

# BIBLE STUDIES

"Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17. 11).

**THE GOSPEL AND ITS MINISTRY**

**THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN**  
(**Chapters 1 to 11**)

**NOTES ON THE PSALMS**

**VOLUME 35**

*Published by*  
NEEDED TRUTH PUBLISHING OFFICE  
ASSEMBLY HALL, GEORGE LANE,  
HAYES, BROMLEY, KENT



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VOLUME 35

JANUARY, 1967

## EDITORIAL

It is not so very many years ago that we read together the Gospel according to John, and some appear to be surprised that it should be chosen again so soon. All will admit, we feel sure, that we cannot hope to plumb the depths of the Holy Scriptures, John's Gospel being no exception to this rule. Indeed, one of the notable characteristics of this book is the depth of the teaching which it expresses in simple language and with a pervading belief through unquestioning faith. Again, in passages like John 3 we encounter things so deep that they cannot be fully expressed in human language. This profundity is very pronounced in the discourses recorded by John. Most of them having fallen from the lips of the Lord Jesus, they are beyond question doctrine of the Lord: all are inspired Scripture. Herein lies the reason for the choice of this subject for 1967 and 1968. It is hoped that our fellow-students will seek to avoid a superficial treatment of the narrative of incidents, and seek to dig deeper than ever before into the riches of doctrine in the discourses.

It will be observed that the discourses are related to the incidents that precede them. For example, in chapter 6 John describes the feeding of the five thousand, and then follows, among other things, the teaching concerning "the living Bread which came down out of heaven". From the record of the incident much may be gathered that is very profitable, but to gather the deeper riches we must also meditate much on the Lord's discourse about Himself as the living Bread, and, while we note its effect on His hearers, we ought not to forget to seek also its bearing upon ourselves.

That we as children of God should be concerned to study the gospel, is evident from the fact that the epistle to the Romans, not at all an easy book to expound, is really a treatise on the doctrine of the gospel. The gospel is not only a thing to be preached to unsaved sinners: it is also a lively message to be taught to regenerated ones gathered together **in** churches of God. So then we desire that our fellow-students **seek** this year, by earnest, prayerful and concentrated study, to gather abundantly sound and helpful teaching that we may have overlooked in the years that are past. Pray we therefore, that the Lord may be pleased to grant to us a richer knowledge of "The Gospel and its  
Ministry.

*John Baird*

## JOHN 1

The grand subject of John's Gospel is introduced before John the Baptist, for He was before him (verses 15, 30), the truths concerning the eternal Word being, in all their profundity, presented in terms of the simple verb "to be". From the beginning He ever is (verse 1), and ever is in the bosom of the Father (verse 18).

In marked contrast to the eternal Word who ever is, there are in the chapter several things that became, that is, were brought into being, expressed by the Greek verb *ginomai*, which indicates things made or brought into being by an agent, and which is rendered in various ways. "All things were made (*ginomai*) by Him" and "the world was made (*ginomai*) by Him" (verses 3, 10). The Word is God, Creator of all things, and thus stands in marked contrast to John the Baptist, for the scripture says, "There came (*ginomai*, became) a man sent from God" (verse 6). John, a man born of woman, a created being, witnessed concerning the eternal Son of God, Creator and Maker of all things. Further, to those that believe on Him the Lord gives the right to become (*ginomai*) children of God (verse 12). The A. V. says, "sons of God", but the word is *tekna*, children (as in R. V. ). Men cannot by nature stand in this relationship to God, but on believing in Christ they become children of God. Another notable occurrence of this same verb is found in verse 14: "The Word became (*ginomai*) flesh". Here was something new, God manifest in flesh. Solomon expressed the earth-bound view of man's works, saying, "There is no new thing under the sun. Is there a thing whereof men say, See, this is new? it hath been already, in the ages which were before us" (Ecclesiastes 1. 9, 10), but when God wrought His wondrous work of salvation He introduced something new under the sun. Earth had never before beheld Deity taking the form of Man; it will never be repeated in any other throughout all eternity. And more, the Lord Jesus is now in heaven bearing upon that precious body the marks of His suffering, and appearing thus before the Father on our behalf. It will be cause of wonder throughout all eternity that "the Word became flesh".

John the Baptist was a man sent from God (verse 6), and he went before the Man that was to come and who was to become (*ginomai*) before him (verses 15, 30). John preached concerning the Christ when as yet the Christ had not been manifested; then came the time when John pointed out the "Lamb of God". From that day the Christ must increase and John must decrease, while John fulfilled his mission in directing men to the Lord Jesus (Acts 19. 4). By this means the Lord gathered His first disciples. In keeping with this, John's replies to those who came from the Pharisees were all decisive, though successively more and more brief: not the Christ, not Elijah, and not the Prophet. Our understanding is that this use of the term "the Prophet" (verses 21, 25) signifies the Christ. If this is so, it would appear then that the Pharisees had failed to grasp this, for their questions would imply that the Christ and the Prophet are two different persons.

The question, "Why baptizest Thou?", would suggest that the Pharisees were prepared to associate baptism with the Christ, Elijah and the Prophet, as entitled to baptize men to mark them as their

disciples, but not with a man like John the Baptist. John's mission was not to gather disciples unto himself, but to prepare men to receive the Christ. John's replies are helpful. "I baptize with water: in the midst of you standeth One . . . He that cometh after me" (verses 26, 27). "Behold, the Lamb of God . . . This is He . . . for this cause came I baptizing in water" (verses 29-31. R. V. M. ). "The same is He that baptizeth in the Holy Spirit" (verse 33, R. V. M. ). "This is the Son of God" (verse 34). It would be interesting to know if the Pharisees or others in Israel practised baptism; and, if so, what meaning they attached to it. There is no vagueness in the teaching of the Scriptures concerning the baptism of John, the baptism of believers in water, and baptism in the Holy Spirit. *John Baird*

## THE GOSPEL AND ITS MINISTRY

### THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

#### Chapter 1

**From London, S. E.** —The Word (*Logos*) is applied seven times to the Person of the Lord (John 1. 1, 14, 1 John 1. 1, 5. 7, Revelation 19. 13) [1].

Jesus Christ, as the *Logos*, is the expression of God; the telling out of the Divine Being and purpose. When Christ came to earth, His expression of God was unique and there followed spiritual light for believers who were the hearers. The introductory paragraph of the Gospel speaks of Him as the Light. The world at large did not accept the *Logos* and therefore remained in darkness, "but as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name".

John the Baptist took a very humble position in relation to the Christ. He said, "I am the voice", that is, in contrast to the powerful *Logos*. John was an important witness to the *Logos* as Son of God (verse 34). "I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God". This was consequent on the occasion when the Holy Spirit descended on the Lord Jesus at the time of His baptism; for it had been previously revealed to John that this was the sign for which he was to look.

Two examples of the word of the *Logos* are seen in His call to Philip and to Nathanael. To Philip the call was "Follow Me"; that was enough: coming from His lips, it was compelling. To Nathanael more was spoken. The Lord knew him: "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" The Lord knew him when he thought he was hidden under the fig tree: "Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee". The final word to Nathanael was, "Ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man". *C. L. Prasher*

**From Southport.** —John the Baptist's testimony is recorded in the four Gospels. He came for a witness to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe in Christ.

John denies that he is the Christ, saying, "This is He of whom I said, After me, cometh a Man, which is become before me; for He was before me". Christ as a Man came after John as to his birth and public appearance, whereas Christ as God was before John.

*Thomas Brown*

**From Vancouver.**—John 1 mentions a few witnesses. John the Baptist is a witness of prime importance. He indicates himself as one to the Jews and defines his duty as a witness. The coming of the Holy Spirit at Christ's baptism was a witness to John the Baptist.

John's Gospel shows to man the Deity of the Lord with the purpose that there will be disciples.

The gospel is about a Being existing in the beginning (therefore prior to the beginning) who became incarnate. The chapter contains many contrasts. Christ is contrasted with John the Baptist. Christ is the Word; John was the voice of one crying in the wilderness.

*Jim Pope, Jim Bell Jr.*

## EXTRACTS

**From Atherton.**—Towards the end of his Gospel, John the apostle writes, "he that hath seen hath borne witness (19. 35). This was true of much that he wrote, for he was the disciple who saw and heard. These are the two essentials to witness-bearing. Yet this was not true of his opening message. He knew the unspeakable blessing of revelation, and writes of the Son of God in a unique way. Christ's person and work are the two main ingredients of the gospel. Christ is the Word, both God and the Son of God, "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father". This is the eternal abode of the Son. The Son's relationship to the Father had no beginning. It did not begin at His birth or resurrection as some affirm. The Word eternal became the Word incarnate. At His birth He became Son of Man.

John the apostle writes of the Word as the true Light. This could only be said of the Lord, who Himself said, "I am the Light of the world" (8. 12). In Him also was life. Only of Deity can these statements be true. Life in Him is the light of men. *G. A. Jones*

**From Macduff.**—John, the son of Zacharias, was the fore-runner. John's coming like the Messiah's was foretold, and the history of John the Baptist is unique in the record of men in divine service. John's function was to exhort men to repentance, and their baptism signified that they were ready to receive the Messiah. John commanded all to repent and be baptized, but he was reluctant to baptize **Jesus** of Nazareth, who was known to John as righteous and consequently, he thought, in no need of his baptism. Jesus insisted, and He was baptized so as to "fulfil all righteousness". The sign for which John was looking, even the Spirit of God descending as a dove and abiding on Him, indicated to John that Jesus was the "Son of God". From this time John's ministry was expanded to include his testimony relating to Jesus of Nazareth. He pointed Him out as the "Lamb of God" and as the "Son of God", thus making known to his hearers that God's Son was

dwelling with men. While John's time of service was obviously limited, his place in divine arrangements is very important, and of him the Lord said, "There hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist". He was a self-effacing man, and his witnessing led to some of his own disciples leaving him to follow the Lord Jesus. They had understood John's message concerning this Man, and immediately addressed Him as "Rabbi" (Master). Andrew's behaviour is still the pattern for disciples: he found his brother Peter and brought him to meet the Lord. *A. B. R.*

**From Aberkenfig and Barry.** —Christ is the Light of the world, a Light which brought light and deliverance to many who were held by sin's captive chains.

In the witness of John the Baptist we see not only the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy but also the fulfilment of the message through Gabriel (Luke 1. 15-17). John made no false claims for himself, but very clearly exalted the One of whom he could say, "the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose", and earned for himself the praise of the Master (Luke 7. 24-28; John 5. 33-35).

In the latter part of the chapter we see in the following of John's two disciples and the call of Philip the need to prepare men to carry the gospel, which they would receive, to the uttermost parts of the earth.

*J.**Butler,**D. H. Butler*

**From Kilmarnock.** —John the apostle informs us of the truth of the incarnation in words of sublime simplicity, "the Word became flesh" (John 1. 14). As the Word He always was, but as Man He became. The Word who was with God is the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father (John 1. 18). Reference is here made to the omnipresent character of God's Son. Though on earth as Man He was in heaven as God at the same time. Writing in the plural, John says, "We beheld His glory", a glory that was unique, true only of the only begotten Son. The statement in John 1. 14 seems to suggest that which was witnessed by all the Lord's disciples, including the Twelve. This glory was seen as the Lord walked and laboured among them.

The two disciples leaving John suggests that one was John, the Gospel writer, and the other, of course, was Andrew, brother of Simon. The Lord's promise of greater things would seem to have a future fulfilment and to be directly associated with Nathanael's recognition of the King of Israel.

*J.**C.**Watt*

From Birmingham. —There are many lessons to be learned from the witness of John. The Lord's commendation of John was that "among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11. 11). During his time of witness John had gathered disciples about him, and when John pointed out the Lord Jesus, two of these disciples heard and followed Jesus. John had done his job well. These disciples were in no doubt as to who was the One to follow, and (as far as we can discern) they had only John's testimony for it. What a challenge to those who would be witnesses for the Lord in any generation!

It is interesting and profitable to trace in this chapter the development of the witness to the Lord Jesus and thus the many aspects of the gospel. The Deity of the Lord and His becoming flesh are set forth. He is also referred to as the Light, as the Bearer of grace and truth, as the One that baptizeth in the Holy Spirit, as the Son of God, as the Lamb of God, as the Messiah, as a lightly esteemed Nazarene, as the **King** of Israel.

*R. B. Jones*

**From Paisley.** —The Word as Creator is proclaimed (verse 2), thus showing His work as Deity.

In his day John the Baptist spoke as the "Lord's messenger in the Lord's message". The apostle John depicts the Baptist's ministry, directing men to Christ. This is the task of all men sent from God with the gospel.

*Ian Penn*

**From Birkenhead.** —The Greek word "*logos*" implies much more than the spoken or written word, it may be the full expression of that of which it speaks. This Word was with God and was God and so, we judge, was the full expression of God. From subsequent verses in this chapter it is clear that the Word, which became flesh, was Jesus Christ, to whom John the Baptist bare witness, and that the Word was the Son of God. This is in keeping with the words of verse 1, "the Word was with God, and the Word was God". There is a religious body which claims that the correct translation is, "... was a God" [2]. It is true that the definite article is not used here, but it is also true that the Greek language does not have an indefinite article, so that the word "God" here stands on its own. There is no support among Greek scholars for this translation, "a God\*". The Word is declared to be (in existence) "in the beginning". This may refer to the beginning of this earth, which is the earliest time that the human mind can comprehend. At that time the Word was already in existence: He himself had no beginning and He was in fact the Person through whom all created things came into existence. He is also the Life and the Light of men. In the gospel message Christ as the Source of divine life and divine light is an important truth. As the Light He is said to lighten every man (that cometh into the world—A. V. ) [3]. This may refer to the fact that although all are born under sin, yet the truth of the gospel shines out from the Cross and brings eternal blessing within the reach of all. (We would be pleased to hear the views of others on the meaning of this verse. ) Christ is seen again as the Life-giver in verse 12, where emphasis is placed on the fact that the new birth is not of man but of God.

*R. L. S.*

**From Derby.** —We learn from the first part of this chapter that the Lord Jesus was the eternal Son of God. Colossians 1. 15 tells us that He is the image of the invisible God. We wonder at His humility in that He was willing to come to a world that would reject Him (John 1. 10, 11). He came to bring light into the world and show forth His Father's great love. We marvel that He should give grace to rebellious man (1. 17). He came to give us eternal life, obtained by trusting in Him and His finished work at Calvary. Thus we become children of

God (1. 12). John **the Baptist knew** that the Messiah would be **the One** on whom the **Spirit** would descend as a dove (1. 31-34). **After this** had **taken** place, John could **cry** as he saw the Lord Jesus, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" **His** personality so impressed those that **were to be His** disciples that **at a single** command, "Follow Me", they left all and **went** after **Him**, owning **Him** as their Master.

Nathanael doubted that **Jesus** was the Messiah **because** he heard **He** was a Nazarene. **After meeting Jesus**, he was **surprised** that **He** already **knew** him and had **seen** him **under** the **fig tree**, Nathanael then acknowledged that Jesus was the Son of God. G. W. Conway, A. K. Smith

**From Glasgow (Parkhead).** —John **writes of** the Son of **God** under the **title**, "the **Word**", the eternal **Word**, who not only was with **God** but was God. In **verse 4** John **seems** to **set** forth the reason why **Jesus** came **into** this world, for **not** only was **He** the Life-giver, as we see in creation, but **He** also came to enlighten **men** who dwell in darkness. In **verse 6** John **introduces** John the Baptist, the **man sent** from God to **be** a **witness** of the **true** Light. John the Baptist himself was a **burning** and shining light, the **greatest** of all **men** born of women. **His** mission was to **declare to** the Jewish nation that the Messiah was coming **after** him. John, as the **voice crying** in the wilderness, **boldly witnessed concerning** the Son of God, exhorting all to prepare to **receive** the coming One, the Lamb of God, the Messiah. We note the **different** titles mentioned in this **chapter**: the **Word**, the only Begotten Son, the **Lamb of God**, the **Messiah** (or **Christ**), **Rabbi** (Master), the **Son of God**.

*Fred Harvey*

**From Melbourne, Australia.** —The Gospel by John **brings out** the truth of salvation more intensely than any other Gospel.

The word "believe" **occurs 99 times** in John, **33** in all other Gospels. "Life" occurs **36 times** in John, 17 in all others; "love" John **uses 50** times, others **33**; "send", "**the Sent One**", **33 times** in John; "witness", **47 times** in John, **six times** in others; "world", **79 times** in John, 15 in others. Many other words **are used** more freely in this Gospel. All the vital elements of the gospel, such as faith and the **new** birth, are brought **out** early in John's writings. The Lord **Jesus** says of John the Baptist in Luke 7. 28, there is **none greater** born of women. **He** is seen as a **man sent** from God who **had spent** some years in **desert** places, and now **emerges** as a witness of the **true** Light.

His work was to **be** the forerunner; his mature understanding of **this** is evident in the words, "**He must increase, but I must decrease**". John was the **first** gospel preacher of the New **Testament**, for **it** was **he** who exclaimed, "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the **sin** of the world". It **seems** that John was **the first** prophet **since** the **days** of Malachi, and his **ministry** had a stirring **effect** on the people. We would do well to **remember** his ministry and **never** compromise, **ever** holding and **teaching** these **precious** truths. *W. H. F.*

**From Methil.** —It is probable that John had seen the three former Gospels before he wrote his, known to be the last to be written. His nearness to the Lord, "The disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 13. 23), is reflected in the intimate way in which he presents Christ in his Gospel not only as a Messenger of God but as the Messiah, the Son of God (John 20. 31).

John the Baptist acknowledged the Deity of Christ, "He that cometh after me is become before me: for He was before me" (verse 15). "I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God" (verses 33, 34). He was quick to recognize the Person and work of Christ, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" and to let this be known to his own disciples (verses 29, 36). Their following Jesus was not out of curiosity, but with a genuine desire to know more about Him; such is true discipleship.

*David B. Reid*

**From Glasgow (Govan and Partick).** —The Lord Jesus is always shining in the darkness, whether men allow Him to illumine their hearts or not. If the men amongst whom He moved in Israel had accepted His claims and believed, they would have received the right to become children of God. But they loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil, and so they were judged already (John 3. 19-21). Although the Lord was fully aware that His own people would reject Him, He nevertheless came.

The witness of John was true, not only because he spoke the truth which was entrusted to him, but also because the Lord Jesus was the complete fulfilment of all that was written in the Scriptures and that John said of **Him** (John 10. 40-42).

*Martin Archibald*

**From Hamilton.** —The theme of the Gospel by John is the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 20. 31), and the apostle loses no time in introducing us, in the simplest of language, to this most profound of all truths.

John the Baptist identified himself as the witness of Isaiah 40. 3, and his message was clear, "Make straight the way of the Lord". John was in no doubt that He who was to come was the Lord, "The latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose" (verses 26, 27). To him had been given the revelation that He upon whom the Spirit would descend and abide is the Messiah, and it was with self-effacing joy that John testified of this, saying, "And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God" (verse 34).

The witness of the Baptist concerning Jesus resulted in two of his own disciples following the Lord. One of these was Andrew, whose testimony to his brother Peter was, "We have found the Messiah". The questioning Nathanael, to whom the Lord gave evidence of His knowledge of him when he was under the fig tree, had all his misgivings removed.

*R. L.*

**From** Toronto. —The main purpose of John the Baptist's life and work was to bear witness to the Light which was to come into the world, which would lighten every man (verses 8-9). The promised sign to John was, "Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending... this is the Son of God". We see from Matthew 3 that the Spirit descended upon the Lord at His baptism. Therefore, the events of John 1. 29-34 took place after the Lord had been baptized, and thus although John the Baptist earlier said, "I knew Him not" (as Son of God), now he says, "I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God" (verse 34).

In verses 21 and 25 John the Baptist is compared with Elijah, because he came in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1. 17). See also Matthew 11. 14 and Mark 9. 11-13. *L. Gillespie*

### COMMENTS

[1] (London, S. E. ). —It seems evident that our friends have been reading the A. V. in 1 John 5. 7, or a concordance, in making seven citations of the Lord as the Word. See the correct rendering of this verse in R. V. *J. M.*

[2] (Birkenhead). —This is a statement of the followers of (Pastor) Russell, who did not know the Greek alphabet, as came out at a trial. A recent translator of the New Testament in a footnote on John 1. 1 says, "But note that the subject has the article and the predicate has it not; hence translate—'the Word was God'." God is one Being in three blessed Persons. *J. M.*

[3] (Birkenhead). —There is little doubt that the punctuation of the R. V. is correct, that there should be a comma after "man" in John 1. 9. It is the true Light that was coming into the world, not every man coming into the world. It is like the sunrise, the purpose of whose light is to lighten every man that is already in the world which has been in darkness. Nestle's Greek text puts a comma after "true" and after "man". This Dr. Marshall follows in his translation. It is also the punctuation of Mr. Darby, and there is no doubt that Mr. Darby's arrangement of words rejects the idea of it being men coming into the world, that is my view in this verse. His words are, "The true light was that which, coming into the world, lightens every man". *J. M.*

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Questions **from** Kilmarnock. —1. When will John 1. 51 have fulfilment?  
2. **Is** the promise only to Nathanael?

Question **from** Derby. —Please explain John 1. 51.

Answers. — 1. Re questions on John 1. 51. This is a dispensation of faith, but at the beginning and afterwards in the Millennium, there will be things to be seen, so I judge this verse has to do with the Millennium. 2. The promise of John 1. 51 is plural. "I say unto you (plural), Ye shall see the heaven opened". This use of the plural is in contrast to the singular in His words to Nathanael, "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee underneath the fig tree, believest thou?" The plural applies to us as well as Nathanael. *J. M.*

**Questions from Birmingham.** — 1. Is there anything in Scripture, particularly the Old Testament writings, which would reveal in what way and for what reason the Pharisees expected the Christ to baptize (verse 25)?

Answer. —The waters of the Flood of Noah and those of the Red sea quite evidently had a place among the Jews; this we would gather from the words of Paul and Peter, in 1 Corinthians 10. 1, 2, and 1 Peter 3. 20, 21. Both forms of ending a past life and beginning a new one were in view both in the what would result in the coming of Elijah and of Christ. *J. M.*

2. In which way were those who received Him given the right to become children of God (verse 12)?

Answer. —Men cannot change their names in organized life in realms these days. They must receive the authority of the government so to do. And when it is that men receive titles, from "Sir" and upwards, these come from the Queen. So no one has the authority to be a child of God unless such has been born of God. *J. M.*

**Question from Denmark Hill.** —He was "the true Light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world". Does the phrase "every man" imply that the light of Christ referred to in this passage is wider than salvation from the penalty of sin. Does it in fact refer to so much that every man receives via Christ as Creator and Sustainer?

Answer. —No! No one is enlightened save those that have believed. The purpose of Christ coming into the world was to enlighten every man. The Lord is the Saviour of the world, but all humans in the world are not saved. See what is said in Titus 2. 11 about salvation. The Lord is the Light of the world, but all in the world are not in the light. *J. M.*

**Question from Atherton.** —In the mind of the Jews would the title of Messiah include the thought of His Lordship?

Answer. —The mind of the Jews today is precisely the same as in the time of the Lord, that the Messiah is the Son of David. (Matthew 22. 41-45). Not until the veil of unbelief is removed from their eyes will they see and believe that the Son of David is the Son of God (Romans 1. 1-4; 2 Corinthians 3. 12-14). *J. M.*

**Question from Derby.** —Who is "the Prophet" mentioned in John 1. 21, 25?

Answer. —The prophet is the Lord Jesus, the One who was promised in Deuteronomy 18. 15-18 (Acts 3. 22-26). *J. M.*

## PSALM 45

*(continued)*

Here, as in Psalm **110**. 1, we have one of the Persons of the Godhead saying to another Person of the Godhead that He was to sit on His right hand. Christ's throne, as God is, is for ever and ever. His is an everlasting kingship, and besides, He has a kingdom given to Him by the Father, and *He* must reign till He has put all His enemies under His feet (1 Corinthians 15. 24-26). This verse (6) should be read as in the text of the A. V. and R. V., both in this psalm and as quoted in Hebrews 1. 8, and not according to the marginal reading of the psalm, "Thy throne is the throne of God". The words "the throne of" in the R. V. M. are not in the Hebrew. Dr. Marshall says in his Greek-English interlinear N. T. of "O God" in Hebrews 1, 8, that it is "an articular vocative". As is His throne, which is founded upon righteousness and judgement (Psalm 89. 14; 97. 2), even so is His sceptre; it is a sceptre of equity or uprightness. Christ loved righteousness, as is seen in all His words and acts while on earth, and He hated lawlessness, therefore God (and here we have the articular vocative again), "Thy God", anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows. These fellows were Peter, John, James and Andrew, and all the apostles, and the saints. This word fellows does not mean His Fellows in the Godhead, as referred to in Zechariah 13. 7, where the LORD of Hosts speaks of His Shepherd being the Man who is His Fellow. The word "Fellows" in Hebrews 1. 9 is "partakers", as in Hebrews 3. 1, where we read, "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling". It is again used in verse 14, "For we are become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end". "Fellows" are not equivalent to persons who are simply born again, for there is no such thing in Scripture, that we are children of God if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end. Fellows make a fellowship, and partakers a partnership, and such as have obeyed God's call out to Christ the rejected One, are found in the Fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Corinthians 1. 9: see also Acts 2. 42).

"All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia;  
Out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made Thee glad"  
(verse 8).

Here we have the writer using pictorial language of the grandeur of some of earth's potentates to give to the readers some apprehension of the glory of King Messiah, and what is mentioned delights the sight, the sight, and the hearing, as this King will be delighted when He comes again. His garments are loaded with sweet odours; His palaces are of ivory, and His music is of the sweetness of stringed instruments. God has to use earthly similitudes to teach men holy and spiritual lessons, and give to them some idea of that which is divine by the material imagery He uses.

"Kings\* daughters are among Thy honourable women:  
At Thy right hand doth stand the queen in gold of Ophir"  
(verse 9).

Here again we have material **imagery**, that at the court of **King Messiah** will be the most honourable of womankind to attend to the **requirements** of the **queen**. She is said to stand at the **King's** right hand in gold of Ophir. Gold here is from the **Hebrew** word **KETHEM**, **pure** gold, whereas in **verse 13** it is wrought gold (**ZAHAB**, from its shining). The **queen** is arrayed in gold which no doubt is the similitude of glory; divine glory was symbolized in the use of gold in the tabernacle and temple in the Old Testament. The question arises as we meditate on this **verse**, Who is the **queen**? The queen, I judge, is composed of the saints of this dispensation of **grace** who are married to the Lamb before the dispensation of the fulness of the **times**, the Millennium (Ephesians 1. 10; **5. 25-28**; **Revelation 19. 7, 8**; **21. 8**, 10).

"Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline **thine** ear;  
Forget also **thine** own people, and thy father's house;  
So shall the **King** desire thy **beauty**:  
For He is thy Lord; and worship thou **Him**" (**verses 10, 11**).

Here is an allusion, it seems to me, to the **saints** of this dispensation. "There can be neither **Jew** nor **Greek**, there can be neither bond nor **free**, there can be no male and female: for **ye** are all one **man** in Christ **Jesus**" (Galatians 3. 28). "For in one **Spirit** were we all baptized into one Body, whether Jews or **Greeks**, whether bond or **free**; and were all made to drink of one **Spirit**" (1 Corinthians 12. 13). "Where there cannot be **Greek** and **Jew**, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman: but Christ is all, and in all" (Colossians 3. 11). What is true of this dispensation, that **racial distinctions** are entirely removed, as well as other distinctions, will not be so with the Jewish people or the tribes of Israel as a whole. In the Millennium each tribe will be distinct (see Ezekiel 48. 1-7, 23-29), and in the eternal state the redeemed of Israel will be seen in their tribes in the twelve gates of the city which is the Bride and Wife of the Lamb. But the redeemed of this dispensation will be as now, all racial, social, **religious** and like **distinctions** will be gone. The saved of Israel in the Church which is Christ's Body, the Bride and **Wife** of the Lamb, will forget their own people, and their father's house as will all of the Gentiles, so shall the **King** desire the **queen's** beauty, which will fill **His** heart with **great** delight. "**Desire**" in **verse 11** is rendered in the A. V. by "greatly desire", it is the **Hebrew** word **AV AH**, "to desire for one's self". He is her Lord and she is to worship **Him**.

*(To be continued D. V. )*

Issued by the Churches of God

Obtainable from Needed Truth Publishing Office,  
Assembly Hall, George Lane, Hayes, Bromley, Kent.

Also from: —Mr. J. Ramage, 44 Tweedsmuir Avenue, Dundas, Ontario, Canada.

Printed by Barretts of Brighton. 42 The Lanes, Brighton  
incorporating W. J. Starkey Ltd. Est. 1877

# BIBLE STUDIES

"Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17. 11).

VOLUME 35

FEBRUARY, 1967

## EDITORIAL

The simple record of the marriage feast at Cana of Galilee gives rise to distinct differences of opinion and interpretation, which are not easily resolved. These have come to the fore once again in the papers submitted to us. We hope the contributions to this issue of *Bible Studies* will prove helpful.

The rendering of John 2. 3 calls for comment. The R. V. reads, "when the wine failed", and the A. V. is "when they wanted wine" (wanted in the sense of lacked). The word in the Greek is a part of *hustereo*, for which Liddell and Scott **give** "to be behind, come later; to come after;... to be in want of", and in Bagster's Analytical Greek Lexicon we find, among other renderings, "to be behind in place or time, to be in the rear; to fall short of;... to be in default; to run short". Further, the interlinear translation in the Englishman's Greek New Testament is "being deficient of wine", while Dr. Marshall's literal translation in the Nestle text is "lacking wine". The over-all weight of these considerations is that the wine failed because the supply was inadequate. This is to some extent supported by the remark made by the ruler of the feast, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now", a remark made in ignorance of the true facts and implying that the good wine was part of the original provision. Man ever falls short in provision, and so is likely to err in provision. Man's needs, temporal and spiritual, are provided for by God, man's Maker, who provides in abundance, but man is prone to fail to recognize the Giver and to misuse the gifts. "Every good gift and every perfect boon is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (James 1. 17). This applies to the meeting of man's needs, both temporal and spiritual: we are entirely dependent upon God.

We note that Cana of Galilee is mentioned another twice in John's Gospel. In Chapter 4 it is again associated with Capernaum, when the Lord exercised His power to heal the sick. Again, the resurrected Lord manifested Himself to certain of His disciples, among whom was "Nathanael of Cana in Galilee". The name "Cana" is reminiscent of the Old Testament name "Kamah", which, according to Strong's Concordance, is related to the Hebrew *qamah*, to erect, to create. Is there an implied significance in the name of the place where the Lord first manifested His power over created things?

***"Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable.***

***One generation shall laud Thy work to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts"*** (Psalm 145. 3, 4). **J. B.**

## THE GOSPEL AND ITS MINISTRY

## The Gospel according to John

## Chapter 2

**From Hamilton.** —The miracle which the Lord Jesus performed at the wedding feast at Cana of Galilee was for the primary purpose of strengthening the faith of the disciples (verse 11). It is significant that such a sign as this should be shown to a small minority of those who were present, namely the disciples and the servants [1]. Human minds would surely have introduced the ministry of Christ in a more public manner, but this was to be characteristic of His sojourn on earth. Isaiah had prophesied concerning Him, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street" (Isaiah 42. 2).

The waterpots which the servants were asked to fill with water had been used for the purpose of purifying those who were present at the feast as was the Jewish custom [2]. Defilement was something of which the Jewish people were very conscious. This is evident from the early verses of Mark 7. Isaiah said, "This people... with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart far from Me" (Isaiah 29. 13).

It is significant that He who was in their presence was none other than the One who had come from heaven "that a righteousness apart from the law might be made manifest". The law was weak through the flesh and because of this was unable to meet the requirements of sinful men.

The statement of the ruler of the feast, although prompted by a natural appreciation of the good wine which Christ had provided, nevertheless speaks to us of the divine purposes of God in salvation, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now", and in these words there is found an echo of Hebrews 9. 26, "But now once at the end of the ages hath He been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

*Allan R. Fotheringham*

**From Derby.** —The Lord Jesus said, "Mine hour is not yet come" (John 2. 4), but shortly afterwards performed this first miracle. Only those who were close to the Lord knew of the miracle. Most of the wedding guests would not suspect it had taken place [3].

It must have grieved the Lord Jesus as He entered His Father's house to find it desecrated by men seeking their own gain. We note that He made a scourge and drove them out of the Temple [26]. This does not seem like a manifestation of His meekness, but it showed His love for His Father's house.

From John 2. 19 we see the Lord's dedication to His mission, to die and be raised again to bring salvation to all men. He needed no one to tell Him what was in man, for as the Creator He knew all men, and He knew what men would do to Him [4].

*A. K. Smith, G. W. Conway*

## EXTRACTS

**From Methil.** —Among the guests at the marriage feast were the Lord and His disciples. Calamity befell the wedding feast when the wine failed. The mother of Jesus confided in Him. Did she sense His power to help? Earlier, had she not kept all His sayings in her heart? (Luke 2. 51). She was indeed a wise woman (verse 5). In using the word "woman" the Lord showed no mark of disrespect. Scripture

would lead us to believe that it was an everyday expression. It was a word widely used (John 4. 7; Luke 15. 8; John 20. 13-15).

This chapter records the first cleansing of the Temple, which later had to be repeated (Luke 19. 45, 46). There was nothing sinful in men selling animals for sacrifice as occasion demanded (Deuteronomy 14. 23-26); the sin was in the using of the Temple precincts for merchandising. The Lord displayed righteous anger (see also Ephesians 4. 26). This place was still His Father's house. It was not yet desolate (Matthew 23. 38). His remarks should have been a pointer to Israel as to His divine character and His actions a mark of His zeal for God's house. The people were far away in spirit. They understood not His answer (verse 20); later, at His trial (Matthew 26. 61) and at the Cross (Mark 15. 29), they were to misquote His words

*Iain T. H. Hunter*

**From Glasgow (Govan and Partick).** —'The third' in Scripture is often associated with manifestation. It was so in the case of the changing of the water into wine by the Lord on His third day of public ministry, when He manifested His glory to the guests. At this manifestation of His glory He met the need of men; He met man's greatest need at His greatest manifestation of power and glory in His death and resurrection.

The bringing about of the manifestation of His glory required obedience on the part of the servants; surely a lesson for us today as to how to bring glory to God in obedient service. Those who walk closely to the Master will learn of Him, as the disciples did on that day. Their believing (verse 11) was not the believing unto salvation, but a step towards a knowledge of "the mystery of God, even Christ" (Colossians 2. 2, 3). The Lord's first public visit to Jerusalem was to be like His last. The disciples were now to see from the One who manifested the glory of God how much service to God mattered to Him. The Temple of God was being allowed to be put to a wrong use, but this was not condoned by the Son over God's house. It was noted, by comparison with the other Gospels, that the scourge was used by the Lord only on the animals [24].

*E. McKee*

**From Carlisle.** —The incident in the Temple stands out in contrast to the events at the wedding. As the Lord beheld the Temple crowded with merchants and animals His righteous anger was aroused. It seems evident that the religious rulers had little concern for God's house. As they watched, the disciples recalled the scripture, "The zeal of Thine house shall eat Me up". We wondered why the phrase "zeal of Thine house" was used and not "for Thine house", as we might expect [5].

The Lord's action in the Temple resulted in the Jews demanding a sign. They expected the Lord would give them proof of His authority, but were little prepared for His answer. The Lord uses the word "Temple" here as a figure of His body. Previously the word would only be used to refer to God's house or sanctuary, but the Lord was introducing a new thought. The apostle Paul takes this up in 1 Corinthians 6. 19, showing that the believer's body is a temple of the Holy Spirit [6].

Twice in this chapter the word "believe" is used in connexion with the disciples. As the disciples were already believers in the sense of John 1. 12, these occurrences suggest that the disciples had a fresh vision which strengthened their faith.

**From Whitehills & Macduff.** —It was thought by some that perhaps Mary had an insight into the events that were to happen that day [7], when she said to the servants, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it" (verse 5). In the previous verse it would appear that her Son rebuked her gently [8] by saying, "Mine hour is not yet come", and then in His own time He gave the servants instructions as to the filling of the waterpots.

In the changing of water into wine we see His creative power. It was not simply a case of adding some ingredient to the water. The making of wine is a specialized process which requires grapes and a lengthy time for fermentation. We see from this His first sign that the Lord was able to meet the need, whatever it was, of all who sought Him. It is also interesting to note that He supplied wine, and the ruler bore witness that it was the best wine, signifying that the Lord can not only meet our need, but meet it fully. We wondered whether His distrust of those who lived in Jerusalem was the reason for the Lord lodging so often in Bethany [9].

*J. M. W.*

**From Birmingham.** —Among the finest words ever spoken by a woman are the words of Mary, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it". Thus we see the servants doing a seemingly strange thing in filling the waterpots, not with wine, but with water, and bearing them away [10] to the ruler of the feast. Both Mary and the servants manifested faith.

The words of the Lord Jesus, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come", point forward to His coming cross-work, with its resultant blessing to all who believe (John 7. 30, 13. 1) [11]. His mode of address, "Woman", bespoke His Lordship. He used the same word when, upon the Cross, He provided for Mary in committing her to the care of John. "What have I to do with thee?" may seem hard to our ears, but the Lord Jesus was referring to a higher purpose [12].

*H. S.*

**From Denmark Hill, London.** —By His action against the merchants in the Temple the Lord revealed to the nation His authority. Others no doubt were perplexed and sad at the abuses of the Temple, but the Lord by His action was in effect challenging the misrule of the leaders. They recognized this and asked for a sign. The Lord at the end of His life took similar action (Matthew 21. 12), showing they had not learned the lesson. The disciples saw in this action a fulfilment of prophecy, thus showing the true spirit of those willing to be guided by God's word.

The Jews asked for a "sign" as to His authority for doing "these things". The Lord gave an answer which is plain to all His disciples today, and which His disciples of that time understood later when the Lord had risen from the dead. "Without a parable spake He not unto them", and this was a "dark saying" which was meaningless unless the light of faith as to His Person illuminated those who heard that day.

*R. F. Robertson*

**From Paisley.** —In the first recorded miracle at Cana [13], the Lord is shown to be the omnipotent Creator. It was as nothing to the Author of all things to convert water into wine. Human ability and effort always fall short and reach their end as did the provision of the wine. Yet there is One who can meet all human need even as He did at Cana. Abundant wine was produced in an instant. *Ian Penn*

**From Glasgow, Parkhead.** —Cana of Galilee, the city from which Nathanael came, though small, has an honoured place in the gospel record of Christ's life and ministry, being the scene of the first miracle performed by the Lord. His mother did not realize the change that had taken place through His entry on His work as Jehovah's Servant. Her word to Him, "They have no wine", brought from Him the mild rebuke [14], "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come". Yet, the wise counsel in her words to the servants, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it", remains as a fitting exhortation to every disciple. This called for obedience on the part of the servants, and they had the happy experience of being the bearers of wine of such quality that the ruler questioned why the good wine had been kept to the last. The amount available would no doubt also be a cause for wonder. Various equivalents have been put forward for the firkin, each of which suggests abundance. This was a feature of all the Lord's giving, and still is. *R. Shaw*

**From Kilmarnock.** —The action of the Lord in going into the Temple suggests that although the Jews were far from God spiritually, yet God in His forbearance still recognized the Temple as His house. The manner of the Lord overthrowing the money changers' tables suggests not anger but rather the indignation of the Lord that men should desecrate the Temple. This incident brings to remembrance the zeal of Jesus when, at twelve years of age, His parents found Him in the Temple and He said, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" (R. V. M.).

The question is asked as to whether at this early stage of the Lord's ministry, the disciples would know the prophetic words, "The zeal of Thine house shall eat Me up", or is this an interjection into the narrative similar to verse 22? [15].

Why, we may ask, should the Lord use the words recorded in verse 19 to men who did not believe? Was it in anticipation of the time of the Lord's arrest when witnesses were required by Caiaphas the high priest? [16]. *J. M. Rankine*

**From Barry.** —Some queried the time of the commencement of the Lord's public ministry, whether it was the changing of water into wine or the subsequent action at Jerusalem [17].

The great attachement of the Lord Jesus to God's house is seen in His righteous anger at the avarice of the priests and temple authorities [18]. There could be no mistaking that He spoke and acted with complete authority, even as had the ancient prophets of God. Though the Jews afterwards asked for a sign none tried to stop Him taking action against the wrongdoers in the Temple. *B. V. F.*

**From Southport.** —Whilst in Jerusalem the Lord found in the Temple the sellers of oxen, sheep and doves and the moneychangers. The men of Israel were not sinning if they bought the sheep and oxen, provided they had come a distance, for provision was made for this in the law (Deuteronomy 14. 23-26), but the sin was in buying and selling in the Temple. It is sad that it was necessary for the Lord to take this action, but even sadder that it was necessary for Him to repeat it at the close of His public ministry. The statement of the Lord that He would destroy the Temple and raise it up in three days was judged to be of importance by the Jews as they quoted it (or rather, misquoted it) at His trial.

*W. S. Holden*

From Birkenhead. —There seems to be insufficient evidence to conclude that the marriage was on the third consecutive day calculating from the record of John 1 [19]. This is one of many incidents which demonstrate that the Lord Jesus was not a recluse but mingled freely with folk from all walks of life, conducting Himself perfectly.

The form of address, "Woman", in the context of life today seems harsh, but it needs to be remembered that Jesus as Son of Man had no father and as Son of God, no mother, and so for Him it was correct. See John 19. 26 [20].

The eastern wedding feast was lengthy, and so a miscalculation of the wine consumption might easily occur. The large quantity of water (over 100 gallons) [25] was changed to top quality wine by a word. The Creator was able to accelerate the laws of nature to produce instantly what would naturally take years to achieve [21]. The Lord's corrective action in the Temple was followed by a discussion with the Jews about the literal Temple and its precincts (*Hieron*) and the inner sanctuary (*naos*). The Lord used the latter word when referring to His body but the Jews misconstrued His meaning. It was noted that there are allusions to the death of Christ in all the early chapters of this Gospel.

*R. D. Williams*

**From Toronto.** —There is a comparison made between Moses and the Lord, in that God gave Moses signs (both to His people and to the Egyptians), and we read in verse 11 that this was the beginning of signs which Jesus did that men should believe on Him.

*L. Gillespie*

From Vancouver. —The zeal of the Lord Jesus for His Father's house is revealed by His purging of the Temple along with the indication to the Jews of His resurrection. Also shown by this incident is man's lack of comprehension of God's ways. Too often men make Christ's words a stumbling block for unbelief rather than a revelation of truth. The gospel fulfils prophecy, as indicated by the disciples recalling Psalm 69. 9.

An interesting point arises in verse 25. The Lord "knew what was in man". He knew man's sinful nature, and it was for this reason that He had come to earth. But also by this time He had undergone His temptation. So He did not need anyone to tell Him about man's character [22].

*J.*

*Bell,*

*J.*

*Pope*

**From Liverpool.** —In cleansing the Temple the Lord drove out the animals, poured out the changers' money, and said to them that sold

the doves, "**Take** these things **hence**; **make** not **My** Father's house a house of merchandise". **He did** not **use** the scourge on the **men**: **He** spoke with divine authority to them. **As** His disciples witnessed these things they were **caused** to **remember** that it was written, "The zeal of Thine house shall **eat Me** up".

