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BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOK

**THE
GOSPEL OF JOHN, Vol. II**

by
PAUL T. BUTLER

A New

- *Commentary*
- *Workbook*
- *Teaching Manual*

College Press, Joplin, Missouri

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THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED

to

my beloved brethren in Christ
in the congregations where I have served
the Kingdom,
for,

it is through their support and inspiration
that this writing ministry has been made possible.

The Conway Christian Church, Conway, Missouri

The Oxnard Christian Church, Oxnard, California

The Washington Church of Christ, Lebanon, Missouri

The West Side Christian Church, Carthage, Missouri

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Preface

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

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

We have embodied special studies, maps, diagrams, outlines and another technical, linguistical, and highly critical work. Our aim is to present a book that can be used by Sunday school teacher, preacher, student and layman alike. For those who desire a more technical treatise of the subject, we suggest the works of the aforementioned commentators and those enumerated in the Bibliography.

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

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

We have embodied special studies, maps, diagrams, outlines and photographs which we hope will both inform and inspire the reader to further study concerning the fourth Gospel.

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

PAUL T. BUTLER

SPECIAL STUDY NO. ONE

In our Introduction to the *Gospel of John, Volume I*, page 13, we made brief mention of the papyrus, Bodmer II (P 66). This special study is a digest of some of the recent reviews of this codex as to its importance in exegesis of the fourth Gospel.

The first portion of the codex was published in 1956 by Victor Martin, Professor of Classical Philology at the University of Geneva. The codex now resides in the Bodmer Library in Geneva, Switzerland.

Significance of the Codex

One reviewer says it is "of the greatest importance." It is classified by others as even more significant to Biblical philology (language study), though less publicized, than the Qumran (Dead Sea Scroll) discoveries.

The Chester Beatty papyri, comprising some of our most ancient manuscript fragments of the New Testament text, offer only a very few fragments from John's Gospel. Conservative scholars were, until Papyrus Bodmer II, able to call to witness for the antiquity of John only the small fragment called Rylands Papyrus 457 (P52) which contained not even one complete verse. Now conservative scholars have the Gospel of John complete through chapter fourteen, verse twenty-six, except for the loss of one sheet in the sixth chapter plus portions of each of the remaining chapters (15 through 21) in a codex which dates from about 200 A.D. This means that the Bodmer manuscript (P66) dates from within only about one hundred years of the original manuscript written by John the Apostle himself!

As a witness to the text of the Fourth Gospel this codex is second only to the Vaticanus (B). Most reviewers are amazed at its legibility. The writing is so clear that there has been no question, so far, as to the identity of any Greek letter.

The Type of Text in P66

The textual scholars say the most important testimony of this codex is its amazing confirmation of the Neutral or Alexandrian text (the type of text which conservative scholars regard as the most accurate text—the text most likely to represent the original mss.). In eighty-seven percent of the cases where the important manuscripts disagree (such as Aleph, B, C, D, etc.), Bodmer II has the Neutral reading. We are more assured than ever before that we have in the Neutral text the type of text actually used by the early church. All of this technical jargon simply means that this manuscript brings forth an-

other very reliable testimony that the New Testament as we have it today is the same New Testament that the apostles wrote, except for some minute errors made by copyists in centuries of copying by hand.

One review says, "we seem to have (in P66) what might be called a people's copy of a portion of the New Testament . . . there is no ornamentation of any kind . . . legibility seems the one aim." This is very significant for it shows that in the second or third century A.D., the common believers, not just the scholars, had the Neutral text in their hands.

In John 7:8 the Bodmer II has *bupo* rather than *ouk* which gives the context the better reading, "I go not yet up to the feast," rather than the present ambiguity, "I go not up unto this feast."

In John 7:52, P66 adds the definite article before *prophetes* causing it to read, "Search, and see that out of Galilee ariseth not *the* Prophet." The belief that *no* prophet at all arises out of Galilee conflicts with the Old Testament in II Kings 14:25; Jonah 1:1.

In John 9:27 the Bodmer II omits *ouk* before *ekousate* causing it to read "I told you already and you heard," which eliminates another ambiguity and makes the phrase more agreeable with the context.

The most significant of all variants, however, is the fact that it omits all of the story of the adulteress, John 7:53 through 8:12, without a break in the continuity of the manuscript and without the slightest hint that it was ever included in John's Gospel.

Conclusion

It is easy to see that this has been one of the most significant discoveries in Biblical philology since Tischendorf's discovery of the great manuscript Sinaiticus in 1834. The Bodmer II papyrus dates from about 200 A.D. and verifies again that we have uncorrupted, except for a few minor scribal errors, the text of God's Word as it was delivered by the Holy Spirit unto the apostle John.

Postscript

Very recently a Coptic (Egyptian) version of the Gospel of John was found and also placed in the Bodmer Library. This manuscript has been dated somewhere between 300 and 400 A.D. It is of interest that passages in John which textual scholars have previously recognized as critically suspect (John 5:3b-4; John 7:53—8:11) are not present in this manuscript.

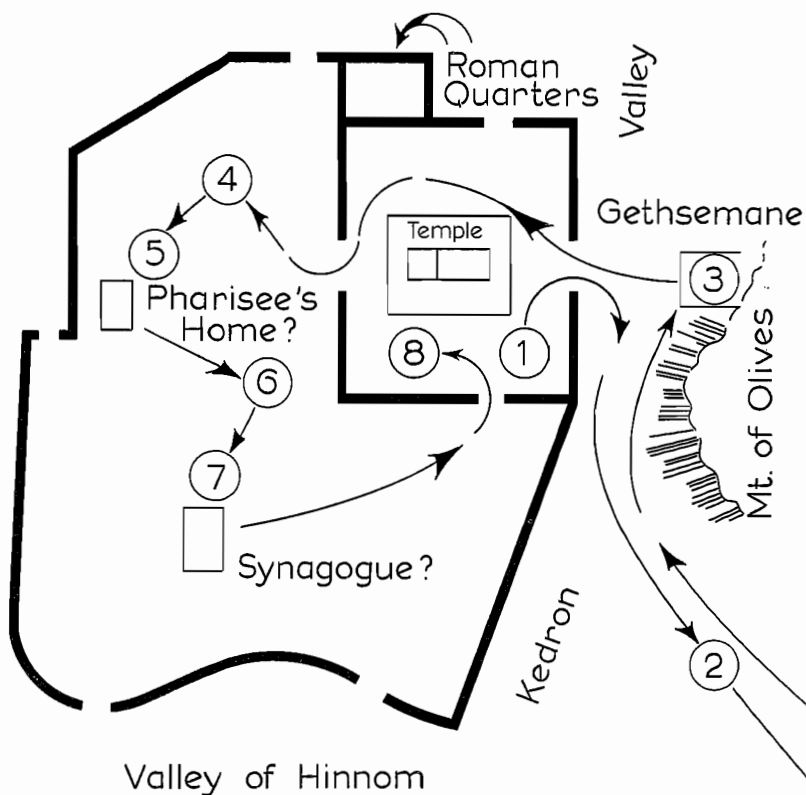
Some Variant Readings

The Bodmer II papyrus omits the explanatory glosses in John 2:3; 3:13 and 6:56 as they are now found in the King James Version. In John 1:18 it has the better attested reading "God only-begotten" rather than "only begotten Son."

It omits the reference to the angel troubling the waters of the pool of Bethesda, John 5:3b-4.

MAP NO. 5—THIRD YEAR, LATER JUDEAN MINISTRY (about 3 months)

1. Temple; Feast of Tabernacles; Sermons on Light of World; Freedom; Abraham's Children; Man born blind healed; Good Shepherd; 70 sent out to evangelize, Jn. 7-8-9-10 & Lk. 10
2. Bethany; Jesus, Mary & Martha, Lk. 10
3. Place of Prayer; Discourse on Prayer, Lk. 11
4. Place unknown; charged with being in league with Satan, Lk. 11
5. Dining in Pharisee's home; denounces Pharisaism, Lk. 11
6. Before multitudes of 1000's Great evangelistic appeals on Hypocrisy, Anxiety, Covetousness, Lk. 12-13
7. In a Synagogue; heals woman bowed double; controversy over healing on the Sabbath, Lk. 13
8. Feast of Dedication (December); Jews seek to kill Jesus, Jn. 10



CHAPTER SEVEN

Between chapters six and seven of John's Gospel an interval of approximately six months occurs. During this interval of six months Jesus carries on a relatively private ministry in Galilee. In order to give His disciples some much needed personal instruction, He retires into semi-privacy and travels to the north of Galilee. John makes only a brief note of this extended ministry in the first verse of chapter seven. Here are some of the outstanding incidents of this Later Galilean Ministry (see Map #4, page 266, volume 1).

1. Syro-Phoenician woman's demonized daughter is healed.
2. Many are healed in Decapolis and four thousand are miraculously fed.
3. The Pharisees demand a sign from Jesus at Magadan.
4. Peter's great confession and Jesus' first plain prediction of His crucifixion at Caesarea Philippi.
5. The Transfiguration on a high mountain.
6. Peter and the question of the temple tax.
7. The disciples arguing as to who shall be the greatest.
8. The unknown miracle worker is discussed.
9. Jesus discusses stumbling blocks, etc.

Chapter seven opens with Jesus and the Twelve still in Galilee. The Lord's skeptical brothers are chiding Him. Their advice is that He stop hiding in the hills of Galilee, quit beating around the bush about His kingdom and go to Jerusalem and make His Messianic claims public.

In Chapter six we see the attitudes of the people of Galilee toward Jesus. Now John sets out to show, in Chapters seven through ten, the attitudes of the Judean people toward Jesus and His claims.

We now take up our outline of the Fourth Gospel where it was discontinued in Volume I of our commentary, *Gospel of John*.

II The Word Manifested to the Jews and their rejection of Him,

D. Public Ministry, Third Year

2. Later Judean Ministry, 7:1—10:21, The Feast of Tabernacles
 - a. Jesus' unbelieving brethren advise Him, 7:1-9
 - b. The Multitudes in Jerusalem have varying ideas about Him, 7:10-13
 - c. The old Sabbath controversy renewed, 7:14-24

d. Mixed emotions concerning Jesus at the feast, 7:25-36

e. Discourse on the Living Water, 7:37-52

ADVICE OF HIS UNBELIEVING BRETHREN

Text 7:1-9

1 And after these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill him.

2 Now the feast of the Jews, the feast of tabernacles was at hand.

3 His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may behold thy works which thou doest

4 For no man doeth anything in secret and himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou doest these things, manifest thyself to the world.

5 For even his brethren did not believe on him.

6 Jesus therefore saith unto them, My time is not yet come; but your time is always ready.

7 The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that its works are evil.

8 Go ye up unto the feast: I go not up unto this feast: because my time is not yet fulfilled.

9 And having said these things unto them, he abode still in Galilee.

Queries

a. What is the Feast of Tabernacles?

b. His brethren admit His miracles—why do they not believe Him?

c. What does Jesus mean, "my time is not yet come?"

Paraphrase

After the miraculous feeding of the five thousand, Jesus taught His disciples semi-privately for about six months in Galilee. He would not travel in Judea, because the Jewish rulers sought to kill Him. Now the feast of the Jews, the feast of tabernacles was at hand. So His brothers said to Him, This is hardly the place for you. Why don't you leave here and go into Judea, where all your disciples are and there your disciples may see the miracles you are doing. As everyone knows, a person does not do something secretly if he is eager to be known publicly. Since you are doing these miracles, show yourself to the world. This was the advice of His brothers because they did not believe in His spiritual kingdom. Jesus said to them, This is not the opportune time for Me, but for you any time is suitable. The world does not hate you but it does hate me, because

I proclaim that the world is evil. You go up to the Feast yourselves. I am not yet going to the Feast because my time has not yet been fulfilled. Having said these things to them, He stayed behind in Galilee.

Summary

The Lord's brethren give Him some worldly advice on how to carry out His divine mission. Jesus answers their advice by informing them that He is acting in accord with the eternal purposes of the Heavenly Father.

Comment

After the miraculous feeding of the multitudes (Jn. 6) the crowds would all depart toward Jerusalem, for the Passover "was at hand" (Jn. 6:4). But why would Jesus refuse to go to Jerusalem and avail Himself of the opportunity to teach the great throngs of Jews gathered there for the Passover? Was He afraid? Yes and no. He was no coward, but He was fearful that the Jews might force the issue of His death before the divinely appointed time. When that time should come He would courageously and steadfastly "set his face to go to Jerusalem." No one could take His life from Him, He would lay it down willingly—but at the appointed time within the Father's Will. Another reason He might wish to remain in Galilee is privacy. When these great throngs of people left Galilee to go to the Passover, their absence would give Jesus much more privacy and freedom of movement to teach not only His disciples, but people in the borders of Gentile territory (the Syro-Phoenician woman).

During the six-month ministry in Galilee the open hostility of the Jews in Jerusalem might lose some of its fervor; especially if Jesus should make His ministry as private as possible. He recognized this and "charged his disciples" to refrain from spreading abroad the news of the miracles and teachings of this six-month Galilean ministry (cf. Mk. 9:9; Lk. 9:36).

Please notice that the plain inference of verse 1 of this seventh chapter is that Jesus did not attend the Passover mentioned in John 6:4. It is not wise to dogmatically assert that Jesus must of necessity keep every ritual and attend every feast commanded in the Law of Moses. After all, He is the Law-Giver. He taught Peter the same lesson in regard to the Temple tax (cf. Mt. 17:24-27).

The Feast of Tabernacles was to be celebrated by every grown Israelite male in Jerusalem on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (our October). The feast was to last eight days and the people were to dwell in tabernacles (booths) made entirely of fresh branches of

fruit and palm trees. This was to commemorate their fathers dwelling in booths (tents, temporary dwelling places) after their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. It was to be a joyful festival, reminding them of the fatherly care and protection of Jehovah in the wilderness journeys of their forefathers. It was also the festival at which they celebrated the ingathering of the labor of the field. It is called The Feast of Tabernacles, The Feast of Tents, The Feast of Ingathering, The Festival of Jehovah, or simply the festival (cf. Ex. 23:16; Lev. 23:33-44; Num. 29). There was much expression of joy in the ritual of the Feast. The trumpets were blown each day of the feast; there was the ceremony of the outpouring of water drawn from the pool of Siloam to commemorate the miraculous water from the rock at Meribah and to look forward to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit by Jehovah; the great candelabras (four of them so large that ladders were used to light them) were lighted and the light from these lamps illuminated the whole city at night. It is probable that Jesus referred to some of these rituals as He taught during the feast concerning the Holy Spirit, the Water of Life and the Light of the World. What a sight it must have been to enter the city at this period of the year and see over a million Jews living in these booths. They would be crowded into the courts, streets, public squares and on housetops. Then to see the smoke from the great altar in the Temple as hundreds of animals were sacrificed in burnt offerings. There would be the trumpets, harps, psalteries, cymbals and other musical instruments, the singing of the Great Hallel and the dancing before the Lord to behold.

In view of the tremendous throngs of people and the holiday excitement about to ensue in Jerusalem, the brothers of the Lord, James, Joseph, Simon and Judas (the Mother of Jesus had other children (cf. Mt. 13:55-56, 12:46-50; Mk. 3:31, 6:3; Lk. 8:19; Jn. 2:12; Acts 1:14), advise Jesus to go to the Feast and do His miraculous works there in public. Our text says of these brethren that they "did not believe on him." How, then, do they admit His miracles and disbelieve? They did not believe or place their trust in Him as a spiritual King over their wills and hearts (see Expository Sermons Seven and Eight).

The time for Him to drink His bitter cup was not yet come and this was His answer in verse 6. He knew the moment the proper time had come (cf. Jn. 17:1). Jesus' answer also has some definite inferences as to the attitudes of His half-brothers. Their godly wit-

ness was weak. They were "friends of the world" for the world did not hate them (cf. Jas. 4:4).

The world hated Jesus for testifying of its evil works just as it hated and killed the prophets of the Old Testament. John the Baptist and the Apostles of the New Testament, and all the righteous saints of God in all subsequent ages (cf. Jn. 15:18-24, 3:19, 18:37).

Then Jesus dismisses His caviling brothers to go up to the feast. He will not yet go up to Jerusalem. The K.J.V. supplies "yet" which seems to be the best reading. The statement "I go not *yet* up to the feast" agrees with the context and is further substantiated by the Bodmer Papyrus (P66) which places the Greek word *hupo* in place of *ouk* in verse 8. Because of the apparent contradiction between Jesus' statement, "I go not up to the feast," (A.S.V.) and His subsequent action of actually going up to the feast, one German liberal is quoted as saying "Jesus Christ did of set purpose utter a falsehood." But now the ancient manuscripts verify what the context demands.

Therefore, having vindicated His actions to His doubting brethren, He remains behind in Galilee until the proper time affords itself and then He takes His disciples and goes to the feast.

Quiz

1. How much time transpires between chapters 6 and 7 of John's Gospel?
2. Why did Jesus not go to the Passover which was "nigh" in John 6?
3. Was it necessary for Jesus to go to every Feast? Why?
4. Describe as nearly as you can the festivities and rites of the Feast of Tabernacles.
5. How could the Lord's brethren admit that He worked miracles and still disbelieve in Him?
6. What is inferred about His brothers in that the world did not hate them?
7. How may we reconcile Jesus' statement "I go not up to the feast" and His subsequent appearance at the feast?

VARING IDEAS OF THE MULTITUDES

Text 7:10-13

10 But when his brethren were gone up unto the feast, then went he also up, not publicly, but as it were in secret.

11 The Jews therefore sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he

12 And there was much murmuring among the multitudes con-

cerning him: some said, He is a good man; others said, Not so, but he leadeth the multitude astray.

13 Yet no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.

Queries

- a. Why did Jesus go up to the feast in secret?
- b. What is the significance of the varying opinions concerning Him?

Paraphrase

But after His brothers had gone up to the feast in Jerusalem, then Jesus went up to Jerusalem and the feast also, but Jesus traveled in secret and not openly with the crowds going to the city. Consequently, the Jewish rulers kept searching for him at the feast, asking, Where is that fellow? There was much whispering and guarded murmuring among the multitudes of people concerning Him: some whispered, He is a good man, while others said, No, He is not good for He deceives and misleads the people. But none of the people dared speak with boldness their convictions concerning Him on account of their fear of the Jewish rulers.

Comment

It should be plain from John 5:18 and 7:25 the reason for Jesus' secrecy. The Jewish rulers were constantly dispatching officers to search Him out to arrest Him. Therefore, He waited until His brothers had departed and then, beckoning His twelve disciples to follow, He took a road through Samaria that would not be traveled by Jews on their way to the feast. Luke 9:51 ff. informs us that Jesus went through Samaria on His way to Jerusalem at this particular time. It also shows the hostility of the Samaritans toward the Jewish worshippers. Jesus and His disciples could travel here without being discovered by the Jewish rulers. He probably did not let anyone know of His departure from Galilee or His arrival in Jerusalem. The word *secret* is *krupto* in the Greek and our English word *crypt* is derived from it—hence *cryptograph* means "secret writing."

We will soon find Jesus teaching publicly and boldly in the Temple at the feast. Why does He not remain incognito? It is relatively safe for Him to reveal His identity as He is surrounded by the great throngs of well-wishers, for some believe Him to be a prophet. The rulers of the Jews are themselves afraid of being stoned should they harm Jesus in public.

The sullen contempt of the rulers is brought out vividly in the Greek as it reads literally, "Where is that one?" They will not so much as do Him the honor of mentioning His name. The imperfect

tense of *asking* indicates that these rulers were continually questioning the multitudes as to His whereabouts. They seemed to have been expecting Him.

The hundreds of thousands of worshippers were also on the tip-toes of expectancy concerning the man of Galilee. They were probably gathering in small groups whispering their opinions and discussing Him and His teachings and works.

Some were whispering that they thought Him to be a good man. He had healed lepers, made the lame to walk and had even raised the dead in Nain; He had just miraculously fed multitudes in Galilee. Others, however, murmured that He was a false prophet and was leading the people astray. They could remember Theudas and Judas of Galilee (Acts 5:36-37) and other false Christs who deceived the people and brought Roman retaliation and punishment upon the whole Jewish nation.

Whatever their attitude, not one of the multitude was willing to declare openly and boldly just what he thought of Jesus. It is plain from the text that their secrecy was due to fear. Everyone preferred to remain in the good graces of the hierarchy. To say the wrong thing would mean excommunication from the synagogue which would in turn ostracize one from all other social contacts. Barnes has a comment worthy of repetition here: "There are always many such friends of Jesus in the world who are desirous of saying something good about Him, but who, from fear or shame, refuse to make a full acknowledgment of Him. Many will praise His morals, His precepts, and His holy life, while they are ashamed to speak of His divinity or His atonement, and still more to acknowledge that they are dependent upon Him for salvation."

Quiz

1. What route did Jesus take on His way up to the feast?
2. Why would He be relatively safe from discovery on this route?
3. How could Jesus drop His secrecy and teach publicly in the midst of the feast?
4. Why would some of the multitude say that Jesus was leading people astray?
5. What kept the people from speaking openly and boldly of Jesus?

THE OLD SABBATH CONTROVERSY RENEWED

Text 7:14-24

14 But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.

15 The Jews therefore marveled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?

16 Jesus therefore answered them, and said, My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me.

17 If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself.

18 He that speaketh from himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh the glory of him that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

19 Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you doeth the law? Why seek ye to kill me?

20 The multitude answered, Thou hast a demon: who seeketh to kill thee?

21 Jesus answered and said unto them, I did one work, and ye all marvel because thereof.

22 Moses hath given you circumcision (not that it is of Moses, but of the fathers); and on the sabbath ye circumcise a man.

23 If a man receiveth circumcision on the sabbath, that the law of Moses may not be broken; are ye wroth with me, because I made a man every whit whole on the sabbath?

24 Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

Queries

- a. What is the test Jesus proposes for His teaching in verse 17?
- b. How does Jesus interpret the law of Moses here?
- c. What is "righteous judgment"?

Paraphrase

But when the feast was already half over, Jesus went up to the temple and began to teach. The Jewish rulers were filled with incredulity, saying, How can this man know anything about literature or the Scriptures, never having been a scholar in our schools? Jesus answered the rulers and said, My teaching is not the philosophy of mere mortal men, but comes from Jehovah God who sent Me. If any man is willing to surrender his will to God's will and do the will of the Father, he will be able to discern whether I teach the doctrines of God or whether I speak philosophies of men. Anyone who teaches on his own authority is seeking honor for himself. The teacher who seeks only to honor and glorify the one who sent him, this one is trustworthy, and there is nothing false in him. Moses gave you the law, did he not? Yet none of you are keeping the law for you are

seeking to kill me—and why do you seek to kill me? The multitude cried in astonishment, You are demon possessed. Who is trying to kill you? Jesus answered, One deed I did, and you are all taken aback and want to kill me. And for this reason I now say to you, Moses gave you the rite of circumcision (not that it originated with Moses but with the fathers) and on the sabbath you perform the work of circumcising a man. Why then, if you go to work and circumcise a man on the sabbath to avoid breaking the law of Moses, are you seeking to kill me for healing a man's body on the sabbath? Do not judge by superficial appearances, but judge justly, fairly and according to reality.

Comment

In verse 14 we are told that Jesus did not appear at the feast until it was about half over. Evidently He spent two or three days in Samaria (Lk. 9:51ff). The priests and rulers would be occupied with services in the temple and the crowd would be concerned with the observances of the many rites midway in the feast. This diversion afforded Jesus a certain degree of safety, momentarily, from the anger of the rulers who were seeking to kill Him (cf. Jn. 5:18). A part of the great multitude was sympathetic to Jesus (7:12) and so He was able to go on with His teaching. Jesus went boldly into the very courts of the temple and began to teach. As He began to "speak as never man so spake," the crowd around Him grew larger. Soon many of the rulers would join the listeners. The incredulity of the rulers (7:15) is to be found in their amazement at the liberties this Galilean is taking. The audacity of someone like this Nazarene teaching publicly, a prerogative reserved only for those Rabbis with "accredited degrees," is causing them no small amount of amazement.

According to their records the Nazarene had never attended any of their official theological schools. They derisively scorned, "How can this fellow know theology, having never attended our accredited schools?" To "know letters" was to be trained by Rabbinical schools in the science of interpreting the law and the prophets. In other words, Jesus was not expounding the accepted and orthodox interpretations of the Rabbinical schools.

Jesus answers the amazement of the Jewish Rabbis. His wisdom is divine—it comes from God the Father. Jesus, Himself a member of

the Godhead, knew the Scriptures because the Scriptures were His words given centuries ago by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to Moses and the prophets. What Jesus was teaching, therefore, was not the theological interpretations and opinions of a man *about* the Scriptures, but His words were in fact the words of God. This is another of Jesus' many claims to equality with God.

Verse 17 is one of the many plain, yet profound, utterances of the Saviour. Being a follower of God is more than mere knowledge of what the Scriptures say. There must be that surrender of one's stubborn will to the point where we *desire* to do God's will. It is a *disposition* to do God's will. The man who "willeth to do His will" is the man of a "good and honest heart" (Lk. 8:15).

