

THE "I AM" REVEALED

The Gospel of John

Thoughts come from a wide variety of sources. Some come from messages I have heard from individuals in their teaching ministry, some come from assembly Bible studies, some come from experiences in home and personal life and some from books I have read. The Holy Spirit is the Teacher who makes them real to me.

- "Studies in the Four Gospels," by G. Campbell Morgan
- "The Believer's Bible Commentary," New Testament, by William MacDonald
- "The Life Application Bible," Tyndale House and Zondervan

The Gospel of John1

While sitting on the throne of His glory, the plans of God have been unfolding throughout eternity and will continue forever. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered the heart of man the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him." God spoke and things were made by the word of His power. With a word the earth, galaxies by the hundreds with planets whirling and spinning were put in orbits and moving in intended places in the universe. Each one of them is unique even though there are billions of individual stars which He named. Then for His own sovereign reasons, God focused His attention on one small speck we call earth and began a wonderful week of transforming a place the "was without form and void," into a beautiful fruitful planet.

In the design of the great "I AM," He chose this place to put human beings on. He created them with a mind, so they could choose to know Him; a will, so they could choose to obey and serve Him; and emotions so they could choose to love Him and receive His love. In this way there could be enjoyable fellowship that the Supreme Being of the universe could intimately share with intelligent beings. Because mankind was made in the image of God, this was made possible. So, humans, with a body making them conscious of where they were; a soul making them conscious of who they are; and a spirit making them conscious of who God is - were placed on this wonderful earth to "love God and enjoy Him forever." But man failed and his mind became dark, he was separated from God in his soul by sin, and spiritual death separated him from the One who loved him supremely.

God, who is Love, did not abandon His plans in frustration because in His omniscience He knew what was going to happen. So even before making all of creation, He had a way prepared for His purposes to be justly done, and finally have what His great heart of love desired. There would be a way back to God opened for the lost souls who were justly condemned by their own sin. This way could not be obscured or partial. To be righteous and fair it had to be opened to "whosoever" and be done on the easiest possible terms. Even though God is eternal in His existence, infinite in His wisdom, understanding, love, grace, mercy and all other character traits. He is unlimited in His power and authority - yet He chose to "be found in fashion as a man."

This was in the divine plan. In this way He could come to us and reveal to us in this unique way, who God is. He came into this world in flesh to completely identify Himself with us. He never compromised anything of His divine nature, nor limited His authority and power. But He chose to veil His glory, submit to His own laws, and reveal Himself as "God manifest in the flesh." He always was God; is God today; and always will be God. "From everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God." He came into this world not to give information only, nor to demonstrate divine power over all things He created and over death itself, but He came "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." In order to do this, He had to "suffer for sin, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." By this He demonstrated "His love for us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

The Gospel of John was written by a man who was with the Lord Jesus Christ for the years of His public ministry when He was here as Emmanuel. The first eighteen verses of this book open our understanding to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ: who He is - God from heaven come to earth. Two hundred forty-seven times the apostle John calls Him "Jesus." The book of John describes the deity of Christ by incidents in His life and the eight miracles He performed. But also, John links the humanity of Jesus with His eternal Sonship as the only begotten Son of God. This marvelous book puts into divine light the glories of the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ so that we "might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name."

What Jesus *taught* and what He *did* are tied inseparably to *who He is*. John shows Jesus as fully human and fully God. Although Jesus took upon Himself full humanity and lived as a man, He never ceased to be the eternal God who has always existed, the Creator and Sustainer of all things, and the Source of eternal life. This is the truth about Jesus and the foundation of all truth. If we cannot or do not believe this basic truth, we will not have enough faith to trust our eternal destiny to Him. John wrote this to build faith and confidence in Jesus Christ so we may believe He is truly God.

John 20:31 gives the over-all reason for the writing of the Gospel of John. "*That ye might believe.*" For instance, in chapter 11, as the life and ministry of our Lord here are drawing to a close, He reminds us that He is living, resurrection power. "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name." In chapter 12, shortly after His entry into Jerusalem when His name was on the lips of everyone but without belief in the heart, He loudly proclaims His purpose in the world and equality with the Father and expects people to believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God; and believing ye might have life through His name. In chapter 13, after giving the personal example of service in the kingdom of God, He clearly states that He is our Supreme Lord and Master, "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name." In chapter 14, in clear unmistakable terms; "The Way; The Truth; The Life," He not only unequivocally states that no one comes to the Father but through Him; but also, to see Christ, means we have seen the Father. Those two Persons and the Holy Spirit are all equal and One, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name." In chapter 15, He says He is the True Vine, nurtured and cared for by the Father, the Husbandman; that lasting, divine fruit will be brought forth for the Holy Husbandman's delight. But now there is the Holy Three plus another large group involved in putting on display the fruit of the character and Person of God, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name."

The first three Gospels are concerned with *facts*; John is concerned with *issues* as well as *facts*. The first three Gospels are a *presentation* of the Lord Jesus; John is an *interpretation* of the Lord Jesus Christ. The first three show the Lord Jesus *outwardly*; John interprets Him *inwardly*. The first three emphasize the *human* aspects; John reveals the *divine*. The first three correspond to the *lion, ox and man* in Ezekiel's vision; John parallels the *eagle*. The first three are mainly concerned with Jesus' public discourses; John the private discourses, verbal conflicts with the Jewish leaders and private conversations in seclusion. The first three are mainly His Galilean ministry; John almost entirely to His Judean ministry. The first three are factual; John is also doctrinal. The first three begin with human genealogy and a fulfillment of Jewish prophecy; John begins with a direct divine revelation of what is eternal. In John 1:11-12 we read, "*He came unto His own and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He the power to become the sons of God; even to them that that believe on His name.*" John deals with --- "*as many as received Him*" Individuals, Small groups. [1] Peter, Nathaniel (1:35-51) "...*power to become sons*" [2] Nicodemus (3:1-21). Inner birth. [3] Samaritan woman (4:6-26). Inner life. [4] Blind man (9:35-41). Inner sight. [5] Martha and Mary (11). Inner faith. [6] The eleven (13-16). Inner power. [7] Mary Magdalene (20:1-18). Inner joy. [8] Peter (21:15-23). Inner change.

John 1:1-2

THE WORD WAS GOD

Our minds are limited as to a real conception of eternity. It is very hard to explain in words something that is without a beginning or an end. Sometimes a marble, a ring, a circle of any kind is used to try to express what something endless is like. However vague our understanding is of things beyond our experience, there is much that we can believe by faith - there is much we can do by faith. When we read of "The Word" already being in the beginning, we wonder at what that "Word" is and what the beginning is. Is "The Word" a unit of speech? Is it a principle of reason like the Greeks taught many years ago? Or were the Hebrews right when it was written, "The Word of the Lord is right; and all His works are done in truth." "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." The very first act of creation on the world was done by the spoken Word, "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." To the Jewish people "The Word" was another expression for God.

So "In the beginning was the Word," John wrote, and that would be easily accepted by the Jews as an expression for God. Then came the statement, "And the Word was with God." What is this? Another distinct personality, separate from God? This is not just a vague idea or passing comment, but a stated fact that there was Someone in the beginning with God. Then John's words really would arouse the attention of the readers (as it should us), "The Word was God." The impact of the word "was" is that in each use in this verse it is continuous - with no beginning or end. This is not marking off time segments such as years or centuries. This Person of whom John wrote was eternally existing as God because He is God.

In the first fourteen verses of John 1, "The Word" is repeated. By putting those phrases that describe the theme introduced in verse 1, together, we can learn more about "The Word" very quickly. "In the beginning was the Word" [v.1]; "And the Word became flesh..." [v.14]. "And the Word was with God" [v.1]; and the Word "dwelt among us" [v.14]. "And the Word was God" [v.1]; and the Word was "full of grace and truth" [v.14]. It is impossible for anyone to explain God. But the theme of the Gospel of John is that God is explaining Himself to us in terms we can grasp. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself."

To the Jews who would read this, there would be an antagonistic response right away when this "Word" was identified as the Lord Jesus Christ. To Greeks this would probably be considered a ridiculous idea. But to us who know Him and believe on Him with all our hearts, this is a wonder of wonders. Our Lord and Savior is the Eternal God! He is not like God. He is not a god nor is He only godlike. He does not only have a divine nature. He is the One True God - and yet in these words there are two Persons mentioned. In this first verse of the book teaching us the truth that Jesus is God, there is the statement that tells us of two Persons of the Trinity that we call, the Godhead.

Verse two doesn't only repeat what was said in verse one, but teaches us that who He is and what He is, He always was. He did not come into being at some particular time. He did not become a Person when He was conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary. He existed as a Person from all eternity. He is, always was and always will be, the Eternal Son of God. He did not become, a son; He always was the Son. He did not become a god after His crucifixion and resurrection as some religions teach. The physical changes He assumed after His resurrection did not make Him any more than He was before. By His own choice He limited Himself as a man when He was establishing Himself as a man among men. His character never changed. His power was never limited as to Him possessing it. He just limited the use of His powers to continually give proofs that He was who He claimed to be.

The theme of the book is established right in the first verses. Then it is illustrated and described in a wide variety of examples, and in the teaching, He gave on occasions of meeting different people in different life situations. In this book He is often giving profound teaching when dealing with individual people. Personal contact and communication with individuals are a basic way of giving faithful words to "faithful men, that they may teach others also." The whole Gospel of John then is given to us so we will not mistake who the Lord Jesus Christ is, the proofs of His deity and humanity in the same Person, and the results God expects from this exegesis - "that believing ye might have life through His name."

To try to define the indefinable is altogether a great waste of time.
However, the revelation of Jesus as God is a great truth to mine.
Eternal in His being and also eternal in all His existence -
Is hard for us who measure time and space when we are limited by distance.
So, I admit freely there are things way beyond my understanding -
But in faith I know they are not beyond my spiritual comprehending.
Because purposely God has chosen to reveal to us Jesus as "The Word.
And in Him I place my personal faith, and with gladness own Him as Lord.

When I make that step of faith, difficult things start to make sense.
I can accept the fact that One on the throne in heaven, to earth was sent.
There was a purpose in God's mind when Emmanuel came here to dwell.
Some things have to be shown, that are in words, impossible to tell.
That was an act of grace that was great, when He who was rich became poor.
If He had not been willing to come, every person would be lost evermore.
He who was God and with God, became a man to be here with man.
To reach earth that was His footstool, He crossed a tremendous span.

Limiting the uses of His almighty power and His divine authority -
As the God-Man He was a human, but never ceased to be deity.
His creatorial powers were not limited, but in order to identify with us -
He became found in fashion as a man, so that in Him we would trust.
Each step of His life, each miracle He before men did perform -
Changing water into wine, walking on water and calming a storm
Was a proof that His powers were not diminished, they were to use as He could wish.
Through "The Word" that dwelt with us," we are able to be eternally blessed.

"Father, I praise Thee for sending Thy Son to be the Savior of the world. Lord Jesus, I thank Thee for being willing to come and be my Savior and Lord. Amen."

John 1:1-5

EXPRESSION.

To use words to say a thing is quite common place
We do it often, behind backs or in people's face
Some words are bad and other words are nice
They are generally more important when we say them twice.

We use these words to pass on important information
Sometimes to tell of some peculiar situation
That can produce blessing or bring tribulation
And we need those words to make clarification.

As far as I know, there has been only one time
"Word" is used as a Person's real name
It tells us of the Christ who into the world came
Our Lord Jesus Christ and "The Word" is one and the same.

He is the One who on earth spoke the first words
"Let there be light," and lit up the world
After each act of creation, He would say it is good
He who is "The Word" is in every way truly God.

When God expresses Himself, it is to connect with us
Bringing light and life He reveals Himself thus
With those words Our Lord dispelled darkness
And brought into our lives the things that bless.

"O God, the revelation of Thy Son to us certainly was never something that was hidden from the eyes and minds of men. "This thing was not done in a corner." But how so many seem to miss the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is the revealed Word to men, indicates a deliberated deafness on their part. Truly the devil has deafened the ears as well as blinding the eyes of men. O God, have mercy on those that they may turn and use their ears to hear Thy Word. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 1:3.

BY HIM - IN HIM

Everything that has come into being has been created by the Lord Jesus Christ who is "The Word." He was "with" God in the sense of the nearness, the closeness the Father and Son share. "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever the He doeth, these things also doeth the Son likewise." It is hard for us to conceive of two unique Persons being in such close harmony, and spiritual oneness that they act in perfect unison by their nature. A number of people can be trained to do the same thing in unison for a short time and are limited to one or two things. Identical twins because of their human nature, may think and do a lot of things in the same way under the same stimulus. But the nearness of the Father and Son is that in all things, they act in dependence on each other. Not because either has any limitations of any kind, but the divine nature of the Godhead is such, that perfect unison is maintained even though roles in their activities to reach a goal may be different.

In the creation, the goal was to reach and fulfill the purpose of the revelation of God to intelligent beings that there might be a full fellowship between the creature and the Creator. The perfect relationship of "The Word," the Lord Jesus Christ, with God is perpetual closeness. That closeness is between them through all activities of the Godhead through all eternity. There was no coming and going between divine Persons. Rather, each continually fills a role as the Agent to do all things. "All things were made by Him" means just that. There is nothing so large that it defies human imagination, that was not made entirely by Him. There is nothing so small that it can only be conceived by our thoughts, that was not made by Him. The silly reasoning of people who say all this happened by an act of chance, is basically an attempt to convince themselves and others that we are in control life. They say we are in control of life, and order is brought about by human endeavor - or "mother nature." There is no "mother nature." There is only one "Father God." The scriptures say, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." "He made everything beautiful in His time."

Not only were there the days of creation, but "by Him all things consist." The ongoing procession of creation is done by Him. Every season has its unique features. The cycle of life is maintained by Him who is "The Word." The persons who begin their existence at conception are given life and survive by Him. Millions are aborted from the womb by sinful people who think that act is their right. The One who gives life is the Life-Sustainer. Nothing that is created, originally came into being apart from Him. Nothing that has appeared

since, even though the life in a seed may remain dormant for hundreds of years, can show itself except through Him. Our Lord alone has the keys of life and death.

The impact of a clear understanding, though not complete understanding, of Him who is the One who made "all things," moves us to worship, praise and adoration. It also creates in us an earnest desire to serve Him who has called us frail, mortal men and women to be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Him of all that is His by creatorial right. All angels and heavenly beings; all things visible and invisible; all things tangible and intangible have their source in Him who made "all things" without exception. "How big is God; how great and wide His vast domain!" Every issue in life we may face is known completely by Him. He knows the cause of it, the course of it and the concluding results. It is our great privilege to be made objects of the divine affection of this Almighty Lord. We can trust ourselves without reservation to Him in every time of hurt and suffering, or every time of blessing and comfort.

When there was nothing, something appeared; not just a gathering of substance.
Some things are so small, they can't be seen at all, others are seen at a great distance.
How can this be? What intelligence behind this can make so much from nothing?
The One who was here as a man among men, is Creator-God from the beginning.

Whether material or men, it came from His hand, all power on earth is His.
There is not need to fully understand, by faith I know He created all of this.
All power is His in heaven and on earth: He is the Source, the Power, the great I AM.
It is impossible to know all about everything; the amazing thing is He was here as a man.

None of this was frivolous, there was important business that God in flesh had to come
here to do.
He started here in obscurity, and Man of perfect purity, experiencing even death before He
was through.

There was nothing in His nature, spoken of in human nomenclature, that can be fully
described in our words.
He was a real man on earth, no one can measure His matchless worth, in every way He is
supreme Lord.

We are not able to define His grace, seen in this small speck in space, God was walking
here on ground He made.
His time spent living on His possession, is beyond our limited vision, there was a
redemptive price that must be paid.
Though He made earth with only a word, the good news must be heard, so from His
fullness, grace we did receive.
Our faith is not in some vague idea, but placed in a Person who is real, I Jesus the Eternal
Word, I believe.

"Father in heaven, I believe with all my heart by the Lord Jesus Christ all things were made. I believe behind all Thou hast done, there is a reason. I believe I am involved in helping to carry out Thy eternal plan, and I thank Thee for the privilege of this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 1:4-5

LIFE AND LIGHT

Our living Lord is the Source of life, not only the Possessor of life. It is true He is, was and always will be "The Life" in Himself. He also is the Provider of life in all its aspects - physical and spiritual. The principle of life is hidden in the most minute seed lying dormant in the ground. The egg of the smallest insect has that principle hidden in it, that "The Life" has made to show itself in a pre-ordained pattern. Even hidden in material around us whether fruit, plants - all living things, there is that life from Him that can be transferred to us in the food we eat, and in particular, the water we drink. Everywhere we look there is evidence of that life that defies human description and avoids human duplication even though some intelligent people spend a lifetime trying to do what only God can do. That life is everywhere, seemingly limitless and human beings are aware of it. In climbing high mountains, they carry life sustaining food and air to survive. When men go into the depths of the sea, they need to carry that life with them to sustain them while they marvel at the variety of life that surrounds them. That life is adapted by "The Life" who placed those sea creatures to live there where man cannot live. Life is everywhere around us on earth. But it is not in space. It sustains us here - but more importantly, it is there to give us light.

Man, created in the image of God, is distinguished from other forms of life because with our minds we can grasp, though dimly, the fact of there being a Life-Source - God. With our emotions we are moved to marvel - and hopefully, worship the Creator, not the creature. And with our will, we can submit to His divine

sovereignty and find the reason for our life. When we find Him and put our faith in Him, we are then not only able to worship Him - but we can serve Him, love Him, enjoy what He enjoys, share the blessings He has provided and live and walk in "the light as He is in the light." In that way we have fellowship with others who believe on Him and together we enjoy communion and fellowship with Him. The Lord Jesus Christ who is "The Life," is also "The Light" to provide us the understanding we need to live a full and abundant life. That light He provides, enables us to see our God by faith and live in His fellowship even though all around us is moral and spiritual darkness.

As that light shines from Him and on Him, and we are able to live in the blessings of it, we in turn reflect that light. Amazingly we are called by Him, "the light of the world." Obviously, this is not the same as the light that emanates from Him who is "The Light of the world," but it does encourage us to live as reflected light in the darkness that that cannot overcome (comprehend) the light. Consistent light has a remarkable impact on darkness. One small candle in a window can be seen hundreds of yards away in a dark night. The reflected light from one small lamp has guided men at sea for many years to avoid dangerous shore lines and lead them into safe harbors. When we walk in His light and follow His light, we may unknowingly shed some reflected light that brings blessings to others. Darkness does not extinguish light. It is the other way around.

There is a certain degree of light that has been placed in all men by God when He created us. We are wired up to know there is One who is greater than we are. God consciousness is in every person whether they will admit it or not. We are responsible to God according to the light we have. Some with little light, who reject that little light are still responsible to take the consequences of that rejection. Those who have received a lot of light and rejected it are far more responsible for rejecting what could have been theirs. "If that light that be in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness." May our reflected light glorify God and be a blessing to those we come in contact with.

Life in all its myriad forms has found its source in God.
The Way, the Truth, the Life is Christ the Eternal Word.
Plants, animals and all earth's living creatures -
Each with singular and amazing unique features -
Have a physical existence known by men, but unexplainable.
We know their composition, but power to give life is unattainable.
The fact of years, weeks - time measured by natural existence -
We cannot control or determine by mere human persistence.

There is another form of life best known by its essence.
We are conscious of its reality - or lack of its presence.
Some call it "lifestyle," the way one chooses to pass time.
The life of most people around is very different than mine.
In every way life is considered, the Source of essence is the same.
The One from whom life is given, "Jesus" is His given name.
He is the Lord from heaven who came to give life and light.
"The Life" is one part of His nature; as "The Light" He gives spiritual sight.

As "The Light" shines in the darkness, nothing at all can it extinguish.
Pure, holy light by nature, is quite hard by man to distinguish.
Through faith in "The Word" reveals both God and sin.
The clarifying "shadowless" light means facing sin is where to begin.
Death and darkness rush to flee away from light so exposing.
Light leaves no place to hide, no room for arrogant posing.
Powers of darkness cannot overcome the power of divine light.
Walking in the light with Jesus makes hidden things shine bright.

"Gracious Father, the light of the revelation of Christ, and through Him sin being exposed and Thy holiness seen, changes life from mere existence to an essence that has quality. This has, and still does, brought much joy and meaning to the kind of life measured by time. Eternal life experienced daily is real to me. I am so grateful. Thanks, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 1:6-9

THE REVELATION OF THE INCARNATE WORD

God had laid precise plans relating to the coming of Christ into the world. The Old Testament scriptures had foretold of a forerunner who would prepare the way of the Lord. In the sovereign purpose of God, John was born into this world. This man "came from God." The program of carrying out God's intention of revealing Himself to the world through "The Word" included the miraculous conception of John, born to Zacharias and Elizabeth in their older years. This was no mere fluke of nature. This was in the divine plan of God. The

nature of John's birth, the event of his name being announced, the kind of man he was and the lifestyle he lived set him apart from others. He was a prophet of the Most-High. He was to give God's people the knowledge of salvation through forgiveness of sins. He was separated from politics and the religious life of the nation by living in the desert, until "The Light" was to be publicly revealed.

Not every servant of God knows what God has in mind as the purpose of their life and service. John didn't live long, but he is well known because of the power and impact of his brief years. His calling of God involved years of childhood and a few years in the desert for preparation for the short time of his public testimony. When one testifies, that person openly affirms and gives evidence of what they know. John was such a person. He came to openly testify, and also to bear witness of "The Light." He knew personally that Jesus was "The Light." Now as a witness, one who sees and knows a thing by personal presence or perception, John began to publicly attest to the fact that Jesus was here. He clearly stated he was not "The Light" himself, but as a witness he openly afforded evidence as to who the Lord Jesus Christ was. We too are to testify and affirm openly who the Lord Jesus is. By personal experience we know Him and have experienced His presence and power with us in our lives as those who believe on Him. Our witness to what we have seen and heard - and experienced of Him is important.

John did not only bear witness to the Lord Jesus, but behind that testimony was a very important reason. It was that "all men through Him might believe." Just to tell something that is true is not enough. The objective of a witness testifying for the Lord is that people will take personally for themselves what we have to say. It is true that we, like John, can reflect the light of our Lord Jesus Christ, but the point of that is so others will come to accept "The Word" who is "the Light of the world."

Many people through the years, and some in my lifetime, have claimed to be the true light. Their deception was soon revealed. When the Lord Jesus Christ came, he showed the imperfections and the dimness of all others who claim to have the light of truth and understanding apart from the revealed truth of the Word of God. "The True Light" that came into the world, shines on everyone regardless of who they are and where they are. His character reveals the true character of every person. His holiness revealed how unholy - how ungodly we are. His perfections exposed the darkness of our hearts. His coming into the world did not give everyone the knowledge of salvation or even the knowledge of Him. But the Incarnate Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, has revealed the standard of divine expectation as to what God wants from humans. Philosophies of others who began religions in the world, rise only as high as the morals and limited understanding of the teachers. Every one falls far short of what God expects of us. So, they all impose on their followers a demand of works to try to attain what in every human heart we need - peace, freedom, righteousness and happiness. The shining of the True Light of the Lord put into human flesh the perfect humanity God wants. None of us can attain this. But in and through Christ, God can accept us who believe in Him. God can accept us who believe in Him and by faith personally accept Him as our Savior, Redeemer and Lord. His righteousness is imputed to us - and God can justly accept us because of Him.

There is no question, no doubt at all, of the limitations of our humanity.
And in contrast to that there is no doubt of the perfections of "The Word's" deity.
How then can the infinitely wide gap be crossed between us and God's expectations.
"The Light" has shined in the darkness we were in revealing His sinless perfection.

When there is a witness to give affirmation to that which one sees and knows -
There results a testimony to those looking on of a reality the truly shows.
Light has come far greater than that which only reveals that what is wrong.
True Light shines into the darkness of hearts showing to whom that person belongs.

John came to tell and also to show that faith in God is a reality.
He testified to the fact Light had come and He was there for all to see.
When one is a witness of "The True Light," that witness casts a reflection.
That reflection is what people see when they hear the message of salvation.

Not every person has an inward knowledge as to who "The True Light" really is.
And not every one has heard about Jesus and the uniqueness that is singularly His.
But the shining of the Light in every person is that everyone's character is revealed.
Then when the Gospel message comes to them, they will learn "by His stripes we are healed."

Those who know the Lord now and live by faith in Him who "gave Himself for me."
Have the responsibility to bear witness of "The Light" so hearers will from wrath flee.
Our personal testimony adds weight to our words so those who hear will believe.
The experiences of walking in the light with Him gives witness to the Light we received.

"Father, this day is kind of marked out in my mind, but whatever Thou dost have for Thy servant I want to do. If there are some things I should not do because it would hinder the "True Light" from casting the rays of divine grace - please stop me. If there are things I have overlooked, that should be done - please give me that light that I might reflect the character of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 1:7-8. *"The same came for a witness, to bear witness of that Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light."*

OUT OF OBSCURITY: the reason for the cross.

Two men living in obscurity, changed the course of the whole human race.

Both men were sent by God, and yet both, human lineage could trace.

One from the tribe of Levi; the other from Judah's kingly tribe.

Both were miraculously born; both as faithful men, at the hands of others died.

One went from home to a desert place where a prophetic message he learned.

The other remained in His despised hometown; as a carpenter His living earned.

One from a priestly home - a prophetic declaration to the nation was to bring.

The other was to most a common man; but He was a prophet, a priest and a king.

One of them came to warn the nation; the other came the nation to bless.

One's message was a call to repentance; the other's message - new birth and God's forgiveness.

One was popular with the people he preached to; the other despised and rejected of men.

One was a final prophet for the Jewish nation; the other was the Lord from heaven.

It really is hard to figure out why the prophet was so widely received.

The people came from afar to hear him, and the message he gave, they believed.

John's role was to publicly bear witness of the Light that to them would come.

People gave heed to his words from common people and soldiers, to a king sitting on his throne.

When John pointed out the True Light; people looked at the other Man askance.

When Jesus was identified as the Lamb of God; the nation rejected Him and lost their chance

Of a national redemption and restoration, and for that they continue to suffer.

The Work of the Lord who was slain on the cross is sufficient the sin of the world to cover.

These two men moved from obscurity to places of national prominence.

The God-Man brought the Light and the Life; the prophet called for true repentance.

In God's unfolding redemptive plan, both were used His will to fulfill.

What was introduced way back then is continuing all across the world still.

John is gone, waiting for the resurrection, but the eternal Word is alive and well.

Jesus still is the Light, the Lamb of God; the Master whose will we fulfill.

He is the Christ: The Son of God; He is the King of Israel.

The message John preached and the work Jesus did, bring blessing to people still.

"I know Gracious Father; I haven't been able to express myself today the way I would like to. But You know my heart. Some things just defy description. I thank Thee my life is hid with Christ in Thee. Please guide me through this day and may I be able to in some way honor Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 1:10-18

THIS IS HE

Everything that is on this earth, even the world itself was made by the Lord Jesus Christ, who is "The Word" spoken of in John 1. There in this chapter a look back at the first creation, and "The Word" was there then. It was a work of His own power. The was light and life in Him then because He is the Light and the Life. Now, in an act of God's grace we find hard to comprehend, He came to dwell among His own people, in His own domain and among His own things. They are all His by creatorial power. In that great step of condescending grace, the Lord Jesus came to His own people who would not accept Him for who He is. They rejected Him even though His coming was predicted in the Old Testament scriptures. When He came in the flesh, He welcomed those into the family of God who would believe on Him and welcome Him as their Savior and Lord. The new life God gives changes us. We become spiritually alive to God. Our ambitions and attitudes in life are new as we now live our lives unto God.

The new birth does not happen because we have Christians parents or come from a Christian heritage. Neither does it come through self-effort or self-will. The desire of others such as preachers or other people who know us cannot give us the new life in Christ. The new birth is a work of God the Holy Spirit who regenerates those who are spiritually dead to God. This new beginning is not only a work of God, but the power to live the life of a new creation comes from God.

The Word" was visibly seen in the world in absolute perfection. Not only was the deity of Christ made known to the people who saw Him, heard Him and saw the things He did that men cannot do. His humanity was not hidden as He lived here as a perfect Man. His grace and truth were not hidden. Moral glory cannot be hidden. It is obvious that the Lord Jesus Christ was God's unique Son. The undeserved kindness of God toward undeserving people was easily seen. At the same time the uprightness of His life, and the truth He spoke, gave clear testimony that He was in full fellowship with the Father. John could see that evidence of His deity and humanity in the One Person. John saw the Lord Jesus Christ as a revelation of the heart of God when he stated that He "is in the bosom of the Father."

John knew who he was and the work he was to do. He also knew who Jesus was and the work He came here to do. His fullness is so great that there is abundant provision for all our spiritual needs in Christ. When we need grace, grace is there, and the Lord does not hold back from that supply of divine grace. When we think we have exhausted what God has to give, He unfolds to us more of the exceeding riches of His grace. There was a measure of grace given by the law There was also truth in the law given by Moses. Both of those were temporary and limited. Now in fullness grace and truth are given to us through the "Only Begotten Son."

John the Baptist was the last messenger of the old covenant and concluded his ministry by pointing out to the people the value of the Person who was among them. John the apostle opened his Gospel by just pointing out the past, but more importantly identifying the new beginning. The One who was Eternal in the beginning is still the same today and is among His people now. His power and authority are still supreme. The Eternal Life He is and has, has now been brought to us as a personal gift that we can have now and forever.

How can it be the only One with unlimited power?
Has shown marvelous grace that is unlimited too?
Is everything we need waiting in heaven's bower
For us to draw on today that will carry us through
To the place where God can in Christ reveal Himself
As the One who came willingly here to dwell with us?
And even when He was here as a Man, He felt
Every pain of humanity - even the devil's thrust
That has brought many a saint to their knees.
While here in the flesh He yielded His will
To the Father who always and in every way pleased
And that pleasure the Father get from Him still.

The fullness of His grace and the Truth He is
Was here in the Lord Jesus Christ for all to see.
As the "only begotten of the Father," a uniqueness was His
That demonstrated divine grace unlimited and free.
Not just on occasion did light shine through -
That light found its source in His being.
There is in Him inherent truth brought into human view.
There is contained in His Person everything that we are needing.
We are not left in darkness to now and forever wonder
If God has lost interest in us or for us no longer cares.
In the Lord Jesus who came we need no longer ponder
Nor fear, for in His grace we can forever share.

"Father, with a grateful heart I write these words knowing Thou hast been near. Thy grace to me has in no way diminished even though the Lord Jesus is not presently here in the flesh. Thanks so much for the abundant riches of Thy grace. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 1:10-13.

A human is not automatically a child of God. To be a child of God, one has to become one, and you cannot become what you already are. The condition for becoming a child of God is – you must receive Christ and

believe on His name. Not all human beings become children of God. Not all receive Christ. The process by which one becomes a child of God: What it is not. Not a physical birth. Not something we do by our own will and power. The process by which one becomes a child of God: What it is. God's creatures are made by Him; God's children are begotten by Him. Example: an engineer can make a computer; but he has to beget a child. The computer can do greater things than the child, but the child possesses the engineer's life; a relationship; enjoyment of the father's life; love and fellowship.

John 1:6-14

WITNESSES.

He came with a message - right from God
He came from the desert - people would think him odd
He came with solemn words - witnessing for the Lord
He came and he died - giving men God's word.
His name was "John."

He came shedding light - to overcome darkness
He came lighting every man - that He might bless us
He came to His own people - they received not His witness
He came, the True Light - revealing God in His fullness.
His name is "Jesus."

He came with a message - passed on to him to carry
He came with solemn warnings - "In sin do not tarry."
He came and was consistent - his life and words do not vary
He came and spoke truth - his message came clearly
His name is "Evangelist."

His name is of one who Christ personally received
His name was written in heaven when on Christ he believed
His name is of one who for others must intercede
His name is of one from who sin's burden is relieved.
His name is "me."

"O God, surely John pleased Thee when he came bearing his witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ Himself certainly bore witness of Thee. Peter, Paul: all the apostles and true messengers of Thee have given unmistakable witness to the truth of the Gospel and have seen evidence of its reality in the lives of millions. May I be a true witness of Thee until I am called home to heaven. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 1:11, 12. *"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."*

RECEIVED.

Why would they not receive Him,
After all, He was one of their own?
What was so strange about Him,
Why was He left so alone?
What did He do to offend them?
Did He not often them bless?
What was the reason they left Him?
Was it His own righteousness?

When light so bright comes among us,
We are not so used to the light.
When truth so clear and so righteous,
Is given - we who are children of night,
Usually flee because of discomfort,
For our sin, truth does easily expose.
And to face sin, as truth clearly shows it,
Leaves us open, with no place to go.

When choices so plainly presented,
Are before us, we cannot ignore
The light that our darkness made brighter,
We are responsible like never before.
Will we receive Him whom light does embody?
Will we accept what He says as the right?

To receive Him means here, now and always,
I surrender my dark to His light.

To receive Him means truth takes the stand;
To govern, from now on, my life.
It means that whatever my choices - His hand
Points the way to what's right.
And whatever I do, I've received Him,
And from now on, to Him I belong.
And my greatest delight is to please Him,
For in Him, I've all rights as a son.

“O Father in heaven; when Thou didst look down in mercy upon me: I didn't even know all that had happened, until I had finally ‘received Thy word.’ But then I was enlightened to understand that when I received Thy word and understood He died for me, I was also able to receive Thy Son and be made a child of God. I am brought down low before Thee when I consider my unworthiness and the riches of Thy grace. I know all of us will be showing the “exceeding riches of Thy grace” in the future. I would like to be able to show some of it now out of gratitude; in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.”

John 1:15-18.

HIS FULLNESS.

It all belongs to Him, from the core to the mantle - land and sea
Every vein of precious metal; every latent source of power
Its fullness exceeds all, for from Him it came to be
And from the fullness of His Person, I can draw strength for every hour.

Every act of divine initiative the Father in wisdom planned
The completeness of redemption the Son paid for on Calvary
In power, the Holy Spirit has brought God's blessing here to man
The fullness of the Godhead, has made that fullness available to me,

His fullness fills up everything from the greatest to the small
There is no limit to such a Source - His provision is extreme
It is God in Christ, that One in whom all fullness in a body dwell;
He is above and greater than all - of everything known - He is Supreme.

I have received from the fullness of Him, holy character traits -
All that is needed to ensure my life and service here is full
Whatever my life demands - faith for faith or grace for grace -
From His abundant provision - whatever is needed, He bestows.

Through ages yet to come, just like the ones that now have passed
He will dispense from Himself sufficient for every possible hope.
Not only does and will He give, but His giving will outlast
Every situation - at His right hand is eternal fullness of joy.

“Father in heaven, what depths from the well of His Person, does the Lord Jesus provide every possible need I might ever have. “Fullness” is such an all sufficient word. It is so true - I have received from His fullness all the grace He provides for all the grace I need. I am experiencing abundant joy, even now as I address Thee. I praise Thee for all the fullness given to me. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

John 1:19-28

THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN

The Gospel of John begins with the testimony of creation and the authority of the Word who became flesh and dwelt among men. There was a unique glory in Christ that no one else ever had. God demonstrated His nature in the law that Moses passed on to God's people. Moses gave the law. Christ fulfilled the law. God has gone farther than the testimony of the law. John the Baptist came bearing testimony that God was about to reveal Himself and His truth through "the only begotten Son of God" whose life on earth showed the nature of God in a way that could be seen and heard.

Both law and grace are a part of God's nature. To see creation shows there are "laws" that keep everything in order. But to see God in a physical way is impossible. We could not survive God's glory and holiness in

our present human condition. In Christ we can see the great grace that has made salvation possible to those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The truth of God has given us greater understanding as the Spirit of God makes plain the prophecies of the Old Testament that have been fulfilled in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As John the Baptist called the nation of Israel to repentance and to show proof of their sincerity by baptism, the religious rulers became uneasy. They felt they were responsible to determine if John's credentials were right and if he was, or was not, a false prophet. They would have been concerned that their traditions were not being challenged by John's teaching. To try to get a handle on him they subtly named off prophets to try to get him to identify himself as to *who* he was. After all, people were coming to listen to him and he was a popular person. John didn't really tell them *who* he was as they tried to put him in a frame of reference of their own choosing. But he did plainly tell them *why* he had come and *why* he was preaching. He was preparing the way for the Messiah who was already among them but had not been yet publicly identified. The baptism of John was a testimony of those who were baptized that they repented in view of the coming of the One after John who had the authority to forgive sins. John knew his role and did not allow anything to distract him from the responsibility he was given.