The Jews questioned His authority for what he had done and asked for a **sign**, but misconstrued His parabolic reply. He spoke **frequently** in this veiled way to the Jews, and **even** His **disciples** wondered, **but remembered, after His** resurrection, what He had said and believed the scripture. Was this Psalm **16. 10?** [23].

*F. L. Jones, F. Frith, A. H.*

### COMMENTS

[1] (Hamilton). —It is too much to **assume** that only **some of** those **present at** the marriage **feast** were aware that a miracle had **taken** place. What **verse 9** says is that, when the ruler of the **feast** tasted the wine, he did **not** know its origin, **but** the **servants** that drew the water did. The disciples, who were **guests**, were aware of the miracle (**verse 11**), so **it appears** highly improbable that anyone, **even** the ruler of the **feast**, could long have **remained in** ignorance of what had **taken** place.

*L. B.*

[2] (Hamilton). —This would **mean** that the Lord used soiled **water** for the miracle. To the **writer** of this note, **it is by** no **means** certain that this **is** so, or **even** that the **water** was solely **for** the washing of hands. These waterpots were **very** large **and** heavy, too large to lift, and **were** for storing water. (Evidently the reckoning of the amount of **water required** was sounder than the reckoning of the amount of wine). In the normal course of **events** the **servants** would have drawn water from these stone waterpots **as** required. **After** obeying the Lord **Jesus** **and** filling them to the **brim** with **water**, they drew out and found the **water** had become wine.

*J. B.*

[3] (Derby). —We **suggest** that this **statement reads** too much into John 2. The ruler of the **feast** would **be** the first to **taste** the wine; thereafter the **guests** would have **some of it**, and the **sign** would **become** known. See Comment [1].

*J. B.*

[4] (Derby). —See Comment [20], **Surely** the Lord knows what is **in man** because He is **very** God.

*J. B.*

[5] (Carlisle). —The R. V. **text** is strictly according to the Greek. This zeal **is** associated **with** what the house of God **is**.

*J. B.*

Prof. Lasker **in** his Tyndale Commentary on John **says**, "Here the genitive **is** objective and the translation should **be**, Zeal for Thine house". Vine **makes** a similar comment in his Expository Dictionary.

*L. B.*

[6] (**Carlisle**). —In 1 Corinthians 6. 19 "temple" (*naos*) is without the article. It is generally held that a preferable rendering would be "your body is temple of the Holy Spirit", thus setting forth the character, temple-character, of the redeemed bodies of saints. *J. B.*

[7] (**Whitehills**). —There is nothing in Scripture to justify us in saying that Mary had foreknowledge of what was to come. She did have some knowledge of her Son (Luke 2. 19), and so she said, "Whatsoever **He** saith unto you, do it". *J. B.*

[8] (**Whitehills**). —Did the Lord really rebuke His mother? "Woman" (*gune*) in the Greek gathers its significance from its context, and should always be so read. The word is here uttered by the Lord Jesus as a mode of addressing His mother, and we may be sure that no mother ever had such a loving Son; so there would be no harshness in the word as used here. In John 2 "woman" is in the vocative case (*gunai*), and of this Liddell and Scott say, "a term of respect", and Bagster's Greek Lexicon says, "in the vocative... an ordinary mode of addressing females under every circumstance".

The Englishman's Greek New Testament and the Nestle text agree in the Greek and also in their interlinear translation: "What to Me and to thee, woman? Not yet is come the hour of Me". The text of the R. V. and of the A. V. are to some extent determined by the history of the translations of the Scriptures into English and by the terms of reference under which the translators worked. The literal translation indicates that the Lord was really asking His mother what there was in this circumstance for Him and for her. She was to learn that He was about to begin His ministry. This is strictly in line with what quite several of our contributors say about the incident, and does not provide grounds for charging the Lord with harshness in addressing the mother **He** loved. *J. B.*

[9] (**Whitehills**). —It is vain to speculate on this. We do know that the Lord Jesus ever went where He was led of the Spirit, and that this was ever to places where there was work for Him to do. See John 4. 4. *J. B.*

[10] (**Birmingham**). —The waterpots of stone were much too large and heavy for this. The Lord Jesus said, "Draw out now, and bear..." (verse 8). *J. B.*

[11] (**Birmingham**). —No. This was the hour of the start of His public ministry. *J. M.*

The meaning of "Mine hour" in John's Gospel depends on the context. We suggest that here it refers to the manifesting of His glory (verse 11), which was future to His reply to His mother. In John 7. 8 the Lord says, "My time is not yet fulfilled", as a reason for His not going up immediately to Jerusalem to the feast: yet very soon afterwards He went up (7. 10). In John 12. 23, 17. 1 we have instances of the use of the phrase which do not refer to His death. *Jas. M.*

[12] (**Birmingham**). —See Comment [8]. *J. B.*

[13] (**Paisley**). —The turning of the water into wine is not merely the first *recorded* miracle; it is actually the first. John 2. 11 says so,

and that is final. The term "this beginning of His signs" rules out the possibility that the Boy Jesus wrought miracles. *J. B.*

[14] (Parkhead). —See Comment [8]. *J. B.*

[15] (Kilmarnock). —I should reckon that the disciples remembered on that very day. This puts them in bold contrast with the Jews who sought a sign. Faith needs no sign when it rests on revealed Scripture. *J. B.*

[16] (Kilmarnock). —On several occasions the Lord Jesus spoke of the manner of His death and also of His resurrection. In the merciful governance of God the full truth did not dawn upon the disciples. They became enlightened in the course of events. The Jews, by contrast, were blind in their unbelief. Those that hated the Lord without a cause made a wrong use of the Lord's own words, and so wrested judgement. *J. B.*

[17] (Barry). There is a direct definition in the words "Mine hour". His public ministry was to commence at Jerusalem and that ministry was connected with "powers", which John calls "signs". *J. M.*

[18] (Barry). — Does the narrative in John 2 justify the word "avarice" (or "profiteer", which certain others used)? Also, were the "priests and temple authorities" those that sold? *J. B.*

[19] (Birkenhead). —John 2. 1 says it was the third day, and however we reckon the days we must not be in breach of this definite statement in John's chronology. It would appear that the temptation of the Lord took place immediately after He left the Jordan (Matthew 4. 1; Mark 1. 12; Luke 4. 1), and so the reckoning of the days must take account of this. *J. B.*

References to "the morrow" in John 1 are verses 29, 35 and 43, where the Greek is *te epaurion*, translated by Dr. Marshall as "on the morrow", meaning "the next day". John 2. 1 is, translated literally, "on the day third a wedding there was . . .", thus measuring from the last date given (1. 43), making a week, the first week. *Jas. M.*

[20] (Birkenhead). —Great care in the choice of words is needed when dealing with the Deity and Manhood of the Lord Jesus. His two natures are inseparable, so that to say "as Son of God" or "as Son of Man" might give the wrong impression or might lead to loose thinking about this sublime mystery. It is admitted that the expressions are frequently heard, but Scripture goes no further than to say, for instance, that He was "of the seed of David according to the flesh". We shall find it a safe practice to restrict ourselves to scriptural terms. *L. B.*

[21] (Birkenhead). —The Lord definitely did not "accelerate the laws of nature", also He did not perform "what would naturally take years to achieve". The Lord changed one substance (water) into another quite different substance (wine) purely by His own divine power, without addition of other constituents and apart from natural processes. *J. B.*

[22] (**Vancouver**). —No, not at all. The Lord did not gather His knowledge of what was in man as a result of the forty days of temptation. See Comment [4]. *J. B.*

[23] (**Liverpool**). —Psalm 16. 10 is given in the references in our Bibles, and it could well be the scripture intended. The remarkable thing is that "the scripture" (verse 22) is in the singular in the Greek. We note that the scripture and the word spoken by the Lord Jesus are in perfect agreement. *J. B.*

[24] (**Govan and Partick**). —From this comparison it would appear that our friends think that the purging of the Temple (John 2) is the same as that recorded by the synoptists (Matthew 21. 12, 13; Mark 11. 15-18; Luke 19. 45-48). According to Mark the purging took place on the day after the triumphal entry of the Lord into Jerusalem. Luke gives no note of time, but links the purging with the entry into Jerusalem. All three synoptists place the purging at the beginning of the passion week. John places his account at the beginning of the Lord's ministry at the first passover. The most satisfactory solution is that the Lord cleansed the Temple on two occasions, one in the first week of His ministry and one in the week immediately prior to His death. The mention of the "lash out of ropes" (Dr. Marshall) is peculiar to John. We agree that this expression indicates the use of the scourge to drive out the cattle only, the "all" of verse 15 anticipates the sheep and the oxen. *Jas. M.*

[25] (**Birkenhead**). —Another computation is that a firkin is almost equivalent to the Greek measure, *metretes*, which is about 9 gallons. Each waterpot would, then, contain 18 or 27 gallons, and the total contents of the six waterpots would therefore range from 108 to 162 gallons. *Jas. M.*

These initial contents would probably be considerably augmented when the waterpots were filled to the brim. The Lord's bounty is immeasurable. *J. B.*

[26] (**Derby**). —Note the R. V. reading. The Lord did not drive out the men, only the sheep and oxen. Marshall reads as the R. V. *J. M.*

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question **from** Derby. —When did the house of God under the old dispensation cease?

Answer. —If our friends are looking for a sharply defined event, we suggest the rending of the veil when the Lord Jesus died. "Jesus cried again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. And behold, the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom" (Matthew 27. 50, 51; Mark 15. 37, 38). It should be understood, we suggest, that the veil was the way to God (not, as some say, a means of shutting men out from the presence of the LORD). This is ever true of the house of God, from the Tabernacle in the wilderness to the present testimony, for we "enter into the Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by

the way which He dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh" (Hebrews 10. 19, 20). We believe that the veil was rent to show that God was no longer there, and so that way of approach had now been done away. The house of the Old Covenant was then truly left desolate. *J. B.*

**Questions from Methil.** —(1) Where did the Lord commence His public ministry, Nazareth, Cana or Jerusalem? (2) What did the Lord imply by saying, "Mine hour is not yet come", His public ministry or His death?

**Answers**—(1) We must not confuse the beginning of the Lord's signs (at Cana) and the beginning of His ministry. The Lord's ministry (in the complete sense) began at the Jordan when the Spirit descended and abode upon Him (Matthew 3. 16; Mark 1. 10, 11; Luke 3. 21, 22).

(2) Neither His public ministry nor His death. The manner in which the Lord is introduced (verse 2) implies that He had already entered upon His ministry. John uses "hour" in a characteristic way (2. 4; 7. 30; 8. 20; 12. 23; 13. 1; 16. 21; 17. 1) to indicate the high imminence of an event. Most occurrences of the term, we admit, have a close bearing upon His being taken by force and put to death. Nevertheless, in chapter 2 the intention would appear to be that the time had not fully come for Him to manifest His glory (verse 11). *J. B.*

**Question from Toronto.** —Was the Lord in the cleansing of the Temple in any way officiating as "Son over His (God's) house"?

**Answer.** —The Lord's own words are "My Father's house" (verse 16) and the quotation in verse 17, "The zeal of Thine house shall eat Me up" is from a psalm of the Messiah. The Lord's Sonship defines His right as a Son to rule over the house: Moses was a servant in God's house. The fact that there was no resistance to the Lord's action would indicate that those affected could not do other than yield to His authority. *J. B.*

## NOTES ON THE PSALMS

### Psalm 45 (Continued from page 12)

Even the rich among the people shall entreat Thy favour"  
"And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift;

(verse 12).

We have the daughter of Zion (Lamentations 2. 1), the daughter of Judah (verse 2), the daughter of Jerusalem (verse 13), which simply means the people who lived there. Similarly, the daughter of Tyre means the people of Tyre who shall bring their gift to King Messiah. The rich also among the people shall come with their riches to entreat, as the text says, His favour. Favour here is not grace, it is the Hebrew word *PANIM* which means "face". Grace excludes merit in the giving of riches.

"The King's daughter within the palace is all glorious:  
Her clothing is inwrought with gold.

She shall be led unto the King in broidered work:

The virgins her companions that follow her

Shall be brought unto Thee.

With gladness and rejoicing shall they be led:

They shall enter into the King's palace" (verses 13, 14, 15).

The A. V. gives the correct rendering of verse 13. It says, "The King's daughter is all glorious within". It will be seen that "the palace" is in italics in the R. V., showing that there is no equivalent word for "palace" in the Hebrew. The meaning seems to be that she is all glorious within herself, that is, she herself is gloried. She is the King's daughter, that is, in antitypical meaning, the daughter of the Father, who is the eternal King, for to such as have known God's grace, the Lord can say, as He said to Mary Magdalene, "I ascend to My Father and your Father". Over and over again the King in the Song of Songs (chapter 1. 4, 12) speaks of His Bride as His sister—"My sister, My Bride" (4. 9, 10, 12; 5. 1, 2). She is also called, "O Prince's daughter". In these verses in the psalm the King's daughter is led unto King Messiah with clothing inwrought with gold and embroidered work, garments that were embroidered with needlework, as was the screen of the gate and the door of the tabernacle; these were embroidered with blue and purple and scarlet (Exodus 26. 36; 27. 16). In contrast to the work of the embroiderer, the curtains and the veil of the tabernacle were the work of the cunning workman, and the pattern of the cherubim in these was done in the weaving, in blue, purple and scarlet. The queen has her attendants in the virgins her companions, and these shall be led before the King in His palace with joy and rejoicing.

"Instead of Thy fathers shall be Thy children,

Whom Thou shalt make princes in all the earth.

I will make Thy name to be remembered in all generations:

Therefore shall the peoples give Thee thanks for ever and ever"  
(verses 16, 17).

"Thy children": in the antitypical meaning of these words, we are not to conclude that Christ is the father of the children of God. We have in Hebrews 2. 13, a quotation from Isaiah 8. 18, "Behold, I and the children which God hath given Me". We must read this in the light of the Lord's words in John 17. 6, "The men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me". They were God's children who were given by the Father to the Son. Again, He said, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for those Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine" (verse 9). Instead of the fathers of the Messiah, according to the flesh, shall be His children given Him by the Father, these He will make princes in all the earth, when the kingdom shall be that of King Messiah and the saints. "The kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High: His kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him" (Daniel 7. 27). God will make His (Christ's) name to be remembered in all generations, though it is largely forgotten today, and all peoples shall give Him thanks for ever and ever.

*J. M., L. J. M.*

Issued by the Churches of God

Obtainable from Needed Truth Publishing Office,

Assembly Hall, George Lane, Hayes, Bromley, Kent.

Also from:—Mr. J. Ramage, 44 Tweedsmuir Avenue, Dundas, Ontario, Canada.

Printed by Barretts of Brighton, 42 The Lanes, Brighton  
incorporating W. J. Starkey Ltd. Est. 1877

# BIBLE STUDIES

"Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17. 11).

VOLUME 35

MARCH, 1967

## EDITORIAL

In this month's study the Lord is revealing Himself to ever-widening circles.

The first twenty-one verses of John 3 can be divided into three sections: verse 1, the introduction of Nicodemus, verses 2-10, the intimate night dialogue between the Lord and Nicodemus, and verses 11-21 in which the dialogue becomes a discourse by the Lord. Most of our contributors assign *all* of the third section to the words of the Lord Himself although a few are of the opinion that verses 16-21 is a divinely guided account by the apostle John.

Nicodemus's first question (neither recorded nor uttered) would, judged by the Lord's answer, appear to deal with entering the kingdom of God. Some of our contributors suggest that Nicodemus ought, from his knowledge of the Old Testament prophets' writings, to have understood the Lord's reference to being "born anew". The type of answer by the Lord is described by some commentators as a "marsal", meaning a paradoxical saying, or a veiled and pointed remark. The Greek word *anothen* seems to have troubled Nicodemus, with its various connotations. It may mean "from above" (from the top), as it does in John 3. 31, 19. 11, 23. Not only in John's Gospel has it that meaning, but also in Matthew 27. 51 and James 1. 17, 3. 15, 17. A second meaning is "again" or "anew", as in Galatians 4. 9. The third meaning is "from the beginning", as in Luke 1. 3, and Acts 26. 5. Nicodemus took up the second meaning and interpreted it in a literal way. No wonder then that he soon reached the state of mind denoted in his questions, "How can... how can these things be?" (verses 4, 9).

From verse 11 the plurals "ye and you" are introduced, and from this we judge that there may have been others listening to the discourse of the Lord in the most sublime language that has fallen on human ears. What a thrill to be amongst the first to hear that golden text, John 3. 16, from His lips! The price of redemption, by the way of Calvary, was wondrously explained by the Lord in the illustration from the event recorded in Numbers 21. 6-9. We can learn lessons from the illustrations chosen by the Lord from the Scriptures, though, here again, we must not stress typology to extremes.

In verse 11, the Lord places against Nicodemus's "we know", His own "What we know we speak and what we have seen we witness" (literal translation from Marshall's). The use of the same Greek word for "witness" in 1. 7, 8, 34 might guide us to conclude that the plural

"we" used by the Lord includes John the Baptist. One contributor thinks that this "we" refers to the Trinity, whereas another thinks that there is reference to the Holy Spirit (v. v. 5-8); see also answer to question from Melbourne.

The location changed to Judaea and the Lord and His disciples (probably the five mentioned in 1. 35-51) move nearer the area of the Baptist's activities. Here they tarry for some time, certain commentators suggesting from May, just after the first Passover, until December of 27 A. D. Verse 24, although almost an aside, shows that the author is making it plain to those who, even then as he wrote, may have deduced from the earlier Gospel, Matthew, 4. 11, and 12 that John had been cast into prison immediately after the Lord's temptation. There evidently was a considerable period of time during which the Baptist and the Lord were baptizing disciples, the former unto repentance, and the latter as His own disciples, who had believed in Him.

We believe that the passage from verse 27 to verse 36 contains a record of the words of John the Baptist. The apparent perplexity of John's disciples as to the Lord's actions does not move John from his faithfulness to his mission, which he had stated previously and now repeats in verse 28 . . . "I am not the Christ" (1. 8, 20), and "I am sent before Him" (1. 15, 23, 27).

"He *must* increase, but I *must* decrease" should be the very keystone of our preaching. One great preacher has written, "No man can speak well of Christ and at the same time eulogize himself". John looked far ahead when he spoke of the Lord as the heavenly Bridegroom having the Bride, the Church which is His body. Jas. M.

## THE GOSPEL AND ITS MINISTRY

### The Gospel according to John

#### Chapter 3

**From Paisley.** —Nicodemus eventually believed on the Lord and thus stands as an example of the outworking of the theme of this Gospel (see 20. 31). We conclude from this that John's choice of theme was not his own but arose from his accurate describing of that aspect of the Lord's work which was concerned with the granting of eternal life to men. This was the way the Lord went about this work, hence it is also the way John must write.

The Lord's method in conducting this nocturnal interview is an ensample in correctness, wisdom and courtesy. Recognizing the ability and status of the enquirer, the Lord converses on a high plane, employing Hebrew shadow and type as well as parallelisms in speech. At the same time the conversation is such that its principal point can be grasped by the simplest. Thus in teaching the teacher of Israel, the Lord speaks of the water of the word and the Spirit in the new birth Titus 3. 5 and Ephesians 5. 26 explain the cleansing action of the Scriptures. Psalm 119. 9 provides a Hebrew analogue with which Nicodemus would be acquainted. New birth takes place at the moment of reception of the seed of the word by faith (1 Peter 1. 23). The Lord goes on to

tell Nicodemus that this faith must be in Him (verse 16, 1 John 5. 1). The Spirit prepares the receiving ground, moving as mysteriously as the wind (verse 8).

Having thus put Nicodemus right on his first principles the Lord then unfolds His true identity. He declares His omnipresence (verse 13). Then in a manner appropriate to Nicodemus's understanding He explains much as to the basis of the free gift of eternal life in a very few words.

The Lord leaves it to Nicodemus's Hebrew intellect to compare the parallel statement of verse 14. Part of this Hebrew shadow, namely the connexion between serpent, copper and judgement (Gen. 49. 16, 17) suggests that the Lord is here making reference to the fact that He was to bear the judgement of God at Calvary. He is thus able boldly to affirm that such as are deserving of judgement need never so suffer (verse 18).

*Ian Penn*

**From Glasgow, Govan and Partick.** —As a Jew, Nicodemus looked for fruitfulness and blessing through the righteousness of the Law. Respecting birth, his confidence was in the promises to the sons of Abraham. He would also be waiting for the time when the kingdom would be restored to Israel. He was concerned at the signs which the Lord Jesus was doing, and came inquiring. But he was perplexed when the principle of the new birth was laid before him. The Law was intended as a tutor to bring men to Christ, containing as it did the promises of the Messiah, the shadows expressed in its rites, and the prophecy concerning the seed of the woman.

The conception which Nicodemus had of the kingdom of God depended upon the restoration of the monarchy and the land for the people. He could not understand that the Saviour sought neither a throne nor a crown. The Lord showed that night to the teacher of Israel that the kingdom of which He spoke was peopled by men of nobler birth than earthly parentage could give, and the favoured place which was occupied by Israel was meantime to be filled by a heavenly people. Nicodemus at this point was baffled as to how that could ever be achieved, and he knew of no birth that could possibly confer a status to excel the favoured place obtained by the sons of Israel through their lineage. The new birth enabled men to see the kingdom, and obedience brought them into the kingdom (Matthew 21. 43).

In John 10. 41 men recalled the work and testimony of John the Baptist: "John indeed did no sign: but all things whatsoever John spake of this Man were true". The Gospel writer John, by the Spirit, draws attention continually to the value and importance of faithful witness. From the men whom John gathered by his testimony the Lord led out a company of obedient ones to form the kingdom, and to these he added others also (John 10. 3, 16).

*Eric Archibald*

**From Vancouver.** —When the gospel is being ministered two people meet. In this chapter Nicodemus, a man from the Pharisees, a lost sinner, meets Christ, the Man from heaven. Nicodemus needed to learn certain facts before he could know salvation. First Nicodemus must apprehend the concept of being born again and that salvation is a spiritual gift not a material one. Nicodemus probably hoped to meet the Lord on equal terms as if he were talking to another Jewish teacher;

but the Lord showed Nicodemus that he needed to be born anew. Being an eminent teacher of the Jews, Nicodemus should have known from the Law his sinful nature.

Nicodemus in his conversation learned two basic truths about the Godhead: that Christ is the Son of God, a truth doubted by Jews then and a stumbling-block to many today, and that the child of God is "born of the Spirit". David said, "Take not Thy Spirit from me", indicating a different relationship between the Holy Spirit and the believer in Old Testament times.

Nicodemus came to Jesus by night perhaps for fear of the Jews. The fear of man's reprisals is one of the foremost hindrances when the gospel is being ministered. The Lord uses "whosoever" and "world" much in His ministry here to emphasize to Nicodemus the all-embracing character of the gospel.

*J.*

*Pope,*

*J. Bell*

### EXTRACTS

**From Methil.** —We considered the fact that Nicodemus chose to come to the Lord by night (verse 2), and we could only conclude that owing to his high position in the sect of the Pharisees he dared not be seen approaching the Lord, lest he lost his position. This we felt was supported by the words in John 12. 42: "Even of the rulers many believed on Him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue". The experience of Nicodemus would clearly indicate that the soul that is seeking salvation can approach God at any time, day or night, without fear of being turned away.

We noted that Nicodemus did become a born again man, for in John 7. 50, 51 we see him correcting his fellow Pharisees who would have taken the Lord, and in John 19 he was one of the secret disciples who came with Joseph of Arimathaea to take the body of the Lord and **prepare** it for burial.

*A. R. Smith*

**From Atherton.** —We may be sure that what John says about the recorded signs which Jesus did (20. 30, 31) applies also to the Lord's recorded conversations with individuals. The primary reason for the inclusion of Nicodemus's story in the Gospel was that readers might reach the same conclusion that Nicodemus reached: "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (20. 31). We list briefly the main features of the story which commend this conclusion to the reader:

(1) The story is about an intelligent observer who belonged to a group highly critical of the Lord. (2) So impressed was Nicodemus with reports about the Lord that he sought a private interview. In case his hopes were unfounded, he approached the Lord privately, by night. (3) Nicodemus actually met the Lord. (4) He was allowed to ask questions, and heard the apparently unprepared replies. (5) He heard the Lord make great claims about Himself, associating Himself with the Old Testament (verse 14), and calling Himself the Son (of God, verse 16). (6) He heard both sides. The Lord had presented His own side; the ablest men of the day, Nicodemus's regular companions, presented the

other. It is impossible to judge exactly when Nicodemus made up his mind, but by the time of John 7. 45-52 he was beginning to see that his clever companions were criticizing the Lord without sincerely hearing Him. (7) Finally, the Lord was crucified.

Nicodemus, resolutely threw aside remaining reservations. His mind was made up. He openly helped his fellow-counsellor to remove the body from the Cross and bury it (John 19. 39-42). *D. S. Jones*

**From Kingston-upon-Thames.** — Nicodemus is mentioned only in John's Gospel, where he is described as a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews. He was a great man, but he must be born again.

Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, why? Perhaps it was because he wanted to see Jesus alone and have a quiet talk. The more likely reason was because he was afraid to let his interests be known to his fellow Pharisees. The Pharisees condemned Jesus for many things. Hence Nicodemus might get into trouble if he were seen in deep discussion with Jesus.

Nicodemus seemed to address Jesus in a reverent and polite way. He said "we" (meaning that other Pharisees believed He was a teacher come from God). Jesus answered with one of the most important statements in Scripture, "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God". As Nicodemus could not understand this, Jesus set forth the only means whereby one can see the kingdom of God: "Ye must be born anew". Lest there should be any misunderstanding as to the origin of the new life the Lord denned the nature of the new birth. It is from above and essentially the Holy Spirit's work: born anew, a completely new start, a new life. If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature.

*P. Bartlett*

**From Hamilton.** — This chapter shows that the grace of the Lord Jesus can reach those whose prejudices are strongest against the gospel.

The Lord Jesus showed that no man's external privileges, religious profession or moral attainments availed anything if his heart and life were not effectually wrought upon by the regenerating work of the Spirit of God. Because we are by nature corrupt and polluted with sin, we must receive a new (divine) nature, the work of God.

The truths Christ taught were infallible; He spoke as commissioned by His Father, leaving the hearer without excuse. Unbelief is the great sin which condemns a man; there can be no cure for those who reject the only remedy. The cause of their condemnation is that light is come into the world, the light of the glorious gospel of Christ. Unless a man is taught of God, he can never understand and embrace the truths of God which must be spiritually discerned.

He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom; He has come from heaven to espouse her to Himself; the heavenly Bridegroom, having loved His people from eternity, draws their hearts to Him in faith and love. John said that his joy was fulfilled to hear that Christ was appearing publicly and multitudes were flocking to embrace the offer of grace.

*Andrew A. Collington*

**From Aberkenfig and Barry.** —Nicodemus was a Pharisee but the gospel which the Lord preached to him was one which struck at the roots of the Pharisees' doctrine. They practised strict adherence to the Law and were confident that they formed the kingdom of God. The Lord Jesus refuted this immediately by His first words, "Except a man be born anew (or from above), he cannot see the kingdom of God". Nicodemus was a man who acknowledged the Lord's divine origin, demonstrated by the works which had been done (probably the signs in Jerusalem, 2\* 23).

We remembered in our study that Nicodemus is seen later in the Gospel; the death of the Lord Jesus did not surprise him. The great teacher of Israel now understood from the Old Testament that the death of the Christ was necessary [1].  
*R. C. J.*

**From Carlisle.** —In His conversation with Nicodemus the Lord covered a wide field of doctrine in few words; the work of the Trinity in the kingdom of God, the new birth before a man can see (or perceive) the kingdom, birth of water and the Spirit before he can enter. We felt that 'born anew' (verse 3) and 'born of water and the Spirit' (verse 5) were fundamentally the same prerequisites (Titus 3. 4, 5) and that the Lord was leading Nicodemus along from the simpler statement to the more complex and far-reaching with regard to entering. The former statement however, seems to establish that new birth does not of itself secure the entering.

It is impossible with certainty to determine how much of verses 16 to 21 was spoken directly by the Lord, but we remembered that part of the work of the Holy Spirit was to bring to the apostles' remembrance all that the Lord said unto them (John 14. 26). Whether direct quotations from the Master's lips or Spirit-given statements at a later date, we have the mind and word of God unmistakably establishing salvation by faith [2].

The immense stature of John the Baptist stands out in the latter part of the chapter. We thought of John taking the place of the Bridegroom's friend and knowing his joy fulfilled, though having no part in the Church, the Bride of the Lamb. What honour and privilege has been conferred on us in this dispensation, though we may be "but little in the kingdom of God" (Luke 7. 28)! *R. H., J. D. T.*

**From Birmingham.** —Was Nicodemus expected to understand about the new birth, since Jesus said to him, "Art thou the teacher of Israel, and Understandest not these things"? It was thought that as the teacher of Israel he was expected to understand, and that the new birth was not a new thing since the Old Testament saints- were born again: "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" [3].

We wondered what the word "water" in verse 5 meant. We had two lines of thought, the one being that it is baptism, for without baptism we cannot enter into the kingdom of God. The other suggestion was that it is "the word" and therefore would read "Born of the word and of the Spirit". We would value help on this matter [4].

We wondered what was the difference between "witness" and "testimony" as given in the subtitles for chapter 1 (The Witness of John

the Baptist) and chapter 3 (The Testimony of John). We thought that witness was "first hand account" and a testimony was the statement of one who testified of another [5].

*D. P. Brown*

**From Glasgow, Parkhead.** —Our appreciation of the chapter is deepened by the fact that the Lord Himself spoke verses 3, 5-18, 10-21 [6]. We accept the Deity of Christ unquestionably; this is the very cornerstone of the foundation of our teaching John 3. 16 is one of the simplest and yet at the same time one of the most profound scriptures in the whole Bible. Christ is the eternal Son of the eternal Father, yet the relationship of Father and Son implies that in the day of eternity there was begetting in the Godhead [7]. He was born of a virgin, conceived by the Holy Spirit. He was Mary's Child and God's Son. The Lord breaks new ground in this verse. John 3 was quite early in the Lord's ministry, probably about the same time, if not before Matthew 10. So about the same time as He was commanding His disciples not to go in any way of the Samaritans, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He was saying to Nicodemus, "For God so loved the world".

*J. Peddle*

**From Whitehills and Macduff.** —John continued with his ministry in the way he was instructed, baptizing and answering questions. The people came to him and said, "He... to whom thou hast borne witness, behold, the same baptizeth". The people seemed to think that Jesus was imitating John, not realizing that John must decrease and Jesus must increase.

The Lord Jesus at the start of His ministry told the people how to be saved. Similarly, John at the conclusion of his ministry told the people what they must do to inherit eternal life. At the close of his service here below the one who made the rough ways smooth and the crooked ways straight was handing over to One who was to carry on the work to the extent that whosoever cometh unto Him He would not cast out.

Doubt was expressed concerning the passage from verse 31 to the end of the chapter as to whether it was the language of John the Baptist or of John the apostle [8].

*W. S. Johnston*

**From Toronto.** —The end of chapter 2 (verses 23, 24, 25) seems to serve as an introduction to chapter 3 by showing that the Lord knows man's need. He not only knows all men, but He knows what is in man. In chapter 3 we see God's provision for man's need. This chapter illustrates the mind of God as expressed in Romans 1. 16, "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek". The Lord Jesus deals with a Pharisee, the teacher of Israel (verse 10), but verse 16 clearly opens out to the whole world, "For God so loved the world".

Is every believer in the kingdom of God? From verse 3 we see that if a man is not born again he in no way can see the kingdom, but in verse 5 we see that in order to enter the kingdom, the first requirement is that a person should be born "of water and the Spirit". Is this the water of the word, or baptism in water? The following scriptures were read: John 13. 10, 15. 3; Titus 3. 5, indicating that the water of the word is meant here.

*L. G.*

**From Derby.** —Nicodemus evidently had some knowledge of the Lord Jesus and had watched His movements closely, for him to say that to perform such works God must be with Him. The Lord's message to Nicodemus was that he must be born again, not naturally but by the Spirit.

The Lord Jesus said, "We speak that we do know" (John 3. 11). Surely the "we" implies that He spoke on behalf of the Trinity. He explained to Nicodemus that the brazen serpent lifted up was a means of salvation in that day, and now He by His death on the Cross would bring eternal life to all those that trust in His finished work.

*A. K. Smith, G. W. Conway*

**From Denmark Hill, London.** —Water and the Spirit together are essential to effect the new birth. The word "water" here is not water from an earthly spring. It is rather the living "water" of the word. The sanctification of the Church the Body is "by the washing of water with the word" (Ephesians 5. 26).

After this solemn discourse the Lord and His disciples came into Judaea to a place some distance away from where John the Baptist was baptizing in Aenon. It seems that John's followers were a little jealous of the fact that Jesus and His disciples were drawing crowds and becoming very popular. The humble John was ready to reaffirm the emphatic statement he made on the very day when he baptized Jesus, "I am not the Christ". He was Christ's friend and greatly rejoiced over the fact that he had both seen and heard the Lord. It was John's labour of love to make the Lord's fame grow, and at the same time he wished that his own honour would pass unnoticed. The Lamb of God from heaven was still "above all" (verse 31), even on earth. John exclaimed in words akin to those already spoken by the Lord to Nicodemus, "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life", adding the warning that anyone disbelieving will **bear** the wrath of God. *Mark McKaig*

**From Melbourne.** —To Nicodemus the Lord Jesus Christ revealed several important points about the gospel and its ministry: His incarnation (verse 13), that the Old Testament types spoke of Him, that the possession of eternal life is through the exercise of faith (verse 15), that salvation is the product of the infinite love of God (verse 16), that the purpose of His mission to earth was to be the Saviour of men (verse 17), that the unbelieving are under the judgement of God (verse 18), and His eternal Sonship (verses 16-18).

John the Baptist testified of the greatness of Christ. He spoke of His descent from above and of His supremacy (verse 31). He marvelled that though the Son of God, who made all things, had come, yet men **in** their blindness of heart received not His testimony. *P. W. A.*

**From Kilmarnock.** —The authoritative teaching and miracles of the Lord Jesus convinced Nicodemus that a personal visit to Him at night was imperative. John the Baptist had taught and baptized many Israelites, yet it would seem that Nicodemus was not one of John's disciples. He had not submitted to the doctrine of God as seen in John's baptism. This is substantiated by the fact that he only recognized

the Lord Jesus as a Teacher. The personal interview changed Nicodemus completely as is evidenced by the two subsequent incidents in his career recorded in John 7 and 19.

The wind was used by the Lord to illustrate the operation of the Holy Spirit. The effects of the wind are seen but not the wind itself, likewise the working of the Spirit. Mention was made of the possibility that John 3. 16-21 was the commentary of John, the writer. We failed to see any break in the discourse which might indicate this. John, the forerunner, was a remarkable character, he was void of jealousy and full of humility. Faithfully and well did he fulfil his mission. *He* described himself as the rejoicing friend of the Bridegroom in John 3. 29. In the prime of life, his work was nearing completion and his influence was on the wane. One greater than himself would become the central Figure, indeed, One above all and greater than all.

*J. C. Watt*

## COMMENTS

[1] (Aberkenfig **and Barry**).—The facts given in Scripture about Nicodemus do not justify the conclusion that he understood more fully than the apostles that their Lord must die. The one motive of love would provide Nicodemus and also Joseph of Arimathaea with ample incentive to do their beautiful work following the crucifixion (1 John 4. 18). *L. B.*

[2] (Carlisle).—Reasons given by some commentators that the Lord's discourse breaks off at the end of verse 15 are: the use of the Johannine phrases "only begotten" and "the light"; there is no further allusion made to Nicodemus; and John's custom of continuing the Lord's discourses with additions of his own. We consider that these reasons cannot settle the question, verse 16 is joined to verse 15 by the conjunction "for" and verse 17 to verse 16, similarly. It seems unlikely that John would give no indication of a change from the Lord's words to his own. We judge that up to verse 21 was spoken by the Lord. *Jas. M.*

[3] (Birmingham).—It seems that the Lord's remark was intended to bring home to Nicodemus his lack of spiritual insight and the bankruptcy of the Pharisees' teaching. A spiritual change akin to the new birth must have taken place in Old Testament saints but this is not openly taught in the Old Testament. Are our friends suggesting that the Lord's statement in John 3. 3 applied to the earthly kingdom described by Moses in Exodus 19. 3-6 as well as to the spiritual kingdom of this dispensation? Undoubtedly the people of Israel were redeemed on the Passover night, but that was no more than a foreshadowing of the new birth just as many other experiences of God's ancient people are typical of the spiritual things of today. *L. B.*

[4] (Birmingham). —Ephesians 5. 25, 26 read in conjunction with Titus 3. 5 makes it clear that it is the word of God that is in view here, not baptism in water. *L. B.*

[5] (Birmingham). —The two words are very similar in meaning but "testimony" is often used in the New Testament to emphasize that the persecutions suffered by disciples become not only a witness to the persecutors but also a judgement upon them (Matthew 10. 18; Luke 21. 13 etc. ). The Greek word so used is *marturion* but the word usually translated "witness" in John (Revised Version) is *marturia* and generally refers to the spoken word. *L. B.*

[6] (Glasgow, Parkhead). —The spoken words of the Lord Jesus recorded in the New Testament, wonderful as they are, should not be more highly prized than the rest of Scripture, which is equally God's word. Many believe that verses 16-21 are the Lord's own words but some commentators think otherwise. This controversy has no bearing upon the spiritual value of verses 16-21. *L. B.*

[7] (Glasgow, Parkhead). —The use of the word "was" suggests a past event in time, but the Sonship of the Lord Jesus is an eternal and divine relationship not subject to the laws of time. The interpretation of the scripture, "This day have I begotten Thee" (Psalm 2. 7; Acts 13. 33; Hebrews 1. 5, 5. 5) must not be restricted to the sphere of human begetting. The day of eternity is an ever-present day, necessitating the use of the present tense in connexion with the begetting of the Son of God. His words to the Jews who questioned His Deity, "Before Abraham was, I Am" (John 8. 58), show that in the God-head time has no place. *L. B.*

[8] (Whitehills and Macduff). —See answer to question (3) from Toronto. *L. B.*

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Questions from Derby.** — (1) John 3. 22, 23 shows that the Lord Jesus and John the Baptist were baptizing at the same time. Was it the baptism of repentance in both cases?

**Answer.** —No! The baptism of repentance was peculiar to John, for it looked forward to the One who was to come (Acts 19. 4). The way Paul dealt with the situation at Ephesus makes it clear that John's baptism was not appropriate for those who believed on the Lord Jesus. The disciples of the Lord baptized those who became His disciples (John 4. 1, 2). Undoubtedly this was believer's baptism, not the baptism of repentance. *L. B.*

(2) Please explain the difference between "seeing the kingdom of God" (verse 3) and "entering the kingdom of God" (verse 5).

**Answer.** —There seems to be a progression of thought in the two verses mentioned. In verse 3 the Lord is introducing Nicodemus to the truth that the new birth is essential before a person can have a vision of the kingdom of God. In verse 5 we have a further view of the new birth, which is by the word and Spirit of God. *L. B.*

**Questions from Toronto.** —(1) What was the significance of the baptism of John 3. 22?

**Answer.** —See answer to question (1) from Derby. *L. B.*

(2) Who is the Bride in John 3. 29?

**Answer.** —The Church, the Body of Christ (Ephesians 5. 22-33, Revelation 21. 9). *L. B.*

(3) Who spoke the words in John 3. 31-36?

**Answer.** —(1) Some regard verses 31-36 as the Evangelist's comment upon the Baptist's speech.

(2) They say that these verses strongly resemble the Evangelist's style and phraseology, although they admit that the substance remains the Baptist's.

(3) Another argument is that verses 34 and 35 are too advanced to be ascribed to the Baptist.

Our observations:

*Re* (1) Again, as with verses 16-21 the Evangelist does not give any intimation that he is taking up the theme after verse 30.

*Re* (2) Even here it is admitted that the substance remains the Baptist's.

*Re* (3) Surely he who had seen and heard what is recorded in 1. 32, Mark 1. 9-11 could have uttered verse 34 and 35.

We suggest that the weight of evidence is that verses 27 to 36 are the words of the Baptist. *Jas. M.*

**Question from Melbourne.** —John 3. 11. "We speak that we do know, and bear witness of that we have seen". Whom did the Lord Jesus link with Himself when using the word "we" in this verse?

**Answer.** —"We" seems to be used in connexion with the public preaching of the Lord and His disciples (some of whom may have been present at this interview). Note the contrast with "ye" in verse 12, referring to the Jews generally, and "I" in the same verse in connexion with heavenly things as compared with earthly things, a subject on which the Lord alone could speak with authority. *L. B.*

## NOTES ON THE PSALMS

### PSALM 46

This is a Song set to Alamoth of the sons of Korah; Dr. Young says this word is "derived from Almah, 'a virgin' in reference to the higher pitch of her voice as compared with that of an adult male's". This word Alamoth is used only once again, in 1 Chronicles 15. 20, where certain musicians had psalteries set to Alamoth. Others had harps set to Sheminith which means the eighth, the octave. See psalms 6 and 12.

"God is our refuge and strength,

A very present help in trouble.

Therefore will we not fear, though the earth do change,

And though the mountains be moved in the heart of the seas;

Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,

Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof"

(verses 1, 2, 3) [Selah.

Whilst verse **1** has application to what **the LORD** will **be** to those who trust Him in all times of trouble, **a** refuge, strength and **a** present help, the psalm has special reference to the time **at** the end of the **age** when, amongst other things, there will **be** **great** convulsions of **nature** in the earth, mountains will **be** moved in the **seas and** shaken in the earth, and the waters of the **sea** will roar and **be** troubled. **But** those will not **fear** who **trust** in God, for they will **be** confident that **He** knows all about their needs.

"There is **a** river, the **streams** whereof **make** glad the **city** of God,  
The holy place of the Tabernacles of the Most High.  
God is **in** the midst of her; she shall not **be** moved:  
God shall help her, and that right early" (**verses 4, 5**).

These words must **first** of all have **a** literal fulfilment, whatever spiritual applications we **may seek** to **make** of them. Literally, there never was **a** river whose **streams** made glad the city of God, that is, Jerusalem. There is the brook Kidron to the **east** of the **city**, which dried up in the drought of summer, **but** this psalm speaks of **a** river. This will not **be** until the days of millennial blessing, when waters shall issue from under the threshold of the house of God eastward and **run** down on the south **side** of the altar, and, **as** the waters **run** on, they reach to the ankles, then to the **knees**, then to the loins, and then **at** length they **are** waters to swim **in**, that could not **be** passed through (Ezekiel **47**. 1-12). These waters **are** referred to **in** Joel 3. 18; "**A** fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim". Then in Zechariah 14. **8** they **are** referred to **again**, "**And it** shall come to pass in that day, that living **waters** shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the **eastern** sea, and half of them toward the western **sea: in** summer and in winter shall **it be**". Isaiah, writing of Jerusalem **in** that future day, says, "There the LORD will **be** with **us in** **majesty**, **a** place of broad rivers and **streams**: wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby" (Isaiah **33**. 21). These **waters are** living **waters**, and, according to Ezekiel, shall heal the waters of the Dead **sea** and that **sea** shall **swarm** with fish, but the **miry** places thereof shall not **be** healed. The house of God shall then **be in** the **most** northern part of the holy oblation of the land, and the **waters** shall flow south to Jerusalem, which will **be in** the southern part of the oblation, and from thence they shall divide **in** two, the half of the waters going to the Dead **sea** and the other half to the Mediterranean. These **waters** shall not **be** rendered common **by** boats and ships sailing thereon. God will **be** in Jerusalem then and will help her; **a** **city**, perhaps more than **any** other city on earth, which has **been** so often **attacked and** known so **many** destructions. **J. M.**

*(to be continued, D. V. )*

Issued by the Churches of God

Obtainable from Needed Truth Publishing Office,  
Assembly Hall, George Lane, Hayes, Bromley, Kent.