The New Testament teaches that, fundamentally, doing God's will is a result of knowing Christ. In other words, as Hendriksen says, "The fundamental relationship . . . is therefore, (a.) knowledge, (b.) love, (c.) obedience, (cf. Jn. 14:15, 17:26)." (The N.T. Commentary, Gospel of John, Vol. II, p. 11, pub. Baker Book House.) Yet each of these three principles complement one another so that there is always an interaction between them. Knowledge of Jesus leads to love and obedience, while on the other hand, obedience leads to a full-grown knowledge and love (cf. Eph. 4:11-16). We never quite grasp the full significance and import of some of the more profound passages of Scripture until we have obeyed them or experienced them.

A lifetime of studying the Bible is of no avail if a man's will and desire is out of harmony with God's will. Paul said the same thing in I Corinthians 2:6 through 3:9. The rebellious, carnal-minded man cannot discern the things of the Spirit, because the worldly-minded man has no desire to *do* God's will. These Jewish rulers, to whom Jesus spoke, had studied the Old Testament from their youth up—hour upon hour, year after year—but they did not comprehend that Jesus spoke God's word for they had no desire to *do* God's word.

It is the man who humbles himself and has, as it were, the mind of a child (receptive, willing, pure) that understands the wisdom of an Omniscient God—while the prideful, rebellious man who is puffed up with his worldly knowledge can never understand God (cf. Matt. 11:25-30; also Isa. 1:18-20).

As one writer has expressed it, verse 17 is the "proper disposition" for man and verse 18 is the follow-up of that, or the "proper ideal."

If Jesus was only expressing His own views He would be sure to "toot His own horn" like other self-appointed wisemen and prophets. But to the contrary, Jesus always sought to give the glory unto His Father, the One Who sent Him (cf. Jn. 5:41-44). These Jewish rulers, who were supposed to "sit in Moses' seat" and teach the Word of God so that God might be glorified, rather taught and practiced religion in such a manner that they might be glorified. It was, in fact, their envy of the honor the people paid to Jesus that drove them to crucify Him (Matt. 27:18; Jn. 11:47-50, 12:17-19).

Verses 19-23 are still part of Jesus' efforts to get these Jews to receive His word as that which comes from God. They are judging His teaching superficially. Their judgment is prejudiced and Jesus continues by showing just how unrighteous their judgment is. They were supposed to be upholders of the Law of Moses. They pretended great reverence for the Law. Yet, in their hearts they were plotting to kill Jesus. Murder violates every moral principle given by God. He penetrated the outward sham of their righteousness and looked upon their heart (cf. Matt. 5:21-23).

The multitudes, of course, could see no outward signs of such drastic action. There were no soldiers, no one carrying weapons, no angry mobs as yet. This man from Galilee was beside himself, they reasoned.

But Jesus shows the inconsistency of their judgment. He had made a man whole on the Sabbath over a year ago (cf. Jn. 5:1-18) and for this they sought to kill Him. Now in view of the fact that the rulers had determined to kill Him for healing on the Sabbath, for this reason, He is going to show how they themselves set aside Sabbath regulations for much lesser expediences.

The Pharisees were fond of making Sabbath rules (*not* legislated by Mosaic law) for the people to be burdened with, while they themselves used all sorts of devious means to get around their own traditions. Sabbath regulations were not for the rulers. They enforced a tradition that no one was to travel over seven-eighths of a mile on the Sabbath. But the rulers could not afford to be bound by this tradition. They built little palm-leaf booths all over the countryside and on the roads between the villages every seven-eighths of a mile apart. If business or some other reason demanded it, they could travel from city to city just by going seven-eighths of a mile, abiding in the booth for a while, and then traveling seven-eighths of a mile farther toward their destination.

So Jesus, the accused, now puts them on the defensive and shows them their unjust judgment by illustrating their regulations regarding circumcision (ceremonial rite).

According to the Law of Moses, every male child had to be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. Even if that eighth day fell on the Sabbath, the priests performed the rite of circumcision.

The argument of Jesus is, if they permit this *work* of circumcision to be done on the Sabbath that the Law of Moses be not broken—how can they be so unrighteous and prejudiced as to prohibit the healing of a man's body and soul on the Sabbath? God did not create man merely to keep Sabbath regulations, but the Sabbath was given for man's benefit. There are principles and actions which are higher and must supercede Sabbath regulations. God works on the Sabbath; He sends rain, sunshine, life and many other necessary things on the seventh day. So it was proper that the Son of God heal and teach on the Sabbath.

In verse 24 Christ makes the application. "Judge righteously—judge according to truth." Consider the real substance of the situation (cf. I Sam. 16:7). How different the atmosphere of many churches today if Christian people were not so quick to condemn others in those things which they themselves do. "Consistency, thou art indeed a gem!"

Incidentally, verse 24 is a positive command by Jesus that men judge! So often we are told that we *must not judge*, yet here our Lord requires it of us. There is, however, no contradiction between Matthew 7:1, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," and verse 24 here. In Matthew 7:1 Jesus condemns censorious judgment—unfair, hypocritical judgment motivated by an evil desire to hurt another's character. But in John 7:24 He commands that men use wisdom, discretion and honesty in their judgments of both men and doctrines. Followers of Christ, *must* judge religious doctrines and religious teachers (cf. Matt. 7:15-20; Jn. 10:4-5; Rom. 16:17-18; Thess. 3:14; I John 4:1-3; II John 7-11).

Quiz

1. Why were the rulers amazed at Jesus' teaching?
2. Why is it necessary to have a desire to do God's will in order to understand the truth of His word?
3. What is the natural tendency of the teacher who seeks to glorify himself?
4. What attitude of heart by the Jewish rulers violated the Law of Moses?

5. How did the Jews, out of necessity, violate the Sabbath regulations?
6. Explain the principle laid down by Jesus in verse 24 concerning righteous judgment.
7. Have we a right to judge religious teachers?

MIXED EMOTIONS CONCERNING JESUS

Text 7:25-36

25 Some therefore of them of Jerusalem said, Is not this he whom they seek to kill?

26 And lo, he speaketh openly, and they say nothing unto him. Can it be that the rulers indeed know that this is the Christ?

27 Howbeit we know this man whence he is; but when the Christ cometh, no one knoweth whence he is.

28 Jesus therefore cried in the temple, teaching and saying, Ye both know me, and know whence I am; and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not.

29 I know him; because I am from him, and he sent me.

30 They sought therefore to take him: and no man laid his hand on him, because his hour was not yet come.

31 But of the multitude many believed on him; and they said, When the Christ shall come, will he do more signs than those which this man hath done?

32 The Pharisees heard the multitude murmuring these things concerning him; and the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to take him.

33 Jesus therefore said, Yet a little while am I with you, and I go unto him that sent me.

34 Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, ye cannot come.

35 The Jews therefore said among themselves, Whither will this man go that we shall not find him? Will he go unto the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks?

36 What is this word that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am, ye cannot come?

Queries

- a. What did the people of Jerusalem mean when they said, "when the Christ cometh, no one knoweth whence he is."
- b. Did Jesus mean that they actually knew Him as the Messiah? (v. 28)
- c. When would they seek Him and not find Him?

Paraphrase

Some of the Jerusalemites, recognizing the profound wisdom of Jesus' words, said, Is not this the man whom the rulers seek to kill, yet behold, he speaks openly and boldly in the temple and they say not one word to Him. Some said, Can it be possible that our rulers have come to recognize this man as the Christ? Others replied, No, we know where this man comes from—when the Christ comes, no one will know where He comes from. Exasperated at their unbelief, Jesus cried aloud, as He taught in the temple and said, So you think you know me? and where I am from? To the contrary I have not come to you as a mere mortal—on my own authority. He who sent me is the One True God, and Him you do not know. I know Him because I came from His very presence and He sends me with His commission. The rulers, hearing Jesus' words, were eagerly seeking to arrest Him. However, in the Divine providence of God, His hour had not yet come, and no one laid a hand upon Him. Great numbers of the feast crowds were following Him and saying among themselves, When the Christ comes He will not do more signs than this man has done, will He? The Pharisees heard the crowd mumbling these things concerning Him and the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple police in order that they might arrest Him. Then Jesus said, I am going to be with you only a little time more and then I go away unto Him that sent Me. You will look for Me but you will not find Me, and where I am you are not able to come. At this the Jews said among themselves, Where is this fellow about to go that we shall not be able to find him? Will He go to the Jews that are scattered in the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? What does he mean when he says, You shall seek and shall not find me, and where I am you are not able to come?

Summary

There are many opinions concerning Jesus at the Feast. Some say He cannot possibly be the Christ—others say He must be—the rulers are determined to kill Him. Jesus claims unequivocally to be sent from the very presence of God and soon to return to the Father. Jesus then warns the Jews of a time when they will diligently seek Him but they will not be able to find Him.

Comment

In verse 25 John uses the word *Hierosolumton* (Greek for Jerusalemites) to make a distinction between the definitely hostile rulers of the Jews (7:15), the crowds of pilgrims from Galilee, Perea and

Judea (7:20), and these city dwellers or Jerusalemites. Why their opinion of Jesus was important enough for John to include it in an extremely abridged account of the Life of Christ we do not know. But notice that they seem to be well informed as to the premeditated intentions of the rulers, while the pilgrims who have come from afar are shocked at the suggestion of Jesus' impending execution (cf. John 7:19).

The Jerusalemites were shocked at the boldness with which Jesus openly denounced the rulers. Neither could they understand the hesitancy of the Jews to have Jesus silenced or arrested. Their amazed reaction is an impulsive, "Can it be that the rulers' have been persuaded that this man is the Christ?" To say, as some commentators, that the question is asked in derision does not suit the context. These city dwellers knew very well the attitude of the rulers in the past (cf. John 5:18). But now the Nazarene was even more bold and there was no official action being taken. They could only conclude that the rulers had recognized Jesus as the Messiah.

Yet, with a moment's deliberation, they knew this man could not be the Messiah. The rulers may have made a mistake but not these people—they knew where Jesus was from! Some of them knew that He was from Nazareth and some, perhaps, knew His family.

There seems to have been a popular theory that the Messiah, when He came, would appear suddenly and no one would know where He came from. The origin of this theory is obscured by vagueness, but there are some passages in the Jewish apocryphal books and Rabbinical writings such as this extract: "A roe appears and then is hid; so the Redeemer shall first appear and then be concealed, and then again be concealed and then again appear. So the Redeemer shall first appear and then be hid, and then, at the end of forty-five days, shall reappear, and cause manna to descend. (Barnes, Notes on the New Testament, Luke and John, Baker Book House, 1956, page 258.) There are also passages in the canonical books such as Isaiah 53:2, 8; Daniel 7:13; Malachi 3:1, from which the people may have started this theory. On the other hand, it appears that many of the Jews knew the Messiah was to be born at Bethlehem (cf. Matthew 2:5 and Jn. 7:42). Jesus may have been correcting their theory in Matthew 24:23, when He said, "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not." And again in Matthew 24:26, "If they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert, go not forth; behold, he is in the secret chambers, believe it not." When the "great tribulation" was to come upon Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the people in

that city would certainly look in every direction for a sudden appearance of the Messiah.

The origin of their false theories about the Messiah is of minor importance here. Of major importance is the self-willed rejection of Jesus by these Jerusalemites and His ironic condemnation of their ignorance of the One True God.

Their unbelief vexed the Lord's heart. He was exasperated, yet heartbroken; ironic in tongue, yet concerned for their souls. He cried out, "So you think you know me? and you know where I am from?" We believe Jesus was using irony and was not making a statement of fact. We further feel the words of Jesus are better punctuated interrogatively. Our most ancient manuscripts indicate that there were no punctuation marks at all in the original New Testament. But time after time Jesus said emphatically the people did *not* know Him (cf. John 3:11; 5:18, 37, 38; 6:42, 60-62; 8:19, 42, 43; 8:55-69; 14:9). Jesus was not averse to using irony (cf. Luke 13:31-32; Mark 7:9).

They knew His mother and brothers and sisters—they knew His boyhood home—but they did not know *Him*. They were like so many of our modernists today. They accepted Jesus as a wise teacher, but they knew too much to accept Him as the Divine Son of God.

Then Jesus declares that He comes not on His own authority (see our comments on John 5:32-32, Vol. I, pages 192-193). Jesus comes forth from the presence of the One True God. It is no wonder they reject Him as the Divine Messiah—they do not know the One True God. Jesus had said essentially the same thing six months before at the Passover in this same city (cf. John 5:37-44), and He repeats it again and again (cf. John 8:19, 55). They did not know God for the same reason the Gentiles of Romans 1:25, 28 did not know God—they *did not want to know God*. And for this reason, thousands of every generation do not know God—they refuse to have Him in their lives because His Word condemns their carnal minds and deeds.

In verse 29, Jesus claims to have come from the presence of the Father with a Divine commission. The Greek word *apostelein*, from which we get *apostle*, means "sent with a commission, or by the authority of another." This is the word Jesus uses for *sent* in verse 29. Jesus is called "the Apostle . . . of our confession" in Hebrews 3:1.

The rulers of Jerusalem had sought to kill Jesus even before the close of His first year of ministry. At the second Passover of His public ministry they sought "the more" to kill Him (cf. John 5:18). Now they were trying again to take Him into custody (v. 30). But,

strangely enough, no one laid a hand on Him. The excuses His antagonists had for not taking action against Him at this time are not made known. Perhaps they were afraid of the multitudes of pilgrims who were in favor of His teaching (v. 31). One thing is certain, the proper time for His suffering within the Divine scheme had not yet arrived and the Providence of an omnipotent God overruled the designs of evil men.

In contrast to the rejection of Jesus as the Messiah by the Jerusalemites and the rulers, many of the pilgrims there for the Feast of Tabernacles were clamoring after His teaching. We agree with Hendriksen that the words in verse 31 "many believed on him" do not "necessarily indicate true, living faith." There were many in Galilee who believed in Him until the time of testing at the Sermon on the Bread of Life. Then multitudes forsook Him.

Their materialistic attitude is revealed in the remainder of verse 31. They were enamored of His wonderful miracles and signs. But six months later, in this same city, they, too, will forsake Him when they realize He is not to be a materialistic Messiah. The construction of the Greek in verse 31 shows the people to have asked the question expecting a negative answer. In other words, the pilgrims are asking each other and expecting confirmation of each other that the wonders and signs of this man can only mean He is the Messiah they are looking for.

The Pharisees, hearing the teeming multitudes mumbling among themselves that the Nazarene is the long looked for Messiah, must take drastic steps for a serious situation. The Pharisees and chief priests were bitter enemies, yet they united in this Satanic pact to destroy a common foe, Jesus the Nazarene.

In verses 33 and 34, Jesus speaks a solemn and fearful warning. Yet, He speaks it in a voice full of tenderness. They have decided secretly to kill Him, but He knows it and tries to tell them that He is aware of it. He warns them further that the time will come when they shall seek Him, but be unable to find Him. This does not mean that there would come a time when it would be impossible for these Jews to find Jesus unto salvation and forgiveness. We know, in fact, that many thousands did seek Him and find Him for salvation (cf. Acts 2, 3, 4 and 5). We believe Jesus refers to a time of great sorrow or tribulation when they would search desperately for the Messiah to lead, deliver and comfort them. Just such a time occurred in 70 A.D. at the destruction of Jerusalem (cf. Matthew 24; Josephus' "Wars of

the Jews, Books V and VI). Jesus here warns that He will be unavailable for such leadership and deliverance. He will soon ascend unto His Father in Heaven (cf. John 13:33, 36-38).

The Jews glibly cast aside any seriousness to His warnings. They joke about His prophetic warnings. "Where will He go," they say, "to our people who are scattered throughout the world (the Dispersion)?" In sarcasm and ridicule they ask if He will go among the Gentiles and teach them. Little do they know how the gospel of Christ will be rejected by their countrymen and then taken by the apostles to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 13:46-52; 28:25-28).

The Jews are perplexed (v. 36). Their carnal minds are not able to comprehend that He was sent forth from the presence of Jehovah and will soon return to heaven. But amazingly, Jesus does not answer their question. He has more relevant teaching He wishes to give the multitudes. What He says in verses 37-39 will be more pertinent at this time than a discussion of eschatology, and so the Lord merely ignores their sarcastic question.

Quiz

1. Where would the people get the idea that the appearance of the Messiah would be sudden and secret?
2. How do you think verse 28 should be punctuated?
3. What does the word *apostle* mean?
4. Why was Jesus not arrested at this time?
5. Do you think the belief of the multitudes was sincere or superficial?
6. When would the Jews seek the Messiah and be unable to find Him?

DISCOURSE ON THE LIVING WATER

Text 7:37-52

37 Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.

38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water.

39 But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him were to receive: for the Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified.

40 Some of the multitude therefore, when they heard these words, said, This is of a truth the prophet.

41 Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, What, doth the Christ come out of Galilee?

42 Hath not the scripture said that the Christ cometh of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?

43 So there arose a division in the multitude because of him.

44 And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him.

45 The officers therefore came to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why did ye not bring him?

46 The officers answered, Never man so spake.

47 The Pharisees therefore answered them, Are ye also led astray?

48 Hath any of the rulers believed on him, or of the Pharisees?

49 But this multitude that knoweth not the law are accursed.

50 Nicodemus saith unto them (he that came to him before, being one of them),

51 Doth our law judge a man, except it first hear from himself and know what he doeth?

52 They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and see that out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.

Queries

- a. How will the "rivers of living water" flow from the believer?
- b. Was the Spirit not given in some measure prior to Jesus' glorification?
- c. What criteria did the Pharisees use to judge the validity of Jesus' teachings?

Paraphrase

On the last day of the great feast, Jesus stood and cried aloud, If any man thirsts after righteousness and everlasting life let him come unto Me and drink. For the man believing in Me, as the scripture has said, Out from his innermost being shall flow an abundant river of this life-giving water (He said this concerning the gift of the Holy Spirit which they that believed in Him were about to receive. For the gift of the Holy Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus was not yet glorified). Some of the multitude, having heard these words of Jesus, were saying, This is truly the Prophet. Others were saying, This is the Christ. Still others said, The Christ does not come out of Galilee, now does He? Have not the scriptures said that the Christ, when He comes, will come from the ancestry of David and from the village of Bethlehem where David was born? There arose a division therefore in the multitude on account of Jesus and His teaching. Some of them desired to arrest Him but no one forcibly laid their hands upon Him. The temple police even returned to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, Why have you not brought him? The officers answered, Never has a mere mortal spoken as this man is speaking! The Pharisees replied, He has not seduced you also, has he? Have any of the authorities or Pharisees approved his teaching? As

for this crowd of ignoramuses that do not know the law, they are accursed! Then Nicodemus, the one who came to Jesus before, being one of the Pharisees, said to them, Does our law permit a man to be condemned and sentenced without first giving him a hearing and hear his defense in order to determine the facts? The Pharisees replied, You are not also from Galilee are you, Nicodemus? Search where you will in the scriptures and you will see that the Prophet does not come from Galilee.

Summary

The Lord's discourse on the living water touches the chords of hope in some who are ready to accept Him as the Messiah. Others, judging Him hastily and in ignorance of the facts, reject Him as the Christ. The Pharisees condemn everyone as ignoramuses who do not believe what they believe and reject what they reject.

Comment

We have substituted the phrase, "on the last day of the great feast," in our paraphrase in lieu of the traditional ". . . on the last day, the great day of the feast." Josephus (*Antiquities* 3:10:4) states that this feast is "the holiest and greatest feast." We believe that the Greek word *me-gas* (great) more appropriately applies to the whole feast rather than to any particular day. This was precisely the way the Bodmer II papyrus (P66) read originally—"on the last day of the great feast." The manuscript was evidently changed in later years from its original reading to the traditional reading.

The most joyous of all festive seasons in Israel was that of the Feast of Tabernacles. It fell on a time of year when the hearts of the people would naturally be full of thankfulness, gladness and expectancy. Edersheim says of the three great annual feasts: "the first [Pass-over] . . . spoke, in the presentation of the first sheaf, of the founding of the church; the second [Pentecost] of its harvesting, when the church in its present state should be presented as two leavened wave-loaves; while the third [Tabernacles] pointed forward to the full harvest in the end, when 'in this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things . . .'" (*The Temple, its Ministry and Services*, p. 269, pub. Eerdmans, by Alfred Edersheim.) The Rabbis, in many passages of the Mishnah, single this feast out from all the other feasts. This feast closed the sacred festive cycle for the year. It very appropriately followed the Day of Atonement by only five days. At the Day of Atonement the sin of Israel was removed

and her covenant relationship to God was restored. Thus a sanctified and cleansed nation could keep a holy feast of harvest joy unto the Lord. In Zechariah's prophecy of the new world it was this Feast of Tabernacles which was to be celebrated all over the world (Zechariah 14:16-19). Finally, more sacrifices were offered at this feast than either of the other two annual feasts.

Some of the background of the ceremonies during this feast will make Jesus' words in verses 37 and 38 much more significant. Each day of the feast the people came with palm branches and limbs of willows to the temple. They held these branches over the great altar of burnt offering until they formed a sort of roof and the people marched around the altar. While the people were thus marching, one of the priests went, according to the ceremony, to the pool of Siloam and filled a golden pitcher with about two pints of water. As he returned through the Water Gate, the people chanted Isaiah 12:3 . . . "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." The priest walked up the steps to the great altar and began to pour the water out into the altar and the people began to sing the Hallel (Psalms 113-118) to the accompaniment of the flute.

Perhaps this is the very moment Jesus cried out, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water. This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive." Jesus explained the deep significance of the ceremony and claimed to be Himself the One through Whom they would find fulfillment of its promises.

To the people this ceremony was both a prayer of thanksgiving and supplication for the rains which brought the harvest. It was also a memorial ceremony looking back to the water which sprang from the rock when their forefathers were in the wilderness. It was also understood as a prophetic-type ceremony in which they depicted the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. The Talmud says, "Why is the name of it called, The drawing out of water? Because of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, according to what is said: 'With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.'"

Jesus must have meant "the scriptures in general teach that from within the believer shall flow rivers of living water." No scholar yet has been able to determine that His words (verse 38) are an exact quotation from any specific Old Testament passage. These are some

of the Old Testament passages to be studied in connection with verses 37 and 38: Psalms 46:4-5; Isaiah 44:3, 55:1, 58:11; Ezekiel 47:1-12; Zechariah 14:8.

In John 4:14 Jesus promises the believer a never-failing source of life, strength and joy. The living water promised to the woman at the well was to be a "well of living water springing up unto eternal life." This is figurative language to describe the continual renewing work of the Holy Spirit: so long as He is allowed to dwell within the believer (cf. Isa. 40:31; II Cor. 4:16; Eph. 4:23; Col. 3:10; Titus 3:5). But here in John 7:37-39 Jesus uses figurative language to show that the living water will also flow out from the "inward man" of the believer. The Christian will naturally become a source of life to others. Jesus is the Water of Life and believers become streams of life-giving water pouring forth to those thirsting for Life, the believers being ever supplied from the Source themselves. Jesus is the Light of the world and believers are also lights (Matthew 5:14). One only need review the book of Acts and especially the life of Paul to see examples of those who have drunk deeply of the Water of Life and become rivers of living water themselves.

The indwelling Spirit of Christ is meant in verse 39. The gift of the Holy Spirit which is promised to every Christian (Acts 2:38, 5:32); without which no man belongs to Christ or may have eternal life (Romans 8:1-17). This measure of the Holy Spirit was not given before the resurrection and ascension of Christ. The Holy Spirit was given to individuals in the Old Dispensation on an arbitrary basis by God (I Pet. 1:10-11; II Pet. 1:20-21). A few individuals out of God's chosen people were given the Spirit, e.g., Samson, Samuel, etc. Even those believers who repented and were baptized at John the Baptist's preaching were not given the indwelling Spirit. We have an instance of the rebaptism of certain of John's disciples (Acts 19:1-7) into the name of the Lord Jesus because John's baptism carried with it no promise of the Holy Spirit. Jesus distributed the powers of the Holy Spirit as He saw fit while He lived on earth (cf. Matthew 10:1). But while Christ dwelt among men in the flesh it was not possible for Him to send the Comforter to each believer. As Westcott says, "The necessary limitations of Christ's historical presence with the disciples excluded that realization of His abiding presence which followed on the Resurrection" (The Gospel According to St. John, by B. F. Westcott, p. 279, Eerdmans). Jesus says much the same Himself (cf. John 14:17, 16:4-5, 16:7). Jesus is spoken of as being glorified in a num-

ber of ways—through His works, through His disciples, in His death, in His resurrection, in His exaltation to the right hand of the Father (cf. John 11:4; 12:16, 23, 28; 13: 31; 14:13; 15:8; 17:4, 10; Acts 3:13).

When Jesus cried aloud in the temple courts it was probably right at the moment when the worshippers were at the highest pitch of interest in the ceremony. His words, being highly significant for the moment, had instantaneous effect. Many of the worshippers were ready to impulsively declare, "This is truly The Prophet, the one our father Moses promised in the Law" (cf. Deut. 18:15). Others were just as ready to declare Him "Christ!" But their emotional instability and their ignorance is betrayed. They do not even know that Jesus was actually born in Bethlehem—they hastily make their judgment of Him assuming that He originated in Galilee.

