1:18-32; Ept. 2:11-12). The point Jesus seems to emphasize for Nicodemus is that salvation is possible *only* through trust in God's Son. Unless Nicodemus accepts the *only* way, he stands condemned, regardless of his Jewish blood and ancestry from Abraham. This point needs emphasis in every generation. Family ties, traditions and family religion will not avail unless they be conformable to revealed truth!

The next verse (v. 19) is very revealing! Jesus shows that the condemnation which abides upon the unbeliever is just.—it is what the unbeliever deserves—and He further reveals the inner moral wrong which makes this condemnation deserved. The Greek word for loved in verse 19 is *agapae* which means a love of intelligence and purpose . . . a deliberate love. Thus a man who deliberately loves the darkness is morally rebellious and makes his own choice! When the light comes and convicts this man of his sins he will purposely reject the light and deliberately love the darkness. Such a man inevitably condemns himself and receives a just punishment (cf. II Thess. 2:9-12). Unbelief stems from a moral wickedness and not from ignorance! Paul recognizes as the basic cause of rejecting of the truth "having pleasure in unrighteousness."

The Lord further shows that the one who has deliberately chosen the darkness cannot remain at peace with the light. This principle is expressed by Jesus—"He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth" (Mt. 12:30). The lover of darkness *must* hate the light. There are two different Greek words used for evil works in verses 19 and 20. In v. 19 the word *ponera* which denotes an active wickedness, and in v. 20 the word is *phaula*, which denotes worthlessness—the one positive the other negative. Even the one who is useless and inactive in the cause of righteousness is evil in the Lord's sight! The remaining words of Jesus in this 20th verse focus like a gigantic searchlight upon the very deepest recesses of the heart of the one who loves darkness. Such a man hates and wars against the light because the light reveals his works for what they really are—evil, dishonest and worthless. The verb convicted (*elencho*) means more than reproved. It means expose, show up, bring to light, show what is actually the case (cf. Eph. 5:13). As Lenski says, "We see here the inner, self-contradiction and self-

condemnation of all such doers of evil who in unbelief act contrary to Christ and the gospel. They choose the worthless but they do not want its worthlessness revealed. They want to be undisturbed in thinking the worthless valuable." The evil-doer does not want others to see him, nor does he want to face himself. Jesus recognized this in the Pharisees who deliberately rejected His word when He said, "*Because I say the truth, ye believe me not*" (Jn, 8:45).

Now what of the man who does the truth? He gladly comes to the light. The man who abides in the truth purposely comes to the light that he may manifest his works to show that they have been wrought in God. He is not afraid to have the penetrating searchlight of truth play upon his works for they have God as their source and they are good works. The disciple of Jesus is to purposely show his good works before men that they may glorify the Father who is in heaven (cf. Mt. 5:16).

Thus ends Jesus' conversation, as far as we know, with this teacher of Israel. We would like to know more of Nicodemus than what is briefly told in two later passages (Jn. 7:50-51; 19:39). The important Personage for us to know, however, is not Nicodemus but the One who is now teaching Nicodemus, even Jesus.

Quiz

1. What is the nature of God's love (cf. I Cor. 13:5)?
2. Give three Old Testament references to the love of God.
3. What reasons may be given for contending that verses 15-21 are a continuation of Jesus' teaching?
4. What is meant by the word perish?
5. What was the primary purpose for Jesus' coming into the world?
6. How does the unbeliever bring about his own condemnation?
7. Into what two categories does Jesus place all mankind?
8. What kind of choice is made by the man who loves darkness?
9. Name two types of evil as mentioned in these verses.
10. How does the unbeliever contradict himself?
11. Why does the doer of the truth come to the light?

JOHN'S WITNESS CONCERNING HIMSELF

Text 3:22-30

22 After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.

23 And John also was baptizing in Enon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.

24 For John was not yet cast into prison.

25 There arose therefore a questioning on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purifying.

26 And they came unto John, and said to him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond the Jordan, to whom thou hast borne witness, behold the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.

27 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it have been given him from heaven.

28 Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but, that I am sent before him.

29 He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, that standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is made full.