Also from: —Mr. J. Ramage, 44 Tweedsmuir Avenue, Dundas, Ontario, Canada.

Printed by Barretts of Brighton, 42 The Lanes, Brighton  
incorporating W. J. Starkey Ltd. Est. 1877

# BIBLE STUDIES

"Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17. 11).

VOLUME 35

APRIL, 1967

## EDITORIAL

In John 4. 24 both the Revised and Authorized Versions have "God is a Spirit", whereas most commentators agree with the Revised Version Margin in omitting the indefinite article. In the form given in the traditional versions the statement might be understood in a wrong sense, but "God is Spirit" conveys the true thought that God in *His* essential nature is Spirit.

The words of verse 24 are simple; the argument is lucid; the teaching is sublime. The essential nature of God is stated as being the compelling reason for the great change announced in verses 21 and 23, namely the impending termination of the material form of worship in the temple in Jerusalem and the cessation of the imperfect Levitical priesthood (Hebrews 7. 11). The things which were to take their place are described in the epistle to the Hebrews as "the good things to come" (or that are come, R. V. M. ) through which God's people have a heavenly calling, a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, and who is the Surety of a better covenant, a Son perfected for evermore, a Minister of the true sanctuary in heaven, described as "the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands" (Hebrews 9. 11). Thus God's people today may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe, for they are constituted a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

L. B.

## WORD STUDY

### Wonders, Signs, Powers

These three words, used to describe the works (Greek, *erga*) of the Lord Jesus (although not exclusively used for that), occur in connexion with each other on four occasions, namely in Acts 2. 22; 2 Corinthians 12. 12; and 2 Thessalonians 2. 9; and Hebrews 2. 4. The Greek words are: *teras* (plural *terata*), wonders; *semeion*, sign; and *dunamis*, power. Two of these words, John 4. 48, signs and wonders, and 54, sign occur in the story of the healing of the nobleman's son. A brief summary of the meaning of these words, individually, and as they are used in connexion with each other may be helpful, particularly as "sign" is characteristic of John's writings, in contrast to Matthew, Mark and Luke. The implication of sign is basic to John's Gospel, as John himself indicates at the close of his Gospel (20. 30). *TERAS*, a "wonder", is something startling, strange, and views the mighty deed from the effect which it has upon the spectators. It appears invariably in the plural and is rendered "wonders"; it generally follows, or is followed by,

"signs". Apart from its use in Acts 2. 19, "I will shew wonders in the heaven above", "it is characteristic of the miracles in the New Testament, and", as Origen noted long ago, "this name 'wonders' is never applied to miracles but in connexion with some other name". These are "signs and wonders" (Acts 14. 3, Hebrews 2. 4 etc. ). This was so because the miracles of the Lord were intended to strike more than wonder into the heart of the spectators; they demonstrated a close relationship between the marvellous acts and the Lord Himself who did them. "Wonders" acted as a summons to awaken dull men to open their eyes to the spiritual appeal by the Lord. This spiritual appeal would be lost if only astonishment or amazement were aroused by the "wonders".

SEMEION means "a sign, mark, indication or token", and amongst its various uses, "it is used of miraculous acts as tokens of divine authority and power, e. g., John 2. 11, 3. 2, 4. 54 etc. " (Vine). The term is used more often by John than by other Gospel writers. It is a token of the presence and working of God, a proof of the divine authority of the Lord Jesus. Hence "signs" lead the attention of the spectator away from the deed itself to the Divine Doer. The "sign", a work of power in a physical realm can illustrate something in the spiritual realm. For example, the feeding of the 5, 000 (a "sign", John 6. 14, 26, 30) brings out the truth of Christ as the Bread of Life; the opening of the eyes of the blind man (a "sign", John 9. 16) draws our thoughts to Him who said, "I am the Light of the world (9, 5); and the raising of Lazarus (a "sign", 11. 47, 12. 18) is connected with the Giver of spiritual, as well as natural, life (11. 23-27). Also, the Lord gave signs to His messengers, confirming the Word (Mark 16. 20, Acts 14. 3, Hebrews 2. 4). In John 2. 18, the Jews said to the Lord Jesus, "What sign shewest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things?" Thus here, as elsewhere with similar questions, they indicated that they required special proof of His divine authority, thus showing their conception of the implication of a "sign". DUNAMIS means power, ability, physical or moral, as residing in a person or thing" (Vine). In Acts 6. 8 we read, "Stephen, full of grace and power (*dunamis*), wrought great wonders (*terata*) and signs (*semeia*)", and, in Acts 10. 38, God anointed Him (Jesus of Nazareth) with the Holy Spirit and with power (*dunamis*)". The power is from God and dwells in His messengers, as He equips them, in the fullest and highest sense, in the Lord Jesus. By extension, *dunamis* may indicate "mighty works" (Matthew 7. 22, 11. 20; Luke 10. 13).

Vine has summarized the shades of differences in these three words as follows: a "wonder" appeals to the imagination, a "sign" is intended to appeal to the understanding, a "power" indicates the source as supernatural. Another definition states the difference thus: "*terata*" (wonders) are portents, which excite wonder and amaze; "*semeia*" (signs) are so called in so far as they serve as a proof of doctrine or of divine mission; and "*dunamis*" indicates power, the **great and** outstanding power (strength) needed for the works, and so a "great work".

The following illustrates the grades of meaning from the miracle of the healing of the paralytic in Mark 2. 1-12. The healing was a "wonder", for those who beheld it "were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion". It was a "sign", for it

indicated that One **greater** than they thought **was in** their midst, and **it** was a "power", for **at** the Lord's word **the man** "arose, and straightway took up the bed, and **went** forth before them all". *Jas. M.*

### THE RECKONING OF TIME IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

The following **are** the occasions when John **states** the hour of the day: - **1. 39** (it was about the tenth hour), **4. 6** (the sixth hour), **4. 52** (yesterday **at** the seventh hour), **19. 14** (the sixth hour). According to Roman civil day computation (day commencing **at** midnight): tenth hour = **10 a. m. or 10 p. m.**; sixth hour = **6 a. m. or 6 p. m.**; seventh hour = **7 a. m. or 7 p. m.** According to Jewish computation (day commencing at sunrise), tenth hour = **4 p. m.**; sixth hour = **noon**; seventh hour = **1 p. m.** The Jewish method of reckoning **is followed by** the **Synoptic Gospel** writers. The Roman method of computation **seems to be that used by** John, although there are arguments on both usages.

**Apply** the Roman method to above occurrences: - **1. 39**, the **two** disciples **met** the Lord at **10 a. m.**; **4. 6**, the Lord **met** the woman at **6 p. m.**, **4. 52**, the **cure** was effected at **7 p. m.**; **19. 14**, the **sentence** on the Lord **by** Pilate **was** at about **6 a. m.** This **seems more easily** reconciled with Mark **15. 25**, "**it was** about the third hour, (**9 a. m. by** Jewish reckoning) and they crucified Him". It is suggested that the **meeting-time**, **6 p. m. at the well would fit in** with the **men** coming out from the **city after** the day's **toil**, and **give** time also **for** the conversation with the woman.

It must be added that **it is not** easy to adjust all the **references** to the hour of the day in John's Gospel to either of the **two** methods.

Perhaps the passage **most** nearly decisive is John **11. 9**, "**Are** there **not** twelve hours **in** the day?" According to professor F. F. Bruce these "**hours were** reckoned **from** sunrise to **sunset, just as** the three (Jewish) **or** four (Roman) watches **into** which the period of darkness was divided **were** reckoned **from** sunset to sunrise".

There are equally **strong** authorities on both sides, some favouring the Roman method and **some** the Jewish method. *Jas. M.*

## THE GOSPEL AND ITS MINISTRY

### John Chapter 4

**The Samaritan** woman **and** her testimony; the healing of the Nobleman's son

From Whitehills and **Macduff**. — Whether **speaking** in the night with **Nicodemus** or **at** the height of day with the woman, the Lord declared himself **as** the One **to** whom **men** and women **must** look for salvation. **He** spoke to the woman of the satisfaction **to be** found **in** coming to **Him** who alone has the living water. Once the thirst **is** known and Christ has quenched **it**, there remains **an** indwelling source of satisfaction and **life that** can only **be experienced by** those coming **to** Him. This chapter **records** that **He** was wearied **and** that **He** asked for a drink: these things show **His** humanity. We **can be** surprised that a woman of this sort should ask questions about the correct **place** and

way for worshipping God, but she seems to see that this is important and demands an answer. Her declaration that the Messiah, when He came, would "declare unto us all things" shows that to find the Messiah is to find authoritative answers to the questions which puzzle men. The Lord stated simply that He is the long sought Messiah and she readily believed Him. Her testimony about Him is, He "told me all things that ever I did", and she is anxious that others should meet this wonderful Man. He had divine insight and knowledge and was able to give living water which would become a well springing up to satisfy eternally. He was also the first to tell her that worshipping God was not physical attendance at a mountain, but was an attitude of the whole spirit of a man. At first the men of the town listened to Him perhaps because of her obvious enthusiasm, but later they believed because they themselves heard the Lord and believed "that this is indeed the Saviour of the world". A. B. R.

**From Glasgow, Parkhead.** —The Lord's weariness suggests that He had walked a long way and needed to sit by the well. He let the disciples go away to buy food in order that He might be alone as she approached. The Lord's request was introductory to His word about living water. The Jews spoke of fountain water as living water in contrast to water in a cistern. The Lord used the terms to contrast His gospel with the religion of the day. The woman was intrigued by His description of living water, but not thereby convicted of her sin. This came with the mention of her husband. The Lord's gentle disclosure of her past life brought her to realize that He was a prophet. Her expectation of Messiah and His resolution of all religious difficulties gave the Lord opportunity to make two disclosures, (1) that salvation is of the Jews and (2) that He is Messiah. At this she left her waterpot and hastened to inform the men of the city saying, "Can this be the Christ?" Her words were effectual.

The nobleman appeared to assume that it was necessary for Christ to be present to heal his son, but the Lord gently chided him and others that while seeing may be believing, it is not faith. So He said, "Go thy way; thy son liveth". This the nobleman believed but he was careful to verify the fact by enquiry of the servants who came out to meet him, presumably to inform him that it was no longer necessary for Christ to come. When it was confirmed that the Lord's words had been indeed instantly effective, all reserve in his mind vanished and he accepted Jesus as the Son of God, he and all his house. This brief story illustrates different kinds of believing, the belief of the mind governed by the senses and the deep-rooted belief of the heart, the latter being the source of personal salvation when applied to the Person and work of Christ. J. J. p.

**From Methil.** — We thought that the Samaritan woman would recognize the Lord Jesus to be a Jew by his speech and His garments. The Jews were instructed to wear a cord of blue on the fringe of their clothing. The Lord's approach is worthy of our very close examination. He opens the conversation by asking a favour, "Give Me to drink". He then speaks to her about spiritual things, and awakens her interest, for she says, "Sir, give me this water". Then He deals with her sinful condition. This woman was an adulteress and the Lord knew this and

revealed her past to her. It was because of her known character that she went to the well at about the sixth hour, the very hottest time of the day. She was probably spurned by her own people. It may surprise us that the Lord Jesus revealed to such a person that "God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth".

Her testimony was effective; she went to those she knew, the men of the city. The result was that many of the Samaritans believed on Him because of the word of the woman. Such was the effect on the people in that city that they besought the Lord to abide with them and He abode there two days. This resulted in many more believing.

The nobleman heard of the Lord Jesus and travelled from Capernaum to Cana to beseech the Lord to come down to heal his son. We do not know if this was his only son, but we know his concern for him was very great. The test of faith came when Jesus said, "Go thy way; thy son liveth". The result of this miracle was that the nobleman and his whole house believed.

*N. G. Coomer, R. C. Surgeon*

## EXTRACTS

**From Hamilton.** —In the earlier chapters of John's Gospel, the Lord revealed Himself in Judaea, and Galilee, but in Chapter 4 the revelation of the Son of God comes to despised Samaria, to a city called Sychar. Not only did the manifestation of the Lord Jesus widen out in a geographical sense, but it also came successively to persons of widely differing backgrounds and character, for example, to men like Andrew and Simon Peter, fishermen (John 1. 40, 41), to Nathanael, an Israelite indeed in whom was no guile (John 1. 47), and to Nicodemus, "the teacher of Israel" (John 3. 10).

In Chapter 3 we read of Jesus speaking to a man, a Jew, a Pharisee, but in Chapter 4 to a woman, a Samaritan, an individual of low repute. Nevertheless there was a divine revelation to both. Not only in understanding, personality and environment did they differ, but their response to the claims of the Lord was different. After the discourse with the woman, she testified to the inhabitants of the city, "Come, see a Man, which told me all things that ever I did: can this be the Christ?" (John 4. 29). The response of this woman was immediate and far-reaching, for the Samaritans came to see Jesus, and believing His word they saw in Him "the Saviour of the world" (John 4. 42).

*M. C.*

**From Atherton.** —In the course of the conversation, the woman at the well was taken aback by the claims of the Lord to some power far superior to that of Jacob, who gave the well. He stressed the distinction between the water of the well and the living water, by saying, "Who-soever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst". The stress thus imparted only tended to quicken the dissatisfaction already in her heart, because the pleasures of sin had failed to satisfy. Jacob's well (R. V. M, spring, the word used in verses 6 and 14) held water that gave no lasting satisfaction (see the different word used in verses 11 and 12).

Two opinions were expressed about the living water to which the Lord referred: (1) that it refers to the receiving of eternal life as out-

lined in John 6. 35, and (2) that it is associated with the prospective gift of the Spirit (see John 7. 37-39) [1]. E. B.

**From Kilmarnock.** —The Lord exhorted His disciples (verses 35-38) to go out into the harvest that all **may** rejoice together in a day to come.

The **case of the nobleman** is different from that of the Samaritan woman as far as the attitude of the individual is concerned, yet the **divine purpose is the same, that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.** Though distressed **because** of his son's illness, the nobleman **came to the Lord Jesus Christ in a measure of belief, and intreated the Lord from the heart, "Sir, come down ere my child die". Here was a man** who realized whom he was entreating. He **used** simple words which brought **an** immediate response, "Thy son liveth". The nobleman's belief **was** confirmed when he **enquired as** to the **time** of his son's recovery, and found that the healing had **been at the time** the Lord Jesus Christ had spoken. This was the second of the **signs** performed by the Lord in Galilee.

Can we conclude that a **sign** was a miracle but not all miracles were signs? [2]. J. M. Rankine

**From Derby.** —The humanity of the Lord Jesus is clearly seen in the **fact** that the essential things of life were required by Him, such as rest, food and drink (John 4. 6, 8, 9). He **did** not share the Jews' prejudice **against** the Samaritans, but instead He brought **great** blessing to the Samaritan woman who was of doubtful character. It is **interesting** to note that the New English translation of **verse 9** reads "Jews and Samaritans... do not use vessels in common" [3].

It is evident that the **Samaritans** as well as the Jews **waited** for the coming of the Messiah (John 4. 25). The Lord told the woman that *He* was the Messiah. On hearing this the woman left her waterpot and **went** with joy to tell others. The woman's testimony **must** have had an **impact** upon the **men**. John 4. 35 should **speak to us** today, for **we are so apt to be discouraged by** the apathy in the world to the gospel message. Ought we not to **be** continually **testifying** of the Lord Jesus? The reward **is sure** (verse 36). G. W. Conway, A. K. Smith

**From Denmark Hill, London.** —The two incidents of the chapter reveal a difference of approach that **gives an** insight into the Lord's perception of the **nature** of the two people involved.

The **woman** was gradually led to faith in Christ and, in turn, told others in the **city** about Him. They too **came** to know Him, their faith having two foundations; **first** the testimony of the woman and secondly the reality of personal **experience**.

In Cana the Lord Jesus Christ **was quite abrupt** with the nobleman. He **was not only a man in great need but a man with great faith.** No long conversation or gradual **awakening** was **needed; a direct statement** was all that was **necessary** to **effect the** healing.

The **sign** itself, like the others recorded by John, demonstrates the Lord's ability to **bring peace** where formerly there **was unrest**.

A. C. Bishop

**From Vancouver, B. C.** —In this chapter John seems to be showing another aspect of the ministry of the gospel, that of personal testimony. The circumstances of this encounter with the woman would show the necessity of buying up all opportunities the Lord presents to us in order to witness for Him. The woman came to the well at which Jesus sat. It is true that she was not specifically seeking Him, but the very nature of the incident presented the means for opening conversation. It was possible that the woman was drawn into conversation since the Lord's simple request brought a question that led on to others.

The Lord knew the point to touch on in order to elicit the real truth about the woman's life for He had perfect spiritual discernment. Discernment is necessary in our own testimony to individuals. "He that winneth souls is wise".

The woman introduced the subject of worship, but the Lord showed her that the place was not important. What mattered was the attitude of heart, in spirit and in truth. Men are saved with the express purpose to worship God in a church of God. This was the beginning of dealings with the Samaritans and an indication of the universal nature of the gospel.

J.

Bell

Jr., J. Pope

**From Southport.** —The Lord's weariness at the well shows His absolute humanity. He was made in all points like unto us, yet without sin. He was weary with His journey (Greek *kopiaio*, be beaten out, to grow weary).

The joy of the Lord was great as He contemplated the harvest in this fruit of even one woman. This led Him to invite His followers to labour and enter into the joy of a future harvest of souls.

In the story of the nobleman we see the kindness of the Lord and His desire to bless men. The answer to importunate prayer reminds us that even while we are yet speaking God will answer (Isaiah 65. 24). The resultant blessing affected a whole household in Cana. T. R.

**From Aberkenfig and Barry.** —The Lord must pass through Samaria. There is manifest in this incident the true humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is fundamental to the gospel which we preach; we can speak of One who is God over all, but truly Man.

The distinction between a spring and a well was noted. We think of the spring as bubbling up, whilst the well may be static.

An interesting point arises in regard to the nobleman's son. The Lord said, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in no wise believe".

Here the Lord is making an assertion as to the attitude of the many, at the same time testing the faith of one man. The essence of the gospel is faith in the word of God. "The man believed the word that Jesus spoke unto him". Later his faith was supplemented by sight, when he saw with his own eyes the fulfilment of the words of Jesus.

D. H. Butler

**From Carlisle.** —The method of approach used by the Lord serves as an example to personal evangelists. He sought the Samaritan woman privately. He asked a question. He appeared to put Himself under an obligation to her. He used the illustration of water (something which she needed) to press home what He had to offer.

The Lord **made** this journey so that He could sow **first and** then reap a rich harvest. This woman **became** His willing witness **as** she **returned** to the **city and** soon brought others to hear Him. From a simple **request for a drink** of water a conversation opened **up** and lasting satisfaction was offered to a thirsty soul. With kindly **grace** the Lord proceeded to **press** home her **sinner** need, "Go, call thy husband... " Guilt was exposed, **but** not wishing to dwell further upon her shame she changed the **subject** to that of worship **and** the Lord allowed her to proceed. The conversation soared to lofty heights. Outcast **sinner** though she was, the prospect of becoming a worshipper was held out to her. It is the universal privilege of all **believers to worship in spirit and in truth.**

*RH., J. D. T.*

**From Birmingham.** —It was thought that it would have **been** about four months to the usual harvest **time and** that the fields would therefore have **been** green. The disciples would perhaps have looked **across** the fields, **and in** the direction of the city would have seen the crowd of people that the woman had gone to **bring.** These then would **be** the fields white unto harvest that the **Master** spoke of.

When **Jesus met** the nobleman, **first** the physical need **in** the **curing** of his son was **met** then the spiritual **need** of the nobleman himself. The nobleman thought that it was essential for the Lord **Jesus** to come to his son's bedside before a **cure** could **be** effected. He soon learned otherwise. "Thy son liveth." It is interesting to note how convincing to the nobleman and his household **were** the words of his **servant,** "Yesterday **at** the seventh hour the **fever** left him", for that was when the Lord had said, "Thy son liveth".

*D. H. Elson*

**From Cardiff.** —We were impressed by the wonderful **grace and patience** that was displayed **as** the Lord dealt with the **Samaritan** woman, also the wisdom with which He answered her questions. Our attention was drawn to the word "**must**" in **verse 4** meaning it behoved Him, **suggesting** that He knew the woman's **need** and thus He was there to **meet** that need. Also in **verse 24** we have another "**must**", **setting** forth a condition of worship. We felt that **in** response to our Lord's **request** for water to drink the woman was **prepared** to **argue** on behalf of her **people.** The Lord **turned** her thoughts from her natural **needs** to her spiritual needs. He reminded her of her **past** life, and she thus realized that He was a prophet. Then the Lord enlightened her concerning God's desires **and requirements** in the **matter** of worship. In **verses 23-25** He reveals **His identity** as the Messiah that God had promised to His people. With a full heart she left her **water** pot to tell others of the **great** discovery, that this Man was indeed the Christ of God.

**From Liverpool.** —Gradually the Lord disclosed to the **Samaritan** woman who He was. She had **first** addressed Him as a Jew (**verse 9**) then "**Sir**" (**verses 11 and 15, R. V. M. Lord**). *His intimate* knowledge of her life convinced her that He was a prophet. Her endeavours to **avoid** the real issue **by** a religious discussion were unavailing, for He touched **deeper** chords **and** she felt a thirst which could not **be** satisfied with water. Then He revealed Himself as the Messiah. "I know that Messiah cometh", she **said,** and He replied, "I that **speak** unto thee **am** He". Her further **statement,** "He will declare unto **us** all things" (**verse**

25) was answered by her own words, revealing her acceptance and recognition of His claim, "Come, see a Man that told me all things that ever I did" (verse 29).

All other things forgotten, she hurried away to tell the men of the city, and her testimony must have been a powerful one. "They went out of the city, and were coming to Him . . . and . . . many of the Samaritans believed on Him".

There were further results, for they besought Him to abide with them. He stayed two days, and many more believed because of His word. They said, "We have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world". J. Seddon, AM

### John Chapter 3

**From** Hamilton, Ont. —The meeting of the Lord and Nicodemus was not surrounded with pomp and pageantry but it resulted in the statement of basic gospel truths needed by us some two thousand years later. Nicodemus is seen as an honest man, yet he heard with dismay Christ's words and said, "How can these things be?" Perhaps the Lord's references to the brazen serpent won Nicodemus to Christ, and we can see the result at the Cross when he openly confessed Christ (John 19. 39). This conversation is an invaluable statement of the way of salvation. We would hope that, as with Nicodemus, our words to the unsaved might in later days **bear** fruit. J. R. Y.

### COMMENTS

[1] Atherton. —"Shall never thirst", and "a well of water springing up unto eternal life" (verse 14) may indicate that the new birth and all that follows it are in view. L. B.

It is unlikely that the Lord's words in chapter 4 refer to the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jas. M.

[2] **Kilmarnock.** —The word sign (Greek *semeion*) in the New Testament does not always refer to miracles (Matthew 26. 48, Romans 4. 11). John selects certain of the Lord's miracles and calls them signs because of the teaching they convey, but all the miracles of the Lord had a purpose beyond the immediate benefit received and were therefore signs. John confirms this in relation to miracles not recorded in his Gospel (John 20. 30). L. B.

[3] **Derby,** — The Greek word *sunchraomai* used here literally means to use with or to have joint use, but in the context it is regarded by most translators as metaphorical, so that the meaning given by the New English translation is probably too restricted. Extreme caution must be exercised in the use of this version. The compilers frequently incorporate their own interpretation into the text. L. B.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Question from Aberkenfig and Barry.** —What is the significance of the words, "The hour cometh and now is"? Does it mean that the new dispensation was brought in at that time?

**Answer.** —This statement must have been in part prophetic of that which Peter refers to in his first epistle: a holy priesthood offering up spiritual sacrifices. However, there was a transition period, commencing with the Lord's ministry and culminating at Pentecost, when the disciples were assimilating the principles of true worship. The Samaritan woman was one of these, so justifying the words "and now is". *L. B.*

**Question from Derby.** —(1) Who are the "others" in verse 38?

**Answer.** —The Old Testament prophets and John the Baptist. *L. B.*

(2) Please explain verse 22 about worship.

**Answer.** —The Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God (Romans 3, 2), whereas the Samaritans had a false form of worship based on a travesty of the Pentateuch. They were groping in the dark. *L. B.*

(3) If the nobleman had not believed the word of Jesus would his son have been healed?

**Answer (a).** —This is the hypothetical kind of question to which there can be no answer. In cases of demon-possession, and perhaps the lame man in Acts 3, the objects of healing power did not exercise faith, but they did not actively disbelieve. *L. B.*

## NOTES ON THE PSALMS

## Psalm 46

(Continued from page 36)

"The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved:

He uttered His voice, the earth melted.

The LORD of hosts is with us;

The God of Jacob is our refuge" (Heb. an high place for us.  
A. V. marg. ). (verses 6, 7). [Selah

Here we have that time which is referred to in Psalm 2. 1; "Why do the nations rage, and the peoples imagine a vain thing?" and other portions of the Scriptures, when the nations will combine to fight against the Lord at His coming to earth. Then the Lord will utter His voice. The Lord who is now the Word in grace, who was the Word, who was with God and who is God, and later became the Word in incarnation (John 1. 1-3, 14), will at His coming to earth be the Word of God in judgement (Revelation 19. 13, 15). Then the earth will melt, so far as many of the multitudes of people upon it are concerned. Then the right hand of God shall teach Him terrible things (Psalm 45. 4) on that day of judgement, for men by their rebellion and wickedness will force the Lord to act in judgement upon them.

"Come, behold the works of the LORD,

What desolations He hath made in the earth.

He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth;

He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder;

He burneth the chariots in the fire" (verses 8, 9).

The works of the LORD in judgement will result in **great** desolations in the earth at the beginning of the millennial reign. Mankind will learn what an awful thing it has been for men to combine to fight against the Lord, bringing upon themselves eternal destruction, and desolations of lands where they once lived. But when His judgement has passed then through His goodness, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice... even with joy and singing" (Isaiah 35. 1, 2). "Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be counted for a forest" (Isaiah 29. 17; see also 32. 15; Psalm 72. 16).

Then the Lord will make wars to cease to the end of the earth, for He will break the bow, and cut the spear in sunder and burn the chariots in the fire. Then men shall follow suit, "and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2. 4). This is the exact contrast of Joel 3. 9-11 and of what is the way of men in the earth now, when munitions of war are the chief expenditures of the world.

"Be still, and know that I am God;  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth.  
The LORD of hosts is with us;  
The God of Jacob is our refuge" (verses 10, 11). [Selah.]

"Be still" is from the Hebrew word *RAPHAH* which means "to let fall or let go". It may mean that we are to "let go" of what we feel calls for all our attention and labour, and in consequence get to know God, for man's work for a lifetime or even a millennium is not worth a moment of God's work. His works declare His everlasting power and divinity (Romans 1. 20-23), so that man in the uselessness of his work should let go and lay hold of God by faith and not live with a dark senseless heart. He will yet be exalted among the nations, but that time has not yet arrived. In the meantime it is ours to know in the secret trustfulness of the heart the LORD of hosts is with us, and the God of Jacob is our refuge.

### PSALM 47

This is a psalm of the sons of Korah. This with the next two are in their titles called psalms, while Psalms 44 and 45 are called *MASCHIL*, of instruction, and 46 is a "Song" and 43 has no title.

O clap your hands, all ye peoples;  
Shout unto God with the voice of triumph.  
For the LORD Most High is terrible;  
He is a great King over all the earth, (verses 1, 2)

"Clap your **hands**" simply means to strike **the** hands together, **but** what **is** the **significance** in doing this? The **same** Hebrew word **is** used **in** Nahum 3. 19: "All that hear the bruit (report) of thee clap the hands over thee", that **is**, the report of the **destruction** of the **Assyrian king** and of his capital **city** Nineveh, of him that wrought such **destruction** in Israel. "To clap the hands" **is** to show appreciation, and **men** showed appreciation when destruction overtook **and** overwhelmed Assyria. So God's people **were** to clap their hands **and** shout with the voice of triumph that their God was **great and** terrible, **a great** God over all the earth. The **day** of manifestation of His greatness is **yet future**. This **is** **man's day** (1 Corinthians 4. 3. "**man's judgement**" is "**man's day**", see R. V. marg. ), **but** the **day** of the Lord will come when the almighty power of the Lord will **be** revealed (Revelation 6. 15-17; Isaiah 2. 17-22).

**He** shall **subdue** the peoples **under us**,  
**And** the nations under our feet.  
**He** shall choose our inheritance for **us**,  
 The **excellency** of Jacob whom **He** loved. [Selah (verses 3, 4).

**In** the blessings of the LORD which would come upon Israel, as recorded **in** Deuteronomy 28. 1-14, they were to **be** the head of the nations and not the **tail**, **but** this would only **be** **if** they hearkened and obeyed God's commandments, **and** turned not to the right hand or the left to go **after** other gods. Alas, **by** their disobedience **and** idolatry they **became** the tail **and** not the head **and** were **scattered** among the nations **away** from their own land. **But** that **state** of things will end, and they will **be** gathered **back** to their own land. Nations will **be** subdued **under** them. In the Millennium God's people will all **be** righteous. "Thy people also shall **be** all righteous" (Isaiah 60. 21). "The LORD **is** our righteousness" (Jehovah-tsidkenu) will **be** true of Israel **in** that day (Jeremiah 23. 6; 33. 16). It will also **be** **true** that "all thy children shall **be** taught (disciples R. V. marg. ) of the LORD" (Isaiah 54. 13). God will **yet** choose their inheritance **for** them, **and** that land will **be** the **centre** of world rule and worship; from **it** will go forth the law, and to **it** the nations will come to worship, **bringing** their **gifts** with them. Their land will **be** the excellency of Jacob whom God loved.

*(to be continued D. V.)*

Issued by the Churches of God

Obtainable from Needed Truth Publishing Office,  
 Assembly Hall, George Lane, Hayes, Bromley, Kent.

Also from: —Mr. J. Ramage, 44 Tweedsmuir Avenue, Dundas, Ontario, Canada.

Printed by Barretts of Brighton. 42 The Lanes, Brighton  
 incorporating W. J. Starkey Ltd. Est. 1877

# BIBLE STUDIES

"Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17. 11).

VOLUME 35

MAY, 1967

## EDITORIAL

The Jews rightly discerned that when the Lord called God His Father He was making Himself equal with God (John 5. 18). The Lord's dissertation in the following verses makes it clear that identity of purpose and action are the necessary results of the equality of nature of Father and Son. The subjection of the Lord Jesus Christ to His Father is not here under consideration except in a subsidiary way.

In spite of the cross-reference in the R. V. margin to Philippians 2. 6, the teaching of the John 5 passage is quite distinct from that of Philippians 2. 1-11. Attention should be carefully directed to the Revised Version translation in verse 6. The phrase "on an equality" translates the Greek neuter plural, literally "equalities" (according to Vine). "The neuter plural... denotes the various modes or states in which it was possible for the nature of Deity to exist and manifest itself as Divine" (Gifford, The Incarnation). The Son's self-emptying (verse 7) is thus not connected with the *nature* of Deity, as some have erroneously taught and become entangled in heresy, but with that which is *associated* with Deity. It is suggested that in becoming Man, the Lord Jesus relinquished, for the time being on earth, His external heavenly glory (John 17. 5) and His riches (2 Corinthians 8. 9). The passage in Philippians 2 can therefore be taken to mean that the Lord Jesus "being in the form of God<sup>st</sup>" that is, having and retaining at all times the essential nature of God, in complete humility temporarily laid aside the visible manifestations of Deity in order to become a bondservant and to die on the cross. *L. B.*

## TEMPLE

### A Word Study

The different Greek words for "Temple" used in John 2. 14, 15 (*Hieron*), and in verses 19, 20, 21 (*naos*) call for a re-statement of the meaning of the two words.

HIERON, the neuter of the adjective *hieros* (sacred), literally means the "sacred thing". It embraces the whole sacred area of the Temple with its buildings and courts.

NAOS literally means "the dwelling place" (from *naio*, to dwell), and with regard to the Temple in Jerusalem included the sanctuary or Holy Place (into which only priests could lawfully enter), where stood the table of Shewbread, the golden lampstand and the altar of incense, and beyond the veil, the Holy of Holies, where God dwelt above the Mercy-seat (See Hebrews 9. 1-5).

In 45 passages where *Hieron* is used it is translated properly by "temple", the inclusive term, both in the A. V. and the R. V. *Hieron* is never used figuratively. It is the word of 1 Corinthians 9. 13, the only use in the New Testament outside the Gospels and the Acts.

NAOS occurs nineteen times in the Gospels, and in only two occurrences (Matthew 23. 35 and 27. 5) is it properly translated "sanctuary" in the R. V. text. In the other 17 cases "temple" is retained in the R. V. text and "sanctuary" in the R. V. Margin. A consistency of translation by "sanctuary", instead of "temple", would, for example, make it clear that the veil of the Temple that was rent in twain at the time of the Saviour's death (Matthew 27. 51, Mark 15. 38, Luke 23. 45) was that veil of the *sanctuary* which divided the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place.

*Naos* translated "temple" (of God) in 1 Corinthians 3. 16 refers to the church of God in Corinth as such, and in 1 Corinthians 6. 19 refers individually to the bodies of believers as being sanctuary of the Holy Spirit in character. That part of the Temple purged by the Lord was outside the inner sanctuary (John 2. 14, 15); whereas in verses 19 and 21 *naos* refers to His own body. *Jas. M.*

## THE GOSPEL AND ITS MINISTRY

### The Gospel According to John Chapter 5

**From Birmingham.** —One man out of the multitude that lay at Bethesda found mercy at the house of mercy, when the One came who is greater than the angel who troubled the water. We were impressed by the simple testimony that the man gave to the Jews so soon after he was healed (verse 15).

When the Jews persecuted the Lord He used the opportunity to reveal something of the wonders of the relationship between the Father and the Son. We marvelled at the subjection to the Father of the Son, and thought of Him as the perfect pattern. How close the Lord was to His Father!

It was thought that the Lord, in His reference to witness, was referring to His being one of the Trinity (verses 31-34).

The Son has been given judgement and the authority to execute judgement for two reasons: (1) that all may honour Him, even as they honour the Father, and (2) because He is the Son of Man. *R. B. Jones*

**From Aberkenfig and Barry.** —It seems evident from verse 7 that some kind of phenomenon took place at the pool from time to time. The man had been within sight of a cure for a long time, but because of human weakness was unable to gain the cure. The pool would seem to speak of the Law. "For what the Law could not do . . . God, sending His own Son . . . condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8. 3).

We see in this the helplessness of the sinner: "I have no man". "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him . . . that he should still live away", but Christ appears bringing hope and life.

Many signs, like this one, were performed by the Lord on the Sabbath, and were a frequent source of annoyance to the Scribes and Pharisees. They did not realize that He was Lord of the Sabbath and never rested from doing good.

The Lord Jesus Christ claims equality with the Father and brings forth as witnesses, John the Baptist, the works He Himself performed, the Father, the Scriptures and Moses on whom they had set their hope. He condemns the critics for their ignorance of the true meaning of Scripture and points to the fact that they had not His word abiding in them.

There was a difference of opinion regarding verse 25, some thought it referred to physically dead, i. e., Lazarus, while others thought it may refer to those dead in sin [1].

*J. Butler, D. H. Butler*

**From Melbourne, Australia.** —This chapter brings before us a five-fold testimony to the Lord, as to why He came and who He was.

There is the witness of the miracle of the man at the pool. A miracle is outside the law of nature. Miracles were few and far between in the history of man. There appear to be about 40 miracles recorded as performed by the Lord Jesus whilst here on earth. The man at the pool was helpless and hopeless, and in his healing the Lord Jesus manifested His glory. The witness of John the Baptist has been dealt with in an earlier month. It was suggested that the witness of the Father took place at the baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ when the voice came, "This is My beloved Son".

The Scriptures all bear witness of Him: "These are they which bear witness of Me". Finally the Lord mentions the witness of Moses (the Law). The Jews had been introduced to the truth of the Trinity in the divine title of Elohim. They were not, however, prepared to accept Jesus of Nazareth as God's Son.

We noted several important points in this chapter: Verse 17, His equality with God; verse 19, the unity of the Father and the Son; verse 21, the authority of the Son; verse 23, man's responsibility to honour the Son even as the Father; verse 24, His authority to give eternal life to all who believe; the resurrection power which He has, and His authority to **quicken** whomsoever He will. *T. L. F., P. W. A.*

## EXTRACTS

**From Edinburgh.** —Blessing for the man at Bethesda resulted in persecution for the Lord, because He healed on the Sabbath (verse 16). The Jews failed to appreciate that the One they persecuted was Lord of the Sabbath and had committed no crime. "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2. 27).

A very important relationship is shown following verse 17, —"My Father", "and I". This is the relationship of Deity between Father and Son, revealing the Lord to be the Son of God. The Jews refused to acknowledge the truth of the eternal Sonship of the Lord and His equality with God.

There is no independent action in the Godhead (verse 19). Unity is ever a divine principle. Even on earth, as God's bondservant, the Lord is seen united in thought and purpose with the Father (John 4. 34).

The majority thought that verse 25 speaks of physically dead persons. In verse 24, by contrast, the Lord speaks of the spiritually dead passing from death to life. Some considered that both verse 24 and verse 25 referred to spiritual death, especially in view of the phrase, "the hour cometh, and now is" in verse 25. If physically dead are seen in verse 25, then these may speak of saints who will be raised in the resurrections before the millennial reign of Christ. The resurrections of verses 28 and 29 were thought to be different and to refer to those which will precede the Great White Throne judgement.

*Iain T. H. Hunter*

**From Hamilton.** —In verses 19 to 47 the Lord justified His claim to Sonship, and adduced valid testimonies in support. His activity in raising the dead, according to His will, even as the Father (verse 21), is evidence of His divine personality. The exercise of this authority in raising Lazarus left no doubts in the minds of at least some present that He was the Son of God, for "many... believed on Him" (John 11. 45). This power He received by decree of the Father (verse 26), and it will be revealed in a most remarkable way, for "the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth" (verses 28 and 29).

This resurrection will be with a view to judgement, for "the Father hath given all judgement unto the Son" (verse 22). It is significant that the Lord Jesus has been given this authority because He is Son of Man. He is the Judge of all the earth who shall do right (Genesis 18. 25). No one will ever be able to claim that the Judge had no understanding of human frailties, for He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without **sin** (Hebrews 4. 15).

*R. L.*

**From Methil.** —Legal minded Jews approached the healed man and questioned him because he was carrying his bed on the sabbath. Who had told him to do this? He did not know His name, but he knew that it was the One who had made him whole. The Lord is greater than the sabbath. Was He breaking the sabbath? We think not. Jesus said, "Are ye wroth with Me, because I made a man every whit whole on the sabbath? Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgement" (John 7. 23, 24). In Matthew 12. 12 the Lord said to the Pharisees, "How much then is a man of more value than a sheep! Wherefore it is lawful to do good on the sabbath day". The principle is that one should do good at all times (Exodus 23. 4, 5).

Our mind with regard to verses 28 and 29 was that they refer to the resurrection just before the judgement of the Great White Throne. With regard to verse 25 we thought that this refers to the present. It clearly says, "The hour cometh, and now is". Every born-again one experiences at the new birth the miracle of hearing the voice of the Son of God and living. Before the new birth we are viewed as dead in our trespasses (Ephesians 2. 1) but afterwards we are seen as a new **creation** (2 Corinthians 5. 17).

*Neville Coomer*

**From Derby.** —It seems as though the man at Bethesda's pool had almost lost his desire to be healed, therefore the Lord's question was an important one (5. 6). Thirty-eight years had elapsed and now the Lord Jesus was going to alter completely this sick man's life. We notice the power of Jesus in that He could heal him instantly. However, the Lord warned the healed man to forsake his sinful ways in case he suffered something worse.

The Jews recognized that the Son of God must be equal with God (5. 18). The Lord Jesus fully expressed His Father's will and all Jesus did received His blessing. Because He is the Son of Man He is to judge men, for the Father gave full jurisdiction to the Son.

*G. W. Conway, A. K. Smith*

**From Southport.** —The Lord did not forbid the healed man to testify of Himself, as He did in some cases. He knew the origin of the man's disease, and warned him not to sin again.

The raising of the dead of all dispensations, each in his own order, will be the work of the Lord Himself (1 Corinthians 15. 23). All judgement in its various stages is vested in the Lord as the Son of Man. The Lord did bear witness of Himself, but not alone. John also bore witness. The Lord's own works and words bear witness, for no man spoke like Him and man had never seen works like His. The Father bore audible witness to Him.

*T. R.*

**From Denmark Hill, London.** —The miracle at the pool of Bethesda demonstrates such facets of the gospel as: the effects of sin in human life (verse 14), human impotence to save, the unique power of Christ, swift, sure and satisfying to the believer, the blindness of the unbeliever and the attitude of Christ to the believer and the unbeliever.

Four witnesses are found in chapter 5. They are: John the Baptist (verse 33), God the Father (verse 37), the miracles of Christ (verse 36) and the Old Testament Scriptures (verse 39).

Since the testimony of the first three come chiefly through the New Testament, the four are covered by the whole Scriptures. It is essential to keep before us in gospel ministry the veracity of the whole of Scripture from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22. This is the complete and sole authority for such ministry, and once any part of it is doubted, the veracity of the whole is in doubt. The importance of Moses' writings is specially emphasized by the Lord in verses 45-47, and however much we may find difficult, there may not be doubts as to the veracity of any part of it.

*C. L. Prasher*

**From Glasgow, Govan and Partiek.** —No mention is made in the record of the ill man's faith; this makes the case different from others in which healing was preceded by the faith of the individual. It seems that the man showed obedience to the command of the Lord, rather than faith.

The letter of the Law was foremost in the minds of the accusing Jews but the One who gave the command to this man was the One of whom the Law spoke and in whom the Law was not destroyed but fulfilled.

It is suggested that obedience and subjection are running through this chapter. The man was made whole because of obedience, the Son showed obedience to the Father and subjected Himself to the Father [2], but the Jews would not subject themselves to the Lord.

They searched the Old Testament Scriptures, and through the writings of Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22 they could have received eternal life had it not been for their disobedience and the veil across their minds (2 Corinthians 3. 14-16).  
*Ernest McKee*

**From Glasgow, Parkhead.** —The Lord came to Bethesda and met a multitude of sick lying in its five porches. Whether or not healing powers were given to the waters of Bethesda it was certainly a forlorn hope that a man sick for 38 years and without any to help would ever be cured. His pathetic answer undoubtedly touched the heart of the enquiring Lord and brought from His lips those life-giving words, "Arise, take up thy bed and walk". The grace of God had appeared in the house of grace bringing salvation to a man who, learning later of his gracious Friend, witnessed "that it was Jesus which had made him whole".  
*R. I. Shaw*

**From Whitehills and Macduff.** —Chapter 5 opens with the sad story of a man, crippled for 38 years, whose infirmity was apparently brought on as the result of sin. It is true, of course, that all disease is the result of sin; sometimes disease or infirmity may be brought on by one specific act of sin (e. g. Gehazi, Miriam). The Lord counselled this man as to the result of further sin. Having been made whole, he had a responsibility as to his future conduct, or perhaps a worse infirmity would result.