They were correct in two points! The Scriptures do say that the Christ is to be born in David's birthplace, Bethlehem (cf. I Sam. 16:1-4 Isa. 11:1; Jer. 23:5; Micah 5:2). And the Scriptures also say that Christ comes from the seed of David. Scholars are not agreed on the lineage of Mary. Some say Christ gets His Davidic lineage from Joseph. But this writer is persuaded that Mary was a descendant of David (cf. Sam. 7:12; Acts 2:30; Rom. 1:3; II Tim. 2:8; Rev. 5:5). Scripture tells us that Jesus was born, according to the flesh, of the seed of David, and Jesus' human nature was not derived from Joseph, for Jesus was born of the *virgin* Mary.

Some of the worshipping pilgrims appear to have been actually hostile. Perhaps they were angered by Jesus' interruption of the ceremonies—perhaps at His silence in denying to be the Christ (which was really a claim). How could a lowly Galilean be the Christ—he was guilty of blasphemy. Some wanted Him arrested. There were temple officers already there, sent by the chief priests and Pharisees to arrest Him. But they returned empty-handed. Their superiors demanded a reason for their failure. The officers' reply would seem rather ludicrous were it not for other instances where people were overawed by the words, countenance, or mere presence of Jesus (cf. Matt. 7:28-29; Luke 5:8; John 18:6). What restrained these hardened temple police—was it the eloquence of Jesus? His personality? Or the authority with which He spoke and carried Himself? Perhaps all three.

But the Pharisees were not the least impressed by such a report. These ignorant police and the ignorant masses might think the Galilean to be eloquent, persuasive and speaking with authority, but the Pharisees knew him to be a sinister character, seeking to lead the masses astray. The scribes and Pharisees spent practically their whole lives in minute study of the Scriptures and the traditions of the fathers. The more Scriptures one could quote, the more Rabbinical authorities and traditions one could quote, the wiser and holier one became. And so the multitudes who could not quote much Scripture or traditions were ignorant and sinful. Thus the ignorant masses were to follow unhesitatingly the decisions and opinions of the religious experts—the Pharisees. This is one reason Jesus told men who were following the Pharisees that they were “blind men following blind guides . . .” (cf. Matt. 15:14).

The Pharisees have just boasted that none of their number believes in this Galilean and now one of their own number, Nicodemus, speaks up in defense of Jesus. The Pharisees have just boasted that they were the great students and interpreters of the Law and now one of their own number points out that they are violating that Law.

We have discussed the personality of Nicodemus in Volume I, page 93. This incident shows that he was not a craven coward. He was speaking in defense of a hated enemy of his colleagues. They had sworn to kill the Galilean and were not at all reticent in expressing their hatred for Him and His followers. Nicodemus was reminding these arrogant, self-righteous men that they were violating their own Law.

And violating the Law they were indeed! The law required that justice be done, and impartially. Every man was to have the right to fair, and legal trial upon being accused. Every accusation had to be established at the mouth of two or more witnesses (cf. Ex. 23:1-2; Lev. 19:15-18; Deut. 1:16; 19:15-18).

Although Nicodemus was ready to speak out for a fair trial for Jesus, this passage (7:50-52) leaves one with the feeling that Nicodemus could have been more bold and direct and testified openly his persuasion that Jesus was a “teacher come from God” (John 3:2)—even that He might be The Prophet or the Messiah. Nicodemus quoted the relevant legal maxims and when his august colleagues taunted him with having a connection with the Galilean rabble, he said no more.

Many Christians today often find themselves in much the same situation. There comes the “moment of truth” in every Christian’s

life—and more than once—when he must openly and boldly witness for Jesus or be reduced to an uncomfortable and ashamed silence. Let every follower of Jesus remember His warning, "Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32-33).

A final note in the field of textual criticism. Both the King James Version and the American Standard Version texts read, in the last sentence of verse 52, "Search, and see that out of Galilee ariseth *no prophet.*" (Italics mine.) The Bodmer II (P66) manuscript places the definite article before "prophet" in verse 52 making it read thus: ". . . *the prophet* does not arise out of Galilee." This relieves the chief priests and Pharisees of making an egregious error, for there were prophets who came from Galilee, such as Jonah (II Kings 14:25; Jonah 1:1), and perhaps Hosea and Nahum. It is doubtful that the scribes and Pharisees would make such an error as the K. J. V. and the A. S. V. would have them commit by saying "*no prophet* ariseth out of Galilee." Furthermore, the P66 rendering would more aptly fit the contextual discussion which concerned "*the prophet*" and "the Christ."

Quiz

1. How important was the Feast of Tabernacles to the Jews?
2. What was the most significant part of the ceremonies connected with this feast?
3. Name four Old Testament passages which speak of "living water."
4. What is the "living water" within believers—and how does it flow out from within them?
5. What measure of the Holy Spirit was not given prior to Jesus' glorification?
6. Why could the Holy Spirit not be given before Jesus was glorified?
7. What law was the Pharisees violating in their accusations and actions against Jesus?

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
EXPOSITORY SERMON NO. SEVEN
SYMPTOMS OF UNBELIEF

John 7

Introduction

I. FEAST OF TABERNACLES

A. Describe the Feast: its meaning, its ceremonies, the rejoicing, the spectacle of it all (cf. comments Chap. 7, pgs. 15, 16, 17).

II. OMINOUS SHADOWS OF UNBELIEF CAST UPON THE FEAST

A. In spite of all the joy, ritual and splendor of the feast, its significance was ruined by the manifestations of unbelief. Ugly infidelity cast a pall over the whole joyous occasion and obscured the real lesson behind the feast. This festival was to remind the Jews of ancestral trust in God . . . it was to teach them of the Fatherly care of Jehovah in the wilderness journeys of their forefathers.

B. But when Jesus faced the people here with His claims it becomes evident that Judaism is rotten to the core with unbelief.

Discussion

I. UNBELIEF OF JESUS' BROTHERS, vs. 1-9

Notice that they admitted His supernatural character. They admitted that He performed miracles. But it says of them that "they did not believe on him." How can men admit the supernatural nature of Jesus and disbelieve in Him? Is such a contradiction possible? Remember the rulers of the Jews in Acts 4:15-16 who admitted the miracles of the apostles and could not deny them, but they refused to accept the message of the apostles. His brothers would not accept Him as a spiritual King over their wills and hearts. **THERE IS THE CRUCIAL POINT.** One may get many people today to say they believe in Christ and God and the Bible—but they do not want God's Word to rule over their minds, hearts and actions. This attitude is very prevalent among people today. You may see such people any Lord's Day, washing their cars, raking leaves, going to the lake or some other mockery of God. You may see them at the football games sitting on hard seats in bitter cold, screaming their lungs out, while twenty-two boys run back and forth over a field with a piece of pigskin. But these people can't get up on Sunday morning and come to church and sing and

worship the Lord who willingly hung on Calvary's cross for their sins. Oh, God, have mercy upon their souls! His brothers betrayed their weakness. Jesus told them that the world did not hate them as it did Him. The Lord is plainly indicating that their godly witness was weak—they were friends of the world, but enemies of God (Jas. 4:4-5). They had the worldly outlook. They mockingly betrayed their skepticism by chiding Jesus for staying in Galilee when He could be in Jerusalem doing His miracles and getting a worldly following toward His mission as Messiah. Remember the thousands of Jews as they walked the wilderness and beheld all the miracles of God, but murmured to return to the leeks and garlic of Egypt.

II. MISTAKING ERUDITION FOR HOLINESS, vs. 15-16; 47-49

Jesus had never attended the Jerusalem schools of the Pharisees. Immediately they crossed Him off their list as an unlearned ignoramus from the hills of Galilee. At once they threw up a barricade of self-willed prejudice against anything Jesus had to say. In verses 47-49 the Pharisees show that they believe scholarliness and law-keeping is the way to piety. There are many self-named "scholars" today who show the same symptoms of unbelief by attacking the Bible and Jesus as unphilosophical, unscientific and irrational. They demythologize the Scriptures—they attack fundamentalist preachers and small preacher training schools (loyal Bible Colleges). These "scholars" claim the real wisdom is to be found in their universities where the Bible is studied, not as the only supernatural revelation from God, but as a work of man-conceived literature contemporary with Buddhism, Mohammedanism and other Oriental religions. Paul faced the same situation in Corinth. Christians there were elevating the wisdom of men above a growth in knowledge of God's word. The Corinthians were placing value on eloquence, reason and rhetoric rather than the "foolishness of the cross." Great numbers of preachers today are too scientific and too reasonable to try to change men's hearts and convert them through preaching the gospel of atonement by the blood of Jesus Christ. To such the Gospel is outmoded. Scholarship and the evolutionary attainment of man now demands the preaching of a "social gospel"—raising the standards of living, one world government, etc. On the other hand, there are orthodox believers who maintain that study leads to salvation. They know the Book from "kivver to kivver" and have read it all the way through so many times. The Pharisees studied—memorized the Scriptures frontward and backward. They

counted the words, letters and paragraphs and knew every jot and tittle. But although they knew the Scriptures as no other men have known them since, they could not recognize the Messiah when He came (cf. John 5:39-47).

III. UNWILLINGNESS TO DO GOD'S WILL, v. 17

When the Jews rejected Jesus because they supposed Him to be unlearned and uneducated, He posed a statement that contains all the wisdom and supernatural insight of One who is able to read their very deepest meditations: "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself" (v. 17). They were unwilling to do God's will—they had not the love of God in them (cf. John 5:42). Knowledge, as such, never produces love. No matter how much we know *about* Christ, our knowledge alone will never produce obedience. A certain amount of understanding and knowing God comes *only* from obedience or the desire to obey His will (cf. I John 2:3-5). See also John 8:47. This same stubborn unwillingness to do God's will led the Pharisees to reject the counsel of God, refusing to be baptized of John the Baptist (Luke 7:29-30). If we are not willing to do God's will, we shall desire to do Satan's will! There is no middle ground, no neutrality (cf. John 8:44). There must be that surrender—that giving up—of one's will to where one desires to do God's will. The man who wills to do God's will is the man Luke calls the "man of an honest and good heart." The fundamental equation is, then, (1) knowledge, (2) love, (3) obedience. Yet each of these three principles complement one another and interact. Knowledge of Jesus leads to love and obedience, while on the other hand, obedience leads to a full-grown knowledge of Christ and a more perfect love of Him (cf. Eph. 4:11-16). We never quite grasp the full significance and import of some of the more profound passages of Scripture until we have obeyed them or experienced them (like Job and David). A lifetime of studying the Bible is to no avail if a man's will and desire is out of harmony with God's will. Paul said the same thing in I Corinthians 2:6—3:9. The rebellious, carnal-minded man cannot discern the things of the Spirit, because the worldly-minded man has no desire to *do* God's will. AND THIS IS JUST THE REASON SO MANY PEOPLE IN OUR DAY SAY THEY CANNOT UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE. THEY HAVE NO DESIRE TO OBEY IT—NO DESIRE TO LIVE LIKE THE BIBLE DEMANDS THEY LIVE. They cannot understand the New Testament concept of stewardship because they do not want to give

like the Bible demands. They cannot understand the Bible concept of worship and personal witnessing because they willeth not to do God's will!

IV. PREJUDICED AND SUPERFICIAL JUDGMENT, vs. 18-24

These Jews judged all teaching by how men heaped plaudits upon the teacher. They judged a man's teaching as to whether he sought honor and prestige and applause of others or not. Jesus did not seek His own glory, but the glory of the Father only. They also judged a man's teachings by the standards they themselves had set up. They had judged Jesus as a blasphemer and one possessed of demons because He had cured a man on the Sabbath and had broken their traditions. Jesus shows them just how superficial their judgment was. They circumcised babies on the Sabbath in order that the Law of Moses be not broken (in spite of their traditions). Now if they permitted this work of circumcision to be done, how could they be so shallow and unrighteous and unmerciful as to prohibit the healing of a man's body and bringing him to faith on the Sabbath? You see, making laws where God never made them is also evidence of unbelief! Judging others by man-made standards and by superficial, shallow prejudices is a symptom of unbelief.

Conclusion

I. HAVE YOU ANY OF THESE SYMPTOMS OF UNBELIEF?

- A. Believing His supernatural character but not allowing Him to rule your heart?
- B. Mistaking knowledge or personal merit for holiness?
- C. Unwillingness to *do* God's will?
- D. Prejudiced and superficial judgment?

II. IF YOU DO, YOU ARE HARBORING SOMETHING MORE DEADLY THAN CANCER!

- A. Flee to the Great Physician . . . partake of the Balm of Christ.
- B. By His stripes you may be healed . . . ONLY TRUST HIM.

III. IF YOU HAVE NOT OBEYED THE GOSPEL OF SALVATION, WHY NOT NOW?

- A. A father once had a boy who liked to have his own way. He said to him one day, "Son, you ought not to want your own way—you ought to want God's way." After thinking a while, the son said, "Father, if I choose the will of the Lord and go His way because I *want* to, don't I still have my own way?"

IF WE LEARN THAT SECRET, WE HAVE LEARNED THE WHOLE SECRET OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. LET HIM HAVE HIS WAY WITH THEE . . . NOW!

CHAPTER EIGHT

Chapter Eight, omitting the interpolation of John 7:53—8:11, is a continuation of the Lord's discourses at the Feast of Tabernacles. This commentary will omit printing the text of John 7:53—8:11 for new textual evidence now makes it even more certain that this passage was not a part of the original text.

Our earliest and best Greek manuscripts do not contain this passage. Codex Vaticanus (B), Codex Sinaiticus (Aleph) and Codex Washingtonianus (W)—three of the most important MSS—do not give the slightest indication that the story of the woman taken in adultery is part of the original. In fact, no Greek manuscript prior to the ninth century (with the exception of the bilingual manuscript Codex Bezae) has the story. None of the church fathers who wrote in Greek commented on this passage until the twelfth century, although many of them made reference to the passages which immediately precede and follow it.

A recent manuscript discovery (also in the Bodmer library) of a Coptic version of the Bible in the Bohairic dialect, contains the Gospel of John which is dated by its editor in the fourth century (300-400 A.D.). Passages which textual scholars have previously recognized as critically suspect (John 5:3b-4, etc.) and the passage under discussion (John 7:53—8:11) are not present in this manuscript.

The most crucial evidence against this spurious passage, however, comes from the Bodmer II Papyrus (P66). It is highly significant that this earliest complete text of John's Gospel does not have the account of the adulterous woman. There is no mark or hint at either 7:53 or 8:12 of this MS that either scribe or corrector knew anything additional belonging here (see Vol. I, p. 13, and Vol. II, Special Study No. One, pgs. 11, 12 for the value of Bodmer II in textual criticism).

In many of the late Greek manuscripts which do have the story, it is marked so as to inform the reader that it is an insertion. Furthermore, the manuscripts which have the account vary so much from each other in wording that there are at least sixty different readings. Someone has determined that this is an average of five variants for each verse of the twelve-verse unit—a much higher average than is found in the rest of John's Gospel. The account also occurs in other locations in the New Testament. Some have it after John 7:36; others after John 21:24; still others after Luke 21:38.

The style and vocabulary of the story in Greek are quite different from that which John employs in the rest of the book. It does not in any way contribute to John's account, but to the contrary, disrupts the context. How meaningful the two declarations of Jesus become—the "Water of Life" and the "Light of the World"—when we understand their setting coincident with the last day of the great Feast of Tabernacles. But if the unit 7:53—8:11 remains in the text of John's Gospel, then both the incident of the adulterous woman and the discourse on "light" occur at the Temple *on the day after the feast has closed*, for 8:2 reads, "Early in the morning he came again to the temple."

We, therefore, do not accept the passage John 7:53—8:11 as part of John's Gospel and have omitted it from our commentary. We continue our outline as follows:

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

D. Public Ministry, Third Year

2. Later Judean Ministry, 7:1—10:21, The Feast of Tabernacles

a. The Light of the World, 8:12-20

b. Fatal Unbelief, 8:21-30

c. Truth brings Freedom, 8:31-36

d. Abraham's Children, 8:37-40

e. Satan's Children, 8:41-47

f. Christ Defamed, 8:48-59

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Text 8:12-20

12 Again therefore Jesus spake unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

13 The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest witness of thyself; thy witness is not true.

14 Jesus answered and said unto them, Even if I bear witness of myself, my witness is true; for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye know not whence I come, or whither I go.

15 Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man.

16 Yea and if I judge, my judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.

17 Yea and in your law it is written, that the witness of two men is true.

18 I am he that beareth witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.

19 They said therefore unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye know neither me, nor my Father; if ye knew me, ye would know my Father also.

20 These words spake he in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man took him; because his hour was not yet come.

Queries

- a. What is the "light of life"?
- b. Does Jesus contradict Himself on the matter of judging?
(vs. 15, 16.)
- c. What is the significance of the mention of the Treasury?

Paraphrase

Again Jesus addressed the people, saying, I am the Light of the world. The man who believes, obeys and follows Me will not wander, being lost in the darkness; but he will possess The Light which is life. At this the Pharisees said to Him, You are testifying on your own behalf; your testimony is therefore not valid. Jesus replied, My testimony is valid even though I do testify concerning Myself; because I know by direct knowledge where I come from and where I am going. But you are wilfully ignorant of where I came from and where I am going. You are judging me according to your worldly standards for a Messiah. I am not now primarily concerned with judging anyone. Yet even if I am judging, my judgment is true, because I am not alone in my judgment as a mere man but I am One with the Father who sent me. And in your own law, which you as Israelites are sole possessors, it is written, that the testimony of two men is valid. I am bearing witness concerning Myself and my Father who sent me is also bearing witness concerning Me. Then they said to Him, Where is your Father? Jesus answered, You know neither me nor my Father; if you knew me as the Son of God, you would also know my Father. These words spake Jesus near the Treasury as He taught in the Temple. Yet no one arrested Him, because His hour had not yet come.

Summary

Jesus claims to be the Messiah—Light of the world. The Jews reject His testimony. Jesus adduces the Father's testimony on His behalf.

Comment

Jesus' discourse on the Light of the world here naturally connects with the former discourse on the Living Water (7:37-52). The significance of His claim to be the Light of the world is related to the

ceremony of lighting the great candelabra during the Feast of Tabernacles. Great candelabra with four receptacles for oil were placed in the inner court. The candelabra were so tall that the priests climbed ladders to light the oil. When they were lighted, the priests and the people "danced before the Lord" with joy. This was in commemoration of the blessing of the pillar of fire which led their fathers in the wilderness. What that pillar of fire was to Israel (leading them through darkness and the wilderness), Jesus is for the whole world. To the ignorant and unbelieving His light brings wisdom and faith; to the persecuted and downtrodden saint His light brings comfort and hope.

There are also the Old Testament prophecies which depict the Messiah as the Light of the World (cf. Isa. 9:1; 42:6; 49:6; 60:3; Mal. 4:2; Lk. 2:32). The Pharisees were well aware of these prophecies and when Jesus claimed to be the Light of the world, they understood Him to be claiming to be the promised Messiah. For a discussion of the relationship between light and life and darkness, see our comments on John 1:4, Vol. I, pp. 23, 24.

To follow Christ means to trust and obey Him. We follow His words (Jn. 10:4) and His example (I Pet. 2:21; Jn. 13:15, 34, 35). When we place such complete trust in His Person and His precepts, we possess the Light which not only illuminates our life but is the very source of Life itself.

The Pharisees are alert to the inference that Jesus is claiming deity for Himself. They immediately reject His claims on the basis of insufficient evidence.

His answer (v. 14) is that His testimony alone ought to be accepted, for in reality He is not alone (v. 16). But He has come from a realm of existence where they can know nothing except they receive His testimony as true. Barnes illustrates it very well: "As they had not seen and known these things, they were not qualified to judge. An ambassador from a foreign court knows the will and purposes of the sovereign who sent him, and is competent to bear witness of it. The court to which he is sent has no way of judging but by his testimony, and he is therefore competent to testify in the case. All that can be demanded is that he give his credentials that he is appointed, and this Jesus had done both by the nature of His doctrine and His miracles." (Barnes' Notes on the N.T., Luke & John, p. 226.) Compare also this verse (v. 14) with John 5:31 (see our notes on Jn. 5:31, Vol. I, pp. 192-193).

In verses 15 and 16 Jesus goes to the heart of the problem. The Pharisees and the people judged Him after the flesh—that is, they compared His earthly appearance with their ideas of a worldly Messiah. His meekness, poverty and apparent powerlessness did not fulfill their ideal. Theirs was a superficial judgment and one made with minds closed to truth by preconceived ideas (cf. our comments on John 7:24, Vol. II, p. 24). In the Lord's emphatic statement, "I judge no man," He seems to contradict Himself in John 9:39, "For judgment came I into this world . . ." But the apparent contradiction vanishes when we understand that His primary purpose for coming into the world (salvation) necessitates self-condemnation upon all who reject Him (the only source of salvation). (See our notes on John 3:17-18, Vol. I, pp. 112-113.) Yet even if He does pronounce a judgment (as He apparently did in Matt. 11:20-24 upon the unrepentant cities; upon Jerusalem in Matt. 24:15-28), His judgment is just, valid and certain for He is One with the Father (see notes on John 5:19-23, Vol. I, pp. 184-186). What Jesus is saying is that His testimony and judgments are not made by Himself alone as would be the case with any other man, but He and the Father are perfectly united—their words and wills are in complete accord.

This is what He boldly and plainly declares in verses 17 and 18. The law to which He refers is in Deut. 17:6. He says "your law" because the law of Moses was exclusively given to the Jews and these scholars should have interpreted it correctly. They should have accepted this double testimony of Father and Son (for the testimony of the Father concerning the Son, see our comments on John 5:36-38, Vol. I, pp. 196-197).

Their question, "Where is your father?" was undoubtedly couched in sarcasm. He had made it plain enough for them to understand that His Father was the Invisible Jehovah. His answer to them is also very plain and candid. They did not know the Father and therefore they did not know His Son. They did not know the Son and therefore they could not know the Father (cf. John 5:37-43; 8:47). The *only* way to know God is to know Jesus Christ (cf. John 1:18; 14:6-11; Matt. 11:27).

Why would John mention the fact that Jesus was near the Treasury when He uttered these tremendous claims? Because the Temple Treasury was very near the council chambers of the Sanhedrin. It is possible that this group of men, now dedicated to kill Him, could hear Him as He taught. But no one arrested Him because in the Divine scheme of redemption, His hour had not yet come (see our comments on John 7:30, Vol. II, p. 29).

Quiz

1. How does the discourse on the Light of the World relate to the ceremonies of the Feast of Tabernacles?
2. How does the discourse on the Light of the World relate to the Old Testament?
3. In what two ways should we "follow" Jesus?
4. Why should men be expected to accept Jesus' witness to Himself?
5. How were the Pharisees judging Jesus?
6. Does Jesus contradict Himself in the matter of judging others?
7. How may we truly know the Father?

FATAL UNBELIEF

Text 8:21-30

21 He said therefore again unto them, I go away, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sin: whither I go, ye cannot come.

22 The Jews therefore said, Will he kill himself, that he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come?

23 And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.

24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.

25 They said therefore unto him, Who art thou? Jesus said unto them, Even that which I have also spoken unto you from the beginning.

26 I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you; howbeit he that sent me is true; and the things which I heard from him, these speak I unto the world.

27 They perceived not that he spake to them of the Father.

28 Jesus therefore said, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself, but as the Father taught me, I speak these things.

29 And he that sent me is with me; he hath not left me alone; for I do always the things that are pleasing to him.

30 As he spake these things, many believed on him.

Queries

- a. What is the consequence of dying in sin?
- b. Why say "I am from above . . . ye are from beneath"?
- c. How would the Jews know that Jesus was the Christ after they had "lifted Him up"?

Paraphrase

So He said again to them, I am going away, and in your hour of death you will search for the Messiah and His salvation, but you will die in and under the sentence of your sin. Where I am going it is not possible for you as an unforgiven sinner to come. At these words the Jews began to ask among themselves, He is not going to kill Himself and be cast into hell, is He? Is that why He says, Where I am going it is not possible for you to come?

Jesus replied, You are from below; I am from above. You in your unregenerate nature, are of this condemned world. My nature is divine and I am not of this world. That is why I told you that you will die in and under the sentence of your sins. For if you do not trust and believe in Me as the Messiah and obey my words and become spiritually regenerate, you will die condemned in your sins.

The Jews said to Him, Just who are you anyway? Jesus replied, I am exactly the One of whom I have been telling you all along. I have many things to say and many judgments to bring concerning this nation. But, in spite of your rejection and unbelief, what I say is true and shall come to pass because He who sent Me is true and whatsoever I have heard from Him these things only do I speak to the world. They did not perceive that He was speaking to them of the Father so Jesus added, When you have crucified the Son of Man, then you will have evidence that I am the One sent from God and that of my own authority I do nothing but I say exactly that which My Father Jehovah has taught Me. And Jehovah who sent Me is with Me constantly. He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing unto Him.