The example of John as a preacher and a spokesperson for the Lord, is one we do well to copy. He was not moved aside from his calling by pressure from those around him nor by the religious leadership. His call to repentance reminds us of the need of true repentance before the Gospel is understood. Repentance is a genuine change of mind; regret and sorrow for sin; and an earnest desire for forgiveness. Consciousness of guilt moves one to seek for mercy. In any Gospel message there needs to be "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" clearly preached.

Many do not realize the fact that the Lord is near us. He does not manifest Himself visibly or audibly, even though He is "One among you." He uses His servants today to reveal Himself through. Every believer has the responsibility to represent the Lord Jesus in a faithful way by words and deeds.

John 1:26-27. *"John answered them saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth One among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."*

ONE AMONG YOU.

THE WORD from the past and present and future: expressions deep; truths profound; unchanging in character; eternal in nature; established and powerful; authority unparalleled; in flesh among us; grace expressed.

THE LIGHT which lighteth every man: without casting shadows; from above and within; energy from the Source; darkness has no place; no man can hide; brilliance from the One who gives the sun light; revealing the dark world.

THE LAMB sacrificed for us: identifying with our need; bearing our sin; substituting Himself for us; speaking truth; leading the searchers; unknown by most; made manifest to the world; testified to by God; identified by the Spirit.

THE SON OF GOD, God drawing near: God has spoken to us; God continues to speak to us; God makes clear to us what He thinks of the Lord Jesus; the Holy Spirit identifies Him; the relationship between the Godhead remains unchanged; He is the same forever.

THE CHRIST sent from God: His mission is clear; He was sent from God to men; He was looked for; He was waited for; He came at the right time to the right place; He calls men to follow Him; He has a work to accomplish; He uses others in His work.

THE KING OF ISRAEL they had been looking for: to deliver them, to lead them; to teach them; to be one of them; to identify with them; "He came unto His own and His own received Him not"; any that receive Him are not just subjects, but children.

THE SON OF MAN is seen and heard: He's one of our own kind; He is the God-man; hypostatic union is uniquely His; He will reign universally; God's plans and purposes will always win in the end; angels will witness His coming and will identify Him publicly.

"O God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: the unmistakable evidence of His coming, and His purpose in coming was clearly put on display. Today I can see the need of

people like me to be unmistakable in our Christian testimony of Him and to the people of our time and place. Whether it be in the public or among the believers I see today, I want to show Christ and His reality in me. I need help to do this right. Amen.”

John 1:19-28.

THE VOICE.

People gather in clustered groups - suspiciously
Waiting to hear John's plain speaking - unmistakably
Some wanting to hear of life and hope - anxiously
Others who the status quo has enriched - cautiously
Soldiers come asking questions as those living on the edge - fearlessly
Religious leaders form a parade of self-centeredness - confidently
The sinful that are well known on the dark side - fearfully
The dissatisfied come closer wanting change - hopefully
The convicted ones, step into the water to identify themselves - publicly
The converted that have faced themselves make changes - honestly

The voice is sent from God - to speak for God
The voice is sent to the nation - to give warnings
The voice is heard by all - to call to repentance
The voice is loud and plaintive - calling to sinners in darkness
The voice is easily understood - "flee... repent... behold the Lamb."
The voice is not intimidated by questioners - his answers are from God
The voice knows the work he is called to - the Lord is coming
The voice knows who he is - a spokesman of a greater "Sent One"
The voice knows what to do and say - and what not to say
The voice of John was heard by the nation, the king, the people - and God.

“O God, we need such a voice today to call our generation to flee from the wrath to come, to repent from our sins, and to look to the Lord Jesus alone for salvation. It seems we are getting farther and farther away from clear and plain Gospel preaching. May I never compromise the truth of the Gospel to be acceptable by the people. Give me the wisdom to present Thy Word in an unmistakable way. Help me to be relevant and listenable when I speak for Thee. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

John 1:29-34

RECOGNITION OF THE INCARNATE WORD

Just the day after John the Baptist told the Jewish leaders he was not the Messiah, but was the voice crying in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord, He saw Jesus coming toward him. There was excitement in his voice as he called on all who were there to look earnestly at the Lord Jesus Christ. Whether John knew the Lord Jesus before His baptism is not told us, but we know on this day Jesus came to John to be publicly identified as the true sacrificial Lamb of God who was the fulfillment of all the sacrifices made before. John did not say, "Behold your King," nor did he say, "Behold the Mighty Conqueror." He pointed the Lord Jesus out as the Lamb, chosen by God, approved by God, and now in the flesh "The Word" was here to be seen and approved by men. But even though men saw Him and heard Him, many did not approve of Him.

John had seen the Spirit of God come and abide on the Lord like a dove after he had baptized Jesus. John clarified his role by saying he baptized with water in view of their repentance, but the Lord Jesus Christ would baptize with the Holy Spirit. That happened on the day of Pentecost fifty days after the Lord rose from among the dead. The Lamb of God was here to bear away the sin of the world. He opened the way for all men everywhere to repent and be saved. He was also here to baptize those who believed on Him with the Holy Spirit and place them into the Body of Christ which is the Church. John was a humble man who knew who he was himself and knew the Lord Jesus Christ was "before" him both in rank and in His eternal existence. He knew now positively that Jesus was the Son of God. There was now no question as to who his earthly cousin was.

When we declare to the world the Gospel, we must make plain to the people who hear us that we who are sinners by nature, need a substitute to be able to come to God. For years types and shadows had been used to testify to sinners that a sinless substitute was needed. Lambs, bullocks, goats, pigeons and doves were sinless alternatives. Now the reality of all the types was here as one of our own kind and yet sinless because of Who He is and the way God sent Him. Born of a virgin without Adam's sin nature, in His sinless purity as the Lamb God provided for us, He could put away sin forever by bearing it and the consequences of sin, on Himself. By His death, He conquered sin and death. Now every person who accepts Him

personally, comes into the lasting benefit of the sacrifice He made. The sin price has been paid in full and each person who comes to Him in faith can be forgiven.

The sign of the Holy Spirit was a testimony of God's satisfaction with the Lamb He provided. God had given John evidence that Jesus was from God, even though John had probably known Him or at least about Him. When Jesus was baptized, John was given the assurance He was the true Messiah because God had told him about the Spirit remaining on Him and he saw that happen, when like a dove resting on Jesus, the Spirit came. Now he knew positively that Jesus was the Son of God.

Our testimony to people is only effective when the Holy Spirit's working is unhindered. We have been baptized in the Spirit and when a genuine sense of humility and faith is seen in us, the Spirit of God can work through us and bring blessing to others. John's ministry was short but effective. The length of life on earth isn't the important part of our work on earth. The quality of it is more important than the quantity.

John 1:36. *"And looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, 'Behold the Lamb of God!'"*

BEHOLD!

"Behold the Lamb of God" is not taking just a casual look.
The One who came toward Jordan looked much like any other man.
The second time John said that, he watched each step He took -
The purposeful steps after His baptism, seemed to speak loudly to him.

When a person identifies himself with either a man or a cause -
The steps they take, the words they say and the places they will go,
Indicate a goal before them that is greater than men to please -
To look intently on such a person, the weight of their testimony shows.

A sacrifice or more I might make, needs to seriously be made -
When the object of our life is Christ, and is by others there to be seen.
There is more than a casual stroll to take or flighty words to be said -
If those who are looking on see a difference from what has been.

When those men with John saw Jesus, they changed the way they went,
And followed after Him to see Him and find out where He did dwell.
I wonder if some who watch me will ask if people think I was sent
To really make a difference and if my words the truth will tell.

I have had some people at times, ask why I don't do some things
That others around me do and they seem to think nothing of it.
Maybe if in some way they can see Jesus and the joy to me He brings -
Then as a result of following Him, to the work of my life there will be profit.

"O God, I know that even here today some are watching me and the things I do. They are probably listening from a distance trying to hear what I say. I am asking for help to act and speak in ways that can honor the Lord Jesus Christ and make people think about Him and the Gospel message they will hear tonight. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 1:35-51

WHAT SEEK YE?

There is a time in the lives of people when they become conscious of themselves. That happens in early youth. Then the consciousness of family is followed by consciousness of many others as our life is expanded by years. As understanding increases there is also a response to the call of one's own spirit to the "God - consciousness" within us all. The first words that are recorded that Jesus spoke when He began His public ministry are, "What seek ye?" Every person of sound mind can understand that question because it is one, we ask ourselves often, in these words or ones that are similar. "What do I want?" Later on, "What do I *really* want out of life?" It is as an answer to this that we live by and proclaim the Gospel. We who have found the answer to that question have something to offer others; actually, we owe it to others to go and tell them what we have found.

I would seem that Andrew was not a wordy man but one of those strong silent types that can say a lot in a few words. Rather than have a talk on the side of the road, he wanted a place where he could get some serious answers to his questions. The awakened conscience and consciousness of the man through the preaching of John the Baptist prepared him for John's great declaration of Jesus when he said, "Behold the

Lamb of God." The first time John the Baptist identified the Lord, He was the One who "beareth away the sin of the world." The next day John identified Jesus as to who He is Himself, "The Lamb of God." Andrew must have detected the difference in the statements.

Three-word conversations do not often happen. "What seek ye?" went straight to the point. "Where dwellest Thou?" didn't open a whole dialogue of thought. "Come and see" was a challenge of faith and reality which both Andrew and John acted on. Probably after hearing the Lord Jesus speak to them in that private conversation, and after Andrew was convinced Jesus was the Messiah, there was not much time wasted in passing on his greatest discovery to his brother Simon. John very likely did the same and brought James to the Lord Jesus Christ too. What a wonder it must have been to spend the night with Jesus!!

The variety of personalities of those who followed the Lord Jesus right at the beginning of His public ministry, gives us some insight into the mind of God. He did not make everyone identical. He does not intend us to all be the same. Each person has a uniqueness that reflects what God is like in His eternal and infinite being. Put all human personalities together and we get a little understand of being made in the image of God. Simon, a typical blustering man who had a strong personality but weak underpinnings, became a rock-solid man of character after "being with Jesus." Andrew never did say much but could be counted on to do the right thing. John seemed to be a quiet contemplative thinker, but had another side to his personality he shared with his brother James as one of the "sons of thunder." Even though Philip came from the same place as Andrew and Simon, they didn't call him and bring him to Jesus. It may be that he was an unimpressive person who would have been overshadowed by others. Those who seem so shy often have great insight. It was Philip who said, "Show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Because of that question, the Lord Jesus who had called Philip personally, gave great clarification to the relationship of the Father and the Son. The Lord Himself gave the description of Nathanael when Philip brought him to Jesus.

Most moral and honest people want to know the reason for their existence, and what they are supposed to accomplish in life. "What seek ye?" "Come and see." "Follow Me" - these short sentences get right to the crux of a matter. We can learn from the Master how to best speak for Him to those who seek Him. It is our responsibility to be prepared to connect with people in the most effective way possible. A short comment or question; a meaningful dialogue; an illustration - all of these are ways to communicate the Gospel and introduce people to the Lord Jesus Christ. Variety goes with humanity. Different people call for different methods. What reaches one may not resonate in any way with another person. To give instructions as to how to win a soul to Christ is really wasted effort. People are uniquely different. The need for soul winners, is to be a prepared vessel who knows how to establish a personal connection with others; who has a consistent devotional life and who believes in the truth that every person will get eternal life here on earth as a gift from God and will be in heaven when they die; or if they refuse to accept the gift of God and refuse Christ they will be lost in hell and ultimately the lake of fire in eternal despair.

John 1:35-42.

WHERE DWELLEST THOU?

Omnipresent - in every corner and in every hidden place,
The universe itself, to Him is only like closet space -
For One who is not limited - who dwells above time -
There is no place to go where you He cannot find.

In the depths of the oceans, miles from human sight
In the caverns - the bowels of the earth where there is no light
On the highest peaks, far above the dwelling of normal men -
He dwells - the earth itself is only a footstool for Him.

In the open fields where as an infant He lay in His birth -
Submitting to mother and Joseph in Nazareth - a village of little worth
Dwelling as a man among men in relative obscurity -
Was He who made the worlds - a Man, yet incarnate Deity!

Establishing a humble abode - a space for living that He could tell
Those who had waited and longed for Messiah here to dwell -
Them He called to come follow Him if they so chose -
Not to everyone did He reveal Himself - only to those.

But further and more impacting each day to me,
Is the fact that here today, with His people He chooses to be.
To dwell in the midst of us who He has deigned to call His own -
To dwell with us - even the eternal God, who fills heaven's throne.

In a quiet room where one of His saintly ones kneels in prayer -
Out on the busy streets with those who witness - He is there.
He dwells with His people - those who are the house of God -
He dwells omnipresently - with all those who know Him as Lord.

"I sense Thy presence here in this room, O Lord God. Thy voice to my soul is not silent and the warmth imparted to my spirit is not from manufactured heat - but from the awareness of Thy Person. I fear lest I am imposing here in Thy place of dwelling, and yet I would never want to be in any other place. May I be able to dwell with Thee in this way always. I ask in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 1:43-51.

WE HAVE FOUND HIM.

Not hidden, yet unseen by eyes unsanctified
In full view, for the whole earth is full of His glory
Yet only by those who looked and waited for real evidence
Was He revealed - announced and declared by angels;
Eyes anointed with heavenly eye salve - knew Him;
Looked upon Him as He walked with steps made purposeful
By the needs the Son of Man alone could see
He watched the uncertain feet of the lost and said -
"Come and see."

Leaving the valley and the distant river for the calling place
He, with a few who followed with wondering steps,
Looked for one who looked, and found him
Called to him as He did to those in the past - and today
Those who seek find what they are looking for
A principle and practice joined together by action
A slowly growing company and the sound of going
A waiting, wondering, reading, thinking man hears -
"Follow Me."

Sitting quietly - guilelessly waiting for whatever would happen
Devoted in his way - understanding only what he saw
Until a faithful friend in passionate words says -
"We have found Him; He is the One we've waited for"
And with hesitating steps and uncertain thoughts
He faces Him who knows all things, has all power
Is in every place at once - His space is everywhere
And He hears fearful words, and he believes -
"I saw thee."

Whether it is "Come and see" for me this day and place
I must not hesitate, but to Him hasten the steps of my faith
And listen to hear again those words I have heard before
"Follow Me," and I hasten to the door to look again
Needing to see those blood-stained holes impressed
Upon His ear to testify, and upon mine to identify
I am not my own, I am not hidden from His all-seeing eyes
I belong to Him, body, soul and spirit - wife and children -
"I have found Him."

"I am humbled in this lower place, O God of my salvation, that Thou knew where I was and came near enough that I could hear Thy call, the voice of entreaty and later the voice of command. Forgive me for the deafness of the ears of my will. May the opened holes of my head, and particularly of my ears to listen never be closed to Thy words of direction. May my mouth be opened to declare, "We have found Him!" Amen."

John 2:1-11

MANIFESTED HIS GLORY

In the past sometimes the whole community attended the weddings held in their town. In some of the small villages the celebration would last more than a day. Mary, the mother of Jesus, must have been known in Cana of Asher. Jesus and His disciples were from different towns, but by God's sovereign direction they were invited to this wedding. God has His own plans and ways of doing things. The life of faith is often just

simply taking the next obvious step in front of us. "Full surrender's tide" is sometimes a fearful time for us, but when the Lord Jesus is there we can go forward in confidence, "He knows the way I take."

The Lord honored that wedding feast by His attendance, but even more, by being there He honored the institution of marriage. "Marriage is honorable..." To show fellowship at joyful occasions is important, but those times are often hard to manage without sinning. We always need to be reminded of the honor we have of honoring the Lord's presence with us. We need to commit ourselves and the event to the Lord that He will be glorified by what we do then and that dignity and honor accompanies such an important time as a marriage. There are often opportunities on such occasions to do good either in conversations or in actions. Whenever a marriage is held, keep the occasion such, that as an invited guest the Lord Jesus can be happy to be there. It is important that He is acknowledged as the One who made the union, and He can bless the union as well as the occasion.

Invited guests share in the joy of such an event. The disciples who followed Jesus, although not yet designated as part of "the twelve," were linked with Jesus even though they may have still wondered at this Teacher they were following. Mary was there, not as one to be prayed to or worshipped. In some places she might still be the object of scorn or demeaning gossip because of the events surrounding the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the presence of Jesus, the Son of God, that sanctifies an occasion, and in an occasion like this one, made it much more than just a wedding feast. When a need arose, Mary was not the one venerated and she could not meet the need that was there. She knew without question who her son was, and she knew the infinite power of God in bringing Him into the world miraculously. Now that He had gone public in His identification, she probably felt He might be willing to meet the need by His power. Other books are written telling of childhood miracles Jesus did, but they are not to be considered as true. This miracle at the wedding in Cana of Galilee is plainly stated as the "beginning of miracles."

The word "woman" is not used in a patronizing way in this passage. It is used in the sense of "honorable lady." The Lord knew what Mary had in mind and in this first reference to "My hour," it is in relation to His mother. "Mine hour is not yet come." The last reference to His "hour" was in relation to His Father. "The hour is come." Jesus lovingly responded to His mother in a way that bore no offense whatsoever. She knew who He was and He knew what she meant when she spoke to the servants.

To do this miracle Jesus used what was available. He didn't miraculously keep everyone's cup full of wine. That would have led to drunkenness. Huge water pots filled to the brim held 20 to 30 gallons apiece. The total amount of water in the six water-pots would have been close to 180 gallons. The water was filled right to the brim leaving no room for speculation that wine could have been poured in. It was good wine created instantaneously by the Lord Jesus Christ and everyone at that wedding could testify to that miracle. Not only was there far more than enough for the wedding; there was enough to sell and make a good profit on for the newly married couple.

The meaning of the miracle and the reason behind it is that those disciples would be convinced that Jesus is the God of creation. He created the wine without the need of history. There were no vines that needed to be planted and pruned. There were no seasons for the fruit to gradually grow into maturity. In order to produce that amount of wine, a very large vineyard would be required. In a moment of time He was revealed as the Creator; as God in the flesh; as the God of glory - and there was also the foreshadowing of the joy of Christ as the Bridegroom and His bride, the Church.

The disciples got it!! The message was loud and clear. They now knew without doubt who Jesus was. Their faith in Him was strengthened. Their submission to Him was with full confidence. The evidence was visible, tangible and testified to by one who had not even seen what happened. "Thou hast kept the good wine until now." The One who is our Savior and Lord has left unmistakable proofs as to who He is, not only in this miracle but in all the miracles He did when He was on earth - and in the ones He is doing today in our lives. "In Him we live and move and have our being." To not believe on Him would be to deliberately close our eyes to His power in creation; in maintaining all things in their order; in making us to suit our place in this creation. But more than that, we believe on Him because of what He has done and does daily by the riches of His grace. He has brought us to Himself and to His banqueting house to be with Him and part of Him forever.

John 2:1-2. *"And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: and both Jesus was called and His disciples to the marriage."*

THE THIRD DAY.
For years there was silence, the Lord was at work.

Tables and benches, maybe houses to make.
All evidences of a Man who was here among men;
One who was human was here - and then

The preacher, the river, the nation, the mission:
And Jesus stepped out to be seen in His baptism.
The first day had come; He was seen as God's Lamb.
Now the nation would know; God's here - the, I AM!

The second day came, and John sees Him again:
And points Him out plainly to two other men.
Those two follow Him, they knew Him to be
The One they had heard, now they wanted to see.

Other men came; they were called by their friends.
Jesus knew who was who, and who would follow Him.
On the third day He knew that the time had now come;
The first public miracle - the water into wine.

The word was now out, there is here in our land;
One who came down from God, and is here as a man.
And for three years and a half, He established the fact,
That redemption, would happen, when the time came to act.

He spoke of that time, three years had to pass,
For the temple of His body, and His death in advance
Was the day He referred to when He spoke of destruction.
The third day after was the day of His resurrection.

The third day is important; it speaks of new things,
And because of three days, salvation He brings
To all who have on Him, placed all their faith.
He's not dead, He's alive, we are saved by His grace.

“The first day He was seen here Father, as the One who had come to save His people from their sins; must have brought great joy to Thee. I know this was made public when Thou did speak from heaven and expressed joy in words. I expect there was a lot more to find joy in that was not expressed. I am still rejoicing in the fact of the third day after His death, He rose and the temple was raised up forever. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

John 2:4. *“Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.”*

MINE HOUR: the timing of the cross.

It was before Him always; in His mind and in His words.
Not always brought out plain to others; the meaning not often heard.
But the cross was there before Him, even at a wedding feast.
The wine of the cup of the wrath of God was something He could already taste.

I wonder when all were rejoicing, did He pause and shed a tear.
Those who had come to celebrate, He knew their sins He would bear.
They tasted and were probably made happy for what He did for them.
But little did those people know, He was the One who would die for their sin.

His hour was always before Him, even when doubting people asked for a sign.
The illustration of the temple showed He was Lord even over the course of time.
The fact of a human body as the dwelling place of the Holy God -
Escaped those people then, but is revealed to us in God's Word.

His hour was always before Him, when for some their sins He forgave.
It was there when He told Zacchaeus it was the lost, He came to save.
His hour was there before Him when in grace He healed the blind.
When He drove from the temple the covetous merchants, the Father's will, was on His mind.

Those who followed Him didn't remember He told them what would happen some day.
Strangely they did not pay attention to some of the most important things He had to say.
How strange is the mind of men to forget such significant things as this!

But even now we may forget, when we focus on our things, not His.

There is no doubt the cross was on His mind in the years before it happened;
When God laid on Him the iniquities of us all that we might be forgiven.
May I never carelessly forget the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ my Savior -
The effect of what He did in that "hour," is seen in my daily behavior.

"Father God, the day the Lord performed that first known public miracle, opened up my mind to what the Lord Jesus must have had constantly on His mind. May what I have been doing this day reflect in some little way the light of the Lord. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 2:5. *"His mother saith unto the servants, ' whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.'"*

HE SAITH.

Words of power may not always be many
Authority is not always loud or verbose
Calm commands - even out of the ordinary
Cause a response without questions to pose
Clearly spoken explanations said but once
Are understood even though unusual they are
What may not always to me make sense
When coming from the Lord I dare not ignore.

Words spoken by the Lord have changed everything
It was by His word all things came to exist
How foolish it would be on me to hesitate to bring
Some water to fill pots when by Him all things consist
When He tells me to go make disciples in all the nations
Why ever would I hold back except for stubborn self-will
Those servants did just what He said to meet the situation
And blessing came to many when they simply pots did fill.

I read that faithful men should be taught by those who are older
So who am I to say that I can wait a few more years
I look at younger men who are ready for burdens to shoulder
They need help along the way from those with experience to share
May God in grace enable me to be a help to those who serve
By passing on a few things I've learned when my Lord I obey
They in turn may be a benefit to take what truth they have
And people in some other place, God will save through what they say.

"O God, I know there have been times I have hesitated to obey a command of Thine because of a feeling of inadequacy. I confess that I think I have to meet some kind of man-made qualification to be able to pass on what I have received. O Father, some men will be here in a little while to study and they have a genuine desire to learn. Please fill me with the truths they need to hear that I may pass on to them some help for the work they will be doing in days to come. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 2:12-24

MY FATHER'S HOUSE

Not very often people in places the Lord visits in grace realize the potential blessings that could be theirs until it is too late. When Jesus moved into Capernaum, that community had a time of divine visitation. Times of visitation still happen today, but in many places the impact of being the object of God's special attention is either taken for granted or considered to be of little importance. When such times come, people talk about spiritual things, Christians pray differently than is normal, and the scriptures are turned to more often. The appropriate response to such times is to say what we believe, be consistent in our attention to divine things and be concerned with the needs of others and the glory of God.

The Lord Jesus Christ as a Jew would have been to Jerusalem each year after He had come to the age considered manhood. All males were to go to that city for the Passover. He was obedient to the ceremonial law as a man but He was not subject to it. It was subject to Him because His authority was behind it as God. The first sign of "The Word" being God incarnate was the miracle in Cana where Jesus was revealed as the God of creation. The second sign in Jerusalem was when He "cleansed the temple" revealing Him as the God of true worship. That place was His "Father's house."

As the temple was being enlarged and renovated under the authority of Herod after being built over 500 years before, inside the temple grounds the court of the Gentiles was made into a shopping center for exchanging Roman money (Caesar's image was not allowed to be used for the temple tax) to a local currency suitable for religious use. Also, unfit animals could be exchanged for a price, or those who came from a distance could buy sacrificial animals. So Gentiles who came to worship at the temple were shut out of the only place they could go because it was being used for business. The profiteers were using it as a place of merchandise. The Lord Jesus was not a sentimental person who would let everything go to please the people. In His passion for the will of His Father, righteous anger moved Him to stop this insult against God and disrespect for the Father's house. Holiness is to be expected in the house of God. Reverence and honor accompany the true worship of God. The whole purpose of the temple and temple-service was to glorify God. Any gathering place for God's people to meet is a representation of what is taught there and practiced by those who attend. But the place is not what is important. The Person who we gather to, and the reasons we gather for, are what really matters. Respect and dignity certainly belong in that building but not for the building itself. Rather for what we do there and with whom we meet.

In the strength of His zeal, the Lord Jesus acted quickly and decisively with authority to correct the wrong being done in the temple. His majesty and words would have convicted the guilty consciences of those who were satisfied with appearances as long as a profit could be made. Restoration to what God intended took place quickly but it had to be done again three years later. When the people of God fail to function in worship according to God's word and will, there is need of restoration in spite of what others may think or do. Of course, there will be challenges made and people will say today as they did when Jesus returned the temple worship to what God intended, "What right have you to do this?" We must remember the building is only a building. That structure is for the sake of the Owner and Master. Worship of Him and service for Him is to be done there.

The Lord had just given them the sign of fulfilled scripture and they missed the whole point of it. Now they were asking for a sign. The Savior gave them the option that in three years they would take, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." This introduction to the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, pointed to the victory of the cross. That was the sign of His authority that extends over all the world to this day. Even though the disciples heard His words, their memories were not awakened as to His meaning until after His resurrection. We may not understand all of God's ways with us at the moment of an event, but our memories can enlighten us later at a most opportune time and we will say, "Oh, now I understand why that happened." The reading and meditating on scripture places in our minds the "word that Jesus said," and when we are in certain situations it will all make sense to us.

Other miracles Jesus performed in Jerusalem at that time gave other opportunities for people to believe on Him. There are times when things happen that are out of the ordinary and they are actually opportunities for us to use for the advantage of furthering the Gospel. However, we must be aware that there is a kind of "believing" that is shallow even though it is real to a limited extent. Such kinds of affirmation create applause for what is done but is not saving faith. The people who believed in His name could see for themselves the reality of what had happened. It was right there to be seen in the city of Jerusalem. Saving faith is in the Person of Christ and who He is, and what He has done. Peripheral things that people can see and believe like supposed healings, unusual phenomena or even creation may make a person believe in the fact of God but not in the Person who redeems the sinner. For that reason, Jesus did not "commit" (believe; trust) in the people because He knew then, and He knows now, what is in the fickle heart of every person. Jerusalem was a privileged place, but just like Capernaum, social pressures can make people come or go. Until there is conviction of sin and repentance toward God, real faith will be missing.

John 2:12.

HE WENT DOWN.

Not alone now - the miracle of Cana past
His mother and family - those who follow fast
Behind Him in steps now made purposeful by His
Come to a city, because of His dwelling place - is blessed.

Not long did they stay - for reasons more than one
Wonderful works He did there - particularly in Capernaum
But in spite of such benefits as He alone could bestow
They hesitated in an unrepentant state - though His grace they know.

Far too often I have found what seems to be a place of blessing
If only those around could grasp the fact - Jesus was passing.

And He can satisfy the deep unspoken needs of those
Who could have experienced the joys of faith - instead oppose.

Oh, may I in every way and opportunity seize
Upon that brief time, some way to say what I believe -
That whether saint or sinner - my fellow man
May take hold of the passing, gracious Savior while they can.

And I - as I follow with His family and friends
Must consistent be to pass along to them, my helping hands
To use for goodness to meet needs and to testify
The worthiness of the Lord Jesus upon who I - and they can fully rely.

"I have passed through many towns and cities these last few days Father, and I can see the location of our tent where we had meetings to preach the Gospel. Yet how many there are that have never responded. It seems sad to see that ground where once many feet passed in to hear the Gospel, is now grown over and no one remembers that Jesus of Nazareth has passed by. I lift them all to Thee now and intercede for their souls. If I am to go again, please make that plain to both Linda and me. Amen."

John 2:13-17.

ZEAL.

He came and looked and saw beyond the business of the place
To where the holiness of God once moved men and women
To bow in deep contrition and repentance, and offer their best.
Without a sense of grace or reverence that was becoming
They counted the money in their hands claiming they were blessed
Not knowing the actions that so completely them engaged
Left them empty swept and garnished, dry husks of forms
In which they named the name of God - and left Him out.
In the distant memories of the ancient past they thought were up to date
And God looked on - closer than they thought -
He's here in this desecrated place of prayer
Observing until the twisted cords combined
To make a stinging lash which round blue-trimmed garments twined
Moving the bargaining covetous throng to find a different place.
Running and leaving behind a dreadful wake
For in the Father's house the dirt and feathers
And the sound of ill-gotten gain rolling about
Until like silly children chasing jacks, was now
Cleaned out of the terrible travesty of religious joking
And "The One" is there with words to pierce the hard hearts
"Take these things hence..." and zeal has its way.

He comes and looks today, and sees what we don't see
The hearts and motives of people moving in to worship
And beyond the form, the sound of music easy on the ears
He watches and listens to the sounds known only to Him.
Sounds of hearts - some moved by "Amazing Grace"
To close eyes and listen to the timbre of such words on souls redeemed -
While others listen and watch, and form the words just right
So what is heard is perfectly in tune - with everyone else
But not with God, who moves among them unseen.
"Was it for crimes that I have done..." sung with broken voices
And the heads are bowed or eyes fastened on some distant point
As the grace of God melts down again into the spirit deep
Bring appreciation out to God alone in words unspoken -
Perhaps even unexpressed or inexpressible - but real.
The soaring sounds of "A Mighty Fortress..." and the accompaniment
Far out-sounds the words and people shiver at the tones
The words forgotten in the overwhelming noise
That drowns out heart-sounds only God can hear.
But hear He does - and waits to cleanse and recover
And receive that from the hearts of those appreciating -
"Hallelujah, what a Savior..." and zeal has its way.

“What power there is to righteous zeal, O God. Before the eyes of on-lookers there is evidence that God is still in control; even when men think they are. Help us who gather unto Thy Son alone, to maintain a holy honesty in our prayers, hymns and words of worship and praise. May the house of God always be clean and ready for any service the divine authority chooses to use it for. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

John 2:18-22.

THIS TEMPLE.

He was seen on occasions by a very select few,
His face and form were hidden from most men.
If they were a “Christophanes” or not, I am not really sure,
But I know it was different way back then.

When the “fullness of the time” came - the time of His birth,
He was looked upon with love and adoring faces.
He was God in the flesh - to the world He came forth,
He was seen by thousands in many and varied places.

He was “veiled” it is true, or all would have died,
Seeing One brighter than the sun in holy glory.
God was manifest in flesh that He might with men abide,
The Lord Jesus was here in the “temple of His body.”

It is not quite the same today although with His own He lives,
Giving comfort through the Spirit and His own presence.
Now His temple is composed of all who in Christ believe,
And from our Head comes the bounty of His blessings.

His physical body was a temple that died and rose again,
In three days, He arose from among the dead.
That body is now glorified in a way we have not seen,
But we will visibly see Him when He comes again.

The body of believers is the temple of the Lord,
Composed of those saved from Pentecost till now.
Every member is a part of it according to the Word,
The Church is a temple all will know.

The body of the saints is a dwelling place of God,
Each believer's body is a temple of the Holy Ghost.
The moment a sinner trusts Christ, the Spirit does abide,
The Holy Spirit from then on is the gracious Host.

Each gathering of saints, who in the Lord's name alone
Gather to carry out the Lord's divine commands;
Is a temple of our God, a place where He's at home;
With those who submit to the authority of His name.

“O God: how I praise Thee for ever sending Thy Son in the likeness of sinful men. They looked upon Him as one of them. I look upon Him as my gracious Head, the Lord from whom all blessings flow. The death burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ will always be in the minds and hearts of Thy people. He who died for me, and was buried, rose again, and is alive for evermore. I thank Thee and praise Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

John 2:23-25.

HE KNEW.

He knew all men - nothing was hidden from His eyes that are in every place
The good and evil, the names and places, the failures and victories -
The thoughts and intentions, the actions and consequences
The fears and courage, the losses and gains -
Because HE KNEW ALL MEN. [Jn.2:24]

He knew their thoughts - they had tried to find reasons to accuse Him
The jealousy and hatred, the plots and evil schemes, the anger -
The plans for murder, the search for reasons to accuse
The forms of religion, the hypocrisy and pretense -

Because HE KNEW THEIR THOUGHTS. [Lu.6:8]

He knew what was in man - they were made in His image but failed to obey
The fact that death has passed upon all men for all have sinned
The nature of man is to sin and men take easily to sin
The heart of man is deceitful, He knows our wicked ways -
Because HE KNEW WHAT WAS IN MAN. [Jn.2:25]

He knew who would betray Him - Judas had never been able to deceive Him
The call and the companionship, the bag he carried and the money he stole
The public place he held, and the private avarice he hid
The thirty pieces of silver and the kiss of death -
Because HE KNEW WHO WOULD BETRAY HIM. [Jn.13:11]

“O Lord God: how futile are the efforts of men to try to hide from Thee. How lofty are Thy thoughts and ways. “As the heavens are higher than the earth” pretty well covers the distance between mine and Thine. Yet I am glad that to a certain degree, I am able to enter into some of the things that are important to Thee. I appreciate this very much. Thanks, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

John 3:1-13

HE CAME TO JESUS

A contrast between those Jesus did not commit Himself to and Nicodemus, begins the teaching of the new birth - a whole new life principle. The Lord could commit Himself to this searcher who had a knowledge of the Old Testament and could teach the law himself. But knowledge and salvation are very different. When a person is searching for God and truth, the time of day doesn't matter. nor does it make any difference to the Savior. The Lord Jesus Christ could easily discern one He could commit Himself to in contrast to curiosity seekers. This man came with an open mind and heart with unasked questions the Lord Jesus already knew. In this face to face encounter with the Lord, Nicodemus was immediately introduced to the new principle of life that was necessary for one to be in the kingdom of God. We need to be ready to introduce inquirers who we come in contact with to the fundamentals of the faith by connecting with them in an area of their life they are familiar with.

Nicodemus would have known about the kingdom of God because he likely would have taught that subject to others. So the Lord begins with him on familiar ground. Nicodemus would have thought the kingdom of God would be ruled by God; restored here on earth with the Jews as God's people in it. Jesus revealed to him in one sentence a whole new principle of life that is necessary for one to be in the kingdom of God. Entering the kingdom is a personal matter open to all people of the world who have been born again. This was completely new to Nicodemus as it is also to many people living today. For some reason people find it hard to grasp the truth of spiritual life. Some will say the physical act of infant baptism puts people in the kingdom of God. Others the act of baptism by immersion puts people in the kingdom of God. There are various physical ways some are taught places them in the kingdom of God. The truth of natural physical life has been experienced by everyone but many do the same as Nicodemus - they confuse the flesh with the spirit. The Lord Jesus clearly separated them when He pointed out the truth of the new birth to Nicodemus.

When a person is born again, they are born again by the Spirit of God. The doctrine of the new birth is taught in the book of 1st John. The Holy Spirit is referred to in John 7 as the water, and it would be consistent with that to say that in this text the statement would mean born of water "even" the Spirit. New birth can be testified to in baptism, but baptism is not the means of the new birth. The Holy Spirit is the One who gives life to a person who is spiritually dead in trespasses and in sins. Entering the kingdom of God is a work of God then, and is open to every person today regardless of their ethnic origin. Repentance of sin to God and faith in Christ for salvation results in the new birth.