The Jews professed to honour God, but unless they were prepared to honour the Son, they could not honour the Father. The Lord condemned the Jews by saying the love of God was not in them. He referred to His rejection, saying that they would not receive Him in His Father's name, but if one came in his own name they would receive that one. This is something we have seen many times in history, false leaders leading many astray with heretical teachings. The Jews claimed to believe Moses, yet they would not believe the Christ of whom Moses wrote.  
*J. M. W.*

**From Birkenhead.** —Because Jesus claimed equality with God the Jews sought to kill Him. Points made by Him in reply are: (1) the Father and the Son are so linked that neither can act without the other's knowledge, (2) the Son is aware of all the Father's plans (John 3. 35), (3) both the Father and the Son are able to give life, (4) the Son has been appointed by the Father's authority to judge the world (see Acts 17. 31), (5) equal honour is due to the Father and to the Son, (6), the Father and the Son both claimed to have life in Themselves, whereas in the bringing back to life of dead ones God's servants prayed to God that He would restore life (e. g., 1 Kings 17. 21).

There are none who will escape the judgement of God except those who lay hold of the truth of verse 24. It was thought that whereas "life" in verse 24 is spiritual, that mentioned in verse 25 is natural.

*R. D. Williams*

**From Kilmarnock.** —The sight of the man carrying his bed on the sabbath brought a reprimand from the Lord's Jewish critics. When they sought to contend with Him, the Master answered by adding *His* claim to the Lordship of the sabbath and equality with God. On another occasion the Lord said that the Son of Man is Lord of the sabbath (Mark 2. 28). The Father and the Son cannot act independently (verse 19). Honour should be rendered to the Son because all judgement has been put into His hand (verses 22, 23). In the first work of quickening, the Father and the Son are responsible, whereas the work of judging has been given to the Son alone [3].

The Lord Jesus makes reference to two classes of people whom He calls "dead". Firstly those who are spiritually dead in sin yet capable of hearing *His* voice (verse 24). Secondly those who are physically dead, like the widow of Nain's son who heard *His* voice and lived (verse 25). Similarly, the physically dead shall in the future day respond to His summons to judgement at the Great White Throne (verses 28, 29).

#### Chapter 4

**From Toronto, Ont.** —The Lord *Himself* did not baptize. Knowing men. He could foresee men assuming a position because of the one who baptized them (1 Corinthians 1. 12).

The words "Shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life" (4. 14) can be linked with John 7. 37-40, which speak of the coming Holy Spirit. The woman asked, in her ignorance, to drink of this water (verse 15). The Spirit was not given until Pentecost, but when the Lord revealed Himself to her (verse 26) we see the result of true conversion (verse 28), for she "left her waterpot", realizing she could not draw from Jacob's well what Christ had just given her. It seems as though at this time she received satisfaction in the realization of Christ's coming.

The phrase "spirit and truth" (verse 23) is rendered by the Revisers with a small "s", pointing this out to be the spirit of man, and not the Holy Spirit of God. "The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit" (Romans 8. 16). *L. Gilles pie*

#### COMMENTS

[1] **Aberkenfig and Barry.** —It may be that both spiritually and physically dead are envisaged in verse 25 for either meaning fits perfectly well into the context. *L. B.*

[2] **Glasgow, Govan and Partick.** —In verses 19-26 the equality of Father and Son is the paramount issue, not the obedience of the Son. **See Editorial.** *L. B.*

[3] **Kilmarnock.** —The last clause in this sentence might be taken as meaning that the Son will act independently. John 5. 19, Acts 17. 31 and Romans 14. 10 show clearly that such is **not** the case. We would **suggest** that **verse 22 means** that all men in their own day of judgement will have **to** face the Lord Jesus Christ. Other scriptures indicate that His judgement will also be the judgement of God. *L. B.*

## QUESTION AND ANSWER

**Question from Derby.** —To whom does the judgement apply in John 5. 29, those under law or those under grace?

**Answer.** —Verse 28 refers to "all that are in the tombs". We can only conclude that the resurrection envisaged here is the final one preceding the judgement of the Great White Throne and embracing all not included in the previous selective resurrections (e. g. 1 Corinthians 15. 23; Revelation 20. 4-6). Revelation 20. 13 tells us that at the Great White Throne men will be judged according to their works; this agrees with John 5. 29; "they that have done good... they that have done ill". Those saved by grace will not be subject to this judgement (John 5. 24). See also Romans 2. 1-16. **L. B.**

## NOTES ON THE PSALMS

## Psalm 47

*{Continued from page 48}*

God is gone up with a shout,

The LORD with the sound of a trumpet.

Sing praises to God, sing praises:

Sing praises to God, sing praises:

For God is the King of all the earth:

Sing ye praises with understanding *{MASCHIL}*, (verses 5, 6, 7)

After subduing the peoples of the earth under His people Israel, verse 5 indicates the LORD going up with a shout, with the sound of a trumpet to take His place in the midst of His people who will sing His praises, and together with Israel will be the Gentiles. As far back as Deuteronomy 32. 43 it was prophesied by Moses that the Gentiles would rejoice with His people Israel, and again, in Psalm 117. 1 we have the command, "O praise the LORD, all ye nations; laud Him, all ye peoples" See Romans 15. 8-11. God will then be known as King of all the earth, and Israel and the Gentiles will then sing praises with understanding.

God reigneth over the nations:

God sitteth upon His holy throne.

The princes of the peoples are gathered together

To be the people of the God of Abraham:

For the shields of the earth belong unto God;

He is greatly exalted, (verses 8, 9)

God is called the "King of the nations" (Jeremiah 10. 7. See also Revelation 15. 3, both A. V. and R. V. margins). The Lord has been given authority over all peoples even now, although in the present dispensation He acts in grace, but in the future He will act in judgement. He will fill the throne of God (see 1 Chronicles 29. 23) and will reign over Israel and the Gentiles. Then will the princes of the Gentile peoples be gathered together to be the people (or "unto the people" R. V. marg. ) of the God of Abraham, and then will the promise which was made to Abraham be fulfilled, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12. 3; 22. 18). There is an application of the promise to Abraham in this day of grace (Galatians 3. 8, 9), but the

fulfilment of **it will** be **in** the Millennium. In "the shields of the earth" "shield" **is** the ordinary word for shield, that which is made for protection. Such shields belong to God. We read frequently **of** the **LORD being a shield in** the Psalms. Such shields of the earth belong to God, and while the **believer** knows God who shields him, the unbeliever knows Him not, **yet** God **is** the Saviour or Preserver of all **men**, specially of them that **believe** (1 Timothy 4. 10). He is greatly exalted and will **yet be** more so.

### PSALM 48

**Great is the LORD, and** highly to be praised,  
In the **city** of our God, in **His** holy mountain.  
Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth,  
Is mount Zion, on the sides of the north,  
The **city** of the **great** King, (verses 1, 2)

Though there were **times**, such as **in** the most of the life of Solomon, when the **city** of God, Jerusalem, and **His** holy mountain, Zion, were beautiful **in** elevation, **the** joy of the whole **earth**. Alas, such **times were** short-lived, for **even** towards the end of Solomon's reign the shades of **night** began to gather through the sad and idolatrous behaviour of **that great king**. And when **we** reach the days of Jeremiah and **peruse** his Lamentations, **we** read thus:

All that **pass** by clap their hands **at** thee;  
**They** hiss and **wag** their head **at** the daughter of Jerusalem, **saying:**  
**Is** this the **city** that **men** called  
The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?  
(Lamentations 2. 15)

This was before the coming of Nebuchadnezzar the **king** of Babylon who destroyed Jerusalem and the temple of God, and carried **many** of the people captive. For seventy **years** their **captivity** continued, till the **first year** of **Cyrus, king** of **Persia**, who conquered Babylon and freed all those who wished to **return** to Jerusalem to build the temple (Ezra 1. 1-11).

God hath made Himself known **in** her palaces for a refuge.  
For lo, the **kings** assembled themselves,  
They passed **by** together.  
**They saw it**, then were they amazed;  
They were dismayed, they hasted **away**, (verses 3, 4, 5)

The **difference between** those days **described by** the sons of Korah and those of the **time of** Jeremiah's Lamentations was caused **by the fact** that God was a **refuge in** the palaces of Jerusalem **as in this psalm**, **but** He was not a **refuge to His** people, **because** of their sinful, idolatrous **ways, in the time of** Jeremiah. What **the kings** saw **caused them to pass away, for they were amazed and dismayed and stricken with** terror.

Trembling took hold of **them there**;  
**Pain, as of a woman in** travail.  
With **the east** wind  
Thou **breakest ships** of Tarshish, (verses 6, 7)

Here the psalmist continues his description of the state of the kings, as with terror they were stricken by the strength of Jerusalem against attack, for the city as to its situation was not only beautiful, but it was strong in its fortifications. As with the east wind God broke the ships of Tarshish, so would Jerusalem break the might of attacking forces, unless, as in the case of the Babylonians and the Romans, it was God's time to deliver up the city to these powers.

As we have heard, so have we seen

In the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God:  
God will establish it for ever, (verse 8) Selah

It is well when this is the case as to the city of God, or as to the church of God, that what people have heard of it, they should also see in practice. Great is the pity when the teaching is one thing and the practice quite different. What the Queen of Sheba heard of the city of God and of the Solomonic kingdom was much less than what she saw when she came from her own land. She said that it was a true report that she had heard in her own land, but the half had not been told her (1 Kings 10. 1, 6-9). Whatever have been the sins and sorrows of Jerusalem in present and past years, and these have flooded in on what was the city of God, it will not be always so, for God will establish it for ever. For to Zion and Jerusalem God says, "Thou shalt also be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God" (Isaiah 62. 3). Let such as take pleasure in the truth and service connected with the place of the Name find joy and comfort in what God will yet do in connexion with that truth; let those who are Zion and Jerusalem minded (Hebrews 12. 22-25) not refuse Him that speaketh nor what He says as to the truth for our day, for as it was God's will in the past to have a place, the place of the Name, where His people should do all that He commanded them (Deuteronomy 12. 5, 11, 12), even so it is today in the church of God and house of God.

We have thought on Thy lovingkindness, O God,  
In the midst of Thy temple.

As is Thy name, O God,

So is Thy praise unto the ends of the earth:

Thy right hand is full of righteousness.

Let mount Zion be glad,

Let the daughters of Judah rejoice,

Because of Thy judgements, (verses 9, 10, 11)

The word "lovingkindness" is from the Hebrew word *CHESED* often rendered "mercy". God's throne in the Tabernacle or the Temple was the Mercy-seat (Hebrew *KAPPORETH*), the cover of the Ark. From God on His throne flowed out His mercy to Israel whom He loved. Even so has He acted to us, as Ephesians 2. 4-6 clearly shows. Love, mercy, grace describe the way of His approach to us miserable sinners. As is God's name *ELOHIM*, the triune, infinite One, so will yet be His praise to the ends of the earth when men get to know the true God. His right hand is full of righteousness; He ever does right and cannot do wrong. Mount Zion was to be glad and the daughters of Judah were to rejoice, because of His judgements. What use is a judge whose judgements, for one cause or another, are unrighteous? God's judgements are ever righteous; this is seen in the sufferings and death of

Christ. Not one sinner would have been saved but for the Lord bearing and dying for our sins. The righteous character of God's judgement was upheld by Christ and in this we rejoice, and also Zion and Judah will yet rejoice in God's judgements.

Walk about Zion, and go round about her:

Tell the towers thereof.

Mark ye well her bulwarks,

Consider her palaces;

That ye may tell it to the generation following.

For this God is our God for ever and ever:

He will be our guide even unto death, (verses 12, 13, 14)

Those who loved the city of God, because they loved the God of the city, encouraged others to walk about Zion and to go round about her, to tell her towers, mark well her bulwarks and to consider her palaces, so that they might tell it to the generation following. This was ever the responsibility in Israel, for the elder to the younger, the fathers to the children, to tell of the choice of God of His people and His place, and of the work He had done. Here the men of Israel were to walk about Zion, to tell her towers, her bulwarks and her palaces that they might tell what they had seen to those coming after them. May this be the practice of men in our day, that there be no losing of things that God wrought by them and others (2 John 8).

### Psalm 49

This is the last of this group of eight psalms by the sons of Korah. This, in contrast to the others, contains a message to all the world's inhabitants.

Hear this, all ye peoples;

Give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world:

Both low and high,

Rich and poor together (verses 1, 2).

Though the Old Testament was written largely to God's people Israel, and the New Testament to His New Testament people who were gathered in the churches of God, yet there is contained in both Testaments messages suited to the need of all men. This psalm is of universal application.

My mouth shall speak wisdom;

And the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding.

I will incline mine ear to a parable:

I will open my dark saying upon the harp.

Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil,

When iniquity at my heels compasseth me about? (verses 3, 4, 5).

Much that is spoken today is little better than the rattling noise of a kettledrum, but the psalmist would speak with wisdom, the result of the profound meditation of his heart, which would be of understanding. He would listen to a parable and would open his dark saying upon the harp. He asks, why should he fear in the days of evil, when iniquity

should be so close to him as to be at his heels and should compass him about? The Lord, in the first prophecy of Him as Kinsman-avenger (Genesis 3. 15), was to know iniquity close to Him, when the serpent was to bruise His heel. Never did iniquity surround anyone as it surrounded the Lord, when all earth and hell gathered round Him in the hour and power of darkness.

They that trust in their wealth,  
 And boast themselves in the multitude of their riches;  
 None of them can by any means redeem his brother,  
 Nor give to God a ransom for him:  
 (For the redemption of their soul is costly,  
 And must be let alone for ever: )  
 That he should still live alway.  
 That he should not see corruption (verses 6, 7, 8, 9).

Here is the wisdom of the psalmist, and his dark saying upon the harp. He reveals what many of the wealthy men of earth have never bowed to, the impossibility of the rich to redeem his brother, that he should live for ever and not see corruption. Money has been poured into the coffers of ritualistic religions so that the givers might for their own sake or for their brother's gain eternal life. Rome, the largest system of all such materialistic and ritualistic systems, teaches that it is up to men and women themselves, if they hope to reach heaven and happiness hereafter, but they will assist by a system of penances (personal sufferings), prayers, priests and payments in their endeavour to reach heaven. None can redeem (*QUDAH*, to free, redeem) themselves or others this way by their doing or giving, nor can they give to God a ransom (*KOPHER*, a covering. *KAPHAR* to cover, is often rendered "to make atonement" in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. *KOPHER* is translated "a ransom" in about eight places in the Old Testament). God will accept no ransom for man's costly soul which is under sentence of death because of sin, except by a ransom in blood, and that blood the blood of a sinless victim. Hence believers are not redeemed with such corruptible things as silver or gold, "but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1. 18, 19): "In whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins" (Colossians 1. 14), "Christ Jesus, . . . gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2. 5, 6). Man, if he will hear the words of wisdom from the psalmist and from the psalmist's God, must leave the costly redemption of the human soul alone for ever. But thankful we are beyond words that the Lord Jesus became the Redeemer and gave His life on Calvary a Ransom for many (Matthew 20, 28), so He said Himself.

J. M.

(to be continued D. V. )

Issued by the Churches of God

Obtainable from Needed Truth Publishing Office,  
 Assembly Hall, George Lane, Hayes, Bromley, Kent.

Also from: —Mr. J- Ramage, 44 Tweedsmuir Avenue, Dundas, Ontario, Canada.

Printed by Barretts of Brighton. 42 The Lanes, Brighton  
 incorporating W. J. Starkey Ltd. Est. 1877

# BIBLE STUDIES

"Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17. 11).

VOLUME 35

JUNE, 1947

## EDITORIAL

Many useful books of synonyms have been compiled, but exact synonyms, or words with identical meanings, are almost non-existent in ordinary English. Over a period of many centuries our tongue has been enriched with words drawn from other languages and the words so acquired have in time taken on slightly different meanings from their native counterparts, enabling fine shades of meaning to be accurately conveyed. For example, the New Testament Greek word *martur*, meaning "witness", has been absorbed into our language as "martyr", giving us a special word for one who bears witness by his death. *Exodus* is a Greek word meaning "departure", but the English word "exodus", although similar in meaning, has a rather restricted application. These are simple examples of the many thousands of similar groups of words which, although adding to the complexity of language, at the same time help to make available to writers and speakers a powerful and precise instrument capable, when properly used, of influencing men's minds.

Most Biblical subjects, especially those of a doctrinal nature, require accurate verbal expression in order to convey the right meaning and avoid ambiguity (our "Comments"\* section bears witness to that). Careful writers sometimes find that only after long consideration and the examination of several possible word combinations can the intended meaning be satisfactorily expressed, an experience suggesting that sometimes there may be only one form of words capable of describing precisely the thought in mind.

The problem of translating thoughts into words is connected with the subject of the inspiration of the Scriptures. There is a theory prevalent that the Bible was written by men who were inspired with divine thoughts or ideas which they clothed with their own words. Apart from the doctrinal difficulties of such a suggestion (Matthew 4. 4; John 6. 63), it will not bear examination from the point of view of language. The Bible is far more important than a carefully drafted legal document; it requires such precision in the use of words that there can be little freedom of choice, so the Divine Author could not leave the work to fallible human beings. He must of necessity give men the very words of Holy Writ.

If individual words are so vital, how can we place confidence in English translations when the inspired word was conveyed to men in other languages? We suggest that spiritually-minded scholars dedicated to their task have given us versions which are so close in meaning to the original that subject hearts can learn with accuracy all that is necessary for a godly walk and a correct ecclesiastical position. It is, however, the delight of the student to dig more deeply in order to obtain confirmation of his faith in the tracing out of the more detailed and exact meanings of the words used.

L. B.

**BIBLE STUDIES**  
**THE GOSPEL AND ITS MINISTRY**

**The Gospel According to John**

**John 6. 1-21**

**From Denmark Hill, London.** —This is the only miracle of the Lord that is recorded in all four Gospels and it therefore follows that the Holy Spirit has some important things to teach us from the record of this event [1].

It would appear that the crowds were drawn to the Lord by the miracles He performed, and the large number of people could also be accounted for by the fact that the Passover was nigh. In Matthew 14. 21 we are told that there were women and children in addition to the 5, 000 men. They were orderly, being divided into groups, and all were filled as a result of the miracle the Lord performed. The effect was to make them determined to have the Lord as their king, the spiritual significance being lost upon them.

"Little is much if God is in it" is here most apparent. The barley loaves brought by the lad betrayed the fact that he was very poor, but we do not hear of him refusing to give all that he had to the Lord. God can use the weak things of this world to work out His own purposes!

Philip had weighed up the situation and concluded that their resources were inadequate even that people might take a little. Andrew had hopefully suggested the little lad but spoiled things by his remark, "But what are these among so many?" (verse 9).

The main spiritual lessons we can draw from this incident are as follows: (1) This world is a wilderness, and men are hungering for the Bread of Life whether they realize this need or not. (2) Only Christ can satisfy the hunger of the soul and He uses human instruments to this end. (3) The twelve baskets full show the fulness of the provision. He fully satisfies the longing soul.

The mis-directed enthusiasm of the crowd in seeking to make the Lord a king by force (verse 15) made Him withdraw to a mountain alone. The disciples went by boat, and possibly the Lord had arranged to meet them at some point (Mark 6. 45). The winds were too strong for them and it would seem that they might never have reached their destination. They feared the apparition of Christ (as they thought) **but** the Lord reassured them; their fears went and they gladly received Him into their boat. Immediately they reached their destination.

The spiritual significance, from the point of view of the gospel can be summed up briefly as follows:

(1) Christ's disciples find difficulties and dangers in life's pathway. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood", and "In the world we shall have tribulation" must ever be remembered. (2) When relief is near we often do not recognize the succourer but fear all the more. (3) The Lord soothes our troubled breasts and brings us (if we let Him) at last to our desired haven. With Christ in the vessel we can smile at the storms of life.

*R. F. Robertson*

**From Kilmarnock.** —"And a great multitude followed Him, because they beheld the signs which He did on them that were sick." The multitude were spiritually sick and could be classed as sheep who had gone astray and turned every one to his own way. It has pleased God to relate this incident in all four Gospel accounts. When the Lord lifted His eyes and saw the great multitude He knew that the five thousand men, beside women and children (Matthew 14. 21), were there not for spiritual benefit but rather for material benefit. Even Philip looked on the matter in a material way when his faith was put to the test. It was no surprise to the Lord that a lad was there with five barley loaves and two small fishes (verse 6). The Lord had a fore-knowledge of the situation and knew of the willingness of the lad to give what he had.

Although He was the Divine Creator, the Lord gave thanks, showing to the people His close communion and subjection to the Father. The miracle was then enacted in the distributing of the food, as much as the people needed.

In everything the Lord was engaged in, all was for a divine purpose. As God is not a God of confusion, can we assume that the twelve baskets of broken pieces were not wasted but were for a purpose not disclosed [2]? The people, being swayed by the miracle performed, tried to make Him king, but perceiving their material attitude He withdrew to a quiet place alone.

That Christ is Lord of heaven and earth is shown by His walking on the sea. J. M. Rankine

**From Atherton.** —The Lord employed His disciples in this sign. At the marriage in Cana He worked through the servants. In the case of the nobleman's son He worked alone. Yet in each case the sign was His, but it was His good pleasure to use others while the miracle was being wrought. This would teach us that the way He does His work in saving souls or making disciples may well vary. He may well act apart from human instrumentality, but it is His purpose to work through "earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves" (2 Corinthians 4. 7).

The twelve had been out preaching. They were evangelists. They wrought miracles themselves (see Mark's account), and yet the Lord, whilst later using them in distribution, passes them by and takes up the meagre resources of the lad, to use them in His mighty fulness. This would teach us that the Lord in His work may pass by the public preaching of His talented servants and use the little that an unnamed and obscure person may have.

The Lord commenced to work by blessing and giving thanks (an example to us all). Where was the food multiplied, in the Lord's hands, or in the disciples baskets? The food was multiplied in His hands, for is it not always true that "He that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food, shall supply and multiply" (2 Corinthians 9. 10) [3]? The Lord could have gone on and on with an unlimited supply, but when all were filled the miracle ceased.

The Lord fed the multitude, but specially did He think about those men whom He used graciously in this sign: "Gather up . . . that nothing be lost". The Lord further met the needs of His disciples privately. He is always near, ever ready to rectify what has gone wrong in the boat experiences. Darkness and strong winds made hard and difficult rowing, yet He came with those cheering words, "It is I; be not afraid". With Him joining them all was well and the night's trial was over.

*G. A. Jones*

## EXTRACTS

**From Glasgow (Govan and Partick).** —The Passover turned the thoughts of Israel to the days of deliverance from bondage, and her emergence as God's chosen people. When the commemoration of these things was at hand, the Lord Jesus performed two miracles, one in public, the other before his disciples. One effect of these miracles would be to strengthen the faith of the disciples for their life of witness-bearing. One day He would leave them, and they would toil onward over the sea at His bidding.

In the story of Gideon the barley loaf represented the man whom God used to carry out his purpose. So the disciples were taught not to despise the five barley loaves. They speak of lives taken into the hands of the Lord Jesus to supply the need of multitudes and being themselves enriched, just as the twelve baskets were filled. The Lord said, "This is the will of Him that sent Me, that of all that which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day". The present life of those who enthrone Him in their hearts is like a resurrection life, "dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus". The people wished to take Him by force to make Him king. But what He requires is obedience, even as He was subject to His Father. They were still working for the meat which perisheth, in bondage to that covetousness in man which resulted from the curse upon the ground (**Genesis 3. 17**) [4].

*Eric Archibald*

**From Hamilton.** —The withdrawal of the Lord and His disciples to the other side of Galilee followed several incidents of importance. In Matthew we read that it followed the death of John the Baptist, Mark tells us that it was after the return of the disciples from their mission of preaching and healing, whilst Luke states that Herod at this time sought to see Jesus. Such was the power of healing that Christ had manifested on previous occasions that even in times of sorrow and weariness He was unable to be alone with His disciples, because of the multitude which followed them in order that they also might experience His power.

Although Christ had come for the prime purpose of giving spiritual life and food, yet the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand illustrates that Christ recognized the temporal need of man.

Human resources were small as was seen by the words of Andrew. His observation, "What are these among so many?", served to emphasize the greatness of that which was about to take place. The miracle therefore had a twofold purpose, namely to supply the need of the people, and to emphasize to the disciples the inadequacy of human resources. In

giving thanks for the loaves (verse 11), the Lord demonstrated to that great audience the close relationship which He had with God. The twelve baskets of bread which were gathered demonstrated to us the abundance of God's grace.

The two signs are not isolated incidents but are introductory to the discourses in the following verses. Both prepare the way for the spiritual counterpart, Christ's sustaining, preserving power. *A. R. F.*

**From Methil.** —Though the Lord wished to retire to the privacy of the mountain with His disciples, His compassion was such that He would not turn the people away. The lesson drawn from this is that we, as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, should ever be able to spend time in helping others.

The question was asked, "Why the reference to the Passover here?" (verse 4). This question is answered by John 11. 55, "Many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the passover, to purify themselves". This accounts for the presence of the multitudes.

We noted that John is the only writer who reveals that a young lad provided the loaves and the fishes. Again we saw the careful order in providing for these people. By being seated in companies, speedy distribution and gathering, and a supply for all was effected.

We concluded that the pieces gathered up were part of what the Lord had broken in provision for the people and not crumbs gathered from the grass. This would show to us the abundance of the provision made by the Lord. The application for us today is that we receive and pass on to the multitudes, and yet there is ample left over for our own use, and for further evangelization or exhortation.

We observed that according to Mark's account, the Lord not only provided for the physical needs of the people, but that He also taught them many things, thus providing for their spiritual needs. The multitudes were an embarrassment to the disciples and so they sought to send them away, but the Lord was able to meet the emergency. We saw a threefold reason for the feeding of the 5, 000: (1) His compassion, (2) that He might prove His disciples and (3) to reveal Himself as the Bread out of Heaven. He also gave the perfect example in His giving thanks for the food (1 Thessalonians 5. 18). This would appear to have had an impression on the minds of the people. *A. R. Smith*

**From Whitehills and Macduff.** —Jesus did signs and wonders so that men might see in Him the power of God. The multitude followed Him, some to be healed and others to see His wonderful works, and this was the opportune time for the Lord to teach them.

The Lord was concerned about getting food for the multitude to eat, yet we remember when He spoke to the woman at the well and the disciples begged Him to eat He could say, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me". He knew how little faith His disciples had in Him when He asked the question of Philip, "Whence are we to buy bread, that these may eat?" His disciples who had seen the water turned into wine should have known that their Lord was sufficient to meet

their every need, as He can meet ours today if we place our trust in Him. This miracle shows the divine power of the Lord, for He actually created food to feed these hungry people. They ate until they were filled. The Lord is able to satisfy the hungry soul. The Lord gave abundantly, and twelve baskets of fragments were gathered.

When the disciples crossed the sea without the Lord they found themselves in difficult circumstances as darkness fell and the wind grew. John 6. 17 says, "And Jesus had not yet come to them". We wondered if the Lord had appeared to them in this manner before [5]. The situation in which they found themselves seemed worse when they saw this figure walking on the sea, but it changed immediately the Lord spoke to them and said, "It is I; be not afraid". The nearer we stay to the Lord the more help we can draw from Him.

We estimate that it took at least four tons of fish and a like quantity of **bread** to **feed** these people. *J. H. Mitchell*

**From Birmingham.** —A comparison of the Gospels reveals very little record of the Lord's words to the multitude on this occasion. We wondered at the fact that, whatever things He began to teach the multitude (Mark 6. 34), these are not included in the narratives. We concluded that the Lord taught many things and did many signs that are not revealed in Scripture, although beyond doubt, all that is needed for men to know is placed on record [6]. John 6. 2 tells us that the multitude followed Him because of the signs He did. As Shepherd the Lord Jesus saw them as sheep, and fed them, both with spiritual and natural food. The Lord's power and control over men is seen in His making them sit down in an orderly way. The people saw in this sign an indication of "the Prophet that cometh into the world", which we believe refers to the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 18. 15. They sought to make Him king by force. The Lord Jesus, perceiving this, withdrew Himself. Such a design on their part was not the result of repentance towards God and the accepting of His Son by faith.

*H. Smith*

**From Vancouver, B. C.** —Our Lord did not perform this miracle to sway crowds to Him but only for the ensuing lesson in it. It was the crowd which misinterpreted His action and would have made Him king. We must not allow human intellect to over-ride the ministry of the gospel. It is human nature to turn away from spiritual counsel. Men are unwilling to have their sins pointed out to them. And yet it is the starting point of the gospel that men should be made aware of their sins.

The miracle brought food for a hungry people in the desert. Perhaps this would remind some of those present of the manna that had been provided for their forefathers. This is characteristic in John's ministry, that he links present happenings with Old Testament incidents which become their antitype. The substance for the miracle was provided by a small boy [7] who gave what he had. The Lord magnified this to His own glory. This is the case in our ministry of the gospel. Any little witness can be greatly blessed to God's glory. It took faith not only on the lad's part to give his offering, but also on Andrew's part to receive it and for the disciples to distribute it.

Philip's answer meant that only a little would be available for each, even if two hundred pennyworth were obtained. But we read that they were all filled. The gospel never offers a meagre blessing. The loaves were made from barley, the earliest crop from which was made the bread of the common people. The gospel is the firstfruits from God, and is available to all mankind. *J. Pope, J. Bell Jr.*

**From Cardiff.** —The Lord was pleased to take up a lad with just five loaves and two fishes and use these in the performing of this great sign. We are encouraged that He still takes the insignificant and the poor, and is pleased to use such in His great work today (1 Corinthians 1. 27).

The Lord Jesus went away alone into the mountain, whilst the disciples, being on the sea, were battling against the winds. In their adverse circumstances He came to them and brought peace and encouragement. "It is I; be not afraid": these words are just as precious today, especially to disciples passing through trying circumstances upon the sea of life.

When He came, the disciples were transported from where they were to where they would be. It was a miracle, yet not to be compared with our experience in the coming day, "Caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord". What a transportation that will be! *C. V. Dodge*

**From Melbourne.** —Perhaps many followed the Lord hoping that He would meet their needs, as was the case of Israel in the desert. The Passover, which became a feast of the Jews, was evidently the opportune time for the Lord to reveal Himself as the Bread of Life, the One of whom the manna so wonderfully spoke. In considering the testing of Philip we thought of how Israel doubted God in the wilderness (Exodus 16).

The value of lads in the service of the Lord is evident. The Lord can always use the little, either in persons or things, if willingly offered to serve Him.

In the portion we see three miracles, the feeding of the five thousand, the walking on the water by the Lord, and also, when the Lord Jesus entered the boat, forthwith they were at land.

In the darkness of troubled waters the glory of the Lord shone and then He entered the boat. *W. H. F.*

**From Carlisle.** —It was characteristic of Andrew to find the lad, and he brought him to the Lord, unsure that the lad's meal would be sufficient. That the lad chose to give all should not go unnoticed by those who would serve the Lord, and his unselfish action is worthy of imitation. Insignificant though his contribution appeared, in the hands of an all-sufficient Provider ample refreshment was provided for all. We were impressed by the orderliness of the gathering and noticed in particular the manner in which the food was distributed. The loaves

were broken by the Lord, and the pieces handed by Him to the disciples. They in turn distributed the food and returned empty-handed to receive fresh supplies from Him. What a striking lesson for those who would feed the hungry souls around us to-day!

The incident of the Lord walking upon the water, and of His timely appearance to His distressed disciples, suggests something of our experiences on life's seas. This lake was subject to sudden storms, and although the disciples would be well aware of this they were powerless. When He came into the boat, the lake was calm, and they were safely at the shore. It seems clear that it needed more than the miracle of the feeding of the 5, 000 to prove to the disciples His great power. The sight of Him walking on the water, and His words, "It is I; be not afraid", were alone sufficient to dispel their doubt.

*R. H., J. H., J. D. T.*

**From Derby.** —The Lord's compassion was great towards all those hungry people and through the whole of His life. He was touched by the needs of those around Him. This same Jesus looks down upon men today and is still willing and longing to supply their need, and His children's needs as well.

Philip did not seem to expect a miracle, and Jesus questioned him to test his faith. The other disciples too looked at things in the natural way, and decided there was not enough food for all. However, Jesus fed them abundantly and we notice that His thanksgiving preceded the miracle.

The Lord Jesus could have set up an earthly kingdom, if He had desired it. His miracles were enough to show men who He was, for they revealed His divine power and majesty.

*A. K. Smith, G. W. Conway*

**From Aberkenfig and Barry.** —Isaiah prophesied that many of the mighty works of Christ would be done in Galilee of the nations (Isaiah 9. 1). This region was despised by the Jews yet honoured and graced by God for the manifesting of Christ's power. Some of the apostles were from this area and the people seemed responsive to the message of the Master [8].

Andrew did wisely in bringing to the Lord even the little that the lad had to offer. The great Creator and Provider of all living creatures gave thanks for his humble gift and provided a feast for the multitude "as much as they would". There is no limit to the provision the Lord makes for all who will avail themselves. In this we see a picture of God's salvation to all men.

The expression in verse 14, "This is of a truth the Prophet" is found elsewhere in John and indicates that the promise of Moses in Deuteronomy 18. 18 was in the Jews' thoughts and they were looking for one who could fit this description. The omniscience of the Lord Jesus is seen in His knowledge of their desire to make Him king. It would seem, however, that in their limited appreciation of Him they were thinking of a temporal king only. It needed but a spokesman for the multitude to acknowledge Him, but although He had the right to claim their allegiance, He did not seek it in this way. *B. V. F.*

**From Glasgow, Parkhead.** —When the Lord Jesus took the bread into His hands and gave thanks to His Father His perfect Humanity was displayed. In nothing did He ever glorify Himself, but rather by performing this miracle, He openly glorified the Father. After this He gave the disciples the bread and fishes to distribute that they might realize they had something to do for the Master, not only then but also afterwards in a greater service for mankind (Matthew 28. 18-20). The lad must have been insignificant in the multitude, yet the Lord received from him the loaves and fishes. "God chose the weak things of the world, that He might put to shame the things that are strong" (1 Corinthians 1. 27-29). Whatever gifts or possessions may be ours, no matter how small or limited, God can use them. Who can predict the potentialities of sanctified gifts in the Lord's hands?

When the disciples were in the boat in their passage across the sea to go to Capernaum, it was dark and the sea was rising by reason of a great wind. Before this they had witnessed the Lord's omnipotent power but they failed to trust their unseen Lord amidst the storm. As He walked upon the sea and drew nigh to the boat, they failed to recognize Him, and they were afraid. Then the Lord spoke to them words of assurance, so they received Him into their boat. Even so in the sea of life we should trust in the Lord. Although unseen, He is ever near.

#### COMMENTS

[1] **Denmark Hill.** —The Synoptics had dealt with the Lord's Galilean ministry (Matthew 4. 12—15. 20; Mark 1. 14—7. 23; Luke 4. 14—9. 17). John has recorded the two miracles that occurred at the beginning of this ministry (John 4. 46-54), and in John 6 he proceeds to give his eye-witness account of the miracle marking almost the close of that ministry. In his record John furnishes some details, omitted by the synoptics, that fulfil his purpose, as stated in 20. 30, 31, namely the majesty of the Messiah.

These are, (1) the reason why the multitudes followed Him (verse 2); (2) the location was on a mountain (verse 3); (3) the proving of Philip (verses 5, 7), who magnifies the difficulties; (4) the naming of Andrew (verse 8), who stresses the smallness of the resources (viz. Greek *opsaria*, a diminutive = little fishes, a different word from the Synoptics); (5) Christ's pre-knowledge (verse 6); (6) that twelve basketsful of broken pieces were collected (verses 12, 13); and (7), most important, that the people were linking up the prophecy of Moses in Deuteronomy 18. 15, 18 with the Lord (verse 14, compare also John 4. 19). *Jas. M.*

[2] **Kilmarnock.** —It is possible that what was gathered up provided food for the disciples themselves. See the Lord's questions on an occasion when they forgot to take bread (Matthew 16. 9, 10). *Jas. M.*

[3] **Atherton.** —The verb tenses in Mark 6 41 help us, in a little way, to understand the miracle. He "brake", one act (the aorist tense). "He began to give", a continuous act (the imperfect tense). With regard to the fishes He "divided" among them all (the aorist tense) showing that the fish was distributed once, unlike the bread which He continued to give to the disciples for distribution until all were satisfied. *Jas. M.*

[4] **Glasgow, Govan and Partick.** —Covetousness entered man's heart before the ground was cursed. There was no shortage of food in Eden, yet Adam and Eve coveted the forbidden fruit. *L. B.*

[5] **Whitehills and Macduff.** —It does not seem that the disciples had seen Jesus walking on the water on any previous occasion, otherwise they would not have been afraid. The Lord sent the disciples on before Him (Matthew 14. 22) and they may have expected to see Him at some lakeside rendezvous during the journey. *L. B.*

[6] **Birmingham.** —No doubt the Lord spoke many words which are not recorded. However, most would agree that he taught only what is contained in Scripture, conversely all that He taught will be found somewhere in the Bible, not necessarily in the four Gospels. *L. B.*

[7] **Vancouver, B. C.** —Greek *paidapion* although a diminutive, means a young lad, not necessarily a small boy. The Lord used what the lad provided, but we should focus our minds on what the Lord did as He broke off fragments of the loaves and the fishes, and *began* to distribute. *Jas. M.*

[8] **Aberkenfig.** —Although the people of Galilee received the Lord (John 4. 45) and His ministry made an impression on them (Luke 4. 14-15, 22), few believed on Him (Matthew 11. 20-24; John 4. 43, 44) and at times there was active opposition (Luke 4. 28-30). *L. B.*

There is a striking parallel between John 5. 18, where the Lord was rejected in Judea, and John 6. 60, where He was rejected in Galilee. These rejections but tend to high-light, in subsequent chapters, the tender love of the Saviour as set against human ingratitude. *Jas. M.*

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Questions from Derby.** —(a) Why did the disciples leave without the Lord Jesus? Had He told them to go on, or was there some other reason (verse 17)? (b) Was it coincidence or a miracle that they were straightway at the land (verse 21)?

**Answers**—(a) The Lord constrained the disciples to go to the other side before Him (Matthew 14. 22; Mark 6. 45). (b) It was a miracle. When the Lord came to the disciples they had rowed over three miles (John 6. 19) and they were far from the land (Matthew 14. 24). *L. B.*

**Question from Atherton.** —To what extent would the Lord use Judas Iscariot in connexion with the carrying out of His work?

**Answer.** —If the Lord had excluded Judas from the ministry common to the other eleven disciples they would have looked upon him as being different from themselves. There is no indication of this in the Gospels. The eleven do not seem to have had any inkling of the final role of Judas until the meeting in the upper room; even then they misunderstood the import of the Lord's words (John 13. 21-30). *L. B.*

## Psalm 49

*(Continued from page 60)*

For he seeth that wise men die,  
 The fool and the brutish together perish,  
 And leave their wealth to others.  
 Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever,  
 And their dwelling places to all generations;  
 They call their lands after their own names (verses 10, 11).

The wise man dies, as doth the fool and the brutish, for "it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgement" (Hebrews 9. 27). But though they die they do not carry their wealth away with them, they leave it to others. Their inward thought is still, though long centuries have passed since this psalm was written, that their houses shall continue for ever, even to all generations, and their lands are still called by their own names.

But man abideth not in honour:

He is like the beasts that perish (verse 12).

The honour of some few men has been both national and international, but how soon the tinsel glory of this world fades! for however honourable man may be, his honour passes away, and he is like the beasts that perish. But, alas, man does not perish like a beast, for for him it will be—"after this the judgement". For the beast there is no judgement.

This their way is their folly:

Yet after them men approve their sayings.

[Selah]

They are appointed as a flock for Sheol (Hell);

Death shall be their shepherd:

And the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning;

And their beauty shall be for Sheol to consume, that there be no habitation for it (verses 13, 14).

The way of man, as to his wealth, his houses, dwelling places and his lands, as mentioned in verses 10, 11, is man's folly, yet when they are gone men approve their sayings, which are held by many of greater importance than the sayings of God and of Christ in the Scriptures. In man's case his sayings are lifeless, but those of the Scriptures are the living Oracles. What a description of the multitudes of natural men who have never known the experience of the new birth:

"They are appointed as a flock for Sheol (Hell);

Death shall be their shepherd"!

But how true are the words! You can easily get a mental conception of this flock, and also of death, their shepherd, as he raises his hand and puts them down one by one to Sheol. How different is the case of the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep that He might take them to heaven where He is (John 10. 8, 9, 11, 14. 1-3). Who are the upright that shall have dominion over this flock? and what is the morning that is referred to in verse 14? Does it refer to such as go down to Sheol? Or is it anticipating the time when the Lord and His saints shall have dominion over the earth and a complete change will take place as to man's outlook on the things of this earth? I must leave this to the reader to find the answers. Man's beauty (Hebrew *TSIR*, form) shall be for Sheol to consume, that there be no habitation (Hebrew

ZEBUL, dwelling or habitation) for it. To see lost souls would be a sight of horror, all their form or beauty will be gone. We know well what death can do to the body, we have looked upon the dead, but what a sight lost souls will be!

But God will redeem my soul from (*he* power of Sheol:

For He shall receive me (verse 15). [Selah

All souls went to Sheol prior to the death and resurrection of the Lord, the righteous to upper Sheol, to the place called Paradise (Luke 23. 43), and the wicked to lower Sheol (Hell), the place of fiery torment (Luke 16. 23, 24). Now the righteous at death go to heaven to be with Christ and to be at home with the Lord (Philippians 1. 23, 2 Corinthians 5. 8), and the wicked still go to Hell at death. In contrast to the portion of the wicked in Sheol, the psalmist knew that God would redeem his soul from the power of Sheol and would receive him. This was the assurance of faith.

Be not thou afraid when one is made rich,  
 When the glory of his house is increased:  
 For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away;  
 His glory shall not descend after him.  
 Though while he lived he blessed his soul,  
 And men praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself,  
 (verses 16, 17, 18).

The psalmist encourages such as know God the Redeemer not to be afraid when one is made rich. The would be rich have often been a danger (Proverbs 1. 10-16). By means of riches the glory of the house of the **rich** is increased. The word glory (Hebrew **KABOD**) means what is heavy. We see in 2 Corinthians 4. 17 that Paul considered glory a weight, from the meaning of the Hebrew word, when he wrote of "an eternal weight of glory". The rich can carry nothing away, and their glory will not descend to Sheol with them. As long as the rich man lived he blessed his soul, and men praise such as do well for themselves. It is usual in this country that titles are given to the rich and prosperous.

He shall go to the generation of his fathers;  
 They shall never see the light.  
 Man that is in honour, and understandeth not,  
 Is like the beasts that perish (verses 19, 20).