As He said these things many believed on Him.

Summary

Jesus patiently warns these Jews again that their rejection of Him will be fatal for them. By their unbelief and disobedience they remain unregenerate and unable to follow Him into the presence of God. They will die with the wrath of God abiding upon them. When they shall have crucified the Man of Nazareth they will realize they have slain God's Son, but too late for many of them.

Comment

Behold the longsuffering and patience of the Son of God! He had been pleading with this nation and these people for over two years. He gave them signs and wonders to substantiate His claims. But again and again they blatantly repudiated them. Especially was this true here at the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. John 7:27, 30, 32, 35-36; 8:13, 19).

So He patiently explains to them once more concerning His divine nature and the absolute necessity of believing in Him. In verse 21 the Lord looks forward to His "exodus" from this world and His return to the right hand of the Father. There will come a time when many of the Jews now standing about Him will cry out in the hour of their death for the Messiah and the prophesied deliverance of the Messiah. Such a time actually came in 70 A.D. at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman legions. Millions of Jews were besieged within the walls of that city at Passover-time and suffered indescribable torments. Josephus, a Jewish general then captive of the Roman army, wrote a history of this terrible conflict, and said the lamentations of the people within the city exceeded even the noise of the battle! He also relates that there were many false Christs in the city at that time. People followed them in desperation, hoping until the terrible end for a Messiah to deliver them from the Romans. But many thousands died "in their sin." His words would be applicable, of course, to any of these Jews who, having come by any manner or at any time to their hour of death seeking the Messiah, had rejected Jesus as the Christ. Christ's warning here is for all mankind. There is only one end for men who deny Christ. They shall die in their sin.

What a fearful alternative to choose! To "die in one's sin" is to enter into eternity with the wrath of God abiding upon one (cf. John 3:36). It is to be called before the Righteous Judge of all the earth to pay the penalty decreed by this Judge for one's own sin. Sin *must* be paid for (cf. Rom. 2:3-16). The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews illustrates from the reality of history that punishment for sin is inevitable *if* we neglect so great a salvation as may be found by faith and obedience to Christ (Heb. 2:1-4). Those men and women who are even now rejecting the Son of God are "judged already" (cf. John 3:18) and are "dead [separated eternally] in their sins" (cf. Eph. 2:1-2). When Christ returns, all the unrepentant and disobedient shall be sent away into everlasting punishment (cf. II Thess. 1:7-9).

And so these self-satisfied, unregenerate Jews would die "in their sins" and suffer the second death because of their sins. They would be eternally separated from the God whom they professed to worship. Jesus said plainly enough that they would not be able to go where He was going—namely, to the Father. Why, then, could they not understand? Why the sarcastic answer, "Will he kill himself, that he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come?"

Jesus both explains His warning and the reason for their misunderstanding in verses 23 and 24. They could never follow Him into heaven and the presence of Jehovah God because they were unregenerate. They were at enmity with God—rebellious and unrepentant. They were, in fact, children of the devil—"sons of disobedience" (cf. John 8:44). Christ plainly told a Judean Pharisee many months before this that a new birth was necessary for every man who wished to become a part of Jehovah's kingdom (cf. John 3:1-21). They were degenerate and their hearts, minds, desires, goals and actions had not been changed; they had not the love of God in them (cf. John 5:42) and thus they deliberately misunderstood and misrepresented every great spiritual truth uttered by Jesus. They were so wise they were foolish. What they needed to do was to become "fools" in order to partake innocently and open-mindedly of the wisdom of God (cf. I Cor. 2:1-16; 3:18-21). If men are to understand the wisdom of God they must have "honest and good hearts" (cf. Luke 8:15); they must "seek the things that are above" (cf. Col. 3:1-4; Phil. 4:8); they must "will to do the will of Christ" and then they will begin to understand (cf. John 7:17); and they must accept and rely upon the infallibly inspired revelation of God as the only true source of wisdom (I Cor. 2:1-16; John 8:31-32). Such men these Pharisees refused to be and thus their ludicrous question, "Will he kill himself . . ." etc.

They are actually mocking Jesus, for the Jews the deepest and darkest recesses of the regions of Gehenna claimed all those who committed suicide. Trusting in their religious heritage as sons of Abraham, they were positive they would not be able to follow this Nazarene to Gehenna. According to certain Jewish traditions, father Abraham will sit at Hell's gates and will not permit one son of Abraham to fall into its pits.

Hendriksen seems to have caught the spirit of the Jews in their question of verse 25 when he writes that they were "probably thinking that the best defense is an offense"; they attack Him with the scornful, "You, just who are you?" They are not interested in knowing who He is, for they have already settled that matter in their hearts, but they sneeringly demand, "How do you come to assume a role like this?" The Lord's answer to this jeer is not easy to interpret and is discussed at length by the various commentators. Essentially there are two conflicting interpretations: (a) "I am altogether, essentially or exactly, that which I am telling you from the beginning"; or, (b)

"How is it that I should even speak to you at all!" We are inclined to favor the first because it seems to be a better rendering of the original language. The second interpretation does not take proper account of *ten archen* (from the beginning).

By their *ad hominem* argument they hoped to put Jesus on the defensive and thus dispose of His penetrating judgments. If they can successfully attack His character and reject His authority, they will salve their consciences and justify their unbelief. This has been the point of attack by infidelity through the centuries. Christ's claims and His soul-searching doctrines are mocked and attacked as being those of a "deluded Jewish Rabbi."

Jesus will not be side-tracked in His aim to reveal to these Jews their necessity for conversion. As the Messiah, it was His prophetic duty to be the "arm of Jehovah's judgment" (cf. Isa. 11:3; 51:5; Micah 4:3). He had many piercing judgments to make concerning this nation and these men. And in spite of their attacks upon Him—in spite of their rejections and unbelief—they could not change the truth of His pronouncements. For He came forth from Jehovah who is Truth and Son and Father are One. Both the Son and the Father agree in word, will and deed (cf. John 5:19). The judgments made and the sentences pronounced by the Son are exactly the same as those of God the Father (cf. John 3:11; 5:30; 32, 37; 7:16).

Again the Jews must have given evidence in some manner that what Jesus was speaking was beyond their carnal comprehension. They had already prejudged Jesus as a "demon" because He spoke of suicide. If what Jesus said before was beyond their comprehension, certainly His statement concerning the "lifting up of the Son of man" would present an incomprehensible enigma to their hardened hearts.

By the statement in verse 28, "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he," Jesus looks forward to His crucifixion. Not merely the crucifixion only, but the resurrection, the appearances and the manifestation of His ascension on the day of Pentecost is also included. Some scholars reject the idea that Jesus may be referring to the crucifixion as the motivating power behind the conversion of three thousand on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:36). We believe, to the contrary, that His passion did offer testimony which caused some of the Jews to turn to Him and become followers of the Way. Even the Roman centurion was touched in the very depths of his soul as he witnessed the crucifixion of the Nazarene (Matt. 27:54; Mark 15:39). We quote here the comments of R. C. Foster in his *Syllabus of the Life of Christ* concerning verse 28:

"Jesus refers to His crucifixion and how His divine personality and God's spiritual program will become plain to them in His death. Some in the crowd are earnestly trying to understand and believe; some are maliciously determined not to believe, but Jesus is sympathetic and kind. He realizes how hard it is for them to understand the mysterious program of God and patiently explains that they will be able to see clearly later that which seems beyond comprehension now."

When Jesus said, "lifted up, etc., . . ." He meant not only the crucifixion, but all the culminating works of God in His Son. Naturally, the crucifixion without the resurrection would be powerless to convict and convince these people of Christ's deity. Just as the crucifixion without the resurrection would not be able "to draw all men unto Him" (cf. John 12:32). Thus we believe Jesus means the entire process of the glorification of the Son (death, resurrection, ascension and sending of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost), when He says, "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he." Yes, after these things many would come to know Jesus as the Christ—the One from the very bosom of Jehovah-God. Some would cry out in faith and repentance, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" These would be told the gospel plan of salvation (Acts 2:38). But many others, unable to deny the facts (Acts 4:15-16), would still reject Jesus as the Messiah because they "loved the glory that is of men rather than the glory that is of God" (cf. John 12:42).

Verse 29 is a beautiful lesson on how we may have God with us. We need only follow the example of Jesus and attempt always to do the things pleasing to God. If we keep His commandments we abide in the love of Christ even as He kept His Father's commandments and dwelt in the Father's continual love and presence (cf. John 15:10).

We remember the man David, "a man after God's own heart," that he attempted always to do that which pleased God. God's presence was always very near to David—God was an "ever-present help" to him.

Verse 30 tells us that many believed on Him, and verse 31 indicates that He addressed His next discourse to those who "believed." But how sincere was their "belief"? Read ahead in the text, verses 31 through 59, and it is singularly evident that their faith was not one of surrender and change of heart. As Hendriksen says, "whether the

faith here indicated is genuine or not will have to be indicated by the following verses [the context]." The context certainly indicates that it was not genuine. There are other instances where people were said to have believed on Jesus, but their faith was far from that which changes men's hearts (cf. John 2:23; 7:31; 12:42). There were many who thought they believed in Him as the Messiah. Perhaps they professed their beliefs aloud—or perhaps Jesus looked upon their hearts and saw a superficial faith which they dared not express. At any rate, He begins, in verse 31, addressing these people and showing them that their faith was short of the mark. It did not even measure up to the faith of the one they claimed as their father, Abraham (cf. vs. 39-40).

Quiz

1. When did the Jews seek the Messiah most fervently? At what other time would they seek a Saviour, but "die in their sins"?
2. What is meant by "die in your sins"?
3. Why could the Jews not follow Jesus when He should go away?
4. Why the sarcastic question, "Will he kill himself . . . etc."?
5. Of what does Jesus speak when He says, "When ye have lifted up the Son of man . . . etc."?
6. How may we be sure of God's presence with us?
7. How did these Jews "believe" in Jesus?

TRUTH BRINGS FREEDOM

Text 8:31-36

- 31 Jesus therefore said to those Jews that had believed him, If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples;
 32 and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.
 33 They answered unto him, We are Abraham's seed, and have never yet been in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?
 34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin.
 35 And the bondservant abideth not in the house forever: the son abideth for ever.
 36 If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Queries

- a. How does the truth make a person free?
- b. How does sin enslave?
- c. What does Jesus mean, "the bondservant abideth not in the house forever"?

Paraphrase

So Jesus said to those Jews who had said they believed in Him, If you are living and dwelling in My word, then you are beyond doubt My followers, and you will apprehend and experience the truth and the truth will liberate and emancipate you. They answered Him, We are the descendants of Abraham, a chosen people above all that are upon the face of the earth, and we have never given ourselves into bondage to anyone—God alone is our Master. How can you dare to say, You will be set free from bondage? Jesus answered them, I assure you most solemnly, Whosoever continually practices sin is the prisoner and slave of sin. Now those who are slaves may enjoy the privileges of the household temporarily, but not permanently, but the son remains forever. If, therefore, the son liberates the slave and he is adopted into a family relationship, then you are really and unquestionably free.

Summary

Abiding in the doctrine of Christ constitutes genuine discipleship. All else is enslavement to sin. Servitude to Christ brings genuine freedom. The Jews, by their sin, have become slave and have no permanent dwelling place within the kingdom. They must be set free through the authority of the Son in order to have a permanent place within God's household.

Comment

It is very evident that Jesus is addressing His remarks to a group of the Jews here at the Feast of Tabernacles who had, in some way, manifested a superficial belief in Him. They wanted to believe in a Messiah, but not *the* Messiah. They were willing to follow, fight or die for a temporal King, but they would have none of a spiritual King who demanded sovereignty over their motives and deeds. They would gladly serve Him with their lips, but not their hearts.

And in verse 31 Jesus plainly declares the requirements for genuine discipleship to the *true* Messiah. To abide in His word is to make it one's dwelling place—to live by it as the Bread of Life (see our comments on John 6:56, Vol. I, page 250). His word is the only source of life (cf. John 6:63) and to abide in it is to keep it stedfastly (cf. I Cor. 15:58; Acts 2:42; Col. 1:23; II John 9). In John 13:35 Jesus tells how we are to witness our discipleship to the world—by loving one another as He has loved us.

Now in verse 32 comes the beautiful paradox. To become really and absolutely free, every man must submit himself to servitude to Christ's word. Much more than intellectual recognition is involved in "knowing" the truth as Jesus means it. To "know the truth" is also to do it, to experience it (cf. John 7:17; Psalms 1). There are those who are aware of the truth but do not "know" it, because they refuse to live according to precepts of truth (cf. John 3:19, see our comments, Vol. I, page 114).

When Jesus says *truth* He means all that is embodied in the Life He manifested and the doctrines He taught—both in His Incarnation and by the Holy Spirit through the apostles (cf. John 1:14, 17; 14:6; 16:13; 17:17). That which is truth is that which is real, genuine and veritable. The truth is not a philosophical abstraction which is reached by the reasoning of the human mind. It is not relative to time, change or feeling. Truth, all truth, originates in God and is divine and everlasting fact. See also these references: Psalm 25:10; 119:142, 151, 160; Eph. 4:21. The truth which Jesus brings and wishes men to trust in is the eternal verities of God which are in contradistinction to things which are temporal (cf. II Cor. 4:18—5:7; John 6:27; Heb. 12:27; I John 2:15-17; Psalm 102:25-26). But the truth of God abides forever and is unchangeable (cf. I Peter 1:22-25; Heb. 13:8).

Those who abide in these eternal verities and "walk by faith and not by sight" are those who are unquestionably free. The man who depends entirely upon human wisdom certainly cannot be free for He is imprisoned by the very limitations of human reason! That the mind of the flesh cannot possibly plumb the depths of wisdom is evident from Romans, the first chapter, and from I Corinthians, chapters one through three. The truth that is found in Christ gives men freedom in at least three ways: (a) Freedom from the habits and enslavements of the flesh can come only through knowledge and obedience of the truth; (b) freedom from spiritual lies, falsehoods, deceptions and prejudices which evil men use to enslave the minds and souls of men and women through their perversions of the truth; (c) freedom from sin and all its consequences—guilt, fear of death, penalty and sentence of sin which is eternal death.

Freedom or victory through the truth of God is the theme of the great apostle Paul's eighth chapter of Romans, Galatian epistle, and eighth, ninth and tenth chapters of First Corinthians. We like the way Hendriksen says it: N. T. Commentary, Gospel of John, Vol. II, page 5, "One is free, therefore, not when he can do what he wishes to

do, but when he wishes to do and can do what he should do."

Religiously the Jews enjoyed a unique position among all the peoples of the earth until after Christ brought truth and salvation to the Gentiles. They alone were the repositories of God's revealed will for men. An illustrious remnant of Israel had never been, enslaved to idolatry or philosophical schemes of religion. Especially would the Pharisees claim to be free of all the passions and failures of the flesh common to other men for they, by their tradition-enforced asceticism remained aloof from the more sensual indulgences of the flesh. One commentator has paraphrased their reply in verse 33 like this: "If the truth you speak of is good only for slaves, do not trouble us, *Abraham's seed*, with it! We are a freeborn, royal nation and acknowledge no one as our master save God. To him we belong as children and to no one else. This is the *truth* which makes us free!" (cf. Ex. 19:5-6; Deut. 7:6; Amos 3:2; Jn. 8:41). They wanted to be sure that they were not connected with the other line of descendants of Abraham—namely, Ishmael, the son of the handmaid who was cast out (cf. Gen. 21:10; Gal. 4:21-31). Remember, also, that Abraham was in the line of Shem and it was prophesied that the descendants of Ham would be servants of Shem's offspring (cf. Gen. 9:25-26). Although they had been politically subservient for hundreds of years to many different rulers (excepting brief periods of temporary freedom) within their hearts burned a fierce freedom of spirit and worship of the One True Jehovah-God. Many Jews through the ages had spilled their very life's blood defending this religious freedom. Even during the Roman rule hundreds were beheaded for refusal to worship the Roman emperor or heathen idols.

Little did they realize, however, that they were slaves to the most binding of all masters, sin! Verse 34 is Jesus' answer to the Jews. When He says "committeth sin," He uses the present participle, *ho poion* (the one doing), which indicates not merely a single sin, but to live a life of continual sin (cf. I Jn. 3:6, 8, 9). This bondage to sin is true of every man who has not been freed from sin by belief and obedience to the Gospel. The libertine is indeed the most wretched of slaves—enslaved to passions and controlled by his flesh. His very soul is a prisoner mastered by his appetites and sensory organs. He allows his will and reason to be controlled by lust. Any man who allows himself to be dominated and led about by sinful habit is a

slave. Such a man does not do what he likes, but he does what sin likes! He has allowed a pleasure to master him so completely that he cannot do without it. That man is a slave to sin and ignorance of the truth who allows himself to be deluded and duped by false doctrines and perversions of the truth. Paul had to fight and battle constantly for his own freedom in Christ and the freedom of the Gentile Christians against the Judaizers. The church has had to wage a constant war for freedom from evil men who would bring men into bondage by prejudice, perversion of the truth and going beyond the things that are written. Men who do not "know the truth" soon become slaves to their sinful ignorance (cf. Rom. 8:2; Gal. 5:1). Finally, sin enslaves man by guilt, fear of death, and penalty or sentence pronounced. It is this guilt and burden of condemnation which keeps sinners from realizing joy, peace and fulfillment in their hearts. Every man has some conscience and feels some sense of guilt and condemnation through it (cf. Rom. 2:14-16). All men are guilty (cf. Rom. 3:19; Jas. 2:10). Men were in bondage to the fear of death until Jesus came and conquered death (cf. Heb. 2:14-15). That men in sin are men in bondage is evident from these Scriptures: Prov. 5:22; Acts 8:23; Rom. 6:16-23, 7:23; II Tim. 2:26; II Pet. 2:19. Praise be to God, the Truth was manifested in the flesh to bring sight to the blind, release to the captives and to set at liberty the bruised (cf. Lk. 4:18). Freedom from sin means, on one hand, "deliverance from all created forces that would prevent men from serving and enjoying their Creator, and on the other, the positive happiness of living in fellowship with God in the place where He is pleased to bless." "Christian liberty is precisely freedom to love and serve to the fullest extent, and is therefore abused when it is made an excuse for loveless license (Gal. 5:13; I Pet. 2:16; II Pet. 2:19; I Cor. 8:9-12).

Men in bondage to sin cannot be sons of God; they are slaves to the devil. A slave may remain within the house, but he is not a permanent member of the household and has no inheritance or can claim no rights. The slave may be driven out or sold at any time (cf. Hagar and her son). Thus Jesus gives a solemn warning to these Jews who could not see their need for regeneration. They were not children of God, but slaves of sin, and unless they become sons of God by adoption—through faith in Jesus Christ—they were in danger of being cast out. He had warned them before that they could not follow Him to Heaven because they were unregenerate (8:21-24). This is the same warning couched in different language. If they expect to be

"carried to Abraham's bosom in paradise" they must become true sons of Abraham by faith and regenerate obedience (cf. vs. 39-40).

The Son is the rightful heir and abides forever in the house. If by his authority the slave is set free, he shall be free indeed. The "indeed" in this case means more than mere freedom. When a man is freed from his slavery to sin by the Son of God, the former slave is not only pardoned and freed from his shackles, but he is adopted into the family and given the place of a fellow-heir (cf. Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 3:29; 4:1-7).

Quiz

1. What is required to become "truly" a disciple of Jesus?
2. What is involved in "knowing" the truth?
3. What is truth?
4. Name the three freedoms which come from knowing the truth.
5. How could the Jews claim freedom from bondage?
6. What brings every man into bondage? How?
7. Explain the figure of "slave" and "Son" abiding in the household.

ABRAHAM'S CHILDREN

Text 8:37-40

37 I know that ye are Abraham's seed; yet ye seek to kill me, because my word hath not free course in you.

38 I speak the things which I have seen with my Father: and ye also do the things which ye heard from your father.

39 They answered and said unto him, Our father is Abraham. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.

40 But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I heard from God: this did not Abraham.

Queries

- a. What does Jesus mean by his word having "free course"?
- b. What were the "works of Abraham"?
- c. How did Jesus know they were seeking to kill him?

Paraphrase

Yes, I know that according to the flesh you are Abraham's descendants; yet you are seeking to kill me, because my word has found no place for freedom of progress within you. I am telling you the things which I have seen while in the very presence of My Father, and what you are doing indicates who your father is and what you have heard

from him. They replied, Our father is Abraham! Jesus then said, If you were truly Abraham's children you would follow Abraham's example and do as he did; but instead you are eager to kill me, a person who has spoken nothing but the truth to you—and the ultimate truth which I heard in the presence of God. This certainly is not the way Abraham did.

Summary

The discussion previous to this concerning freedom has led the Jews to deny bondage and defend their freedom on the basis of descendancy from Abraham. Jesus recognizes their fleshly relationship to Abraham, but hints that their spiritual father is someone besides Abraham as manifested by their hate and intentions of murder.

Comment

They had reminded Jesus that they were the descendants of Abraham, presumptuously denying any type of bondage upon the basis of this heritage. Jesus concedes their physical lineage to Abraham, but He reveals a spirit of hate and evil within their hearts which is as foreign to the nature of Abraham as is darkness to light. It had been openly visible that the Jews were seeking some way to put Him to death (cf. Jn. 5:18; 7:19, 25, 30, 32, 45). Even if the Jews had tried to hide their murderous envy, the Searcher of hearts would have known it, for "he needed not that anyone should bear witness concerning man; for he himself knew what was in man" (cf. Jn. 2:25).

In the very same breath (v. 37), Jesus tells the Jews the basic reason for their spiritual apostasy from being true descendants of Abraham. They would not allow His word to run a free course within their hearts. Vine says the verb *choreo* ("free course") means literally, "to make room for; to go forward." Other lexicographers define it, "be in motion, go forward, make progress." Paul said much the same thing in II Thessalonians 3:1 when he asked the brethren there to pray that "the word of the Lord might have free course and be glorified" in him. There are many Scriptures which might be applied and contrasted to the Lord's accusation that the Jews would not allow His word to progress within their hearts and space will not allow us to mention them all. Perhaps the best illustration for what is intended here may be found in Christ's parable of the different soils in Mat-

thew the thirteenth chapter (cf. also Mk. 4:1-34; Lk. 8:4-18). In this parable Jesus vividly portrays different things which prohibit the word of God from having free course in men's hearts—wilfull rejection, shallow emotionalism and choking desire for material gain (see also the entire 119th Psalm).

In verse 38 Jesus states again, what He has told the Jews over and over; namely, that His teachings were delivered to Him by the Father when He was dwelling in the presence of the Father (cf. Jn. 5:19, 30; 7:28-29). He is implying that they should know He is from Jehovah by His teaching and His deeds; He knows their father, the devil, because of what they are seeking to do! Men are either sons of the heavenly Father by faith and obedience (Rom. 8:1-17), or they become sons of the father of Hell by disobedience (cf. Eph. 2:1-3; 5:6-8).

As the Lord points out in verse 39, it makes little difference whose children we profess to be. Actions speak louder than words (cf. Mt. 7:15-23)! They claimed to be Abraham's children, but refused to walk in his steps. Just who are the children of Abraham? They are men of faith and righteousness (cf. Rom. 4:3, 16); they are men of hope (Rom. 4:18); they are men of trust and obedience (Gal. 3:6); they are those who have been baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:26-29); they are those of the New Covenant, New Israel, the Church of Christ (cf. Rom. 9:6-8); they are men who have purified their hearts (cf. Rom. 2:28-29); they are men who show their faith by their works (cf. James 2:21-24).

Abraham was a man of implicit faith and trust in God who dared to obey God without questioning His commands (cf. Heb. 11:8-19). He was a man willing to prove his faith and trust in Jehovah even if it demanded the life of his only-unique son, Isaac. He was a man of righteousness and good works who cared for his nephew, Lot, and prayed for his deliverance from God's wrath. He welcomed and obeyed God's messengers. His great faith even caused him to look down through the centuries rejoicing in the future coming of Christ as though it were a reality to him in his own day! Abraham was indeed, the friend of God.

It is very evident, then, that these Jews are far from being children of Abraham in the best sense. All they could lay claim to from Abraham was physical ancestry. But that did not make them children of God at all (cf. Jn. 1:12-13; Matt. 3:7-10).

While claiming to be Abraham's sons and heirs to the kingdom of God they were plotting the murder of the very Son of God (cf. Mt. 21:33-46; Mk. 12:1-12; Lk. 20:9-19). As Lenski says, "One would expect of the physical sons of Abraham that they more than all men would turn out to be also Abraham's spiritual sons," but their real sonship is revealed by themselves as that of sons of the devil "who was a murderer from the beginning."

Quiz

1. How does the word of God have free course in men?
2. How may we know a man's spiritual father?
3. Name six characteristics of the true descendants of Abraham and give the Scripture references.
4. Give at least one Scripture reference showing that physical lineage does not make one a son of God.