The Holy Spirit works in ways we cannot control. In His convicting power, He deals with people in ways that reaches the conscience of each individual when He convicts of sin, righteousness and judgment to come. Also, in ways we may never think of, the Spirit brings the light of life to those who previously could never understand the meaning of the Word of God. The area of spiritual life is foreign to most people's thinking. Many think it is simply a deeper understanding of the natural things going on around them in the world. The confusion between "souliness" and what is spiritual is not recognized. The spiritual life the Holy Spirit gives us is the life of God in us that we might know Him and love Him.

Nicodemus has been limited to seeing only earthly things. Now the Lord had his attention, and had enlarged his understanding of what Nicodemus didn't know before, He could then tell the searcher of the way into the kingdom of God. The Lord knew Nicodemus was thinking about an earthly kingdom and was wondering if

this Man who had "come from God" was going to set up the earthly kingdom he had been waiting for. The kingdom of God is a heavenly kingdom entered by the new birth. So, the Lord Jesus Christ told him of heavenly things of which He only was qualified to teach, because He was from heaven and had come down to earth. In a very remarkable statement, the Lord tells of His omnipresence. He ascended into heaven by His own divine power, and even though He was on earth, He was also in heaven.

The Lord Jesus was not limited in His nature and character when He was here in the flesh. He always was and always will be, God. He is the eternal Son and the self-imposed limitations He placed upon Himself as the God-Man did not take away anything from His power and nature. When the Lord was talking with Nicodemus in this face to face meeting, He was able to reach his intellect and get him thinking in a whole area of truth he had not previously considered. We can take a good lesson from this meeting. The people we deal with who do not know Christ as their own personal Savior, are blinded and their intellect has to be awakened to spiritual things. This is not the new birth, but it does open the door so the heart can be reached. After this introduction the Lord Jesus clearly and precisely gave Nicodemus the Gospel summarizing the truth in John's Gospel chapter 3, in a way that has been effective for multitudes of people since that time. We do well to seek to help people open their minds to God's truth before we seek to point them to the sacrifice of Christ and the fact of faith in Him who gives eternal life.

John 3:1-13.

EARTHLY THINGS OR HEAVENLY THINGS.

He came at night looking for answers - though he was used to giving them.

He spent his life looking for a kingdom - one that was restored.

He thought it would be like any other - one that ruled a nation of earth.

He was limited to earthly things - earth-bound in thought and belief.

He wanted the kingdom on earth - but ruled by God and his own people.

He hoped it would unite the scattered nation - they were dispersed for years.

He wanted a restored Israel to be the leading nation - even though they were subjected.

He had knowledge of God's Word and plans - but that is not salvation.

Earthly things have only an earthly reason - "Up with man" and a nod to God.

Even religion as taught by a leader - can leave a nation blind and lost.

Apart from the new birth and God's salvation - questioning darkness still remains.

Looking for answers to divine truth - never comes only through earthly things.

The kingdom will come, and is already here - it has begun in the hearts of many.

New birth is needed to be in this kingdom - the Spirit of God puts people in it.

Repentance and rebirth go hand in hand - there really can't be one without the other.

Every person in the kingdom of God - has one thing in common: God is their Father.

Heavenly things are understood by faith - born of the Spirit and incorruptible Word.

Everyone in the kingdom of God - has personally entered it by faith in the Lord.

Though knowledge is not salvation - it does help give understanding,

The Spirit of God reveals Christ - the scriptures give a basis for our faith.

Anyone who is in the kingdom of God has experienced the new birth.

Nicodemus, like everyone, had to look above the things of earth.

The regeneration of new life is not limited to one nation -

Those who understand heavenly things are willing to accept God's salvation.

"O God, many times people have mistaken the words of the Lord Jesus Christ as only the words of a wise man. I am thankful that Nicodemus saw beyond the limits of his earthly thinking and was able to learn and experience the reality of the new birth. May many we come in contact with learn the same things as we seek to explain the way of Thy salvation. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 3:12. *"If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?"*

QUESTIONS.

"How can a man be born when he is old?"

We all have a frame of reference we live in. It is generally in that sphere that our minds are able to perceive things. When something entirely new comes into our path, we hardly know how to even process the information. The teaching of the new birth was something that could have, and should have, been understood by a religious leader like Nicodemus. He was looking for the rebirth of the nation of Israel. It was

totally new to him that an individual had to be born again. So, the start of this new truth to him, was that He was in need personally of something he did not have. To be born of God and not of men is a profound teaching. It means we become members of God's family. It means we are children of God. It means we are participants in a new life.

The Practice of the New birth [1Jn.2:29] affects our conduct and we live righteously because God is righteous.

The Principle of the New Birth [1Jn.3:9] is that our character with new life from God, enables us to live and show evidence of eternal life.

The Power of the New Birth [1Jn.4:7] makes evident its reality because we have concern for others and love them in the Lord.

The Proof of the New Birth [1Jn.5:1] is a statement of fact that gives confidence to every person that truly believes on the Lord Jesus Christ.

“How can these things be?”

By nature, we do not look at things from a spiritual view. But when new life begins, a spiritual life that the Holy Spirit gives, then there is a change. It is real, it is powerful, it is a life-changing experience. It is not wishful thinking but a Divine Person who moves within this body of mine and empowers the believers to not only do what normally they wouldn't, but makes this our true desire. We want to please God. These things happen because a new life-principle is at work in me; spiritual life, and a new Person is using this body and mind to produce holiness.

“How shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?”

A new principle is at work when one accepts the truth of God as revealed in the Bible, and because of that divine testimony, believes on the Lord Jesus Christ to the saving of the soul. The result is faith that works in the life. “The *just* shall live by faith.” A new nature is given and the barriers caused by sin are removed. We are declared justified by God Himself. “The *just shall live* by faith.” Believing on the Lord Jesus Christ now gives a whole new way of living to the new Christian. Life is new. The reality of new life is experienced by joy in the Lord and joy in serving the Lord. “The *just shall live by faith*.” The practice of faith isn't fear of the unknown but trust in the Person in whom we believe. Our faith is not placed in someone or something that is unreliable. Our faith is in the Absolute One; the Unchangeable One; the Perfect One – our Lord Jesus Christ. So we can know the heavenly things because we have experienced the truth of earthly things He has taught us. We are completely assured that what He says is true and we rest in Him.

“O heavenly Father, I have absolute trust that when questions arise in my heart and mind, the answers will be given if I need them. If some remain unanswered, I will still rest at ease knowing that if I needed the answer, Thou will give it. At the moment, I do not have answers to the future of this work here. But I rest in Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

John 3:14-21

THE "HOW" OF THE NEW BIRTH

Strangely many religious "Christian" denominations fall back on the ideas of men to explain what the new birth is and how we can get it. Some of the explanations are almost pagan as they seek to avoid what the Lord Jesus Christ plainly taught Nicodemus and what John the apostle carefully wrote about in 1st John as well as John chapter 1. He began by a simple well-known illustration. People in Israel had been dying by snake bite because of their sin. A brass serpent was placed on a pole by Moses who did exactly as God had told him. The people who looked at the brass serpent lived. How simple!! That brass object provided a point to which people could look in faith if they believed God's word, and if they looked, they lived. When we look to the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross by faith as the One who paid sin's price on our behalf with His life, we are spiritually healed from eternal death caused by sin.

The Son of Man was lifted up on behalf of all. "Whosoever" does not exclude anyone from the offer to believe on Him. God has provided payment for sin by Christ's death because death settles all accounts. "The wages of sin is death," eternal separation from God, "but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." God's gracious plan of salvation is to provide life for us through the death of the Lamb of God. That is how one is born again. God gives His kind of life to us.

But not only has He done that, the motivation behind that act of redeeming grace is God's love. We can have life through His death because in that act of supreme love on God's part, and on the part of the Lord

Jesus to give Himself, the perfections of Christ as our substitute fulfill every righteous, legal claim against us. We experience His love through His gift. Believing is not an act of merit that we do so God is obligated to give us everlasting life. Believing is putting confidence in Christ alone as the Savior from our sins and its consequences. God does not eliminate anyone from this grace or the offer of His salvation. His love, His benevolent attitude toward us is because He desires our happiness and our fellowship that comes when we have His kind of life. On the basis of His legal justice being satisfied by the death of Jesus for our sins, He forgives us, and accepts us in Christ. There is no higher love possible than the love God has for us. That love on His part is why we are born again when we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

This whole new birth teaching is not that we do anything to add to what the Lord Jesus did, but to accept Him, and by accepting Him, the Holy Spirit regenerates new life in us placing us into God's family. Christ did not come to only expose our sin by His righteousness, but that we might receive this new life through Him. The result of that free pardon is the light of life shines into our soul and our spirit comes alive to God. To not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, is to reject Him and the full provision He has already made. Those who reject Him have already sealed their own condemnation. To refuse the new birth provided for at the expense of His life given for us, is to sign our own condemnation by loving darkness instead of light. A life of unforgiven sin continued in, results in everlasting darkness.

When a person believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, they begin a relationship with God that involves a life of knowing Him, understanding things that previously were hidden to us, and being committed to Him. It is being born into a new kind of life of which unbelievers have no knowledge. The nature of this new life opens to us a whole new area of spiritual reality in which we live. We see the big picture of things beyond just the limited vision of daily life on earth. Our fellowship with the Father and the Son enables us to "walk in the light as He is in the light" and have fellowship with one another with those who are in the kingdom of God. It is a new road we travel with new goals in life, and the light we live in through faith, draws us to the Savior with gratitude and the power over sin the new life in Christ gives us.

Many people try to excuse themselves from believing on the Lord Jesus Christ because of the perceived failures they see in others who profess faith in Christ. But really, these excuses are only an attempt to justify their desire to live for the pleasures of the world, the passions of the flesh, and the deceptions of the devil. They just do not want to have Christ in their lives and would rather continue in the moral darkness they live in and love.

Contrast that murky, dark way of life with walking in the light with God and His people through faith because we have been loved by God and received His gift of eternal life. We can enjoy the benefits of that eternal life now. Our life lived through Christ's death is a great motivator for righteous living, faithful service, concern for the spiritual well-being of others and sure hope in view of the future.

John 3:16, FOR BELIEVERS:

Persons to Preach:

God [Theo – Greek; Elohim – Hebrew].

In the Hebrew there is a precision that is not in the Greek. This word is applied to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Principles to Propagate:

The doctrine of the Trinity: personality of God; the nature of God.

The doctrine of eternal Sonship: One ever with Him; "only begotten."

The doctrine of the Incarnation: v.15. Son of Man; v.16. Son of God.

The doctrine of the Atonement: the cross; the death; the suffering.

- Behind His death was the activity of Satan – opposition.
- Behind His death was the charge against man – murder.
- Behind His death was the judgment of God – substitution.
- Behind His death was the giving of Himself – propitiation.

The doctrine of depravity: the world is ruined.

The doctrine of salvation by faith alone: believeth in Him.

The doctrine of eternal security: have.

The doctrine of resurrection: have everlasting life.

The doctrine of eternal punishment: perish.

The doctrine of eternal life:

Pattern to Present:

Mission to reach the lost:

- Motive of the mission: the unity of God is seen in love.
- Unity of the mission: God.
- Scope of the mission: world.
- Sacrifice of the mission: He gave.
- Seriousness of the mission: should not perish.

John 3:22-24

IDENTIFICATION.

The act is not complicated - it is simple in God's plan
It is a public way to testify that I, a fallen man
Am now declaring to all who know me - there is now a change
What once claimed my attention and time, no longer does me claim.

A new allegiance now I owe - there is a higher call
From Him who died that I can live - I owe to Him my all
It is not enough to state my faith in words I may recall -
The act of identification testifies my Savior I will follow.

It's true, there are different baptisms - each one stated identity -
There was John's and there was Jesus' - each one was for Israelis.
Since then there have made forms based only on mans' opinion
As to what baptism should mean and in whose name it should be.

For us who come from all mankind and are saved - from sin set free
All the ways that men design, are of no value, meaning nothing to God or me -
Our baptism is a public statement, "I am a Christian, I belong to my Lord."
Believers' baptism by immersion after salvation is commanded in God's Word.

"Heavenly Father, I know there have been a lot of people deceived by the ordinance of baptism. Men have changed what is plainly taught in Thy Word to be something taught by "their church." I feel before Thee that I should bring it into the Gospel message from time to time as the apostles did. Help me to make clear what the scriptures teach and point out what is wrong when men teach differently - but help me to do this in a spirit of grace. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 3:22-36

IMPORTANT WORDS

Both John the Baptist and Jesus continued their efforts to reach the people of Israel. John focused His attention on the Lord Jesus Christ in devotion, not in division or contention. His disciples apparently were jealous of the popularity of Jesus, but John continued preaching and baptizing in view of those who heard him being willing to turn to the Lord. He was a man of true humility who focused his emphasis on the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. His authority for doing what he did came from heaven and he was determined to fulfill that work. A call from God and the power to carry it out removes all thought of rivalry and competition. We need to keep that in mind in our service for the Lord. Others have a different call and a different work. Let us rejoice in what they do and keep busy with what we are called to do.

A man is responsible for what he receives. John knew his work had been authorized from heaven - the highest possible Source. John knew his role was that of a voice crying in the wilderness. John also knew his position as a friend of the Bridegroom and he was responsible to make preparations for people to come to Him, in a similar way the friend of a bridegroom prepared the way for the bride to come to the bridegroom. The words, "He must increase, but I must decrease," indicates he was content with what he had done and was content to let the attention go to the Lord Jesus Christ. John was conscious that he had fulfilled his mission. He in no way depreciated or put down the work he had done as of no account. He just realized it was finishing. Some things we do for God are for a lifetime. Other things we may be called to do are for a particular time and location, and have a conclusion such as "a time of visitation."

The old was past - the new had come and was established. John's ministry was an earthly work of preparation. Jesus' work was heavenly and eternal. When the Son of God was here in the flesh, all power and authority was given Him by the Father. He came here in the body and "in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," not partially but completely. In the light of this statement we are responsible to believe on the Son. When we really understand who Jesus is, we are compelled to believe what He said and put our faith in Him. He is the greatest revelation of God to humanity.

"He that cometh from above" did not just commission a work to be done; He came Himself and did what needed to be done personally. To believe on Him with full awareness of the fact we are committing ourselves without reserve to the blessings of His grace and forgiveness, is when we receive eternal life. To not believe on Him results in God's righteous wrath that carries out full justice on those who reject Him. Indecision is fatal because it indicates unbelief. In light of the fact the Lord Jesus Christ is from above, if we do not trust or believe on Him, the wrath of God abides on us. There is no other person, or any other way to avoid the damaging consequences of unbelief. Such unbelief is an insult against the holiness of God in the same way calling Him a liar would be.

John 3:25-36

HE MUST INCREASE.

John knew he was a messenger -
Sent before the Lord to prepare His way.
The Lord Himself was the Message -
All men need to hear what He will say.
The friend's work is finished -
For the Bridegroom Himself has come -
The friend's role now decreases -
The Bridegroom has come to call His own.

John called the nation to repentance -
Jesus called men to the kingdom of heaven.
John warned men to flee from wrath to come -
Jesus told how they could be forgiven.
John pointed out Jesus as the chosen Lamb of God -
Jesus called those who believed on Him to follow -
John knew when imprisoned, his work on earth was done -
Jesus' work just began when men truly Him did hallow.

To believe on Him means to fully trust -
To not believe is the insult of doubt.
To truly trust Him alone is an absolute must -
To not believe means you'll be shut out.
To believe on Him is to not trust in self -
To not believe means you'll go it alone.
To believe on Him means not anyone else -
To not believe is to be eternally condemned.

"O God, as we go to this meeting tonight in the tent; help me to present the Gospel in a way that people will come to know and trust Thee. May their belief be that faith that turns people from darkness to light and the power of Satan unto God. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 4:1-42

THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD

As John the apostle continues to write what the Holy Spirit guided him to, he unfolds in an illustrative incident how far-reaching the influence and power of the Son of God reaches. Jews had thought the Messiah would be only for them. Their idea was that He was going to deal exclusively with their needs. In this portion of scripture, we learn that Christ is the Savior of the world. The event that revealed this truth began when Jesus deliberately left Judea. The sign of His deity relating to His Father's house had created hostility in the Jewish leadership. Now the great success of His ministry increased His popularity among the people of that area and no doubt created further antagonism among those same leaders. So the Lord avoided a controversy at that time by leaving Judea and only occasionally returning. There are times when we need to stay in a place in spite of all the opposition we may face. Other times we are best to leave as the Spirit guides us, to avoid unnecessary controversy over issues that are divisive.

There are a number of "musts" in the Gospel of John. "Ye must be born again:" the necessity of regeneration. "The Son of Man must be lifted up:" the necessity of atonement. "He must increase, I must decrease:" the necessity of holiness. "He must needs go through Samaria:" the necessity of soul winning. "Must worship in spirit and in truth:" the necessity of spiritual worship. "I must work the works of Him that sent Me:" the necessity of service. "Them also I must bring:" the necessity of missionary effort. "Must rise from the dead:" the necessity of resurrection power.

Geographically the straightest road to Galilee led through Samaria. Historically the self-righteous Jews would not associate in any way with the Samaritans who were not considered "pure" Jews because generations earlier the conquering king had brought people from other conquered lands to live there. They and the remaining Jews intermingled and became the despised Samaritans as far as other Jews were concerned. But the Lord Jesus did not follow the road of the self-righteous that went the long way to Galilee on the east side of the Jordan River. He did not come into the world only for the Jews. He is the Savior of the world. He did not allow prejudice and national pride to hinder Him and His work here. Furthermore, He knew there was a very needy woman in Sychar who was probably unhappy with her life. He also knew there were people in that area who would respond in faith to Him.

It is of great interest to realize the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ led Him to limit His deity to the claims of humanity, and He was tired and hungry just like we get at times. Such grace opened Him up to empathize with human needs. The place of His choosing to reach to the Samaritans was where Jacob had bought a parcel of ground for one hundred pieces of money, and where Jacob had dug a well. In soul winning it is wise to choose a place and time that is most convenient to those we seek to reach with the Gospel. Human necessities often open the door to a conversation that people cannot ignore or avoid. To gain a person's attention by asking a favor they are easily able to provide is a good way to make a connection. That gives an opportunity to go further into significant subjects because the person you seek to reach knows you have a bit of an obligation to them so they are not so defensive. The Samaritan woman was surprised, not only to see the Lord Jesus there, but to be asked for a drink. Her casual attitude towards His opening remark reflected a common response to prejudice. Religious, racial or personal prejudice is something we have to deal with in soul winning. It is here to stay so we need to think of ways to avoid it and move ahead.

The comment about the "gift of God" changed the woman's attitude from casual to respectful. A spring is much different than a well. The water from a bubbling spring is also much different and usually better than well water. The woman's spiritual need was addressed right away but not challenging. The suggestion that she had a choice in the matter drew her into a thoughtful condition of confusion and curiosity. It also got her wondering what the Lord meant. Thirst, the fountain of life, springs of living water are all Old Testament statements regarding human need. Everyone has spiritual need of spiritual food and water for the soul. Those comments the Lord made aroused her interest. Every person has certain inner longings that in unbelievers lies just beyond their place of satisfaction. The challenges of life are always there, and many turn to temporary things to satisfy eternal needs, or to the world and the flesh to meet the needs of the soul. When we can help people see things from God's perspective, the need of a change is understood.

The mind of the woman was enlightened as to what the Lord meant because she was doubtless discontented, disillusioned and disappointed with her life. But in the case of every person, the same as in this woman's case, sin has to be faced - and she resisted facing it. Words of truth spoken with grace often bring conviction. Conviction in turn seems to make many take evasive action to avoid facing themselves. Soul winners need to be kind, but also seek to avoid being put off by evasive words and actions. We are being honest with people when we try to bring an admission of guilt so they can see themselves as God sees them.

The Samaritan woman tried to side-track the conversation by raising the theological differences between Jews and Samaritans. This also is a common practice today when people try to bring divisions between Christian beliefs as an excuse for their own actions or lack of faith in God. The Lord Jesus quickly made this woman understand that attitude, not location, is the issue in the worship of God. He was willing to discuss the matter she brought up but soon turned the whole conversation to that which is important - worship must be in spirit and in truth. Honesty brings reality. His statement, "I that speak unto thee am He," left no doubt as to who He is and why she should take the water of life. She was casual at first, then respectful, then there was recognition and affirmation.

Although the disciples were astonished at Jesus speaking to a strange woman alone, John the writer, made it plain that the disciples said nothing about that remarkable scene. The Lord knew what the disciples were thinking and used that as a teaching moment to press home what is really important. In a way, the Lord opened His heart to them pointing out the hunger of the soul is a deeper need than the physical hunger we experience. He had them look beyond what they could see to the reality of what cannot be seen. Usually no one person is involved in all that leads up to the conversion of a precious soul. The harvest is ripe and ready. The sower has done his work and now reapers need to be ready to bring in the harvest. Much of what is needed in bringing salvation to lost souls happens long before the person is actually saved.

A simple testimony is often enough to encourage others to seek the Lord. People cannot refute what has actually happened to another person. We do have to discern whether it is scripturally correct. To speak of

Christ as one's own personal Savior may be enough to create interest in others who will seek the Lord themselves. The Samaritan men came first to the Savior because of her invitation. When they came in contact with the Savior of the world, they knew He was who they really needed. His word was enough for them to believe on Him. From what He said, they believed on who He is. There was no doubt in the minds of those Samaritan men that salvation was based on the words of Jesus, not on the testimony of the woman. It is our responsibility and privilege to tell others what we know. The redemptive work that is needed is revealed to people through the word of the Lord. The Holy Spirit is the One who gives life to the words we speak. Sometimes those we least expect to believe the message of salvation are the ones who put their trust in the Savior of the world. We need to avoid any evidence of prejudice and doubt, and in faith present people with the word of God and let the Spirit of God give light, understanding and life to those who hear the Gospel message.

John 4:1-26

HE MUST.

Why is He here? What led Him thus
To this place at this particular time?
Had He no other way to go -
No greater crowds where His light could shine?
The answers to these questions are clear -
Each individual is important to God.
Whoever that person, or whatever they may be -
That single person is important to God.

He knows each hidden, private sin -
And knows all the burdens of their hearts.
He knows each place where they have been -
And knows in His wisdom, where to start
To bring that person to personal faith,
And to bring about the desired result -
That person must face up to their sin
Before faith in Christ finally deals with their guilt.

When to God an individual acknowledges sin -
God reveals what we knew all along.
When one confesses to a personal and great need -
God reveals to them what for sin He has done.
When one looks for an answer to their problem -
God reveals how they receive salvation for their own.
When one accepts the eternal life, He gives -
God is pleased when she gets other folks to come.

True worship begins inside my heart -
When my spirit responds in gratitude to the Lord.
Thoughts and words expressed in truth is worship -
They find their origin where we feed upon God's Word.
The things of God we learn when we read the Bible -
Come to life when we practice them each day -
And when opportunity comes so we can speak to others -
They will sense reality in the things we do and say.

“O Lord, my God: I have been reading of the greatest Personal Witnesser reaching out to a lost soul, and with a short time she had come to faith in Christ. I find it a reason for concern that we have been trying to reach out to others here, and yet there has been no response - not of any kind. If there is anything, I have left undone that I can do, please help me to see it and to rectify the problem. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

John 4:14. *“But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into into everlasting life.”*

A WELL: the life of the cross.

A hole was dug; to men it was dry -
They weren't even looking for water.
Some might have said when they passed by,
“Another place would be a whole lot better.”
But they weren't digging to fill a human need -

They were going to put into that hole a cross.
From the cross in that hole to the world would speed -
A message that would give hope to the lost.

Whether it is a woman at a well or men working in the street.
From what seemed like a dry well, there came -
A life-giving spring that was sufficient to meet
Every charge against us that our sin could claim.
When into that dry well, the cross of Christ was placed -
A flow began that can never be stopped.
Who would have ever thought that millions would be blessed;
When first into that hole the cross was dropped.

Today there is flowing still a fountain full of blessing
The Lord told a sinful woman that would come.
Down through successive ages, people have learned the lessons
Of John's Gospel, and found words that pierce right to the bone.
Conviction of sin comes first when we come to that well -
Repentance follows after when we face our guilt.
Then from that well there comes the message that will tell -
How from what seemed a dry well, cleansing blood was spilt.

“O Gracious Father, I thank Thee now for that greater fountain of eternal life that I can enjoy today and constantly. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

John 4:27-30

HE TALKED.

Inward thoughts: aghast at seeing such a thing
Divine Purity associating with serious immorality
The personification of Holiness communicating with sinfulness
He who was supremely spiritual talking with her who was so sinful-
This is grace that is greater than sin
This is how God reaches down to men
This is why the Father, His Son to earth did send
This where new life of the forgiven begins.

Outwards words: coming from one who was well known
A Man who was so different, by grace bringing what was sufficient
A Voice revealing things thought hidden, telling of life to those who come when bidden
A Word speaking peace to the soul; a woman wanting others to know
A Christ, who for this reason He came; a woman who will never be the same -
This is what the disciples did learn
This is why we don't other people spurn
This is why to sinners we turn
This is a "grace-work" never earned.

“They came to Christ, O God, and believed on Him - not just because of the woman who told her testimony, but because they heard for themselves the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. Is there some way I can get people to come? Are my words not real to people? Is there some way I can be more effective in presenting Thy great saving grace? Please help me, O God. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

John 4:31-38

HE SAID.

More important than food - the ripened harvest
More urgent than rest - a work to finish
More obvious than inclement weather - a field in front of my eyes
More needy than other occupations - waiting souls not ready to die

More valuable than any other wages - the benefits of responding to great need
More lasting than any other harvest - the life that is abundant indeed
More satisfying than any other work - the sowing and reaping of truth
More blessed than any other result - the saving of souls of inestimable worth

More solitary, the sowing of precious seed - it is often done when one is alone
More necessary, the watering by prayer - we wonder if more could be done
More enjoyable, the days of reaping - when we bring in fruit where others have sown

More glorifying, the songs of laborers - when laborers and fruit surround God's throne.

“How privileged I am, Father, to be able to speak to those who are going to live forever about matters that last forever. Sometimes, I must confess, I have spent way too much time and thought on trivial issues like a falling economy or a leadership which to my mind is leading the wrong way. I remember and bow before Thee at the thought, that the “king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord,” and “my times are in Thy hand.” In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

John 4:39-42

HE TOLD ME.

WE BELIEVE

We may see major differences in others
The changes are obvious to see
Evidence cannot be denied
Even if it has never happened to me -
Doubts that what appears to be real
Fade when on-going consistency
Give unmistakable proof
Now we can say, “We believe.”

WE HAVE HEARD

The first day the words seemed new
Kingdom truth came from the lips of Him
Who came to Samaria to save a woman;
And now He is giving teaching to them -
The listeners are beginning to learn
The Christ came to save all men
“We have heard Him ourselves,” and now
The truths of God give a place to begin.

WE KNOW

By the end of the second day He was there
Individuals had truly believed
No longer were doubts in their minds
The Savior of the world could be seen -
Their questions were answered completely
Their knowledge was that Jesus indeed
Was the Savior they had long looked for
And now He was there in their midst.

“O God of grace and power: I am so aware today of the effect of changed lives on the work of the Gospel, and of the blessing the lives of Christians bring to those who are not saved. Yet for all of that, it is far more important that people heard the Word of God and believe what they hear so they can know for sure the will and truth of God. May many people respond to the Word preached today as they did back in Samaria. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

John 4:41-42. *“And many more believed because of His own word; and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.”*

NOW WE BELIEVE.

Something has happened to her; I know it is true.
She is different, by far, from the one we all knew.
The life that she lived and the swath that she cut,
Made it plain she is sinful. I wouldn't believe her - but
Something's happened to her it is sure plain to see;
She talking about a man again, but she says it is He
Who pointed out plain, all she thought she had hid.
And He reached to her heart by the things that He said.

Instead of remorse, and running away;
She came into town with something to say
About this Man who had given her life from a well,
That never runs dry. But its' Source, she did tell;
Is this Person, the Christ, who has come down from heaven;
To give living water, and by Him sins are forgiven.
Her words we men heard, seemed really sincere.

So, we came out ourselves, to get His word clear.

For the next day or two, many more gathered to hear;
From Jesus the Christ, the Gospel so clear.
And it all made clear sense that the One who had come;
Was the Savior of Sinners, the very same One;
We had longed for and waited for, many long years.
He's is truly the Messiah, who our sins came to bear.
It wasn't just Jews, but Samaritans too
That He came down to save, and give life anew.

It is not just us, but in many other places;
The Messiah has shown what a miracle grace is.
A nobleman up north, had a son nearing death.
The fever was strong, he was near his last breath
When the Lord spoke the word to the man's feeble faith.
When the noble got home, the boy was back to himself.
That father knew when the miracle had happened.
He and his household believed; the Savior had blessed them.

To believe on the Son, is not an unreasonable act.
To believe on the Son, is my response to the facts,
That He who has come for our sins to atone;
Is the Only One able, and did bear alone
All the just weight of wrath God legally demanded.
So now those who believe on the Son, are accepted.
Eternal life is assured, in the future, and now.
It's is life springing up like water from the well.

“It seems most reasonable, O life-giving God: that people would believe on the One who gives and sustains physical and spiritual life. I am resting and trusting in and on the One who gave life to Samaritans and Galileans alike, years ago. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

John 4:43-54

THE FATHER KNEW

The work of God is not limited to a particular time and place. It is also not always in the same way that God reveals Himself as to who He is and what He does - and why. The Samaritans had appreciated the Lord Jesus Christ being with them for two days. But in His own country and among His own people, particularly Nazareth, He was not appreciated as He should have been so He passed on to Cana. This attitude of familiarity should not catch us unawares. It was probably uncomfortable for those who were sinners by nature to live around or even be in the same family as the sinless Savior. Other parts of Galilee were not the same as Nazareth. Because we may be rejected in one location should not discourage us from moving on until we find the place God intends us to be.

Galileans would have been at Jerusalem for the feast and had seen the works of Jesus while they were there. The miracles He did in Judea and the things He said and taught caught their curiosity so they received Him at the place where He turned water into wine. It is faith, not curiosity, that opens minds and hearts to truly receive Christ as personal Savior. Nazareth and Judea had a time of visitation, and now also, if and when a time of visitation is refused and the Savior ignored, an awful spiritual abandonment takes place that is very hard to avoid. Even though many there were doubters, the Lord was still ready to bless them.

Twenty miles away in Capernaum one man from the royal household had an event in his life that was more important to him than anything else. Even a person in his position needed help that was above and beyond any ability of mere men. His son was dying. God has His own ways of dealing with people. What may seem terrible to us may be a blessing from Him. We may never know why some things happen to us or in our lives, but we are wise to remember God knows everything about us. The nobleman knew the Lord Jesus could heal people. He knew his only hope for the recovery of his son to health was Jesus. It seems like his faith was limited to thinking a touch on his son was needed, but at least he believed that the Lord could do what he asked. The Lord Jesus Christ used that as a teaching moment by speaking to all the people there in a form of a rebuke by saying their faith was limited to what they could see. We must never make the mistake of thinking God is in any way limited to working within the realm of our own understanding.

When the Lord Jesus spoke the words, "thy son liveth," that man believed what Jesus said. He believed on the Person when he believed His words. Not only did he believe, he acted on what Jesus said, "Go thy way, thy son liveth," and he obeyed the Lord. In His omnipresence, the Lord Jesus Christ healed instantaneously and completely a boy twenty miles away - and the boy's father believed what Jesus had said and done. The proof came the next day when he made inquiry as to the time of day the boy was healed. In a very short time, his faith grew from asking to assurance. That led to the whole household believing on Jesus even though He was twenty miles away. There is no reason any person should not trust on the Lord Jesus Christ even though they have never seen or heard Him. He is real in the lives of those who put their faith in Him.

This second sign in Galilee reminds us that Jesus is God, and is in no way limited by time or space. He is the omnipresent God. There may be times when there is a sense or vague feeling of belief that leads people to seek the Lord. Then perhaps they can see the evidence of the reality of faith in others who have trusted the Savior. But not until one completely trusts Christ and rests on the authority of His word is there saving faith. The Lord Jesus Christ spoke with authority to the need of the moment. He used that as an opportunity to demonstrate the fact of His deity. The result was victory that changed lives and hopes forever. The first sign in Cana showed Jesus' deity in creation power that brought joy to those at the wedding. When He cleansed the temple, His deity was revealed in showing the necessity of true worship. When speaking to the woman of Samaria, He plainly said those who worship the Father must worship in spirit and in truth. Now in this sign, He testifies as to His deity in His power over disease and sorrow. The One we worship and serve is truly the Son of God. May we never in any way or for any reason lose sight of that fact.

John 4:43-45

HIS OWN COUNTRY.

His parents? Sure, we know them, here's where they and the family reside -
Way back their fore-bearers came from Judah

And moved up here to Naphthali.

There was a strange scandal that happened around thirty years ago

At the time of the census and taxing

It was over two years before they came back home,

People have been talking and asking

Where they were and why they were gone so long.

They came back with a small boy - a young son

He was unreal in almost every way.

His work and words were so perfect

It was like God came here to Nazareth to stay.

His brothers and sisters are here

But His holiness is hard for us to take

He does miracles in towns all around us

But folks here kind of think it is fake.

We don't like Jesus much around here

It is not because of any wrong He has done;

But wherever He is, people compare

The rest of us with God's holy Son.

He has upped the standard so high

It is impossible for the rest of us to reach it,

Unless we were some way born again

And by His holiness we are made fit.

"Father in heaven, when the Lord Jesus was here on earth and spent most of His time around home, I wonder how He handled it. Was He considered by the people of Nazareth just one of the boys? Did His uniqueness and holiness make Him stand out in stark contrast to the other young people? When He worked, was everything He made so perfect that it kept Him busier than He wanted to be? I know that whatever He did, He pleased Thee in everything. I am in my hometown. I pray that I will be able to please Thee here today. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 4:46-54

THE SECOND MIRACLE.

Evidence unmistakable of His deity and His power
The water turned into wine in seconds, not in days or hours -
Proofs of His power over history, the process that takes time,
Were seen in the first miracle when He turned water into wine.

Fatherly love for a dying son is real even for the rich
What can a man do when the son he loves is sick?
Who but God can one turn to when all hope seems to be lost,
And no one can help meet the need no matter how high the cost?

God in human flesh defies the normal mind of men
Yet when the need surpasses reason then we turn to Him
Who responds with love and evidential grace,
To reveal in plain words who He is - accepted by simple faith.

Face to face with the Man from Galilee: the two men looked
The One said unbelievable words which the other simply took
At face value, and believing he went on his way
And learned the hour of the healing when he met servants the next day.

The second miracle brought God so close to mans' basic fundamental needs
That it was evident to all who saw and heard that when one by faith heeds
The simple words of God with personal faith that is unfeigned
Like the miracle of healing, God gives life, and a believer is born again.

“O God, how gracious it was of Thee to draw so close to needy men and meet needs that leave us in despair. Many needs that are not so severe as to leave us hopeless but still are way beyond the ability we have to meet. In gracious favor unmerited, He who is the Source of life itself, draws near to us - and O God of all grace, I thank Thee for not leaving us without hope. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

John 5:1-16

HEALING AND HOSTILITY

There is a strange quirk in human beings toward those who are infirm and in need of help. Most will expect someone else or some professional people to come to the aid of the helpless. They expect the government or some church group to be organized to meet the need others have. Even though the man healed in this next recorded miracle in John's Gospel was sick because of sin in his past life, that had happened more than thirty-eight years before. Now he had no friend, family member or acquaintance who thought enough about him to be with him in order to aid him in his time of need. Sin is like that. It claims its wages and then leaves one to suffer alone the consequences of sin. This man was apparently resigned to the results of the sin he was involved in and did not ask for help from the Lord Jesus. Even the question, "Wilt thou be made whole?" seemed to be answered with a resignation common to those who have been abandoned to the condition they are in without much sympathy on the part of others.

Grace is not experienced very often in the lives of most people by others who know them. But Jesus saw, Jesus knew and Jesus spoke to the man. How gracious was the Lord, to a sinful man who had thirty-eight long years to regret, what had brought him to that place and condition. It behooves us to look beyond sin that we know has had serious consequences in another person, and seek to show the grace of God to that one. There was a moral matter dealt with by the Lord in this miraculous sign Jesus gave. He is the Almighty God of creation; He is the God who insists on cleansing before worship; He is the one true God who has power over disease and sorrow - and now we learn He is the true God who knows the darkness of the past life of a sinner, and yet is willing to give healing to the whole person that he would sin no more. The Lord Jesus Christ started with this man right where he was in his own deep personal need.