30 He must increase, but I must decrease.

Queries

- a. Why is Jesus' growing popularity mentioned?
- b. Why does he ask the question about purifying?
- c. How does John's analogy of the bridegroom and the friend of the bridegroom apply?

Paraphrase

After His ministry in the vicinity of Jerusalem, Jesus and His disciples went out into the countryside of Judea and He spent some time there with His disciples and immersed. But John the Baptist was also immersing in Aenon near Salim, because there was an abundance of water there; and people were continuing to come and be immersed—for John had not yet been cast into prison. John's disciples, therefore, began a disputation with a Jew concerning the subject of ceremonial cleansing. They came to John and said to him, Teacher He that was with you beyond the Jordan, the One to whom you have borne witness, look, He is immersing and everyone is flocking to Him! John

answered and said to them, A man is not able to claim any authority if it has not been given unto him from heaven. You yourselves are my witnesses that I said positively, I am not the Christ but I was sent in advance of the Anointed One. The One having the bride, He is the Bridegroom. But the friend of the Bridegroom, the one who stands and listens for the Bridegroom's coming, rejoices greatly on account of the approaching voice of the Bridegroom. This, therefore, is the fulfillment of my work and thus my joy is fulfilled when all the people flock to Him. He must continue to grow in esteem and following while I continue to decrease in following.

Summary

Jesus' ministry and popularity grows. John the Baptist's disciples exhibit jealousy. The Baptist exhibits humility and devotion to Jesus, refusing to be jealous of Him.

Comment

After attending the Passover week and performing many signs and after a considerable ministry in the vicinity of Jerusalem (including the conversation with Nicodemus), Jesus goes out into the countryside. The most likely place to go with his disciples in order to baptize would be near Jericho where the Jordan was forded. It is evident from John 4:2 that Jesus baptized no one personally, but He is said to have baptized when actually His disciples performed the rite. There was Divine wisdom in this. The apostle Paul was forced to contend with division in the Corinthian church a few years later which had resulted from certain Christians taking pride in having been baptized by certain preachers and apostles (cf. I Cor. 1:14ff). It is asked, "What baptism would Christ and His disciples administer?" The only reasonable answer is that they were administering John's baptism of repentance and preparation. The baptism into His death (Rom. 6:3) could not have been instituted until after His death. The baptism instituted and commanded by Jesus at His ascension (Mt. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:15-16) was not a carry-over of John's baptism. John's baptism was not valid after Pentecost (Acts 2) and this is evident from Paul's instruction to some untaught disciples of the Baptist (Acts 19:1-7) and from the instruction given to Apollos (Acts 18:24-26). The list of parallels below which show the differences in the two baptisms is taken from *Studies in the Life of Christ*, Vol. 1, by R. C. Foster:

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

JOHN'S BAPTISM

1. Demands explicit faith in Jesus as Son of God, as well as repentance	Was preceded by repentance
2. In the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit	On the general authority of God, no known formula
3. Permanent, remaining in force to the end of time	Temporary, preparing for the appearance of Christ
4. Universal — "all nations," "every creature"	For the Jews only
5. Inducts one into the kingdom and into Christ	Only in preparation for the coming kingdom
6. "For the remission of your sins."	Unto repentance and remission of sins (in promise?)
7. Followed by the "gift of the Holy Spirit"	Not connected with the gift of the Holy Spirit

In verse 23 we are informed that John changed his place of baptizing. Before this time he was "beyond the Jordan" (v. 26) which means the eastern side of the Jordan. There is much discussion as to where Aenon is located. No definite location can be established. The most acceptable location is about eight miles south of Scythopolis on the western banks of the Jordan. The primary discussion of this verse centers around the phrase, "because there was much water there." The pedo-baptists claim the phrase means "many waters, or an abundance of springs." They do this, of course, to discredit the "much water" as an inference for immersion. They say John chose a location with an abundance of water that the multitudes might have sufficient drinking water. But the whole emphasis of this context is upon baptizing. The demand of the New Testament for immersion as the only Scriptural mode of baptism cannot be denied by such egregious reasoning as the pedo-baptists have used with this verse (cf. also comment on 1:23-28).