SATAN'S CHILDREN

Text 8:41-47

- 41 Ye do the works of your father. They said unto him, We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.
- 42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I came forth and am come from God; for neither have I come of myself, but He sent me.
- 43 Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word.
- 44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and standeth not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof.
- 45 But because I say the truth, ye believe me not.
- 46 Which of you convicteth me of sin? If I say truth, why do ye not believe me?
- 47 He that is of God heareth the words of God: for this cause ye hear them not, because ye are not of God.

Queries

- a. What do the Jews mean by saying, "We were not born of fornication"?
- b. Why did the Jews not understand Jesus' teaching?
- c. What do we learn of the nature of the devil in this section?

Paraphrase

You are manifesting the nature and doing the works of your spiritual father, the devil. They replied, We are the children of our true father, even God, and we are not the illegitimate children of a spiritually adulterous union with another father. Jesus said to them, If you were the children of the true Father, God, then you would honor Me as His Son and love Me, for I came here from the presence of the Father to be among men; I have not come merely upon my own authority and witness, but manifesting the authority of the Father. Why will you not understand what I say to you? It is because you wilfully refuse to receive my message into your hearts. You are the offspring of your father, the devil, and it is evident because you intentionally do the schemes and works of your father, the devil. He planned and executed the murder of the human race in his heart from the beginning of the world, and he has not one iota of relationship to the truth because there is no truth in his nature. When he lies he merely speaks out of the very essence of his nature for he is a liar and the originator of the lie itself. It is plainly for the very reason that I say the truth that you do not believe in Me. Yet, which of you is able to prove Me guilty of ever committing a sin or telling a lie? He that is a child of God will hear God's words. And this is just the reason you will not hear His message which I have brought, because you are not akin to the nature of God.

Summary

Jesus openly charges these Jews with being the children of Satan. Then He vividly gives the reasons for this terrible indictment. The Jews are exhibiting the nature of the devil by their rebellion to God's Son, their lies, and their open intention to kill Jesus. They cannot be the children of God for they reject His word, not erroneously, but wilfully.

Comment

In rebuttal to Christ's inference that they were bondservants to sin, these Jews had vociferously claimed descendancy from Abraham (cf. 8:33). Now Jesus infers more pointedly than ever that Abraham is not their father. The Lord is talking about spiritual kinship! He admitted their physical relationship to Abraham (v. 37), but denied

their spiritual kinship (v. 39) to him. And now, in verse 41, Jesus implies that they are the offspring of a spiritual father other than Abraham.

Their pride wounded and their ire aroused, these men exclaim "We were born of no adulterous union, we have never had any spiritual father but Jehovah-God." In the Old Testament God was, in a special sense, the Father of Israel (cf. Ex. 4:22; Deut. 32:6; Isa. 63:16; 64:8; Malachi 2:10). When Israel forsook Jehovah and worshipped any other God, she was said to have gone awhoring after strange gods—to have committed spiritual adultery (cf. Judges 2:17; I Chron. 5:25; Ezek. 6:9; Hosea 2:4; 4:12; 5:4).

As most commentators point out, either one of two meanings may have been intended here in the answer of these Jews. When they said to Jesus that they were not the children of any adulterous union, they might have meant (a) they did not belong to a nation of idolaters—spiritual adulterers, or (b) they were not born physically of adulterous parents—inferring that Jesus was, for the Jews had very early circulated the story that Mary, mother of Jesus, had been unfaithful to Joseph and had a lover—a Roman soldier by the name of Panthera—and that Jesus was the child of this adulterous union. In view of the context, we prefer the first interpretation. These Jews knew that Jesus was talking about their spiritual relationship to God for they defended themselves by claiming God as their Father. By emphasizing their spiritual kinship to God they were inferring that Jesus was Himself the spiritual descendant of another father (the devil) (cf. 8:48).

Jesus states in verse 42 a very basic truth. The spiritual parentage of any man is known by his manifest relationship to Jesus Christ. The Lord said it earlier in this manner, "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (cf. Matt. 7:15-20; also Jn. 5:42-43, 46; I Jn. 5:1). William Barclay says it so well, "Here again is the key thought of the Fourth Gospel. The test of a man is his reaction to Jesus . . . To be confronted with Jesus is to be confronted with judgment. Jesus is the touchstone of God by which all men are judged." (The Gospel of John, Vol. 2, by Wm. Barclay, p. 33, Saint Andrew Press.) If they were true loving, obedient, believing children of God they would have loved Jesus because He came revealing Himself as the Incarnate God. He gave abundant witness to His claims by signs and wonders performed in their very midst (cf. Matt. 9:1-8). Their trouble was that

they did not want Him as their Messiah—they refused to surrender their ideas to the will of God and, as a result, refused to recognize Jesus (cf. John 7:17).

The Great Cross-examiner continues with His indictment. The next few verses (43-47) contain tremendously incriminating questions and statements. The Divine Barrister not only elicits the facts of the case, but He also lays bare the motives of those indicted.

Jesus asks them the piercing question, "Why do ye not understand my words?" And before they have opportunity to deny or rail irrelevantly He answers for them the answer that is evident to all honest-hearted men—they simply refuse to hear His teaching, not out of ignorance, but out of their rebellious and evil nature. They are like their forefathers of whom the prophet wrote, "To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it" (Jer. 6:10). (cf. Ezek. 12:2; Zech. 7:11; Matt. 11:25-26; II Tim. 4:4; I Cor. 2:14.) They could not understand because they *would* not hear. They could not understand the spiritual nature of Christ's Messiahship because they wilfully carnalized their hearts.

Their failure to recognize Jesus as the Christ is due, as Jesus continues to explain, to their willing submission to the devil. They voluntarily became satan's cohorts. There is the answer; terrifying in all its stark reality and horrible implications. They cannot bear or tolerate the truth of God, so they embrace false doctrine and willingly choose error and lies rather than truth. Thus they become sons of Hell—offspring of satan—for the devil by his very nature stands in no kinship whatever to the truth. It is his very nature and work to deceive and when he speaks a lie, he merely expresses his character. He was a murderer from the beginning of time. He seduced the whole human race when he deceived Adam and Eve. He brought the penalty of death upon us all in the Garden.

The verdict in the charge against these Jews, then, must be "Guilty." They were seeking how they might kill Jesus who was completely innocent of any of their accusations—hence they were murderers at heart. Not only that, they could not tolerate the truth and thus they manifested their spiritual kinship to the devil.

What a morally impeaching indictment verse 45 brings upon these Jews. Because Jesus spoke the truth, they rejected Him. There was no doubting now whose side they were on—the devil's. How reprobate has a man become when truth is rejected because it is truth and error is received and practiced because it is error (cf. Rom. 1:18-32). Are there not those today, even in the guise of being religious seekers after the truth, who reject truth because it is truth and receive a lie because it is a lie?

Then comes the challenge, "Which of you is able to convict me of sin?" What a dramatic moment! None but the Son of God would dare to make such a challenge. There must have been a silent pause while Jesus waited for anyone to speak out. Were there none who could convict Him of some sin or falsehood? Not one! Neither here nor forever after! By their silence they admitted that they could find no sin, falsehood or inconsistency in Him—*then why did they not accept His words?*

The answer is inevitable! They were not, as they claimed to be, sons of God. The man that is of God (or is disposed toward righteousness, truth, justice and the attributes that are God's nature) will listen and endeavor to obey God's word. But these men were haters of the truth and lovers of darkness (cf. John 3:19-21) and it was evident that they were not of God.

May God grant us the wisdom, courage and conviction to accept the truth (wherever it is) because it is the truth, and reject that which is false (wherever it is) because it is false?

Quiz

1. What did the Jews probably mean by their answer, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God"?
2. What is the basic truth asserted in verse 42?
3. Why could they not understand Jesus' words?
4. What is significant in verse 45?
5. What is the inevitable answer to Jesus' questions in verse 46?

CHRIST DEFAMED

Text 8:48-59

48 The Jews answered and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a demon?

49 Jesus answered, I have not a demon; but I honor my Father, and ye dishonor me.

50 But I seek not mine only glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth.

51 Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my word, he shall never see death.

52 The Jews said unto him, Now we know that thou hast a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my word, he shall never taste of death.

53 Art thou greater than our father Abraham, who died? and the prophets died: who makest thou thyself?

54 Jesus answered, If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing: it is my Father that glorifieth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God;

55 and ye have not known him: but I know him; and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be like unto you, a liar: but I know him, and keep his word.

56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad.

57 The Jews therefore said unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?

58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was born, I am.

59 They took up stones therefore to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple.

Queries

- a. Why accuse Jesus of being a Samaritan?
- b. How will belief in Jesus keep men from "seeing" death?
- c. How could Abraham "see Jesus' day"?

Paraphrase

The Jews answered and said to him, Are we not right when we are saying that you are a Samaritan heretic and that you are possessed of a demon? Jesus answered, I am not demon-possessed but quite to the contrary I honor my Father while you dishonor Him by dishonoring Me. However, to seek self-glorification is not My purpose. Even though men may dishonor Me there is One, even God, who is seeking after and taking care of glorifying Me and He is judging those who dishonor Me. I tell you most solemnly if any man keeps My word he will never experience death unto all eternity. The Jews said to Him,

Now we know for sure that you are possessed of a demon. Abraham died and the prophets also died; yet you say, If a man keeps My word he will never taste death unto all eternity. Are you actually claiming that you are greater than our father Abraham? Both he and all the prophets experienced death; just who do you make yourself out to be? Jesus answered, If I glorify Myself, My glory would be vain. It is My Father, whom you call, Our God, that continues to glorify Me; and you have not come to know Him—but I know Him. If I should deny that I know Him as His only unique Son then I would be a liar like you who say you know Him and do not! But I know Him perfectly and keep His word. Your forefather Abraham was extremely happy that he was to see My day, and he saw it and rejoiced. The Jews therefore said to Him, You have not even lived fifty years and have you seen Abraham? Jesus said to them, I do solemnly assure you that before Abraham was born I am living as I have been and shall be for all eternity. So they picked up stones in order to hurl them at Him. But Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple.

Summary

Jesus is attacked for His tremendous claims of having power to overcome death and of pre-existence. The Jews rightly recognized that Jesus was claiming supernatural powers, but they, in their carnality, accused Him of heresy and demon possession.

Comment

Some men will always react as these Jews did when their sins and their real nature is revealed; they will slander, back-bite and call names. The Jews could not defend themselves against the overwhelming logic of Christ's words (verses 41-47), so they made derogatory remarks about Him personally.

Jesus had exposed their hypocrisy and evil intentions and had related them to the devil—they were the devil's children. The Jews counter-charged, "You're another!" The participle *legomen* (saying) in verse 48 is in the present tense (continuing action). It may mean that the Jews were continually muttering, "Samaritan," "heretic," "demon," all the time Jesus was addressing them (cf. our paraphrase of this verse). To call Jesus a Samaritan was to call Him a heretic and schismatic because the Samaritans were thus regarded by the Jews (cf. our comments, Vol. I, pages 141-142).

Some commentators argue that since Jesus did not answer the charge of being "a Samaritan," it is doubtful that the Jews really called Him a Samaritan. These commentators claim that what we have in the English word "samaritan" may be a translation of the Aramaic *Shomeroni*, (meaning Samaritan), which, in turn, may be a corruption of the Aramaic word *Shomeron* (which means, prince of the devils). Thus John actually meant to record the Jews as saying, "Say we not well that thou art the prince of demons, and hast a demon?" But where did these commentators get the idea that John wrote his gospel in Aramaic? The weight of evidence presented by early Greek manuscripts (and now the Bodmer II) is overwhelmingly in favor of John's gospel being written originally in the Greek language. We dismiss this argument as unproven and irrelevant.

We like Lenski's comment as to why Jesus did not answer their charge of being "a Samaritan." Lenski says, ". . . Jesus touches only the second epithet hurled at him . . . because that is enough for the contrast he is bringing out between what he is doing and what they are doing. Moreover, while these Jews utterly despise the Samaritan, Jesus does not . . ." (Interpretation of St. John's Gospel, by R. C. H. Lenski, page 658).

He did answer, however, their charge of demon-possession. And He answered it in much the same way He had answered the Pharisees in Galilee (cf. Matt. 12:22-30), ". . . and if Satan casteth out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand?" Jesus' answer was simply, "How can I honor the Heavenly Father and be demon-possessed?" If He was a servant of Satan He would be honoring Satan and dishonoring God—but the exact opposite is true. He honored the Father in everything He said or did, while they dishonored the Father by reviling God's Son (cf. John 5:23).

Jesus continues, "It matters little that you dishonor Me, as far as My own self-pride is concerned, for I do not seek to glorify Myself simply for the glory involved." Jesus never sought the honor of men as an end to be desired. He "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant . . . he humbled himself, becoming obedient . . . to the death of the cross," (cf. Phil. 2:6-8). He, though He was the Son, lowered Himself, left Heaven and took upon Himself mortal flesh and experienced subjection and obedience by the things which He suffered (cf. Heb. 5:8). When even His own disciples were contending about places of honor He girded Himself with a towel and took a basin of water and performed the lowliest of services in washing their feet

(cf. John 13:1-17). The Lord Jesus Christ did not concern Himself with seeking praise and honor of men. The matter of maintaining and vindicating His honor is in other, proper hands—the Father's hands.

The Father honored Jesus through His self-assumed humility (cf. Phil. 2:9-11). Although men were reviling and about to kill the Son, the Father was glorifying the Son through the dishonor of men (cf. John 12:27-33). The honor of God comes through humility. The truly great man is the servant of all (cf. Matt. 20:26-28). One day the Judge who judges righteously will assess things at their true value and will assign to men their true honor. On that day the one who has been the servant of all will be honored as the greatest of all.

In verse 51, Jesus makes one of His bold claims. If any man, not Jew only but *any* man, will keep His word, that man will not see death. The word *keep* in this verse comes from the Greek word *tereo* which means to obey. It is the same word that is translated *observe* in Matthew 28:20. Jesus means that those who keep His word shall never experience the *second* death which is eternal separation from God. Jesus means that for those who believe and obey Him, physical death is but the opening of the door to the life that is Life indeed. For the Christian, to be absent from the body means to be at home with the Lord (cf. II Cor. 5:6-8; Phil. 1:21-23). But the Jews, either purposely or ignorantly, take Him literally—as meaning physical death.

To those listening to Jesus, His claim is the height of absurdity. The greatest Jew of them all, father Abraham, had died. Furthermore, the illustrious prophets had died (they seem to have forgotten Elijah's translation in the fiery chariot). All these great men were men of God and yet they had died. In their estimation He was indeed trying to glorify Himself and make Himself greater than Abraham or any of the prophets. Contemptuously they ask, "Whom makest thou thyself?"

When Jesus made His supernatural claims He was not bragging or seeking false glory; He was stating what was true! He knew the Father intimately and proved it by keeping the Father's word, doing the Father's works and manifesting the Father's nature to men. If, then, He should keep silent about His intimate relationship to Jehovah He would be a liar by His silent denial, just as these Jews were liars by their loud claims to know God while denying it by their lives. It is true of the "silent" Christian today, also—he lives a lie! Those who

believe and profess to follow Christ must confess that profession by word of mouth and by good deeds (cf. Matt. 5:13-16; 10:32-33; 12:30; 7:21-23; Mk. 8:38).

Now another astounding claim is made, this time on behalf of Abraham. Abraham rejoiced when he saw the day of Jesus. Of course, Jesus is contrasting the *faith* of Abraham with the *lack of faith* of these Jews who claim Abraham as their spiritual father. Here the Messiah stood before them and had done many mighty works in their very presence and they could not accept Him, yet their father Abraham had, by faith, seen the day of the Messiah. There were others, both before and after Abraham, who through eyes of faith beheld the day of Christ. Moses, it is written, "accounted the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt . . . for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible" (cf. Heb. 11:26-27). The prophets also saw His day (cf. I Pet. 1:10-12).

Many of these Old Testament saints who saw the day of Christ through faith are named in Hebrews, the eleventh chapter. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. 11:13). The key phrase is ". . . having greeted them from afar." Abraham rejoiced when Isaac was born for he knew that through Isaac (whose name means "laughter") would come the Messiah in whom God would bless all the nations (cf. Gal. 3:16). These Jews were not glad. Jesus was not the Messiah they wanted. They could not rejoice in a meek, gentle and spiritually-minded King. And so their boast to be the spiritual children of Abraham was hypocrisy.

These Jews have eyes but they see not, and ears but they hear not. They continue to interpret the Lord's words in a literal, physical sense. How could this Jesus of Nazareth, who is not fifty years of age, have seen Abraham who died over 2000 years before? Impossible!

In verse 58 Jesus states very plainly that although Abraham was born in point of time, He enjoyed timeless existence. Here is one of the many instances in the New Testament where the Greek language best expresses what Jesus intended to say. When Jesus says "I am," He means that He not only existed from all eternity before Abraham "became" a being in point of time, but Jesus transcends all time and will continue to exist eternally.

And when Jesus ascribed to Himself the words "I am," the scholars of the Law standing about would remember Exodus 3:14 wherein

God calls Himself "I AM THAT I AM." Of course, the Jews would look upon such a statement as blasphemy. According to their Law, blasphemy was punishable by being stoned to death (Lev. 24:16). But the Law also provided for the accused to have a trial with witnesses present to establish the charges. They knew that when challenged before they could not convict Him of sin, nor could they lawfully convict Him now, so they took up stones and fully intended to criminally assault Him as a mob. The temple even then was still under construction in some parts and there were stones lying around within easy reach (cf. our comments on John 2:20, Vol. I, page 84), and these Jews, enraged and maliciously seeking some excuse to murder Jesus, picked up stones to cast upon Him. Jesus, knowing that His time had not yet come for the supreme sacrifice, hid Himself amidst the crowd and went out of the temple.

Thus Jesus has met His enemies face to face in their own stronghold in Judea in the temple. He has made bold, supernatural claims for Himself and backed them up with His challenge that His enemies bring forth proof, if they can, of any sin or falsehood on His part. Not one shred of evidence or testimony is forthcoming—only slanderous insinuations. But the great controversies at the Feast of Tabernacles are not yet over. Jesus probably spends a few more days in the temple healing and teaching (cf. John 9:1—10:12) before He retires to Bethany and the home of Mary and Martha (cf. Luke 10:38 and Map #5, page 12).

Quiz

1. What are the connotations of Jesus being called "a Samaritan"?
2. How did Jesus answer their charge that He was demon-possessed?
3. Although Jesus never sought the glory of men, wherein did He obtain honor and glory?
4. Why was Jesus not boasting when He made His supernatural claims?
5. Who, besides Abraham, saw the day of Christ? Give Scripture references.
6. What two things did Jesus claim when He said "before Abraham was, I am"?
7. When does this particular period of teaching in the temple end?

EXPOSITORY SERMON NO. EIGHT

SYMPTOMS OF UNBELIEF (Continued)

John 8

Introduction

I. UNBELIEF MAY TAKE MANY FORMS, AS WE HAVE SEEN IN JOHN 7

- A. But all doubting or investigating is not condemned by the Scriptures. The Bible definitely teaches that men are to seek evidence for believing. "By their fruits ye shall know them . . ." ". . . try every spirit . . ." ". . . prove all things, hold fast that which is good . . ." The Bereans searched the Scriptures to establish the validity of Paul's preaching. We do not follow Jesus because we have been deluded, deceived or duped. Our faith is founded on historical fact.
- B. Doubt is condemned, however, when it is born of a refusal to accept incontrovertible fact. Or, when unbelief is simply a carnal refusal to obey the truth when one has seen it—doubt then becomes damning.

II. LET US STUDY FURTHER THE SYMPTOMS OF UNBELIEF AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

- A. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God . . . so we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." Heb. 3:12, 19
- B. Could it be that we may be guilty of any of these symptoms which will lead to our final expulsion from the streets of Heaven? Friend, some of these symptoms are evident even within the church of Christ today—among those who profess to follow Jesus we may find these symptoms of growing unbelief.

Discussion

I. PRIDE IN RELIGIOUS HERITAGE, 8:32-40

Pride in ancestral religion was an ever-abundant source of unbelief for the Jews. They could not believe that God would "nail" the exclusive Jewish heritage of Judaism to the cross and open the door for heathens to come into His favor. The Jews staked all his claims to Heaven upon his illustrious ancestry of Abraham, Moses, David and the prophets. God had separated them from all the heathen nations in a special way and they proposed to tell God that He could never give them up (remember Jonah). They enjoyed a unique religious standing because of their nationality. They continually pointed back to their ancestors and their accomplishments . . . they based their

salvation on their physical lineage and upon their national heritage. Many people today rest all their hopes concerning the here-after on Mother's religion or Father's religion. "The members of my family have been (———ists) since the Mayflower and that's good enough for me," they say. But Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Neither Mother's religion, nor the religion of the majority, nor your fiance's religion will save you—the revealed truth of God only brings salvation. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Some members of the Christian church are, in fact or in theory, resting all their hopes in the prestige and traditions of an Alexander Campbell or in an institutionalized church. The Scriptures state unequivocally that we dare not rest our hopes upon men and traditions of men. John the Baptist told the Jews, "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Lk. 3:8).

II. ABUSE OF THE WORD OF GOD, 7:45-52; 8:37

Some of the Pharisees were infamous abusers of the Word of God. They had a certain mystical reverence for it but they revered their traditions above the pure Word (cf. Mark 7:6-13). They had no qualms about wresting the Scriptures and interpreting them to serve their own ends. They dishonored their aging parents refusing to supply their material needs by pronouncing their own possessions "Corban" (devoted to God). They gave perverted interpretations of the Law in order to welch on business deals. And here in our text Jesus accuses them of prohibiting the Word of God from having "free course" in their hearts (Jn. 8:37). They accused Jesus of blasphemy and condemned Him to death by a perversion of the law. They grossly perverted the intent of the Word of God when they refused to let Him heal a man on the Sabbath. Yet they would, in turn, violate the very letter of the law and rescue an expensive animal from a ditch on the Sabbath. Any time a person or a group of persons (whether the group be called a church or not) wrests the Scriptures to serve their own selfish ends, they are in a state of evil unbelief. Such an action "tries God" just as surely as the actions of the Israelites in the wilderness (cf. Heb. 3 & 4). Denominationalism is itself a perversion of the Bible. The Bible nowhere allows for men to construct and maintain the multitude of divisions and contrary doctrines taught in the name of Christ. Men and women who persist in perpetuating division by going beyond what is written in the Scriptures must come under the same condemnation as the Pharisees—abusers of God's Word!

III. NO LOVE FOR THE TRUTH, 8:45-46

Jesus accused the Pharisees of deliberately hating the truth! For the *very reason* that Jesus was telling them the truth, they would not believe Him. What a terrible accusation! He told them they were children of the devil, who stands in no relationship to anything that is true. When the devil speaks a lie, he speaks out of his very nature, for he is a liar and the father of liars. When the truth about the Pharisees became unpleasant, they sought for the pleasant thing, even if it had to be a lie in order to be pleasing. Such are those today who have "itching ears and heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts . . . and turn away from the truth and turn aside unto fables." Those who hate truth and have no love for righteousness will be deceived and believe a lie (cf. II Thess. 2:10-12). This is the crux of the matter with hundreds of people today—they have no love for the truth because they take pleasure in unrighteousness. They simply close their eyes and ears to the truth, because they have more pleasure in believing a lie! Such a state of heart makes fertile ground for the devil to plant his half-truths. The Jews wanted to believe a lie about the nature of their Messiah and thus the devil obliged them. So many men and women today do not want to face the reality of the temporal nature of this world—the reality of Hell—the reality of sin; these are symptoms of unbelief.

IV. INFLUENCED BY HEARSAY, 7:12, 40-43

The very fact that some of the multitude was led astray in their thinking by rumors and hearsay is evidence of their unbelief. Many people without courage and faith to think for themselves allow themselves to be swayed by the reports and rumors and opinions of others. These murmuring Jews had not come to their opinions of Jesus by personal investigation of His claims. They had heard the rulers pronounce judgment upon Him and they had not enough personal conviction or courage to make up their own minds. Uncommitted people are easily influenced and "tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine." James describes this type of person who is "wishy-washy" and unstable (cf. James 1:6-7). Here one day, there the next—every new idea that comes along they become dupes for it because they haven't enough conviction of what is real truth. The church has a ministry to perform in establishing its members in the truth, which is as important as evangelism (cf. Eph. 4:13-14). The matter of belief is a matter of growing in knowledge of Jesus Christ; so is the matter of Christian unity; and so is the matter of progress and victory for Christ and the church.

V. LOVING THE HONOR OF MEN MORE THAN GOD'S HONOR, 7:50-52

Nicodemus spoke up timidly once in defense of Jesus. But after the browbeating he received from his important and powerful colleagues, he is conveniently silent! In another place we are told that Nicodemus was a "secret" disciple of Jesus. We do not have the right to judge or pronounce sentence upon Nicodemus, but we do maintain that cowardice is a manifestation of unbelief (cf. Matt. 10:28). As trusting disciples of Christ we must take Him at His word to protect us in all circumstances. There are other illustrations of this symptom (cf. John 12:42; John 9). Shallow faith which withers under tribulation and persecution is the product of rocky soil. The unbelief which will not openly confess Christ will result in Christ's denial of the unbeliever before the Father at judgment (cf. Mt. 7:21-23). When faced with opportunities every day of life to profess Christ and salvation to a lost and dying world, HOW DO YOU MEASURE UP? Do you have the dread symptom of unbelief known as loving the honor of men more than the honor of God?