Jesus spoke with authority to this man briefly and to the point. "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." There was no room for, or need of, discussion about his past or what would hinder this from happening. There was no questioning the rightness or wrongness of it being done on the Sabbath day. This was a matter between two persons. Will the needy one, obey or not? Would he, on his part, put faith in the word of the Lord? There was no lengthy conversation about repentance or waiting for certain signs of faith. There was no place in those words for one to delay acting on what the Lord Jesus Christ commanded. This man was powerless in himself. He had not one to turn to for help. And suddenly the Voice of authority told him what to do. In faith he simply obeyed and was healed. It is not at all helpful to complicate the word of God by adding to it our own ideas as to how God will save a sinner or heal him morally. Salvation is by grace through faith without our added opinions.

Religionists are so bound by tradition and opinions that they cannot see the blessing God gives when He saves a soul. The Jews were more concerned about a man carrying his bed on the Sabbath, then they were about a man who was healed after thirty-eight years of sickness. Under questioning the healed man told the Jews what happened even though he did not know who Jesus was. It does not take a lot of faith to

experience the blessing of God. There will always be those who are blind to what is important and will "strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." God is working in spite of what people may think or say. He is not at rest and leaving the whole human race to be lost because of sin. God is working today. God is saving souls. God is bringing wandering souls and sinning saints back to Himself. We need to be aware of what God is doing, and not be too concerned with what we are doing. If He can use us in some little way, let us be thankful.

The Lord Jesus Christ did tell the healed man clearly that He knew that sin was involved in his sickness. He knew what the man had done. He also warned him that sin still has its consequences in the life of a believer. Who can explain why hostility and hatred sometimes accompanies acts of kindness and mercy. For some unknown reason, criticism often follows times of blessing. Criticism is also leveled at those who do what others cannot, or will not, do. When we have been called by God to do some work for Him, many other people will not appreciate what God does because it was not done in the way they expected. The healed man did not seem to show the same degree of enthusiasm the Samaritan woman showed. His faith seemed less than that of the nobleman who came in believing faith to seek the help of the Lord Jesus. But the moral issues of the sick man was dealt with by the Son of God who knew all about him, and after thirty-eight lost years started him on a whole new road of life. This miraculous sign can be repeated today because "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever."

John 5:1-18

38 YEARS.

All around him were hundreds of people in need
None of them was able to live a normal life.
Living in darkness some called for others to lead them,
Shrunken limbs, legs that wouldn't answer the call
Of a brain that could have directed them to the water.
Too late - too late again and again - for years
And yet he stayed there, hoping for someone - anyone
To help him come back to wholeness - and he waited
For ³⁸ years!

A simple question from a passing Stranger who knew -
He knew the need of the man, and He knew it was the Sabbath.
How do you answer the obvious? How do you deal with doubt?
What could he say but to express the frustration of years -
Years that passed slowly - acquaintances that forgot him
Hope that is fading as age adds itself to infirmity -
And then this Man comes, this Stranger asks this question,
Not the distant sounding question of the curious, but compassion
After ³⁸ years!

A plain command that is easy to understand but how to do it -
Just do what He said, "Rise, take up thy bed and walk."
Who cares what day it is - this is a miracle, actually the third one.
How many Sabbaths have there been in the last ³⁸ years?
It doesn't really matter because this Person is the Lord of the Sabbath.
It is unmistakably clear He had authority over disease caused by sin
That charge is given, "Sin no more..." - the past is covered
Move on into greater and spiritual things for the rest of your life
³⁸ years are gone!

"O God, ³⁸ years ago I can remember much of what I was involved in. Where we lived. We welcomed children into our family. To have spent those ³⁸ years in frustration and impotence seems unbearable. Thanks for making it plain that even after such a long time a new life can begin by the power and grace of God. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 5:15. *"The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole."*

IT WAS JESUS.

It was Jesus at Bethesda, the house of mercy.
It was Jesus who saw and knew the man had been sick for ³⁸ years.
It was Jesus who said, "Wilt thou be made whole?"
It was Jesus who said to him, "Rise, take up thy bed and walk."
It was Jesus who found him in the temple and said, "Sin no more..."
It was Jesus the Jews persecuted and wanted to kill.
It was Jesus who identified Himself as the Son of the Father.
It was Jesus who three times said, "Verily, verily..." as He testified of His deity.
It was Jesus who the five witnesses testified about.

All-knowing, all-caring, all-powerful.
Authority over nature, authority over sickness, authority over the Sabbath.

Untouchable, undeniable, unmistakable.
Deity in a body, deity in plain sight, deity in spoken words.
Equality in His working and knowing, equality in resurrecting and judging, equality in honor and regenerating power.
Self-existent in His being, self-existent in living, self-existent in character.
Testimony from the witness, testimony from the works, testimony from the words.

As God, He is...
Sovereign: He has the right to do what He wants.
Righteous: He is absolutely right.
Just: It is impossible for Him to do anything unfair.
Love: He freely gives without consideration of the merit of another.
Eternal life: He is always in existence.
Omniscient: His knowledge is limitless.
Omnipresent: He is in all places at all times; we are in His space.
Omnipotent: He is unlimited in His power.
Immutable: He is unchanging.
Veracity: His truth is absolute in every situation.

“Father God: wherever I trace the walk, works and words of the Lord Jesus Christ, I see unmistakable evidence of His deity. There is absolutely no question as to who He is. How did You ever put up with the questioning people when He was visibly here on earth? For that matter, how can You stand to hear the screeching and blather of people today when the Name and Person of the Lord Jesus are called in question? I know You are longsuffering and I guess I’ve answered my own question. I do love Him. Amen.”

John 5:17-47

EQUAL PERSONS

The Jews were upset when Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath day. Actually, their hostility was so great they tried to find a way to kill Him. Jesus' answer to them was to point out to them the fact that God the Father works on the Sabbath day to bless people, and He did the same as His Father. Those who opposed Him had no difficulty recognizing the claim of the Lord Jesus Christ to be deity. For this they were further incensed in their anger against Him. This truth regarding the Lord Jesus Christ is still being challenged and attacked today. John chapter 5 has much to say about the deity of Christ and the equality of the Father and the Son.

When the words, "Verily, verily" are used, this is an emphatic statement meaning "Most assuredly I say unto you." There is no question about the veracity of the following statement when those words are used. In using the first of three "verily, verily" statements the Lord Jesus says the Father and Son cooperate in all they do. They are united in that activity. They do not act independently of each other even though each Person of the Godhead has unique roles to fill. The second of these statements in verse 24 refers to the work the Lord Jesus does in the presentation of the Gospel with the expectation that people who hear Him should believe on Him. The third again indicates the cooperation of the Son and the Father in raising people from the dead at the resurrection of life and the resurrection of damnation.

As the Lord continued to speak to the Jews, He gave them seven ways He is equal with the Father. They are equal in all they do. That would mean both are omnipotent. They are also equal in what they know, so both are omniscient. The Jews had evidence already and they would see more and greater proofs of Jesus' deity when they saw Him raise people from the dead and being the Judge of both the living and the dead. Resurrecting power is unique to God who alone has power to give life. Only God who knows the hearts of all men, is qualified to properly judge all things with perfect judgment. Both the Father and the Son are to be honored equally. Each has the authority over everything and equal honor is to be given to each one. Our generation of people have dishonored the Lord Jesus and dishonored the Father. Yet because of God's grace there is still offered the blessing of receiving eternal life that both are equal in giving. The self-existence of both means that neither is subject to the other in their eternal existence. Both are eternal in themselves.

The Lord Jesus was speaking personally when He said, "I say unto you." He has the right to expect us to listen to Him when He gives a clear presentation in very simple terms as to how one receives everlasting life, the life of God and is assured of freedom from the consequences and damnation of sin. It is very important for us to speak to the people in Christ's name and tell them what He said and what He meant when He gave this promise of everlasting life. When He speaks of the impact of the Gospel now, when people hear the voice of the Son of God - He is speaking of spiritual life given to those dead (separated from God) in trespasses and sins. When He spoke of the resurrection of physical bodies, He refers to Himself as the Son of Man both in resurrection and judgment. He knows us because He was one of us. Though He was in fashion as a man, He is the Son of Man who came down from heaven to give us His kind of life. To receive Him is to live. To reject Him means eternal damnation.

There were four witnesses about Jesus to those Jews which they could believe if they were willing to. Whether they did or not, those witnesses left them without excuse. We also are without excuse in our day because we have the testimony of those same witnesses in written form. The Father gave witness to who the Lord Jesus is in audible words spoken on at least three occasions. Also, the works of the Father and Son in creation as well as other ways testify as to who Jesus is without the need of words. John the Baptist was another witness who spoke plainly when He identified Jesus as the Lamb of God and as the Lord who he went before to open the way. Scriptures long ago foretold of the coming Messiah and over 300 of those prophecies were fulfilled when the Lord Jesus Christ was here in the flesh. Those scriptures still tell us of Him who is the same in the past, present and future.

To reject any, let alone all of those witnesses is to set one's self up against God, all that has been revealed and all that can be understood by faith. When this happens, a person has narrowed the world of their knowledge and experience to the limitations of their own finite intellect. Such a person aligns themselves against every person who lives by faith, against God's holy word and against God Himself. They also put themselves into the extremely limited sphere of every existentialist who thinks he is his own god, and his god is who the feeble man of limited mind says he is. A god of the imagination is only that. It is not real. It leaves one with no reason for existing, no meaning in living and no future as far as that person is concerned. The awakening of such people after death must be terrifying. The Lord Jesus expected people to believe on Him because of the support of the witnesses that were right there for them all to see. We have a right to expect people to believe the message of the Gospel if we present it scripturally, in fellowship with God and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

John 5:19-27

VERILY, VERILY.

In the past from God's grace to creation
There was in every way, complete cooperation
The Father and Son, in every situation
Acted as one in bringing salvation.

The love that was in one was equally in the other
The power the Son had was also in the Father
All judgment is committed to the Son - not another
Both the Father and Son are equal in honor.

Today the words of the Godhead are plainly revealed
In the Word of God what previously was concealed
Now is expressed as divine truth is openly unveiled
As the eternal life He gives is to us detailed.

"Verily, verily" are personal words I can take
As I look into the past learning how He did make
All things and then, gave eternal life for my sake
Now - and in future judgment, Father and Son cooperate.

"What a lesson there is to learn Father God, from Thy Word as I learn of Two who are in every way equal, and yet in every way compliment each other in the work they join to do. May I never try to claim some higher role that what has been given me by Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 5:25. *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.*

THIS HOUR: the resurrection power of the cross.

There is noise everywhere in the world where people congregate
Much of it is for pleasure-seekers, seeking jaded appetites to slake.
Amidst all the sounds of industry, of travel and even war -
There are those in quiet meditation who are anxiously seeking more.

The noise is when the souls of men are seeking some relief -
And so, their body is used as a tool, but their spirit is lifeless in unbelief.
Behind all this activity another Spirit waits patiently to bring
A new birth and new life that can with them joyful praises sing.

The hour is here; the Spirit moves a believer to kneel and pray -

Another rises early reading the Bible; learning what to say
To a loved one, a child perhaps, a neighbor or a friend you know -
And the Holy Spirit begins to work, the way of salvation to show.

The stirring of a dissatisfied soul after a long night spent in pleasure -
Makes one dead in trespasses and sins to stop and take the measure
Of all they have to show for a life used up in pleasure and fun -
And they begin to wonder what will I have that is real when all of this life is done.

The Spirit moves the pray-er and the reader to direct
Their attention to the dissatisfied one - not a searcher yet.
But soon the pray-er's efforts make the dissatisfied one to seek -
And the Holy Spirit moves the reader and the searcher to meet.

The Word of God is read: an explanation is given and life begins to stir.
Sin and guilt bring the seeker to stop; repentance is not far.
Light begins to dawn where the darkness of sin once reigned -
And the seeker turns 180 degrees facing what the Word of God made plain.

Now the Spirit moves the searcher to really hear the voice of God.
The words of the Bible make plain the sin-cleansing power of Jesus' blood.
The searcher's ears are opened, then the mind is opened and the mouth is opened too -
As the light of life brings a spiritual resurrection, and the meaning of the cross breaks
through.

Now the searcher has finally found, real life begins at the cross.
The blood of Jesus has paid sin's price and washes away the world's dross.

"What is it?" - that is its name;
This mysterious white from heaven that comes in the dark
From the Father; angels know.
Round and sweet; at first it looks insignificant.
Then on closer inspection - perfect in shape;
The color is pure and seen in the dark morning.
No corners, no hidden spots able to cast shadows.
Impossible to have a blemish or a spot.

"What time is it?" - in the predawn darkness.
Men are silent and helpless in sleep.
Black wilderness distantly lit by heavenly fire.
People wondering about the next meal
Toss in sleep as provision falls.
The first light shows whitely,

As it reflects heavenly food with heavenly light.
As a new creation in Christ, a whole new life begins at that hour of resurrection.
The Holy Spirit, the pray-er and reader too, all work together to bring searcher salvation.

"Father, Rhyl is on my heart again this morning. If she was really saved in the summer, and the Holy Spirit is in her, help her to come clear in testimony and testimony and confession. For this day - I pray there will be much of Thee about the gathering of these few younger couples that will build their faith in Thee and confidence in the calling they have received. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 6:1-15

"LITTLE IS MUCH"

The disciples had just returned from their first mission of telling the nation of Israel the kingdom of God was here. John the Baptist had just been beheaded by a wicked king wanting to please a wicked woman. The Lord Himself had just spent the whole day teaching the huge crowd of people who were now following Him wherever He went. But instead of resting awhile as they had intended, there were still spiritual needs to be met. It may be that because of the rejection the Lord Jesus Christ experienced in Jerusalem and Judea, He didn't go to the Passover there. It is now called a feast of the Jews rather than one of the feasts of Jehovah. The things of God that we have been taught can become so common-place to us that they are no more than a form that "we do in our church." Spiritual and fleshly things do not go together even though the events in denominations seem to be similar to what is practiced in scripturally gathered assemblies. When a spiritual practice deteriorates to mere tradition or a practice to please people, it has no spiritual value.

Even though "He Himself knew what He would do," the Lord Jesus used the needs of a hungry crowd of people as a teaching moment for His disciples. Philip knew the worth of a man's labor for a year wouldn't meet the need of all those people. There is no human solution for hunger apart from God. God alone can sustain human life. Yet for all of man's dependence on God whether they acknowledge Him or not, in grace "He Himself" knows what He will do for us today. The whole earth and its hidden supply of all that we need to live is the work of the Life-Giver. On that mountain where 5000 men beside women and children were gathered, Jesus moved the normal course of making provision for human need ahead so quickly, that in His divine work all of those people ate all they could eat and it happened right at that time. The One who holds the course of the universe in it orderly fashion has the power to make what normally take a lot of time, and makes it happen instantly. Only God can do that. Jesus is truly God.

This was not a lesson in unselfishness as some claim. People didn't pull their personal lunches out from under their coats and start to share with others what they had. There wouldn't have been twelve baskets full left over if that had been the case. No, Andrew in feeble faith brought a young boy with five loaves and two fish to Jesus and said, "But what are they among so many?" He knew his Lord's ability. He just didn't know the Lord's intention. His faith was in the right Person. He just wasn't sure what Jesus would do - hence the feeble question. The Lord Jesus knew what He was going to do. He can take a little and make it much. "Little is much when God is in it." The age of a person is not a limitation for God to use either. A small boy, with small loaves of bread and small fish was all Jesus needed to testify to His deity again and His ability to keep the food flowing to thousands of people. He did what others cannot do, and at the same time expected His disciples to do what they could do. He gave them the privilege of sharing with Him in the work of His grace and He does the same with us. That principle still holds true for our day and age. His storehouse is abundantly full of grace to give when grace is needed. But He expects us to do our part by faith. If the supply came as the food passed through His hands or if it was multiplied as it was being distributed by the disciples is not stated. However, all the people there who ate of that food, knew what they were eating was a miracle from Jesus.

The precious things of God are not to be wasted. He does not provide blessings to have them spurned as unimportant or rejected as unnecessary. The teaching He had been giving on how to receive eternal life was illustrated by how the people received the blessing of physical life-sustaining food. It came to Him from a person who would have been thought of as insignificant because he was a small boy. The young boy had received what he had from God, and now was willing to give it to God. He can take of our small gifts and bring blessing to others through those gifts. What we give to God can be used by Him in ways and places we would never dream of. Who would have thought five loaves and two small fish would provide all that thousands of people needed. May we never overlook or discount any act of faith on our part or on the part of others.

Even then the blessing didn't stop. Disciples who had been weary in their service for the Lord, now had a new and successful service they could do for Him. To be carrying baskets of food to people sitting in orderly fashion on the grass who would gratefully take what you had to give, would have rejuvenated their enthusiasm and assured them that the Lord could use them in more than one way. When they went around and gathered up all that was left over, they would have learned that the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, could do "exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think." Probably for the next several days they themselves were fed by the food from that miraculous sign. In each of the four Gospels the sign of the feeding of the 5000 is given testifying as to the Lord Jesus Christ being the Son of God, as to what He can do in creating much out of little that is given to Him in faith. He can satisfy the needs of mankind who are willing to come to Him. In His wisdom He knows exactly what we need and offers us the choice of accepting what He gives by faith, or rejecting it. He is also willing to allow those who believe in Him personally to participate with Him in His work.

His day of reigning over the world is coming. He is not going to be made a king by men. He was born King of the Jews - the only One who was born with all power, authority and dominion over all kingdoms. In His wisdom and grace, He has left these proofs of His deity and His personal understanding of humanity, so we can each as individuals put our faith in Him. He was not doing some magic tricks to motivate people to change their ways. The miracle of feeding the 5000 reveals His understanding of basic human need, and His willingness to meet that need. God is still working on our behalf today. Every bit of food we eat and the water we drink comes from the gracious hands of Him who is the Life-Source of every good and perfect gift we enjoy.

It did not happen as some people are prone to say -
"Selfish people were moved to share their lunch that day."
The people were hungry, not able to meet their own need -

And by the command of the Lord, disciples quickly did heed.
 In orderly fashion by fifties, the people sat down -
 And the disciples brought food to distribute around
 Until everyone was filled, there was more than they could eat.
 They learned that Jesus was God who in every way did meet
 The characteristics of God who could produce by His power
 All that was needed in that late evening hour.
 Every person there who had eaten knew Jesus was unique -
 And yet they greatest need they had, from Him did not seek.

It is possible for us to taste all the good things of God -
 And still hold back and not submit to Jesus Christ as Lord.
 He has provided for our spiritual needs by offering us divine life,
 And expects us to believe and follow Him by faith, not by sight.
 To take for granted all the spiritual blessings He has provided -
 And think we deserve them; means we are very short-sighted.
 We are not worthy of the least of the mercies He gives.
 To Him we owe everything, in Him we have our being and live.
 Miracles of provision for our whole person - body, soul and spirit -
 Jesus alone is the One through whose grace we can receive it.
 The wise person will bow in humility, gratitude and faith -
 And praise and worship our Lord for the abundance of His grace.

“Father, I have been greatly blessed by Thee with daily blessings both physical and spiritual. I thank Thee for this on-going way of meeting our needs Thou hast given. As an intercessor on behalf of others, I humbly ask Thee if Thou wouldst reveal Thy truth to them in salvation. In particular, those who are listening to the Gospel at this time. To Thee be all honor, glory and praise, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

John 6: The deity and humanity of Christ.

(vs.11-13) Christ in His deity, **creating** something out of nothing --- Christ in His humanity, meeting **physical needs**. In His deity, He **produces** abundantly --- in His humanity, He **wastes nothing**. In His deity, He has awesome **power**; He is an awesome Person; He makes an awesome **provision** --- in His humanity, He **recognizes the need**; the hunger; the limitations of people.

(vs.19-20) Christ in His deity, **controlling** the elements --- Christ in His humanity, meeting **emotional needs**. Calming their fears.

(vs.33-35) Christ in His deity, **clarifying** His Person --- Christ in His humanity, meeting the **spiritual needs** of the people. *“I am the bread of life...” “Never hunger--- never thirst.”*

(vs.51-58) Christ in His deity, **coming from heaven** --- Christ in His humanity, **making us part of Himself** and **taking us into the heavenlies**. *“...the living bread which came down from heaven...” “Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life.”*

John 6

TRUE BREAD.

They came from all directions
 Wanting Jesus to meet their needs
 He healed them, cared for and taught them
 And with five loaves and two fish ⁵⁰⁰⁰ did feed.
 It is hard for me to imagine
 Why His teaching they would not heed
 After eating such miracle food,
 His deity they seemed not to perceive.

It is so similar now
 People will not on the Lord Jesus believe.
 They refused to accept the fact
 That for salvation each one must receive
 The Person who came here from heaven
 Who in love on Calvary did bleed;
 That any and all who will trust Him
 Will from the bondage of sin be freed.

The proofs of His Person as God
Are everywhere searchers can look.
They are seen in creation so plain,
It is worth every effort it took
To investigate and come to a conclusion
The One who those same people forsook
Is truly the Holy Son of God
As revealed to us in God's Holy Book.

They wanted to find Him again
Because they had eaten and were well filled
They ate but did not understand
He was the Bread of God come into the world.
The Source of life Himself
Through Him God is to us revealed
All blessings come through Him
God in Christ is to us unveiled.

"It is so true Father God, that the Bread of God does fully satisfy. I have personally enjoyed the heavenly manna for well over sixty years in this wilderness. I praise Thee and thank Thee for all the spiritual food I have been given from Thy heavenly storehouse and for Him who is the Bread of God. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 6:16-34

"IT IS I (AM)"

Sometimes in our lives, one significant event in which the Lord Jesus Christ reveals Himself, opens up the way to experiences that are even more impacting than we anticipated. When a person first "tastes and sees that the Lord is good," it is accepted with enthusiasm. The experience itself and the blessing associated with it, affects us to the extent we have tasted and seen that it is good. But the important part is left unknown or not considered - "the Lord is good." When the multitude of well-fed people watched the disciples of the Lord go into the boat to go to the other side of the lake, and saw the Lord Jesus go to the mountain to be alone with His Father, they went their own ways for the night. Some experiences the Lord's people have, are not for public display or knowledge. The fifth sign of the Lord's deity, walking on the water, was to strengthen the feeble faith of His disciples.

The disciples were probably glad when the people wanted to make Jesus their King. They wanted that too. It was their hope that Israel would again flourish as a nation and that Jesus would reign as the prophets predicted the Messiah would. As those who were obedient to the directions of the One, they hoped would be their King, they kept rowing against the storm. He had told them to go to the other side so they would not turn back. Most seafaring men in a similar situation would have turned around to go back to shore and shelter and try it again when the wind died down. But these men were faithful to their Master and rowed hard to go to the other side.

To see a figure walking on the water, bent into the wind and catching up with them when they were three or four miles from shore, would certainly make any person full of fear. Their hard rowing was still slower than the One walking on the water, and He was gaining on them. Doubtless their fear increased the closer He got and they feared a ghostly spirit was coming to them - until they heard His voice. "It is I (AM), be not afraid." They had been with Him long enough to know that with those words He identified Himself as God. By speaking briefly and to the point, He opened their understanding as to His Person that the feeding of 5000 and more people, did not. Not only can Jesus speed up the course of nature and make natural things happen instantly, but now they would know that He is King over nature, not just the coming King over a nation.

The whole universe is subject to Him, not just people and a nation. As soon as they had received Jesus into the boat, they were at the shore they had been heading for. The Lord Jesus is the Lord God of people, the Master of nature no matter how contrary it may be, and is also Lord over time and space because Jesus is truly the Son of God - the great I AM. That sign was seen only by the disciples who learned that His purpose in coming to earth was not just to be their King and to supply food to hungry people, but to substantiate His right over people and nature as the Great I AM.

The material blessings we receive from God are not because people have trusted Him as the Giver of Life and of "every good and perfect gift." Many people, and maybe even most, think they deserve these

blessings and take them for granted without sincere thanksgiving. These good things have come to us from God continually and are to lead us to repentance. Those people who had eaten bread and fish from the Lord's hands and knew He had multiplied two fish and five loaves of bread to be more than enough to feed them all, still didn't believe on Him. They didn't see Him as any more than a miracle-worker who had come to bring benefits to them.

Those same people came to where they knew the disciples had gone in the boat and got into boats themselves to cross to where Jesus was. On the other side there was only the one boat the disciples had crossed in and they wondered aloud how He got there. He did not answer their question but quickly exposed their motive for seeking Him. They wanted Him as a King who would provide for them what they desired. Even though they had eaten physical food the day before that came from Him, and that seal of the Father's approval and endorsement had been given, they still were not satisfied. Physical life alone does not satisfy the need of a person.

People are still trying to earn their way to God and would like God to accept them on their own terms. Some would like to be able to boast of what they have done to get to heaven. Those folks had just eaten food Jesus made that was a sign of His deity in that He has power and ability over the normal way of things happening. Yet in their self-centeredness and hypocrisy they still thought they could do the work of God themselves. It is impossible for us to do what God does. The Lord Jesus had done that right before their eyes and they were participants of the provision He created. How insolent it was that those same people implied that Moses was greater because instead of multiplying what was already here, five loaves and two fish, to their way of thinking Moses brought bread down from heaven by his own power. Jesus pointed out to them that Moses did not give the children of Israel manna, God gave it.

This way of thinking has not changed much in many people's minds today. People still want physical evidence before they will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. They want to see something and then they say they will believe. They want to feel something first and they think then they will know they are saved. "Seeing is believing" is a common phrase to people who do not understand what faith in God is. God intends people to do what He says in the way He said it. The work of God, or what God intends from us is that we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and add nothing else to it. Assurance of salvation and knowing what is true comes after believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, not before.

Seeing is not believing. Seeing is only seeing. Feeling is not salvation. It is only feeling. Believing is trusting a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, without seeing Him. That is the faith that pleases God. Faith is not belief without proof only, but is trust without reservation. Even after the Lord Jesus had explained that the manna was not spiritual food but physical food, literal food, that supplied the physical need of the bodies of the children of Israel in the desert, those people listening to Jesus did not get it. They still missed the fact that He is the True Bread of God from heaven that gives life to the whole world, not just the Jews. How hard it is for those who have their own preconceived ideas about things to be willing to listen to what God has to say. Miracles give proof as to who the Lord Jesus is. The signs He gave testified to His claims of deity. But it is faith in Him personally that gives life. Each person must accept what has already been provided - the True Bread - the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 6:35. *"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believe on me shall never thirst."*

THE BREAD OF LIFE.
It is there when needed.

"Where is it?" - not in a far and distant place.
It's outside the camp, but near.
Close enough for all to reach.
Get up, get out of bed - it is there for you to get.
It is in the wilderness it's true, but gather
For yourself and family before the heat comes.
The gift is free, reach out in faith to claim what's near.
It will not be there after the world's heat comes.

"Will it satisfy?" - nourishing, tasty, filling;
It is God's provision for human need.
It strengthens when taken daily but doesn't keep.
The taste is just right when the heart is right.
Delicious, like honey wafers when baked or seethed.
But spoiled and bad if kept to be warmed over.

Satisfaction comes when it is fresh,
From God to me at the right time and place.

The bread of God is Life and Light.
It comes from heaven to us as day by day
We gather and feed and taste its goodness.
The soul is fed and life needs met completely.
The Living Bread is pure and white;
He satisfies completely the hungry need.
The strength comes daily from the Father's table.
Rise, stretch out the hand of faith and eat - be filled!

"I know it is there in its fullness Father: He is the Living Bread that feeds and fills and satisfies the need of my hungry soul. I've tasted and seen that the Lord is good. Because of the sustenance that it gives, this Heavenly Bread empowers me to live by Him. He is the Manna that fills. I give my thanks for this full provision. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 6:36-71

"HOW IS IT... HOW CAN... WHO CAN...?"

The seven great "I AM" statements in John's Gospel as to Jesus' deity, leave no question as to what He meant when He said, "I AM the Bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." In these statements He plainly identified Himself as God in all areas of human experience and need. As the Giver and Sustainer of life, the Bread of Life has come and been given to us that we can live forever. Hunger and thirst are two of the things, men cannot do for themselves and we cannot survive without either or both. Our hunger can only be satisfied by what God provides from the earth, and our thirst can only be quenched when we find the water He placed in, on or above the earth. In the same way the need of our spiritual hunger and thirst can only be met by God. Knowing and doing the will of God satisfies our souls and the Lord Jesus promised lasting security to those who come to Him.

It is true God chooses people to be saved, but He does not choose people to be lost. In grace, and by His grace He saves those He chooses. We, on the other hand, have to accept our personal responsibility to repent and believe the Gospel. Our believing doesn't save us, but when we willingly believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, God saves us Himself. We believe on Him and keep on believing on Him through our whole life; not to keep saved but because God has saved us and our faith is in Him. God guarantees eternal life to all who come to Him by faith. Our salvation is made secure by the One in whom we have placed our faith. Faith goes before sight and prepares our souls to understand the Gospel, our hearts to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and our will to obey Him.

Most people in the years the Lord Jesus Christ was on earth only thought of Him as a man, a carpenter from Nazareth, and would not accept His message nor commit themselves to Him nor submit to His demands to believe on Him in order to come to God. He came with a message that was rejected by most of the people of His day. But to reject the message, is to reject the Messenger - what a serious choice that is. When we receive Him, His life, becomes our life. When He said, "I AM the Bread of Life...", He was stating the fact of His deity. The facts of His Person are taught to us in the early verses of this portion of scripture and then His Purpose is made plain. That purpose is that we would have everlasting life. Eternal life is in Christ alone and we are able to receive that gift when we receive Him. All forms of religious pretense people have done to make themselves acceptable to God have no place in the Christian life. All the "How" questions: How is it... in regards to Jesus coming down from heaven; "How can..." in regards to eating His flesh; "Who can..." in regards to Him and the Father as one, are often asked of us when we submit to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith even though we do not understand all He says, and can't satisfy every trick question people might ask.

When we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, His death on the cross for our sins, and His resurrection from among the dead for our justification, we are united to Him. As the Living Bread He gives and sustains our spiritual life. By trusting in Him by faith, the Holy Spirit gives us the desire and power to do His will, reveals God's truth to us, and enables us to represent our Lord where we live. The spiritual life-giving nourishment of His Person and His life in us, makes possible the reality of godly, holy living. To eat His flesh and drink His blood is obviously not physical but spiritual nourishment. The people back then who heard Him speak knew what He meant but excused themselves from the commitment of partaking of His life and following Him, by the lame excuse of calling it a hard saying.

It is abhorrent to people now to submit to being a participant in the life of the Lord Jesus because it interferes with the life of pleasure and self-seeking the people of the world want. There is no half-way to

serve God. Eternal life now and the life-style associated with it, is offensive to the enemies of God. Many such people reject the interest and friendship of one who walks in the Spirit. Some who seemed at first to have an interest in spiritual things when they first hear the Gospel, soon realize faith in Christ changes our life from being compatible with the world and the flesh, to one contrary to those attractions.

The people the Lord was speaking to that day were offended when they heard Him say He was the Living Bread that came down from heaven. What would they say if they saw Him ascend into heaven? Some things are only understood by the Spirit's teaching, not by our fleshly instincts and experience. So who are we really, and what are we willing to do when the lines between the flesh and the Spirit are clearly drawn? Peter's answer to the Lord was simple and to the point, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the Living God." There is no one else we also can go to for eternal life. The blessings of eternal life are not all realized when we first trust the Savior. The conflict and tension that accompanies faith in Christ alone apart from religion and man's ideas, cannot be avoided. We have to go to the Living Bread and commit ourselves to follow Him.

John 6:51. *"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."*

THIS BREAD: the sustenance of the cross.

The greatest of human need was planned for before the foundation of the world.
Before there was human life or the stars and galaxies in the universe swirled -
The Eternal God had planed a way to have reciprocal love.
This plan in design had in its center a way God's life to others He could give.

To many, bread is the "staff of life," the main course of many a meal.
"Give us bread!" Is the cry of the hungry, the pain of hunger to heal.
The same is true of the soul, there is a hunger there the world cannot fill.
One can taste of all of earth's bounties, yet hunger is in the soul still.

When the time was just right, Christ came; sent by His Father to save.
That salvation could only be provided if His sinless life He would be willing to give.
That is exactly what our Lord did, when He died for our sins on the tree.
Now from that sacrifice, the bread of His life, is made available to me.

The hungry are not forced to eat, though bread can maintain their life.
The person that hungers for righteousness will find their spiritual appetite
Will be satisfied when they seek with their heart for the Bread which came from heaven
Given because the life we have, did at the cross first begin.

The Bread God gave brings peace paid for by the blood of Christ on the cross.
The sustenance it gives to us came at the highest possible cost.
Satisfaction that extends to almost every person's need
Comes to us when on the Living Bread our souls and spirits feed.

May I never neglect the Living Bread for the light food the world offers.
The Bread of God is despised by the world and also all the scoffers.
But to me the Bread from heaven satisfies my appetite -
And the results from that Living Bread is life and strength and light.

"Gracious God: the provision Thou hast given me is a daily blessing. I never want to take any portions of the holy manna Thou dost give me, as "light bread." Thy Word is truly pure, and entire and sweet to the taste. It satisfies and strengthens. I know the cost was high - "even the death of the cross." May our time in this place of fellowship and challenge today, be a feast of holy things. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 7:1-9

FAMILY DYNAMICS

There can be a lot of bitterness among those who oppose the Gospel and the efforts of the ones who seek to see them saved by God's grace. When people think we are condemning them because they are trusting in their works, their sincerity, their religion or their personal opinions - it doesn't take long for them to openly oppose us, or at the best seek to avoid us. When we are called to proclaim the Gospel publicly, we expect such reactions and are not offended by them. But those of our family and relatives sometimes experience the same criticism and opposition because of their association with us. They find it difficult to be ostracized through no fault of their own, simply because they are related to us.

I can, in a way, understand why Jesus' brothers were at times sarcastic and, to a degree, opposed to Him. The Jewish leaders were not hiding the fact they wanted to kill Jesus. His teaching, the signs He gave as to His deity and the miracles He did, showed up the falsehood and deception of the religious traditions they had added to the word of God. It would have been tough to have been raised in the same home in the shadow of an older brother who never did anything wrong, never said anything inappropriate, never disobeyed or displeased His parents and was obviously "in favor with God and men." All the people who knew Him in His growing up years would have been able, if they wanted to, to use Jesus as an example of a perfect child and then a perfect son growing into manhood. No wonder He was "a stranger to His brethren, and an alien to His mother's children." Then to have Him as the object of murderous intent, and perhaps fear from family associations, would have antagonized His brothers.

The challenge by Jesus' brothers to go up to Judea and show the people who He really was, was an act of opposition on their part in the family unit. "Go ahead. Do what kings and leaders are supposed to do if you really are the Son of God," was their challenge. The sarcasm in their comments was such that there was no question they did not believe in Him. It may be on occasion, those closest to us are the most difficult to convince of your sincerity and the reality of your call to do things differently than what they expect of you. The Lord's life on earth was ordered by God, and Jesus knew what God wanted. Some things just cannot be explained to the satisfaction of others. We just have to leave those to God to deal with and move ahead in faith and do what we know He wants from us.

The brothers of the Lord were not hated by the Jews because they were of the world and the world loves its own. They did not testify against the world nor against the evil that was being practiced. In His infinite wisdom and understanding, the Lord Jesus Christ could see all the evil in the world and in the hearts of those who looked righteous on the outside but were sinful on the inside. "Man, looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

By remaining in Galilee until He would go to Jerusalem arriving in the middle of the week of the feast of Tabernacles (booths), Jesus moved according to God's chosen order of events, not what was expected by His brothers or other people. We may not always be at liberty to do what people expect when we are acting according to God's will. Our obligation is to act upon God's revealed will, not on human expectations. For a Christian to be loved by the world because we conform to it, is not normal. We are "in the world but not of the world." "I any man love the world; the love of the Father is not in him."