The soul that descends into Sheol (Hell) will go to the generation of his fathers who were materially and earthly minded as he was, and sad to say, "They shall never see the light", for their abode will be in outer darkness (Matthew 8. 12, 22. 13, 25. 30). The poor man who has a knowledge of God's salvation and of God's ways, who shares no earthly honour is far, far better off than the man loaded with earthly wealth and honour; the latter is just like the beasts that perish. J. M.

Issued by the Churches of God

Obtainable from Needed Truth Publishing Office,  
 Assembly Hall, George Lane, Hayes, Bromley, Kent.

Also from: —Mr. J. Ramage, 44 Tweedsmuir Avenue, Dundas, Ontario, Canada.

Printed by Barretts of Brighton, 42 The Lanes, Brighton  
 incorporating W. J. Starkey Ltd. Est. 1877

# BIBLE STUDIES

"Now these were **more noble than** those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with **all** readiness of mind, examining the **Scriptures** daily, whether these **things** were so" (Acts 17. 11).

VOLUME 35

JULY, 1967

## EDITORIAL

In New Testament times the Jews looked upon their past history with excessive pride. Because of centuries of oppression by **foreign** powers they tended to dwell upon the glories of Old Testament events and characters rather than allow themselves to be depressed by their day to day difficulties. They rightly claimed to be the seed of Abraham but wrongly deduced that they had never been in bondage to anyone, whereas the Lord pointed out that they were slaves to sin (John 8. 33-37). John the Baptist saw the danger they were in and warned that there was no virtue in claiming Abraham as their father (Matthew 3. 9), for God's people would be a spiritual people chosen on grounds other than earthly relationships. They trusted in Moses (John 5. 45); they claimed to be his disciples, and the words of the Lord on many occasions show that they regarded Moses with greater veneration than any other Old Testament character.

In studying John 6 it should be noted that it was the people, pre-occupied with their traditions, who raised the question of the manna. Rather than accept the salvation which the Lord was offering, they tried to belittle it by a comparison with a dead past. Any interpretation of the Lord's words must therefore take account of the fact that *He* did not compare the manna with the true Bread from heaven; He rather showed the deep contrast between them. Although the manna may be regarded as typical of our day by day feeding upon the word of God, we would suggest that this thought is not prominent in chapter 6 until near the end of the Lord's discourse. As far as verse 54 the Lord is speaking of eternal salvation, but in verse 56 the emphasis seems to have changed. "Abideth" ("remains", Marshall's literal translation) recalls John 15. 4-8, where the same word is used. In the latter portion the Lord is speaking to the eleven disciples in private about fruit bearing and discipleship. There are therefore good **reasons for** inferring that the teaching of John 6. 56 is on similar lines.

**L. B.**

### Discussion of Prophetic Character of Daniel 11

Widespread interest in prophetic developments is being stimulated by recent events in the Middle East, and this seems an appropriate time to introduce a special discussion feature on Daniel 11. The following questions have been submitted as a guide to the exploration of this difficult and involved prophetic chapter:

- (a) Which part of the chapter awaits fulfilment?
- (b) Who is "the king" of verse 36?
- (c) Is the "king of the north" (verse 40) the first beast of Revelation 13?
- (d) How does "the end" of verse 45 fit in with Revelation 19. 19?

It is wise to approach such subjects in the spirit of 1 Cor. 7. 25, and any who feel they have a constructive contribution to offer to the discussion are invited to submit papers to Mr. J. Martin not later than the 31st August, 1967. The following article will serve as introduction to Question (a), but further papers on this aspect of the problem will be welcome, as well as on the other questions raised. *Eds.*

### WHICH PART OF DANIEL CHAPTER 11 AWAITS FULFILMENT?

This question was discussed in *Bible Studies* 1952, pages 109-116, when varying views were put forward. As a basis for further discussion it would be useful to consider the suggestions which were then made.

Some thought that the unfulfilled part of the chapter was from verse 21 onwards, whilst others thought that the break was between verses 35 and 36. In favour of the first suggestion it was argued that verse 31 must be future, because the Lord connects the abomination of desolation referred to in that verse with the events preceding the coming of the Son of Man (Matthew 24. 15-30). The king mentioned in verse 31 is first described in verse 21; but verses 1-20 can be recognised as historical, so it can be inferred that the division comes between verses 20 and 21. Those who put the division later, between verses 35 and 36, recognise in verses 21 to 35 a strong resemblance to the history of Antiochus Epiphanes. The fact that the abomination that maketh desolate is mentioned in verse 31 is not a difficulty if the Lord's words in Matthew 24. 15 refer to Daniel 12. 11 rather than Daniel 11. 31.

Two other methods of dividing the chapter were suggested by contributors, but these did not appear to be supported. The arguments outlined above may not be entirely convincing to some students, who would prefer to seek an alternative answer to the problem. It is therefore suggested that it is not really necessary to suppose a hard and fast division between fulfilled and unfulfilled prophecy. Is it not a peculiarity of many prophecies that they have, viewed from the standpoint of the present dispensation, both a historical and a prophetic application? (Note that we say "application" not "fulfilment")- For instance, although Psalm 2. 1-3 had an application to the Crucifixion, verses 1-9 will actually be fulfilled at the coming to earth of the Son of Man. Again, it is well known that Joel 2. 28-32 applied to the day of Pentecost but its fulfilment is yet future. Perhaps more closely parallel to the subject under discussion is the LORD'S promise to David concerning his successor (1 Chronicles 17. 11-14). Verse 11 must have a reference to Solomon because of the words "when thy days are fulfilled", but verses 12-14 can only be fulfilled in Christ. Thus the entire prophecy, as to fulfilment, is of Christ.

It is suggested that the Holy Spirit uses this particular prophetic method in Daniel 11, and there is no difficulty in considering the whole, or at least the major part of the chapter, as being a divinely interwoven complex of both past and future events which it may be impossible to unravel until their consummation.

*L. B.*

### THE GOSPEL AND ITS MINISTRY

#### John 6. 22-71

**From** Hamilton. —The Lord's address as to His being the Bread of Life was to the inhabitants of Capernaum, who the day before beheld His miracle, partook of His bounty, and, had He permitted, would have proclaimed Him king.

The abiding meat (verse 27) must be sought and got, and the Son of Man bestows what no one by wisdom or strength of his own can procure. It is not of works but of faith; not of merit but of grace (Romans 4. 4-6). The only labour admissible in connexion with salvation is that of believing [1]. The Galileans made a grave mistake when they ascribed to the creature that which came from the Creator; they thought rather of Moses than of Jehovah the Giver. It is an error to ascribe the conversion of a sinner to the eloquence of the preacher instead of the quickening power of the Holy Spirit (John 6, 63).

The Bread of God came not from earth but from heaven; not from the hand of Moses but by the hand of God. There is a tendency to mistake the typical for the real, the shadow for the substance. Christ's hearers imagined the Bread of Life to be only a better sort of manna, as the woman of Samaria thought that Christ intended to give her in the living water merely a refreshing liquid of finer quality than Jacob's well could furnish.

The manna was a temporary gift; at the borders of the Promised Land it disappeared. While the Israelites ate it they died, but the Bread of Life will endure for ever, -and will satisfy every want of the soul.

The Bread of Life to which Christ alluded was not a dead material thing but a living spiritual Person: Himself, capable of giving and sustaining life.

The Son of Man is the Bread of Life (verses 35, 48, and 51). It was nothing impersonal or material outside Himself such as His doctrine, His example, or even His death, but Himself in His divine-human personality.

*Andrew A. Collington*

**From Vancouver, B. C.** —It sometimes happens, when dealing with the unsaved, that we cannot read their thoughts, consequently we have difficulty in presenting the facet of the gospel that meets their need. But the Lord knew the true reasons why the multitudes came to Him (verse 26) and knew the points to touch on. The Lord spoke of Himself as "the Bread of Life", "the Bread of God", "the Living Bread" and "the True Bread". Each presents a different aspect of the gospel and yet each could be grasped by anyone among the common people present.

The Jews refused to look on Jesus as from heaven but rather saw Him as Joseph's Son. Today few believe that Christ is the Son of God. The Lord showed how inextricably He is linked with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit first convinces men of sin, then the Father draws them. Finally Christ accepts them (verse 37). Salvation is not of works, as the Jews perhaps thought when they asked the question, "What must we do, that we may work the works of God?" The work of God is that men should believe on the One He sent. They were to receive Him and believe on Him by eating and drinking of Him. This is not a literal act but rather identification through faith (John 3. 16 [2]).

These truths that the Lord was setting forth caused some of His disciples to stumble. The natural or carnal man cannot understand spiritual sayings. Those who like Peter did not go away had received this eternal nature and had enough spiritual insight to grasp the truth.

Verses 64 and 65 mention the subject of predestination. However, the Lord here speaks only of knowing beforehand of those who believe

not and the one who would betray Him. He uses different words of those who believe. "No man can come unto Me, except it be given unto him of the Father". *J. Bell Jr., J. Pope*

**From Atherton.** —In verses 26-40 the Lord speaks to the same people that had been miraculously fed the previous day. Verses 41-59 seem to introduce some particular Jews with a greater knowledge than others, and finally verses 60-71 reveal the disciples' response. The varied opinions expressed reveal the characteristics of mankind, and may provide lessons for our service in the gospel.

The fickleness of the human race as indicated by a multitude that one day clamoured for the Lord to be their king, while the next day sought Him merely because He had met their material needs, emphasizes the importance of stressing the complete satisfaction which can only be realized in the acceptance of the Son of God because of who He is. The desire to do something to gain eternal life is evident in the question, "What must we do, that we may work the works of God?" but belief in good works as a means of obtaining eternal life is countered by the reply of the Lord in verse 29. In spite of the previous day's miracle, there was a demand for a further sign. Likewise the people of the twentieth century would not "be persuaded, if one rise from the dead", but the Lord said, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed".

The request recorded in verse 34 appears to have had no higher motive than that of selfish gain. The motive of self-gratification has never been more evident than now; "Men shall be lovers of self". This cuts right across man's obligation, whether under law or grace, to love the Lord his God. The query of these professedly learned men (verse 42) was a challenge as to His origin. The warning note must be raised in the gospel message again and again, "Except ye believe that I AM, ye shall die in your sins". Even some of His disciples found these sayings of His extremely difficult, perhaps because of their anticipation of His immediate assumption of the kingdom. The terms of the gospel are "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried; and that He hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures".

Some discussion ranged around verse 27, where the Lord speaks of working "for the meat which abideth unto eternal life". Two thoughts were expressed, (1) that the Lord explains this injunction by the words of verse 29, and (2) that here He is drawing the essential contrast between the material and spiritual outcome of labour [3]. *E. B.*

### EXTRACTS

**From Whitehills and Macduff.** —The multitude sought Jesus, but with the wrong purpose in their hearts. Jesus came not to give unto men things that were to perish but that men might have life and be raised up at the last day. Faith was lacking in these people, for their carnal minds sought after earthly satisfaction which would pass away, leaving them empty. The Bread of Life was now in their midst with power to satisfy eternally, but they sought to find favour with God by works.

They brought before Jesus the great miracle of the manna in the wilderness. The very fact that their fathers found sustenance in the

manna proves that their faith was strong, for they had to believe it was given them, they had to gather and also partake. God had now given a greater sign, even His Son, the Bread of Life. The Jews had only to do as their fathers did, and they would never die but have eternal life. Alas they saw no need for this; they hardened their hearts **and** would **not** believe that He was from God.

*Jas Mitchell*

**From Aberkenfig and Barry.** —"All that which the Father giveth Me shall come unto Me" (verse 37). Here we see the sublime truth of divine fore-ordination; the Father has fore-ordained those who are to be saved. This truth is difficult for the mind to grasp, perhaps impossible. God has laid down in His purposes that this one and that one should be saved, and yet when the gospel is preached there is the call to "whosoever will", which is also according to God's purposes.

The Lord uses the three descriptions, "I am the Bread of God", "I am the Bread of life" and "I am the living Bread". He is the One who came to give everlasting life by giving His flesh. He is the Source of spiritual life, the Bread of God which cometh down out of heaven and giveth life to the world. But not only is the Lord the Source of life but He is also the Sustainer of that life, and apart from constantly feeding upon Him as the Bread of life, it is not possible for the believer to live spiritually. This latter truth is, we think, seen in verse 56, where the Lord says, "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me, and I in him". Abiding in Christ is necessary for fruit-bearing (John 15. 4). John 14. 23 also makes clear the condition for the Father and the Son abiding *with* a man.

*R. C. J.*

**From Melbourne.** —The multitudes followed the Lord Jesus Christ because they had been miraculously fed by Him. Their thoughts were full of the manna which Israel ate when on the way to Canaan, and possibly they were thinking that by following Him they would be given natural food by Him.

He discerned their thoughts and exhorted them to work for the "meat which abideth unto eternal life" (verse 27). He revealed Himself as the Bread of Life come down from heaven to meet the need of mankind. The Cross was before Him as He spoke, for He explained that the Bread is His body, "the bread which I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world" (verse 51) [4]. He was to give His body at Calvary to meet our need as sinners. The eating and drinking (verse 53) is a spiritual experience which takes place when a sinner accepts the Lord Jesus as his Saviour, thus by faith appropriating His death and being eternally satisfied thereby. The Living Bread imparts eternal life to all who partake of Him by faith.

This discourse caused the Jews to strive with one another, and caused many of His disciples to turn back. Those who did not receive His words did not partake of the Living Bread, but those who believed would know the truth of Psalm 107. 9, "He satisfieth the longing soul, and the hungry soul He filleth with good". When questioned by the Lord, Peter as spokesman for the apostles said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life".

*P. W. A.*

**From Birmingham.** —The people asked the Lord, "What then doest Thou for a sign, that we may see, and believe Thee? what workest

Thou?" and yet, five thousand or more were fed from five loaves and two fishes only the day before. What wonderful truths He revealed concerning Himself when they mentioned the manna! He described Himself as the true Bread from Heaven, the Bread of God and the Bread of Life. Those that had eaten the manna had died, but the living Bread was for a man to eat and live for ever.

The people could not understand how they could eat His flesh, but the words of the Lord are very clear in verse 53, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have not life in yourselves". Even His disciples murmured at His sayings. Apparently many had not believed and therefore His words offended them, and caused them to turn back and walk no more with Him. *D. P. Brown*

**From Glasgow, Parkhead.** —Against the dark background of unbelief there shines out the teaching of the Master concerning Himself as the Bread of Life. This they sought in their unbelief to discredit and minimize by comparing the giving of the manna in the wilderness with His miraculous feeding of the multitude. The manna which was given daily and had to be gathered daily did not prevent death, but of Himself He said, "I am the Living Bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever: yea and the Bread which I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world" (verse 51).

The manna was typical of Him who was Himself "The Bread of Life", who also said to the multitude, "I am come down from heaven" (verse 38). By believing on Him they could partake of Him. Then that further word would be fulfilled in them, "For this is the will of My Father, that every one that beholdeth the Son, and believeth on Him, should have eternal life". It is sad to think that, because of His teaching concerning Himself and the life that they could receive through Him, there was murmuring concerning Him among His disciples. *R. Shaw*

**From Denmark Hill, London.** —In pursuing the Lord to Capernaum, the multitudes lusted after that which He could give them to satisfy their natural appetites. The Lord in upbraiding them taught them to strive not after the things that perish, but to believe on Him who alone could give everlasting sustenance. Their forefathers had subsisted on manna for forty years in the wilderness and although it had come down from heaven, eternal life was not in that bread.

The manna had to be collected six days a week from the ground outside the Israelites' tents. Anyone desiring the Bread of Life must come to Him. Not one needed to go without food a single day out of the forty long years in the wilderness, for God sent down ample supplies. Yet it had to be gathered up early before the sun melted it all away. Waiting until death to believe on the Lord is too late, and He tenderly assured them that everyone who in life comes to Him will not be cast out. He later added that those who can come to Him are only those who are drawn first by the Father (verse 44). The work of bringing a soul to Christ is the work of God. The testimony of the Lord in verse 45 is that one must be taught of God, hear from the Father, and learn, before coming to the Son. Thus it is impossible for the Lord to lose anything that the Father gives Him, for He will raise it up in a future day (verses 39, 40). *Mark McKaig*

**From Toronto.** —Verse 40 refers to the "last day" which, according to the context, applies to the resurrection of those that are Christ's at His coming. (See Question from Derby (1) Eds. ). We would not overlook the fact of the Jews' hope of resurrection, handed down from the time of Abraham, who believed that God would raise up Isaac (Genesis 22. 5, "We . . . will come again"); and is seen clearly by Martha's words concerning the raising up of her brother Lazarus "at the last day" (John 11. 24). Assurance is given as to the resurrection of the individual believer (verse 39) of whom Christ will lose none. Thus there is also a possible reference to Revelation 20. 5.

Concerning verse 44, men are not only drawn by the Father, but also by the Son, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself" (John 12. 32), and (in this day of grace) the Holy Spirit convicts "the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement", to bring men to Christ. Here we see divine unity in action.

In verse 35 we see the wonderful possibility of continuous feeding, and the constant satisfaction derived from believing. This passage leads from the giving of life to the living of the life given. Moses never gave life. Only through God's power was he able to sustain life. Christ is not only the Giver, but the Sustainer of life, both natural and spiritual.

In verse 51 the reference to the flesh is a reference to the whole Person of Christ, not just common flesh, but the Word that became flesh. He also partook, of course, of flesh and blood. From verse 51 onwards the mention of flesh and blood is not a reference to the Remembrance. Its significance is seen in the presentation of the Lord Jesus as God's provision.

In verse 70 the Lord speaks of Judas as a devil. Later, we know, that Satan entered into the heart of Judas in the upper room.

*L. Gillespie*

**From Carlisle.** —The unbelief on the part of the multitude was to be matched by the Jews (verse 42) in the matter of the Lord's heavenly origin, by His disciples (verses 60 and 66) in the matter of the hard saying about His body and blood, and even amongst the Twelve in the case of Judas. We noted how the Lord's communication in this chapter narrows progressively from the multitude to the Twelve. The Lord would not withhold divine truth from any of these groups because He knew that some would be stumbled. There is surely a deep lesson here for us with regard to the whole counsel of God.

In considering the meaning of the verses concerning the eating and drinking of the flesh and blood of the Lord as a requirement for spiritual life, we briefly reviewed some of the errors which have flowed from misinterpretation of the passage, and the evidence in the Lord's own words in this chapter which show clearly the spiritual significance of the words. With regard to the latter point, we especially noted the preceding words of verse 47, "He that believeth hath eternal life", one of the clearest statements that spiritual life flows from faith; also in verse 63, "the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life", equally clearly disclaiming a literal, material application of the eating and drinking of His body and blood. Errors flowing from such

a wrong interpretation include: (1) violation of the truth of salvation by faith alone, and an introduction of works, (2) confusion with regard to the Remembrance, "Transubstantiation" doctrine and the "Eucharist" as a means of grace and (3) doctrinal error involving repeated sacrifice of Christ (Hebrews 9. 24-28). *J. H., J. D. T.*

**From Methil**—The Lord said, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (verse 37). No matter who come and whatever their sad state, if they come to the Lord Jesus they will not be rejected, and that promise still stands today.

The "last day" (verse 54), we judge is "the day of the Lord" and is associated with the Lord's return to earth for His thousand years' reign. In John 6 the Lord addresses Jews who could have died before Pentecost and if they had believed on the Lord Jesus they would be among the "blessed dead" Old Testament saints who will be raised just before the Millennium [5]. In John 6 the Lord spoke about bread and then led His hearers on to think of the living Bread, so that they said (verse 34), "Lord, evermore give us this Bread". How necessary bread is! Even so, "Man doth not live by bread only, but by every thing that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live" (Deuteronomy 8, 3). The natural body needs bread, but the new life is from the Bread from heaven.

It is necessary to eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood to have eternal life (verse 54). For His flesh is true meat and His blood is true drink. To have eternal life abiding in us involves feeding on Christ. And so to know Christ, we feed upon the living word of God (John 17. 3) [6]. *N. G. Coomer*

From Derby. —The people wondered where the Lord Jesus was, because they had seen the disciples leave alone in the boat the previous night. After much diligent searching, they eventually found the Lord Jesus and they called Him "Rabbi", because they had seen His ability to provide food, and had eaten of it. The Lord Jesus tells them that their temporal need cannot permanently be satisfied, but the need of the soul can be met for ever by trusting Him.

When the Lord said that He was the only means of men getting back to God, many turned away from Him. However, the Twelve, except Judas Iscariot, were faithful and stood with Simon Peter when he said, "Thou art the Holy One of God".

*A. K. Smith, G. W. Conway*

**From Edinburgh.** —It was noted that verse 26 indicated a comparison between the material and the spiritual. The words that Jesus spoke to the multitude following the feeding of the five thousand, were spoken in Capernaum, the city which the Lord compared to Sodom (Matthew 11. 23). His words could be accepted only by those who had learned from the Father (verse 45).

The Lord makes it very plain here that men can be saved only through Himself "the Living Bread which came down out of heaven" (verses 32, 33, 38, 42, 50, 51 and 58).

It is necessary for the believer to partake continually of the Bread of Heaven in order to sustain the spiritual life. As the manna was given and eaten daily, so we have our portion of the Bread which cometh down out of heaven.

The Lord must have suffered great disappointment when many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him (verse 66). But when He said to them, "Would ye also go away? Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life". The Jews said of Him, "Is not this Jesus, the Son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?" Is it possible that Joseph was alive at this time? [7].

*D. B. Renfrew*

**From Hamilton, Ont.** —The Lord said, "Work not", and men today are still trying to work, not only for bread which perisheth but also to gain divine acceptance. In verse 29 Jesus said, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent". The following verse shows their unbelief. They had seen five thousand fed and yet they then said, "What then doest Thou for a sign?" The words that follow also show that they were misguided concerning the manna. They apparently thought that Moses gave their fathers the manna. The Lord said, "My Father giveth you the true Bread out of heaven". Once again they misunderstood and said, "Evermore give us this bread". They continued taking the Lord literally, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" (verse 52) even after the explanatory words of verse 35, "He that cometh to Me shall not hunger". This truth is not clearly understood today; there are those who still believe that the actual flesh must be eaten.

One of the fundamentals of the ministry of the gospel is seen in verse 65; "No man can come unto Me, except it be given unto him of the Father". The first move is made by God, then the sinner responds to His love.

In verse 70 we read, "One of you is a devil". Should this read demon? Or is it similar to the expression, "Satan entered into Judas" [8]?

*N. MacKay*

**From Kilmarnock.** —The supply of manna came from God yet by the Lord's answer to His critics it would seem they reckoned Moses was directly responsible. The Lord Jesus explained clearly that though their fathers ate the manna, they died. In contrast to this, partaking of the true Bread from heaven assures eternal life. The manna was for one nation only, but whosoever cometh to Christ will never hunger (verse 35).

The Lord Jesus reveals to the people that He is the Bread of life; He also gives living water (verse 35). Then there is the promise of being received and secure, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (verse 37). This ensures eternal life and also resurrection (verse 40). In the context, the resurrection referred to seems to be associated with those contemporary with the Lord Jesus, "He that beholdeth" (verse 40). The last day reminded us of that to which Martha referred (John 11. 24) which may speak of the raising prior to the Great White Throne (Revelation 20. 11-13) [9]. In our study we contemplated the resurrection on a much broader basis. We considered the last days (in the plural) in association with 1 Corinthians 15. 23.

*J. C. Watt*

**From Leeds, Halifax and Bradford.** —In this chapter we have the expression "Out of heaven" used nine times of the manna and of Him who is the true Bread. We also have, as in the whole of John's Gospel, the stress on the need to believe, to take God at His word (verse 29).

We considered Psalm **132**, 15, "I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread", also Psalm **105**. 40, the people asked... and He "satisfied them with the bread of heaven". The promises of God were fulfilled in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. God met His people's need in the provision of the manna; they fed on this and lived. So in Christ, He can meet the need of all. We considered that verse 54 refers to the once only eating, it having been translated, "He that shall have eaten hath eternal life", and in verse 56 we have the continual feeding upon Christ, "He that eateth" [10]. We need to be continually feeding upon Him in order that we might experience spiritual growth (2 Peter 3. 18).  
*H. R. Dodge*

## COMMENTS

[1] **Hamilton.** —There is nothing in the Lord's answer to suggest that there is any labour involved in believing. The work is "of God" (verse 29).  
*L. B.*

[2] Vancouver, B. C. —Eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Lord signify receiving Him by faith. They do not imply identification.  
*L. B.*

[3] **Atherton.** —The free gift of eternal life seems to be the subject primarily under consideration in verse 27.  
*L. B.*

[4] **Melbourne.** —"My flesh" has reference to the complete sinless humanity of the Lord, not merely His body.  
*L. B.*

[5] **Methil.** —See answer to question (1) from Derby.

[6] Methil. —It is necessary to distinguish between eternal salvation and abiding in Christ. We suggest that verse 54 applies to the former and verse 56 to the latter. See Editorial.  
*L. B.*

[7] Edinburgh. —Other scriptures (John 2. 1; Mark 3. 31; John 19. 26-27) point to the conclusion that Joseph was dead. Westcott says, "The word *know* expresses simply acquaintance with the fact that Joseph was in popular esteem the father of Jesus, and not personal acquaintance with him as still living".  
*L. B.*

[8] **Hamilton, Ont.** —The Greek word here is *diabolos*, correctly translated "devil". There is only one devil, yet such was the character of Judas Iscariot that he is identified with him.  
*L. B.*

[9] Kilmarnock. —In our understanding of prophecy, Lazarus and all the faithful of Israel will be raised at the end of the Great Tribulation (Daniel 12. 1-4) not immediately prior to the Great White Throne  
*L. B.*



## NOTES ON THE PSALMS

## Psalm 50

We now come to a psalm of Asaph, one of the three chief singers. His part in divine service was to sing in Zion before the LORD who dwelt there in the tent which David pitched for the Ark when it was brought to Zion (1 Chronicles 16. 4-6).

God, even God, the LORD, hath spoken,  
And called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going  
down thereof.

Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,  
God hath shined forth (verses 1, 2).

A new day in the dealings of God with men was commenced when the Ark of God was brought from the house of Abinadab (1 Chronicles 13), and it at length reached Zion (1 Chronicles 15. 1-3, 16. 1-3). David said, "Let us bring again the Ark of our God to us for we sought not unto it in the days of Saul" (1 Chronicles 13. 3). The Ark contained the covenant written on two tables of stone; this was the law and also the testimony. It was no great wonder that the kingdom of Saul ended as it did in complete disaster, when Israel was defeated by the Philistines and Saul and his sons slain. There was no movement Godward in Saul's days. But when the Ark with God's word therein reached Zion, after long years of unhappiness, God began again to speak to men. He called the earth from the rising to the setting of the sun. "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty" (see Psalm 48. 2; Lamentations 2. 15) the spiritual light of God's truth was shining forth. This was one of the important phases of the life and service of the people of Israel, to disseminate the truth of God in the Law. The peoples of the earth were to say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.... What great nation is there, that hath statutes and judgements so righteous as all this law?" (Deuteronomy 4. 6-8).

Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence:  
A fire shall devour before Him,  
And it shall be very tempestuous round about Him.  
He shall call to the heavens above,  
And to the earth, that He may judge His people: (verses 3, 4).

When God promulgated His law, His standard of conduct and judgement to Israel, He appeared in the manner as stated here to His people. He came to them and did not keep silence.

"The LORD came from Sinai,  
And rose from Seir unto them;  
He shined forth from Paran,  
And He came from the ten thousands of holy ones:  
At His right hand was a fiery law unto them"

(Deuteronomy 33. 2).

*(to be continued D. V. )*

Issued by the Churches of God

Obtainable from Needed Truth Publishing Office,  
Assembly Hall, George Lane, Hayes, Bromley, Kent.

Also from:—Mr. J. Ramage, 44 Tweedsmuir Avenue, Dundas, Ontario, Canada.

Printed by Barretts of Brighton. 42 The Lanes, Brighton  
incorporating W. J. Starkey Ltd. Est. 1877

# BIBLE STUDIES

"Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17. 11)

VOLUME 35

AUGUST, 1967

## EDITORIAL

It is generally accepted that at the time John wrote his Gospel Jerusalem was in ruins, the Temple had been razed to the ground and Israel no longer functioned as a nation. John's references to the Temple and its services are therefore of great interest. His memory of the Holy City must have been vivid, for he wrote in the present tense of objects which no longer existed (5. 2). John's regard for Jerusalem and for the Temple services was perhaps deepened by the passage of time so that the Holy Spirit was able to use him to depict with feeling the confrontation in Jerusalem between the Lord and the Jewish rulers, so helping to achieve the special purpose of this Gospel (20. 30, 31). It is particularly to be noted that he uses the word feast (Greek, *heorte*) in respect of the set Feasts (Leviticus 23) 17 times, more than twice as many occurrences as in the other three Gospels together.

Three Passovers are mentioned (2. 13, 6. 4, 11. 55), giving some indication of the length of the Lord's ministry. The only other definitely identified set feast is that of Tabernacles in the chapter we are studying this month (7. 2). Much has been written of a conjectural nature about the feast mentioned in chapter 5; it has been variously identified with each of the feasts by different commentators, but Pentecost, the Feast of Trumpets or Purim seem the most likely. The Lord's going up to Jerusalem is mentioned immediately after the feast in such a manner as to suggest that the one was a direct consequence of the other. If this is so, the Lord's meticulous keeping of the Law would suggest that He was going of necessity to one of the set Feasts and not Purim, which was instituted in Esther's day to celebrate a remarkable deliverance. It does not seem to have had divine authority.

The Feast of the Dedication (10. 22) was not a set feast but an eight days' annual celebration of the cleansing of the Temple by Judas Maccabaeus after it had been polluted by Antiochus Epiphanes. In this verse the word "feast" does not appear in the Greek text.

It is conspicuous that the Old Testament designation of the feasts is absent in John. They are not spoken of as feasts of the LORD but feasts of the Jews. The significance of the change of name seems to be that they were no longer true festivals which God could acknowledge. They had suffered a degradation similar to the change that has taken place in holidays in modern times; they were not kept for the glory of God but for the enjoyment of man.

L. B.

## THE GOSPEL AND ITS MINISTRY

### The Gospel According to John, Chapter 7

**From Southport.** —The reason why the Lord spent more time in Galilee than in Judaea was that the Jews sought to kill Him (verse 1). Their anger and enmity were aroused when the Lord cured the impotent man on the sabbath day, when He was at Jerusalem for a previous feast (John 5). It is not said, He dared not, but, He would not, walk in Judaea. It was not through cowardice that He declined, but in prudence, because His hour was not yet come.

The Feast of Tabernacles was one of the three feasts which called for the personal attendance of all males at Jerusalem (Leviticus 23. 34'; Exodus 23. 17; Deuteronomy 16. 16). It was revived in the days of Nehemiah after long neglect (Nehemiah 8. 14). This Feast was intended to be both a memorial of the tabernacle state of Israel in the wilderness and a figure of the tabernacle state of God's spiritual Israel in the world.

It was observed annually for one week, beginning on the fifteenth day of the seventh month. The Israelites were not to appear before the Lord empty, every man was to give as he was able, according to the blessing of the Lord. Compare this with the direction of Paul (1 Corinthians 16. 2) [1]. It was to be a time of rejoicing, but how far short of this the Jews came! They sought to kill the Saviour whose wisdom and holiness put them to shame.

Now the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles was at hand. His brethren sought to advise Him to go to Judaea to manifest His works to His disciples. John notes this as an evidence of their unbelief. He would not depart from His own purpose, but when His brethren were gone up, then went He also up unto the feast, and taught in the Temple. He startled both friends and foes by His sudden public appearance in the Temple, as One who had a claim to speak God's message to the people. They questioned His knowledge of the Scriptures, "How knoweth this Man letters, having never learned?", that is, having never been under the instruction of the Jewish teachers. It is plain from this question that the Lord showed a wisdom and knowledge in speaking of the Scriptures which astonished His hearers, as His "understanding and His answers" had done some years before.

The Lord answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His that sent Me", that is, not Mine, as though springing from Myself alone, and apart from the Father (John 5. 19, 30). The Lord having received the Spirit without measure, He needed not to receive any knowledge from man.

*Thomas Brown*

**From Derby.** —We assume that at this time Jesus was apart from His disciples [2]. His brothers disliked His being in Galilee and they argued that in order to convince men who He was He ought to do His works in the public eye. We conclude therefore that the motive of His brothers for saying this was unbelief. The Jews expected the Messiah to appear in a very different form and perhaps more majestic than that which was seen in the Lord Jesus.

The testimony of the officers shows us the impact of the preaching of the Lord Jesus. The Pharisees were afraid that the rulers as well as some of their own number might believe on Him. Verse 49 shows us how the devil was blinding their eyes.

*G. W. Conway, A. K. Smith*

**From Glasgow** (Parkhead). —The question was asked, "If Israel had accepted their Messiah, would the purposes of God concerning them have developed in another direction?" It was thought that Israel could not under any circumstances have accepted their Messiah, for apart from all other considerations the dispensation of the mystery—the Church which is His (Christ's) Body in the dispensation of grace—which from all ages hath been hid in God, must be revealed. Israel as a nation could not believe on Christ because they were blind; the eyes of their heart were not enlightened, and blind men physically or spiritually **cannot** see. "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, unto this very day" (Romans 11. 8) [3]. The rulers were blind: "had they known... they would not have crucified the Lord of glory". The religious leaders were blind, the Lord denounced them as blind guides leading the blind into the ditch. The people were blind, the light that was in them was darkness, and how great was that darkness! How could Israel in such a condition accept her Messiah?

"The Jews sought to kill Him". Here we have the problem of the implacable Jewish hatred of Christ. What was the cause of their bitter enmity against Him? What was there in that incomparably lovely Man that could incite such vile passions in men? It was prophetically written in Psalm 69. 4 what their reaction to Him would be, "They... hate Me without a cause".

The men of the Lord's day mis-read the prophecies. They imagined another deliverer than Him whom God had promised. He did not answer to their ideal; He lacked the characteristics they admired; His greatness was not shaped to their thoughts. They would have welcomed Him if He had come in His kingly aspect to take His power and reign, and vanquish their enemies. They had no admiration and no welcome for One who came, meek and lowly, to make His soul an offering for sin. Sin does not trouble some men; how should a Saviour, One who delivers from sin, delight them?

Considering the Feast of Tabernacles, we were first reminded of what may be called its anti-typical teaching. "The Word became flesh, and dwelt (tabernacled, pitched His tent) among us". "It behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren." J. *Peddie*

## EXTRACTS

**From Birmingham.** —In the midst of the Feast Jesus went to Jerusalem [4]. We thought that His education would have been that of the average boy of His day, hence the men's query, "How knoweth this Man letters?" Knowing Him to be the very Son of God, we can understand His knowledge of the Old Testament writings. Not only so, but as a Spirit-filled Man He was perfectly equipped for His work.

We discussed the personality of the Lord. Some thought an attractive personality could rank as a gift in us, others thought its exploitation in spiritual matters might border on seeking our own glory. The Master said clearly, "My teaching is not Mine, but His that sent Me". We might well use and act on these words in our gospel testimony.

It was interesting to note that the Jews were wrong **as to their** facts. They spoke of the Lord **as being** out of Galilee, **but** we know that He had also lived **in Egypt** and was born **in Bethlehem**. *D. H. Elson*

**From Ringwood, Australia.** —The **Feast** of Tabernacles, the **last** of the Festivals of Jehovah enjoined in Leviticus **23**, was held **about** the **end** of our **September** or beginning of October (the Jewish **month** Tisri). This Festival **was to be** outstandingly one of thanksgiving and gladness before the LORD. It pointed to the past, the present, and the future. It **reminded** Israel of their coming out of Egypt. It **came after** the harvest of the land was gathered **in**, a true "harvest thanksgiving". It pointed to a **future day** for which Israel had **been** taught to **look**, when "in this mountain shall the LORD of Hosts **make** unto all peoples a **feast of fat things**,... and the reproach of **His** people shall He **take** away from **off** all the **earth**" (Isaiah **25**. 6-8). This **was** also the last of the three Festivals at which all the males of Israel were to appear before the Lord in the place which He should choose.

The Lord had **returned** to Galilee **because** of the determination of the Jewish leaders to **find** occasion **against** Him and put Him to death. **As** His brethren **urged** Him to go **up** to Jerusalem, He **reminded** them that His **time** had not **yet** come (to declare His Messiahship). He **had** much to do before **this**, **but** His **immediate** plans He **did** not reveal to His brethren, for **as yet** they had not believed **on** Him.

We would **draw** attention to the **significant** words of the Lord recorded in verses **37** and **38**. At the daily offerings **during** the **Feast** were the accompanying **drink** offerings of **wine**, which were poured **out** at the **base** of the altar. **But** associated with the **drink offering** we **understand** that there was also what was known as "the pouring out of water". Water, generally **taken** from the pool of Siloam, was poured on to the ground **as an** appeal to Jehovah to **send** upon the ground the needed rain. Possibly **as the** last **great day** of the **Feast** had arrived, and the water was **being** poured out for the **last time**, Jesus stood and **cried**, saying, "If **any man** thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, **as the** Scripture hath **said**, out of his belly shall flow **rivers of living water**". "But **this** spake He of the Spirit, which **they that** believed **on** Him were to **receive**". It would appear that **many** who **heard** realized somewhat of the **significance** of His words. How closely **they resembled** those written by Isaiah (**55**. 1): "Ho, **every one that** thirsteth, come **ye to the** waters". Here, **standing in their midst** was "the Salvation of Israel" and the Source of "living water".

*T. W. F.*

**From Vancouver, B. C.** —In this chapter we **find** the attitude of the world to Christ. **First** we **see** His brothers' thoughts, **then** those of the multitude, and finally those of the elders of the Jews. It was the **Feast** of Tabernacles, **but** with Christ **in their midst** the Jews should have **seen** the One who had pitched His tabernacle among them.

The Lord's attitude to His brethren and to the multitude **did not differ**. A natural relationship **did not bring** about spiritual salvation. It is not a **matter** of flesh and blood **but** acceptance or rejection. The Jews were marvelling at His knowledge and wisdom, and the Lord was **quick** to show them that it was not a **matter** of natural education **but a** heaven-sent message. The **ministry** of the gospel is the same. The Jews were judging according to appearance, **but it must be** emphasized in the

gospel that God looks on the heart. A division arose because some tried to deny the Lord's origin by saying that they knew Him. Jesus admitted that they knew (were acquainted with) Him; but they did not know Him as He knew the Father (intimate communion).

In verse 14 we see Jesus teaching in the middle of the Feast; but on the last day the final appeal came. This time His appeal was to "any man". In chapter 6 we have the "living Bread" and here we have the "living Water". Christ is speaking of Himself and also recalling the Old Testament. He is the Rock that was to be smitten, and out of Him were to flow rivers of living water. The feast was nearly at an end. Each man had to live in booths, thus putting all men on an equal plane, also an aspect of the gospel.

Even the officers of the chief priests were affected by the words of Jesus. It is true that anyone who comes in contact with Christ responds in some way, either positively or negatively. *J. Bell, Jr., J. Pope*

**From Hamilton.** —The brethren of Jesus attempted to make this Feast an occasion for public manifestation (John 7. 3). It was not signs they desired, but works designed to attract attention. Jesus was urged to perform wonders boldly and openly in Jerusalem, thus manifesting Himself to the world, since no one who conceals himself can expect public recognition. This action of the brethren of Jesus is similar to the action of those who would have made Jesus King (John 6. 15), and that of the devil in the wilderness (Luke 4. 6). Jesus said, "My time is not yet come" (John 7. 6). But there was to be a time of public ministry in Jerusalem (John 7. 26, 10. 22-29).

In the midst of the whispering multitude, knowing the hatred of the rulers, Jesus taught openly in the Temple truths concerning Himself. His heavenly origin (John 7. 29), His divine teaching (John 7. 16-17) and His marvellous work (John 7. 21). He taught concerning man, that he is a law-breaker (John 7. 19), an enemy of Christ (John 7. 19), legalist at heart (John 7. 23) and superficial in judgement (John 7. 24). Later, on the last day of the Feast, His teaching concerned the Holy Spirit (John 7. 37-39).

*Matthew Carruthers*

**From Macduff.** —The Feast of Tabernacles was a very special feast to the Jews. It meant leaving their home surroundings and travelling up to Jerusalem. Attached to this was the experience of staying in booths as did their fathers. They stood for long hours listening to the scribes reading from the Law. This should have had a sobering effect on them and should have caused them to resolve to be better men and women in the coming year.

The Lord Jesus would not walk openly in Judaea lest He should lose His life. He also had to face His brethren in the flesh, who told Him to go to Judaea, and there show Himself and His works to His disciples. If He wanted to be prominent, He should do His signs openly at Jerusalem, where large numbers of people would be gathered, instead of at Galilee, where there would be very few interested.

At the feast the Jews sought Him; some said He was a good Man, whilst others thought He was leading the multitude astray. This is still the position of many today, for they cannot see that He is the Saviour of the world. The Lord Jesus knew when to speak, and He appeared in the middle of the Feast after the commotion had died down, standing up in the Temple ministering to the people.

*W. S. Johnston*

**From Methil**—In John 7 the Jews were seeking to keep the Feast of Tabernacles, a feast of joy and thanksgiving, and yet they had lost the whole sense and meaning of such a feast, for instead of joy there is a scene of hatred and strife, with men seeking the Lord to kill Him (verse 1), and to find fault with His teaching (verse 12). "How knoweth this Man letters, having never learned?" They thought only of earthly knowledge, but His was no college education, His learning and knowledge were from His Father God. The Lord knew the very thoughts of their hearts, and so He refers them to the Law, and how that none of them kept it, else they would not seek to kill Him.

We felt that verse 17 was of considerable importance, and in the light of John 8. 31-32 and 16. 13 we considered that those who earnestly seek the "Truth" to practise it must surely find themselves within the house of God. See Comment [7].

The Lord's teaching resulted in many believing on Him, and to them the Lord said, "Yet a little while am I with you, and I go unto Him that sent Me". This verse and those following refer to the glory that was soon to be His.

The Pharisees sought to bring Him into ridicule, but Nicodemus, himself a Pharisee, stood in defence of his Lord, as a true evidence of his having received the new birth (John 3; 19. 39). *A. R. Smith*

**From Denmark Hill**, London. —The attitudes of people in Jerusalem varied from class to class. One group, the Jews, seems to have included the chief priests, the Pharisees and the rulers, and was openly hostile to Jesus. They despised the unlearned Galilaean with His high claims which they considered to be blasphemous and, sinking their differences, they united in the aim of arresting and killing Him. They condemned the Lord for healing a man on the Sabbath on a previous visit. In His reply the Lord exposed their inconsistency, for they insisted on keeping Moses' law and circumcizing on the eighth day, even when it fell on the Sabbath. The multitudes, on the other hand, were of a more open mind. Many of them were clearly impressed by Jesus' claims, and yet fear of the Jews and prejudice or ignorance turned many aside.

On the great day of the Feast Jesus expanded the revelation He had made privately to the woman of Sychar (chapter 4). He had spoken to her of living water which could slake the spiritual thirst of the individual. In Jerusalem He spoke of an abundance of water which, like that from the smitten rock in Horeb, flowed out continuously. The grace of God has satisfied our own needs but it is intended that, through service, we should be channels whereby that grace should flow abundantly to others. *A. C. Bishop*

**From Kilmarnock**. —Ezra read and explained in the presence of men and women, and of those that could understand, the book of the Law of Moses (Nehemiah 8. 3). The verse points out that the ears of **all** the people were attentive. In verse 14 we read of attention being drawn to the need of dwelling in booths in the feast of the seventh month as a reminder of the days of their captivity. The law of Moses was still observed in a formal and empty manner when the Lord was upon this earth. Instead of actually dwelling in booths, booths were set up, and it is in this setting that the Lord was urged to go and manifest Himself to the world at the Feast of Tabernacles.