VI. MORAL CARNALITY, 8:12

By carnality we do not necessarily mean sensuality. Sometimes this word "carnal" is used to mean only an unregenerate way of thinking which may be true even of baptized believers (cf. I Cor. 3:1-2). When Jesus accused the Pharisees of judging "after the flesh," He did not mean they were sensual or immoral, but He was warning them that they were judging Him and the works of God by their earthly standards. They "strained the gnat and swallowed the camel . . ." They "left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy and faith . . ." Men may be carnal and not immoral. The Pharisees were such men—generally on the outside they were strictly moral. Their carnality consisted in rejecting Jesus because He demanded sacrifice of self-righteousness—something they did not want to give up. So is every man carnal who desires to be justified before God by His good works alone. He is not eager to admit that he is still a long way from what God demands even in the Law. He will grasp at and hold to every denial of a perfect standard—this is why the Jews killed Jesus. Such men will gladly welcome unbelief because it removes from their sight the accusing high standard of Christ's teachings which pass judgment on their inability to keep the law of commandments.

Conclusion

- I. THESE, THEN, ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF UNBELIEF
 - A. Human nature has not changed in 2000 years, nor has the devil gone to sleep.
 - B. We are just as susceptible to every symptom of unbelief here as were the Pharisees.
- II. CHRIST IS ALWAYS THE BURNING ISSUE!
 - A. He has made claims to be the Son of God . . .
 - B. Here at the Feast of Tabernacles He said . . .
 1. ". . . except that ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."
 2. Unbelief takes a man into eternity with all the sentence of his sins upon his own person . . . where he will have to suffer the eternal punishment for them.
- III. CHRIST FACES YOU NOW WITH HIS CLAIMS
 - A. "If you have seen me you have seen the Father . . ."
 - B. "He that hath the Son hath the Father . . ."
 - C. "Believe in God, believe also in Me . . ."
 - D. Don't be deceived by Satan and trapped into the snare of unbelief.

EXAMINATION, CHAPTERS 7 and 8*True or False*

1. Jesus may have purposely missed some Jewish feasts.
2. There is a contradiction in the Bible at John 7:8-10.
3. We are commanded by Jesus, in chapter 7, to judge.
4. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit was given to men while Jesus lived on earth.
5. The best manuscript evidence indicates that the story of the woman taken in adultery (John 8:1-11) is not a part of John's gospel.
6. The Jews had never been in bondage to anyone.
7. Jesus challenged anyone to convict Him of sin.

Who Said This

1. "For no man doeth anything in secret, and himself seeketh to be known openly."
2. "Hath not the Scripture said that the Christ cometh of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?"
3. "Never man so spake."
4. "But this multitude that knoweth not the law are accused."
5. "Doth our law judge a man, except it first hear from himself and know what he doeth?"
6. "He that is of God heareth the words of God."

Supply the Scriptural Answers to These Questions

1. Q. "Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you doeth the law? Why seek ye to kill me?"
A.
2. Q. "Why did ye not bring him?"
A.
3. Q. "Will he kill himself, that he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come?"
A.
4. Q. "If I say truth, why do ye not believe me?"
A.

Multiple Choice

1. The Feast of Tabernacles commemorated:
 - a. Passing over of the death angel in the time of exodus
 - b. Rededication of the temple
 - c. Wandering in the wilderness
2. Jesus' brothers:
 - a. Saw His miracles and did not believe
 - b. Saw His miracles and believed
 - c. Believed in Him without seeing His miracles
3. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit:
 - a. Is to be kept
 - b. Is to become a source of life flowing from us to others
 - c. Is given only to a select few
4. The multitudes:
 - a. Were all in favor of Jesus
 - b. Were silent about Jesus
 - c. Were disagreeing among themselves about Jesus
5. To die in one's sins means:
 - a. To die while committing a particular sin
 - b. To die as a result of some terrible sin
 - c. To die, not having one's sins forgiven, and having to pay the penalty forever
6. To lift up the Son of man means:
 - a. To glorify Him by praise
 - b. To put Him upon the throne
 - c. To crucify Him

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

7. The Jews slandered Jesus by:
 - a. Calling Him a "Samaritan"
 - b. Calling Him a "liar"
 - c. Calling Him "prince of demons"
8. Abraham saw Jesus:
 - a. Before He (Abraham) was born
 - b. In a vision
 - c. By faith
9. The Jews could not understand Jesus because:
 - a. He spoke in a different language
 - b. They did not know what He was talking about
 - c. They could not tolerate His teaching
10. Jesus said that in order to be free:
 - a. We must have a democratic form of government
 - b. We must be free from all restraints of religion
 - c. We must abide in and obey His word
11. When the Jews said, "We were not born of fornication"; they probably meant:
 - a. Our physical parents were not adulterers
 - b. We were not born of fornication, but you were
 - c. We are not descendants of spiritual fornicators (idolators)

Match These Scriptures

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. "If any man willeth to do his will," | a. "but judge righteous judgment." |
| 2. "But because I say the truth | b. from within him shall flow rivers of living water." |
| 3. "If a man keep my word | c. ye shall be free indeed." |
| 4. "Judge not according to appearance | d. ye shall die in your sins." |
| 5. "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, | e. and the truth shall make you free." |
| 6. "If therefore the Son shall make you free, | f. he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself." |
| 7. ". . . except ye believe that I am he, | g. he shall never see death." |

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8. ". . . and ye shall know the truth | h. ye believe me not." |
| 9. "If ye abide in my word, | i. then are ye truly my disciples." |
| 10. "The world cannot hate you; | j. but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that its works are evil." |

Essay Questions

1. Describe the Feast of Tabernacles. What was approximate time of feast? How was it observed? Who attended? Where observed?
2. Discuss the textual evidence for the omission of John 7:53—8:11.
3. Discuss the significance of John 7:38-39.
4. Discuss the true spiritual children of Abraham. Who are the true spiritual children of Abraham? What other New Testament Scriptures speak of Children of Abraham (spiritually)?

CHAPTER NINE

If it were not so tragic, this ninth chapter would be comical. Here is a man blind from birth healed by the Nazarene and the Pharisees, rather than accept the evident fact that Jesus had healed him, chose to question the man's former blindness. Next, his parents, out of cowardice, "pass the buck" and will not take sides with their son. The really amusing section, however, is found in verses 24-34. In these verses the former blind man by common-sense reasoning makes the learned Pharisees look ridiculous. The beggar turns the tables on the Pharisees and he becomes the questioner instead of the questioned. The Pharisees, unable to withstand the man's testimony, can think of nothing but to attack the character of the beggar and use ecclesiastical force against him.

Chapter nine is simply a continued record of teachings and works of Jesus in Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles. Whether this incident was on the same day and immediately after the discourse of chapter 8, or whether it was on another day afterward is of little significance. The important matter is the evidential power of the miracle and the teaching Jesus attached to it. The outline is continued:

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

D. Public Ministry, Third Year

2. Later Judean Ministry, 7:1—10:21, The Feast of Tabernacles
 - a. A Blind Man Healed, 9:1-12
 - b. He is Investigated by the Authorities, 9:13-23

- c. The Questioned One becomes Questioner, 9:24-34
- d. Blindness that is blindness indeed! 9:35-41

A BLIND MAN HEALED

Text 9:1-12

- 1 As he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth.
- 2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Rabbi, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?
- 3 Jesus answered, Neither did this man sin, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.
- 4 We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work
- 5 When I am in the world, I am the light of the world.
- 6 When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and anointed his eyes with the clay,
- 7 and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went away therefore, and washed, and came seeing.
- 8 The neighbors therefore, and they that saw him aforetime, that he was a beggar, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?
- 9 Others said, It is he: others said, No, but he is like him. He said, I am he.
- 10 They said therefore unto him, How then were thine eyes opened?
- 11 He answered, The man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to Siloam, and wash: so I went away and washed, and I received sight.
- 12 And they said unto him, Where is he? He saith, I know not.

Queries

- a. Why such a question from the disciples (v. 2)?
- b. Why put clay on the man's eyes?
- c. Is there any faith evidenced by the blind beggar?

Paraphrase

And as Jesus and His disciples were walking along He saw a man who was blind from his birth on. And His disciples asked Him saying, Teacher, did this man's sin or his parents' sin cause him to be blind? Jesus answered, It was not that this man or his parents sinned which caused his blindness. His blindness has happened to him within the providence of God in order that God's works of mercy and power might be made manifest in him. We, while our appointed time and

opportunities for working still remain, must make the most of our opportunities and do the works of the One who sent Me. The night-time of life comes to every man and then our opportunities to do God's work is over. I am the world's source of divine light and truth as long as I am in the world and so I must make the most of My opportunities here. Having said these things He spat upon the ground and made clay of the spittle and daubed the clay upon the blind man's eyes. Then Jesus said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (interpreted it means Sent). So he went away and washed and returned seeing! His neighbors and those who had seen him before and known him as a beggar were saying to one another, This is not the blind one who used to sit begging is he? Some said, Yes, this is the beggar; but others were saying, No, but he resembles that one. But the man himself said, Yes, I am that man. So they said to him, How were your eyes opened? He answered, The man who is called Jesus made clay and daubed my eyes with the clay and said to me, Go to Siloam and wash. I went and washed as he commanded and behold, I received my sight. They said to him, Where is this man? He replied, I do not know.

Summary

Jesus cures a man born blind. The disciples are concerned about the theological aspects of the man's blindness. Jesus uses the man's blindness to perform a miracle and testify to His deity and, further, to illustrate His teaching that He is the light of the world.

Comment

It would seem that the blind beggar was observed by Jesus and His disciples immediately upon their leaving the temple as recorded in John 8:59. The temple gates were appropriate places for the multitudes of aged and infirm of Jesus' day whose only means of existence was begging. People would be coming and going continually (and especially during annual festivals) to drop their shekels in the temple treasury. In fact, the Book of Acts tells of one beggar (Acts 3:3) who was carried and placed daily at the gate Beautiful in order to beg alms. This particular blind beggar must have been well-known for the disciples to have known him as one blind from birth. The time when Jesus and the disciples passed by and saw the beggar is not important. It could have been the day following Jesus' escape from

the temple (8:59). Jesus continued His later Judean ministry, in and around Jerusalem, for at least three months (from Tabernacles in September to Dedication in December). But it seems more in harmony with the context that this incident took place on the same day that "Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple."

We can understand the alternative explanation of the disciples when they attributed the man's blindness to parental sin, but why would they suggest that a man *born* blind might be blind as a result of his own sin? How could a man sin before he was born? First, the Jews unhesitatingly connected suffering with sin. Job's friends attributed his calamities to his hypocrisy (cf. Job 4:5-8). All of man's infirmities are attributable in the final analysis to sin—Adam's sin brought about physical disease and death (cf. Rom. 5:12-21; also Gen. 3:17-19; Rom. 8:20-23). Furthermore, the sins of parents may be visited upon their children in physical calamities even to the fourth generation (cf. Ex. 20:5; 34:7; Num. 14:18; Deut. 5:9, 28:32; Jer. 31:29; Ezek. 18:2). And it is also true that much of a man's suffering is brought by his own sin and dissipation.

Could it be that in their dilemma they were thinking that if his blindness were a punishment for his own sin, then God must have punished him before he sinned, since he had been blind from his birth—or, the only other alternative, to them, was that the innocent child was being punished for the guilty parents.

According to most commentators, the Jewish Rabbis exaggerated the theological implications of the relationship between sin and suffering all out of proportion to what God's revealed truth actually says. Jesus did not agree with some of their ideas (cf. Luke 13:2-5). Some of the Rabbis are said to have believed that infants still in the womb were able to commit prenatal sin. According to their interpretation of Genesis 25:22-26, Esau had tried to murder Jacob while still in the womb of their mother! Other scholars have traced out in a Judaism later than Jesus' time a Jewish belief in the pre-existence of souls and their ability to sin in such a pre-existent state. Perhaps some of the Rabbis contemporary with Jesus were even then teaching this doctrine.

Whether the disciples had been exposed to these Rabbinical theories or not, they were concerned with the blind man primarily in a theological sense. They were wanting Jesus to give His opinion on the subject.

Jesus was not primarily interested in wasting time in speculating on the theological question of the cause for the man's blindness. His time was precious and to be used primarily for bringing remedy to the results of sin and evil. Jesus does not contradict the teaching of the Scriptures when He says, "that the man is not blind as a result of his own sin nor the sin of his parents." The man is still subject to mortal infirmities because of Adam's sin. Neither did Jesus imply that the man or his parents were without sin. In light of our ignorance on the mystery of suffering and affliction we will do well to accept what God has revealed and not to speculate further. Jesus simply stated here that, within the providential scheme of God, this man's blindness was in order that the works of God might be made manifest through Him. As Hendriksen says, "*All things—even afflictions and calamities—have as their ultimate purpose the glorification of God in Christ by means of the manifestation of His greatness.*" (Gospel of John, Vol. II, Wm. Hendriksen, pub. Baker, page 73.) This is the teaching of the Scriptures (cf. Rom. 8:28; II Cor. 4:17) and this is the ultimate lesson which Job learned (cf. Job 42:1-6).

To the disciples this man presented an opportunity for theological speculation which was time-wasting and unprofitable. To Jesus the man's extremity presented a challenge and an opportunity to manifest in Himself the glory of God and the authority of God. Giving sight to the blind was to be a sign that the Messiah had come (cf. Isa. 35:5, 29:18, 32:3ff, 42:7; Matt. 12:22; Lk. 4:18-19).

In verse 4 Jesus makes it plain that He has only a certain allotted time in which to manifest Himself as the Son of God. It seems that Jesus means His period of earthly life when He says "day" and by "the night cometh when no man can work," He means physical death, when He shall depart this earth. This harmonizes with the general idea that Jesus is trying to teach the disciples concerning the man's blindness. But the Lord's statement in verse 4 is true of all His followers. We all pass this way but once. We must make the most of our opportunities to carry out our divinely appointed commission to proclaim and live the word of Christ. When the time of our departure draws nigh, let us be ready to say with Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (II Tim. 4:6-8).

He has a special work to do while He is in the world. While He is here He is the light of the world in a special sense (cf. John 1:4-18). While He was here He was the "effulgence of his glory,

and the very image of his [God's] substance" (cf. Heb. 1:3). Jesus was Emmanuel (God with us). He came to walk among men and reveal unto them the Father (cf. John 14:7-11). He is, of course, still the Light of the World through the written testimony of His Word, the Bible, and through the reflected glory of the lives of His followers, in whom His Spirit abides.

Two reasons are generally offered for Christ's anointing the man's eyes with mud made of spittle: (1) To challenge the Pharasaic tradition of prohibiting application of medications on the Sabbath, and/or (2) to give the blind man some symbolic or expressive action in order that he might know the power to heal his blindness comes from Jesus. Perhaps the second explanation is the more to be desired. Jesus used this method at other times (cf. Mark 7:33, 8:23) and so did the prophets (cf. II Kings 4:29; Isa. 8:18) to show that the miraculous healing was communicated through them.

Why did Jesus send the blind man to the pool of Siloam? The pool of Siloam was just inside the southeast portion of the city wall and quite a distance from the temple—there were probably facilities much handier where the man might wash. We believe there were two reasons for such a command: (a) He sent the man there to test his faith. Faith must be tested and expressed. Actually, neither the mud nor the water had any medicinal qualities except as Jesus used them miraculously. The Scriptures are replete with such tests of faith by demanding obedience to an arbitrary command—both Old Testament and New Testament. Just one example will illustrate—Naaman the Syrian captain cured of leprosy by dipping himself seven times in the muddy Jordan river (cf. II Kings 5:10); (b) This pool probably had some symbolic, typical, or spiritual Messianic significance (cf. Isa. 8:6 and our comments on this pool in connection with the Feast of Tabernacles, John 7:38). John could be hinting of this spiritual significance when he adds the interpretation of the pool as "Sent."

The pool of Siloam has an interesting history. The water supply for Jerusalem was mainly from outside the city walls and always subject to being cut off by her enemies in event of siege. King Hezekiah, realizing that Sennacherib was about to invade Judah, in about 701 B.C., had workers tunnel through solid rock a conduit from the Virgin's Fountain (or Spring Gihon) into a pool inside the city (cf. II Chron. 32:2-8, 30; Isa. 22:9-11; II Kings 20:20). The engineers began their cutting from both ends and met in the middle and tunneled through solid rock with the very inadequate equipment of that

day for a distance of 583 yards. In 1880 a tablet was discovered by two boys, while wading, which had been cut into the stone in Hezekiah's reign to commemorate the completion of the tunnel. This inscription would have been there when the blind beggar went to wash the mud from his eyelids.

Jesus, wishing to remain hidden from those who would have stoned Him in the temple, quietly left the scene of the miraculous healing. The beggar, now able to drink in the world with his eyes, would go quickly home to tell his parents the exciting news. And there was excitement, indeed, as the neighbors couldn't believe their eyes. Some of them were unable to believe that this was their former blind neighbor until he, himself, said, "I am he." Naturally they are eager to hear how he received his sight. The man knew very little, actually, of what had transpired. He simply related clearly and concisely what he knew—the man called Jesus put clay on his eyes, told him to go wash in the pool of Siloam; he did so and received his sight. Someone no doubt told the blind man that it was the man called Jesus who commanded him—perhaps even Jesus told him His name. But, as we shall see later, the former blind man had not yet come to know Jesus as the Christ. The beggar's neighbors must have been cohorts with the Pharisees. Their desire to know where Jesus could be found is only natural and arises out of the excitement of His apparent miracle upon their neighbor.

Quiz

1. What teachings concerning sin and suffering might cause the disciples to ask their question in verse 2?
2. Why was the man born blind?
3. What does Jesus mean primarily in verse 4? Does it apply to everyone?
4. How was Jesus the "light of the world while He was in the world"?
5. Why did Jesus put clay on the man's eyes?
6. Why command the man to wash in the pool of Siloam?
7. Who built the conduit to the pool of Siloam? What archeological evidence is there to substantiate the antiquity of this pool?

THE BLIND MAN INVESTIGATED

Text 9:13-23

- 13 They bring to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind.
- 14 Now it was the sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.

15 Again therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he received his sight. And he said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and I see.

16 Some therefore of the Pharisees said, This man is not from God, because he keepeth not the sabbath. But others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such signs? And there was a division among them.

17 They say therefore unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, in that he opened thine eyes? And he said, He is a prophet.

18 The Jews therefore did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and had received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight,

19 and asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see?

20 His parents answered and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind:

21 but how he now seeth, we know not; or who opened his eyes, we know not; ask him; he is of age; he shall speak for himself.

22 These things said his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man should confess him to be Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.

23 Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him.

Queries

- a. Why the disagreement among the Pharisees (v. 16)?
- b. Why did the Jews refuse to believe that the man had been healed until they questioned his parents?
- c. Were the man's parents really ignorant of who had opened their son's eyes?

Paraphrase

Then they conducted the former blind man to the Pharisees (and it should be remembered that it was on the sabbath day that Jesus made clay and opened the man's eyes). The man was being asked again, now by the Pharisees, how he had received his sight. So he said to them, He put clay on my eyes and I washed, and now I am seeing. Some of the Pharisees were saying, This fellow is no man sent from God, for he is not keeping the sabbath. Others were saying, How is a sinner-man able to do such great signs? And there was disagreement among them. Therefore they spoke again to the man, say-

ing, What do you say about him seeing that you have declared that he opened your eyes? The blind man replied, He is a prophet! However, the Jews would not believe the beggar that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the man's parents and questioned them, saying, Is this man your son, whom you are saying was born blind? How then is it that he now sees? The man's parents answered, We know that this is our son and we know that he was born blind. How he is now able to see, or who opened his eyes we do not know! Ask him; he is of age. He can speak for himself. His parents gave this answer because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jewish authorities had already agreed that anyone who acknowledged Jesus as the Christ should be excommunicated from the synagogue. And for this very reason his parents said, He is of age, ask him.

Summary

The Pharisees will not even believe that the man was formerly blind. His parents testify that he was born blind. But the man's parents will not testify as to who their son's Healer is, for fear of excommunication. One thing is certain to the Pharisees: Jesus of Nazareth cannot be a God-sent miracle worker for he violates their Sabbath traditions.

Comment

Who brought the former blind man before the Pharisees? We do not know. The best guess is that some of the helpers of the Pharisees were sent to find the beggar and bring him in for questioning. It is doubtful that any of the neighbors of the man would be so eager to involve him. The news of the miracle would certainly get back to the Pharisees rapidly for, as John says parenthetically, Jesus performed the miracle on the Sabbath! For Jesus to heal again on the Sabbath was like waving a red flag in the face of a herd of enraged bulls. (For a study of Jesus and controversy, see our Volume I, pages 214-217.)

This seems to have been a formal investigation by the Pharisees, called for the specific purpose of questioning the man and passing judgment upon the miracle and the miracle-worker. It was the duty of the religious leaders to investigate all such incidents. They were charged with investigating the claims and doctrines of all who professed a message from God (Matt. 23:2; John 1:19-24). For an excellent discussion of this matter see Hendriksen's commentary on this section. It was also the duty and responsibility of the Pharisees to

"judge righteous judgment." These men, however, had already passed judgment on the miracle-worker, Jesus, before they investigated the miracle. They had already made up their minds that Jesus was a blasphemer. This investigation could only be a mockery of truth.

The beggar answered the first question simply and precisely. It is interesting to note that the beggar used the present tense when he said, "I see." Instead of saying, "I was made to see," he says, "I am seeing." He wants to emphasize for the Pharisees that although they may never know *how* the miracle took place, they can be sure that it *did* take place!

The Pharisees, caring not one iota that a man had been delivered from the chains of darkness, are interested only in their sanctimonious Sabbath traditions. The real issue here, however, is not their Sabbath traditions, but finding some straw of an accusation with which to condemn Jesus of Nazareth and sentence Him to death.

Others of the Pharisees are less emotional. There stood the beggar—formerly blind from birth but now seeing. Their problem was: "How can a man that is an open sinner do such great signs?" The word used for sinner is *hamartolos*, used in most places as an intensifier (cf. Luke 7:37, 39; 13:2) and means an open sinner or flagrant sinner. Jesus claimed to work miracles greater than any other (cf. John 15:24) and the beggar claims this miracle to be extraordinary (v. 32). There may have been a division in their thinking here, but it is quickly resolved and in united action they both condemn Jesus and excommunicate the beggar (vs. 28, 29, 34).

For the moment, however, the judges cannot agree among themselves. They hope they have frightened the beggar by hauling him before their august court. If he is frightened enough, perhaps he will say exactly what they want him to say about Jesus—"He is a profaner of the Law." But the beggar is far from frightened. He is indeed a man of courage and conviction. He answers, "He is a prophet!" The Pharisees had already expressed their judgment of Jesus ("Sabbath breaker"), but with the bravery of conviction the beggar confessed Jesus to be a prophet. What a contrast! Men who had studied the Law and the Prophets all their lives could not see that Jesus was sent from God, while a man blind from birth—unable to have ever studied the Scriptures—can readily see that Jesus must be a prophet sent from God. The real contrast is between those who *would* not see and one who would see; it is a matter of wanting to see! The Pharisees were also wanting the beggar to commit himself to an opinion concerning Jesus that they might use it against him later. If they cannot harm Jesus, they will harm the man He healed. The hate of the Jewish

rulers for Jesus was so intense that they would go to any length to express it. Later they would seek to kill the resurrected Lazarus out of their hate for Jesus (cf. John 12:9-11).

Although the Pharisees had the testimony of the man himself and, perhaps, the testimony of those who brought the beggar to them, they refused to accept the fact that the man had been blind and had been miraculously given his sight. That should have been enough evidence. But let's give them the benefit of the doubt and judge their reaction after more evidence has been presented.

The parents of the beggar are called before the investigating committee. In answer to the question as to whether he is their son they answer affirmatively. In answer to the question concerning his congenital blindness, again the answer is, "Yes, he was born blind." Now the facts are incontrovertible. That a very notable miracle has been wrought is undeniable. Now if the Pharisees will not believe it is not a matter of insufficient evidence but of wilfull rejection of the truth!

The parents could have used some of the courage and conviction of their son. They were evidently not telling the truth when they said, ". . . who opened his eyes, we know not . . ." for verse 22 implies that they did know. But, as Hendriksen points out, before we criticize them too severely we must consider what we would have done in similar circumstances. To be excommunicated for the Jew was even more fearful than modern-day excommunication from the Roman Catholic Church. The excommunicated Jew was literally cut off from all social, religious, economic, or fraternal associations. His family counted him as dead (cf. John 12:42 and 16:2). The excommunicated Jew was to become to his countrymen as a heathen (cf. Matt. 18:17).