In any situation in which we find ourselves, we need to wait on God's time for any change. The Lord Jesus went to the feast and was there when God wanted him there - not before nor after God's time. Some things we need to leave to God as far as the timetable of events is concerned. The Lord's brothers seemed to think if Jesus was the Son of God, He should act like other world leaders and get out and advertise Himself publicly. The worldly ideas of promotion are different from the divine intent. It is incumbent on us to know what God wants us to do, but also not to run ahead of His will nor lag behind to accommodate to our own schedule. God said, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways." So, in the course of family living, the same as in public testimony, we need to wait on God to reveal His timetable, and then act upon it without hesitation, and in accordance with what is consistent to faith, grace and humility.

John 7:5. *"For neither did His brethren believe in Him."*

THE BROTHERS.

"Go ahead if You're so great, and have the power and the final word;
Go where the big crowds are and turn the place over, if You're Lord.
Don't stay here where not much is going on; go to the city.
Make it known, You're God; not just our brother for men to pity."
And so, the brothers who, though they had seen and known the difference,
With words sarcastic, cutting and with scorn - show indifference.

"How can He know the doctrine; who taught Him the words of law?
If He never learned from us, or rabbis trained; how is it that He saw
Things we have never seen or known?" And so, the teachers asked,
Never understanding that real truth comes from God, and is passed
To those brothers whose hearts and minds are open to the Light,
And learning true, comes clear and illumines the darkest night.

The officers came to find and claim the freedom He set loose.
But as they heard Him speak, and hearts were opened to the truth;
They had to come again with thoughtful minds and empty hands.

To those who asked, they answered, "No one spoke like this Man!"
No, they were not deceived nor turned aside from spoken truth.
They heard Him speak, and knew the rightness and the value of His words.

The thirsty crowds who came, the thirsting of their souls to fill;
Were His brothers, coming, wanting, hungering and thirsty still.
Days had passed, the great day had come and yet, they're empty.
"Where can our deepest needs be met; is there none to fill me?"
And then with voice so loud and clear, the call is given to come.
The longing hearts and souls can find refreshment in God's Son.

A man of them, one of their own whose questions were all answered;
Speaks clearly out to challenge those who called their brothers, curse'd.
His voice perhaps not loud, but reasoned, and with evidence of faith;
Is heard as he among those who hate light, he takes his place
With those whose hearts are opened; and with light he has been given,
Identifies with Him: and all who now believe with heart and soul- His brethren.

Today, it is with them who own His Person and His claims to be
The Son of God, as true and right; and His life to share - that He
Is willing to call "His brethren." He is not ashamed of us.
How could it ever be that one who He has saved would ever thus
Deny Him. No, it would be not be so among the saved of men,
That we would ever want to not be known as one of His brethren.

"I am thankful, O Father God; that the Savior is not wanting to leave us in the dark or not commune with us as family members. It is among those He knows and loves that we draw near with respect and awe and say of Him, my Lord and my God. He in turn calls us brethren. How comforting! Amen."

John 7:10-36

WILL DO HIS WILL

In the service of God there are times to be out in the public and times when it is best to be in the background. At this time in the ministry of the Lord Jesus, He waited until much of the religious forms of the feast of Tabernacles had been gone through, and the social aspects of the week would have begun to settle down. It was then He went into the temple and taught. It was time for the truth to be told. It was time from God's word and God's will to be spoken of rather than leave the people in a state of religious deception. The middle of the feast would have been three or four days into the time of remembering the history of the Jews when they had journeyed through the wilderness living in tents. There is only so much reminiscing people can do before they get restless and want to do some more exciting things.

In this setting, Jesus, with eloquence and clarity, taught the truth of God against the background of dry formalism. His intellectual ability and approach to spiritual truth surprised those who had attended the established schools of learning in Jerusalem and thought themselves superior to those from Galilee or distant places. They had thought this teacher would have been one of lesser intelligence and ability than the leaders of the Jews. When one teaches spiritual truth, it is well we remember for whom we are speaking. The dignified, godly presentation of divine things under the guidance of the Holy Spirit has an effect on those who listen. The difference between spiritual teaching and the learn'ed teaching of men, is that it has first affected the speaker before it is passed on to others. Learned teaching is often very correct, cut and dried because it is unfelt truth. The Lord Jesus made it plain that what He was teaching was the doctrine of God, not just some school of thought and man's ideas. Among God's people some of the most capable teachers have learned from God and experience, rather than some school of religion.

People often miss the point of a message if they are only impressed with the speaker himself. One point well presented is of far more value than ten points impressively delivered without unction. To be moved by the messenger rather than the message defeats the whole purpose of teaching. The Lord Jesus Christ stated the fact that His teaching was from God, the highest possible authority, and it was possible for people to understand it. The qualification for understanding what He taught was if a person was willing to do what was taught. The door of understanding remains closed to those who do not want to do what the Teacher says. When we hear a person speak, in order to determine if what he says is right, test it with what we already know is right. If it is contradictory to revealed truth, reject that teaching. Sometimes the teacher's teaching points to himself rather than God. That teaching also should be rejected.

Why was there such hostility against the teaching Jesus gave? It was because it exposed the inward thoughts of the hearers who were planning to kill Jesus and break Moses law, but who outwardly seemed to

obey that law. Jesus knew their hearts and exposed their hypocrisy when He taught. Their hostility and animosity was not hidden in any way from Him and was even able to be seen by those around. They would circumcise a child at eight days of age on the Sabbath day, but didn't want a person who was sick for decades to be healed on the Sabbath day. This kind of inconsistency is still in practice today when people appear religious on the Lord's day but live sinful, ungodly, covetous, materialistic lives the other days of the week. When we teach God's truth in fellowship with Him under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, He can use those thoughts to produce in the hearers what we may never know in our lifetime. Our responsibility is to be "the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message."

There is a saying, "You can fool some of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time." The people who heard what Jesus had said to the Jewish leaders began to consider what they had overheard. Apparently, they had heard someone teach that when Messiah came, no one would know where He came from. This is not according to the Old Testament scriptures but was probably what someone had added to the scripture to appear very learned. The unprovoked hostility of the leaders set people talking among themselves. That was when Jesus called out to the whole crowd of people and told them who He was, where He came from and who sent Him. No one was able to lay hands on Jesus, not even the soldiers who were sent to take Him. The power and authority of Jesus cannot be contained or hindered by mere mortal men no matter who they are. We can be strengthened in our work by remembering "greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world."

His miracles, signs and power over all the forces of men and demons made many to want to believe on Him. The position and pride of the Jewish leaders was in conflict with the dignity, truth and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Truth and traditions of men are contrasted when truth is demonstrated by love, and tradition by hatred; truth is revealed in grace, and tradition by intimidation; and when truth is presented by One who is meek and lowly in heart, and tradition by those who in pride of their position produce fear and embarrassment. Following Christ does not mean we add to the requirements of the law. One who follows Christ does, by the influence of his or her new nature, what the law intended. The blindness of willful unbelief is as morally dark as it is possible to get. When a person does not want to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord, they will find they cannot. People who will do what God wants, will find not only can they do it, but are given power to do what they could never do by themselves.

John 7

SOUGHT TO TAKE HIM.

Why such hatred directed against such grace -
When such blessing was dispensed in that very place?
Why were they offended at the power of His words -
When it was obvious that He was the Son of God?
Why did they want to kill the Prince of Life -
When He brought peace instead of strife?
Why complain and murmur against the One who was truly good -
When He met needs on every hand from healing to miracle food?

Why today such indifference to Christ who can satisfy -
When He offers a full salvation that works and money can't buy?
Why is there antagonism against the One, men cannot see -
When on the basis of simple faith, from sin we are set free?
Why is there such resistance against the gift that He has given -
When without it one is lost and never can be in heaven?
Why after all these years do people refuse to believe -
When eternal life is offered to all who Christ receive?

Why condemn such a One who has displayed infinite love -
When on the cross He suffered that He might bring us to God?
Why would one ignore truth seen right in front of your face -
When the truth can set you free on the basis of simple faith?
Why would one not come, drink and enjoy God's Living Water -
When the Spirit comes to indwell and one can know the Father?
Why would one who has tasted and seen the Lord is good -
Not walk in faith and obedience and want to please the Lord?

"I come to Thee Father God, to clearly state my absolute confidence in Thee and in the Lord Jesus Christ my Savior and Lord. I do not deserve all the mercy I have received and the grace that provided such a living salvation - but I give Thee thanks from my heart Thou hast revealed Christ to me. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 7:37-8:1

LET HIM COME UTO ME

Many people are conscious of something lacking in their lives and they don't know where to look or what to look for to satisfy themselves. A lot look for pleasure but that fades so quickly that life becomes just an endless circle of seeking for more, and they have to keep on looking. Some seek that inward longing for fulfillment in fame, but even the most famous people are usually quickly forgotten after their brief moment in the sun of adulation dims and goes dark. The most sought-after form of satisfaction today is by means of material gain. People are looking for "things" but there is never enough. Materialism has become a religion to many. They love the challenge; they constantly think about what they can do and what they can get. It dominates their conversations, it is what they think about morning, noon and night, and it takes priority over everything else. And yet - no matter how much a person accumulates, they want more. This dissatisfaction is not new. It happened in Jesus' day. That is why on the last, the great day of the feast of Tabernacles Jesus told the dissatisfied, spiritually thirsty people to come to Him.

Jewish tradition says for seven days there had been a parade of priests who would go to the pool of Siloam and bring water to the temple, symbolizing the water that followed the nation of Israel in the wilderness when they were living in tents for forty years. Now on the last day of the feast when the sacrifices were made, the priests brought no water symbolizing the fact they had entered the promised land and a new day of full and plenty had begun. (It should be said here that others say a little water was brought only on the last day of the feast, but the symbolism was similar) Instead of people being spiritually satisfied and renewed, Jesus, who knew the inner longings of all mankind, made His public, passionate appeal to "any man" who was still thirsting after God, to come to Him.

The traditional forms had all been gone through for a week, and now it would be another year before this same feast would be held. Perhaps, as some traditionalists say, they had joined in the march around the altar seven times symbolizing the Jericho march of promise and victory when they finally got to their own land. When Jesus' voice sounded across the crowd of thousands of people, there were probably many who would say to themselves, "How did He know I still feel empty inside. How did He know what I am thinking?" How empty and unfulfilling the traditions of men are compared to the personal acceptance and knowledge of God. The loud voice of Jesus was calling them to come from the faded, and in part, false forms of man-made traditions to Himself. He is the Son of God. He is the Life-Giver. He is the Soul-Satisfy-er. He is the spiritual Thirst- Quencher. The call He made to "any man" was to come to God Himself. That is what we do when we publicly proclaim the Gospel. We are calling to people to come to Christ who said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

The general theme of the Bible is that mankind will find the need of their souls and spirits satisfied in a right relationship with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. When that happens there is not only momentary satisfaction, but lasting satisfaction and peace that increases as time goes by. Not only will the one who receives the living water will be blessed, but through that person blessing can go out to others. The Holy Spirit came upon those who put their faith in Christ in the past, and empowered them to serve and enjoy God. Since the Lord Jesus Christ died, was buried and rose again and ascended into heaven, the Holy Spirit has come and now indwells all those who have come to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. From the Holy Spirit though us now flows rivers of living water to bring the blessings of the Gospel to the world.

Whenever God works in the Gospel, there will be opposition of some kind. Those who are interested in the "living water" so they will never thirst again, will find pressure against them from friends and sometimes family members. Those who are satisfied with the forms of their religion or their life-style, and do not want to be interfered with by a real, living, zealous Christian, will oppose the truths of the Gospel. Many are satisfied with half-truths and use biblical words to say what they believe is the same as what the Bible says. The Pharisees in Jesus day considered themselves to be superior in intellect and religious knowledge, as well as their station in life, to those from Galilee. Prejudice was rampant among their own people in the nation of Israel. Without even finding out what was right about Jesus, they condemned Him - overlooking their own laws which they professed to obey.

It is very significant that the men sent to arrest Jesus waited to hear Him speak before attempting to take Him. Perhaps they didn't know they were powerless against Him because His "hour was not yet come." Instead they were blessed by hearing His words that were so different from anything they had every previously heard, they had to say, "Never man spake like this Man." It seems like they realized His words had come from One who was more than just a man. The Pharisees and priests knew what those officers meant and challenged their intelligence by comparing Jesus with themselves. Deliberate spiritual blindness is often recognized by words like, "I think....," or "I have always said....," or "I don't agree with that....," and

similar such phrases. Such people think their opinions and ideas are as important as what God has said in His Word.

Thankfully there are men like Nicodemus who speak up, though cautiously, and point out how those of the Sanhedrin go against their own laws themselves and interpret the law to suit themselves. A challenge is not always needed in a dialogue with others. Sometimes an appropriate quotation of a verse of the Bible or a reasonable comment does as much or more to convict a sinner than an argument we might have and win. It is possible to "win the battle, and lose the war." Pride interferes with reason so that what is right is negated by that barrier of pride. To some people, what is good doesn't matter as long as they get their own way. We are wise when we allow the Spirit of God to guide our conversations and when we apply scriptural principles, and the words of scripture, to direct our comments. Confusion ended the confrontation of the Pharisees, but communion with His Father was what the Lord Jesus experienced on the mount of Olives. We must never let anything hinder our communion with divine Persons, no matter what people around might say.

John 7:38. *"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."*

RIVERS: communion of the cross.

Who would have thought such abundant supply;
Could come from communion with Him?
There are fundamental necessities money cannot buy -
The cost is too great for mere men.
But from the Source of life-giving water -
There comes a bounty of holy refreshment.
The water of life that God gives is so much better
Then earth's feeble stream; God's river is full of contentment.

The fountain of life that flows for our taking -
Springs forth from the cross when Christ died.
The thirsty soul finds that river his deep thirst slaking -
Is continually there whenever he in Christ does abide.
The water of life that we drink brings communion -
With the Father and the Son through the Spirit.
The Holy Spirit indwells us sealing the union -
We have from the water that flows always near us.

The first drink of that water brought us to a halt,
And the conviction of sin ensued.
Repentance made us face that sin is not just a fault
But is a principle we cannot elude.
The Holy Spirit continued His work by an inward awaking
Making us to see the reason for Christ's death -
And the Spirit brought life to us through the Word by making
The cross-work real and personal by faith.

"O God of grace and mercy: I thank Thee this morning for opening the river of living water that I might respond to the work of the Holy Spirit and live. May my communion with Thee this morning, extend through this whole day and bring honor and glory to Thee - blessing to myself and others. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 8:2-11

JUSTICE AND MERCY MEET

The events of the last great day of the feast of Tabernacles were past and people were probably preparing to leave for home. Still, there were those in the temple in the early morning who listened to Jesus as He sat and taught them in the manner of an authoritative teacher of the Jews. In fact, on that early morning, all those in the temple came to hear the words Jesus taught them. Much is learned in the early morning that would have been missed by waiting until later in the day. One's mind is clearer and more willing to attend to truth in the morning before the distractions and responsibilities of daily life claim our time and attention. To be in a position to give undivided attention to the Lord is found more often in the morning than at other times of the day.

Into that group of people who were paying attention to the Lord's teaching came another group of men bringing a woman with them. These scribes and Pharisees were determined to trick Jesus into either breaking Moses' law or interfering with Roman authority. They brought a woman who had committed adultery it is true, but their intention was to find a way to condemn Jesus. The punishment of the law for

adultery demanded both parties to be stoned, so these men were acting illegally themselves by only bringing the woman. It is one of those traits of humanity we all have, that by charging others with sin, we try to silence our own guilty consciences. Adam was the first to seek to excuse himself from the consequence of willful sin by pointing at Eve who had been deceived by the devil.

The scribes and Pharisees were correct in their interpretation of Moses' law, except they didn't go far enough - they didn't bring the man. When they asked Jesus, "What sayest thou?" their intention was to trap Him into denying the authority of the law Moses gave by showing mercy, or interfering with Roman authority by showing justice. Bending over to write on the dusty ground covering the paving stones in the temple gave these men time to think about what they were saying, but they continued to express their challenge so that none of them was in a position to ever say he was not involved in the outcome of this matter. Jesus knew what He was going to say and do, but by their continuing to ask His opinion, each man was putting himself in the position to be convicted of his own sin. A hasty reply to every challenge we face as we seek to serve the Lord, can lead us into conflicting situations that are very difficult to deal with and may hinder rather than help the outcome of a matter. Take time to consider what is the appropriate way to act when challenges come that people use to condemn us and our work.

The silent woman had nothing to say. She had been caught in her sin, she was brought to the public place, which was not legal as far as the law was concerned. The charge against her was substantiated. Her actions had led to her being brought to this place of condemnation. Here was an impure woman before One who embodied sinless, spotless, absolute Purity. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners." The only sinless One who had the legal right to cast the first stone was bowed down writing on the ground. The woman remained silent while the accusers continued to pressure Jesus for an answer to their challenge. It is always important in making decisions that affect other people to think in the way God would have us look at the matter at hand. We are limited by what we see and hear. God only is the One who knows the heart and the right outcome of an issue.

When Jesus rose and made a comment, it was both very simple and very profound. Only the sinless person among them had the right to cast the first stone. That was the qualification needed to execute the just punishment of the law. Then He bowed down again and wrote on the ground after saying, "He that is without sin (sinless) among you; let him cast the first stone at her." Where could such a person be found? The only one in the world, let alone that place, who had that right was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He only can forgive sin because He only, paid the price of sin with His life. The older men in that group of religious men must have been wiser and more conscious of their own guilt, and they moved away into the crowd. The younger ones who are often more zealous must have been looking at Jesus again while He was writing on the ground, when they realized the older ones were leaving and they began to think about what Jesus said. When they saw the reaction of the older men, the younger ones must have finally been awakened in their consciences as to what was going on. Their self-righteous accusations came back at them. They should have been looking at themselves as those who needed help and spiritual healing - and forgiveness, instead of being determined to condemn Jesus.

Jesus did not in any way ignore, condone or excuse what the woman had done. He just had plainly seen through the scheme of the scribes and Pharisees and dealt with that matter first. When they were gone, He dealt with the woman herself with grace and with truth. Both the woman and Jesus knew what she had done. Both knew what the demands of the law were. But when the accusers left and Jesus and the woman were in the middle of the on-looking crowd, the people watching the whole scene would have wondered what was going to happen next. The woman doubtless wondered that herself. When Jesus asked where her accusers were she spoke the only words she said in the whole event, "No man, Lord." That was evidence she knew who was deciding her future - the Lord. She knew Him as Lord. He had remarkably dealt with one problem, there were no accusers. Now how would He deal with her Himself?

The law demanded justice, and justice demanded accusers to lay charges. But there were no accusers, so justice was maintained. Mercy can be shown by the one who has the responsibility to judge a matter, and in this instance the Judge was the sinless Son of God, and He chose to show her mercy when He said, "Neither do I condemn thee..." Justice was satisfied when He said, "Go, and sin no more." His redeeming grace removed the charge of condemnation and in His compassion, He forgave her. "Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more," are words of grace that indicates justice and mercy were both satisfied and maintained. At the same time the law Moses gave was vindicated and Roman law was not interfered with. How wise!!! How gracious!!! How holy and pure are the judgments and mercies of God!!!

John 8:10. *“When Jesus had lifted up Himself, and saw none but the woman, He said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more.”*

ACCUSERS.

Just at daybreak - after a night of soul darkness.
They come - she comes with head down and bowed low.
The worst has happened - the sentence is death.
No words from her lips but theirs are loud with accusations.
No hesitation on their part - fingers pointed.
Challenge strong and loud and legal and hard.
Hard as the stones around.

Another bends low in silence;
Finger pointed to the ground to mark the reasons.
And words in silence with loud voice are there for all to see;
Accuse and challenge and condemn.
And quiet steps are heard in leaving one by one,
As silent witnesses to the darkness long thought hidden.
Old to young, one by one go sneakily away.

The accusation's silenced and the eyes look.
Beyond the words to conscience's screaming siren;
To the inward recesses of the soul.
There the decision is made and known by Him.
Not condemned, after what I've done?
Condemnation borne; the pain's transferred to Another.
Free from accusation by light and love.

Against perfection in a Person and words so true;
Come accusations from deceitful lips.
The words of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness
Come to those in bondage they don't know.
Full freedom fresh from Truth's deep fountain,
Flows in words of grace in spite of accusations sore.
Accusers still, though argument and battle lost.

“I don't think I have ever felt the kind of relief she must have experienced, but to the extent of my experience, I know relief from accusation. It is such a comfort to a sinful person to know the reality of forgiveness - and more, no condemnation. I thank Thee for the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

John 8:12-30

THE LIGHT OF LIFE

Available to everyone is the light of spiritual life that Jesus spoke of when He was in the treasury part of the temple. Some have said there was light shining on the gold colored containers people put their tithes and offerings in like the woman who put in two mites. Whatever was the case, the people were still conscious of spiritual need even after the week long feast was over. In our world of spiritual and moral darkness, many people are discontented and dissatisfied with they have experienced in their lives. Those who believe on Him today, the same as those who believed on Jesus when He was here, will experience the "light of life" when they follow Him. In this way we rise above all that appeals only to our fleshly nature and begin to experience the blessings of living in fellowship with God. Then we can see beyond the deterioration of things around us to the reasons behind the events God is allowing to happen.

In a clear statement as to His deity, Jesus declared publicly that people could experience light in their own lives in spite of the spiritual darkness all around them. They would be able to know divine guidance even though the times are uncertain. When other people are in doubt as to what is going to happen next to them and in the world, those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ will have the knowledge and assurance that God is in control. Those who believe on Him and have the light of life, have meaning and goals in life while others who do not believe on Him live purposeless and hopeless lives. Life really begins as God intends it for us, after there has been true repentance to God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Pharisees who continued to criticize Jesus and who hoped to catch Him in some illegality, passed their judgment on Him because He testified of Himself as to who He is. Passing judgment in the flesh is done by human standards and outward appearance. Such judgment is imperfect and superficial. That is only done by

comparing another person by ourselves or other failing mortal men. The Lord Jesus plainly said to the Jews who were challenging Him, that not only did He have the right to say who He is, but the Father supported His claim. The judgment of God was not only supported by two divine Persons making it legal, but by the public signs and miracles Jesus did in the view of them all. Still they mocked Jesus and His statement of unity with the Father. To deny the Son is to deny the Father. To mock the Son is to mock the Father and Jesus told those men what we need to remember today - words of mockery and denial of God come from beneath, come from Satan.

Even though those Jews who opposed Jesus so openly wanted to take Him and kill Him, there was no way they could do that because he had all power over creation, sin and every evil power. He has the authority to subdue all things to His will. There was nothing men could do against Him "except it were given to thee from above." They rejected Jesus' claims and still demanded evidence of His authority and deity. Spiritual blindness is caused by Satan and people can also choose to deliberately not see what is right in front of them. When the Lord said He was going away, those who opposed Him foolishly mocked Him about committing suicide. In their darkness they would die in their sins because they continued to reject Christ and be controlled by Satan.

Over and over Jesus affirmed His deity in many ways. The "I AM" is the Light of the world. He is in perfect unity with the Father. He said plainly, "I AM HE," and yet they did not understand nor accept the fact of His deity. Right from the beginning of His ministry there was evidence in His words and deeds that Jesus is the Son of God. He told those people who would not believe on Him that He would be lifted up on the cross and they would then know that God was in Christ. The supernatural darkness that lasted three hours when Jesus was on the cross was obviously an act of God. The earthquake at the moment He dismissed His spirit was clearly an act of God. So was the renting of the veil from the top to the bottom at that same moment. Then there was also the great earthquake at the time of His resurrection. All of these things that happened were out of man's ability to control. Those who believe on Him need to follow Him. When they do they will know the truth and the truth will set them free from doubt, fear, spiritual darkness and despair, and they will walk in the light with the Lord Himself. Spiritual blindness is removed when one remembers the cross-work of Christ and the redemption He provided for all who will believe on Him.

In this eighth chapter of John there is conflict and hostility directed at Jesus as the Jews sought to discredit Him, deny Him and ultimately destroy Him. The same is happening today. People are denying the existence of God and the deity of Christ, and are militantly opposing anything that even mentions Jesus as the only Lord and Savior of mankind. In this chapter there is willful unbelief and blindness that accompanies the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is an unexplainable darkness and blindness over people who hear the Gospel and cannot seem to grasp the meaning of what Christ has done for them. To believe on Him seems too simple a means of salvation to many people. Spiritual deadness in trespasses and sins continues until such times as each individual believes in their heart on the Lord Jesus Christ and confesses with their mouth that He is Lord.

In contrast to the spiritual blindness and deadness of unbelievers, there is the Light of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ, illuminating the darkness with His words of truth and salvation. The life that follows faith in Christ, affects every part of the life of a follower of Him. There is understanding that comes about things that were previously hidden from the mind by unbelief. There is clarity as to who Jesus is, why He came, and the blessings that accompany salvation. God's grace illuminates the darkness of the sin of this world, and the glory of God is revealed in those who believe on Jesus as well as in their worship, praise and thanksgiving for Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

The contrasts of unbelief and the bright glory of faith in God is seen in this part of John eight. It begins with "I Am the Light of the world," and concludes with, "I do always those things that please Him." There were those who believed on Him as a result of what He said. Perhaps some only believed on the things He said, but there were many who "believed on Him." What a blessing it would be today if people would get beyond religion and personal ideas, and simply believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 8

WHAT SAYEST THOU?

v.11. GO AND SIN NO MORE
There was no doubt about it
The witnesses were there to see -
Questions that rose about her
Were tricks to hear what He would say.
The One who knows inner hearts

Speaks to their consciences' voice -
He who was able to forgive -
Gave to each one there a choice.

v.12. HAVE THE LIGHT OF LIFE
To "Go and sin no more" -
Beings hope to a forgiven soul.
To "have the light of life"
Is to begin to live fully once more -
A life lived in light is freedom
From fear when truth sets one free.
And He who said these words
Tells us that He gives freedom indeed.

v.31. CONTINUE IN MY WORD
We are not called to live without guidance
His written Word is placed in our hand.
And when applied to life daily
Empowers one and enables to stand
Against the conflicts of life
And the challenges that come from within -
So not walking with eyes looking backward
We press on to life's ultimate end.

v.36. YE SHALL BE FREE INDEED
What the Lord says is really all that matters
Although others have a right to be heard.
The difference is they aren't like me,
And He has the ultimate word.
For no matter what all of us say
The Lord Jesus alone has the right
To expect me to obey every statement
And can tell me that is "The Light of life."

"The freedom from guilt even though one has sinned, is truly only something Thou art able to give, Father. I know sin has to be confessed and forsaken but such grace as to be fully restored to fellowship with Thee is a great blessing - and relief and I thank Thee for this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 8:28. *"Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things."*

LIFTED UP: the curse of the cross.

There! On that tree! He is hanging!
Despised and rejected of men!
In His own body He is bearing -
What should have been laid upon them.
The words of men were self-centered -
Trying to justify all they had done.
When the Light of the world finally entered -
They tried to put out the Light of the Son.

Through His years here the Light was bright -
It exposed the darkness of sin.
There was no avoiding the light of life -
God had come to earth to dwell among men.
There never was a doubt of His righteousness -
Blessing to man came directly from Him.
The brightness of His perfect holiness -
Showed men where they had to begin.

There had to be a willingness to stop -
And acknowledged that they were wrong.
They must face the fact that they were not-
Able to meet God on their own.
All men need this Mediator between
God and sinful men.
There is no one else but Him-

Who is able that great gulf to span?

In jealousy and anger men acted -
And nailed the Lord on the tree.
Holy God and the Savior contracted -
That He would bear the guilt belonging to me.
Lifted up on that cross He bore -
The curse imposed by the law.
God, in righteousness, doesn't demand more -
For Christ in His perfection, actually fulfilled them all.

Because of that uplifted Person -
The curse of the law is passed.
Now there is complete justification -
Men can approach to God at last.
Faith in the Savior provides -
A redemption that is full and complete.
In peace now believers can abide -
For every claim against them, He met.

“Father in heaven, and God of all grace: in this reading from Thee today, I am again made conscious of the fullness of the work Christ accomplished, when He died on the cross. I know He fully satisfied Thy righteous claims. I know that He was sent by Thee to do this. I know there was never a question as to whether He would do this. I am forever blessed because of this sacrifice He made - and I thank Thee this Lord's day morning, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

John 8:31-59

YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH

There is a saying, "There are none so blind, as those who will not see." Those are the kinds of people the Lord Jesus Christ was speaking to in the great debate He had with the Jews who felt their position and prestige was being threatened by the works and teaching of the Lord Jesus. There are those who follow only, and there are those who follow and learn. True disciples are the latter. True believers are those who hear God's word, believe God's word and continue on in the practice of God of God's word in their lives. Those people have been saved by God's grace and appreciate what He says because they know Him and love Him. They know they have been delivered from the control and consequences of sin. They walk in the light because they are children of the day and want to avoid the pitfalls and snares that are laid for them in the darkness. More than that, they are led by the Holy Spirit in the ways of God and they want, and welcome, that guidance rather than wanting their independent self-control. God's word confirms our salvation. We are not left to speculate on our position nor on our future. The word of God assures us that the situations we meet in life are under God's control whether they be easy or difficult. Our forgiveness of sins is confirmed by the word of God. That source of truth makes us free.

When there is freedom in Christ, the attempts to bring us into the bondage of sin does not have dominion over us. We are not immune from the attacks of the world, the flesh and the devil, but these enemies do not have the power to control us. We know that these enemies will try to deceive and defeat the believer by subtlety and temptation. When there is bondage, a person is under the control and authority of another. People can get so used to sin; they think that is normal living. That bondage is evident when people are dishonest, irreverent toward God and holy things, and mock those who walk in the light of life. The Jews who were challenging Jesus were in bondage to Rome and for generations had been in bondage to foreign powers, and yet said they were never in bondage to any man. Perhaps they thought they were unbowed and unbroken in their national spirit, but they didn't realize they were in a far greater bondage to Satan.

A slave is never sure of where he will live or what will become of him. He may have a measure of freedom and think that is all freedom means. He may know his parentage but is not able to live in the blessings of his early life because sin has come into his life and has caused defeat. When we sin, we are in bondage to sin. The Lord Jesus was very plain when He identified the difference between a slave and a son. A son feels at home in his father's house. A son is free indeed because all the father has is his. The Lord Jesus Christ was a Son in His Father's house forever. There are no strings attached that makes Him a Son, because He is the eternal Son of the eternal Father and has the same nature as the Father. The Son has no question as to His parentage no matter what kind of slur those who opposed Him laid on Him, trying to cast a reflection on His origin. The Son talks and acts like the Father and the Father is delighted with the Son.

Family characteristics are passed on to those who are in Christ by virtue of the divine nature He has imparted to us. Those who spoke against the Lord Jesus Christ did not have the seed of faith Abraham had. The Lord called them children of the devil because they had the characteristics of Satan. They were plotting to murder Jesus, and the devil was a murderer from the beginning. They were lying and dishonest and would not listen to God, and the devil is a liar and the father of lies. He would not listen to God, and seeks to blind the minds of people lest the light of the Gospel shines into the dark hearts of sinners and God saves them. All of those traits in the people who were opposing Jesus comes from Satan's seed, not Abraham's seed. As a true Son, the Lord Jesus Christ wanted to honor His Father and see Him honored by others. Jesus sought honor for the Father from those who are disciples indeed.

It is a blessing when sons can appreciate and honor their fathers, and what they hear and learn from true fathers, they can act upon. They trust the words of instruction their fathers give. Words refer to what is taught. Those who pay no attention to the words of teaching from God's word are not sons of God. Speech refers to the words themselves. Those people did not understand Jesus' speech because they had no intention of hearing with faith in His words and doing what He taught. They did not understand what He was talking about when He spoke of living bread, living water, the light of life and similar expressions of truth. Sinful minds seek ways to express their opposition to the truth of God. Those who love God, love the truth. Abraham rejoiced in what he knew by faith because he loved God, obeyed God and demonstrated his faith in his life. When Jesus told those who were debating with Him that Abraham rejoiced to see the day He would be here, with scorn they verbalized their attitude against the Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus plainly stated His deity and eternal existence in the words of truth and dignity, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM;" they knew He was again identifying Himself as God. The Son of God was right there before them and they maliciously rejected Him with murder in their hearts.

The One who true disciples follow, the One who reveals the truth that liberates the souls of men and brings us into the light of life, has made it possible for us to know the truth. What a privilege it is to be free to know the truth and follow Him without the trappings of mans' religious ideas and the bondage of sin tying us to the god of this world. Freedom and a full, abundant life are the heritage of those who have been born into the family of God. We enjoy the blessings of that inheritance now and will be continually marveling at the abundance of all that is ours because of the exceeding riches of God's grace bestowed on us.

John 8: "Continue" – persevere

IN MY WORD, Jn.8:31 - disciples indeed; free indeed
IN MY LOVE, Jn.15:9 – glorify the Father; bear fruit
IN THE GRACE OF GOD, Acts13:43 – the spiritual work begun
IN THE FAITH, Acts 14:22; Col.1:23 – in spite of difficulties
IN WITNESSING, Acts 26:22 – to the Gospel: [1] the privilege of the real witness – know, 1Jn.5 [2] the power of the real witness – the Holy Spirit, Acts 1:8 [3] the personal testimony of the real witness [4] the progress of the real witness – wait, receive [5] the presentation of the real witness – bold, fervent, courageous
IN HIS GOODNESS, Rom.11:22 – in picking us up who were "nobodies."
IN THE GOSPEL, Gal.2:5 – in spite of opposition
IN FELLOWSHIP, Phil.1:25 – with other believers
IN PRAYER, Col.4:2 – specific, thankful, intercessory
IN DOCTRINE, 1Tim.4:16 – save yourself and others by teaching
IN WHAT WE LEARNED FROM OTHERS, 2Tim.3:14 – learn their wisdom from their experiences
IN BROTHERLY LOVE, Heb.13:1 – meeting needs
IN THE SON AND THE FATHER, 1Jn.2:24 – when first love and first fruits remain a part of us

John 9: Confession of what one knows

"I am" of personality, v.9
"I went" of obedience, v.11
"I received" of blessing, v.12
"I know not" of ignorance, v.12
"I washed" of cleansing, v.15
"I know" of experience, v. 25
"I see" of sight, v.25
"I have told you" of emphasis, v.27
"I might" of desire, v.36
"I believe" of faith, v.38

John 9

WHO?

v.11. A MAN THAT IS CALLED JESUS
He seemed kind of ordinary - and yet
Evidence was there - He was sent
He could sense what was said - and meant
It is hard to conceive - humanity and deity blent.

v.22. THE CHRIST
His commission to come - was from the Father
He alone was the chosen One - there is no other
He came lost sheep He would gather
Who by the enemy of souls, had been scattered.

v.35. THE SON OF GOD
Not just like other men - but unique
He was the Son of Man who came to seek
The lost sunk in darkness so deep
Back to the safety He gave and would keep.

v.38. LORD
For in His essence He is the Son of God
In the past and the future, the eternal Word
To us who believe He is Lord
The man Jesus is truly the Son of God.

“The many attributes of His deity are known, O God, in the names and titles of the Lord. It gives me a sense of security and yet humility that the One who fills all these titles, is my Savior. I ask help of Thee to never dishonor Him or His name or His titles in any way but that I may give honor to Him in every aspect of my life. Amen.”

John 9

THE WORKS OF GOD

The Lord Jesus Christ was always "about His Father's business" wherever He was found. His eyes were always open to display the grace of God and the interest of God in the needs of men. Even though a blind beggar had never seen any evidence of God in creation through his sightless eyes, God saw him through Jesus' eyes. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." It wasn't the sins of the blind man nor his parents that caused his blindness, although many then, and now, think the difficulties of life and sickness are the result of some specific sinful act. Sin and its consequences do cause death, but this man's blindness was a result of the sin principle that is part of our humanity, not necessarily some particular action we might have done. Taking advantage of the opportunity, the Lord Jesus was able to make the works of God to be seen in doing this healing work as a sign of His deity. He gave physical and spiritual sight to this man who was born blind.

In the course of human life innocent people may suffer. But when God in His grace allows us to hear the Gospel and understand not only who Jesus is but what He has done for us, we follow Him. The motivation for following Him is not for convenience and comfort, but because of love and devotion for Him. Good behavior in a person's life is not always rewarded, and bad behavior is not always punished. The Lord Jesus used this sightless man to testify that the Creator who made the world, was able to use the original material He made, when mixed with His spittle, to bring blessing - again we are given another sign of His divine power. Jesus saw the man and met His need.