As John writes his gospel, he is aware of Matthew's sequence of events in the ministry of Jesus and John the Baptist. John would know that Matthew has John the Baptist cast into prison just after the temptation of Jesus (Mt. 4:11-12). Here, in

John's gospel, Jesus and the Baptist are represented as preaching and baptizing simultaneously at least six months after the Lord's temptation. John, the author, is aware that those who later compare his gospel and Matthew's account may stumble and so he interjects the phrase anachronistically, "for John was not yet cast into prison." The interjection of verse 24 shows there was a considerable lapse of time between Matthew 4:11 and 12, and during this time Jesus and John were both preaching and baptizing.

As in the case when most great spiritual leaders gain a following, there arises, unsanctioned by the leaders, jealousy between the followers. Verse 25 informs us of John the Baptist's disciples beginning a disputation or argument with a Jew (probably one who favored Jesus and His ministry) over the question of cleansing. From verse 26 it seems the whole disputation was over the authority and cleansing efficacy of the two baptisms. The disciples of John began the controversy and probably challenged the Jew because he had been baptized by Jesus' disciples. That Jesus could baptize without consulting John they could not understand, and undoubtedly argued that the Jew had not been purified or cleansed because he had not been baptized by John. John's disciples probably brought the Jew with them when they came to their Teacher, expecting John to set this man right about the correct administrator of the rite of baptism.

The real trouble of these particular disciples of John was jealousy, not theological problems. Jesus was gaining popularity, and He and His disciples were preaching and baptizing and were not companying with John and his disciples. Jesus' disciples had the same trouble with the "unknown miracle-worker" (Mk. 9:38-39.). They could not understand how one could do good and practice religion and not company with them. Anyone who is doing the revealed will of God, whether he belongs to our immediate circle of fellowship or not, is for us and for Christ, and he is a child of God!

The Baptist's answer, verse 27, was probably unexpected by the disputing disciples. They were saying John should have the pre-eminence and that Jesus was a usurper. But John replies that authority and pre-eminence is divinely bestowed. In God's eternal scheme of things everyone has a place. John knew he had a definite place — his place was to be a preparer, a forerunner. Even John's own disciples testified publicly of John's previous denial that he was the Christ.

John now uses a familiar Old Testament figure to illustrate his secondary position to Christ. The bride is expressive in the Old Testament of the people of Israel in their close relation to God (cf. Isa. 54:5; Hos. 2:18; Ps. 45). The bride belongs to the bridegroom. Christ is the Bridegroom, and His people are the Bride (cf. Eph. 5:32; II Cor. 11:2; Rev. 21:2, 9; 22:17). In the Jewish marriage ceremonies, the friend of the bridegroom often had certain tasks to perform in advance of the final union. The friend would then stand and wait for the approach of the groom. Upon hearing the groom's voice the best man could rejoice in a task completed and rejoice again when the groom voices his joy upon receiving the bride. John then tells his disciples, "Since you have come to me and told me that all people are flocking to Him, the Bridegroom, my joy is made full." The Bridegroom is receiving His Bride with joy and the friend of the Bridegroom also rejoices!

Verse 30 will stand forever as a monument to this great man, John the Baptist. It exemplifies his whole life of service in behalf of the Christ. As Barclay says, "we would do well to remember that it is not to ourselves that we must try to attach people; it is to Jesus Christ. It is not for ourselves we seek the loyalty of men; it is for Him." (Wm. Barclay in *The Daily Study Bible*, "The Gospel of John," Vol. 1). Note the word must in this verse. The word is a translation of the Greek word *dei* which, in turn, is from the Greek verb *deo* meaning "I am bound." John says, then, "I am bound, I must decrease while He is bound to increase." John is merely submitting to the eternal plan of God by giving Jesus the pre-eminence.

Quiz

1. Where did Jesus go with his disciples to baptize?
2. Did Jesus baptize anyone? Explain.
3. Name at least 4 differences between John's baptism and Christian baptism.
4. Where is Aenon?
5. How are Matthew 4:11-12 and John 3:24 reconciled?
6. What probably caused the disputation concerning purifying?
7. How is v. 27 to be interpreted?
8. What was the joy of John the Baptist v. 29?