The parents, fearing these terrible consequences, determined before facing the Pharisees that they would never confess Jesus as the Messiah. It should also be clear that the Pharisees did not call this investigation to determine the *truth*. They had already agreed among themselves and made a public declaration that anyone openly confessing Jesus as the Messiah would be excommunicated. This inquiry was made in hopes that they might get some evidence to make what they had already determined to do—kill Jesus—appear less evil.

There is a very expressive phrase in the Greek rendering of verse 23. The English "Therefore" of v. 23 is a translation of the Greek, *dia touto*, which would best be translated "Because of this," or "For

this very reason . . ." There was no doubt in John's mind that the parents' reluctance to confess Jesus as the one who had healed their son was for the very reason that they feared excommunication.

Quiz

1. Is this investigation by the Pharisees a seeking after the truth? Why?
2. Why ask the beggar his opinion of Jesus?
3. Why did the Jews not believe that the beggar had formerly been blind?
4. After the answers of the parents, what must the Pharisees admit?
5. What was involved in being put out of the synagogue?
6. What was the real reason for the refusal of the parents to tell who had healed their son?

THE QUESTIONED BECOMES QUESTIONER

Text 9:24-34

- 24 So they called a second time the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give glory to God: we know that this man is a sinner.
- 25 He therefore answered, Whether he is a sinner, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.
- 26 They said therefore unto him, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes?
- 27 He answered them, I told you even now, and ye did not hear; wherefore would ye hear it again? would ye also become his disciples?
- 28 And they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are disciples of Moses.
- 29 We know that God hath spoken unto Moses: but as for this man, we know not whence he is.
- 30 The man answered and said unto them, Why, herein is the marvel, that ye know not whence he is, and yet he opened mine eyes.
- 31 We know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and do his will, him he heareth.
- 32 Since the world began it was never heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind.
- 33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.
- 34 They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.

Queries

- a. What do the Pharisees mean by saying, "Give glory to God"?
- b. What is meant by, "God heareth not sinners"?
- c. Why did the Pharisees say the beggar was "altogether born in sin"?

Paraphrase

So for the second time the Pharisees called the man that had been blind, and adjured him, Give glory to God; we know that this particular man is an open sinner. The beggar replied, Whether he is a sinner or not, I do not know; one thing I do know—I was blind and now I can see! So they said to him, What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes? Deliberately the man answered them, I have told you already and you would not listen; why do you want to hear it again? You do not want to become his disciples, do you? They reviled him vociferously, sneering, You are that one's disciple; we are the disciples of Moses. We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow we do not know where he has come from. The man replied, Well this is astonishing, that you say you do not know where he comes from and yet he has opened my eyes. We Jews know that God does not hear wilfull sinners, but if a man is a worshipper of God and seeks to do His will, to such a man God listens. Now, since the world began it was never heard that a man opened the eyes of a man born blind. It follows then that if this man were not from God, he would never be able to do anything like this—They interrupted vehemently, You were absolutely conceived and begotten in sin; and are you now presuming to teach us? And they cast him out!

Summary

The poor beggar is not awed by the presence of the Pharisees. He is a man with a good and honest heart upon which the truth has fallen and is slowly bringing forth fruit. The beggar is more amazed at the wilfull blindness of the Pharisees than anything else. By his sincere, innocent and capable logic he becomes the questioner and exposes the stiff-necked unreasonableness of the Pharisees. He is summarily excommunicated for his troubles.

Comment

The adjuration, "Give glory to God," could be either the administration of an oath or simply a statement that the man should give Jehovah the glory for His healing rather than Jesus whom they "know" to be a sinner. The commentators are disagreed. We prefer to think that this tribunal was attempting to intimidate their precocious opponent by the adjuration of an oath. There were many different formulae used to express the judicial oath among the Jews (cf. I Sam. 14:39, 44, 19:6; 20:3, 20:23; II Sam. 11:11, 14:19, 15:21; Matt. 5:34, 23:16, 26:63). This particular phrase is used in Joshua 7:19 when Achan was adjured to "Give glory to God," and tell the truth as to his guilt. The Pharisees, having been thus far confounded and put on the defensive, bring to bear all the ecclesiastical and judicial authority they possess. They must regain the offensive. This naive and common beggar has, in his sincere adherence to the facts, shown the Pharisees for what they really are—bigoted, ambiguous and dishonest. The rulers have already pronounced Jesus an open sinner, yet this beggar dares to call Him a prophet. To protect their proud position and to find an occasion for condemning Jesus to death, they threaten this man with an oath.

The arrogant, "we know" on the part of the Pharisees is not new. They were certain that they alone possessed knowledge. They were the intelligentsia and all others were ignorant (cf. John 7:14, 45-52). The rebuke of Job to his three friends, "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you," would be fitting for the Pharisees.

But the man was not awed—he would not be intimidated. The beggar had been presented irrefutable evidence that this Jesus was more than a mere man. His evidence is empirical—the highest type of evidence—that which appeals to the senses of man. Such evidence is so overwhelmingly factual he must stand in opposition to Pharisaic opinion regardless of the consequences. Furthermore, the very nature of the evidence makes only "this *one* thing" outweigh all the force of Pharisaic authority and prestige.

Now, having been bested in cross-examination and having their bigotry exposed, *the only way* they can think of to carry out their nefarious bluff is to repeat their question concerning the "how" of the alleged miracle. Perhaps they are hoping to trip the beggar into a contradiction in his account.

The beggar's bravery is exciting to behold! In view of the power residing in this tribunal of Pharisees the man's courage is challenging. It is no less than amazing that his ironic answer in verse 27 did not incite the ire of the Pharisees more than it did! Only their all-consuming concentration on killing Jesus saved the beggar from probable bodily harm at this moment. The apostle Paul was later struck in the mouth for alleged impertinence in the same type of situation (Acts 23:2). He has told them over and over again from his own personal experience—they have heard plainly enough, but refuse to accept the truth which is necessarily implied if they do acknowledge the miracle. The man's exasperation with these opinionated, self-righteous dogmatists is understandable. What man is able to retain his patience with those who deliberately and continually refuse to admit that which is undeniable.

Maliciously they turn upon the beggar with vile imprecations. The man has humiliated, outwitted and exposed these judges of Israel. He has further completely turned the tables in this investigation—the prosecutors have become the prosecuted! The only recourse imaginable to these Pharisees arises out of the very nature of their hearts—to revile the man.

They could hardly think of any malediction more vile than to say, "You are that one's disciple!" They would not even so much as speak the name of Jesus. He was judged by the rulers and teachers of Israel as a blasphemer—a servant of Satan. Jesus was also pronounced a heretic—advocating (according to the Jews) destruction of the Law of Moses. The rulers had decided that Jesus must be destroyed (because of envy) and regardless of His truth and righteousness, anyone defending Him was also no better than a heretic.

As for themselves, the Pharisees boasted, "we are the disciples of Moses." But Moses would never claim them! For Moses "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt . . ." Moses, through what he wrote, condemned these pseudo-disciples. Moses wrote of the great Prophet that was to be raised up from among them (cf. Deut. 18:15-19) and Jesus was that Prophet (cf. John 5:45-47; Luke 24:44; Acts 3:21-24). The warning of John the Baptist three years previous still applies (cf. Matt. 3:9), for God is not only able to raise up from stones children unto Abraham, but unto Moses as well.

Again the presumptuous, "we know." Yes, they knew that God had spoken to Moses, but they lacked the essential thing—*what* God

had really spoken to Moses. But here is the marvel—just as the blind man saw it—they “knew” so much about Moses which they had to accept on the testimony of the written record, yet they would not accept the first-hand testimony of this miracle which witnessed to Jesus! It simply astounded the guileless and straightforward beggar that men would so deliberately blind themselves to truth. This former blind man has a heart of the “good and honest” type, for to him Jesus’ origin is evident—He is from God!

Their esteemed Moses, great as he was, had never performed any such miracle as this—opening the eyes of one congenitally blind. In fact, it had never been heard of in all the annals of history until the beggar’s day and age. None of the prophets had done such a miracle.

As Hendriksen points out, the beggar is an excellent logician. His syllogism here is perfect:

Major Premise: God hears and answers and works through only those who worship Him and abide in His will and are sent from Him.

Minor Premise: This man Jesus performed an unheard of and astounding miracle—greater even than any Moses had wrought.

Conclusion: This man Jesus is just as definitely sent from God as was Moses. He cannot possibly be an open and flagrant sinner as the Pharisees accuse Him.

Not only does the beggar use logic to prove his point, but he evidently had in mind many of the Scriptures which the Pharisees should have remembered concerning God’s relationship to the wicked. God does not hear nor answer the prayers of the willfull and blatant sinner 15:29; Isa. 1:15, 59:2; Jer. 11:11, 14:12; Ezek. 8:18; Mic. 3:4; (cf. I Sam. 8:18; Job 27:9, 35:12; Psā. 18:41, 66:18; Prov. 1:28, Zech. 7:13; John 8:21; Acts 10:35).

This verse (31) has been abused. Some have taken it from its context and used it as a proof-text to declare that any person not affiliated with the Christian church cannot expect to have their prayers heard by God. It is very plain from Acts 10:35 that God hears the sincere and honest prayers of those who have not yet “been obedient to that form of doctrine.” In fact, in Cornelius’ case, God heard the prayer of one who had not yet even heard of the gospel of Christ! This, of course, may even be true of men and women today who have not yet heard the gospel, but are earnestly praying and seeking God’s will—God may hear and answer their prayers.

On the other hand, God will not listen nor will He answer the prayers of men and women who regard iniquity in their heart. Wilfull

sinners—persistent disobeyers—will not be heard, regardless of their outward affiliations with whatever religious group to which they may belong (cf. all the Major and Minor Prophets). To be heard of God we must hear Him—to receive of His bounty, we must be obedient and full of faith.

Note the beggar's growing faith and knowledge of Jesus. First, "the man that is called Jesus . . ." (v. 11); next, "he is a prophet . . ." (v. 17); next, ". . . from God . . ." (v. 33); and last, ". . . Lord, I believe . . ." (v. 38).

Here is a miracle that is a miracle indeed—and the Pharisees cannot deny the veracity of its accomplishment. They themselves can readily see that the man has his sight. Both the neighbors and the man's parents testified under fear of banishment that the man had been born blind. The man himself testified under oath that Jesus of Nazareth had performed a miracle. The Pharisees could not disprove it.

The only way they could think to maintain their self-begotten prestige was to attack the character of the beggar and to excommunicate him from the synagogue. They inferred what Jesus had denied (cf. v. 2)—that the beggar's blindness was an indication of his and his parents' wanton sinfulness. How dare he presume to teach the scholars of the Scriptures anything! This is normal procedure for the rulers of the Jews—if they cannot disprove the miracles attesting to Christ's message, they will threaten the messengers or do them bodily harm (cf. Acts 4:16-21).

Quiz

1. What two reasons are given for the Pharisees saying, "Give glory to God"?
2. What is the highest type of evidence to attest to a fact?
3. Why is the beggar's bravery so exciting?
4. Why was their boast to be the disciples of Moses absurd?
5. Why did the beggar "marvel"?
6. What two ways did the beggar prove Jesus to be from God?
7. Does God ever hear the prayers of non-Christians? How do you know?

BLINDNESS INDEED!

Text 9:35-41

35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and finding him, he said, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?

36 He answered and said, And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him?

37 Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and he it is that speaketh with thee.

38 And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

39 And Jesus said, For judgment came I into this world, that they that see not may see; and that they that see may become blind.

40 Those of the Pharisees who were with him heard these things, and said unto him, Are we also blind?

41 Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye would have no sin: but now ye say, We see: your sin remaineth.

Queries

- a. How did the beggar "worship" Jesus?
- b. Why would Jesus come to make some blind?
- c. How would being blind help the Pharisees to be without sin?

Paraphrase

Jesus heard that the rulers had cast the beggar out and had excommunicated him; so Jesus went searching for the man and, having found him, said to him, Do you believe in the Son of man — the Messiah? The beggar answered, saying, Who is he, Sir, Tell me in order that I may believe in him? Jesus answered and said, You have seen Him, in fact, He is talking to you right now. The beggar cried, Lord, I believe! and he fell down before Jesus and worshipped Him. And Jesus said, I came into this world and my coming has necessarily brought judgment, for my doctrine brings spiritual sight to those who recognize their spiritual blindness and my teaching, by its very nature, blinds those who are certain they have all spiritual sight. Some of the Pharisees who were near, hearing what He said, replied, We are not blind also, are we? Jesus answered them, If you would admit your spiritual blindness and believe on Me you would have your sins forgiven, but you are persisting in trusting your own self-righteousness when you say "we see—we know," therefore your sin remains unforgiven and you remain blind.

Summary

Jesus finds the beggar who has been cut off from the Israel that is passing away and makes him a member of the new Israel that is coming. He gives the man who has already exhibited a spark of faith an opportunity to come to full faith in Him as the Messiah. The man, because of his faith, receives a great blessing. The Pharisees, because of their unbelief, become even more hardened.

Comment

The Greek word *heurisko* (find) may mean "to find, with previous search." This is the word used of Jesus' "finding" the beggar after he was cast out. The Good Shepherd does not find his precious lambs by accident—He searches for them until He does find them and takes them under His loving protection. Jesus intends to offer the beggar that which is far superior to what he has lost in being excommunicated. He is being offered the opportunity to believe in the One in whom all the law and the prophets is fulfilled!

The American Standard Version has translated the latter half of verse 35: ". . . the Son of God?" while the Nestle Greek text has ". . . *ton huion tou anthropolou*" (the Son of man). The most ancient manuscripts (Sinaiticus, Vaticanus and Bezae) have "the Son of man." The latest great Codex on John, Bodmer II (P66), confirms the reading, "the Son of man" and the Revised Standard Version has this reading also.

The term "Son of man" is used by Jesus (exclusively by Him) in the Gospels at least eighty times—thirteen of which are found in the Fourth Gospel (cf. 1:51, 3:13, 3:14, 5:27, 6:27, 6:53, 6:62, 8:28, 9:35, 12:23, 12:34 (twice), 13:31). It was clearly a Messianic term and the people understood it as such (cf. 12:34). The prophet Daniel foretold of the Messiah, using the term "son of man," and Revelation 1:13 and 14:14 use the same term. Therefore, when the beggar heard the term "Son of man," he anticipated beholding the Messiah of Israel.

We can almost hear the eagerness in the man's reply . . . "Just tell me who he is, sir, in order that I may believe on him." We have translated the word *kurie* (Lord) in verse 36 to read "sir." The word *kurie* may be translated either "sir" or "lord" and is so translated (cf. John 4:11, 15, 19, 49; 5:7; 12:21; 20:15, where it has been translated in both the KJV and the ASV as "sir." The beggar has not yet had it revealed to him just who Jesus is, but in verse 38 he knows Jesus as the Messiah and the same word, *kurie*, may be translated "Lord."

Only a very few times did the Lord reveal Himself so plainly as the Messiah. Most of the time He allowed the people to form their own conclusions and make their own statements as to His Messiahship. One other time that we recall, He said, "I that speak unto thee am he . . ." (John 4:26).

The Greek word *aphiemi* used for the word "said" in verse 38 is the same word used of Jesus when He "uttered a loud voice" (Mark 15:37) upon the cross. The word, according to Vine's Expository Dictionary is "used of uttering a cry." How the man must have been

startled to find that he stood in the presence of and had been healed by the very Messiah for whom the Jews had waited century upon century. The man uttered a cry, "Lord, I believe . . ." and probably fell upon his knees before Jesus as he worshipped Him. Notice, Jesus never refused the worship of men as did the apostles (Acts 10:26, 14:15), for Jesus deserved man's adoration! According to Vine's Expository Dictionary, page 235, "The Note to John 9:38 in the American Standard Version in this connection is most unsound; it implies that Christ was a creature." While the word *proskuneo* (used here for the beggar's worship toward Jesus) may also be used when one man does reverence or obeisance toward another man, it is "most unsound" to imply, as does the footnote in the ASV, that Jesus is a creature.

In verse 39 Jesus makes a claim that, at first glance, seems contradictory of John 3:17 and 12:47 where He claims that He did not come to judge. However, after careful study, they are found to complement one another rather than contradict (see our comments on John 3:17, Vol. I, pages 112-113). He came to convict men of their sins and to proclaim the one way of salvation. His coming resulted in two reactions by men—some refused to come to the light lest their works be shown for what they really are; others gladly came to the light (cf. our comments on John 3:19-20, Vol. I, pages 114-115). He came to declare the truth and man's reaction one way or another results in man's being judged—worthy or unworthy. The prophet Isaiah was commissioned to go and preach to Judah purposely to dull the understanding of those who would not understand, to close the ears of those who would not hear, and to close the eyes of those who would not see (cf. Isa. 6:9-10). Jesus quoted this same passage to explain that He taught in parables to bring about judgment upon those who refused to understand Him (cf. Matt. 13:10-15). And so the man who deliberately rejects or disobeys the doctrines of Christ necessarily judges himself. Christ's teachings, by their very nature of demanding faith and obedience and by their absolute finality, cannot be rejected without judgment. No man, once confronted with the Gospel of Christ, can remain neutral. Jesus demands a choice—either for or against Him (cf. Matt. 12:30).

Some of the Pharisees who were standing near, began to "get the message." They knew from their past experiences with Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles that He must be talking of them and their blindness.

Jesus furnished the Pharisees and all the world for all ages a truism which needs to be remembered. No man is so blind as one who will not see! If the Pharisees had realized their blindness and had been pure in heart they would have sought the Light which would have led them to Jesus, the true Light, which lighteth every man (cf. John 1:9). The man who knows his own ignorance and blindness, but who desires to know more, is the man whose vision can be increased and his knowledge enlarged. But the Pharisees boasted of their vision—"we know," again and again. They did not seek the Light for they did not think they needed the Light—they already possessed all the Light there was. Therefore, because they would not recognize their own spiritual destitution, they rejected the only source of grace and forgiveness. What a lesson this is for all of us today! May we never arrive at the place where we reject God's Word in favor of our own opinion or knowledge. Let us never be so presumptuous as to think that we, as a group or as individuals, can never be taught from God's Word because we know it all.

Quiz

1. Did Jesus find the beggar by accident? Explain.
2. What did Jesus call Himself in verse 35? What did the title imply?
3. Does John 9:39 contradict John 3:17? Explain.
4. In what way were the Pharisees remaining in their sins?

EXPOSITORY SERMON NO. NINE

LIGHT FOR THE BLIND

John 9:1-41

Introduction

I. JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES SEE THE BLIND BEGGAR SITTING, PERHAPS, AT THE TEMPLE GATE

- A. Can you sympathize with the blind man? He was born blind. He had never seen the lovelight in the eyes of his father or mother. He had never seen the green fields, the majestic mountains, the winding Jordan river. The brilliance of the sun by day had never shone upon his eyes, nor had he ever witnessed the dark blue sky at night sprinkled with twinkling stars. Yet, as we shall see, he saw more than all the others about him who had their eyesight.

II. THE QUESTION OF THE DISCIPLES

- A. They raise the theological question about his infirmity being connected with sin—especially do they presume that his blindness has come as a punishment. In a sense, our sins are visited upon our offspring for generation upon generation. But in another sense, our sins are not borne by our children (cf. Ezek. 18:19-20). There was a purpose in the beggar's blindness and Jesus answers with that purpose—that the glory of God might be made manifest. All infirmities are for such a purpose. They are for discipline, chastisement, that the will of God might be perfected in those who believe and that God's justice and power might be shown. To the disciples this man posed a problem of the past—"How did he get that way?" But to Jesus he presented a challenge and an opportunity to work the works of God in the present!

Discussion

I. BLINDNESS OF THE BEGGAR

Although his physical sight had never been given him, he was not really the blind one at all. Actually, it was probably his physical blindness that worked to bring his greatest blessing. It caused him to turn in utter dependence upon the mercy of God and anyone else who would help him. His sightless eyes thrust him upon the grace of God—they led him to hope.

Thus his faith was a faith that would obey Jesus' commands with unhesitating obedience. It seems that always the poor, infirm and outcasts, who found both themselves and others incapable of help, that professed the greatest faith in Jesus. They had nowhere else or no one else to turn to—the religious leaders of the day would not be their shepherds. The prosperous, healthy and self-righteous felt no necessity to trust in God. The church at Laodicea was told, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and *blind* and naked . . ." (Rev. 3:17. (Italics mine.) AND SO IT IS! THE MAN WHO HAS LOST HIS PHYSICAL SIGHT CAN NEVER BE SO BLIND AS THE MAN WHO HAS LOST HIS INDEPENDENCE UPON GOD!

This man had courage. He knew as well as any other Jew of that city and of that particular time what would happen to anyone who associated with Jesus. Not only had he associated with the hated Nazarene, he had allowed himself to be healed by Him on the Sabbath.

The beggar had an honest heart and when convinced of the truth, he followed the leading of the truth. He accepted the testimony that was presented to him and believed it. He might not be a student of theology, as were the rulers, but he could witness to what Jesus had done for him—this he knew. His honesty allowed Him to see far more than the Pharisees could see about Jesus. They said Jesus could not possibly be good for He healed on the Sabbath. The blind man said, "God would not work through a deliberate blasphemer." He knew more of the Old Testament than did the students of the Scriptures. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psa. 66:18). "When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood" (Isa. 1:15).

II. THE BLINDNESS OF THE BEGGAR'S PARENTS

Theirs was the blindness of cowardice and fear. Even in everyday experience we know that fear can cause people to be blind to many things that would otherwise be easily seen. What did they fear? They feared loss of social liberty and prestige. If they should profess any belief in Jesus they would be boycotted socially and economically. Their friends would not come near them . . . they would not be sold anything in the markets. They also feared excommunication—religious condemnation. They would no longer be allowed to participate in the services of the temple or the synagogue. This has been used by other religious dictators in modern times as a means of forcing the dictates of men upon the superstitious and indifferent. The parents might also have been afraid of the responsibilities they would have to assume should they become followers of Christ. Many today are afraid of the truth because they might have to change their way of living—to give up some of their sinful, indulgent pleasures and so they have conveniently blinded themselves to the truth—they have seared their consciences.

The parents could not see beyond the level of this world. They could see only the persecution and criticism they would have to face. They could see only the things of this world which they might lose. Peter at Antioch is a good example of such blindness. His fear of the Jews actually blinded him to the truth that he himself had already preached concerning the reception of the Gentiles into the kingdom. When some Judaizers criticized him for eating with Gentiles, he defected and separated himself from the Gentiles. He had just preached that God is no respecter of persons—that the Gentiles are to be received into the church as brothers—now he gives in through fear. It

isn't easy to be a witness for Jesus today. Today's great philosophy is "Don't be different from the world—be a conformist—don't be abnormally religious." I sometimes believe it is more difficult to witness for Christ in times of peace and prosperity and security than in times of persecution and hardship. But cowardice and fear brings a blindness that covers our spiritual eyes so that we cannot see the truth—we do not see facts and ideas in their proper perspective. If all we can see are the consequences and losses in this world by following Christ, we are no better than this beggar's parents. The heroes of the O. T. were not even permitted to see the Christ and yet they could see better than these parents through their spiritual eyes for "these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were pilgrims on the earth . . . for they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country . . ." (Heb. 11:13-14). **THE BLIND BEGGAR WAS LOOKING AT THE HEAVENLY CITY, WHILE HIS PARENTS GROPED BLINDLY FOR THIS WORLD AND LOST BOTH THIS WORLD AND HEAVEN!**

III. THE BLINDNESS OF THE PHARISEES

Theirs was a blindness of prejudice and hate and bigotry. Do you hear any of them rejoicing even that the man born blind was healed? They were interested in nothing but revenge for having one of their traditions broken. They were interested only in trapping Jesus. Woe unto them, for "Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil." There are men and women even in our day who are so filled with hate and prejudice that they can see no good in anything but their own ideas and their own ways of living.

Their blindness was to be found in that they said, "We see." Over and over they insisted, "*We know* this man is a sinner . . .", or, "*We know* that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man we know not whence he is . . ." They knew everything, and the people did not know anything. They were the teachers and everyone else were the ignoramuses. Paul points out the blindness of the Jewish teachers in Romans, the second chapter. The Jews gloried and were secure in the belief that they were the guides of the blind, yet they themselves did not practice what they taught as light.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians (II Cor. 3) that even in his day the Jews were still blinded by the veil of prejudice—they refused to see that the Old Covenant was done away in Christ. ". . . the god of

this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ should not dawn upon them." Jesus wisely pointed out these self-righteous men as "blind guides trying to lead the blind . . ." and both would fall into the pit. NO MAN IS SO BLIND AS ONE WHO *WILL NOT SEE!* HOW MANY TIMES MIRACLES WERE WROUGHT BEFORE THE VERY EYES OF THE PHARISEES, BUT THEY WOULD NOT SEE!