When God works there are varying reactions among people. Sometimes we may be surprised at how people respond to a blessing from God that cannot be explained by our normal limited experience. Strangely the neighbors who would have known the blind man all his life, were not only surprised by his healing, but were skeptical about the whole matter. His answer to them was simple and to the point as he spoke of "A man that is called Jesus...", and he told of his simple faith. "I went and washed, and I received sight." Little faith brought great blessing. Not satisfied, those neighbors in unbelief brought the now-seeing man who had been given sight by the Lord, to the Pharisees. Again, in simple, pointed words he repeated what had happened to those prejudiced, unbelieving and antagonistic Pharisees. Even the Pharisees were divided in their opinions. In spite of obvious evidence of a work of God in the lives of people, many willfully reject the Savior because of mans' natural enmity against the holiness and power of the One who is far greater than any man.

Another reaction to this sign came from the parents of this now seeing, healed man. They knew he was their son who was born blind, but either did not know what had happened or were afraid of excommunication from the synagogue. History does repeat itself at times. It is not uncommon for a person who accepts Christ as Savior and Lord to be no longer welcome in some religious groups. Light that shines into darkness makes those who dwell in the darkness uncomfortable, afraid and angry. The healed man however, rapidly grew in faith from knowing Jesus as a man, to a Man with power, then a Man (Lord) to be respected, to finally knowing Jesus as the Son of God to be worshipped, and he did worship Him.

The Pharisees' jealousy led to an investigation and condemnation because of good being done on the Sabbath day. Their list of do's and don'ts included their opinion that making a small mixture of dirt and water to make clay was breaking the Sabbath day laws. When there is jealousy, malice and guilt, there follows bitterness against that which is good. Also, there is reviling against the one who does good and the one who is benefitted by the good that is done.

Because of one act of blessing, many people were affected that day. The work of God has a tendency to polarize some people in their own mindset and it enlightens others as to what they had never known before. Spiritual light can bring life to one, and that same light when it is rejected brings greater darkness than was there before. "If that light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness." When the blind man who was given sight was put out of the synagogue, that did not hinder his growth in faith. In one way he excommunicated the religion from him rather than the other way around. A person being brought into fellowship with God is what the Lord Jesus Christ came to accomplish. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

There will always be those who will not accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, because they want their religion now, more than eternal life now and forever. No matter what is taught from the scriptures, the spiritual eyesight of most people will remain in blindness and darkness. But God does see and know those who will respond to His grace, and so we must keep moving forward in presenting the truth as the Lord did in order to find those few who will enter the door to the narrow way.

John.9:4. *"I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day. The night cometh when no man can work."*

THE WORK.

The day is here, wait not for light,
For in the brightness of the day the plight
Of men, looks stark, dark and fearful;
Awaiting the relief that makes us hopeful.

A work is here, at hand, close by;
To be done by one willing to try
The impossible - to men at least,
But not to Him who knows the best.

For Him, no obstacle is too great,
Nor daunting - that He cannot make,
To fly away the problems that fill
The life of him that wants to do God's will.

But night is coming as sure as day is here.
And in the darkness of that time is fear;
Invading the heart and soul of each and every one,
Whose daytime was filled with frivolous games.

When night descends, no work is done, time's past,
For changes to be made that can be blest
By God, from whom we now receive
All blessings true, to those who do believe.

Without the light, the darkness that fills the land,
Overwhelms the fearful; leaves no doubt the hand
Of God that brings such benefits in the past;
Has been removed, and man is on his own.

"My hands seem full Father, but the work seems so much greater than these aging hands can grasp. Is there some area of imparted grace where I should be giving more attention to? If so, I'm ready (I think) to grab it with God-empowered strength and take

it to the end of what Thou hast in mind for me. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

John 9:38. *“And he said, “Lord, I believe, And he worshipped him.”
“I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day...”*

THE PERSONAL “I!”

The Father has sent Me, there's much to be done, here's a special work for Me.
The day is here now, I came for this hour, this blind man cannot see.

“I am in the world...”

For the needy have I come, for all and for some who need things men cannot do.
My work and purpose must be done, God's power and grace to show.

“I am the light of the world.”

The darkness is ending, it is fading fast, soon it is going away.
The man who never saw, hears the word from God now, and sees the light of the day.

“I am he.”

This is not another man, this is really the one, that begged there day after day.
Truly he was born blind, in the past here you'd find him, but now the same man can see.

“I went and washed...”

He did what he was told; this one from of old, by the One who made the clay.
He told him to wash, and so he washed at the pool, the darkness has gone away.

“I received sight.”

He had never seen light, or the sunlight so bright, and faces he had never seen.
And now he has sight, and all seems so right, except those who have come to complain.

“I know not.”

Who is the Man who did such a thing, I know not, but of this I am sure;
My eyes both were blind, and the Man of God did find - me, He Himself did the cure.

“I washed, and do see.”

To answer your questions; I may never give, all the things you men are wanting to know.
He told me to wash, and I did what He said, the results are obvious to show.

“I know...”

Why is it a problem for men to perceive, that I know what has happened to me.
It is not complicated; it is just as I stated; I was blind but now I can see.

“I was blind...”

Blind is in the past; I did what He asked; I washed and He gave me my sight.
I should know what has happened, it is me that has passed, out of darkness into His clear true light.

“I see.”

I see; it's not dark, from now on I will mark, this day as a red-letter day.
I started out blind; depressed in my mind, but now by God's grace I can see.

“I have told you...”

I told you the truth, I got it right from His mouth; I washed just the way that He said.
Now believe it or not, that's up to you; but as for me, I am ever so glad.

“I might believe on him?”

I didn't know who He was at the first, I just appreciated all that He did.
But I know now, without question at all; Jesus is the great Son of God.

“I believe.”

I believe on Him now; at His feet I do bow; He is truly the Savior of men.
I worship Him here, and will say everywhere, “He's my Lord, for me He was sent.”

“I am come into this world, that they which see not might see.”

It was not just back then, to the man who was blind, that the Savior came to be known.

Here, now, today: I will tell you plainly; He is Lord, we are not now our own.

“I learn a lot, Father, from those people and events of the past. Please help me keep from taking miracles for granted. Here in this hospital, waiting for results, I am reminded that You have made known to men, the way things are made so they can make repairs even on human bodies today, as the Lord did in His day. Amen.”

John 9:39. *“And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and they which see might be made blind.”*

FOR JUDGMENT: the judgment of the cross.

There had to be standards set, because sin had entered the world.
Chaos reigned on the earth; confusion everywhere swirled.
Until a standard of righteousness was impressed on men's hearts -
And self-righteous people tried their own rules on others to impart.

But confusion still reigned on earth, until God's law was given.
People tried to favor their own life-styles - still their sins unforgiven.
God's laws made plain what was needed to control -
And bring order out of chaos, but it didn't bring rest to their souls.

So, into this world of sin, Christ was willing to come -
And He did not leave, until judgment for sin was done.
Those helpless to establish true righteousness -
Found the way One who could forgive and bless.

The demands of God's law could not be overlooked.
It was judgment for a broken law Jesus willingly took.
He did not suffer just to leave an example -
For in His sacrifice, His fulfillment of the law was ample.

The judgment He bore makes self-righteous people blind -
Because they can't put their perceived goodness out of their mind.
They will not accept the fact they are not good enough -
And in spite of God's law, they still themselves foolishly bluff.

Other people know they are blinded by sin.
When God's Gospel is made clear, they turn willingly to Him
Who was willing to take the judgment they would forever bear.
They realize the Lord Jesus on the cross took their place there.

“I thank Thee, O God, that the judgment that was on me is passed and there is no condemnation now. I praise Thee from my heart that He fulfilled all righteousness and I am legally free from the law's demands and am legitimately one of Thy family. Please accept my thanks Father, for all the blessings that have come to me through the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

JOHN 10

IF ANY MAN

A word to the lost, Jn.10:9: *“If any man enter in, he shall be saved.”*

- He shall be saved – (1) Noah was saved from danger, by going through the door of the ark (2) The offender was saved from death, by going through the door of the city of refuge (3) The Passover person was saved from the destroyer, by going inside the blood-sprinkled door.
- Shall go in – to the presence of the Lord (1) To find fellowship with God (2) To find communion with God (3) To find acceptance with God (4) To find favor with God
- And shall go out – to the presence of the people (1) Identification [Heb.13:13] unto Him without the camp (2) Testimony [MKat.22:10] so those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all as...
- Shall find pasture – (1) Food for the soul: the sustenance is there (2) Rest for the weary: the shelter is there (3) Safety for the tested: The Shepherd is there.

A word to the guilty, 1Jn.2:1-2: *“If anyone sin, we have an Advocate.”*

A word to the friendless, Rev.3:20: *“If any man, hear My voice and open the door.”*

A word to the unsatisfied, Jn.7:37: *“If any man thirst, let him come unto Me”*

THE SHEPHERD AND HIS SHEEP, John 10. *"Follow thou Me."*

The FOLD as a figure of the Church or the Kingdom of God.

The DOOR as a figure of Christ, the Way.

The PORTER as a figure of the Holy Ghost who brings us into the fold.

The SHEPHERD as a figure of Christ, our Savior and Keeper.

The SHEEP as a figure of Christ's true disciples.

The HIRELING as a figure of false teachers.

The WOLF as a figure of Satan "seeking whom he may devour."

Christ is the "Good Shepherd" [Jn.10:11], for He *loves* the sheep even unto death.

Christ is the "Great Shepherd" [Heb.13:20], for He *cares* for all the flock.

Christ is the "Chief Shepherd" [1Pe.5:4], for He *appoints, supports and will reward* all His faithful under-shepherds.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD:

He *knows* His sheep; all of them. "I know My sheep"; "He calleth His own sheep by name."

He *bought* the sheep [1Pe.1:18-19].

He *seeks and finds* His sheep [Ez.34:11-12; Lu.19:10].

He *cares* for the sheep: collectively, individually [Jn.13:1].

He *guides* His sheep [Jn.10:4; Ps.32:8]. He leads them:

- In paths of holiness [Isa.35:8; Ps.24:2; 93:5; Lu.1:75; 1Thes.4:7; Heb.12:10,14; Titus 2:3].
- In paths of happiness [Pro.3:17; Ps.109:2; 128:2; Pro.8:32; Lu.2:28; Rev.22:14].
- In paths of usefulness [Mat.4:19; 21:28; Jn.4:34-38; Jn.9:3-4; Eph.2:10; Titus 2:14; 3:1,8].

He *feeds* His sheep [Mk.6P:43; Rom.5:9-10; 1Pe.2:2; Ps.23:2,5].

THERE FORE:

"Follow Me"; with hearts surrendered in humility.

"Follow Me" with hands sanctified by carrying the cross.

"Follow Me" with hope satisfied completely by the promises of God.

"Follow Me" with happiness secured by knowing and doing the will of God.

John 10

THE DOOR – THE SHEPHERD.

THE DOOR AND THE FOLD

Dangers are everywhere - lurking about secretly

Furtively they seek - looking for weak spots

The thief, waiting for the cover of night

Waits and watches until all seems quiet.

Complacency seems to have gained ascendancy

As the sheep lie in a dormant-like condition.

They are so apathetic it seems as if they hibernate -

Not the reason for their existence - but there they lie.

The robber checks his weapons - club and spear alike

Are readied to claim what does not belong to him -

But unknown to the waiting sheep - a vigorous assault

Awaits to claim them; their potential; their reason.

The hireling sound asleep awakens and runs

As the wolf brazenly approaches to devour quickly -

But not sleeping - noiselessly waiting - motionless

A Living Door makes Himself known - and all foes flee.

The fold is intact - the Door is on guard!

THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP

The grass is green and the waters still -

All that is needed to sustain life and bring profit

Is there for the taking - and the Good Shepherd leads

The trusting sheep to the good pasture.

He knows their need better than they do.

He knows where to go and the way to get there.

He has invested Himself and His life in the sheep.

He knows the Father's hand is there - with His.

A Voice is heard giving a command to follow
And the sheep follow to places unknown - gladly.
They know not the destination - but know the Voice.
They do not know the road ahead - but trust the Voice.
There will be obstacles and unknown difficulties - but the Shepherd is here
The life the Shepherd gives is His own - eternal.
The sheep live and grow in safety - even in the presence of enemies.
The sheep are safe - the Shepherd speaks!

“I do not take for granted Father, the One who is the Door and the Good Shepherd. My trust is in Him as I journey through this world seeking the spiritual oasis that are to be found from place to place. I am grateful to be in the fold and to be able to feed on the green grass of the pasture. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

John 10

ONE IN ESSENCE

When the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world, He did not come in judgment to condemn people, but He came to save them from their sins. However, by His coming He created a crisis in the same way that light seriously affects darkness when people prefer darkness. The Pharisees had been losing in every confrontation they had with Jesus because He is the Light of life. They were determined to maintain the status quo of which they believed they were in control.

Those people who were not conscious of spiritual blindness had an illustration of the spiritual healing power of Christ when the blind man received his physical sight. One who can give physical sight has the power to give spiritual eyesight. On the other hand, those who claimed to know the answers to spiritual things by imposing their own addendums to the law of God, were still in spiritual blindness because of their unbelief and willful rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."

To teach them what He meant, He gave another illustration of his statement regarding blindness. There had been false prophets and false Christs who had come and deceived the people by saying there was another way to God. Such a person is like a thief who comes with sly and deceptive means to gain a following. Often when a person like that comes among the people, they use the same words as a believer would use only with a different meaning behind it. They gain followers by false promises and subtle criticisms of those who take the Bible literally and follow its teaching as the guide for what we believe and how we conduct our lives.

Robbers come with a more aggressive and confrontational attempt to keep earnest seekers from entering into the kingdom of God. Often, they will use open opposition against the preaching of the Gospel and the biblical practice of church truth. Anger is not uncommon when the truth of scripture is appealed to as the standard and source of faith and practice. The door of the sheepfold is a reference to Israel and the blessings God gave to that nation. Prophets of the past had opened the door to present the Shepherd who led them out from the bondage they had been in for so long. The Jews would have understood the imagery of the shepherd being the king of a nation. They considered themselves the keepers of the door and so had just put the newly healed blind man out of the fold. The man they had excommunicated because of the blessing he received from Jesus, was now received by the Lord Jesus Christ who said He is the Door of the sheep. It is not the sheepfold He is concerned about but the sheep themselves. This newly sighted man was put out of Judaism and had come to Christ and was gladly received into the kingdom of God.

Many people are concerned about the religious sheepfold they are a part of and do not consider the spiritual condition of the sheep. The Good Shepherd in contrast to the thieves and robbers is not only the Door to the kingdom of God, but is the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep. He deliberately laid down His life to bring blessing to the sheep. The result of that is abundant life in Christ and the good pasture of spiritual food to nourish the needs of the souls and spirits of every one who belong to Him.

Hirelings are those people who have made an occupation out of herding sheep rather than being a true and good shepherd who lays down His life because of His love for those who belong to Him. The Lord Jesus laid down His life on our behalf so that we can be free from the guilt and consequences of sin. He also gave His life that we too might have the same kind of live the Father and the Son share. The eternal life they have, they have given to us to have and enjoy now and will have and enjoy forever. The fellowship of the Father and Son is because of the love they have. That love is extended to us and because of the new nature we have, "We love Him because He first loved us and gave Himself for us..."

At the feast of lights (Hanukkah), the winter feast of dedication, the Jews came and hemmed in the Lord Jesus like a pack of animals around Him and demanded that He say exactly what they wanted to hear. His claims of being the Christ were clearly stated to the Samaritan woman and to his own disciples. They found great joy in the assurance that He was the promised Messiah. The statements and proofs of Him being the Christ did not match the Jews preconceived ideas of what the Messiah would do. They wanted deliverance from Rome and their place restored as a world recognized kingdom. Jesus had told them who He was by His teaching and showed them by His works. Still they would not believe His testimony. He plainly told them the reason they did not know who He was, was because they were not His sheep. Those who hear His voice and believe on Him, He knows and gives them eternal life - His kind of life.

When a person has received that life as a gift from God, both the Father and the Son secure them in the safety of divine hands - Almighty power. The two Persons are united in keeping those who believe on Him, safe and secure. The two are One in essence and substance - not one person. What the Father is to us, the Son is also. The Jews knew what He meant and took stones in their hands but were powerless to throw them because His "hour was not yet come." No one can do what God will not allow. We may never know the reason for the pressures and hard things that happen to us in life, but we can keep our faith in Him, and by His grace, go through what life holds in store for us.

The claims of the Lord Jesus to be the Christ were well substantiated but those people ignored those claims. Even after they found they were powerless to stone Jesus and He continued to point out the fact of the Godhead being one in essence, they tried to take Him by force. They could not take Him because the time had not come for Him to be crucified. Another year of public ministry still had to take place. That was the last time He was in Jerusalem until He came as the rejected king riding on the donkey into the city a week before His crucifixion.

When the Lord left there, He went back to the place He was baptized and first began His public ministry. of great interest is that many came there to be with Him and to hear His teaching. Those who came recognized the difference between a prophet and the Lamb of God who would bear away the sin of the world. Even though He was rejected in Jerusalem, many believed on Him there. Because the door is shut against the Lord and the Gospel in one place, doesn't mean there are no people who want and need to hear the way of salvation. It is up to us to bring people to Jesus that they might find the great blessing of eternal life.

John 10:17-18. *"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."*

I LAY DOWN MY LIFE: the love of the cross.

Why would a Person do what others just talk about?
What motivation is behind these words to keep
To keep the Savior on this road knowing if He continued on this route
It would lead to the darkest valley wide and deep?
In Him was such a love that is beyond our measure -
His is love that is infinite and true.
He knew the sheep were lost and each one of them He treasured -
And the name of every one the Good Shepherd knew.
Without argument and fear, or the slightest hesitation -
He went into death, though He was the sinless Son of God.
The conclusion of the matter, was He provided full salvation -
Abundant life is there for us because Jesus died.

A love that is without measure is such a moral pleasure -
That the sheep for which He died will show love too.
As they in life go further, often they will come together
To express in prayer and praise what Christ went through.
Their joy is not of sadness that has been turned into gladness,
But the constant inward joy that comes with peace.
For the Good Shepherd who once died, is forevermore alive -
And gives to them through life His needed grace.
The Good Shepherd who laid down His life, now bids us walk with Him in light,
And we in turn reflect His love to others.
The world that is so in need of love from people who love Him now should have
The love of Christ shining through us to our brothers.

I can become conflicted when opportunities I've neglected -
Makes me to consider why God has left me here.

I too have to love the sheep; I have moral obligations to keep -
 So there will be burdens I am called to bear.
 I should not avoid or allow myself to be annoyed -
 If some sheep seem to be straying from the fold.
 There will always be a reason; perhaps a temptation that has seized them
 And I can help them, even though I am old.
 The privilege of an under-shepherd, is he works under the Chief Shepherd -
 He is not left to tend the sheep alone.
 A day is coming when with rejoicing, we will come and will be voicing
 Our praise to the Good Shepherd who has brought us to His home.

“O Father, guide me today as we travel to another pasture where the sheep are in pain and old age. Help me to be a good shepherd to them. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

John 10:27-28. *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.”*

FOLLOWING.

Following means Loving the One who has called; the One who is Shepherd so true.
 It is natural to sheep, who the Shepherd does feed; to love the One who gives them their food.

Following means Leaving; no longer I'm cleaving to anything that may hold me back.
 The Shepherd has called to new pastures so green, and to waters still, my thirst there to slake.

Following means Loyalty: to the Shepherd alone; not to robber or hireling or thief.
 If I listen to men, like a wolf from his den; they'll come to capture my life.

Following means Learning from the Shepherd who knows, all I need to enjoy this new life.
 To learn from His Word, all I can and I should, will give strength to go forward in faith.

Following means Likeness to the Shepherd who leads, and who feeds and protects with His hand.
 It's not that I look like the Shepherd so much, but that I know how to follow His commands.

The enemies keen, with their plans to demean, and defeat all the sheep of His flock.
 Will not be able to win or defeat by their sin, sheep who in the Shepherd's steps willingly walk.

The Father's great care, with His heart full of love, holds tight in His hand each love'd one.
 And in the Shepherd's hand too, so strong and secure, each sheep is kept till we're home.

So we follow Him now, and are content that He knows, each and every new problem ahead.
 And contentment is mine, as His nature divine, linked with mine makes me follow His lead.

So with joy I will go where He leads me to show, to others the blessings complete.
 The Shepherd leads on and His steps I do know, lead to pastures where gladly I'll feed.

“O Great Shepherd of Thy chosen flock: I am finding all that my heart can desire in the pasture here of Thy choosing. I am content and continually satisfied with all Thy provision to meet my every need. Amen.”

John 11.

THIS IS FOR ...

THE GLORY OF GOD
 How can we see things that defy description?
 How can hidden glory that seraphim hid from
 Be experienced by frail, mortal men?
 How can excellence in absolute perfection;
 Be allowed in the moral darkness of men?
 The Son of God, using His life-key before men -
 Showed to all who gathered there, His supreme authority -
 The “last enemy” surrendered its hold to Jesus' moral glory -
 And men saw “the glory of God!”

THAT YE MIGHT BELIEVE
What can make the strangle hold of unbelief flee?
How can "the sin which doth so easily beset us"
Abandon its tenacious claim on my mind?
What observation of my eyes and intellect;
Can join these two in life-changing faith?
A Person stands and cries aloud with love
And sorrow mixed - a loud voice cries -
Life from its Source, flowed into a mortal body -
And many "believed!"

YET SHALL HE LIVE
Is it true as He said, "Though he were dead;
Yet shall he live?" Is life not over at death?
How can I know? What assurance can be had
That gives such meaning to the flow of passing years?
I AM has spoken, His words are truth and life -
In a day that lies ahead beyond the last good-bye,
He who is Resurrection and Life awaits to work His power
And believing saints to long-dead bodies are finally joined -
And they live!

THAT THEY MAY BELIEVE THAT THOU HAST SENT ME
Two Equals met at death's dark door -
Fast closed by sin's demanding claim.
Conversing openly; One declares His power -
And a sleeping body stirs at his spoken name.
Watchers' eyes and mouths both open wide
In silent wonder as body and soul reunite -
Every honest person there knows deep inside -
God is here in flesh - "O wondrous sight!"
And I believe!

"To see that sight by an open tomb, must've left a life-long impression, Father, on all those people. I know it leaves a mighty impression on me. In these last three days, two I have known, one aged and one young, have died and another has a report that indicates death is coming shortly. I am resting in confidence that He who is Life and is the Resurrection has everything under His control. Perhaps in all of this the glory of God will be seen and observers will believe. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 11

ULTIMATE AUTHORITY

Not too often is there a home other than our own where we feel perfectly "at home." Even though those who show kindness and grace toward us and in their hospitality say, "Make yourself at home," there are limits that we do not cross for fear of invading privacy. It seems like the home of Lazarus, Mary and Martha was a very special place to Jesus when He was in Judea. Of special interest is that Bethany was called "the town of Mary." She must have been well-known for her piety, grace and spirit of meekness as well as other obvious public traits. Martha was a hospitable woman who seemed to be very practical in her way of life. All of us have a reputation of one kind or another. We are each one different and God can use those differences when they are used in fellowship with each other to be a means of blessing to many and a comfort to the Lord.

An obscure village can become important when there are some of the people of God living there. Some of earth's great cities are far less important than a small town or even a country place where the light of biblical testimony has been established. It is not uncommon for people looking on, to see people gathering together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and asking, "What is the attraction in that little place?" It is the gathering to the Person in the midst that is important. Other gatherings may have thousands who come together attracted by the great numbers, the music that is played or the oratorical skills of a man. But when our attraction is the Lord Jesus Christ only, it is a unique place. God is in the midst of His people.

At Bethany in that home there were expressions of appreciation for the Lord Jesus, Mary was there who had anointed His feet with ointment and wiped them with her hair. That was not an act of affectation but of genuine love for her Lord. Martha had busily prepared food for the Savior as her service of hospitality, and there was fellowship and interest in the things of God when they sat together and shared meals. The Lord Jesus had a special interest in those who lived in that home. He loved and appreciated them, and they loved

and appreciated Him. The characteristic of hospitality and friendship is a special comfort to the Lord's people as we journey through life. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me." That spirit of hospitality usually extends beyond just our friends and family, to include those who cannot reciprocate and so has a special place in the hearts of any who come there, whether they be believers or unbelievers. But even in such blessed places and homes like the one in Bethany, there will come times of grief and sorrow. Sometimes they are expected, and other times such things happen without any forewarning.

When we don't understand the reason why something unforeseen comes, we wonder why God allowed this to take place. In such times our faith in Christ becomes even more vital in order for us to have peace. Unexpected events such as an unknown sickness, scares us. We had never thought it would happen to us. Then when we turn to the Lord our God for answers and quick solutions, and He doesn't give them to us right away, those delays really bother us. "The trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth..." The words sound good but the opposition that may accompany the trial, can intimidate us. Then the darkness that comes over our spirits stumbles us if we are not careful to cast our burden upon the Lord and trust Him to sustain us. When death comes, we are saddened, especially if it is unexpected or a young person is taken.

Lessons we can learn when the contrast of life and death is starkly before us, are actually many. God's delays, though we may not realize it at the time, are God's opportunities. A quick answer like we expect, would be not much more than a quick fix, and the lessons will have to be learned again. God's timing of events is in perfect harmony with God's will. There are results that come from letting an event run its full course, that we learn later are perfectly fitted to the solution that is needed. God's will and God's guidance are parallel in bringing to pass what He intends. When the alternatives to a problem are reduced to one, there are no more questions to be asked. But sometimes there is more than one alternative. Then we have to take time to see, and really learn, which one is more suitable to doing God's will, and which one will bring the greatest benefit to all who are concerned. God's power is in no way limited, but the waiting times may be as important as the solution when it comes to bringing glory to God. The events surrounding the death of Lazarus have a lot to teach us who are by nature pushy or impatient. We have to be taught to wait for God to act according to His sovereign will.

Four days after the death of Lazarus, as Jesus came to Bethany in spite of the fears of the disciples who knew the Jews wanted to kill Jesus, Martha met Jesus. Her grief over the loss of her brother expressed itself in an understandably reproachful way. She was a woman of faith, but her faith was limited to what she knew had happened before. Jesus used that moment to teach her the truth of who He is and why it is so important to believe on Him. Mary used the same words but not in the same way. An awareness of the presence of Jesus comforts us even though we may not understand the delays of unexplained circumstances that happen to us. The presence of Jesus in trials, is a time when He instructs us even though our faith is weak and we wonder what will happen next. The presence of Jesus awakens us to believe that what is impossible to men is possible with God. The presence of Jesus in the difficult times of life opens our minds to the reality of the kingdom of God we are in and of which we are a part.

It was in this hard time Martha testified to her own personal faith in Christ. It was in this hard time Jesus declared a sixth verbal testimony to His deity when He said, "I AM the resurrection and the life..." Then He challenged her faith with a straightforward question and her answer to Him was a beautiful expression of genuine faith in Him.

The Lord's compassion for the living is what caused Him to weep. He knew what He was going to do and He knew that every one of those people would be in heaven or hell. People often misunderstand and misjudge the ways and words of God because of the limitations of their own experiences. The Lord's emotion and His sympathy was genuine. His caring and understanding of the human experience testifies to His humanity. His power over death, man's last enemy, testifies to His deity. In an act of His interest in humanity, He involved others in this greatest of His miracles. They could move the stone. They did what He knew they could do. Our limitations in the service of God keeps us from boasting but He allows us the privilege of participating in it as we are able. The Lord does what no man can do - He gives life. That key is His alone.

Even at the graveside Jesus used that event as a teaching moment so that people would believe on Him. His loud voice in prayer was so that all there would know who He is and who His Father is. By the means of all hearing the words of His prayer, they knew that this act of power was for their sakes. There was no mistaking the fact of His authority when He spoke directly to the soul of Lazarus and commanded his soul and spirit to return to his body.

The Lord did not make a point of raising dead people to life very often because He knew they would have to go through the experience of death again. In this case it was for the glory of God, and that people would know Him as God who has power over death. Even after Lazarus came out of the grave, the Lord again had people participate when they removed the grave clothes off of him so he could walk. All of those who watched this scene could testify to the reality of the miracle and the sign of His deity.

In spite of the fact of Lazarus being raised from the dead, there were those who refused to believe on Jesus. They were so hardened against His holiness, His power and His Person that they arranged for and assisted in plotting for His death. They would rather reject the Savior and what was obvious, than admit they were wrong. Pride leads to unbelievable sin. However, there were many there who did believe on Him. The effect of real Christianity on the business and social life of natural men convicts them. Deceit, dishonesty, illegal and immoral practices are exposed for what they are in the light of the One is the resurrection and the life. People are willing to reject what is obviously right because they want what is wrong more. Even the mouth of a hardened religious leader (Caiaphas) was used against Jesus as far as he was concerned. But he stated a wonderful truth as far as the Gospel of God was concerned.

The Passover was coming but until that time, Jesus went to Ephraim, a city in the wilderness to wait until His hour was come. God has His timetable and we are wise to wait for God to work and with His ultimate authority, guide and direct us through whatever event He sends along to fulfill His will.

John 11:25. *"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live:"*

LAZARUS IS DEAD.

What are the reasons behind this death? He was going to bring Lazarus to life.
There sometimes has to be darkness allowed before people will see the light.
The night of grief and loss are needed in order for eyes to see.
Tears sometimes wash worldly-focused eyes so clean, that we may learn from sin to flee.

vs.4, 40

The glory of God to many people is limited to His visible creation.
But a greater glory is seen when there happens obvious resurrection.
I have seen evidence of new life imparted in people who finally hear what God said.
The light of understanding comes into one's eyes, and life-changes show they're raised from the dead.

v.15.

Faith has to be developed; it involves much more than spoken words.
Those who look on and see new life acknowledge this is of the Lord.
A new creation in Christ Jesus certainly is hard to hide -
The wholeness of new life is not just external; it really comes from inside.

v.26.

Sometimes God works His will in ways beyond our comprehension -
That He might elicit from His own people clear statements of their confession.
We cannot tell others what happened to us without making a confession of faith.
Others then can judge the reality of what I say by what has taken place.

v.45.

The Gospel to many is hidden, they look on to see what is real.
Many know they are lost in sin, but don't know where broken hearts are healed.
When serious things happen to God's own children, they watch how we react to them.
And when our testimony of faith in Christ is given, they know they can turn to Him.

v.47.

There are the skeptics and atheistic unbelievers, who stubbornly refuse to believe
Some works of God are unexplainable to them, but still Christ they won't receive.
God allows them to unite in unbelief even though they refuse to trust.
So God allows the darkness of their hearts to be seen through the light of faith in us.

v.53

The countdown to the cross began at a grave, but all the time God was in control.
Sometimes God allows sickness and death to come, that the sin-sick ones can be made whole.

If we have to hold a dying one's hand, or even follow that one to the grave -
Let us remember that path to Calvary was necessary that we might believe and be saved.

”O Gracious God: it seems to me that sometimes the greatest lessons of faith are learned at an open grave. If my death were to bring life to others, Father God, I could count dying to be a privilege and a victory rather than just an inevitable end. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

John 11:41-42. *“Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, ‘Father, I thank Thee that Thou hearest Me always: but because of the people which stand here I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me.’ ”*

AT BETHANY: THE HOUSE OF AFFLICTION.

RAISING OF LAZARUS

This is the 7th sign of the deity of Christ in John's Gospel. Six reasons for this sign are:

- The glory of God, v.4, 40.
- To develop the faith of the disciples, v.15.
- To obtain Martha's confession, v.26.
- To bring friends of the family to faith in Him and to the reality of Him, v.45.
- To polarize the religious leaders, v.47.
- To begin the countdown to the cross-work at Calvary, v.53.

Loved by Christ, Jn.11:5. *“Jesus loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus.”*
It wasn't just comfort or talk that they had;
There was more to their friendship than that.
Love was expressed and enjoyed by them all;
When together in that home they all sat.

Listening to Christ, Lu.10:39. *“Mary sat at His feet and heard His word.”*
Mary's choice place seemed to be at His feet;
Lazarus would sit by His side.
Mary, perhaps more than others, it seems
The truth of His word she applied.

Laboring for Christ, Lu.10:40. *“Martha serving.”*
Martha was anxious, her Lord to attend,
For His food and His rest to assist.
She was truly concerned as a faithful friend,
But what was really important she missed.

Longing for Christ, Jn.11:3. *“His sisters sent unto Him.”*
When Lazarus was sick it was natural to them
To call for their Lord to come soon.
Their disappointment was great when Lazarus died;
Before the Lord got to their home.

Light through Christ, Jn.11:41. *“Take away the stone.”*
When He had come and seen where he lay in the cave,
Before which there had been placed a stone.
He wept tears of love and concern at the grave;
And then His power became known.

Life in Christ, Jn.11:43. *“Lazarus, come forth.”*
God can give life; He alone is its' Source.
So, when the Lord called out loud and clear;
For Lazarus to come, and his bands to be loosed;
The man was given life then and there.

Liberty by Christ, Jn.11:44. *“Loose him and let him go.”*
He was loosed to new life to live again for the Lord.
As we also have in our time.
Life lived for the Lord is freedom for us;
Our life for God's glory to find.

Although He's omniscient and knows everything;
It is comforting for me to be sure,
That He who is Lord both of heaven and earth;
Still is willing my sorrows to bear.

His omnipotent power that can all things maintain,
And creates all there is with His word.
Is directed towards man, who is part of His plan;
And lets us be involved in His work.

Whenever there comes a time that I wonder;
Does He care about what is happening to me?
Then I rest all assured, this omnipresent Lord,
Is here, and in Him, faith holds the key.

“O Life-giving, resurrecting God: I do believe in You without question. I look into the future with confidence and anticipation. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Jn.11:25-43.

Jesus has power over life and death as well as power to forgive sins. This is because He is the Creator of life. He who *is* Life, can surely restore life. Whoever believes in Christ has a spiritual life that death cannot conquer or diminish in any way. When we realize His power and how wonderful His offer to us really is, how can we help but believe on Him and commit our lives to Him?

John 11:51. *"And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation;"*

FOR THAT NATION: the prophecy of the cross.

Long dispersed in distant lands; the nation far was scattered.
Never would it be possible by man's arranging - to be gathered.
There must be some divine plan or Person to restore the identity
Of a people so small and scattered that there would ever be unity.

Perhaps this priest was the last man we would choose to predict the future.
He was not only open in opposition to the Lord; he didn't have a new nature.
This may explain some of the things I have seen that come to pass.
Even in my lifetime people have determined the Jews would not last.

Hunted and killed; tortured and burned - and still these people survive.
The only explanation for their existence is, God wants this nation alive.
He has planned and will bring to fruition a time of Israel's peace.
After all the rejection, being despised and killed, God will show that nation His grace.

They will see Him coming in garments stained, with the crimson reminder of death.
They will remember the One they refused, is still determined Israel to bless.
Like Joseph's brothers, Israel will bow before the King on David's throne.
After centuries of terrible persecution and pain, Israel will finally come home.

Then they will see the nail marks in His hands and remember what they did.
They will look at the King on His throne and realize, they were never hid
From the eyes of Jehovah that followed them on the paths of their own choosing -
And the wages of sin will have their cost; they were responsible for the nation's loosing.

The re-gathering will happen because one day on the cross, Jesus died for the nation.
Those who trusted in Him personally are blessed with God's gracious salvation.
When the nation is gathered again, the promises made will be fulfilled.
The prophecy made by one in unbelief, God will see is upheld.

“O Lord God, the long centuries have taken awful toll on Thy chosen people. I pray for their peace. May many yet come to faith in Christ. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

John 12

STEPS INTO THE DEEPER LIFE, 21-33.

Seeing Jesus, the **induction** to life, v.21.

Dying with Him the **prelude** to fruitfulness, v.24.

Hating the self-life, the way to life that is eternal, v.25.

Serving the Lord, the privilege of the life that lives, v.26.

Following Christ, the way to serve", v.26.

Serving Christ, the way to honor and position, v.26.

Victory over the world and Satan secured by Christ for us, v.31.

John 12

WHERE I AM.