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 3:31-36
JOHN'S WITNESS CONCERNING CHRIST

Text 3:31-36

31 He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is of the earth, and of the earth he speaketh: he that cometh from heaven is above all.

32 What he hath seen and heard, of that he beareth witness; and no man receiveth his witness.

33 He that hath received his witness hath set his seal to this, that God is true.

34 For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for he giveth not the Spirit by measure.

35 The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

36 He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Queries

- a. Who is "he that cometh from above" and "he that is of the earth"?
- b. What is the meaning of "He giveth not the Spirit by measure"?
- c. What is the significance of the word obey?

Paraphrase

The One coming from above is far above all men: but he that comes from the earth remains on an earthly level and is above no one and he speaks from an earthly standpoint. The One coming from heaven is above all men: He is bearing witness to that which He has seen and heard in the very presence of God and no one is receiving His witness! The person who has received the Son's witness has acknowledged that God is true. For the One Whom God sent is speaking the words of God, for the Father does not give the Spirit to the Son in part. The Father loves the Son and the Father has given all things into His hand. The person continuing to believe in the Son with a trustful obedience is continually possessing eternal life, but, conversely, the one continuing to disobey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him in his disobedient state.

Summary

The Baptist points out that Jesus comes with the full revelation of God's will. The person who accepts Jesus' words acknowledges that Jesus is God's true Representative.

Comment

Although it is not certain whether verses 31-36 are the words of John the Baptist or John the Apostle, contextually they seem to be the words of the Baptist. John the Baptist is certainly capable of uttering such high and lofty phrases when speaking of the Son of God (cf. Mt. 3:11-12; Mk. 3:7-8; Lk. 3:16-17; Jn. 1:26, 27, 29-36; 3:27-30).

Assuming these to be the words of John the Baptist, they are his final testimony to the Sonship of Jesus. These words of witness to Jesus' deity are but a continuation of the witness John is giving his disputing disciples. These disciples must recognize, as did Andrew, Peter, Philip and the other early disciples of John, that the Lamb of God has come and He is the pre-eminent One. Thus, the Baptist points out, since Jesus came from the "bosom of the Father" He is superior to every mortal. He is above even a great mortal like John the Baptist, for this prophet was earthly in origin like all other mortals (cf. Mt. 11:11). These loyal (but jealous) disciples of John must see that the "one to whom all men are flocking" is the One Who has come down out of heaven with the complete and final counsel of God (cf. Jn. 1:9-15; 3:11-13). The Baptist states an axiom which not only applies to ordinary fallible men, but also in some instances to Spirit-inspired mortals when he says, "he that is of the earth . . . and of the earth he speaketh." John the Baptist and some of the apostles, when left to their own fallible reasoning, reverted occasionally to carnal thinking and speaking (cf. Mt. 11:2-3; Gal. 2:11-14).

The Baptist continues, in verse 32, to explain to his disciples that Jesus has come from the very presence of the supreme God and Father with the message of absolute truth. The message of Jesus does not vary; it contains no conjectures and is not frustrating. His message is the exact will of God for men which the Son heard directly from the Father (cf. Jn. 5:19; 7:16, 29; 8:26, 38, 40; 15:15). What a blessed knowledge! He Who speaks to us through the gospels speaks the words which He heard in the council-halls of heaven. He has interpreted for us (Jn. 1:18)

the divine plan of redemption, and He became God's oath, sworn in blood, to show that the promises of God are immutable (Heb. 6:17). Then the Baptist, in the last phrase of this verse, shows the superlative guilt of one who rejects Christ's testimony. John does not mean every man, without exception, when he says "no man receiveth his witness." This is plain from the following verse (v. 33). It is so monstrous to the Baptist that even one man should reject the message of Christ that he is moved to say, "no man receiveth his witness."