Conclusion

I. WHAT CAUSES SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS?

- A. Materialism (cf. Isa. 56:10, 59:10). The Jewish national eye was so full of materialism that it was utterly blind to God. Take any American weekend or, more especially, national holiday, and you can see the same blindness. Our eyes are so full of tinsel, gifts, food and wanton pleasure that we cannot possibly see God. God's solemn warning to the Jews before they possessed the promised land was, "Beware lest after you have eaten, builded fine houses, increased your flocks and silver and gold . . . beware lest your heart be lifted up and you forget Jehovah thy God."
- B. Fear! Fear of what will be done to us or fear of what we will have to do if we allow our conscience to be convicted and follow Jesus. Herod's fear of the truth caused him to put John the Baptist in prison and to death. Felix's fear of the truth caused him to put off listening to Paul (Acts 24:25). Agrippa's fear of becoming a Christian and giving in to the truth and giving up his sensual way of life caused him to reject Paul's message.
- C. Self-righteousness and prejudice and hate! "If ye were blind, ye would have no sin: but now you say, "We see: your sin remaineth." "The whole have no need of a Physician, but the sick do . . . I came not to call the righteous unto repentance but the sinners . . ."

II. HOW MAY ONE HAVE SPIRITUAL SIGHT?

- A. Purity and humility! "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The blind beggar was honest, pure, innocent, guileless and thus his spiritual eyes were opened along with his physical eyes.
- B. Faith! "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:27). Moses saw even that which was invisible through eyes of faith!

- C. **Courage!** One thing is certainly true of the blind beggar—he was a brave man. He knew quite well the consequences of declaring Jesus to be a good man—a prophet. But he made his statement and took his stand. It was as if he said: "I am bound to believe in Him, I am bound to take my stand by Him because of all that He has done for me . . ." We are reminded of Martin Luther when summoned before the Catholic hierarchy and commanded to recant and return to the Roman church—Luther said, "Here I stand, I can do no other, God help me."
- D. **Loyalty to Christ** always brings greater revelation and spiritual insight. This man was rewarded for his faith by a further revelation of Jesus. When the Jews had cast him out of the temple, the Lord of the temple went searching for him and found him. **IF ANY MAN'S CHRISTIAN WITNESS SEPARATES HIM FROM THE WORLD, IT ALWAYS BRINGS HIM CLOSER TO JESUS CHRIST.** It is to the man who is true to Him that Jesus most fully reveals Himself. Loyalty to Jesus may well bring persecution and scorn at the hands of men, but the reward of loyalty is a closer walk with Christ and an increasing knowledge of the wonder of Christ.

III. THIS CLOSER WALK CAN BE YOURS . . . THIS SPIRITUAL SIGHT CAN BE YOURS

- A. By obedience to His will (cf. John 7:17). The more we know Jesus by doing His will, the greater He becomes to us personally. Why do you tarry, my friend?

CHAPTER TEN

The first half of Chapter Ten undoubtedly takes place just after the incident with the Pharisees and the man born blind—especially the beggar's excommunication in Chapter Nine. The discourses on the Door and the Good Shepherd are chronologically a continuation of the Feast of Tabernacles' discourses. But there is a very evident lapse of time near the middle of Chapter Ten. At verse 22 of this chapter we are suddenly transferred in time about three months forward to the Feast of Dedication. Between the Feast of Tabernacles (September) and Dedication (December), Jesus conducts an extensive ministry in and around Jerusalem (cf. Map #5, page 12). Between 10:21 and 10:22 Jesus sends the Seventy on an evangelistic campaign; visits the

home of Mary and Martha; retires to an oft-used place for prayer; dines in a Pharisee's home; preaches soul-stirring evangelistic sermons recorded in Luke 12 and 13; heals a woman bowed double in a synagogue, and teaches many parables. We continue our general outline:

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

D. Public Ministry, Third Year

2. Later Judean Ministry, 7:1—10:21, The Feast of Tabernacles

a. The Door of the sheep, 10:1-10

b. The Good Shepherd, 10:11-21

3. Later Judean Ministry, 10:22—10:42, The Feast of Dedication

a. Claims to Deity, 10:22-31

b. Evidence for Deity, 10:32-42

In the first half of Chapter Ten we have two allegories—the Door of the Sheep and The Good Shepherd. The word (10:6) by which John classifies the figure of speech used by Jesus is the Greek word, *paroimia*. This is not the Greek word used in other places in the New Testament for parable (*parabole*). Neither is *paroimia* the same in its form of expression as *parabole*. The *paroimia* is more like an allegory. D. R. Dungan, in his Hermeneutics textbook says, on pages 258-259, "The distinction in Scripture between a parable and an allegory is said to be, that a parable is a supposed history, and an allegory is a figurative application of real facts." A parable is an extended simile (expressed comparison), while an allegory is an extended metaphor (implied comparison).

In the interpretation of allegories the tendency is usually, as with all figurative language, over-interpretation rather than under-interpretation. That is, most interpreters tend to manufacture and extend points of analogy which the author did not intend to include in the lesson of his allegory. Any good hermeneutics book will give a number of rules to follow in interpreting allegories. We mention just a few of the most important ones:

- a. Be very careful not to demand too many points of analogy.
- b. Let the author give his own interpretation.
- c. Remember, figures of speech are not always used with the same meaning everywhere in Scripture.
- d. Let the literal facts of everyday life be made to assist in the interpretation of figurative language.

- e. Allegories may explain allegories (which is exactly what we have in John 10:1-21—two allegories; the first evidently misunderstood and the second given in an attempt to clarify the message of the first).

The very evident purpose and message of these two allegories is a strong contrast between Jesus as the Door of security and peace and the Good Shepherd of compassionate trustworthiness with the false, insecure, unloving, untrustworthy Pharisees who claimed to be shepherds of the sheep. Such a contrast—between Jesus and those who claim to be shepherds—is very appropriate for our day.

THE DOOR OF THE SHEEP

Text 10:1-10

- 1 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.
- 2 But he that entereth in by the door is the (or, *a*) shepherd of the sheep.
- 3 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.
- 4 When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.
- 5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.
- 6 This parable (or, *proverb*) spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.
- 7 Jesus therefore said unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.
- 8 All that came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.
- 9 I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and go out, and shall find pasture.
- 10 The thief cometh not, but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy: I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.

Queries

- a. Why does Jesus use this particular figure (The Door) to teach at this particular time?
- b. Is Jesus referring to Himself as both the Door and the Shepherd in the first two verses?
- c. Does the "salvation of verse 9 and the "pasture" have any connection with the "life . . . abundantly" of verse 10?

Paraphrase

I assure you most solemnly that the one who does not lead the sheep into the sheepfold through the Door, but enters deceitfully by climbing into the fold some other way, that one is a thief and a robber. But the one leading the sheep through the Door is a true shepherd of the sheep. Unto him the door-keeper opens the door and the sheep heed his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has firmly started all of his own on the way to pasture, he goes in front of them leading them and the sheep follow him because they recognize him as a true shepherd. They will never follow a stranger, but to the contrary, they will flee from him because they do not want to know or give heed to the voice of strangers. This allegory Jesus told them, but they did not understand what He was saying to them. So Jesus said again to them, I assure you most solemnly, I Myself am the Door of the sheep. All others who come elevating themselves before me in eminence are thieves and robbers, but the true sheep heed them not. I Myself am the Door. If anyone enters into the sheepfold through Me he shall be saved, and he shall go in and out freely enjoying peace and security and he shall find pasture upon which to feed his soul. The thief comes only in order that he may steal and kill and destroy; I came that the sheep may have life and that they may have it in overflowing abundance.

Summary

Jesus first hints that those claiming to be shepherds of Israel are not entering by the Door and are thus not true shepherds but strangers, thieves and robbers. Then He states plainly that He is the Door and those entering the fold through Him shall be secure and find substance.

Comment

The figures (Shepherd, Sheep, Sheepfold, Hireling) used by Jesus in these allegories should have been familiar enough to the Jews. Read these Old Testament references for yourself to see why Jesus could expect the Jews to understand His allegory: Num. 27:17; I Sam. 17:34-36; II Sam. 12:3; I Kings 22:17; Psa. 23, 79:13, 80:1, 95:7; Isa. 40:11; Jere. 23:1; Ezek. 34; Zech. 10:2, 11:17, 13:7, and others to be found in your concordance.

There are a number of reasons why we believe Jesus was not referring to Himself as The Shepherd in these first ten verses of Chapter 10. First, the main idea is to show that those rulers who had excommunicated the beggar (chapter 9) were not, as they claimed to be, true shepherds of God's flock—because they refused to lead the

sheep through the true Door! Secondly, as the marginal note of the A. S. V. text shows, the definite article *the* (verse 2) before the word *shepherd* may be supplanted by the indefinite article *a*—making verse 2 to read “. . . he that entereth in by the door is *a shepherd* of the sheep.” In fact, the definite article is omitted in the best Greek manuscripts. Thirdly, Jesus makes a point of referring to Himself as the Door in verses 1 through 10 and then makes a point of emphasizing Himself as The Shepherd in verses 11 through 21.

Usually the sheepfolds were community edifices wherein each shepherd of the community would shelter his flock by night. They were large enclosures walled by stone walls and sometimes large briars or thorns were secured to the top of the wall to fend off thieves. These folds were protected by a strong door of which only the porter (door-keeper), who was either paid or took turns with other shepherds, held the key. The porter knew the various shepherds and would immediately open the door for the shepherds who has led their sheep in through the door. Each shepherd knew each of his own sheep by name—and all his sheep knew their shepherd's voice from any other! The true shepherd, then, must first lead the sheep into the fold by the door; the true shepherd is also recognized by his own sheep. The one who proposes to get into the fold by some other way than the Door is very evidently a stranger, thief and robber. He is both crafty and violent, and the sheep flee from him. Sometimes there were sheepfolds of a less imposing structure out in the fields and upon the hills. They had lower walls and were without doors. The shepherds themselves lay down across the entrance gap at night and literally became the door of the sheep. The point, we reiterate, is this: there is no rightful access into the fold except by the door, and any who enter any other way are strangers and have no intention but to steal or destroy.

Jesus had for two years boldly presented Himself as the Way to God—the Way to Life. The Pharisees and rulers of the Jews who claimed to be the spiritual shepherds of God's people violently rejected Him and deceitfully went among the flock stealing and destroying. A prime example of such rejection of the Door was just experienced by Jesus when the blind beggar was excommunicated because he dared to confess Jesus as one sent from God. The beggar was manifestly one of the true sheep for he saw through the hypocrisy and false shepherding of the Pharisees—he knew not their voice, for they, with one voice, contradicted plain evidence of Jesus' Divine nature.

Thus as Jesus speaks to the crowds at the Feast of Tabernacles, He distinguishes both the true shepherds and the true sheep. The true shepherds of God's flock "go before" the flock—that is, they lead—they do not drive. However, as is intimated in verse 4, it is sometimes necessary for the shepherd to be firm with unwilling sheep for the sheep's own good.

The sheep, on the other hand, are to recognize the shepherd's voice and follow him. They are also to beware the false shepherd and robber and are to flee from him.

Now this writer believes that definite application may be made of these allegories to both the elders of the New Testament church and the members of the church. A quick survey of the duties and responsibilities of both elders (Acts 20:28-32; I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-11; Heb. 13:17) and the responsibilities of the members of the church toward the elders (Heb. 13:7, 17) will substantiate this application. The elders must, to be true shepherds of God's flock, lead the people into the fold through the Door. True elders should take individual interest in each member, knowing them by name and by need. He should be firm with the sheep when necessary. The members are to willingly submit to the leadership of the shepherds because they know them and trust them.

The people standing about Jesus as He taught did not understand His allegory, so He said plainly, "I, Myself, am the Door of the sheep." He is, indeed, the only access men have to the Father's fold. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and no one comes to the Father but through Him (cf. John 14:6). Through Him we have access unto the Father (cf. Eph. 2:18, 3:12; Rom. 5:2).

In verse 8 there is no reference to Moses or the Prophets as being thieves simply because they came before Jesus in the matter of time, for they believed in the Christ and sought to lead men to faith in the Christ (cf. Heb. 10:24-27; I Pet. 1:10-12). Jesus is naming *all* those who make themselves and their schemes pre-eminent to Him as thieves and robbers. The Lord is primarily aiming this condemnation toward the self-seeking, materialistic, self-righteous Pharisees and Sadducees who sought to intimidate the sheep and destroy the flock and all this by "climbing up some other way" than through the Door.

We cannot agree with Lenski that verse 9 refers only to the shepherds entering in, finding salvation and going in and out to pasture. In the first place, Jesus says, "If *any* man enter in . . ." Secondly, in the sentence immediately preceding verse 9, Jesus is concerned with the safety of the sheep (v. 8).

And so Jesus assures His listeners that if *any* man will come to the Father through Him, that man shall be saved. He will be given life and that presently and in abundance. In his everyday "goings in and goings out" such a man will be led into green pastures and beside the still waters. The poor beggar had just been cast out of the synagogue and deprived of spiritual security, but Jesus was showing him and others the "new and living way." The thieving shepherds come to steal, kill and destroy the sheep, but Jesus came as the Door of the sheep to bring life and more than life—life overflowing. The word used for "abundantly" is *perisson* and is related to the word used in John 6:13 to speak of the abundance left over from feeding of the five thousand. Barnes explains it this way, "They shall not merely have life—simple, bare existence—but they shall have all those super-added things which are needful to make life eminently blessed and happy." Hendriksen comments, "These sheep receive freedom from the guilt, the misery, and the punishment of sin. Abundance—the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, the peace of God that passes all understanding—is their portion, here in principle, by and by in perfection." See our comments on John 5:24 concerning the enjoyment of eternal life in this present world (Gospel of John, Vol. I, page 188). Remember the Beatitudes for the promises of happiness and blessedness for those who come to God on Jesus' terms (cf. Matt. 5:1-12).

Quiz

1. What lapse of time occurs in chapter 10?
2. What is an allegory and what is the biggest danger in interpreting one?
3. Give at least three Old Testament references to the figure of shepherds and sheep and give the gist of each reference.
4. How do we know that Jesus is not referring to Himself as the shepherd in these first ten verses?
5. What is the great contrast presented by this first allegory—the Door?
6. What application may be made of this allegory to the N.T. church?
7. What is the meaning of ". . . have life, and have it abundantly"?

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Text 10:11-21

11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep.

12 He that is a hireling, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth, and the wolf snatcheth them, and scattereth them:

13 he fleeth because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

14 I am the good shepherd; and I know mine own, and mine own know me,

15 even as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, (or, *lead*), and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become (or, *there shall be . . .*) one flock, one shepherd.

17 Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again.

18 No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power (or *right*) to take it again. This commandment received I from my Father.

19 There arose a division again among the Jews because of these words.

20 And many of them said, He hath a demon, and is mad; why hear ye him?

21 Others said, These are not the sayings of one possessed with a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?

Queries

- a. Why the contrast between the good shepherd and the hireling?
- b. Who are the "other" sheep, not of that fold?
- c. What is so important about Jesus' laying down His life that causes the Father to love Him?

Paraphrase

I, Myself, am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd willingly lays down his very soul on behalf of the sheep. The hireling, who is neither the true shepherd nor the owner of the sheep, when he sees the wolf coming, deserts the sheep and runs away—and the wolf attacks the flock and scatters them—because the hireling is what he is—one who cares not for the welfare of the sheep. I, Myself, am the Good Shepherd; I know those that belong to Me, and those that are mine know Me, just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father. My life I willingly lay down on behalf of the sheep. Now I have other sheep which are not of this particular fold; unto them also must I become Shepherd and they shall hear and heed my voice and all

who heed my voice will become in equality one Flock on the basis of their heeding and obeying one Shepherd. This is the reason why the Father loves Me—because I willingly suffer death in order that I might be resurrected from the dead! No one has the power to take it from Me, but to the contrary I, Myself, voluntarily give it up. I only have authority to lay it down and I only have authority to take it up again. I received this charge from My Father.

There came a division again among the Jews on account of the words which Jesus had spoken. Many of them were saying, He has a demon in him and is insane—why do you listen to Him? But others were saying, at the same time, These are not the words of one being possessed of demons. A demon-possessed person does not have the power to open the eyes of one born blind, does he?

Summary

The Lord has, in the previous section, contrasted the evil shepherds with good shepherds in general. Now He makes the contrast even more vivid by casting alongside the hireling the One and Only, Good Shepherd of the sheep—Himself. His relationship to the sheep is like that of His Father to Himself. He willingly sacrifices Himself for the sheep.

Comment

The syntactical arrangement of the first sentence of verse 11 in the original is good Greek idiom to stress both the pronoun and the adjective. In other words, the original Greek would be translated literally, "I, Myself, am the shepherd, the good shepherd . . ." Both "I" and "good" are stressed. In the preceding section (vs. 1-10) Jesus contrasted the evil shepherds (the Pharisees) with good shepherds in general—but now the distinction is made even more vivid by contrasting all who propose to be shepherds with The One Good and Faithful Shepherd.

The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. After meditation upon this statement, we begin to see that there is more involved here than the mere sacrificing of a ransom—as profoundly sublime as that is itself! Inherent in His goodness as *The* Shepherd is the fact that *only* His life as a ransom would be efficacious. Other shepherds of the flock might indeed willingly lay down their lives, but none would bring salvation and safety to the flock through their sacrifice!

Now the hireling is described. Hireling is simply "one who receives wages for his labor." He may be a good hireling or an evil hireling

Moses and Paul were under-shepherds of God's flock who received wages for their labors and they were hired men with a large measure of the love and concern of the Good Shepherd in their hearts for the sheep. But the Pharisees and Sadducees were mercenary, evil hirelings whose primary concern was not for the sheep but for the wages. The sheep do not belong to the hireling—he has no personal relationship to them, nor will he tender any personal commitments to them. The hireling is not willing to give up himself for the sheep when they are attacked, but "looks out for 'number one'"—flees to preserve his own safety. Read Ezekiel 34:1-10 for God's condemnation of the hireling shepherds.

We quote here from an anonymous Palestinian traveler of many years ago—a beautiful illustration of a good shepherd:

"It was while riding through the low hills covered with this vegetation, and coming out on the blighted flats of the Dead Sea, that one of those pictures passed before me which are ever after hung up in the mind's gallery among the choicest of the spoils of Eastern travel. By some chance I was alone, riding a few hundred yards in front of the caravan, when, turning the corner of a hill, I met a man coming toward me, the only one we had seen for several hours since we had passed a few black tents some eight or ten miles away. He was a noble-looking young Shepherd, dressed in his camel's-hair robe, and with the lithesome, powerful limbs and elastic step of the children of the desert. But the interest which attached to him was the errand on which he had manifestly been engaged on these Dead Sea plains from which he was returning. Round his neck, and with its little limbs held gently by his hand, lay a lamb he had rescued, and was doubtless carrying home. The little creature lay as if perfectly content and happy, and the man looked pleased as he strode along lightly with his burden; and as I saluted him with the usual gesture of pointing to heart and head, and the 'Salaam alik!' (Peace be with you!), he responded with a smile and a kindly glance at the lamb, to which he saw my eyes were directed. It was actually the beautiful parable of the Gospel acted out before my sight. Every particular was true to the story; the Shepherd had doubtless left his 'ninety and nine in the wilderness,' round the black tents we had seen so far away, and had sought for the lost lamb till he found it, where it must quickly have perished without his help, among those blighted plains. Literally, too, 'when he had found it, he laid it on his shoulders rejoicing.'"

What a high ideal the Good Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd (I Pet. 5:4), has set for all his under-shepherds! Elders are, by divine appointment, shepherds of God's flock under His Chief-Shepherdship. In our opinion, deacons, evangelists and teachers should be considered in some sense shepherds, inasmuch as they feed (teach) and minister to the flock. Those who desire the awesome responsibility of shepherding God's flock need to remember that they "watch in behalf of the souls of the sheep as they that shall give account" (cf. Heb. 13:17). The under-shepherd is to "feed the flock of God" and protect it against wolves both from within and from without (cf. Acts 20:26-32); he is to accept the oversight willingly and not by constraint, to do it eagerly and not for love of money, not to use the position for the exercise of power, and to be an example to the flock (I Pet. 5:2-3). One of the qualifications for elders is that they must "not be greedy of filthy lucre." The ministry or the eldership is not to be considered as a calling on the basis of "pay scale." The Lord is not interested in hirelings (those interested primarily in their wages). This does not mean, however, that ministers should not be paid a living wage. When the Lord *ordained* "that they that proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel" (I Cor. 9:14), He intended that the man who labors in the kingdom is "worthy of his hire." We should never think of the minister's salary as simply a gift—if he labors he earns, and is worthy of, his hire.

Another characteristic of the Divine Shepherd is held up for an example in verses 14 and 15. The Good Shepherd knows His own sheep and His sheep know Him, just as the Son knows the Father and the Father knows the Son. And what is this *knowing* relationship between the Father and the Son which is to be exemplified in under-shepherds and the flock? It is a union of wills, purpose and works (cf. John 5:19-23 and our comments, Vol. I, pp. 184-186). There is absolute harmony and oneness. The Father was constantly aware of His Son's needs and sustained Him every moment—when Jesus felt pain or hunger the Father's heart went out to Him. When Jesus knew joy, the Father rejoiced. On the other hand, the Son knew the Father's will and found exceeding joy in doing His will (cf. John 8:29). Now, the Good Shepherd knows His sheep individually and knows their needs better than they themselves—He is constantly sustaining them. Those who are true sheep of the Good Shepherd hear His voice and are united with Him in will, purpose and work—they obey Him for they trust Him as the Shepherd of their souls. This characteristic is

applicable, also, to under-shepherds (elders and ministers) and to the flocks which they serve. The matter of shepherding the Lord's flock and being a member of the Lord's flock is a reciprocal arrangement. The under-shepherds should *know* their flock as much as possible, like Jesus knows them. The members of the flock should *know* the voice of their under-shepherds the same as Jesus was in harmony with His Father's will! "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief: for this were unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17). When elders are to be chosen to act as Christ's under-shepherds, this allegory of the Good Shepherd, the hireling, the Door of the Sheep ought to be studied and applied:

"... the flock suffers from a double danger. It is always liable to attack from outside from the wolves and the robbers and the marauders. It is always liable to trouble from the inside from the false shepherd. The Church runs a double danger. It is always under attack from outside. It often suffers from the tragedy of bad leadership, from the disaster of shepherds who see their calling as a career and not as a means of service. The second danger is by far the worse; because, if the shepherd is faithful and good, there is a strong defense from the attack from outside; but if the shepherd is faithless and a hireling, then the foes from outside can penetrate into and destroy the flock. The Church's first essential is a leadership which is based on the example of Jesus Christ." (The Gospel of John, Vol. II, Daily Study Bible, by William Barclay.)

It is very evident in the incident of the man born blind and the Pharisees (John 9) that the supposed shepherds of Israel did not *know* the sheep (the blind man) as the Good Shepherd would have them know—they were hirelings. Further, once the stubborn unbelief and obstinate ungodliness of the Pharisees was revealed, the blind man recognized them as false shepherds and did not know them (obey them) as his spiritual shepherds.

His contrast throughout this allegory has been between evil shepherds and good shepherds, and finally, *The Good Shepherd*. A big difference between the two has been their concept of who are and who are not true sheep. Now in verse 16 Jesus looks ahead a few short months when the "middle wall of partition" will have been broken down and the Gentiles will be led into the "one flock." The

Jewish spiritual leaders refused to accept this idea from the very beginning of Jesus' ministry (cf. Luke 4:16-30). The uniting of Jew and Gentile into one flock was plainly foretold in their prophets (cf. Isa. 56:8 and Ezek. 34:23). The Gentiles were not to be gathered into the Old Covenant "fold," but both Jew and Gentile would be led into a New Covenant "flock." It was not intended that the Gentiles be led into the "fold" of Judaism—the Old Covenant was intended exclusively for the Hebrews (cf. Deut. 5:1-3; Rom. 3:19; Eph. 2:11-18).

When Jesus said "I have," He is manifesting divine foreknowledge. It is not a predestination in the sense that He has made an absolute and irrevocable choice of some and passed over others. The sovereign will of man is not violated in foreknowledge. His foreknowledge and man's will is exemplified in Judas, the traitor, whom Jesus foreknew, while Judas very evidently exercised his own free will in betraying Him.

And so Jesus, through His apostles, went out into the wilderness of heathendom and led the strays and the outcasts into the one flock (cf. Acts 9:15, 22:21). They did gladly hear His voice through the apostles and many thousands obeyed (cf. Rom. 1:5, 8; Eph. 1:15; Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:3-4).

The important phrase of verse 16 is: ". . . and they shall become one flock, one shepherd." Jesus sees the unity of the future church. Most commentators on this verse hold to a mystical, invisible unity only as the inference of "one flock, one shepherd." It is true that Christians are one in Christ, held together by a spiritual bond which is stronger and higher than any visible structure. But it is also true that this spiritual unity must, by its very nature, express itself in a visible unity of doctrine and worship according to the divine standard in the New Testament (cf. Eph. 4:1-16).

This is not an enforced unity—held together by a great superstructure or "World Church" organization. This is a unity based on faith and love where all the true sheep hear, answer and obey one shepherd. This oneness is based on loyalty to Jesus Christ and His person. The very foundation for Christian unity is in all the "sheep" hearing and obeying "one Shepherd," even Jesus. It is as simple as this: "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15), and, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). An intelligent, believing, obeying, sacrificing love for Christ and His Body will result in unity!