The Lord Jesus is sitting at a table with an unusual group around.
Lazarus is there recently brought back from the ground.
Judas is there who is preparing to betray the Lord for money
Peter, James and John who were closer to Him than many.
The other disciples were there not really knowing who they were following;
Martha was busy serving, she had made that work her calling.
Mary too was there worshipping - looking beyond what they were sharing
Pouring spikenard on Jesus' feet that she had stored in view of His burying;
He was the "corn of wheat" that soon into the grave would lie -
Soon the great harvest would come from the death that He would die.

Multitudes were awaiting the coming deliverance by the King
Wanting the freedom and glory they were hoping He would bring.
They gathered by the road expecting a victory parade
Thinking perhaps this was the day they from Roman rule were freed.
They heard He raised the dead by the power of His deity
So maybe He would kill the living and as King take authority.
The watching Greeks came closest to understanding what all saw;
They wanted to see the Person who had filled their hearts with awe.
The King is who we honor, not the promised "kingdom come";
The "corn of wheat" that died is the life-producing One.

The Father glorified His name through the service of His Son
The many tasks He came to do He accomplished every one.
Never was left undone any work that needed to be,
Fully finished so the Son of God could make us truly free;
By His death on Calvary's cross where He was lifted up to die,
He made it so every person could through Jesus' death draw nigh
To God, and from then on be empowered to live in divine light.
No longer children of darkness who struggle in the night
Here on earth today we spend time with Jesus in our midst -
And enjoy new life and blessings because we are where He is.

"O Gracious Eternal God: in faith I respond to the assuring words "Where I am they may be also." My thoughts are towards the fact of the ever-present God being here with us and so often we are not really aware of the fact. I pray that the sense of the presence of God will be a continual fact in my life. Perhaps in that way I won't make so many mistakes and be such a failure. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 12:1-19

"HOSANNA" - SAVE NOW

With the plot against Jesus being well known in the city of Jerusalem, it seemed to the disciples the journey to Bethany, a nearby village, would be a dangerous place to be. But the powers of men are not able to act against the Lord Jesus Christ until He permits it to happen. The oasis in the wilderness of hatred that was in the house of Lazarus, Martha and Mary would have been a welcome place to Jesus over the years of His ministry here on earth. When those who love the Lord are together, there is a joy and peace that cannot be disturbed by the antagonism of the world system around us. If this supper was in the house of Simon, it didn't keep Martha from her faithful service for the Lord. She had learned from the Lord previously not to be distracted from her role of service by what others do or do not do. Each of us has a work to which we have been suited by God. There is no reason to compare what I do with what others do. My responsibility is to do what I do "As unto the Lord, and not unto men." Martha had learned and was doing what she had been called to do.

Lazarus who had recently been raised from the dead was sitting at the table in fellowship with Jesus and His disciples, and any others who were there. Just by being there, his physical presence gave proof to the fact that Jesus is God, the only One who has power to give life to those who are dead. Those who are "dead in trespasses and sins" can only find life in the One who gives life - the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of Lazarus being raised from the dead by the Lord Jesus, Lazarus also was now an object of the murderous plot of the chief priests. They were likely Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, and Lazarus being alive was evidence they were wrong, and their teaching was wrong. They did not like that at all. Now they planned the murder of two instead of one. One sin leads to another on a downward slide that cannot be stopped without genuine repentance.

Like a beautiful vista opening to one's eyes after a long drive across a dreary desert, was the devotion of Mary toward the Lord Jesus Christ. Her usual place in her association with Jesus was at His feet. She knew who He really was, the Lord from heaven, and her devotion to the Savior was greater than the others there. She didn't have to say a word. Over the period of time she had known the Lord Jesus, she had been saving in order to give Him the highest honor she could. Anointing of His head was to give Him honor. Anointing of His feet was an act of devotion from her heart. She had listened to Him speak and understood what was going to happen to Him. Her faith in Him and devotion toward Him must have been a great comfort to Him as He looked ahead to what was going to happen in the next week.

We may not be aware of the value of some act of devotion we may show toward the Lord and toward His people. He knows our motivation and is able to be glorified and honored by such acts from His people today. There is no reason to think He does not know what we mean by any sincere act of service, fellowship or devotion we may do. The disciples didn't understand what was happening any more than people do today as they wonder at what we do and why we do it. It is sufficient for us to know that Jesus knows what is behind every act of appreciation we can give Him.

The spikenard Mary poured out on the Lord permeated the house and all those who were at that meal would have the scent of it on them long after the supper was past. Jesus Himself would have the scent of spikenard on Him for the whole final week of His public life. Even at His burial, Joseph and Nicodemus would have known someone anointed Jesus before they did. The effect of true devotion on the part of a believer is a great benefit to all who associate with them. On the other hand, there are those who, because of the darkness of their hearts, will mock and criticize anyone who truly loves the Lord and shows it.

Judas was one of those, a selfish, critical thief who used a pious phrase to cover his own deceit. He had fallen further and further under the control of Satan. He did not understand the value of money and what it was for, and how useless and worthless it is in the face of holy devotion. In the life of those who are without Christ as their Savior, one sin leads to another. The downward slide continues and can't be stopped until sin is faced and there comes true repentance that leads one to turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.

The chief priests with implacable hatred against Christ were willfully blinded and had hardened their hearts to the light of the Lord Jesus Christ and the blessings He brought to others including Lazarus. They had deliberately rejected Christ, and now had plans to kill two instead of one because many people were believing on Jesus because of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Against the background of the beauty of devotion, the joy of fellowship and the satisfaction of faithful service, there was also the blackness of evil under satanic control by Judas and the chief priests. Into the city of Jerusalem, the very next day came Jesus in fulfillment of prophecy relating to the coming King. There was at first adulation as the easily changeable crowd shouted their "Hosannas" - Save now! Their hopes were that deliverance from Roman tyranny would happen right then and they would finally be free. The prophecy was fulfilled alright, but in connection with a far greater kingdom than that of Israel.

The Jews had anticipated the Messiah bringing national deliverance without them having a change of heart. That day will come, of that there is no doubt. When that happens, the whole world will know that Jesus Christ is Lord. He is the King of kings. We who know Him now, honor Him in that way today in our lives and in our gatherings as we anticipate His coming glory.

John 12:7. *"Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this."*

THE DAY: the cross and Satan's defeat.

Who would have thought the Sinless One could die?
The wages He paid to save us were extremely high.
Death had no claim on Him, and yet His life He gave -
That the debt we would have forever owed God, would be righteously paid.
And the fellowship God wanted with man could be firmly planted
In the basis of reconciliation that through the cross-work was granted.

A worshiping woman could see what all the others missed -
The death of the Savior was the way God could bless
Those whose sins were forgiven when the Savior would give
His life as a substitute that the guilty could live.
So, in view of that day when Satan would be defeated -
She showed her gratitude without being entreated.

Before the Lord Jesus Christ would ever be buried -
There were other things accomplished - our sins He carried
On His own body as He suffered that we might be freed
From the dire consequences of our guilt that would be on us for eternity.
Thus, many are drawn by His love for them when He gave -
His life as a ransom that through Him all could be saved.

Before He was buried some who had gathered around
Were yet to believe on Him, before His body was placed in the ground.
A thief in despair turned to Christ in his dying hour,
And was assured with Christ's word of His saving power.
Soldiers too, who watched Jesus and heard His words,
Were caused to confess Him as the mighty Son of God.

A lot happened that day before Jesus was buried.
There were those who lacked understanding of that act of Mary.
She probably didn't realize the full value of what she was doing -
But knew soon to His death Jesus was going.
Her gratitude to Him and her act of worship is a lesson to us -
Who have been taught by this event; our Savior to bless.

"Father God, it was an act of great insight on Mary's part to show her unrestrained appreciation for the Lord Jesus Christ. I learn from this to not withhold from Him my thoughts and words of worship when they should be expressed. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 12:20-26

SERVANTS WHO FOLLOW

There are many people in this world who are outwardly religious, but inwardly they are uncertain of their relationship with God, and look in all the wrong places to find answers to their fears. Greeks prided themselves on their philosophical approach to the questions of "Who am I?"; "Why am I here?"; "Is there life after death?"; "Is there a God?" People today ask those questions, and even though answers are given the from the scriptures, they reject them because they consider themselves their own god, and the God of the Bible is a god of imagination to them. However, when confronted with the evidence of who Jesus is, they stop to consider whether their opinions are right or not.

The Greeks, Jewish proselytes, who came to see Jesus had been searching in Judaism for what was missing in their philosophical search. When confronted with evidence of One who did miracles even to the extent of raising Lazarus from the dead, and seeing the response of the people to Jesus, they wanted to see Jesus for themselves. The evidence today of changed lives often creates an interest in those who were previously disinterested. A drunk man who becomes sober; an immoral woman whose life is changed and so she lives with respect and modesty; a person with an attitude of malice and anger who becomes a loving and caring person - these are evidence of the reality of faith in Christ. Proofs of the Gospel message have great impact on bystanders when inward lasting change takes place.

With anticipation, those Greeks came to Philip. Sometimes those who serve the Lord in the background, are those who inquirers find more approachable. Both Philip and Andrew were not men who were out in front of the activities of the disciples. Those brothers who are more reticent, often connect with those like themselves than those whose personalities set them in the middle of things. We do not need to copy each other, nor should we envy those who are more gifted than we. God has placed us in the body to be what He wants, and where He wants. It is important that we are willing to serve God without prejudice, and with dignity, honor and respect.

Those Greeks looked with anticipation to seeing Jesus. For us, we see the willing condescension of the Lord Jesus Christ when He was for a little time made lower than the angels for the suffering of death, now crowned with glory and honor. The day is coming in the future when "we shall see Him and be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." That day of revelation will be the culmination of all our hopes and dreams that motivate us to serve Him with honor today.

That last public incident in the ministry of the Lord Jesus opened up the hour He had been speaking of that should come. That hour would be the one in which the Lord would be glorified in His death as the Lamb of God John the Baptist had prophesied would bear away the sin of the world. Most people want a comfortable life and try to avoid anything that brings pain and suffering. Greeks were like that in their philosophical

outlook on life. Now that the hour had come for the Lord Jesus Christ to be glorified by His death, burial and resurrection, He explained how this would happen.

A grain of wheat remains a single grain until it is put into the ground where the life-source within it is nurtured by water and heat that opens the seed to produce many more seeds of the same kind. The water of the Word of God and the warmth of the Spirit of God combine to produce the life hidden in the seed of the word of God. The Lord Jesus Christ by His death on the cross for us has brought multiplied millions to experience new life in Him. This eternal life we received as a gift comes not as a labor in our part but as the result of the life-principle that the Seed alone produces. Remarkably the seeds that come from that One, are like the Original Seed in looks, character and use. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

The same principle holds true for us. If we hold back our life from dying to sin from the fruitfulness it can produce because we love the world, or at least the things it offers, we will lose all that is worthwhile from the years of our living on earth. If we are willing to lose our life for the Lord's sake and the Gospel's, we will save it. Not only will our years of living be saved for an eternal purpose, but the Father will honor that person. I can honor God by going where He wants me to go and doing what He wants me to do.

There may be the times of reproach and/or suffering in life, but when we follow Christ wherever He leads us, to serve Him by doing whatever His will for us is, the Father will honor His servant. More importantly, the Lord Jesus Christ will be honored and glorified through the faithful service of those who follow Him.

John 12:26. *"If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honor."*

MY FATHER'S HONOR.

How can I honor God? What does it mean to honor God? How is it possible to add any more honor to the honor He already has? Some questions can be answered and done in one time. These questions are related to ongoing acts that I can do to honor God continually.

Haggai 1:7-8. *"Thus, saith the Lord of hosts; 'Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord.'"*
I can honor God by going where He wants me to go and doing what He wants me to do.

1Chr.29:17. *"I know also, my God, that Thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered these things: and now I have seen with joy Thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto Thee."*
I can honor God by being upright.

Jn.15:8. *"Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples."*
I can honor God by bearing fruit for Him in my life.

Noah: he served God by preparing an ark to the *saving of his house*.

Moses: he served God as a result of a choice made in Pharaoh's house *to serve God's people*.

Daniel: he served God though far away from home and young, by the *sanctifying of his own body*.

Peter: he served God despite failures by *speaking for God to his nation*. He had three major choices in his life: he had to choose between heaven and hell; between heaven and earth; between walking by faith and walking by sight.

"Father in heaven: this is the Lord's Day and I do want to honor Thee from the beginning of this day to the end. I begin here in this room by listening to Thy voice through Thy word. Then there will be the Lord's Supper, the teaching of the word, the interaction in fellowship with others, and the preaching of the Gospel. In every place I do want to honor Thee today. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 12:27-50

"THE WORD THAT I HAVE SPOKEN"

When the Lord Jesus Christ announced that "The hour had come that the Son of Man should be glorified," His soul was troubled. There are three parts to our humanity - body, soul and spirit, and in these three areas Jesus was troubled. He was truly a man and as He looked ahead, He knew what would happen when He

would be lifted up on the cross. Emotions, the senses, every part of the human personality would be affected as He became "sin for us, He who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." There was a price to be paid by the soul-suffering of the Lord Jesus. We are given some glimpses of what that means in Psalm 22, Psalm 69 and other passages of scripture that refer to the inner sufferings of Christ. He was also troubled in His spirit when He was being betrayed by Judas. The future of a lost soul separated from God forever, affected the Lord as He looked at the result of one who deliberately rejected Him. He was troubled in His body when He endured the physical pains of every wound inflicted upon Him. Yet in His grace, He said to His own disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled..."

Jesus asked for nothing to save Him from that hour of suffering because that was His purpose in coming. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." He came to die in our place and in that way would glorify the name of the Father. The voice from heaven was that of the Father as He spoke again declaring His satisfaction with the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and His assurance of a still greater glory as a result of the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Christ. We may not always know the reason behind the actions of God in our lives, but when we are in fellowship with Him, we know He has reasons that may be to bless others through what happens to us. That is a wonderful privilege when another is able to glorify God through us. It is important that we do not get impatient, but wait for the fulfillment of God's purposes.

As the final hour of the Lord Jesus' service on earth was unfolding, He clarified how He would die and why. Condemnation would fall on the world because of the rejection of the Savior. The world condemned itself and Satan was defeated and will be cast into eternal perdition in hell and the lake of fire because of the victory over sin the great cross-work of Jesus would accomplish. When He was lifted up on the cross, the way was opened for all cultures, nations and people of the earth to come to Him by faith. Not everyone will come but everyone is able to come to Christ by virtue of what He has done on behalf of all.

Today, as at that time, people resist coming to the Lord Jesus because they think the sacrifice of Him on the cross is not the way they perceive forgiveness of sins should come. Many think they can add to the value of His sacrificial death by the works they do, the penance they suffer or the personal ideas they have. The result of such ideas follows the arrogant way of the prince of this world, Satan, and the self-centered opinions of people themselves. People who choose to walk in darkness rather than light, will never understand the value and effects of grace. Therefore, they will stumble about in unbelief and ignorance because they reject The Light. Unbelief is a decision people make in spite of all the evidence The Light has shown. In Jesus' day there were unmistakable miracles and teachings to prove who He was. In our day evidence is seen in the many ways God speaks without words as well as what the Bible teaches us.

We have to live with the consequences of our choices today. Those people would not believe the report they had heard and seen. When people refuse to repent and accept Christ, the arm of the Lord is not revealed to them. Even though there was an intellectual acceptance of the facts that were right before the eyes of those who were there, some of the chief rulers would not actually trust Jesus as their own Savior - their Messiah. The evidence was there and they believed the evidence regarding the Lord Jesus, but the praise and acceptance of men was more important to them. The maintenance of their position was important to them and it came first. God does not take second place to men. "The fear of man bringeth a snare." To not accept Jesus as Lord, is to reject Him. To reject Him is to reject God because He is God. To see Jesus is to see God. There is no other way to see the Father.

The first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world was to save people who were in darkness from the eternal consequences of sin. He came as The Light that lighteth every man. But to reject the light of truth as presented in the Gospel is to reject the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. When His words were ignored and His teaching rejected, that is the basis of future condemnation forever. People will recall the words of truth they heard and refused. They will not have an excuse of any kind because what He said was understood. The degree of understanding of every individual may differ according to the light that person has received. The words of truth are in the Bible, but they are also written on the conscience of every person. Evidence is seen around us in creation, in the good things that happen to us and in the lives of those who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

As John, the writer of this Gospel, concludes writing about the ministry of Jesus as proofs of His deity, He uses the words He spoke as testimony to the oneness of the Father and the Son. The teaching He gave testified to His deity. The seven signs John records testify to His deity. Joy comes to us by the power of the Son of God. Spiritual healing comes to us by the power of the Son of God. Strength for living comes to us by the power of the Son of God. Food for the soul comes to us by the power of the Son of God. Freedom from fear and danger comes to us by the power of the Son of God. Spiritual understanding comes to us by the

power of the Son of God. Spiritual life in spite of being dead in trespasses and sins comes to us by the power of the Son of God. These seven signs of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ assure us of who He is in whom our whole life is hid and accepted by God. Our Savior is real, personal and always active on our behalf.

John 13

HE LOVED THEM TO THE END.

Expressions of inner feelings have many ways to be seen.
Others may wonder why I did that or even where I've been.
Love and humility go closely together - almost hand in hand
True love that wants the best for others and humility are hard to find.
The Lord loved His own "to the end," but they had to learn to see;
Their love to others will be seen in actions of true humility.

One of the group could not learn; he thought only of himself.
A thief never considers the difference between loving people and wealth.
Self-love is soul damning pride leading one farther and farther away
Until there is no where to go and there is only sin's wages to pay.
Judas had clean feet when he left hastening on his journey to hell -
The last kind act and words he heard came from Him who does all things well.

Loving as God intends is not impossible, in fact we're commanded to love.
The motivation behind it and power, comes down to us from heaven above.
Our limitations of flesh and the world, make it hard to be real at the start -
When we learn to love others in Christ's name, that comes right from the heart
The results will be that such love, will let all men know I am Christ's
And won't be with self-love but humility, so men will know what is right.

We may not pass every test, or give evidence of love that is real
But the fact is with humility our acts many a heart will heal.
Christians who love each other, will find it much easier to bear
The weight and burdens of life, with someone who is willing to share
The kind of love not temporary - the message it is designed to send -
Is the same as the love of Jesus - we too are to love to the end.

"O heavenly Father, keep me from being selective in loving. I know there are some areas of life and people too, that I have to be selective about. But when I read of the Lord Jesus Christ and His love, I see clearly that His love should be in me and through me He will love others. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 13:17. *"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."*

IF YE DO THEM.

What are the things that I know?

Jesus knew that His hour was come. He knew the time of His vindication and return to the Father was here. He knew the time of His rejection and suffering was here. He knew the work of the cross was here. He knew the end of His public ministry was here. But mainly He knew He had finished His work and was going to the Father. Do I know that my work is done? At the present moment I cannot say that. So, I must leave that knowledge to Him and continue on with the work in my hands.

Jesus knew His own, this little band of followers, and His love for them was to the end of His life and beyond. How can infinite love have an end? It can't, therefore His love for them continues. Do I know who my own are? Yes, I believe I do. Those whom God has given me a special care for and are on my heart continually, are "my own." They are widely scattered but they are "my own." Therefore, I must not leave them or abandon them but love them to the end - of my life.

Jesus knew the things hereafter. He knew the need to exemplify the work of a servant, so He washed the disciples' feet. He knew the nature of man would rebel against being a servant to others, so in this way the new life in Christ was put on display. I know only the present by experience but the future is known by the revealed word of God. I know the privilege of serving God's people now by the cleansing I can give through the word of God; through spiritual time given; through genuine interest in their well-being and the Holy Spirit will enlighten me as to the results when the time is right.

Jesus knew who His real children were. Judas never deceived Him. Peter's denial never surprised Him. In spite of all of the failings of His own, His love never failed. I know the children of God are important to God and should be to me. I know neither they nor I are perfect. I know failures and disappointments will come. I know that my love to others is the best Gospel testimony I can give. I know that priestly consecration and washing at the laver of God's word will teach me what I need to do with what I know. I know the end results of every effort that is divinely inspired will be profitable. Therefore, it is within my power to be happy.

“O God of all comfort and joy: I am happy today because I know I am in the place where I am supposed to be, doing what I am supposed to do. I want it to be like this every day and I know it can be when I am submitted to all that Thou dost show me. Thanks, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

BENT KNEES

What is this scene amazing, my wondering mind beholds?
This evidence of humility and grace before faith's gaze unfolds!
The Lord of life and glory, the Kings of kings is He -
Who washes the disciples' feet, before them on bended knee.

What is there about those people that makes this such a great sight?
They are those who came from unbelief, and now live in His holy light!
He is leaving soon to be lifted high, our sins on His body to bear -
This foretaste of holy servitude we are taught in this way to share.

What is there behind this action that exemplifies true humility?
This is an example of grace displayed by the God of eternity!
He was teaching an important lesson as to how those in the kingdom live -
It is not important what I receive from others, it is what to others I give.

What life-principle can I retain as I review this remarkable scene?
This visual lesson I understand: telling me who I am, not what I might have been!
In the kingdom of God, the way up is down, the way to win is to lose -
The way to get is to give much more, it's important that I wisely choose.

What is the result if I am willing to take this place of lowly service?
Then I will be where I really know what is life's true purpose!
When one is bowed upon his knees, he is taller than when on his toes -
Here is where one realizes what God had in His mind when He me chose.

What will happen if I truly serve others, what should I expect?
God is glorified through this humble means, His people and will, I won't neglect!
To be a comfort to those who mourn; to help those who have a need -
Is to serve the Lord by serving His people; to this lesson I will give heed.

“O Gracious Father, my willful heart has often been served by others who have ministered to me - and I expected that. May this lesson from the Lord Jesus move me to bend my knees in willing service for others who need what I have to give. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

John 13:18-38

A NEW COMMAND

There was no question as to Christ's love for His own. He loved them not just to the end of His earthly ministry, or even to the time of His ascension - His love is infinite, forever. Such a demonstration of that included His example of humility and service for His own disciples, and goes on to the cross where "The Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me." The act of Jesus washing the disciples' feet gave evidence of the reality of His love for His own. This should be true of us. Not just words of love are needed to show the love of God's people for each other, but acts of compassion that meet the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

The significance of the act demonstrates how we can assist and strengthen each other when we see how the word of God applies to the needs another person has. There isn't the need of a complete body wash, because that speaks of salvation when the cleansing power of the blood is applied. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." The washing of the feet of the disciples speaks to us of the need of cleansing from the pollution of the world in our daily walk. We are contaminated by what goes on around us even though we do not participate in what we know is wrong. There are defiling influences in what we hear, what we see and what we do that cannot be avoided. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we need to

constantly support each other in humility and unselfishness. Not only is it beneficial to those to whom we minister, but it is a blessing to us when we know the actions of our lives are useful. That gives us joy in our service for the Lord.

True Christian love means one is willing to take the lowest place rather than being exalted by others or by one's self. True Christian love is a sacrificial love. In order to pour out the water of the word of God into a "basin" to be used for the benefit of others, we have to have taken the water of the word into ourselves so we can draw from what we have personally experienced. Unfelt truth is often not accepted as sincere. The explanation of Jesus regarding the act of feet washing was not lost on Peter. He refers to the need and reality of humility in years that followed when he taught others in his epistles what he had learned himself.

The betrayal of Judas was not unexpected as far as the Lord Jesus Christ was concerned. Yet, whenever such an act takes place, we are affected by it even as Jesus was. The Lord revealed Judas' betrayal in advance, but now it was about to take place. The "heel" of insult and rejection had already been taken by Judas when he sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. The attitude of the betrayer was already known to the Lord Jesus and he was ready to strike out against the Savior. John was near enough to Jesus to respond to Peter's nod and quietly asked who the betrayer would be. Perhaps Jesus answered with a low voice when He spoke of the bread dipped into the juice that He would pass to Judas. Judas had already opened himself to Satan's power. This "son of perdition" left the room and went into the darkness of the night and on into eternal darkness, the "outer darkness" which he will never leave.

Jesus was troubled in His spirit as He thought ahead to what "the hour" was about to bring upon Him. His troubled spirit was not only because of the betrayal of Judas, which in His deity He had known about from ages past, nor from the denial of Peter. There was much more ahead of Him that only He could know. Rejection by those He blessed, deception that would take Israel near extinction, the suffering for sin, the loud call to God when He was on the cross - all of this, and more, would have troubled His spirit. When Judas had finally gone, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him." A page had been turned and He could look beyond and see the lasting results of all that He must go through.

For the first and only recorded time, Jesus used the term, "little children" - an expression of endearment that John never forgot in years to come when he wrote his epistles. This opened the way for the Lord Jesus to give His new commandment. This goes way beyond the law that said, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." This went to loving like God, "God so loved the world..." This went to loving our enemies. This went to loving God's people sacrificially as a proof of being a disciple. This evidence of love is still the strongest test of reality the world can see in those who profess to be Christians.

Disciples are not recognized by doctrinal statements or the dogmas they follow. They are not recognized by apparent miracles they perform or even their love for lost souls. The love believers have for one another is how recognition of true Christianity is seen by those who are unbelievers. This new commandment still carries a tremendous impact on those who are bound by other religious practices. As one said, "What I have in my religion is fear, uncertainly and hatred. What Christians have is love, peace and assurance." May this always be apparent wherever God's people are found.

Four of Jesus' disciples had questions to ask Him during the time of His upper room ministry. Peter's question was "Where." He wanted to know where Jesus was going. Thomas had a question that was concerned with "How." "How can we know the way?" These questions were pertinent to the events that were to follow that night. Philip's question was "Show." He had missed the point of Jesus' teaching that when one saw the Lord Jesus Christ, they saw the Father. The Father and Son are One. Jude wanted to know "What." Questions are not unreasonable comments when we are unsure of what is happening. But it is not right for us to ignore what has already been shown to us because it doesn't fit in with our frame of reference or our preconceived ideas. We do well to take heed to what the Lord has already said and done before we go back to Him with questions that have already been answered.

John 13:31. *"Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him."*

NOW: the cross and cleansing.

There is no place for half-hearted faith.
There are many temptations wanting to take its place.
But to be cleansed from sin is only by grace -
This is the reason why Christ came to earth.

A just and holy God has standards to which we must conform.

They are perfect laws that must be kept - not just human norms.
The laws that are given, the anxious sinner warns -
Revealing to us sin's real worth.

To most sin is not right, but it has been passed along -
So, it is not really that bad when we do what is wrong -
They think God should overlook sin because we are weak and He is strong:
Sometimes looking upon sin with mirth.

Just before Christ died, He knew His hour had come.
No longer was there waiting to see what would happen to Him.
The moment had arrived for Him to put away sin -
He knew the wages of sin is death.

God would be glorified; holy justice would prevail.
The Lord Jesus knew about the cross and what it would entail.
To meet the legal claims of God, He alone could not fail -
He was the Perfect Man from His birth.

He glorified God and God glorified Him;
For on the cross of Calvary He dealt fully with sin -
So those who accept the sacrifice He made for them -
Would have the fellowship God wanted at the first.

"O Holy and Righteous God: for the knowledge that all legal claims against me have been met; for the assurance that Christ satisfied Thee once and for all; for knowing that I am accepted in Him in life, in death and forever - I thank Thee, In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 14

"LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED"

There are a lot of uncertainties in life, and when those things become the focus of our attention, we are troubled. "What is going to happen next?" "Why has God allowed these things to continue?" "How much worse can it get?" Questions like this affect us if what we are occupied with those things going on around us. Most people are concerned with events and issues that make the news. Outside the upper room where Jesus was with His disciples, the hosts of hell were gathering. The religious leaders had their plans made to kill Jesus. Judas had betrayed Him for thirty pieces of silver. Satan was orchestrating the whole thing even to getting the power of Rome involved. But in that upper room came words of comfort. "Let not your heart be troubled." Each one of those men there had the right to claim those words for himself. Jesus had told them previously of the assurance and encouragement of the Father's hand at the beginning of their life of faith. He had told them of the Father's honor as a challenge to faithful service at the present time in the walk of faith. Now He tells them of the Father's house to comfort them as they look ahead to the end of the journey of faith.

Eternal life experienced now contains promises that we can claim because of the One who made them. Heaven is a real place where there is room for all. It is not some disorganized, imaginary dream of one's mind, but is a "prepared place for prepared people." The Lord Jesus Christ told those disciples He was going to prepare that place. Perhaps He was making reference to the redemptive work He would accomplish at Calvary as well as the abode in the Father's house all God's people will share. Our eternal life found its origin when He gave His life that we might have eternal life through Him. Today we live in the good and enjoyment of that kind of life He gave us.

The promise of Christ's return for His own has comforted and challenged God's people since He first spoke those words of promise - "I will come again." Those words have been a comfort to the suffering and sorrowing ones down through the years since He spoke them. They are also a challenge to holy and righteous living because we do not know when He will come. The fact that there is no reference to a specific time or evidence of events that will bring this to pass, purifies us in view of the imminence of it happening. Trye believers do not want to be ashamed before Him when He comes. And yet in spite of ourselves and this knowledge, we sometimes are involved in things that would be an embarrassment to us. We can avoid being troubled in our hearts if we conduct our lives conscious of the fact that it may be today when He fulfills that promise.

Thomas' question introduced the sixth great statement of the deity of Christ and what it means to us today. Jesus is the only way to God. Through trusting Him alone for salvation we are placed on the path to the

Father's house. People often argue and are offended when Bible-believing Christians insist that Jesus is the only Way. Their complaint is that it is too narrow and excludes too many people. Actually, the truth of the matter is just the opposite. There is room enough on The Way for the whole world to be accepted to heaven if they are willing to come God's way, not a way of their own choosing. Jesus as "The Way" is a sure way, not one of men's speculation.

As "The Truth," the Lord Jesus gives promises that can be relied on without question. He is the reality of all God has promised. There is no need to wonder or argue over what He said. The promises of God are "Yea and Amen." Nothing has to be added to what He has assured us of in His Word. Scriptures concerning Him that were written hundreds of years before He came, were fulfilled when Christ was here in the world. As "The Life," He is God's provision for us. He has united Himself to us by giving us His eternal life so that we are joined to Him in sharing this life by grace alone. We do not do anything to merit or earn in any way this life. It is given to us as the gift of God.

Philip wanted to see the Father. For some reason he was not able to grasp the unity of the Father and the Son by trusting what the Lord Jesus said. He wanted to see something apart from believing on Christ in simple faith. Jesus is the visible revelation of God. To see Him is to see the Father and the Spirit. "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Faith can see Him without a visible image. We experience fellowship with the Father, Son and Spirit. We know the Spirit is within us because He bears witness with our spirit that He is with us, teaching us of Christ and reminding us of the things the scriptures say that work in our lives daily. The Holy Spirit convicts us, guides us, shows us, fills us and empowers us to do the will of God when we are obedient to Him. To have the Holy Spirit is to have Jesus. The Spirit of Christ is unseen but real.

So when we pray in the name, by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are not just making an appendage to the end of some poetic words or rote we have learned. In fellowship with Him we approach the Father in confidence. Our love for Christ and desire to please Him and serve Him acceptably, makes our prayerful requests consistent with the will of God. That is part of the work of the Holy Spirit when He is not quenched or grieved. The Comforter (Counselor) who is our Teacher is the Spirit of Truth. Nothing He guides us in or to do, is ever out of the mind of God. He is God in us. He brings the words of our Lord Jesus Christ to our minds at the appropriate times. He assures us of the love of God when we are in need of comfort. The Lord Jesus loves His own unto the end. The Father and Son make their abode with us and we are conscious of the presence of divine Persons when we walk in the light. The Lord Jesus Christ left His peace with His own so we can find our joy and peace where He finds it. We do not find it in the world where there is no peace.

Looking ahead into the future those in God's kingdom have no reason to be troubled. By faith in Christ we have prepared for, and entered into, that kingdom. That is why we live our lives for Him when we live by faith. We are waiting for Him and know His promise to come again is true. Our faith in Him is not in vain because we believe in the Person the words of scripture tell us about. For that same reason our love for Him is real and we want to obey Him. What His word says we know is true and based on that word of truth, we trust Him completely. Satan has no power over Him and when we are obedient to Him, Satan has no power over us. Therefore, our hearts have no reason to be troubled. He was here in the flesh; He did accomplish redemption; He has gone to prepare a place for us and He has promised to come back again for us - of this we can be sure.

PROMISES (7 "I will's")

v.3 The "I will" of hope

A promise was made to us by the One who is the Truth
The character of the Lord Jesus gives that promise its true worth.
Our hope is not a wish for the future but it is an actual fact
He who made the promise is definitely coming back.

v.14 The "I will" of answered prayer

There is unlimited power in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord
He will answer when we pray because He has given us His word.
The answer may not always be exactly what I might want
But the promise is made by Him and in prayer I will not doubt.

v.16 The "I will" of intercession

Often, I don't know a thing and fear what is ahead
My Lord promises intercession and there is no need to dread.
The Person of the Holy Spirit He has sent to dwell within

Both of them make intercession with a view that I don't sin.

v.18 "The "I will" of comfort
The Comforter has come we are not orphans but family
And God has made provision through a Person I cannot see.
The very fact the Lord has promised is comforting to me
And gives assurance of His presence, from fear I am set free.

v.18 The "I will" of fellowship
So now the Holy Spirit, God the Father and God the Son
All have come to abide with me and family fellowship has begun.
His promise of such fellowship is one of His "I will's,"
That lets me enjoy God's peace in spite of pressures that face me still.

v.21 The "I will" of love
The commandments of God aren't grievous they are able to be kept.
When I do what God has asked of me, I am not of joy bereft.
The love of the Father and the Son is promised to be known
My love to Him is manifest when I make His Truth my own,

v.30 The "I will" of success
He did not promise to speak to us in words outside the Bible
The word He gave us to fulfill each one by God is able.
To practice in this world of men though an enemy opposes
For He has given His own power to all of those He chooses.

"I am reminder today O God, that the promises of God are "Yea and Amen." I have no doubt that all the Lord promised He does or will do. There are some today in great need of the comfort of the Holy Spirit and assurance that the Lord Jesus Christ is near them in their great loss. Remember them, O God, and give them some peace. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 14:27. *"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."*

PEACE.

Peace is usually made between two opposing parties. But there is another kind of peace that can be experienced. It is inward peace; one at peace with themselves and the surroundings in life. In spite of the normal tensions of the mind and life, one who has peace inside, is not moved or manipulated by the forces coming from outside. That person has a unique kind of peace.

Often it is made evident on one's face and in the calmness of the hands, feet and words that are spoken. Eyes are not usually squinted; feet are not usually agitated and words are not angrily or rapidly spoken when a person has inward peace. This is not to say that there is a disinterested view of life and what is going on around, but a sense of rising above all the tensions, because the peaceful person either knows what is going to happen next and is prepared, or is trusting in another who has control of the events that are happening or are yet to happen.

The Lord Jesus Christ knew before coming here to earth, everything that would happen; how it would happen, and when it would happen. He even knew the outcome of all the events surrounding His life on earth, and was at peace. Nothing ever caught Him by surprise. His faithfulness to God in every situation gave Him peace, even in His humanity. His understanding of the reason for being despised and rejected, kept Him from being turned aside by the attitude of others, even His own family. His awareness of the scripture and the necessity of the fulfillment of God's word, would have been a source of peace even when it seemed events were going out of control.

To be able to have and live a "quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" is not normal to humans. However, we are able to experience this personally, not just as a result of world leaders giving good leadership, but because God wants us to remember He is in control of all events. The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ was His because of who He is. The peace He gives to us is ours for the same reason – for who He is. The world's peace is a result of cessation of hostilities. Our peace is that of knowing who is in control. The world's peace depends on a willingness to compromise and integrate differences into some acceptable form. The peace He gives us is because we know how future events play out in the end.

So, our hearts are not troubled. Our fears are calmed and we are at rest in spite of all the turmoil and agitation around us. His peace is ours.

“O God of all peace: it is a wonderful blessing to me to experience the peace of knowing that everything that happens is under Thy control. I am able to rest in confidence knowing that the future has been planned out and what Thou hast ordained will be done. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

John 14:31. *“But that the world may know that I love the Father: and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.”*

THAT THE WORLD MAY KNOW: the cross and the believing world.

They stood before the gathering crowd - the world had come to them.
People came running to hear aloud - in their own language of their guilt and sin.
The nation had rejected the Christ, but from other nations - people were ready to hear.
The preaching of the cross that brings salvation - started: to the world God was drawing near.