Although He did not go up openly with the disciples, every eye was on the look-out for Him. Many had suspicions of the signs, and doubts on the wonders He performed. Little wonder that, in such a frame of mind, they asked such a flood of questions (verses 15, 25, 26, 27, 31). To every question asked a divine answer was given. In verses 16 and 29 the Lord was emphatic that His teaching was from His Father, that He knew the Father, and that He was sent of the Father. The Giver of the Law to Moses brings before the Jews their inconsistency in the keeping of the Law.

Nicodemus, who had already met the Lord, spoke on His behalf but was scoffed at.

The Scriptures reveal that to the Lord Jesus Nazareth was His own city (Luke 2. 39), and Matthew recalls the prophetic statement that "He should be called a Nazarene" (Matthew 2. 23). We are wondering if Isaiah 11. 1 is the key which had been overlooked or misunderstood by the Jews [5].

*J.*

*M. Rankine*

**From Aberkenfig and Barry.** —"In secret" appears to be used in contrast with going publicly. It is quite evident that many were expecting the Lord at the Feast, and although there were some who would gladly have killed Him, there were others who said, "He is a good Man".

It is not too clear whether the Lord learned the Law of Moses in the same way as other Jewish boys, having in mind the words "having never learned". The Lord claimed that His teaching was from the Father, how are we to understand this in the light of the words "having never learned" [6]?

Do the words of verse 17 take into account the whole will of God including the gospel? Compare: "God our Saviour; who willeth that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth" [7].

It would appear that the words of the Lord in verse 37 coincided with the pouring out of water, which took place on the last day of the feast. It is quite evident that some of the people appreciated the significance of the Lord's words (Isaiah 44. 3).

It was suggested that Nicodemus was still reluctant to take his stand for Christ at this time; others, however disagreed with this view [8].

*D. H. Butler*

**From Atherton.** —The Lord always acted wisely in dealing with either His brethren or the Jews in general, and He was never afraid. He did not force Himself upon men, yet there were times when His heart of compassion moved Him to speak out to reveal who He was and what He was able to do.

The Jews marvelled as they asked, "How knoweth this Man letters, having never learned?" Never had they heard such words. The officers confessed, "Never man so spake". He was able, as One taught of God, to say the right thing always (Isaiah 50. 4). The Lord is above all comparison, and yet men without learning can be as those who have learned. Of Peter and John, fishermen of the past, the testimony of Luke was that wise men of the Jews observed their boldness, not in manner only, but in speech also, and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus (Acts 4. 13).

We understand therefore that learned and unlearned men are necessary to the Lord and His work. It is necessary that we acknowledge this and accept the apt words of a learned man written to a church where gifts abounded: "For who maketh thee to differ? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (1 Corinthians 4. 7). *G. A. Jones*

**From Toronto.** —Even the Lord's own brethren, the sons of Mary and Joseph, did not acknowledge Him as the Messiah. How remarkable this is! He was with them in the family sphere, a closer earthly relationship than even His disciples knew, yet despite His many wonderful signs and the manifestations of His Deity, they failed to discern the Christ of God in their midst. Such knowledge is given by revelation. Paul prayed "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him" (Ephesians 1. 17). It could well be that since the Pharisees did not recognize the Lord, His brethren hearkened to them and were, as others, led by the blind leaders of the blind.

We felt there was a marked difference in the expression used in verse 6, "My time is not yet come", and that used in verse 8, "My time is not yet fulfilled". His time did come to go up secretly to the Feast of Tabernacles, but His going up to the Passover feast when His time was fulfilled was to be a public event, for it was necessary that all things which were written concerning the Christ should have their fulfilment. He went up to Jerusalem as the King, riding upon an ass and upon the colt the foal of an ass to the hosannas of the multitude. He went up openly, His time was fulfilled, and He led the throng as they went up to the house of God (Psalm 42. 4). *N. Kernaghan*

**From Glasgow (Govan and Partick).** —The Lord's testimony continually expressed His unity with the Father. His thoughts, words and actions made their impact on the world, exposing its evil works and crooked thinking. So it was that the world hated Him, and He avoided making a public appearance on the first day of the Feast, lest He should anticipate His proper time to be delivered up.

At Jerusalem opinion was divided. To speak for Him would incur the displeasure of the rulers, to speak against Him would enrage the people. In their midst Jesus appeared with the teaching of God. He was keeping the Law, but they were not. They sought to kill Him on the pretext that He made a man whole on the sabbath. He pointed out that according to the Law of Moses it was possible to circumsise on the sabbath. The circumcision should have taught them separation in the flesh, so that they marvelled with disbelief when He healed the man on the sabbath. Their judgement was according to appearance.

One of the things which hindered their understanding of His unity with the Father is expressed in verse 27, "We know this Man whence He is". Earlier they had said, "Is not this Jesus, the Son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?" (6. 42). They did not know Him as the Son of God, since they had no personal knowledge of the Father.

*Eric Archibald*

## COMMENTS

[1] Southport. —1 Corinthians 16. 2 refers to monetary gifts, but the typical teaching of Deuteronomy 16. 16 and similar scriptures is principally concerned with the offering up of spiritual sacrifices in holy priesthood service (1 Peter 2. 5). *L. B.*

[2] **Derby.** —The twelve disciples are not mentioned in this chapter, but this is insufficient ground for arguing that the Lord was alone. It was their usual practice for the Lord and His disciples to go up to Jerusalem together (John 11. 7, 16). *L. B.*

John tells us nothing of this ministry in Galilee, probably lasting about six months. The Synoptists fill in the period with their records, Matthew 14. 34 to 18. 35 and Mark 7 to 9. *Jas. M.*

[3] **Glasgow (Parkhead).** —We agree that God's eternal purposes of salvation must be fulfilled but the Jews were not thereby absolved from blame for rejecting their Messiah. As in Isaiah's day the choice was theirs (Isaiah 65. 2-7); the God-given stupor and blindness followed. *L. B.*

[4] Birmingham. —The Lord kept the Law in its entirety (Matthew 5. 17-20), He must therefore have attended the whole of the Feast of Tabernacles, going to Jerusalem privately, after the public pilgrimage had left Galilee. This conclusion is quite consistent with John 7. 14, which refers to the Lord's public ministry, not to His keeping of the feast. *L. B.*

[5] Kilmarnock. —Isaiah 11. 1 and Micah 5. 2 probably led the Jews to suppose that Messiah would be of Bethlehem and there was no misunderstanding on this point. What they failed to appreciate was that He would also be a Galilaean. The Jews seemed to be convinced that prophecy did not allow of Messiah arising out of Galilee. Verse 52 probably has no reference to past prophets, so there is no evidence that Jonah and others were overlooked in this assertion. Matthew 2. 23 presents a difficulty. Possibly "Nazarene" is used figuratively of a despised person, and the allusion is to Isaiah 53. 3 and similar scriptures. The general reference to prophecy in Matthew 2. 23 is in **contrast** to the direct quotation in verses 5 and 6. *L. B.*

[6] **Aberkenfig and Barry.** —This expression is similar to that used of Peter and John (Acts 4. 13) yet these two men were used of the Holy Spirit in the writing of the Scriptures. The Lord must have been given the ordinary education of that day which, according to historians, was very good. It would be unwise to attempt a detailed analysis of His education but Scripture testifies that there was advancement or progress (Luke 2. 52); at twelve years of age His understanding caused amazement; His ear was always open to hear the words of His Father (Isaiah 50. 4, 5), and it was His custom to attend the Synagogue (Luke 4. 16). The Jews were probably referring in verse 15 to a specialized learning possessed by their rabbis. *L. B.*

[7] **Aberkenfig and Barry.** —The issue presented by the Lord in the context of John 7. 17 was that of His claim to be the Son of God, the promised Saviour. Upon acceptance of this truth the salvation of individual Jews depended. This immense claim of the Lord would naturally present difficulties to the minds of His hearers. Yet if they genuinely wanted to know and do God's will in their lives, they would receive assurance that the Lord's teaching was of God. The verse therefore emphasizes the importance of an earnest attitude of heart in seeking after God (compare Acts 10. 35, 17. 27). Genuine seekers who are really desirous of knowing the truth will not be stumbled either by the greatness of the Lord's claims or by the exacting demands of discipleship. We suggest therefore that John 7. 17 states a general principle which has application to God's will in the salvation of sinners and in the further knowledge of truths of discipleship. *G. P. Jr.*

[8] **Aberkenfig and Barry.** —The three references to Nicodemus in John's Gospel leave one with the impression that he did not publicly declare his allegiance to the Lord until after the Crucifixion. His defence of the Lord in John 7. 5 was couched in language suited to an abstract support for legal rectitude rather than the personal involvement of a disciple. *L. B.*

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Questions **from** Derby. —(1) What did the men of Jerusalem mean when they said, "When the Christ cometh, no one knoweth whence He is" (verse 27)?

**Answer.** —There seems to have been a belief among the Jews that Messiah would appear miraculously and suddenly. Possibly scriptures such as Daniel 7. 13 and Malachi 3. 1 would have been quoted by them to support this belief. *L. B.*

**Question** (2) How soon after the Cross was the Lord glorified?

**Answer.** —The Lord's statement in verse 39 need not be construed as linking closely in time His glorifying with the giving of the Holy Spirit, but only that the latter was to occur at some unspecified time after the former. We would suggest that such scriptures as Hebrews 1. 3 and 9. 11, 12 indicate that the glorious heavenly offices of the Lord were bestowed upon Him when He ascended immediately after speaking to **Mary** Magdalene (John 20. 17). He ascended publicly forty days later, making it clear to the disciples that they would not see Him again on earth. *L. B.*

### NOTES ON THE PSALMS

#### Psalm 80

{continued from page 84}

When God spoke from Sinai the words of the ten commandments of the law, the people trembled as they heard the thunderings and lightnings, and the voice of the trumpet, and saw the mountain smoking, and they asked that the LORD would not speak to them, but they would

hear if Moses spoke with them. Moses told them that God had come to prove them, that His fear might be before them (Exodus 20. 1-21). Of that scene Moses said that he himself exceedingly feared and quaked (Hebrews 12. 18-21).

When He comes again to judge His people Israel (and all the earth besides) He will come in flaming fire (2 Thessalonians 1. 7-9). His standard of judgement will be the word which He spoke, and His witnesses that He has spoken will be the heavens and the earth. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the LORD hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me" (Isaiah 1. 2).

Gather My saints together unto Me;

Those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.

And the heavens shall declare His righteousness;

For God is judge Himself (verses 5, 6).

[Selah

There are two Hebrew words in the Old Testament for saints, the one, *CHASID*, means kind, pious, and the other, *QADOSH*, set apart, separate, holy. The latter is practically equal to the Greek word for saints in the New Testament, *HAGIOS*, which also means set apart, separate, holy. The word for saints in this psalm (50) is *CHASID*. The saints of the Old Testament were those who truly subscribed in their condition to the words spoken by the people at Sinai, when they said, "All that the LORD hath spoken we will do" (Exodus 19. 8). This they repeated in chapter 24. 3. But, alas, many of the people did not obey God as they said they would. Yet there were, ever in Israel the pious people, the saints, who did, who ever regarded the covenant ratified and in operation through sacrifice as binding upon them. Even so should we in regard to the New Covenant which has (1) an unconditional side, "And their sins will I remember no more" (Hebrews 8. 12, 10. 17), and (2) a conditional side, "I will put My laws into their mind, and on their heart also will I write them" (Hebrews 8. 10, 10. 16). See Hebrews 9. 16, 17, 12. 24, 13. 20.

Hear, O My people, and I will speak;

O Israel, and I will testify unto thee:

I am God, even thy God.

I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices;

And thy burnt offerings are continually before Me.

I will take no bullock out of thy house,

Nor he-goats out of thy folds (verses 7, 8, 9).

Because of the sad condition of the people of Israel, this was often the thought of God about their sacrifices. This was the view he expressed when He called the leaders of His people the rulers of Sodom, and the people the people of Gomorrah. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats" (Isaiah I. 10. 11). David the psalmist well understood that animal sacrifices were of no value unless there was a repentant and humble heart in the offerer. He said, "Thou delightest not in sacrifice; else would I give it: Thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise"

(Psalm 51. 16, 17). But in the following verses (18, 19) he shows the condition under which God would delight in burnt offering. God, in the verses under consideration in Psalm 50, would reprove Israel for their sacrifices and would not take their bullocks from their house (that is their own house), nor he-goats from their folds.

For every beast of the forest is mine,  
 And the cattle upon a thousand hills.  
 I know all the fowls of the mountains:  
 And the wild beasts of the field are Mine.  
 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee:  
 For the world is Mine, and the fulness thereof (verses 10, 11, 12).

God would neither be pleased nor enriched by the offerings of Israel when their state was wrong and bad, for He assures them that the fulness of the world was His, and if He were hungry he would not tell them. Their offerings were to the end that their sins might be forgiven, and that they might find acceptance with God, that they might also dwell together in harmony and fellowship with each other, but alas, they failed oftentimes to come with a broken and contrite heart which is ever required in men's dealings with God.

Will I eat the flesh of bulls,  
 Or drink the blood of goats?  
 Offer unto God the sacrifice of thanksgiving;  
 And pay thy vows unto the Most High:  
 And call upon Me in the day of trouble;  
 I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me (verses 13, 14, 15).

Twice over in Proverbs we read, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD" (15. 8; 21. 27). Again we are told, "To do justice and judgement is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice" (Proverbs 21. 3). Thus in our psalm God asks the question about His eating the flesh of bulls and drinking the blood of goats, and He exhorts His people to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving and to pay their vows unto the Most High, and to call on Him in the day of trouble and He will deliver them that they might glorify Him. We find the psalmist saying, "I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD\*" (Psalm 116. 17, 18).

But unto the wicked God saith,  
 What hast thou to do to declare My statutes,  
 And that thou hast taken My covenant in thy mouth?  
 Seeing thou hatest instruction,  
 And castest My words behind thee (verses 16, 17).

*J. M.*

*(to be continued D. V.)*

Issued by the Churches of God

Obtainable from Needed Truth Publishing Office,  
 Assembly Hall, George Lane, Hayes, Bromley, Kent.

Also from:—Mr. J. Ramage, 44 Tweedsmuir Avenue, Dundas, Ontario, Canada.

Printed by Barretts of Brighton. 42 The Lanes, Brighton  
 incorporating W. J. Starkey Ltd. Est. 1877

# BIBLE STUDIES

"Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so\*" (Acts 17. 11).

VOLUME 35

SEPTEMBER, 1967

## EDITORIAL

Many Christians are not clear about New Testament teaching as to God's dealings with the sinner. They suggest that in this day of grace God does not bring punishment upon men, here and now, on account of their sins, and that the wrong-doer need not be punished as he would formerly have been under the law of Moses. They quote Hebrews 10. 17 and similar scriptures in support of their argument, but fail to distinguish between the just retribution for a man's misdeeds which overtakes him during his lifetime, and the eternal punishment which, apart from faith in Christ, is the lot of the law-breaker.

When David repented of the double sin of adultery and murder, Nathan said, "The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die" (2 Samuel 12. 9-14). But in spite of divine forgiveness much trouble came upon David as a direct result of his sin. His baby son died and, far worse than that, there ensued a period of licence, murder and rebellion in the royal court which almost brought his kingdom to an end (2 Samuel 13-20). Nathan foretold the evil, and David recognized the justice of it (2 Samuel 16. 10-12).

In this dispensation too, man cannot break God's laws with impunity. Matthew 5. 38, 39 is sometimes quoted as though the Lord was criticizing the Law and substituting grace, but a careful perusal of the whole chapter establishes that He was upholding the moral law (verses 17-20), which was administered by man, and teaching that God looks upon the heart, seeing the evil therein which results in transgression (verses 21, 22, 27, 28). He was putting before the disciples a higher standard of conduct than mere outward compliance with the letter of the Law. The processes of the Law, by which the elders were required to exact an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, were in no way modified by the injunction that in personal dealings with his fellow-men the disciple must love his enemies and pray for his persecutors.

In John 8. 1-11 the Lord was not dealing with the meting out of punishment under the Law as the Pharisees had hoped He would. His ministry on earth was not in the sphere of temporal judgement but in bringing eternal salvation to men. His refusal to condemn the woman cannot therefore be interpreted as implying that He was allowing any relaxation of the punishment laid down in the Law for adultery or any other sin.

*L. B.*

## NOTES ON THE AUTHENTICITY OF JOHN 7. 53—8. 11

When experts **differ in** such a complex **subject as textual criticism** it is admittedly difficult for the **ordinary student to reach** a settled conclusion. The English R. V. places this portion in **brackets**, with a marginal note: "**Most of the ancient authorities omit John 7. 53—8. 11.** Those which contain it **vary** much from each other".

The Revised **Standard** Version places the whole **section** in the **margin** and comments: "Other **ancient authorities add 7. 53—8. 11** either here or **at the end** of this Gospel, or **after Luke 21. 38**, with variations of the text". This all **stems from a real difficulty in assessing the textual evidence** available. Nevertheless **it is important to realize** that there **is a case** for the retention of John 7. 53—8. 11, and the following points of general **interest are** noteworthy.

### 1. Evidence from Manuscripts.

At least **nine** uncial manuscripts (including MS. D) **include** these **verses**; two others leave a blank space for them (**suggesting** that th? **scribes knew of** their existence); three omit them altogether. Examination of a typical selection of **cursive** manuscripts showed that about **70 omit** them **against at least 300** including them. Jerome (400 A. D. ), compiler of the **Latin Vulgate Version**, **stated** that they were found in **many Greek and Latin** manuscripts.

### 2. Evidence from Versions (translations into other languages).

The verses **are included in** versions of Italy, Egypt, Ethiopia and **Syria (dating from 2nd to 5th centuries A. D. ), and in numerous** later versions. **Augustine** considered that they had **been omitted** from some **versions because enemies** of the gospel were so assiduous in **trying to find grounds of censure against the Lord Jesus**, that some **true Christians**, through **misguided zeal**, **left out the verses** from their copies **lest** they should **be construed as condoning** a breach of the seventh commandment.

### 3. Evidence from Early Fathers.

**Eusebius** of Caesarea (300 A. D. ) quotes Papias of Phrygia (130 A. D. ) **as referring** to these verses. **Fourteen** other Fathers of the 4th and 5th **centuries A. D.**, representing wide **areas** of Christendom, **made reference** to them. This line of **evidence** helps to disprove the suggestion of some that the passage was interpolated into John's Gospel **at a much later date**.

### 4. Evidence from Lectionaries.

When **deciding** the appointed **readings** (lectionaries) of the eastern churches in the 4th century A. D., **certain Christian leaders are** on record **as having decided**: "It shall **begin at John 7. 37** and conclude with John 8. 12. **But** so much of it **as relates to the breaking up of the Sanhedrin... had better be omitted... The same** with the woman taken in adultery; **it is inappropriate for reading at the Pentecostal Festival**". But for October 8 of each **year** the eastern churches appointed the nine **verses** of John 8. 3-11 to **be read** publicly. From which there **is evidence of the use of** the passage **as an integral part of God's word** at least from the 4th century A. D.

## 5. Internal Evidence.

The remarkable way in which the Lord handled this situation accords with His unique wisdom, and the spiritual import of the passage is in harmony with His coming not to judge but to save the world.

In the light of such considerations the God-fearing student would be very slow to reject this portion as not being God-breathed, and this reluctance is increased when the conclusions of experts in textual criticism are seen to be considerably at variance. *G. P. Jr.*

## THE GOSPEL AND ITS MINISTRY

## John Chapter 8

**From** Macduff. —In answering the scribes and Pharisees who brought the woman taken in adultery, the Lord showed that sin is in all men. He had come to call men to repentance and offer forgiveness; judging men was not His concern at that time. He used the opportunity to make the accusers look into their own hearts and each saw himself a sinner and not able to cast a stone at the woman. The Lord spoke graciously to the woman but He told her to sin no more. We wondered why the Lord stooped to write on the floor of the temple and what it may have been that He wrote [see answer to question (1) from Derby].

The Lord offered Himself to men as the One to whom they must come for light and life. This should have drawn thinking men to Him, but they denied His credentials and wanted to remove Him as an impostor. They would not believe that He was sent from the Father and they would not accept that He acted as God willed. Some believed in Him, however, and those who learned the truth from Him were to find that it would make them free. The unbelieving Jews were depending on their relationship to Abraham to whom God had made the promises, and were resentful that the Lord should suggest they were in bondage [1]. They were in bondage to sin, in spite of their kinship with Abraham. The Lord said that if they were Abraham's children they should do the works of Abraham who was a very different kind of man from them. When they claimed God as their Father they were told that their attitude and actions showed evidence of the influence of the adversary. He had murdered and lied from the beginning and they showed the same spirit. They would not believe the Lord Jesus and this meant they were not of God. They refused to believe Him greater than Abraham and refused to see the authority of God in what He said and did. They were incredulous that the Man before them could have an existence before or beyond that which they could see. Light had come into the world, and they loved darkness rather than light, for their deeds were plainly evil. To do away with the Light of the world was their solution, for they would not come to Him that they might have life. *A. B. R.*

**From** Methil. —The opening verse of John 8 together with the last verse of Chapter 7 remind us of the One who became poor for our sakes. The incident of the sinful woman who was brought to the Lord is recorded only in the Gospel by John. The Pharisees who brought her

did so in order to tempt the Lord. Romans 2. 1 is a judgement on their actions. The Lord Jesus did not come to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him (John 3. 17). The **Law came** by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The Lord proves this in John 8.

There are three occasions recorded in the Gospels where the Lord Jesus granted forgiveness to the sinner: the paralytic (Mark 2. 5), the woman who was a sinner (Luke 7. 48) and the woman taken in adultery (John 8. 11). Jesus stooped down and with His finger He wrote on the ground; as far as we know the only time that it is recorded that He wrote. Not one of the books of the Bible was written by Him. Men wrote these, being moved by the Holy Spirit. We know that God wrote on the tables of stone in Moses' day. We are not told what the Lord Jesus wrote on the ground, nor do we attempt to guess, for this would be adding to Scripture.

"I am the Light of the world"; these words were spoken by the Lord Jesus concerning Himself. It is one of the many great "I AMs" in John's Gospel.

He was the Light of the world and not only of Israel; He was a Light to the Gentiles (Isaiah 42. 6, 49. 6). As Simeon said, "A Light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel" (Luke 2. 32). To the individual He says, "He that followeth Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8. 12). Light and life are closely associated (see Psalm 36. 9; John 1\* 4).

*David B. Reid*

**From Aberkenfig and Barry.**—God through the Law has expressed His indignation against the sin of adultery, commanding that both the adulterer and adulteress should be put to death (Leviticus 20. 10). The intense hatred of the scribes and Pharisees towards the Lord Jesus and their desire to trap him in His words and actions possibly led to partiality in bringing the woman to Jesus whilst allowing the man to go free. They hoped to induce the Lord to pass judgement.

As a shaft of light reveals hidden things, so the words of Jesus, "He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone at her", went to their hearts and made them realize their deep sin. None legally condemned her and neither did the Lord. Nevertheless, as the Holy Son of God He commanded her, "Go thy way . . . sin no more\*\*".

The Master's discourse teaches us three fundamental truths as to the Light of the world: His followers would walk in the light (verse 12), they would know God the Father through the Son (verse 19) and they would be truly free (verse 32).

*B. V. F.*

## EXTRACTS

From Birmingham. —To those that would abide in His word and teaching the Lord promised freedom. The nature of that freedom evidently had to do with deliverance from the thralldom of sin. Sin and its darkness engender bondage. The knowledge of God's truth has the power in itself to set free. We see a contrast of light and darkness following this contrast of freedom and bondage. The Lord as the Light of the world promises again to those who follow Him that they shall

**have the light of life.** We wondered what this might be and noted the link between light and life revealed in Scripture from the first chapter of Genesis, where we read **God's first** commandment, "**Let there be light**", and **abundant** life followed [2]. **God's** word did not have **free** course in the hearts of the Pharisees. There was **an** impediment. From choice they had darkness. "**Men** loved the darkness". They entirely misunderstood the Lord when He **spoke of** them doing **and** saying the things of their father. According **to** the flesh Abraham was their **father**, **but** the devil is the father of those who lie **and do** his works. The **Lord** manifested the works of His Father, **and** they **manifested** the works of their father.

*H. Smith*

**From Derby.** —The Pharisees were shown to be sinners **and** were unable to **judge** the woman. They were shamed **by** the Lord **Jesus** who calmly **but** effectively replied to their **question**. **Jesus** did **not** condone the action of the **woman** **by** not condemning her, **but** said "Go thy way; from henceforth sin no more".

**Verse 21** foretells perhaps how that the Jews would **seek** the Lord's body **and** would **not** find it. It predicts **at** the same **time** what we **see** **even** today, for the Jews look for the Messiah **and die** in unbelief [3]. However the Lord **Jesus** in **verse 24** told them how they could be **saved**. **It** took **Jesus'** death **on** the Cross to show the Jews that He was the Christ (**verse 28**) [4].

We are made free if we cast aside falsehood **and** abide in Him. **Perfect** freedom is found only in the Son. We were slaves **to** sin, **but** the blood of **Jesus** cleanseth **us** from all sin. The **statement** in verse 44, "He was a murderer from the **beginning**" refers to the slaying of Abel **by** Cain [5].

*A. K. Smith, G. W. Conway*

**From Carlisle.** —We noted that **verses 23 and 44** clearly point out the place of **origin** and the spiritual lineage of the Jews, to whom the Lord **said**, "**Ye are** from beneath", "**Ye are of** this world" **and** "**Ye are of** your father the devil". Correspondingly the Lord shows His own origin **and lineage** in **verse 23**, "**I am** from above", **and** His oneness with the Father (**verse 19**). The contrast was complete. This was associated with their invocation of the fatherhood of Abraham (**verse 39**) although they later (**verse 41**) **seem** to become confused **and** claim, "We have one Father, **even** God". Abraham **is** the Old Testament patriarch who **features** prominently in this chapter, **just as** Moses **did** in the **great** confrontation of chapters **5, 6 and 7**. Neither **an** appeal to the law-giver **nor** to the father of the nation, the patriarch of faith himself, could **be** **sustained** in self-justification. Their corruption was **far** advanced and lay revealed **by** the searching uncovering of their hearts **by** the One "**greater** than **our** father Abraham". Although the majestic "**I AM**" title had already **been** **used** (**verse 24**), it was only the unequivocal assertion, "Before Abraham was, **I am**" which drove the **Jews** to **attempted** stoning.

There is a **message for today** about the solemn issues associated with **an empty** claim to the **Fatherhood of God**. In different guise this **tragic error** is with **us today** **and** requires **an** equally clear **and** fearless witness to the truth. Our thoughts **go back** to Nicodemus **and** the truth of birth from above.

*J. D. T., J. H.*

**From Southport.** —The opening verses of the chapter, together with the last verse of the previous chapter, are in our Bible placed within brackets. We have not the necessary knowledge to determine whether or not it should be included in the Scriptures [6], but we can look at the portion and note that it does not contain anything contradictory to the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, nor is it in disagreement with His manner of life. Attention is drawn to the words of the Lord addressed to the woman, "Go thy way; from henceforth sin no more". Men today are prepared to quote the words of the Lord but they forget, with intent, these last words to the woman.

The Lord said, "Before Abraham was, I am". This describes His eternal being. At such an announcement it would have been well for the Jews to have worshipped at His feet, but such was their heart that they took up stones to stone Him; but His hour was not yet come.

The Lord said to the Pharisees, "When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am He". The Cross revealed His identity, for none other has ever died for the whole world (please see comment [4]). The Lord had already told Nicodemus that as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, and now He was telling the same truth, but to a larger audience. The Lord, just before the end of His public ministry, referred again to being lifted up from the earth (John 12. 32). *W. S. Holden*

**From Glasgow (Govan and Partick).** —The chapter shows how much in the dark the men of that day were concerning the true meaning of the Law. This fact would be a clue as to their conduct in the first section of the chapter. They stood there that day self-righteous and aloof, but the Master acted as a light to their minds, and by His actions and words revealed to them what sinners they really were. Those who came to convict were convicted.

It was suggested that two kinds of Jews were being referred to in verses 30 and 31. Some, it is recorded, believed Him and others believed *on* Him. It looks as though some accepted Him for who He was, but others merely believed what He had to say but would not renounce Jewish beliefs they already held. Again they were ignorant about the Person who spoke to them, so that they could not see in Him beauties and treasures never associated with Abraham.

It was agreed that the lifting up (verse 28) refers to the Lord's crucifixion and not, as was suggested, to His glorification. We recalled the few who realized that He truly was the Son of God and others who received enlightenment at the Cross (please see Comment [4]).

*Ernest McKee*

**From Hamilton.** —The scribes and Pharisees were not concerned with this woman or her sins. They saw her not as a person, but as an instrument whereby they could formulate a charge against Jesus. Their subtlety is revealed **by** their opening words "**Master**" and **by** their **attempt to confront the Lord with a dilemma.**

If Jesus had answered that the woman should be stoned, two things would follow: (a) He would come into collision with the Roman authorities, who reserved for themselves the right to execute the death sentence; (b) His reputation as being the Friend of publicans and sinners might have been jeopardized.

If Jesus gave the decision that the Law's demands should be waived, it could be said immediately that He was condoning the breaking of the Law. This was the legal trap into which the scribes and Pharisees sought to lure Him. Jesus dealt with His adversaries first by way of their conscience: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her". At this they quickly dispersed. **Jesus** then dealt with the woman; He mentioned no punishment for her former sins but gave a command for the present and the future, "Henceforth sin no more". The purpose of Jesus was to seek and save that which was lost.

*I. Gray*

**From Denmark Hill, London.** —It is suggested that in verses 31-36 the Lord addresses those who believed on Him, but at the point where verse 37 starts, He turns again to the Pharisees, who very evidently did not believe on Him ("Ye seek to kill me", verse 37) and the contention of the earlier part of the chapter continues thereafter (please see comment [1], also answer to question from Carlisle).

The point to notice in the Lord's message to those who believed in Him is His insistence that they continue in His word, His truth. Note the singularity of that in which they were encouraged to continue. How like Acts 2. 42-43! No room here for diversification or self-choosing.

Note also, that involved in His good news, the gospel, was the indication of the truth. The truth of His Way for believers cannot be separated from the initial message of the gospel. It is all part of the message which He preached.

Note too, that this truth "shall make you free". In what sense does the truth bring freedom? Was the Lord referring to freedom from the Law, which they had served so long? In what sense today does a continuing in the truth bring freedom? [7].

What then can we learn for today in relation to the gospel and its ministry? We must continue to put the heavenly aspects of Christ before the hearers. We must show that Christ was more than just a good man, or one of the great teachers which the world has known. He was God's Man from heaven. We must continue in this despite opposition. We must try to raise men's minds from materialism, which is specially rampant at the present time, to the truth and reality of the spiritual, the heavenly.

*C. L. Prasher*

**From Kilmarnock.** —In verse 12 light is seen in contrast to darkness. Jesus declares Himself to be not only the Light to the Jews but the Light of the world. God said, "I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles" (Isaiah 49. 6). The Lord Jesus, addressing the disciples, speaks of them as the light of the world, by reason of the fact that they had the light of life (Matthew 5. 14). The apostle Paul used similar language in Philippians 2. 15, "Among whom ye are seen as lights (luminaries)".

The truth of the statements made by the Lord in the treasury was denied by the Pharisees, who alleged that He had no one to corroborate

them. They claimed that the Lord, in bearing witness of Himself, had not fulfilled the Law, for two witnesses were required. He mentions two, not giving more than the Law made necessary, Himself and the Father (verse 16 and 18). The validity of the testimony of the two witnesses is emphasized in verse 17. He Himself bore witness by word and work, and the Father joined in witnessing to His claim.

*J. C. Watt*

### COMMENTS

[1] **Macduff.** —The pronoun "they" in verse 33 refers back to "those Jews which had believed Him" in verse 31, so the Scripture does not at this point describe the Lord's antagonists as unbelievers, as suggested in this paper. Scholars tell us that the grammatical construction of the Greek in this verse differs from that in verse 30, the difference being brought out in the Revised Version but not in the Authorized. This may indicate that those who "believed on" the Lord (verse 30) fully accepted Him and His teaching, whereas the Jews who "believed Him" (verse 31), in an earthly sense believed His claim to be the Messiah but had not as yet accepted His spiritual teaching. The Lord's words in verses 31 and 32 were aimed at encouraging them to make spiritual progress, but antagonism developed as the Lord uncompromisingly exposed the emptiness of a racial relationship to Abraham divorced from a right attitude of heart to Abraham's God. It seems probable that as the Lord continued His discourse in the temple precincts many others gathered round to join in the discussion. This may account for the Lord's strong statements as the discussion proceeded, statements which seem inapplicable to any who had genuinely believed in Him.

*G. P. Jr., L. B.*

[2] **Birmingham.** —"To them which sat in the region and shadow of death, to them did light spring up" (Matthew 4. 16). By nature we were in the darkness of spiritual death; the new birth brought eternal life, and with this the enjoyment of a flood of light and joy, all emanating from the One in whom "was life; and the life was the light of men".

*G. P. Jr.*

[3] **Derby.** —Further to the interesting suggestions in Derby's paper as to the meaning of the Lord's words in verse 21, it is useful to compare similar statements in John 7. 33, 34 and 13. 33, 36. These references rather point forward to the time when the Lord would return to His Father. Those who believed in Him would long to be with Him, but must await God's time for this (13. 36). Many unbelievers would seek for some explanation of His disappearance (He was never manifested to the world in resurrection), but the Lord knew that because of their wrong attitude of heart they would not receive the witness of His apostles. In the light of this He said that whither He went they could not come (7. 34, 8. 21). "Except ye believe that I am He, ye shall die in your sins" (8. 24).

*G. P. Jr.*

[4] **Derby.** —It is true that "When ye have lifted up the Son of Man" refers to the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus (John 3. 14), but we must keep in mind that witness to His resurrection was also a vital

element in the preaching of the apostles, through which many of Israel first came to appreciate that the Lord's claims were indeed true (Acts 2. 22-36, 3. 13-15).  
G. P. Jr.

[5] **Derby.** —The Lord's words, "He was a murderer from the beginning", certainly found reflection in the murder of Abel by Cain, for we read in 1 John 3. 12 that "Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother\*'. It seems necessary, however, to go farther back than this. "He that loveth not abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3. 14-15). Was not Satan a murderer as to his character from the time that rebellion was found in him, in the sense that he showed such hatred to God, and in due course to Adam and Eve? By tempting them he achieved the entrance of sin, which brought death to all men (Romans 5. 12).  
G. P. Jr.

[6] Southport. —See article by G. P. Jr. in this issue.

[7] **Denmark Hill.** —Falsehood and sin bring men into bondage, enslaving their minds and bodies in a service which will drag them downwards. The truth sets men free to engage in that for which they were created, the service of God. It is true that saved persons are free from the bondage of the Law, which cannot save a man, but they are not free from the keeping of the moral law (Galatians 5. 13, 14). **L. B.**

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Questions from Derby**—(1) Is there any clue as to what Jesus wrote on the ground and why He did so?

**Answer.** —There are some things not told us in Scripture because it is not necessary for us to know them. *What* Jesus wrote must be in this category, but it is legitimate to enquire *why* He did so. One object may have been to show the Jews that God never pronounces judgement hastily. The Lord of course knew what He would do, but the clamouring Pharisees needed to pause and consider.  
**L. B.**

**Question (2).** Explain verse 50. Who is the One who seeketh and judgeth? Was Jesus speaking of Himself, as we know all judgement is given to the Son?

**Answer.** —The verb "judge" (Greek *krino*) is not in this verse used in the sense of final divine judgement upon men which, as our friends assert, is the prerogative of the Son. The Lord was saying that although He accepted ill-treatment and dishonour as part of what He must endure whilst on earth, yet His Father, judging things in their true light, would ensure His ultimate glory. *Krino* is used in this sense in some other passages, for example Luke 7. 43, where the idea of giving a considered opinion is clearly illustrated in the Lord's words to Simon, "Thou hast rightly judged".  
**L. B.**

**Question from Carlisle.** —In what sense did the Jews (verses 30, 31) believe on Him, since subsequent conversation indicates them to be unregenerate?

Answer. —As some contributors have noticed, the Revised Version, true to the Greek, distinguishes between the believers of verse 30 and those of verse 31. Those who "believed Him" (verse 31) had perhaps a limited appreciation of who the Lord was, and reservations about parts of His teaching. Some commentators have suggested that the twice repeated accusation, "Ye seek to kill me" (verses 37 and 40) was addressed to persons other than those referred to in verse 31. See comment [1].

L. B.

## NOTES ON THE PSALMS

### Psalm 50

*(continued from page 96)*

But unto the wicked God saith,  
 What hast thou to do to declare My statutes,  
 And that thou hast taken My covenant in thy mouth?  
 Seeing thou hatest instruction,  
 And castest My words behind thee (verses 16, 17).

As is in the case of offering sacrifice unto God, so is it in the matter of declaring God's statutes which formed His covenant; God gave no place to the wicked to be His servants and representatives toward men. They hated instruction or correction, and cast His words behind them, so far as their application to their own behaviour was concerned. This conduct was the exact opposite of what is said of our Lord, He "began both to do and to teach, until the day in which He was received up" (Acts 1. 1, 2). This was the exact opposite of the ways of the scribes and the Pharisees, of whom He said, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat: all things therefore whatsoever they bid you, these do and observe: but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not" (Matthew 23. 2, 3).

When thou sawest a thief, thou consentedst with him,  
 And hast been partaker with adulterers.  
 Thou givest thy mouth to evil,  
 And thy tongue frameth deceit (verses 18, 19).

Here Asaph particularizes on the conduct of the wicked. **God had** no place for such in His service of declaring His statutes, for they were found breaking the statutes of the moral law, and also, they were using their mouth for evil and their tongue for deceit.

Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother;  
 Thou slanderest thine own mother's son.  
 These things hast thou done, and I kept silence;  
 Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself:  
 But I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes  
 (verses 20, 21).

Here is a further evil of which the wicked were guilty, that of slandering their own brother. There are few things that one may be

guilty of worse than slandering the innocent, and in this case of one's own brother. A slanderer is a devil (*DIABOLOS*, one that casts or thrusts through), one whose words pierce with devastating effect. Pity the subject of the slanderer's tongue. God kept silence while the wicked was guilty of the evils mentioned and he thought that God was even as himself, but He now reproves him and sets his evil doings before his eyes.

Now consider this, ye that forget God,  
Lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver:  
Whoso offereth the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifieth Me;  
And to him that ordereth his conversation aright  
Will I shew the salvation of God (verses 22, 23).

God gives to the wicked opportunity to repent and correct their ways, for their actions showed that they had forgotten God, lest He should tear them in pieces, there being none to deliver. We have the summing up of the meaning of this psalm in the last verse. (1) The one who offered the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorified God, and (2) he who ordered his conversation (*DEREK*, way. The word "conversation" is of old English usage for one's behaviour or way of life, see Psalm 37. 14 A. V. ) aright would be shown God's salvation from whatever danger to which he was exposed. Verse 23 is the fulfilment of verses 14 and 15. See Hebrews 13. 15, 16. J. M.

### Psalm 51

We now come to a psalm of David and we are told of some sad circumstances. We have seven other psalms by David in Book 2 which tell either of the circumstances or the place in which they were written. David calls on God to have mercy upon him.

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness:  
According to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my  
transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity,  
And cleanse me from my sin (verses 1, 2).

This psalm and others, such as Psalm 32. 3, 4, tell of the misery in which he was. He pleads for God's mercy (Hebrew *Chanan*, to be gracious), lovingkindness (*Chesed*, kindness), tender mercies (*Rachamim*, bowels, feelings of pity). This last Hebrew word is similar in meaning to the Greek word *Splanchnon*, translated "bowels" in A. V. (2 Corinthians 6. 12; Philippians 1. 8; 2. 1; Colossians 3. 12; Philemon 7, 12, 20; 1 John 3. 17). David asks for his transgressions to be blotted out, to be washed (as to his external conduct) from his iniquity, and cleansed (as to his heart) from his sin.

For I acknowledge my transgressions:  
And my sin is ever before me.  
Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned,  
And done that which is evil in Thy sight:  
That Thou mayest be justified when Thou speakest,  
And be clear when Thou judgest (verses 3, 4).

David acknowledged his sin, for when he pronounced death on the man in Nathan's parable, Nathan said, "Thou art the man" and he also told him that he had smitten Uriah the Hittite with the sword of the children of Ammon, and had taken his wife to be his wife. "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD" (2 Samuel 12. 1-11). He had done wrong to these people who were his subjects but he had sinned against the Lord, and he said, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in Thy sight". God is justified in what He has said, for "the word of the LORD is right" (Psalm 33. 4). "The sum of Thy word is truth; and every one of Thy righteous judgements endureth for ever" (Psalm 119. 160). The Lord Jesus knew this and He said, "Thy word is truth" (John 17. 17). David was quick to write this psalm after the coming of Nathan the prophet. It is his confession of the evil he had done in God's sight. Well he knew that he had committed sin worthy of death, but God heard his cry for mercy and Nathan said, "The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die".

Behold, I was Shapen in iniquity;  
 And in sin did my mother conceive me.  
 Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts:  
 And in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom  
 (verses 5, 6).

David, and we all, were wrong from conception, just as what a plant or an animal is at the time of conception it will be after birth. To change it to something else would require a new conception or fertilization and birth. Hence "through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin" (Romans 5. 12). "For since by man came death, by Man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15. 21, 22). Romans 5 deals particularly with the spiritual consequences of Adam's sin, and 1 Corinthians 15 with the physical consequences. At the Lord's first coming He came to deal with the soul of man, that by faith in Him, who is God's only Son, man should be born again by the incorruptible seed of the word of God (John 1. 12, 13; 3. 3; 1 Peter 1. 23, 25). Spiritually, man is completely misshapen at his natural birth and needs the Great Physician to put him right and make him whole, and when the Lord comes again the body of the believer will be redeemed (Romans 8. 23), and he will have a body like unto the Lord's glorious body (Philippians 3. 20, 21). Whilst David well knew that he was a partaker of original sin, as Solomon also knew when he spoke of every man knowing the plague of his own heart (1 Kings 8. 38), he knew also the remedy in God's truth reaching the inward parts, and God making man to know wisdom in the hidden parts. External religion in dogmas, rites, ceremonies and formal religion is of no value whatever. Divine life comes alone through Christ, by the living word of God; the gospel being the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth (Romans 1. 16).

J. M.

(to be continued D. V.)

Issued by the Churches of God  
 Obtainable from Needed Truth Publishing Office,  
 Assembly Hall, George Lane, Hayes, Bromley, Kent.  
 Also from: —Mr. J. Ramage, 44 Tweedsmuir Avenue, Dundas, Ontario, Canada.  
 Printed by Barretts of Brighton, 42 The Lanes, Brighton  
 incorporating W. J. Starkey Ltd. Est. 1877

# BIBLE STUDIES

"Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17. 11).