John says there were some who did receive the witness of Jesus, and thereby acknowledged that "God is faithful and will fulfill all that he has promised." Those few of Israel who did accept Jesus as the Son of God realized God was fulfilling His promises through Jesus and they "set their seal" that God was true to His word. Up to this time, John the Baptist, Peter, Andrew, Philip, Nathanael, and undoubtedly John and James had all received the witness concerning Jesus as the promised Messiah. Another principle is implied in this verse (v. 33). The person who will not receive the witness of Jesus is actually calling God a liar. Jesus told the Pharisees that although they claimed God as their Father, in reality Satan was their father because they rejected the Son's witness (cf. Jn. 8:38-47). To reject the witness of Jesus is to call God a liar (I Jn. 5:10). To dishonor the Son is to dishonor the Father (Jn. 5:23b).

Verses 34-35 are John's climactic conclusions to convince his untaught disciples that Jesus is the One to be followed and adhered to. John is convinced that Jesus is the One whom God sent. Except for one or two instances, the phrase *hon apesteilen ho theos* ("The one whom God sent") is always applied to Jesus (cf. Jn. 3:17; 5:36; 6:29; 7:29; 8:42; 9:7; 10:36; 11:42, etc.) Upon others who spoke on behalf of God the Spirit came only in measure. God spoke by others "in divers portions and in divers manners," but the Son was the "effulgence of his glory and the very image of his substance," and the Spirit was given to the Son without measure. The Baptist was an eyewitness to this and he "saw the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him" (Jn. 1:33-34). Not only does the Son receive the Spirit without measure, but the Father gave all things into His hand (cf. Jn. 5:19-20; 12:49; 13:3; 17:2; Mt. 11:27; 28:18).

Verse 36 certainly fits the character of John the Baptist's preaching as it is recorded in the Synoptic gospels. There his

message was, "the axe lieth at the root of the tree . . . hewn down and cast into the fire . . . shall baptize . . . in fire . . . flee from the wrath to come . . . whose fan is in his hand," etc. Here, in verse 36, he intends to warn these quibbling disciples in no uncertain terms that to reject Jesus inevitably brings down the wrath of God upon the disbeliever. The sharp contrasts of the Baptist here between the destinies of the believer and the unbeliever are very similar to the contrast Jesus presented to Nicodemus (3:16-18). John uses the present tense to denote that the one receiving eternal life is one who continually trusts and obeys. One who has an abiding faith has also an ever-present assurance of eternal life.

The only other alternative to accepting Jesus is rejecting Him. With Christ there is no middle-of-the-road policy — men either obey Him or disobey Him. Evidently, there is a plan or a norm which the Son came to manifest, which every man must act in accordance with, or rebelliously reject Him. Believing in Christ, then, entails more than admitting His historicity, and even more than giving intellectual assent to His message and claims. A faith that does not express itself in obedience is a dead and useless faith (cf. Jn. 14:21, 23; 15:10; Jas. 2:26). The gospel of Christ is a gospel demanding obedience, and its commandments are plain enough that "they who run may read." The law of the kingdom of Christ is love. But it is a love which leads to trust, repentance, confession and baptism. These are but the entrance requirements — once received as a citizen by the Lord, the new member must participate and share in the edifying of the whole society of believers to his fullest capacities.

The dreadful sentence upon the disobedient is that even now the wrath of God is potentially abiding upon him. The disobedient does not experience the wrath of God while he yet lives, but when Jesus comes again He will "render vengeance unto all them that know not God and obey not the gospel" (II Thess. 1:8). Then those who have chosen to disobey Christ's terms of entrance into the kingdom will go into eternity to reckon with an all-righteous and perfectly just God. There the unredeemed must bear the eternal and perfect wrath of God all alone. The one who chooses to disobey can blame only himself . . . he has been given the message and the opportunity to accept or reject . . . he brings the wrath of God upon himself.

SPECIAL STUDY NO. 2

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

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

HE GAVE THE ONLY SON HE HAD

THE MEANING OF *monogenes*.

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

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

LATIN AND SEPTUAGINT USAGE.

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

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

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

MONOGENES IN LUKE AND HEBREWS.

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

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

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

MONOGENES IN JOHN'S WRITING.

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

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

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

NO REFERENCE TO THE VIRGIN BIRTH.

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

THE "ONLY SON" MAKES A BEAUTIFUL PICTURE.

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

Quiz

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

EXAMINATION

CHAPTERS TWO AND THREE

Multiple Choice

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

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

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Match These Scriptures

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

True or False

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

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

Who said it?

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

Describe the location of these:

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

EXPOSITORY SERMON NO. 3

THE NEW BIRTH

John 3:1-8

Introduction

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

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

III What does Jesus really teach Nicodemus?

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

Discussion

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

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

II WHAT IS THE "NEW BIRTH"?

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

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

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

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

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

III HOW SHALL WE BE BORN AGAIN?

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

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

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

2. Compare Titus 3:4-5

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

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

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

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

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

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

- D. We are:

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A. Repent like Zacchaeus (with restitution if necessary)

B. Confess like Peter and John in Acts

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

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

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

CHAPTER FOUR

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

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

WITHDRAWL FROM JUDEA — ARRIVAL IN SAMARIA

Text 4:1-6

- 1 When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John
- 2 (although Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples),
- 3 he left Judea, and departed again into Galilee.
- 4 And he must needs pass through Samaria.
- 5 So he cometh to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near to the

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

Queries

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

Paraphrase

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

Summary

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

Comment

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Quiz

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

JESUS AND THE LIVING WATER

Text 4:7-14

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

14 but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life.

Queries

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

Paraphrase

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

Summary

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

Comment

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Quiz

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

JESUS SEARCHES OUT A WOMAN'S SECRET

Text 4:15-18

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

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

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

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

Queries

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

Paraphrase

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

Summary

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

Comment

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Quiz

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

TRUE WORSHIPPERS OF GOD

Text 4:19-26

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Queries

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

Paraphrase

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

Summary

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

Comment

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Quiz

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

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
SPONTANEOUS EVANGELISM

4:27-30

Text 4:27-30

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

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

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

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

Queries

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

Paraphrase

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

Summary

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

Comment

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Quiz

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

FIELDS WHITE UNTO HARVEST

Text 4:31-38

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Queries

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

Paraphrase

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

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

Summary

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

Comment

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Quiz

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

REAPING THE HARVEST

Text 4:39-42

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

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

41 And many more believed because of his word;

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

Queries

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

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

Paraphrase

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

Summary

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

Comment

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Quiz

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

PUBLIC TEACHING IN GALILEE

Text 4:43-45

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

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

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

Queries

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

Paraphrase

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

Summary

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

Comment

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

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

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

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

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

Quiz

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

HEALING A NOBLEMAN'S SON AT CAPERNAUM

Text 4:46-54

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Queries

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

Paraphrase

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

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

Summary

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

Comment

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Quiz

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

EXPOSITORY SERMON NO. 4

John, Chapter 4

"YOU CAN BE A SOUL WINNER"

Introduction

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

Discussion

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

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

2. WE LET MANY THINGS STAND IN OUR WAY.

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

C. Jesus found a way to begin witnessing.

1. How does one start?
2. Jesus said to the woman at the well, "Give me a drink."

To Mary and Martha He used the subject of their beloved Brother's recent death!

3. Paul in Athens mentioned the city's idols
4. Most parents can be reached through their children

II CHRIST WAS PREPARED

A. Unpreparedness is the major reason people lack confidence.

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

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

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

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

C. He knew His message

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

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

We need to learn by heart these basic things:

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

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

III HE WAS UNSELFISH IN HIS VISION OF THE LOST

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

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

Conclusion

I THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF REWARD

A. Heavenly reward not able to be expressed in human language says Paul (II Cor. 12:2-4)

B. Neither can we know fully the terrors of Hell!

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

A. Parable of Lazarus and rich man . . . "just let me go tell my brothers."

B. We must work the works of God while it is day, for the night comes when no man can work.

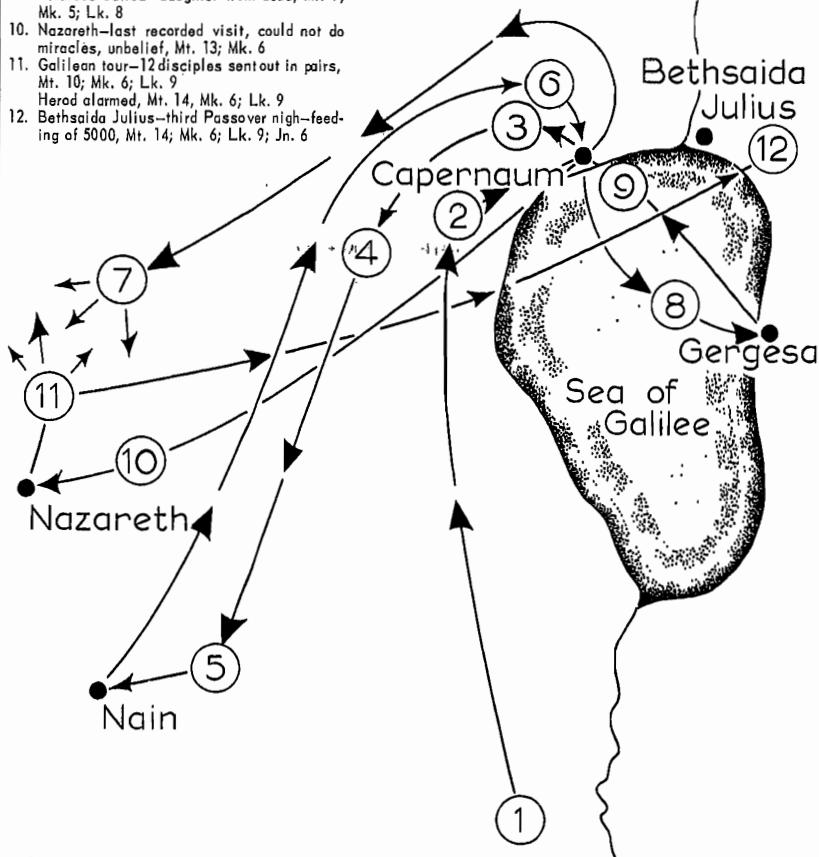
C. Paul said, "knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men."

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

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

MAP NO. 3—SECOND YEAR OF MINISTRY

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



CHAPTER FIVE

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

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

We outline the fifth chapter of John as follows:

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

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
A HELPLESS MAN HEALED

Text 5:1-9

1 After these things there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porches.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Queries

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

Paraphrase

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

Summary

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

Comment

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

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

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

POOLS OF JERUSALEM

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

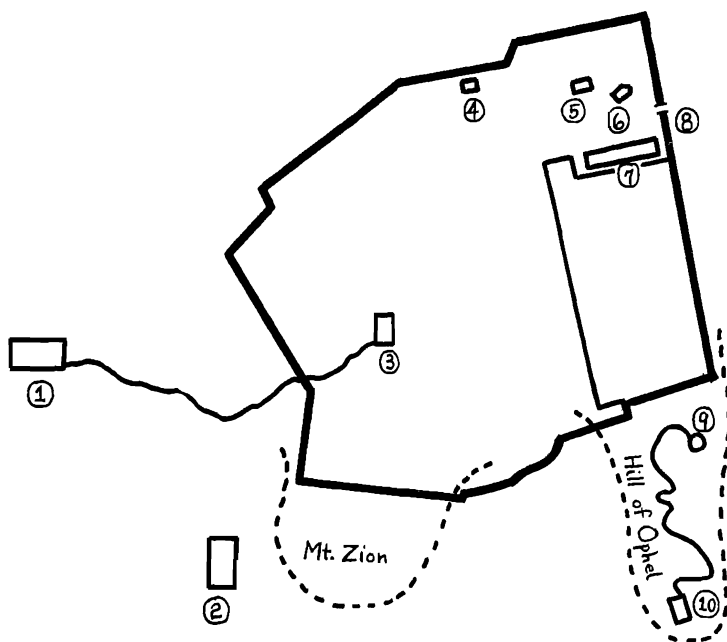


Fig. No. 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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