VOLUME 35

OCTOBER, 1967

## EDITORIAL

This month fellow-students will already be starting to consider the subjects laid out in the 1968 Syllabus, which points a way through the fascinating field of study in the last ten chapters of the Gospel by John. We wish to encourage past contributors to pursue their efforts on to the conclusion of this Gospel, and will warmly welcome the renewal of papers from others.

The new syllabus is obviously a little different from the pattern used over recent years, in that certain lines of study have been suggested for some months, although four months have been left "open" without indicating any special emphasis. It has also been pointed out on the syllabus that even for those months in which certain lines of study are suggested, papers on more general lines may be submitted if these are preferred. It may be helpful to consider monthly portions both from a more general point of view and in relation to the special study themes indicated, but to submit a written paper on one aspect or another.

In any case it is hoped that the "suggested lines of study" may be helpful in directing attention to important aspects of the chapters under consideration, and in underlining problems which some students will be interested to explore:

"Because the Preacher was wise, he still  
taught the people knowledge; yea, he pondered,  
and sought out, and set in order..."

(Ecclesiastes 12. 9)

A similar thoughtfulness, seeking out and setting in order, will enrich our studies and lead to a fresh appreciation of this wonderful section of the Gospel by John.

The whole of the 1968 study is focussed on events surrounding the death and resurrection of our beloved Lord. In a special sense this quickens our reverent interest. For here we are drawn so near to the heart of the One who yielded Himself even unto death for our sakes. John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved", discloses intimate details of the Master's thoughts as night closed in before the anguish of the day of crucifixion. So our study will lead on to "holy ground", where in considering points of academic interest we shall always be conscious of the transcending wonder of the sufferings of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

"Minds opened to understand"; "hearts burning within us"; these are our objectives in sharing the fruits of our studies on the lines of the 1968 Syllabus!

G.

P.

Jr.

## THE GOSPEL AND ITS MINISTRY

The Gospel According to **John**, Chapter 9

From Kilmarnock. —In this chapter there are portrayed not only a person who was destitute of sight but also a people who were ignorant, undiscerning and unable to understand the things which they had witnessed. Here we have a man who had never known what it was to see the glories of God's handiwork around him, only hearing what **was** going on and never fully appreciating what it all meant. The condition of the blind man was similar to that of the Pharisees and Jews (verses 13-34).

Such was the change when the man received his sight that many disbelieved that this was the same man until he confirmed it and recounted his experience. Hard questions and arguments were put to him, but he was sure of the sight he had received and said, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see". The healed man could reason with force and a few words defeated the Jews' false arguments. As a result they cast him out. Under such trying conditions the man might have wondered where to turn. Doubts may have come into his mind but the Lord found him and said, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?", revealing Himself to him.

To the born again person the vision of Christ given in the pages of Scripture brings assurance of the everlasting salvation he has just received and, like the blind man, he is led to say, "I believe", and to worship the Man of Calvary.

Although this great lesson had been enacted before them the Pharisees were still unrepentant, and although they could see with their eyes yet they were spiritually blind; their sin remained.

*J. M. Rankine*

From Birmingham. —This incident concerning the Lord healing the blind man illustrates the purpose of the gospel, the giving of spiritual sight. This man proved the Lord's power and ability to heal him by going to Siloam as he was told. So today salvation is received by obeying the Lord's message. If the man had stopped to reason about the sense of going to Siloam to wash off the clay, he might never have received his sight; and people who attempt to reason out the gospel will not be saved that way.

The ministry spoken by the Lord Himself in John 9 is put in few words but is very profound. In verse 4 He spoke of the urgency of getting on with the work; verse 6 records that He did.

The healed man's testimony, given immediately after he had received his sight, was simple and clear and extremely valuable to the Lord. He knew little about the Lord Jesus, but he declared what he did know and was not afraid to own what he did not know. This is an example of the simple ministry given by one who knew little. We were impressed by his words in verse 11, "Jesus... said unto me, G o . . . and wash: so I went away and washed, and I received sight". The man

may have had only one talent, but he used it to advantage. Verse 31 seems to indicate the man's understanding of God's appreciation of faithful persons.

The Lord's use of the dust of the ground in His work was referred to: in anointing the man's eyes in this case, in writing on the ground (8. 6) and in the creation of man. He still uses "clay" today, namely men, for His work (2 Corinthians 4. 7).

The Jews rejected the man but one would have expected them to rejoice with him who had been blind for so long. They represented the religious leaders of their day, so they cast out one who confessed Jesus as Lord. Need we be surprised if this attitude is prevalent today? Whilst receiving the blessings spoken of in Romans 10. 9, we must be prepared to be "cast out" for the Lord's sake.

*R. B. Jones*

From Denmark Hill, London. —One aspect of the gospel that is sometimes overlooked is that it gives a meaning and explanation to life. The problem of pain is one that puzzles many. The apparent chance that causes some to suffer and others not has led many to think wrong thoughts of God. Even the disciples were wrong in their reasoning about the blind man. Surely the great fact that God is sovereign and does all things according to His will is a source of strength in our proclamation of the gospel.

The Lord enunciates the great principle that God can be glorified in men's lives even in their misfortunes. This means that opportunities for work and service are ever around us. The Lord is the great Source of light and understanding to men darkened in their sins.

It is surprising to see what lengths "blind unbelief" will reach in even denying indisputable facts (verse 18). Men are equally hard today in their antagonism to the gospel record. Fear of men is another stumbling-block exemplified in the reaction of the parents (verses 20-22). How many must have been lost by being fearful of the consequences of believing the message preached!

The questioning by the Jews resulted in a greater opportunity to witness by the man who was born blind (verses 25-33). We can see his faith growing. Witnessing is not only a duty to others but something for our own soul's nourishment. His reasoning was too powerful for the bigoted Pharisees. They cast him out of the synagogue (verse 34). The Lord found him and instructed him concerning Himself (verses 37, 38).

In the last section (verses 39-41) we have our Lord's summing up of the incident. By His coming into the world men have no excuse. A responsibility is put upon them. The Pharisees thought they "saw" in that they understood the Law, but when the fulfilment of the Law was before them and they recognized it not then they were in great darkness. In contrast, those who were "blind", understanding not the weightier matters of the Law and religion but having a child-like heart and believing in Christ, became illuminated by the light of the gospel. How fearful a judgement is upon those who remain in the darkness of **sin** when the light is preached to them!

*R. F. Robertson*

## EXTRACTS

**From Macduff.** —This chapter describes a man who had need of the healing power of the Lord Jesus. Verse 1 tells us that the man was blind from birth. We wondered how it seemed general knowledge that he was born blind [1]. The question was asked by the disciples, "Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?" The Lord makes it very clear that there was no sin attached to the infirmity. It was there that the works of God might be made manifest. The fact that Jesus could give sight to one born blind was impressed upon this man's mind, and he bore witness of it later.

The Lord digresses a little, and makes the statement about working while it is day, for "The night cometh, when no man can work". There were two opinions about this. It was suggested that this was perhaps the evening of the Lord's life, and it was also thought that we are still living in this "the day" of this dispensation but the night will come with the Rapture [2]. It was always His desire to be well-pleasing to His Father; "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2. 49 R. V. M.).

The closing verses tell how the Lord condemned the Pharisees. The purpose of His coming was "that they which see not may see". The Pharisees said, "Are we also blind?" With sight came responsibility; while a man was blind his responsibility was limited, but once a man claimed to see, his responsibility increased. The fact that the Pharisees claimed to see was a confession of their responsibility. So the Lord said, "But now ye say, We see: your sin remaineth". *J. M. W.*

**From Vancouver.** —This chapter contains a warning to those who are disciples. There is a danger in interpreting situations that occur in others' lives, lest we make a wrong judgement as the disciples did here. The anointing of the man's eyes with the clay would emphasize the full extent of his blindness. The man could not now see if he wanted to; he had to rely on the Lord. His faithful obedience is further portrayed by his going to the pool. The spittle and the water in the pool were both used to bring the man healing, the latter perhaps signifying the water of the word.

There was a change made in the man **because** of his new-found sight. Such a change is seen in the salvation of a sinner and should cause people to see it and wonder. The question could be asked as to how the man knew it was the Lord who made the clay [3]. But it becomes irrelevant when we see throughout the chapter that the man knew He was from God. Perhaps he had heard Jesus say, "When I am in the world, I am the Light of the world".

The Pharisees could not have spoken truer words when they said, "Thou wast altogether born in sins". But the man had now received his spiritual sight and it was the Pharisees who were blind.

*J. Pope, J. C. Bell Jr.*

**From Aberkenfig and Barry.** —From this passage we learn that not all illness is a result of sin, although sin, neglect or abuse of our bodies

can result in poor health. The disciples knew the beggar had been blind from birth and wrongly judged it to be a result of sin. They may have considered him a hopeless case, for as far as we know they did not ask the Lord to heal him.

There is a clear warning to the followers of Christ that the day of service will soon be over. We judge that "the night" of verse 4 will be the period after the coming of Christ to the air, when no service can be done on earth (see comment [2]).

The eminent archeologists Dr. Schick and Prof. Sayce have suggested that the pool of Siloam was at one end of the excavations of Hezekiah (2 Kings 20. 20; 2 Chronicles 32. 30), which began in the valley of Jehoshaphat outside the city and by means of a conduit brought water to the pool inside the city.

The man exercised faith very soon after he was given his sight (verses 9, 11, 27, 36). He witnessed without fear before the people and the Pharisees, in spite of the threat to put those who confessed the Christ outside the synagogue. His words in verses 30-33 reveal him as one with a clear understanding of the ways of God. His appreciation that Jesus was God and therefore to be worshipped (verse 38) shows his grasp **by** faith **of** the Person of Christ although previously he had thought that his Healer was merely a prophet (verse 17).

*Ian French, B. V. F.*

**From Cardiff.** —We considered the question asked by the disciples: "Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?" Is it correct to question the Lord concerning conditions and circumstances? In Psalm 73 the godly psalmist appears to question God about the prosperity of the wicked. Having an enquiring mind about God's purposes does not appear to be wrong, but critical questioning seems to be contrary to the Scriptures (Romans 9. 19-21).

In verse 16 we noted the difference in the attitude of various ones to the Lord Jesus. Today men and women are at variance in their thoughts of the Person of Christ. May we always have right thoughts of Him, based entirely on the Scriptures of Truth!

Whatever was the division in verse 16, there was an agreement amongst the Jews in verse 22 that any who confessed Jesus to be the Christ would be cast out of the synagogue [4]. The Lord Jesus and his followers were unwanted. This is also true today, the devil and the world are in full agreement that they do not want the Lord Jesus, nor those that follow Him. Let us not be surprised if we receive ill-treatment, for if we are faithful servants of our Lord Jesus Christ, this will be the case.

*C. V. Dodge.*

**From Hamilton.** —The attitude of the Pharisees to the healing of the blind man was largely unbelieving and hostile. Their preoccupation with the letter of the Law, rather than with its spirit, caused them to condemn the Lord Jesus for performing this miracle on the Sabbath. That the man himself knew immeasurable benefit was of no apparent consequence to them. This was a further demonstration of their attitude, as expressed at the healing of the impotent man by Bethesda

(John 5. 10). They were unable or unwilling to accept that the One who acted thus was "Lord even of the Sabbath" (Mark 2. 28).

The Lord has ever been the great Divider of men, and it was so in the case of these Pharisees. Some, because this act was done on the Sabbath, condemned Him as "not from God\*". Others questioned, "How can a man that is a sinner do such signs?". In that day, as in this, no middle ground existed. The words of the Lord are verily true: "He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth" (Luke 11. 23).

Three times the Pharisees interrogated the man who had received his sight. Of the change in him there could be no doubt, but in each interrogation, their basic question was the same: "How then were thine eyes opened?" (verses 10, 15, 26). They seemed unable to comprehend how this could be achieved. So also are the unregenerate today. The effect of the redeeming touch of the Saviour is evident in the life of the believer. But the unsaved cannot understand, for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2. 14).

*R. L.*

**From Birkenhead.** —The blind man, typical of the sinner, was seen by Jesus. The man exercised faith when he went to wash in the pool. The witness of the blind man in the face of questionings by the Pharisees (verse 24) teaches us to avoid being drawn into dispute by keeping on sure ground: "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see".

The disciples were troubled as to why the man was born blind. Maybe their minds went back to Exodus 20. 5. However, Jesus assured them that the reason was that the works of God may be manifest in him. We may never know why certain experiences come our way, they may be for the same purpose as in the case of the blind man. We should be wary of judging. The fact that time for the "works of Him that sent Me" would pass, should make us realize that we ought to use our opportunities fully whilst we have them.

Two points we noticed in passing. Firstly, the words "Give glory to God" (verse 24), compared with Joshua 7. 19, suggest the thought of "confess your failures and sins". Secondly, verse 37, compared with John 4. 26, seems to lay stress on "seeing Him", which would be an added joy for one born blind. *R. D. Williams*

**From Derby.** —This man was born blind so that the power of God might be seen. The night mentioned in verse 4 speaks of the end of the day of grace. The exhortation for us is to "work today" for the Master, (see Comment [2]).

Jesus could have healed this man instantly as in the case of blind Bartimaeus but instead He made the clay and used this in His miracle. This could have been to test the man's faith as we recall he did not specifically ask to be healed. However his obedience proved his faith.

The Pharisees, confounded by the healed man, thought Jesus was a sinner who disregarded the law of the Sabbath. The works He did denied this accusation and there was a division. However hard the

Pharisees **tried** to reason that the miracle was not of the **Lord Jesus**, the witness of the blind man remained clear and plain (**verses 25, 30**). The meeting with the **Lord** had **so affected** the man that he could not contain the **joy** within him as he testified of what had happened. **As soon as he knew** who the **Lord Jesus** was, his love for Him was **seen** in his worship.

A. K. Smith, G. W. Conway

**From Methil.** —We know that sin is responsible for **much** sorrow and suffering. In **this** particular instance, the man was blind "that **die** works of God should **be made manifest** in him". Physical **defects** in human **beings** may be **suffered** for very **different** reasons. We **remember** the **life** of Job. How careful we should **be not** to point the **finger!** It **seemed** a peculiar **question** that the disciples **asked** the **Lord**, "Who **did** sin, **this** man, or his parents, **that** he should **be born** blind?"\* Could the man **sin** before his **birth**? [5]

One glorious **fact** comes to light in **this** great miracle that **sometimes** our troubles and difficulties are the very **means** used for our blessing. This man's blindness led **him** to the Saviour. **Although** the **Lord** said, "Neither **did** **this** man sin, nor his parents\*\*," it **does not** mean that they were **perfect** and faultless. "There is **none** righteous, **no, not** one"; "for all have sinned, and fall **short** of the **glory** of God" (Romans 3. 10, 23). The **Lord** was simply indicating that **this** blindness had **not** been brought on by their misdemeanours. It would **appear** strange to all who **witnessed** **this** miraculous **cure** that the **Lord** covered the man's eyes with clay and then told him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. The man's **faith** was being proved, **but** he instantly obeyed, and he came seeing.

Neville Coomer

## COMMENTS

[1] **Macduff.** —From verse 8 we **understand** that it was the man's **habit** to sit and beg, probably at the same place **day after day**, so that his history would be well-known to **passers-by**, who would quickly inform the **Lord** and His disciples if they enquired. It **has** been **suggested** however that the disciples may not have known that the man was blind from birth, for the **Greek** is said to be capable of meaning, "Did this man sin? or did his parents commit some sin with the result that he was **born** blind?"

L.

B.

[2] **Macduff.** —Verse 4 is probably of very general application, so that "the **day**" is the day of opportunity for both the **Lord** and His disciples, whereas "the **night**" refers to the time when **circumstances**, whatever they may be, prevent witness either for the time being or permanently.

L. B.

[3] **Vancouver.** —Verse 36 records that the man addressed the **Lord Jesus** as "Lord" before He had revealed Himself as the **Son** of God. The **Greek** word used in that verse is *kurios*, which in the Gospels sometimes means "Sir" but in the remainder of the **New Testament** is almost invariably rendered "Lord". The blind man probably used it in the former sense as he did not yet possess a full knowledge of the **Lord's** deity.

L. B.

[4] **Cardiff.** —A few of the Pharisees, like Nicodemus, believed on the Lord, **but** these would not **be** included **in** the group of Jews (probably the Sanhedrin) who **agreed** to the **casting** out from the **synagogue** of those who **confessed** **Jesus to be** the Christ. Pharisees who **were** well-disposed towards the **Lord** would have acted like Joseph of Arimathaea who, although a councillor, avoided being a party to His condemnation (Luke 23. 50, 51). L. B.

[5] **Methil**—No difficulty **arises** if the **suggested** rendering given in Comment [1] is admissible. Some have said that **a few** Jews believed **in** the pre-existence of souls, **but** this could hardly apply to the disciples. L. B.

### QUESTION AND ANSWER

**Question from Derby.** —From what the disciples said in **verse 2** do we **understand** that **it** is possible that through the specific sin of a person, he **or** his family **can be** afflicted?

**Answer.** —There **can be** no doubt that sin does, directly or indirectly, bring retribution upon the sinner, sometimes in the **form of** physical or mental affliction (See Editorial, September *Bible Studies*). Normal human experience teaches this, also that **some** children have to suffer **because of** their parents' sins. **Exodus 20. 5, 34. 7; Deuteronomy 5. 9; Jeremiah 32. 18** **enunciate** God's law on the point. L. B.

### NOTES ON THE PSALMS

#### Psalm 51

(Continuing from page 108)

**Purge me** with hyssop, **and I shall be** clean:  
Wash **me, and I shall be** whiter than snow (**verse 7**).

**Purge** (Hebrew *Chata* means to cleanse **from**. sin or error) **me**; David calls **on God** to cleanse him inwardly **and to do so** with hyssop. Hyssop as a herb is **an** inward purgative, **but** whether he **uses** hyssop figuratively in this **sense, or as in** the case of the cleansing of the leper, in Leviticus 14. 1-8, when cedar wood, scarlet **and** hyssop were **used** to sprinkle the blood of the **bird** that was killed upon the leper, **may be** difficult to say. The living bird **after being** dipped in that blood was allowed to **go into** the open field, **after** the leper had **been** pronounced clean. This **may be** what was **in David's mind** as he thought of hyssop **being used** in cleansing. Hyssop is **first used**, according to the **record of** the Scriptures, **in** the application of the blood of the passover lamb to the lintels **and** side posts of the doors of the houses of the Israelites in Egypt (**Exodus 12. 22**). Hyssop was also **used in** sprinkling the water, **to** which the ashes of the sin offering of the **red** heifer were added, upon the **tent, and** the persons that were there, **and** upon him that touched a human **bone, a dead** person, or a **grave** (**Numbers 19. 1-22**, particularly **verses 16-18**). Whilst **David asked** God to **purge** him **and** make him clean, he also **asked** Him to wash him **and** he would **be** whiter than

snow, for in each snow crystal there is a speck of dust. David thought of being made whiter than snow. There were two means of cleansing in connexion with the Tabernacle and also the Temple, cleansing by blood at the Altar and by water at the Laver. The Laver was first of all used by Moses when he took Aaron and his sons, the priests, and washed them all over at the door of the **tent** of meeting (**Exodus 29. 4; 40. 12**), after which he put upon them the garments of their priesthood and anointed them and sanctified them to minister in the priest's office. Then they had to wash their hands and their feet (which members speak of work **and** walk) when they went into the Tent of Meeting or when they came near to minister at the Altar, to burn the offering made by fire (Exodus 30. 17-21). The Laver speaks of that cleansing which was done by the Lord, of which He said, "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit" (John 13. 10). He again said, "Already ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15. 3). This washing is that of which we read in Titus 3. 5, "According to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration (Greek *Loutron*, Laver) and renewing of the Holy Spirit". This is the regeneration of which the Lord spoke, when He said, "Except a man be born of water (the word of God of which the Laver spoke) and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3. 5). Then after the new birth (or regeneration) the believer in his service for God has to wash his hands and his feet, which speak of his work and his walk. Washing had to do with a defilement which could be seen, and certainly David's defilement could be seen.

Make me to hear joy and gladness;  
That the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice.  
Hide Thy face from my sins,  
And blot out all mine iniquities (verses 8, 9).

David views himself as a broken man, though not literally with broken bones, and he longs that his past experience of joy and gladness might return to him again. He asks that God would hide His face from his sins and blot out his iniquities. Conviction of sin is a grievous experience and some have suffered much and long from it; but it is nothing compared with that of the lost in eternity when there will be no forgiveness by God. The misery of the lost will be for ever.

Create in me a clean heart, O God;  
And renew a right spirit within me.  
Cast me not away from Thy presence;  
And take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation:  
And uphold me with a free spirit (verses 10, 11, 12).

"Create" (Hebrew *Bard*) means to form. David uses the same word as in Genesis 1. 1, where we read, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth". He asked for a clean heart from the Creator, and for a renewed right spirit within him. "Right" is from the Hebrew *Kun*, which is said to mean established (steadfast, R. V. Marg. ). We have this word used in Isaiah 45. 18, speaking of the earth, "For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; He is God; that formed the earth and made it; He established (*Kun*) it, He created it not a waste, He formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else".

As the earth had been brought to ruin, perhaps by the sin of some unknown creatures, so David thinks of how sin had brought ruination to him, to his heart and spirit, and he seeks God to work upon him again for good. Even so it has been in our case, for God who said (see Genesis 1. 3), "Light shall shine out of darkness", has in our case "shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4. 6). He asks that God will not cast him away from His presence. Paul said, "I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected" (a castaway, A. V.) (1 Corinthians 9. 27), rejected as a servant, but not rejected as to salvation and so becoming a lost soul again. David also asks that God would not take His Holy Spirit from him. He had seen the effect of this in king Saul's case, when he was rejected from being king of Israel, and the Spirit of the LORD departed from him, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him (1 Samuel 16. 14). Often he acted afterwards as though he was mentally deranged, and in his insane jealousy he became a murderer. David having known all this asks God not to take His Holy Spirit from him. Though we in this dispensation may both grieve and quench the Holy Spirit, He will not be taken from us, for the Lord said, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive" (John 14. 16, 17). David also asks, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation". He had not lost salvation, but he had lost the joy of it. However miserable believers may become through sin, they can never become lost souls again. In one sense a person who is born again cannot sin, "Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because His seed abideth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God" (1 John 3. 9). At the same time this person who is begotten of God lives in a body of which Paul said, "For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7. 18). And John the apostle who said that the person who is begotten of God cannot sin, says in 1 John 1. 8, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us", and again, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us" (verse 10). Paul buffeted his body and brought it into bondage lest when he had preached to others he should become a castaway. The believer is a person of two natures, in his soul, in himself, he is holy and cannot sin, and in his body, his flesh, old Adam is still there with all the lusts of a corrupt nature, and his escape therefrom is in holding to the fact that he was crucified with Christ, and he must mortify his members that are upon the earth (Colossians 3. 5) and put away the evils enumerated in verse 8. David knew what his old, evil nature did in his case, and we know what it can do in ours if we are not watchful and prayerful and go often to our Father in confession. David also asked to be upheld, that is sustained, by a free spirit. It is a miserable experience when sin puts the human spirit into bondage, and sorrow and silence is the result; when our lips are closed in prayer, and the believer has no liberty. The Spirit of God works on our spirit which is the nearest part of the believer to God. David's spirit had been in bondage through sin, but in confession he seeks forgiveness, cleansing, joy and freedom. These undoubtedly he obtained, but whilst truly restored to fellowship with God, he reaped in God's governmental dealings with him, much grief as God said he would. His experience over Absalom was part of his sorrow.

Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways;  
And sinners shall be converted unto Thee (verse 13).

It has been the **good** pleasure of **God** to use converted men to teach others His ways. Peter, who denied the **Lord** thrice, was mightily used by God in the early chapters of the Acts, and Paul, the converted Pharisee, filled the pages of the Acts after Peter (from chapter 13 to the end of the book). God could have used the angels of His power, but that was not His will and way. We need to appreciate that it is God's will to use us in the reaching and teaching of sinners, who will be converted in this way. Thus it was that David saw his future work, but it was needful for him through humiliation and confession to get right with God first. Paul was ever ready and happy to tell men, both unsaved and saved, of his conversion, of the grace of God to him. Of himself he said, "I am the least of the apostles, that **am** not **meet to be** called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Corinthians 15. 9, 10).

Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation;  
And my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness.  
O Lord, open Thou my lips;  
And my mouth shall shew forth Thy praise (verses 14, 15).

David confesses that his sin was of a serious kind, bloodguiltiness, and only the God of his salvation could deliver him from that. God did deliver him, so that he was able to sing aloud of the righteousness of God, for God is just in all His ways. Our Advocate with God the Father is Jesus Christ the righteous, not Jesus the gracious or the good, but One who in His advocacy acknowledges that sin must be dealt with righteously, hence He is the Propitiation for our sins, for God must be righteously satisfied before those who have sinned can be forgiven. David asks God to open his lips that his sin had closed, and his mouth would show forth His praise. What a delightful thing it is to hear the words of a forgiven sinner whose mouth the Lord has opened! It is a moving experience to hear his praise.

For Thou delightest not in sacrifice; else would I give it:  
Thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering.  
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit:  
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise  
(verses 16, 17).

God said of Judah in the days of Jeremiah, "They have not hearkened unto My words; and as for My law, they have rejected it. To what purpose cometh there to Me frankincense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices pleasing unto Me" (Jeremiah 6. 19, 20). Not only where the word of God is rejected are the sacrifices of God's people unacceptable, but also where there is lacking a poor and contrite spirit and where trembling at His word does not exist. God said, "He that killeth an ox is as he that slayeth a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as he that breaketh a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as he that offereth swine's blood; he that burneth frankincense, as he that blesseth an idol: yea, they have chosen their own ways" (Isaiah 66. 3). David would

have offered sacrifices in plenty, if that had been the way of getting right with God, but God had no pleasure in receiving burnt offerings from him till there was that state of heart and spirit in him, a broken heart and a contrite spirit, which God will never despise at any time. Let us in this day of spiritual sacrifices apply to ourselves the conditions of offering acceptable sacrifices to God. To offer sacrifices in a right position calls for a right condition for them to be acceptable to God.

Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion;  
Build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.

Then shalt Thou delight in the sacrifices of righteousness, in  
burnt offering and whole burnt offering:

Then shall they offer bullocks upon Thine altar (verses 18, 19).

David's deeds were acts of breaking down the walls of Jerusalem. Walls and gates of cities, especially of the city of God, were such as taught the truths of separation from evil **and** of divine rule and judgement, for the elders sat in the gates to administer the law and the judgement of God. He calls for God to do His good pleasure to Zion and to build the walls of Jerusalem, and when separation and the rule of God were restored, then God would delight in burnt offering and whole burnt offering, which David called the sacrifices of righteousness, and bullocks would be offered upon God's altar. The bullock was the first of the burnt offerings in Leviticus 1, indeed it was the first of the offerings in the book of Leviticus. Only such as were able and had the heart to offer such a burnt offering did so that they might find acceptance with God, for the bullock was accepted to make atonement for the offerer that he might be accepted. Such was the state that David anticipated as the result of sin being confessed and forgiven, and a state of godly separation from evil existing in the king and his people. *J. M.*

**Issued by the Churches of God**

Obtainable **from** Needed **Truth** Publishing Office,

**Assembly Hall, George Lane, Hayes, Bromley, Kent.**

**Also from:—Mr. J. Ramage, 44 Tweedsmuir Avenue, Dundas, Ontario, Canada.**

Printed by **Barretts** of Brighton, **42 The Lanes, Brighton**  
**incorporating W. J. Starkey Ltd. Est. 1877**

# BIBLE STUDIES

"Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17. 11).

VOLUME 35

NOVEMBER, 1967

## EDITORIAL

Parables, proverbs and allegories are word-pictures used in the Scriptures as aids in the teaching of spiritual truths. A parable (Greek, *parabole*) is literally a placing of one thing beside another. In the Gospels the well-known parables of the Lord were short utterances of a narrative or descriptive character about simple things within the experience of His hearers. Running parallel, and illustrated by them, was teaching on a higher plane which was sometimes explained by the Lord but sometimes the explanation was purposely withheld (Matthew 13. 1-50). The Greek word translated "parable" in John 10. 6 is not *parabole* but *paroimia*, meaning literally a wayside-saying and translated "proverb" in 2 Peter 2. 22 and John 16. 25, 29. The two words have very similar meanings in Scripture, but a proverb is usually shorter and less complex than a parable. The word "allegory" is used only once in the Revised Version, in Galatians 4. 24, where historical facts are spiritualized by Paul in order to impress upon the Galatians the vital difference between the New and Old Covenants.

Parables can be of great help in understanding spiritual truths, but where a precise interpretation is not given in Scripture the reader should beware of forming a hasty judgement. The Lord's own explanations of the parables of the sower and of the wheat and tares (Matthew 13. 1-30) should provide guidance as to the principles to be applied. In interpreting a parable the illustration must not be pressed too far, for there must be a point where the likeness ceases. The extent to which the details of a parable can be used as illustrations is a question which arises as we study the parables of the Good Shepherd, particularly the first section (John 10. 1-6). Alternative views have been put forward in this issue but without attempting to press the matter to a uniform conclusion.

The problem of the correct interpretation of detail also arises in connexion with verse 9, "He . . . shall go in and go out, and shall find pasture". This may mean that just as the sheep goes in to the fold for rest and goes out to graze, so the saint can be viewed as enjoying both rest and spiritual nourishment, but we should not carry the illustration so far as to imply that "going out" indicates the possibility of losing salvation.

L. B.

**THE GOSPEL AND ITS MINISTRY**  
**The Gospel according to John Chapter 10**

**From Glasgow (Govan and Partick).** —The Pharisees in John 9 claimed to see, but were spiritually blind. John 10. 1-6 records that it was shown to them in a parable how John the Baptist had been the porter to a fold of which the Lord was the Shepherd [1]. In Jeremiah 23. 25-29 and elsewhere the word of the false prophets is contrasted with the word of the Lord. Moses wrote, "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken" (Deuteronomy 18. 15). The sheep knew the Shepherd's voice, because it had the spirit of the Old Testament writings, and a divine authority of its own. Men said, "These are not the sayings of one possessed with a demon" (John 10. 21, R. V. M. ) and Scripture records, "He taught them as One having authority, and not as their scribes" (Matthew 7. 29).

The aspect of the parable changes in verses 7-16. The minds of the hearers may have gone back to scriptures like Psalm 23, or Ezekiel 34. 14, 15; "There shall they lie down in good fold, . . . I Myself will feed My sheep, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD". Individuals must enter in by the Door to be saved (John 10. 9). They have a personal knowledge of the Good Shepherd (verse 14), who gives unto them eternal life (verse 28). It must be true of those who are obedient to the voice of the Shepherd today that, though they are surrounded by a barren world, they will find pasture where the Shepherd leads them.

The Jews thought that they would have a charge of blasphemy against Him if He told them plainly that He was the Christ. This was the mistake they made when sitting in judgement (Matthew 26. 65). The good works which He showed them from the Father should have indicated to them that His claim was indeed no blasphemy. Psalm 82, from which the Lord answered them, speaks of the greatness of God as Judge, and the failure of those who have the responsibility of interpreting His judgements to the people. In Exodus 21. 6 the word "elohim" may mean "God" or "the judges". The plural word "Elohim"<sup>1</sup>, used as a divine name, implies the triune nature of God. Deuteronomy 6. 4 may be read as "Jehovah our Elohim is one Jehovah". The judges were elohim in so far as the word of God came to them, to direct their judgements among the people. The word of God could not come to men more directly than through Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world.

*Eric Archibald*

From Ringwood, Australia. —The fold was an open courtyard surrounded by a stone wall, usually with a tower for protection and situated near a well; the wall to enclose, the tower for protection and the well for refreshment. John the Baptist was the porter (verse 3) and by his preaching he was preparing the people of Israel for the coming Messiah. When his message was believed, baptism was necessary as an outward evidence of a humbled heart. The scribes and Pharisees would not be baptized by John because they would not humble themselves, nor did they accept his message of the coming One. He called them "offspring of vipers" (Matthew 3. 7). Thus John was the porter, and baptism was the door through which the sheep entered the fold to await the good Shepherd.

The result of John's ministry was that when the Lord Jesus came there were those prepared by John whom the Lord Jesus called out to Himself, and they followed Him (10. 3). He then became the "Door of the sheep" (verse 7). The eastern shepherd lay down at night across the open door into the fold and thus protected the sheep. The Lord Jesus Christ becomes the Protector of the sheep and He is the "Door". Through acceptance of Him the sheep enter into the possession of eternal life (verse 28), and go in and out and find pasture. This speaks of the fellowship and communion of the disciples with the Lord, perfect confidence and trust being displayed as the sheep graze whilst the Shepherd is watching over them.

The disciples were left in no doubt as to the poisonous character of the teaching and actions of the religious leaders in Israel. It was largely through the efforts of such as these that the cry went out later, "Crucify Him". He makes reference to His supreme sacrifice for the sheep, "The Good Shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep". By His death and glorious resurrection He rendered him powerless that had the power of death, that is, the devil (Hebrews 2. 14).

It was felt that the "one Flock" (verse 16) has the same meaning as the "little Flock" in Luke 12. 32, and "the Flock" in 1 Peter 5. 2 and Acts 20. 28, the Flock being, in that day as well as today, the disciples of the Lord Jesus gathered together, willing to follow Him wherever He leads and to obey His will in everything. These are seen today in churches of God in the Fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

*P. W. A.*

**From Toronto, Ont.** —In John 10 the Lord continued His conversation with the Pharisees which began in chapter 9. He spoke to them in a parable concerning sheep and a shepherd, but they were unable to understand it. For us, too, there are many difficulties in understanding the spiritual significance of the Lord's words.

It seems, however, that He is referring to the people of Israel when He speaks of the sheep, those whom Matthew calls "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15. 24). It is they who are in the sheep-fold, which possibly refers to "the Law and the prophets, which were until John", until the Shepherd enters by the door and calls them out. The Shepherd is contrasted with thieves and robbers, that is, impostors who enter by some other way, and with strangers, who seek to lead the sheep out (see Comment [1]). It is worth noting that the sheep will not follow a stranger because they do not know his voice, and yet we, as professed disciples of the Lord Jesus, are all too prone to stray after a strange voice.

The identity of the porter also is not clear to us. It may be that he who opens the door for the shepherd is John the Baptist. We know that John was the forerunner of the Messiah and that Jesus Himself, who is probably the Shepherd in question, was baptized by John. On the other hand, the porter may speak of the Holy Spirit Himself who opens the way for the Lord. Perhaps we could have some guidance on this **matter** [2].

The Lord **had been** speaking to His audience about shepherds **and sheep, and then** He begins to explain the real **significance** of His parable. He says, "I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep". The **emphasis here** is on the word "good". There were other shepherds, some **better than** others, **but** He was the altogether excellent One, **because** He gave His life for the sheep. This evidence of love for His sheep distinguishes Him from all other shepherds [3].

In **verse 9** the way of salvation is **presented: it is** through Christ the Door. He calls His own sheep out of the fold, where they are together with other sheep, and leads them out to become the Flock (the people of God) **and** they go in **and** out in freedom. They know Him and He knows them. It is thought that this **refers** to the call of God to an individual to **be saved and** to follow the Lord, becoming a **disciple in** the house of God [4].

*K. Dorricott*

### EXTRACTS

**From Macduff.** —The gospel **first came** to the Jews and the ministry of John the Baptist **was** to open the door of the fold to the Good Shepherd. Those whose hearts were prepared for the coming Christ **accepted** Him and followed Him, **but as** the blind man in John 9 discovered, this **meant** going out of the fold. He led His sheep out of the fold they **were in**, namely, the ordinances of the Law **and** the traditions of Jewry [see Comment 1], and led them into another fold in which they have eternal protection **and** a richer way of life. He **is** Himself the Door into the **new** fold, and while He **guarantees safety** from harm to the sheep, He had to **give His** life for their salvation. There **are** others **apart** from Israel who will **be saved**, and the Lord **made it** clear that sheep from other nations will **be in** the one Flock, under one Shepherd. It is plain that this work of salvation is **very dear** to the heart of the Father, **since** the Good Shepherd **Himself says**, "Therefore doth the Father love Me, **because** I lay down My life".

The Lord showed **very** plainly that He **gives** eternal life to His sheep **and** that none could lose it. It **is a gift** to those who **trust Him\*** and their salvation **is in** the **keeping** of Himself and the Father, **and** "I and the Father **are one**". Once saved, His sheep **can never be** lost. His hearers would not **accept** that He was the Son of the Father **and** thought to stone Him **as a** blasphemer.

*A. B. R.*

**From Vancouver, B. C.** —In the **first verses** of this chapter is a general **statement** concerning the Good Shepherd **and His care** for the sheep. This **is seen in** action in chapter 11 when the Lord cares for one of His Flock. He called Lazarus **by name and gave** him life [5]. In chapter 10 we read of One who willingly lays down His life, **and in** chapter 11 we read of the One who has the power to raise the dead.

The Pharisees were **disputing** concerning Jesus' Messiahship. They **asked Him** to tell them plainly and this He **did**, with reference to His **Servant** character **and His Shepherd** character. Both of these **ideas** should have reminded the Jews of Isaiah 53.

It would **seem** that the door mentioned in **verses 1 and 2** and that referred to in **verse 7** do not have the **same** application. Verses 1 and 2 refer to a **man sent** from God with a heavenly **ministry**. Verse 7 symbolizes the Way to God **and** the protection which this One provides.

The Jews' questionings present another opportunity for the Lord to show them how they can have salvation. Verses 26-30 give one of the most succinct gospel messages possible with all aspects of the gospel evident. We have both the acceptor and the rejector, the lot of the acceptor, the concepts of faith, eternal life and eternal security, the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and the omnipotence of the Father.

*J. Pope, J. C. Bell, Jr.*

**From Liverpool.** —It was considered by some that the Lord was referring, in the porter of the fold, to John the Baptist. The fold was the confines of John's teaching, those that accepted his message and submitted to his baptism thereby entered the fold, becoming one of his disciples. The Lord Jesus came to John, who recognized the Shepherd, and baptized Him, thus opening the door for Him to enter the fold, from whence He called His sheep. To these the Lord added others not of John's fold.

Another view put forward was that there are two parables. The first, in verses 1-6 concerns a communal fold with a porter as a warden, whereas the second (verses 7-18) concerns a private fold to which the Shepherd guides His sheep and He lies down in the opening, becoming the Door. The first applies to Israel, the Lord calling His sheep from those enfolded therein. In the second, men are sought in the gospel, called by the good Shepherd, and gathered into a fold in addition to the few that were gathered from Israel [6].

Emphasis was laid on the word "again" in (verse 19). This refers back to John 9. 16 where some said, "This Man is not from God, because He keepeth not the sabbath". "Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such signs?" In the division in chapter 10 some said, "He hath a demon, and is mad". Others said, "These are not the sayings of one possessed with a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

In verse 31 "again" refers to a previous occasion when the Jews took up stones to stone the Lord (8. 59), but there is a difference in the meaning of the words, "took up stones" in the two passages. In chapter 8 a spontaneous action is implied but in chapter 10 the stones were carried, a premeditated **action** [7]. *F. Frith, F. L. Jones, M. A. Sands*

**From Derby.** —The Lord Jesus leads His redeemed into the heavenly fold, for it is only by Him that entrance can be obtained.

We see that His relationship with us is an intimate one, and our enjoyment of it depends upon our reciprocation.

The Lord Jesus was accused by the Jews of blasphemy, but He shows from the Psalms that they too are called gods, and therefore their accusation was groundless.

*G. W. Conway, A. K. Smith*

**From Birmingham.** —It was felt that the fold (verse 1) would be those gathered by John the Baptist, he being the porter. The thought behind the "one Flock" (verse 16) is the Fellowship. All believers are therefore not necessarily part of the Flock. As distinct from a born-again person who goes no further, those spoken of as the Flock are disciples who know the Lord intimately, own Him Lord of all, love Him dearly, obey Him explicitly, and hear His voice [8]. The relationship is a secure and happy one for it is equally true that He knows them all by name, He owns them, He loves them and He hears them.

It is to God's gathered together people that the thief comes; he must climb in some other way, for a thief, intent on stealing, killing and destroying, cannot enter by the Door (Christ). Let us be on our guard, for he may nevertheless be in our midst [9].  
*D. H. Elson*

From Glasgow (Parkhead). —The Lord Jesus in John 10 is seen as the Shepherd in three aspects. Firstly, we see Him as the Good Shepherd who out of love for His sheep laid down His life for them. Both Israel and the Gentiles were in God's plan concerning the gathering of such sheep into one Flock with one Shepherd (John 10. 16). To accomplish this the Lord Jesus died upon the Cross and was buried and raised from the dead as the Great Shepherd of the sheep.

He is also the Chief Shepherd over shepherds (overseers) who are left here to do the work of caring for the sheep. In John 10. 3 and John 10. 27 we learn of the call of the Good Shepherd and the true response of the sheep, who not only hear the voice of the Shepherd but obey His call **and** follow Him where He leads them.  
*Fred Harvey*

From Aberkenfig and Barry. —When the Lord speaks of Himself as the Door, He does not mean the door referred to in verses 1-2, but He is the Door of the sheep (see also John 14. 6). It is through Him that we have access and it is through Him that we can go in and go out and find pasture.

The love of the Good Shepherd for the sheep is revealed more fully when He declares that He will lay down His life for the sheep, and emphasizes the voluntary character of the sacrifice He would make (verses 17, 18). What delight the Father found in His beloved Son! "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him" (John 8. 29, see also Isaiah 50. 4-6). The other sheep to which He refers are probably those who would be taken from amongst the Gentiles (Ephesians 2. 13-17).

The expression "one Flock" calls for some comment. Peter, writing to the elders of the Dispersion says, "Tend the flock of God which is among y o u . . . making yourselves ensamples to the flock" (1 Peter 5. 1-3). Peter would never forget the words of the Lord recorded in John 21. 15-17. The Flock has in view sheep that are together following the Good Shepherd. This surely finds its expression today in the churches of God, the Fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The frequent use of the words, "I AM", in this chapter and throughout the Gospel by John was commented upon, emphasizing again the purpose behind John's writing of the Gospel (John 20. 31). *D. H. Butler*

**From Denmark Hill, London.** —We have brought before us in verses 1-18 the qualities of the Good Shepherd contrasted with the wickedness of the false shepherds. Verses 19-21 show that the Jews were again divided as to their opinions of the Lord but He tried to convince them as to the truth of His claims (verses 22-39). The testimony of John is recognized to be true (verses 40-41).

The Pharisees' question, "Are we also blind?" leads to the discourse of chapter 10. The parable of verses 1-6 reminds us of the Pharisees who should have cared for the sheep. They came to John (Luke 3. 7) and John as the porter to the fold condemned them. They were men who would not enter the fold by the door (John's baptism), rather gaining entrance by some other way. The Lord therefore rightly referred

to them as thieves and robbers. In verse 16 the Lord speaks of other sheep, not of "this fold". Surely this brings before us those Gentiles who would believe and together with Jewish believers would form one Flock.

*G. Sankey*

**From Hamilton.** —David said, "Thy servant kept his father's sheep; and when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth" (1 Samuel 17. 34-36). When danger drew near the hireling fled (John 10. 12) but "the Good Shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep" (John 10. 11). It took great courage to face a lion, a bear, or a wolf. How much more courage it took for our Shepherd to face enemies which included men with beast-like qualities (Psalm 22. 12, 13, 16).

Jacob said, "Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep fled from mine eyes" (Genesis 31. 40). The wilderness, with its extremes of weather and the necessity for service at night as well as throughout the day, contributed to the rigours of being a shepherd.

In the life of the Lord Jesus Christ we read of nights of prayer prior to days of ministry (Luke 6. 12), of long weary journeys, like that of the journey to Sychar's well (John 4. 3-5), of His being asleep in a boat through weariness despite a raging storm (Matthew 8. 24).

A shepherd must be a person with love and care for the sheep, especially the young and feeble. This is clearly seen in Jacob's concern for the flock (Genesis 33. 13) and prophetically of God's Shepherd (**Isaiah** 40. 11; Ezekiel 34. 14-16).

*M. Carruthers*

**From Kilmarnock.** —We noted that in the first six verses the theme is the entrance of the Shepherd, whilst from verse seven we have the entrance of the sheep. The Lord Jesus led the sheep out of one fold and now He becomes the Door through which they enter another. First He gives life, then pasture, in order that life may be sustained (verse 9). The other sheep referred to would seem to be the Gentiles, for He must have referred to both Jews and Gentiles when He said, "The Good Shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep" (verse 11). "I have power (the right) to lay it down", reminds us of the eternal counsels of Deity which planned the redemptive work of Christ. The Lord Jesus had the right to lay down His life, a voluntary sacrifice. Not only did He die but rose again also by His own right. What he did was according to the will of the Father: "This commandment received I from My Father".

The Lord's purpose is to gather all the sheep into one Flock (not one fold) so that they might be gathered under one Shepherd (verse 16).

*J. C. Watt*

**From Methil.** —The Good Shepherd laid down his life for the sheep, unlike the hireling, who serves for wages and does not really care for the sheep, because he is not a shepherd and only considers himself. The Good Shepherd knows His sheep and they know Him. The believer on the Lord Jesus need have no doubt that he belongs to Christ. We are reminded of the psalmist David who said, "The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures".

The Lord makes it clear that those who do not believe Him are not His sheep (John 10. 26). His sheep hear His voice and He gives them eternal life, and they will never perish. There is nothing so secure as the sheep in the hands of the Son and of the Father. Once a person is saved he can never be lost.

What really aroused the hatred of Jews to the Lord was His claim: "I and the Father are one" (verse 30). It was a claim to Godhead and they understood what He meant. It was a claim to equality, for we noted that He said "I" first. They did not believe Him and accused Him of blasphemy. It is for this that they desired to stone Him, and no doubt they would have done so but He went forth out of their hand beyond Jordan and many believed on Him there.

*N. G. Coomer, R. C. Surgeon*

### COMMENTS

[*h*] **Glasgow (Govan and Partick)**. —It is clear that the picture presented by the Lord in John 10. 1-6 was intended to illustrate the contrast between Israel's false religious leaders (such as the Pharisees who had "cast out" the blind man of chapter 9) and the true Shepherd, the Lord Jesus, to whose voice the spiritually awakened in Israel were responding. The more detailed interpretation of "the fold" (verse 1) as including committed disciples of John the Baptist, the latter being "the porter", is commended for students' consideration.

Some commentators have preferred to regard the parable in a more general sense, as a picture of eastern life which would readily be recognized. This would simply imply that a true shepherd would enter by the door of the fold, being recognized by the doorkeeper, and his sheep would respond to his voice. So the Lord Jesus had been manifested to Israel in accordance with the counsel of God (including His baptism by John), and His voice was being recognized by the spiritually-minded among the Israel nation. In contrast to this, spiritually-minded Israelites saw many of their religious leaders as but "thieves and robbers", unwilling to submit themselves to the counsel of God, and taking advantage of their position to exploit the people (Matthew 23. 25; Luke 16. 14).

The choice between these lines of interpretation depends upon how far it is felt appropriate to press the detail of the story. *G. P. Jr.*

[2] **Toronto, Ont.** —The Holy Spirit deals with individuals in connexion with the preaching of the word (1 Thessalonians 1. 5) and salvation (Acts 10. 47). It is not easy to see how these, or any other of the Holy Spirit's dealings with men, can be typified by the porter of the sheepfold. See answer to question from Derby. *L. B.*

[3] **Toronto, Ont.** —We are inclined to the view that the parable concerns only one Shepherd; any other person purporting to act as a shepherd would be either a thief, a robber or a hireling. A hireling is not classed as a shepherd (verse 12). Men are spoken of as shepherds in other scriptures, but to introduce this aspect of the subject here would tend to obscure the presentation of the Lord Jesus in an absolutely unique sense as "*the Good Shepherd*". *L. B.*

[4] **Toronto, Ont.** —The emphasis in verse 9 is primarily upon response to the Shepherd for salvation in the sense of receiving eternal life. Entering in by the Shepherd, the Door, the soul commits itself in utter trust to Him for eternal salvation. The Shepherd becomes the Guarantor of this, and He will provide every spiritual blessing in association with it, illustrated by the sheep going in and out and finding pasture. To carry the interpretation of verse 9 beyond the individual's personal relationship with the Shepherd brings in difficulties; the concept of the Lord's sheep together as a flock is developed in the later illustration of the Lord's sheep together as the Flock is developed in the later illustration of verse 16. *G. P. Jr.*

[5] **Vancouver, B. C.** —This reference to Lazarus hearing the Lord's voice and receiving physical life is not what is referred to in the imagery of sheep and shepherd in John 10. The latter is a spiritual response to the Lord Jesus, which brought eternal life; not physical life. *G. P. Jr.*

[6] **Liverpool.** —If verses 7-18 are grouped together under the broad conception of bringing Jews and Gentiles into "one Flock" (i. e., into the Fellowship), would this not imply that believers outside churches of God could not have eternal life?

It does therefore seem essential to distinguish between the parables of this chapter. Verses 7-10 deal with the Lord Jesus as the Door of the sheep through which entering individual believers are saved, blessed under His eternal keeping with abundant life.

Verses 11-15 present the matchless self-renunciation of the Lord Jesus as the Good Shepherd, willing to yield Himself in death, in contrast to the hireling who would flee at the first sight of danger.

Verse 16 introduces a development of thought, perhaps in view of the narrow horizons of Jewish spiritual privilege, and the Lord foretells the wide divine purpose which will result from His death; Jewish and Gentile believers united as one Flock under the control of one Shepherd. *G. P. Jr.*

[7] **Liverpool.** —It is doubtful whether the different Greek words used in 8. 59 and 10. 31 have the significant difference in meaning suggested in this paper. *L. B.*

[8] **Birmingham.** —It would be misleading to assert that disciples gathered together to form "the Flock" are necessarily always so responsive to the Lord as this contribution suggests. Ideally it should be so, but the Scriptures show how far short of an ideal spiritual condition some disciples in churches of God could at times fall. *G. P. Jr.*

[9] **Birmingham.** —While certain principles from John 10. 1-6 may understandably be extended to those united together in churches of God, it should be clearly understood that in this parable the Lord Jesus was speaking about His relationship with Israelites at that time. *G. P. Jr.*

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Question from Macduff.** —To whom does the "all" of verse 8 refer?

**Answer.** —We suggest that the word "came" is used in an exclusively Messianic sense, as it is in many scriptures (John 5. 43; Matthew 24. 5; Acts 19. 4). There is then no difficulty, for all who claimed, and will claim, to be the Christ will do so for their own enrichment. *L. B.*

"Before, during and after the days of the Lord's ministry there were false christs, and there will yet be more of them. (Mark 13. 21-23, Luke 17. 22-23). Some men of Israel were deceived by them and led astray, as, for example, by Theudas and Judas (Acts 5. 36, 37) and also Simon (Acts 8. 9-11). There were others, and we can safely take it that during John's ministry such false teachers sought to lead out some of John's disciples. *J. B.*

**Question from Derby.** —Does the office of the porter in verse 3 have any typical significance?

**Answer.** —In Bible Studies 1955 (page 80) it is suggested that the porter is typical of John the Baptist, the sheep **from whom the Lord** called forth His own being John's disciples. Viewed in this way certain details of the parable may be more fully interpreted. However, see\* Comment [1] for a more general interpretation. *L. B.*

## NOTES ON THE PSALMS

## PSALM 52

This psalm was written by David as the result of the evil work of Doeg the Edomite. Jacob's brother Esau was called Esau, which means "hairy", because he "came forth red, all over like an hairy garment". Later he said to Jacob, "Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom", which means "red". He sold his birthright to Jacob for that mess of red pottage of lentils (Genesis 25. 25, 30-34). His descendants took the same attitude to Jacob's descendants, the children of Israel as Esau did to Jacob, for he would have killed him if possible (Malachi 1. 2-5). In Doeg the Edomite we have all the hateful characteristics of the Edomites, the race to which he belonged. The people of Edom will be the people of God's curse, and the land of Edom will be under divine judgement during the Millennium and will lie a waste for ever and ever; it will be the abode of wild beasts (Isaiah 34. 5-17; 63. 1-6).

Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man?  
 The mercy of God endureth continually.  
 Thy tongue deviseth very wickedness;  
 Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.  
 Thou lovest evil more than good;  
 And lying rather than to speak righteousness

(verses 1, 2, 3). [Selah

When David was told by Jonathan that Saul his father was bent on putting him to death, David could not return to Saul's palace or to his own house. Jonathan returned to the city, but he returned to the city too soon, and later in consequence lost his life. Where was David to go? He went to Nob, to the house of God, for it was there at that time (1 Samuel 21. 1-6), to Ahimelech the priest, who, because he had no common bread, gave him the holy Shewbread from the Lord's table (Matthew 12. 3, 4), which it was lawful for only the priests to eat. Doeg the Edomite, the chiefest of Saul's herdmen was there, "detained before the LORD", and saw what had happened, that David received the Shewbread and the sword of Goliath from Ahimelech. But when he told this to Saul he added the lying statement that Ahimelech had inquired of the LORD for David (1 Samuel 22. 9, 10), whereupon Saul called for Ahimelech and charged him with inquiring of God for David, that he should rise up against Saul. But Ahimelech denied doing this in the words, "Have I today begun to inquire of God for him? be it far from me: let not the king impute any thing unto his servant". Then the king said to him, "Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou, and all thy father's house". Then the king commanded the guard to slay the priests of the LORD, but these, the king's servants, refused to fall upon the priests of the LORD. Then the king commanded Doeg to fall upon the priests, and he slew eighty-five of them, and, besides, he smote Nob, the city of the priests, men, women, children and sucklings, and also the oxen, asses and sheep with the sword. Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, escaped, and fled to David, and told him that Saul had slain the LORD'S priests. David said that he knew on the day that Doeg was there that he would tell Saul and he also said, "Abide thou with me, fear not; for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: for with me thou shalt be in safeguard" (1 Samuel 22. 11-23). If David was ever in doubt as to whether Saul intended to murder him, he could be in no doubt after Saul had murdered the priests and all the inhabitants of Nob by the sword of Doeg the Edomite: also, there could be no doubting the hatred of an Edomite to the true king of Israel, David, and to the priests and service of the LORD in Israel. This is the last we read of Doeg in the Scriptures.

David called Doeg a mighty man, but he was a mischievous one. His tongue was like a sharp razor that wrought deceitfully and left many cuts behind. He loved evil more than good, and also loved lying (Revelation 22. 15) rather than righteousness.

Thou lovest all devouring words,

O thou deceitful tongue.

God shall likewise destroy thee for ever,

He shall take thee up, and pluck thee out of thy tent,

And root thee out of the land of the living

(verses 4, 5). [Selah

God's destruction was to come upon the man Doeg for his lying words and deceitful tongue. Some lies may involve little disturbance and present few consequences, but lies to a king or government in the seat of power may involve the lives of millions. The lying words of Doeg cost the priests of the LORD, and all who dwelt in Nob, their lives, and, as a result, God would destroy Doeg for ever. He would take him

up, pluck him out of his **tent and** root him out of the land of the living, **and** leave no root behind to show that he had **ever** been. **But** his story **remains in Scripture** as his condemnation.

The righteous also shall **see** it, **and fear**,  
**And** shall laugh **at** him, saying,  
 Lo, this is the **man** that **made not** God his strength;  
**But** trusted in the **abundance** of his riches,  
**And** strengthened himself in his wickedness (**verses 6, 7**).

It is often difficult **to assess a man's** worth while he is alive, **but**, when he is **dead**, there is evaluation **by** people in general **from** the outstanding **deeds** of the **man** which reveal his character. **So** was it with Doeg **and** also with Saul the king. The **murders** committed **by** them could never **be** removed from the memories **of** people. The righteous were to **see** it **and fear and** they would laugh **at** the memory of Doeg **and** his **deeds** **and say** that he was a **man** that **made not** God his strength, **but trusted** in his riches instead of in God, **and** strengthened himself in his wickedness. "The memory of the **just** is blessed: **but** the **name** of the wicked shall rot" (Proverbs 10. 7). "A good **name** is rather **to be** chosen than **great** riches" (Proverbs 22. 1). "A good **name** is **better** than precious ointment" (Ecclesiastes 7. 1).

But **as** for **me**, I **am** like a green olive **tree** in the house **of** God: I **trust** in the **mercy** of **God** for **ever and** ever.  
 I will **give** Thee thanks for **ever, because** Thou hast done it:  
 And I will **wait** on Thy **name**, for **it is** good, in the **presence of**  
 Thy **saints** (**verses 8, 9**).

**In** contrast to Doeg's disastrous lying **and** wickedness among God's people, **David** compares himself to a **green** olive **tree** in the house **of** God. The olive **tree** was vital to the light of the Lampstand **in** the Tabernacle. There had to **be pure beaten** olive oil for the light; the **beaten** olive oil was the **first** of the oil from the olives, **pure** oil without sediment. Light was vital to the **service** of the **priests** **in** God's house, **and it** is also vital for testimony. The people of Israel were to bring pure **beaten** oil for the light, **and** Aaron **was** to **burn** the lamp continually without the veil from **evening** to morning before the LORD (Leviticus 24. 1-4). **Some** have contended that the lamps burned continuously for the twenty-four hours, **day and** night, **but that is not so.**  
**J. M.**

*{to be continued D. V.}*

Issued **by** the Churches **of** God

Obtainable from Needed Truth Publishing Office,  
 Assembly Hall, George Lane, **Hayes**, Bromley, Kent.

Also from: —Mr. J. **Ramage**, 44 Tweedsmuir Avenue, Dundas, Ontario, Canada.

Printed **by** **Barretts** of Brighton, 42 The Lanes, Brighton  
 incorporating **W. J. Starkey Ltd. Est. 1877**

# BIBLE STUDIES

"Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17. 11).

VOLUME 35

DECEMBER, 1967

## EDITORIAL

"There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and no kind is without signification" (1 Corinthians 14. 10).

This scripture deals mainly with spoken language. We would apply it in principle also to written language. Millions yearly are learning to read. Literacy in so-called backward countries is on the increase; and ideologists, religionists and politicians are flooding the market in these countries with reading matter of very questionable value, so we judge.

Those who have had experience in missionary work in Asia and Africa tell us that the most profitable avenue for the spread of the gospel and the truth of God is by the *written word*.

Dear fellow-students, one of the primary objects of "Bible Studies" has been the committing to good simple English of thoughts gleaned from the study of God's word. We therefore plead that this exercise should ever be before you in your studies. Timothy was encouraged "to give heed to reading, to exhortation, to teaching", and also to commit the things which he had heard "to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also". It is an ever-recurring cycle. Writers are needed for gospel tracts, writers are needed for all sections of our literature, to reach the unlearned and the learned, the young and the aged. The scope is wide; the field for the seed of God's word can be a fertile one. "Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man and writing maketh an exact man" (F. Bacon 1561-1626).

During the last half-century our beloved Mr. John Miller has been engaged in this work of encouraging, instructing, guiding and admonishing "Bible Studies" students. Many of us remember his "square brackets" and later, his "Comments". Up to 1932 contributions from students were first of all published in "Needed Truth" and later in a separate magazine, "Young Men's Corner". The title was changed and the scope of the magazine extended in 1933 in the first issue of "Bible Studies", just prior to which time Dr. A. T. Doodson joined the editorate. From the pens of these two esteemed editors came most instructive articles on a big variety of subjects, extra to the intensive study of set Bible-books and lives of men of God. A heritage is left to the Fellowship in J. M's. "Notes on the Epistles", which first appeared in "Bible Studies". Mr. Stephen Burrows also added much from his intensive knowledge of the Greek language and various translations of the sacred writings.

This year, 1967, has seen the retirement of dear J. M. from the editorate of "Bible Studies". Present editors desire to put on record in this last issue of the year our appreciation of and our great indebtedness to him in all his wise guidance. Each of us, over greater or lesser periods, has been in close touch with our dear brother, and we herewith express our gratitude to him. We are pleased that he is still a contributor.

We remember them that had the rule over us, which spake unto us the word of God; and considering the issue of their life, we would imitate their faith.

*Jas. Martin*

## DANIEL CHAPTER 11

We agree with the article on this subject in *Bible Studies* (July 1967). The chapter deals with history from the time of Alexander the Great until Antiochus Epiphanes, but, and this is the important point, it applies only partially to Antiochus Epiphanes. Even if we acknowledge the depths of depravity to which this wicked king sank, he never did an act answering to that described in Scripture as setting up the "abomination that maketh desolate". No! This dreadful act is the work of Antichrist. The Lord Jesus told His disciples that it will be the sign of the beginning of the Great Tribulation, a time "such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24. 21). Perhaps a measure of this great wickedness is that the Beast with his false prophet are the first to be cast into the Lake of Fire, at least a thousand years before the devil himself.

The great significance of this scripture is that the Temple must be rebuilt in Jerusalem, otherwise how could the continual burnt offering cease or the abomination of desolation be set up in the holy place? 2 Thessalonians 2. 4 is relevant to this future time. The Beast's magnifying of himself above all is shown to us to be in the temple of God.

*L. A. White*

## THE GOSPEL AND ITS MINISTRY

### THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN 11

**From Vancouver, B. C.** —God was glorified in various ways when Lazarus was raised from the dead. His sisters had their faith strengthened, the disciples apprehended some new truths (verse 15), for we read in the latter part of the chapter that "many believed on Him". So through the preaching of the gospel God is glorified in more than one way.

Many questions have been asked as to why the Lord delayed going to Bethany. The Lord knows when to come to the assistance of His own. He never comes too late or too soon.

A foundation stone of the gospel was spoken of by the Lord when He told Martha, "I am the Resurrection, and the Life". Although both sisters asked the same question of the Lord, this time it was Martha that had chosen the better part, for she decided to go to the Lord first and thus received those consoling and profound words from the Lord. There

can be no question that the sleep of which Jesus spoke was the sleep of death. There are other places when death is spoken of as sleep, among them 1 Thessalonians 4. 13.

This incident can be used in gospel preaching, emphasizing the certainty of the resurrection. There are many who have died; but there are many also whom He will not allow to die. Just as the climax came when Jesus cried with a loud voice and Lazarus came forth, so the climax for all believers will come when the Lord descends to the air with a shout.

The Pharisees were materially minded and were concerned lest the Romans should come and take away both their place and their nation, because of Jesus' works. Caiaphas knew that Scripture spoke of One dying for the nation, and probably he thought that in uttering this prophecy he could the more easily effect the death of the Lord. He twisted the meaning of Scripture to suit his own ends [1]. However, despite it all, this action of Caiaphas was according to the counsel of God, as John explains. *J. Pope, J. C. Bell, Jr.*

**From Hamilton.** —In the home at Bethany were people united by ties of nature and grace, possessing godliness, and honoured by the friendship and love of the Son of God. Although they experienced sickness and bereavement, Martha and Mary had hearts that believed, and they sent for Jesus. It is interesting to note that the Lord Jesus sought to take what the disciples referred to as a dangerous journey and an unnecessary one. It was to Him a very merciful one, inasmuch as He went to comfort the sisters and awaken Lazarus. The Lord was about to show that the journey would also be profitable, even for those who were so strongly against it. There is strong evidence in the portion that the Lord's people will not escape from either sickness or death. They have a strong encouragement to seek His aid in seasons of affliction and bereavement.

The Lord at the tomb was agitated in His spirit as He looked upon the havoc sin had wrought upon the human family and the effect of the unseen enemy, Satan. In the taking away of the stone the Lord taught the lesson that He never sought to accomplish by supernatural means what could be done by men. Although He could have dispensed with the aid of others He did not. He showed gratitude to the Father for having vouchsafed the assurance that He would accomplish the miracle. The awakening summons was affectionate, as from one who calls a sleeping friend to awake; it was also authoritative, the voice of One who is accustomed to be obeyed, and it was effective, to be followed by the appearance of Lazarus in an instant. The fact that Jesus raised a dead man from the grave was not in itself proof that He was divine, since miracles of resurrection had been wrought by Elijah and Elisha, but Christ, the Son of God spake the word Himself, and this miracle is a demonstration of our Lord's Deity. *Andrew A. Collington*

**From Derby.** —Lazarus was dead; the Lord was glad that He was not there, so that He could give further evidence to His own that He was the Son of God. Although Thomas urged the others to go to Bethany,

he was afraid that they might lose their lives there. Lazarus must have died on the same day that Jesus heard of his sickness. Bethany was only two miles from Jerusalem and many mourners came from the city to comfort the sisters. It is likely that it took only one day to reach Bethany from where Jesus was. Thus Lazarus had been in the tomb four days [2]. It seems that Martha expected Jesus to perform some miracle. Verses 25 and 26 show the Lord as Sovereign and Saviour. Mary also was convinced that Lazarus would not have died if Jesus had been there. Jesus knew this, and seeing the Jews lamenting and the sorrow that had arisen, He wept [3].

The Jews were afraid that they would lose their prestige with the Romans and the people. It is interesting to see how God used the high priest to foretell that Jesus would die for the world.

*G. W. Conway, A. K. Smith*

### EXTRACTS

**From Glasgow** (Parkhead). — Through sorrow, sickness and death have come some of the most sanctifying experiences of God's people, some of which have been committed to writing for the comfort of others. Our faith is confirmed in the One to whom we can resort in our deepest needs. He knows when to intervene, and is never before or behind His time. He is able to lift the clouds of sorrow from the heart with His assuring word. "I am the Resurrection, and the Life: he that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die": Who weeps with them that weep? Whose groaning in the spirit was soon to know its fullest expression when He would enter death's dark flood, yet in resurrection power would come forth triumphant? Peter, in bearing testimony on the day of Pentecost said, "Whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it" (Acts 2. 24). Lazarus would rise to die again, but the raising of the saints at His coming will far transcend this in that they will have glorified bodies, like unto His own. 1 Corinthians 15. 50-55 is helpful to an understanding of the Lord's words to Martha in John 11. 25, 26.

*R. Shaw*

**From Kilmarnock.** — "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou believedst thou shouldest see the glory of God?" These words spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ to Martha (verse 40) act as a gentle rebuke, a reminder of His Deity, and His love to those who love Him.

Many sceptics will argue that Lazarus was not dead, but Jesus stated plainly, "Lazarus is dead", and in verse 17 we read that He had been in the tomb four days.

Martha in her distraught state went out to meet the Lord; Mary, more placid, waited until she was called; both cried from the heart, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died". The Lord could have gone to the tomb without asking directions, but in their ignorance and unbelief they showed Him, and it was this condition which caused Him to weep [4]. The "Lord of both the dead and the living" (Romans 14. 9) commanded the dead and bound Lazarus to come forth, and he that was dead came forth. This mighty sign again brought divisions. Caiaphas was used of God to prophesy that Jesus should die for the

nation. Verse 52 gives a fuller meaning to the prophecy. The decision was made to put Jesus to death, and the chief priests and Pharisees gave a commandment that He might be taken. *J. M. Rankine*

**From Macduff.** —The disciples were astonished that the Lord should return to Judaea, for the last time they were there His life was threatened. Mary and Martha were downcast in spirit because Lazarus had died and the Lord had not come; but when they heard that He was on the outskirts of the village, Martha immediately left all and went to meet Him saying, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died", which shows the great faith this woman had in the Lord. He told her, "Thy brother shall rise again". Martha was sure that she would see her brother again in the resurrection at the last day, but the Lord used the circumstances to present the truth, "I am the Resurrection, and the Life". The humanity of the Lord Jesus is clearly seen in this situation, for when the Lord saw the people He was moved to tears, signifying how He felt for them (see Comment [3]). When taken to where Lazarus was buried, He lifted His voice in prayer. Much that the Lord said and did is an example to us and showed that the Father in heaven had sent Him. He called Lazarus forth, and this gives us an indication of what will happen in the future, when the dead will hear His voice and all His own will be caught up to meet Him in the air.

*Wm. Johnston*

**From Melbourne.** —John 11 contains the record of an event which brings before us in perfect combination the sympathetic humanity and unchallengeable Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is a scene where He was touched, and wept because of human sorrow. He saw those oceans of tears brought about by the chill hand of death. He saw hearts torn and rent by forced partings of loved ones on earth. He alone could see and plumb the depths into which men had fallen, and He also knew that before Him lay a work by which death would be destroyed. So the Man of Sorrows wept with others. His sympathetic Manhood is to be seen combined with His omnipotent Deity. He was now to display the glory of God in the power which is His, not only to stay the natural process of corruption, but to recall from Sheol the soul which at least four days earlier had left that body. Being led to the tomb, from which at His word the stone was taken away, He manifested to all around the unbroken fellowship which is His with the Father. Before speaking that life-giving word of command, "Lazarus, come forth", He spoke brief words of thanksgiving to His Father, that the multitude might believe that He was the sent One of God. At the command of the One who so soon was to take from Satan the keys of hell and death, Lazarus **came** forth.

*T. W. F.*

**From Barry and Aberkenfig.** —The teaching of resurrection and eternal life in Christ is made clear in the discourse of the Lord with Mary and Martha. He described the death of Lazarus as "sleep". The believer accepts that to die in the Lord is really to "sleep" while waiting the resurrection shout. It is interesting to note that "sleep" when used of the dead in the New Testament refers only to those who will awake to everlasting life. It appears that many Jews believed in a general resurrection of all humanity "at the last day". The teaching of the Lord and the apostles was to open their minds to a better appreciation of these great truths. It is evident from Scripture that there are three resurrec-

tions. At the coming of the Lord to the air (1 Thessalonians 4. 16), on the return of the Lord to the earth to reign as Son of Man (Revelation 20. 4; Daniel 12. 2) and at the resurrection prior to the Great White Throne Judgement (Revelation 20. 11-15).  
B. V. F.

**From Methil.** —No mention is made of any message coming to the Lord to tell of the death of Lazarus, and yet by His omniscience He knew. Consideration was given to the matter of the two days (verse 6) and the four days (verse 17), and it was thought that Lazarus was buried the same day as he died, and so the four days include the two days that the Lord tarried.

It is clear from verse 39 that Martha did not expect that the Lord would raise Lazarus immediately, because the Jews believed in the resurrection at the last day (verse 24). The Lord however revealed to Martha that He is the Resurrection, and the Life (John 2. 19, 10. 18, 11. 25).

We note that decomposition had already set in on the body (verse 39), and yet the divine power of the Lord is made manifest, for at that triumphant shout, "Lazarus, come forth", he arose still bound hand and foot, but with no defect. So also in a coming day will the Lord raise the dead, including those who had been cremated and their ashes scattered to the four winds, for the same power that raised Lazarus after four days will raise human bodies after centuries (Revelation 20. 12).

A. R. Smith

**From Denmark Hill, London.** —The cry of Martha, repeated by Mary, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died", told their utter confidence in the ability of Christ. If only He had come when He was called, Martha was certain that Lazarus would still have been living. Yet it is to Martha's credit that the mystery of this suffering did not harden her heart against the Lord. Christians today are not exempt from suffering, and we should learn to soften our hearts before God when we undergo times of trouble.

It is interesting to note that so great was the effect of this miracle on the Jews that day that many believed on Jesus. It is more frequently recorded that the Jews disbelieved.

We are not told anything of the rejoicings in the Bethany home after everyone had gone home. We feel that this could not be fully explained in words.

The news soon reached the ears of the chief priests and Pharisees in Jerusalem, and while the Sanhedrin sat, Caiaphas as high priest (this is significant) prophesied that Jesus would die, and not for the Jewish nation only, but for the gathering together into one of the children of God scattered abroad.

It seems strange that because Jesus had given life to a dead man they should seek after His life to destroy it. The hardness of these men's hearts was such that they could not be persuaded as to who Christ was. It only confirmed them in their unbelief. The gospel leads to a similar reaction in the hearts of some today.

Mark McKaig

**From Atherton.** —Three points stand out in the chapter, the Person of Christ, the words of Christ and the work of Christ. These are the bed-rock of the gospel. No one save this excellent Person, so loving and

powerful could **speak** as He did. "I **am** the Resurrection, and the life." No other **than He** could **raise** the dead by virtue of His own power. He **had** already **said**, "As the **Father** raiseth the dead and quickeneth them, **even** so the Son also **quickeneth** whom He will" (John 5. 21).

In the **midst** of **sad** circumstances, for death always **makes** hearts **sad**, the **Lord's** own heart of perfect sympathy and love went out to the family of three who dearly **loved** Him, to His own **loved** disciples and to the Jews. He longed to **bless** them all.

**But** another purpose was before the Lord, the strengthening of the faith of His own (**verse** 15). To **increase** in the knowledge of this all-worthy Person, to dwell upon His words of wisdom, power and love, to **feed** upon His **greatest** work, not now the **raising** of Lazarus, but His own death and **resurrection**, which is **prefigured** in this story, is **ever** God's purpose for men.

G. A. Jones

**From Birmingham.** —"Said I not unto thee, that, **if** thou believedst, thou shouldest **see** the glory of God?" are important words to anyone **seeking** to be well-pleasing to God. **It was said** of Abraham that he **believed** God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. **In Hebrews 11** we are told that without faith **it** is impossible to be well-pleasing unto Him.

Though **Martha** and **Mary** could not understand the **circumstances**, they **did** put their **trust** in the Lord, for Martha said, "**Even** now I know that, whatsoever Thou shalt **ask** of God, God will give Thee".

"This **sickness** is not unto death, **but** for the glory of **God**" tells us the reason for the Lord's **delaying** until **Lazarus** had **been** dead four **days**. There could be no doubt that Lazarus was **really** dead, for he had **begun** to decompose. **It was** no wonder that certain of the Jews, **after** beholding such things, **believed** on Him. The death and resurrection of **Lazarus** point us to the **day** when Christ will return for His own. **Yet** we shall not **experience** eternal death, for the Lord **said**, "I am the Resurrection, and the **Life**: he that believeth on **Me**, though he die, **yet** shall he live".

D. P. Brown

**From Southport.** —The associations of the Lord with Bethany were **very** precious. He was always welcome in that godly home, and **never** more so than when the loved brother of **Mary** and **Martha** was **dead** and buried. This **sickness** of the **one** whom the Lord loved was to be to the glory of God. **At** the **grave** of **Lazarus** the Lord of life and glory **wept**. How could **it** be otherwise, as He saw the **ravages** of **sin** in the death of one of His loved disciples? He was **yet** to weep and endure sorrow untold, before He **gained** the victory over death for all who believe in God (1 Corinthians 15. 51-57).

The Lord was **declared** to be the Son of **God**, but this was not **sufficient** in itself. **It needed** to be accompanied by power. That was the promised purpose of the **raising** of Lazarus. "Declared to be the Son of God with power... **by** the resurrection of the **dead**" (Romans 1. 4). There had **been** other resurrections, **but** men had **not** believed. They **may** have **been** explained away. The **raising** of **Lazarus** was different. The Lord **said** He was glad for the disciples' sake that He was not there.

T. R.

## COMMENTS

[1] Vancouver. —Our friends do not mention which scriptures they consider that Caiaphas had in mind when he made this prophecy. It has been more generally thought, and I would personally favour this view, that Caiaphas was moved to speak oracularly. Verse 51 makes it clear that Caiaphas in his capacity as high priest that year "prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation". *G. P. Jr.*

[2] Derby. —What our friends say about the timing of these events is probably true, but it may be as well to set out the argument more fully. It was customary for interment to take place on the same day as death. Hence, from the known fact that Lazarus had been in the tomb four days and the likelihood that the journey to Bethany would take about one day, it is deduced that Lazarus died somewhere near the time when the messengers reached the Lord. It is assumed that the Lord and His disciples left for Judaea on the third day after hearing of the illness of Lazarus ("*After this*", i. e., after two days, verses 6, 7).

*L. B.*

[3] Derby. — As some contributors have emphasized, the Lord's groanings and tears were not solely accounted for by local and temporary causes. The immediate circumstances were the inevitable result of the devastation which had come upon the human race because of sin, and it was this universal problem which had such an effect upon the Lord. It has been suggested that English translations do not adequately reflect the intensity of feeling, even amounting to wrath, implied in the Greek text.

*L. B.*

[4] Kilmarnock. —There is nothing in verse 34 to suggest unbelief. Whether or not it would occur to those addressed by the Lord that He did not need a guide, it was ordinary courtesy to comply with His request for directions to the tomb.

*L. B.*

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Question from Derby.** —Where was the soul of Lazarus during the four days in the tomb?

**Answer.** —There was apparently nothing abnormal about the death of Lazarus. His soul would go to Abraham's bosom (Luke 16. 22) and return to him when he was raised. Such a tremendous miracle should present no difficulty to our faith, for a similar re-uniting of body and soul will take place for countless believers at the rapture of the Church.

*L. B.*

**Question from Methil.** —What is meant by the words of Thomas in verse 16, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him"? Does this refer to the Lord or to Lazarus?

**Answer.** —Thomas's outlook was characteristically practical. The Lord had made clear His intention to go to Judaea, ignoring danger (verse 11), and to Thomas it was unthinkable that he and his fellow-disciples should not follow Him. If the Lord should suffer death at the hands of the Jews, His disciples could expect the same end. Thus the words, "That we may die *with Him*", would be appropriate if spoken of the Lord, but could hardly be used with Lazarus in mind, for he was already dead.

*L. B.*

## Psalm 52 (Continuing from page 132)

The **lamps** were **dressed**, that is, filled **and the wicks** cleaned with the golden snuffers every morning, **at which time the incense was burned** on the golden altar, **and they were lighted again at even, at which time incense was again burned.** The words of Exodus 30. 7, 3 make this quite plain, "**And Aaron shall burn thereon incense of sweet spices: every morning, when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn it. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations.**" Again, "**In the tent of meeting, shall Aaron order (array) it from evening to morning before the LORD continually**" (Leviticus 24. 3). Moreover the Hebrew word **TAMID** rendered "continually" does not **mean** without interval or cessation. This word is used by **David** about Mephibosheth eating bread **at his table continually** (2 Samuel 9. 7, 13), which does not **mean** that he **ate** for twenty-four hours a day. The **great** woman of Shunem spoke of Elisha **passing by** them continually (2 Kings 4. 9), which of course does not **mean** that Elisha was always **passing by** them. Those who think that the lamps on the Lampstand **burned** for the whole twenty-four hours a **day** should consult the uses of the word **TAMID**, that the word does not **mean** "**always, without interval**", **and certainly this is not its meaning** in regard to the **lamps** on the Lampstand. **David** thought of himself **as an olive tree, as providing the means of light for service and testimony, and this he did more than any man in his day, a day in which there was a great revival in this respect.** Saul in contrast was a complete failure in this **respect** and this is glaringly **seen** in his murder of the **priests** because of his blind jealousy. God **gave** Israel a **king in His anger** and took him away **in His wrath.** **David** spoke of **trusting in the mercy of God for ever and ever, but** in contrast to this he **says** in verse 1, "**The mercy of God endureth continually**", which **means** "all the day". **He gave God** thanks for ever **because He** had done it, that is, **He** had made him, **I** judge, like a **green olive tree** in the house of God, for **David** could no more **make** himself like a **green olive tree** than he could **make an olive tree.** He **said** also, that **he** would wait on the **LORD'S name, which is good, a name of infinite and absolute value.** The **names of the best men are only of relative value.** **He** would **wait** also **in the presence of His saints, till the LORD had fully tried him, then he would be brought to the throne and the kingdom.** **He** was like Joseph of whom it is **said, "The word of the LORD tried him. The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of peoples, and let him go free"** (Psalm 105. 19, 20). J. M.

## PSALM 53

This is another MASCHIL (of instruction) of David and is set to MAHALATH which is said to be "a musical choir".

The fool hath **said** in his heart, There is no God.  
 Corrupt **are** they, **and** have done abominable **iniquity**;  
 There is none that doeth good.  
 God looked down **from** heaven **upon** the children of men,  
 To see if there were **any** that **did understand,**  
 That **did seek after** God.  
**Every one** of them is gone **back**; they **are** together become filthy;  
 There is none that doeth good, no, **not** one (verses 1, 2, 3).

We have here a repetition of what is in Psalm 14. 1-3. This is a **proof text** of the apostle Paul, used when he laid to the charge of both Jews and Greeks, which means all men, that all are under sin (Romans 3. 9-12). What is true of the atheist who wickedly says, "There is no God", in a world full of evidence of a divine mind in all created things, a mind of absolute precision of thought, is also true of all who are without Christ and who are without hope, and without God (ATHEOS, an atheist, godless) in the world (Ephesians 2. 11, 12). Such indeed was true of all believers once, and is true of all, whether religious or irreligious. To do good in God's sight is impossible for such, hence God says, "Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity", and, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one". Why is this world as wicked as it is? The reason is that man is a sinner. Sins do not fall down as the rain from heaven, nor do they grow out of the ground; they are produced in men's sinful hearts. Hence the need of cleansing and forgiveness through the blood of Christ.

God looked down from heaven upon men to see if there were any that did understand, as He did when He heard the great cry of Sodom and Gomorrah, because their sin was very grievous; He came down to see whether they had done altogether according to the cry thereof. Alas, there were not ten righteous people in those cities (Genesis 18. 20, 21, 32). Even so it is with God's due investigation and just judgement of the world. His judgement is, every one of them is gone back; they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. It is not possible for any man to get out of this dreadful state or for his brother to help him, or for any priest to assist man in his plight. Only the work of Christ on the Cross and the salvation that comes through His death to all believers in Him will bring cleansing, forgiveness and salvation.

Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?  
Who eat up My people as they eat bread,  
And call not upon God (verse 4).

God's people Israel were ever the object of attack by the nations which surrounded them. The book of Judges is replete with the sad tales of the invasion of the land by alien peoples. Over a hundred years were lost in the various captivities which Israel endured. They themselves were largely responsible for these because of their sin and idolatry. The last enemy mentioned was the Philistines, and that nation continued to afflict God's people throughout the times of Eli, Samuel, Saul, on to the time of David. These all ate God's people like bread and called on their own gods, but not upon the true God, the God of Israel.

There were they in great fear, where no fear was:  
For God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth  
against thee;  
Thou hast put them to shame, because God hath rejected  
them (verse 5).

David who writes this psalm of MASCHIL (instruction) is, no doubt, speaking of the fear of the enemies of his people, for his reign is one of victory. He attributes his victories to God who scattered the bones of the enemy that encamped against Israel, and he said that Israel had

put them to shame, because God had rejected them. They rejected God and God rejected them. David went to battle seeking God's counsel as to what he should do. God finds pleasure in those who seek His guidance. If we always laid our matters before Him we would have a victorious life as David had.

Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!  
When God bringeth back the captivity of His people,  
Then shall Jacob rejoice, and Israel shall be glad (verse 6).

This is undoubtedly a reference to the coming again of Christ to Israel. Of this Paul quotes from Isaiah 59. 20, 21, which see, "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer; He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; and this is My covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins" (Romans 11. 26, 27). Of Israel he adds, "As touching the gospel, they are enemies for your sake: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sake" (verse 28). God will yet bring back His people and then shall they rejoice; though as yet they still reject the Christ, the Deliverer of that day.

### PSALM 54

This is a psalm for the chief musician on stringed instruments. It was concerned with the behaviour of the Ziphites toward David when he and his men were in the wood of the wilderness of Ziph and they sent and informed Saul as to David's whereabouts. So David wrote.

Save me, O God, by Thy name.  
And judge me in Thy might.  
Hear my prayer, O God;  
Give ear to the words of my mouth.  
For strangers are risen up against me,  
And violent men have sought after my soul:  
They have not set God before them (verses 1, 2, 3). [Selah

David seeks salvation in God's name, from the Ziphites and from Saul. "The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Proverbs 18. 10). God did save His servant, for after Saul and his men had pursued him in the wilderness of Maon to the south of that of Ziph, and compassed David and his men, Saul received a message that he was to make haste and come, for the Philistines had made a raid upon the land, and he returned from pursuing David (1 Samuel 23. 21-29). David then went up and dwelt in the strongholds of En-gedi, which was by the Dead Sea, to the north of Maon. God uses means in answering prayer and granting deliverance that we could oftentimes never have thought of, and David knew not that God would use the Philistine raiders to effect deliverance for him. All things can truly be God's servants, if it is His will to use them.

Behold, God is mine helper:  
The Lord is of them that uphold my soul.  
He shall requite the evil unto mine enemies:  
Destroy Thou them in Thy truth (verses 4, 5).

There can be no doubt whatever in our minds, as we read the wonderful story of David's life, that God was his helper, for, had He not been, David would never have had such an end to his life as we read in the last chapter of 1 Chronicles. How different from these is the closing chapter (36) of 2 Chronicles, when the king of Babylon came and slew young and old, burnt the house of God, brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and carried away to Babylon the vessels of God's house and also the best of the people who escaped the edge of the sword. Such was the treatment the people received because of their sin, which was so grievous that there was no remedy. Perhaps it would be more understandable if the words read, "The Lord is *with* them that uphold my soul", as in the A. V. and the R. V. margin. The Lord would requite David's enemies, as the battle with the Philistines on the slopes of dark Gilboa tells (1 Samuel 31), in which Saul and his sons fell and all his men together that same day. David had prayed that in God's truth they would be destroyed. So God heard David and saved him, and in His own time destroyed his enemies.

With a freewill offering will I sacrifice unto Thee:  
I will give thanks unto Thy name, O LORD, for it is good.  
For He hath delivered me out of all trouble;  
And mine eye hath seen my desire upon mine enemies

(verses 6, 7).

Did David go to Gibeon on the west of Jerusalem, where the Tabernacle was in his time, to sacrifice his freewill offering? We never read of him building an altar in the days of his rejection. The first altar that we read of that David built was in the threshing-floor of Oman the Jebusite, according to the commandment of the angel of the LORD by Gad the seer (1 Chronicles 21. 18). The altar of the LORD was at the high place at Gibeon (verse 29). But of the new place of the altar in the threshing-floor of Oman, David said, "This is the house of the LORD God, and this is the altar of burnt offering for Israel" (1 Chronicles 22. 1). Here the temple was built by Solomon. David gave thanks to the name of the LORD for it was good, that name in which God saved him (verse 1), for God had delivered him out of all trouble, and he had seen his desire upon his enemies. *J. M.*

Issued by the Churches of God

Obtainable from Needed Truth Publishing Office,

Assembly Hall, George Lane, Hayes, Bromley, Kent.

Also from: —Mr. J. Ramage, 44 Tweedsmuir Avenue, Dundas, Ontario, Canada

Printed by Barretts of Brighton, 42 The Lanes, Brighton  
incorporating W. J. Starkey Ltd. Est. 1877