They were scattered far because of persecution - but the Holy Spirit had designed a plan -
To move His servants by opposition - to take the cross-message to other lands.
The world needed to know the Son of God had come - so to all the world the Gospel is preached.
Now the message of the Gospel goes to individual ones - and multitudes by the Gospel are reached.

Down through the years and to all generations - the Spirit moves men the message to take.
There have been martyrs who have died, and difficult situations - sacrifices people are willing to make
That the world may know the meaning of the cross - and why the Lord Jesus there died.
Those who believed have found there is a cost - but by faith in Christ, they abide.

It finally came to my people through a young woman - who to a preacher's message gave ear.
Down through seven generations the Spirit moved them - to pass on to the next generation what they hear.
I am in the fifth one, there are two after me - that God in His mercy has saved.
I pray daily for the children that new generations will see - what a heritage in the Lord Jesus we have.

May there always come from my lips, and others' too - the message of the cross to the world.
May our allegiance to our Lord always show - may our flag of faith remain unfurled.
May God in His grace never let us forget - that the world through us may believe.
May we be faithful and true, and never neglect - the message of the cross we received.

“O Lord God, the way Thou hast brought men to believe the Gospel has been tried and proven. How wonderful it is when the Holy Spirit uses simple men and women who are yielded to Him, to bring peace to millions and hope for the future. I praise Thee for such grace. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.”

John 15

In chapter 15, He says He is the True Vine, nurtured and cared for by the Father, the Husbandman; that lasting, divine fruit will be brought forth for the Holy Husbandman's delight. But now there is the Holy Three plus another large group involved in putting on display the fruit of the character and Person of God, “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.”

Who He is: In John 13, Christ is presented as the true Bond Servant (Lord and Master). In John 14 He is the true Father revealed. In John 15, He is the True Vine. In John 16, He is the true Teacher. **What He does:** John 13. He washes the disciples' feet. No communion without cleansing. John 14. He comforts their hearts. “Mansion/abode.” Faith in Him takes us to heaven. Faith/love/ obedience brings heaven to the soul. John 15. He opens the lips. He wants this. “Abiding, witnessing.” Occupation *with* Christ always precedes occupation *for* Christ. John 15 does not have to do with salvation or being able to lose it. John 15 does not have to do with good works for mankind, but that which is before God. It has to do with the *walk* of the believer, not the *service*. Serving may never bring persecution, but living for God will because it will make us stand apart from the things in which men are engaged and takes us into heavenly things. Living in

the vine is a testimony in itself. Those concerned with living in the vine, not with their testimony, will give the best testimony. Our testimony is our living; God's testimony is what He gives us to speak.

Israel in the past is seen as the vine; in the present as the fig tree and in the future as the olive tree. In the past it was the accepted and understood sign of the Jewish nation (Ps.80:8). In Hosea 10:1, Israel was a luxuriant vine bringing forth its own fruit, not God's. In Isaiah 5:1-7, God was looking for fruit from the vine and only sour, corrupt, wild grapes were brought forth. Isaiah 27:2 is a reference of hope for the future of Israel. Jeremiah 2:21 indicates that in spite of a good beginning and God's hand upon them, Israel turned into a degenerate people far removed from God's will. Ezekiel 15 tells of the uselessness of a fruitless vine and in Ezekiel 19 that vine was caught up and planted in the wilderness. During the time of the Maccabees, because of these references in the psalms and prophets, the vine became a symbol of Israel's national life.

Just shortly following the public teaching in Matthew 21 of the failure of Israel as the vineyard under evil leadership, perhaps only a matter of hours; Jesus stands among His own and says, "I am the true Vine"; literally "I am the Vine, the True." By the nation of Israel, servants who had been sent were beaten and killed. Israel had rejected the Son who was sent, cast out and killed. Israel therefore, was excommunicated, "taken away and the vineyard given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." His disciples heard His solemn message and now amidst the ruins of the vine, as far as Israel was concerned, He makes it clear that God, who created the vine to bring forth fruit to bless the world, has not abandoned His plans and purposes. He is not defeated, because Jesus, Himself is "The Vine, the true."

What He has done is to transfer the privileges and responsibilities from Israel to Himself and those linked with Him. In John 15:5, it is not "the true Vine," but "the Vine, ye are the branches," indicating the relationship of the branches to Himself. The Vine through which God's love and mercy is available to the world is not the Jewish nation; it is Christ and those that have His life in them. There are four representative expressions of believers in John 15: Branches, v.5 – speaking to me of union, the union of life in Christ. We live in Him and bear fruit because of Him. We are spiritually renewed by Him. Am I vitally linked to Christ? This involves my relationship to Christ [v.1-8] as it relates to *fruit bearing*. A branch makes no noise. A branch doesn't move about; it has its' own area of service and can't leave it. A branch has a passive ministry; it depends on another. It has no life of its' own. A branch is doing its work in season and out of season. To a branch, the winter is as important as the summer. A branch has more than one work: feeding, protecting, produces basic fruit beside other side benefits such as producing carbon dioxide, shelter for the fruit and others beneath it.

Friends, v.15 – speaking to me of communion and joy with Christ. We joy in Him; we have fellowship with Him. This is a spiritual privilege. Am I living closely to Him and in daily fellowship with Him? This involves my relationship to fellow believers [v.9-17] as it relates to *fellowship*. Servants, v.15 – speaking to me of toiling, a service for the Lord. We work for Him in spite of persecution that may come. Our work is a spiritual endeavor. Am I faithfully serving Him? This involves my relationship to the world [v.18-25] as it relates to spiritual *foes*. Witnesses, v.27 – speaking to me of telling; heralding the theme of the Gospel. We speak for Him and the Spirit of God, the divine Paraclete, comes alongside. This is my spiritual responsibility. Am I daily witnessing discretely for Him? This involves my relationship to the Holy Spirit [v.26-27] as a *friend*.

John 15

RELATIONSHIPS

The Vine and the branches – the Lord and His servants – the Friend and His friends
The origin of fruit lies deep in the foundation of the Lord
Each fruit in the hand came from Him.
The nature of new life is taught plainly in the Word
To bring blessing to others - God uses men.

From the Vine comes what is needed to produce something new
But the branches each have a role to fill.
The Vine brings from its source all the fruit needs to grow
And the branches maintain the fruit and keep it still.

A branch doesn't make much noise as it shelters precious fruit
Its attachment to the Vine is the key.
But when external forces break the branch off from the Vine
Then the purpose of the branch has ceased to be.

We as servants to the Lord are like branches to the Vine
Disciples are to help the fruit to last.

Love to God and one another is the servants' role in time
The Lord through us brings the ripened fruit to pass.

A wonder now has happened, the Lord Jesus calls us friends
As a friend He laid His life down for my sin.
My part of this friendship is to do what He commands
And He in turn reveals what He has planned.

“Am I shy Father God, or is being hesitant part of my nature? I seem to not want to interfere in the lives of people as much as others think I should. If I am to be more assertive or aggressive in my relationships with the Lord's people and the unbelievers, I would like to have this confirmed in some way. I ask this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

JOHN 15.....FRUIT MANIFESTED TO GOD vs.1-11

“The Vine, the true; the Husbandman [land-worker].” The Father owns and takes care of the vineyard that His goodness will flow to His people. It is the Father who will trim, restrain, train and support the tender branches. He will do all that is necessary to produce fruit to His glory. No longer is the care of the vineyard entrusted to “wicked husbandmen.” The Father judges those who bear no fruit [spiritual]. Spiritual fruit is a spiritual product of a spiritual union. Fruit is the natural product of a living organism. “Takes away” [airo] as in John 1:29 means “bears away” and can mean physical death. In John 8:59 the same word means “lifts up” and can mean the fruitless branch is lifted to where it can get light and air and hopefully will bear fruit. “Purgeth” [pruned] by separating or cutting back. Cleanses from insects, fungus, mildew by the word. Originally at conversion; continually by being set apart. We all have notions, passions and ideas that need purging. Discipline is to strengthen our character and faith. The Word of God is the cleansing agent. We are sanctified by the word.

“Abide” means stay where you are, drawing nourishment from the Vine through the Word, prayer, fellowship and conscious of our union with Him. All we do in our lives must be done in the strength of our union with Christ. “Bear fruit” -- Christ-like character can only be ours by being in continual touch with Christ. “Abiding:” We keep His commandments to abide. The life of the vine flows through the branches to the fruit. The branches are channels. Without an abiding relationship there is nothing. Abiding in Christ involves [1] Believing He is God's Son (1Jn.4:15). [2] Receiving Him as Savior and Lord (Jn.1:12). [3] Doing what God says (1Jn.3:24). [4] Continuing to believe the Gospel (1Jn.2:24). [5] Relating in love to the saints (Jn.15:12). This is not a reference to everlasting punishment, as the subject here is fruit-bearing, not life. A Christian may wither and dry up and their works will be judged by fire (1Cor.3:12-15). “Men gather” is what men see and scoff at in a Christian who has lost his testimony. God doesn't cast out these branches.

Those who abide in Christ and permit His words to abide in them, have the promise of answered petitions. When this is true we will only ask what is good for us; we will only ask what is right. These promises are waiting to be turned into prayers. If this command to abide is kept; as sons with a parent we can “demand as due;” one of the strongest words in regard to prayer in the Bible, and “it shall be done;” granted; caused to be; creative power shall operate. Abiding in Him and His words in us remove all desire or inclination to do anything contrary to His will. “Glorified.” The likeness of Christ exhibited. We are chosen and appointed for fruit-bearing. This has to do with who we are and the meaning of our lives; what our living should be. To be saved; to be a benefit to the community; to set examples for others is not what is fruit-bearing in this passage. It is not the fruit of our service that is in question here. He can command angels or servants to do His bidding. This is the fruit of the new man; the love-mastered life; loyalty to the Lord; God expressing Himself and His joy through us. The order of fruit-bearing Love, keep the commandments of the One loved, this is abiding in Him, this is the fullness of joy; our joy being the sharing of His joy, chosen as friends.

His love is immeasurable but realize and enjoy it. Christ was comforted by the love of His Father in His sufferings. Because Christ loved the Father, He joyfully suffered. The center of the abiding relationship we have is the love of God. His “commandments,” exhortations, examples make this possible to us. Christ always showed that God made Him happy. We spread God's joy and Christ's joy by knowing Him better. Glorifying God is bringing out what God is. The more Christ is to us, the more He does for us, the more He will be known. Joy comes by taking God into one's life, not leaving Him out. Joy transcends circumstances. Joy comes from a consistent relationship with Christ. This keeps us level-headed. This verse can be read two ways: 1) His joy in us may remain; fruitful and faithful disciples are the joy of the Lord Jesus; 2) My joy, that is, your joy in Me, may remain; constantly rejoicing in Him. Union with Christ means we have His joy. All other joys are as chaff.

John 15:4-5. *"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."*

UNION WITH CHRIST: identification with the cross.

The surging pulse of life is felt and from that there is seen
Evidence of the life principle where once none has been.
What began at first as a fragile twig, begins to grow and grow
Until the branch is strongly attached and life in the branch does show.

From the vine-source continually there flows all that for life is needed.
The union is strengthened, weight can be borne, fruit can now be shaded.
The Vine keeps supplying what is needed; all the branch does is "abide."
Soon the evidence of fruit is bursting forth growing strongly from inside.

There is a vital unity between the True Vine and the branch.
This unity is sustained by the Life-Source deliberately - not by chance.
The union of the Vine and branch is intended to remain -
That the fruit needed to bless those around by this union is maintained.

To be "crucified with Christ" is not just a light-weight phrase.
Death is involved in crucifixion - even then, the union stays.
The "death of the cross" means both the Vine and the branch have truly died.
Yet in resurrection that union remains - both are now alive.

There is new life that goes beyond what is common to mortal man.
Immortality the branch now knows is part of the divine plan.
Our life is now "hid with Christ in God," and there the branch will stay.
Not just for the years this life has left, but on through the endless day.

The cross is passed now, that is true, but the effects of the cross go on.
The union of the branch to the Vine is based on a life that evermore is strong.
We will look back on that cross work and will forever praise His name
Knowing the life of the Vine and branch is really one and the same.

"Lord God: the Author and Giver of Eternal Life: with joy I celebrate this morning - this new day of eternal life. Even now I can sense the reality of the life of God within. I am finding new understanding of what it means to abide in the Vine and it gives meaning to this new day. I praise Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 15. FRUIT MANIFESTED TO FELLOW BELIEVERS vs. 12-17

Two commandments in Jn. 15, "Abide in Me," "Love one another." This is the law of our union with Christ. This is an order. It is enforced by His pattern because He loved us with sacrificial love. Listening, helping, encouraging, giving are all ways of doing this. Love in its highest degree, its greatest expression, is laying down one's life. Giving because of obedience. Christ's life is infinitely higher than ours, and He lay it down for us. Faithful friends are obedient servants. Friends exhibit friendship. Friends are those He shares His joy with; He chooses and instructs them in His purposes and ways. Servants do what they are told because He is Lord and Master. A friend is one taken into confidence. We are friends by His choice, because of loving obedience, He makes known to His friends, things relating to redemption.

He chose to love and die for us. He chose to save us to bear fruit and win souls. In grace He chose them to go and be diligent in their work, not to sit still, and their work will produce. When we ask, we go as a son to a parent, knowing the mind of the parent, entering into family liberty and the fullness of the heart of the parent. Asking gives the parent great delight. God yearns for the company, confidence and fellowship of man. He never received it till Jesus was here. We are one with Christ the Vine. He has made us for this and wants our supreme confidence. He has made us for this and wants our supreme confidence. We have a God to go to -- Father. A good name to come in -- Lord Jesus Christ. An answer promised. There is plenty of hatred from the world. We need love and support from each other. Love only is mentioned because this includes many duties and has good influence on all. In view of the warning about to be given, act on the instructions already given.

John 15. FRUIT EVIDENT TO THE WORLD vs. 18-27

Enmity between the seed of the woman and the serpent is real and lasting. The hatred of the world is not an uncertainty but a reality. The world loves its own and hates what is not of itself and its own nature. That is why it hates Christ. The philosophy, the conditioning, the materialism, the satisfaction of the world is

contrary to the Lord Jesus Christ. "Of the world" vs. "not of the world" are complete contrasts. If we create a cause for hatred, we have reason for regret; if hatred is because of that which people should value and love, we have pity but not perplexity. The world is a bad name in scripture, and of all its evils, the worst is that it rejected Jesus Christ. The servant and Master will be treated alike. The believer's essential being, his new life, comes specially from God, and therefore is not the same as those who oppose God.

Persecution is inevitable because of the world's ignorance and rejection of the Father (16:3). We are hated because we belong to Christ. We bear His Name, and therefore will suffer for His name's sake. We are linked to Christ. The world does not know God. If Christ had not come the world would not have been guilty of the sin of rejection of Him. They could have pleaded lack of proof of His Person. But He did come, and He offered His grace and was refused. Now they have no excuse...no cloak for their sin of rejection even though they were always sinners. Now they are totally inexcusable. Privilege and responsibility go together. They had the privilege--now the responsibility.

The Father and Son are One. In hating Christ, the world hates the Father. Jews claimed to obey the Father but they hate the Son. In reality, they hated both. His works, wonders and words are all proof of Who He is. If the Jews had not seen these, they could have pled lack of proof of His Person. To reject Christ in the face of His works is inexcusable. In rebellion and hatred, the Jews were fulfilling God's plan. Psa. 35:19, 69:4. Their hatred was their own deliberate choice. "Without a cause." Enmity to Christ is unreasonable. Christ is the greatest blessing possible to His own and yet was hated.

Christ (Jn.14) and the Father in equality would send the Holy Spirit to testify of Christ. There is more about the Holy Spirit in this verse than any other one verse in the Bible. He is...1) A Person, 2) Spirit of Truth, 3) Proceeds from the Father, 4) According to the Father's will, 5) By the Father's power and authority as Husbandman, 6) Comforter, Advocate, 7) A Witness for Jesus, Counselor: helping, encouraging, strengthening. Spirit of Truth: teaching, illuminating, reminding. He is operating with His friends by being the energy and power which holds them. The Spirit's working will enlarge and encourage our witness. These were especially qualified because they were witnesses of 1) His words, 2) His works, 3) having been with Him, 4) having lived a life of communion with Him.

John 15

BRANCHES... SERVANTS... FRIENDS

Different, yet composed of material that's the same
"The True Vine," and the branches - there's difference in the name
But when joined together, the objective is made very plain -
Fruit, to bless God's people.

"The True Vine," perfect in every possible way
Bringing life from the Source in words that say -
"I AM ... My Father ... ye are - attention pay -
Bear fruit, be My disciples."

So, the branch remains, by the Father lifted up
And life flows through even though occasionally cut
That through the branch, fruit is formed to fill a cup -
To satisfy and bless the people.

When the branches fall down, it is raised and cleansed
That earth's contamination and disease will truly end
Through that branch again the True Vine does send -
Fruit to bless the people.

The servant listens and hastens to obey
His job is to act on what the Master does say
A faithful servant acts now - not waiting another day -
To do the Master's will.

For the servant to find joy and full satisfaction
He doesn't hesitate or linger, he takes immediate action
To do the Master's will and reach the goal without distraction -
His will is to do the Master's will.

The more a servant serves each task to complete
The greater is his joy when at his Master's feet
He places a finished work he doesn't need to repeat -

He faithfully serves his Master still.

Between the Master and servant develops a unique relationship
The objectives both parties have, bring a special fellowship
That by the passing of time and sharing produces a lasting friendship -
Between the Master and servant who does His will.

Now not just a branch, though fruit is still produced
Through faithful service a fellowship is induced
To those who look on, a real friendship is deduced -
The branch-servant is now the Master's friend.

The extent of that friendship is sacrificial love
The effect of that friendship is change that comes from above
The expression of the friendship is intimacy each does have -
Toward the other because they are friends.

The One who initiates that friendship is the loving Savior
The goal of that friendship is fruitfulness that flavors
The bond they share, as toward the other they favor -
The friendship they now both enjoy.

So now from branches and servants, and also friends
There are blessings coming to all that on unity depends
That fruitfulness abides based on love that never ends -
Between the True Vine and those who are His.

"Father in heaven, I thank Thee for tending with loving, continual care this fruitful vineyard in which I have a small part. It is one of the major concerns of my life that I will be found abiding in the Vine always that the Lord Jesus Christ will in every way be glorified. Amen."

John 16

YOU CAN HAVE PEACE

The ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ when He was with His disciples the night before He died, was to prepare them for what was ahead of them. It is not uncommon for us to have a natural fear of the unknown future. But when there is One who knows what the future holds and He tells us ahead of time what is going to happen, then we can have peace in the midst of trouble. There was going to be persecution from the hostile world against those who knew and loved the Lord. It is foolish for us to think following Christ will be popular in our day nor will going public with our testimony of faith in Him endear us to those who do not want Him as their Savior and Lord. The work of God has not been hindered as much by persecution as it has been by complacency and apathy on the part of Christians. There are times when we think we are being blessed because we are accepted by a community and society as one like all the others who profess to be Christians. That is one of the most dangerous times of all. It is then the devil seeks to take our testimony and make it of little value.

When the Lord Jesus had warned the disciples of coming hostility, He also reassured them with the promise of the Holy Spirit coming. He would come into the world and dwell with, and in, those who trust the Lord Jesus Christ as their own personal Savior. He would take the place of the One the world rejected. Jesus had lived here, blessed the people with His presence, His teaching and His miracles - but "He was despised and rejected of men."

The convicting work of the Holy Spirit would reveal to those who would not believe on Christ that He was right and the world was wrong - "Of sin because they believe not on Me." He would also establish in the minds of men the standard of righteous living and righteousness within which they could not avoid even though Christ was no longer on earth. They could not escape coming judgment even though Satan continues to deceive men and women. Judgment is coming and it began when the prince of this world was defeated by the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross, opening the way so all "could come to the knowledge of the truth." The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Truth who guides us into all truth. We are not left to speculate as to what is right or what is wrong. The same Holy Spirit helps us discern the actions to take in everyday life and unfolds to us the facts relating to the future. We can live in peace because we know what the future holds and who holds the future. The Spirit is our Guide on this journey of life and He also instructs us as to our position in Christ and the process that makes us develop into the person God intends us to be.

Even though the Lord Jesus Christ told the disciples He was going away, and that gave them sorrow, the coming of the Holy Spirit would turn that sorrow into joy. The world would rejoice thinking they had got rid of Jesus and the worldly system they were used to, could continue on deceived and deceiving others. But the Spirit of God established the new relationship between the believers and God that could withstand the greatest opposition formed against them. "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." Now through those who are saved the world is being called to repentance of sin. Now through God's people the Holy Spirit is revealing God's standard of righteousness in spite of the changing laws men make. Now the demonstration of God's righteous judgment over sin can be seen in those "who walk in the Spirit." The truth about Christ is made evident through those who love the Lord and His word.

The "little while" the disciples wondered about probably refers not only to the death and resurrection of Christ, but also to the coming of the Holy Spirit and the future coming of Christ for His own people. So whatever temporary sorrow we might have during this life, that will be turned into joy at the time of His choosing. Our fellowship with divine Persons includes redemption through Christ and our acceptance by God "in the Beloved." It also makes our access to the Father in prayer always available to us as we come in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit teaches, guides, gives discernment, empowers and fills us so we can be the person God intends us to be. The Father is the invisible Source of our being. He is God out there waiting for us and watching over us. The Son is the visible, bodily form of God who was here on earth and "in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." He is God with us. The Holy Spirit is the invisible God making things real to us and meaningful to us. He is God within us. So, "If God be for us, who can be against us."

Therefore, there is no reason for us to feel that we are failures when we are in fellowship with God. We can be overcomers in this world because our Lord Jesus Christ overcame the world. He is the Victorious Savior. Any tribulation and testing times that seek to defeat us does not have the authority to defeat us. Our Lord has overcome all enemies and we are positionally in Him. Instead of fear we can have peace. Instead of war we can have peace. Instead of uncertainty we can have peace - all of this in Him.

John 16:14-16. *"He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine, and shall shew it unto you. A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father."*

UNDERSTANDING: The Holy Spirit and the cross.

The Holy Spirit is at work, His function is to show
Why the Holy One who created the world, to the cross must go.
The Spirit unveils the cross that we might see it through God's eyes;
And in the light of the divine intention, it brings us down to size.

He "reproves the world of sin," measuring the greatness of unbelief
By showing us God's view of Calvary and the cause of His holy grief.
Sin demanded a sacrifice that was perfect in every way.
The extent of Christ's death on the cross, opened the door to a new day.

The Holy Spirit reproves of righteousness - God's standard of holiness.
He reveals to the self-righteous world that the Redeemer was made a curse.
The one who is convicted of sin and guilt by a look at the holiness of God -
Will find at the cross, that God is satisfied when His Lamb bore the sin of the world.

This world is under the shadow of judgment, because the prince of the world is judged.
The dark prince has one major objective, to wrest all control from God.
On the cross Christ defeated his aim by being obedient unto death.
Satan's power of death was defused when "He gave His life" as the scripture says.

Now Satan's grip has been broken, for when a sinner comes to the cross -
The work of Christ when He laid down His life brought back what sin had lost.
Fellowship and union with God are the result; He gives eternal life
To those who trust the Mighty Conqueror and the Spirit gives life and light.

"I thank Thee, O Gracious God, for all the work divine Persons have done for me. I was convicted of sin, righteousness and judgment. I was drawn by the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross to trust Him alone for salvation. Now I am able to come to Thee, Father, and I know the Mediator and the Intercessor are both involved in my life constantly. I thank Thee, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 16:33. *“These things I have spoken unto you, that ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”*

THESE THINGS.

^{14:25}
“These things” He spoke when Jesus was here;
So that after He left, the Comforter would be near.
His work is to teach, and make us to remember,
Things that He spoke to make our hearts warmer.

^{15:11}
“These things” He spoke that His joy might be mine.
His joy, it was real, uniquely divine.
A nature divine was given to me;
And because of that nature, His joy I can see.

^{15:17}
“These things” He commanded, lest we go our own way.
We are to love one another and His word to obey.
When we do love this way in deed and in word;
We are able to show, we really love our Lord.

^{16:1}
“These things” He spoke that we would not be offended.
Some will be so angry that our life may be ended.
But the reason for hate that seems so unfair;
Is because of our Savior whose life we now share.

^{16:4}
“These things” He told them that when the time would come;
He would go to the cross and die for each and every one.
The disciples would remember that He told them before;
That for them and for us He would bear every sorrow.

^{16:25}
“These things” He spoke in proverbs; not plain.
The time had not come, He was sparing them pain.
But from then on He spoke plain of the Father to them.
The Father is ready to speak to those who love Him.

^{16:33}
“These things” He spoke to them and to me;
That the tribulations of earth, our portion will be.
But above all the strife of the earth that won't cease;
He gives cheer to us that we might have His peace.

^{17:1}
“These words spake Jesus” to His Father above.
He was concerned about those that He truly loves.
He wanted us to be one, in unity true.
And He knew that could happen to those who know You.

^{17:13}
“These things” He spoke before it came time to die.
That joy instead of sorrow, might in each of us lie.
We know the final end of the cross-death to be,
That believers in Him, His glory will see.

“It is with a grateful mind and heart, I give thanks Father God, that the Lord Jesus said what needed to be said to calm fears, give courage, strengthen resolve, and give assurance in all of life's situations as well as the future unknown. Amen.”

John 16

THESE THINGS # 2.

The bitterness is increasing, unreasonable, inexplicable, unnecessary
Brothers, sisters and their children are injured, imprisoned, impounded
There are books of all religions for teaching, training, transforming

The night of the souls of men intimidates, incites, ignites
BECAUSE
Jesus was here full of grace and truth, living truth, being Truth
He demonstrated long-suffering, light, love
He dealt with sin by bearing it in His body, paying its price by His blood
Christians now believe He is alive, bear witness to His Gospel, "Buy" His truth.
AND THERE IS OPPOSITION!

The Comforter came as He was sent to indwell, inspire, initiate
Believers respond to Him by praying, praising, preaching
The Holy Spirit convicts the world, condemns the lost, challenges the saints
Believers in Christ love their Lord, love the lost, love the light
BECAUSE
God has loved them first, leads them far, lights the future
Showing the state of the lost, the security of the saved, the sureness of prophecy
And the Spirit of God glorifies Christ, quickens the Christians, guarantees the future
And all men are now without excuse, willfully able to walk in the light
AND KNOW THINGS TO COME!

Parables were given for our learning, for our light, for our living
And we have to think about their meaning, motives, manifestation
As we consider the reason for them, responsibility to them, results from them
We learn things beyond normal knowledge about the Father, the faith, the future

BECAUSE
We take time to ponder the truth, pursue the truth, promote the truth
We lead others to love the Lord supremely, learn from the Word diligently, live faithfully
In spite of opposition that applies pressures, provocations, prevarications
And we have understanding that applies to situations, seasons, subtleties
THE PARABLES HAVE TAUGHT US!

"O Lord God, there have always been things that we have known, but I am grateful for the things learned from the Greatest Teacher. Whether it be how to live happily when there is opposition, or confidently in spite of the darkening clouds that indicate prophecies are soon to be fulfilled, or everyday things in everyday life - I am very glad to have these things taught and how to use the lessons hopefully learned. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 17

CHRIST, THE PRAY-ER

John 17. The Intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer for Himself: 1-5. When praying about Himself He says, "Father."

Prayer for His own: 6-19. When praying about His own He says, Holy Father."

Prayer for the Church: 20-26. When praying about the world, He says, "Righteous Father."

The work of the Lord Jesus Christ in this prayer was making God's name known to His own, v.6 giving God's Word to them, v.8, praying for them, v.9,15, keeping them, v.12, sending them, v.18, sanctifying them, v.19, and giving them God's glory, v.22. He knew the characteristics of His disciples, v.6-19. They manifested Thy name: what is involved in the Father's name. They belong to God. Thine they were: v.6. They have been given to the Son and they kept Thy word: v.6, In weakness, in ignorance, with Christ as the Advocate. They glorify the Son: v.10 even though they are hated: v.14 because they are not of the world: v.14.

So the Lord's prayer for His disciples was that the Father would keep them: v.11, sanctify them: v.17, unite them: v.21, let them be with Him: v.24, glorify them: v.24, let love be in them: v.26 and let Christ be in them: v.26. The Lord's relationships are with the Father, v.1. "Thy Son;" the world, v.2. "All flesh" and with the believers, v.11. "His own." The purpose of the prayer was because His work was done, "the hour is come;" His presence was about to be withdrawn from His own and His own were to stay and they need help.

Intercessory prayer is a vital part of the life of the Body of Christ. We are told to pray first of all for kings and those that are in authority that we might live quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty, in 1Timothy 2. We are told that God our Savior will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. So, when our Lord prayed His intercessory prayer, it serves as an example, as well as a comfort to God's people today.

From John 17, we learn that the world is a battleground where the forces of Satan's power and those under God's authority are at war. We must never underestimate the power and subtlety of Satan and the bitter

hatred he has against Christ and His own. Jesus prayed for His disciples, including those of us who follow Him today, that God would keep them safe from Satan's power, setting them apart and making them pure and holy, uniting them through His truth.

The early churches grew because of their reputation for fellowship and generosity, because they were hospitable, and because they were concerned for unity. When the people of God are right with God and with each other; when they are growing in faith and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, one of the inevitable and spontaneous results is the salvation of souls.

The quality of life in the Christian community in Acts was, in and of itself, a witness to the world. A loving community of saints cannot help but find favor in a world rent by alienation. In an intensely lonely society, the reconciled and reconciling love of the people of God has tremendous drawing power. In the upper room ministry of Christ, He wanted to prepare His disciples so they could continue the ministry He had begun. He wanted to get them ready for a greater destiny than they could possibly imagine. His presence *with* them would be transcended by an unimaginable reality – He was going to be *in* them. He was going to continue His ministry through their bodies. The work of God was going to continue, only multiplied by millions of times through the bodies (incarnate grace and truth) of believers. His on-going work in these last days “by His Son” was not only three years, but in the Son working in *us*.

In this prayer Jesus asks His Father to restore Him to His place of honor and authority. His resurrection and ascension reveal that He did return to the right hand of God. Now, God's glory, the revelation of His character and presence, is revealed to the world through the lives of His people. The unity of the Father and the Son in love and harmony is the strongest possible union and is to be seen in the lives of His people. Joy, a common theme in the teaching of the Lord Jesus, is ours through intimate contact with the Lord Jesus Christ, and is to be the experience of God's people even when it seems we are in defeat.

The world hates believers because our values are different. As such we don't cooperate with the world by joining in their sin and that is a living accusation against the world's immorality. Believers are sanctified through believing and obeying the Word of God, which has a purifying affect on our daily lives. God doesn't intend us to escape from the world and all relationships in the world but to be salt and light. Salt, light, seed and yeast do their real work when they are invisible. Salt in the shaker, light covered, seed in storage, yeast in the pantry are useless unless they are taken out and allowed to penetrate their environments, becoming invisible. Food has no power against salt, and darkness has to yield to light.

So, when our Lord prayed for the unity, protection and sanctity of His own; He wanted a powerful witness in the world as to the reality of God.

As we look at this prayer, we will briefly consider the first five verses when He prays about Himself. Several times in the upper room ministry the Lord spoke about specific things as He gave His final discourse. Then through verse 19 we will look at what He had to say about His disciples and some applications to be made. The last verses have to do with the whole Body of this dispensation and give us the Lord's mind for us today.

John 17:4. *“I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.”*

I HAVE FINISHED THE WORK.

THE WORK OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

The work of making God's name known to His own, v.6.
We will learn more of Him from all He says;
No more are we to walk alone.
But from Him to us, to whom the Father gives,
We can by our lives make Him known.

The work of giving God's word to them, v.8.
There is full and sufficient instruction given;
In the words that we received from God.
We know that the One who came down from heaven,
Intends us to live by the word.

The work of praying for them, v.9,15.
His prayers for us keep continually on;
As our lives here on earth He observes.
And He prays to keep us from the evil and sin;

Not to take us out but to let us learn.

The work of keeping them, v.12.
There is power in His name that keeps us from sin.
His disciples were kept when He was here.
That power to keep all of us who have been given
To Him; will continue because we His name bear.

The work of sending them into the world, v.18.
They are going out each one, to represent truth;
Truth that has been given to them.
The world needs God's truth, that's received by faith;
Now it is passed on to others by men.

The work of sanctifying them, v.19.
To set them apart to God and His work alone,
Is done by the power of God's word.
It's been given to us that we might all pass along
To others, the message of God.

The work of giving them God's glory, v.22.
To glorify God is one of man's chiefest aims.
It's a privilege that's hard to surpass.
But to have glory from God to be given to men;
Can only be done by God's grace.

“Holy Father, I can enjoy today the confidence that comes when knowing the One who has all power in heaven and in earth, is praying for me. Nothing that will happen today is without Thy knowledge. Keep us here in a spirit of unity and grace. Give power to the word preached tonight. Give us some new people to attend these meetings and please save precious souls for Thy glory. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

“These words spake Jesus”

WHAT HE SPOKE: Jn.17:1.

1. Who He was, Jn.14:8-9. “Show us the Father”
2. Why He was going away, Jn.14:2. “To prepare a place”
3. What He would do, Jn.14:13-14. “What we would ask in His name...”
4. How He would love them, Jn.15:9. “As the Father loved Him”
5. Promise of His return for them, Jn.14:3. “I will come again”
6. Who He would send them, Jn.14:16. “Comforter... Spirit of truth”
7. Their union with Him, Jn.15:5. “I am the Vine, ye are the branches...”
8. His legacy to leave them, Jn.16:33. “My peace I leave with you”
9. His warnings to them, Jn.15:18-21. “The world will hate you, persecute you”

Jn.17:1. WHY HE SPOKE: That their joy might be full, Jn.15:11. That they would not be offended, Jn.16:1. That they might have peace, Jn.16:33. **“He lifted up His eyes to heaven.”** WHY HE LIFTED UP HIS EYES: His rest was there; His throne was there; His angels were there. **“Father.”** Your Father, Mat.7:9-11; Lu.11:13; your heavenly Father, Mat.6:32; your Father's good pleasure, Lu.12:32. **“The hour is come.”** God looked for it; Jesus looked for it; Satan looked for it; His people looked for it. **“Glorify Thy Son.”** “My glory.”, Isa.42:6-8. Christ glorified not Himself.”, Heb.5:5. “Wrought in Christ.”, Eph.1:20-23. “God also hath highly exalted Him.”, Phil.2:9. “God raised Him.”, 1Pe.1:21.

John 17:2 “Power over all flesh...”

The Word was made flesh [Jn.1:14]. Christ suffered in the flesh [1 Pet.4:1]. Sin was condemned in the flesh [Rom.8:3]. Access to God through His flesh [Heb.10:20]. Abolished enmity in the flesh [Eph.2:15]. Gave His flesh for the life of the world. [Jn.6:51].

“Give eternal life...”

The Lord Jesus Himself [1 Jn.1:2]. Fellowship with the Father [1 Jn.1:2]. His life in us: favor of God; presence of God; image of God; power of God.

“As many as Thou hast given Me...”

He became a man for us. He suffered, died, and rose for us. He mediates for us. He uses His power for us. He values us. He delights in us. He saves us. He keeps us. He assures us. He waits for us.

As a servant, Christ pleads on this basis (a mediator).

His relationship, "Thy Son..." The glory of the Father, "that the Father may be glorified in the Son." [Jn.14:13]. The commission God had given Him, v.2. The objects for whom He came, "those that thou hast given Me...", v.11. I have glorified thee on the earth." v.4. I am glorified in them, v.10,22. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. v.4.

John 17:3. "This is life eternal..."

Life is the perfection of being; eternal life is the perfection of life; all life has its source in God. Natural life is His creation, Ps.104:29. Spiritual life is His inspiration, Jn.10:10. Eternal life is His gift, 1Jn.5:11.

"Know Thee..."

De.11:32. "the people that know their God shall be strong...."
Eph.1:17. "...wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him."
2Pe.1:2. "Grace and peace be multiplied through the knowledge of God and...."
Phil.1:9 "...love may abound yet more and more in knowledge."
Ps.9:10. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee."
2Tim.1:12. "I know in whom I have believed..."
2Pe.1:18. "...ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge...."

John 17:4. Glorified thee...finished the work..."

Only Christ could glorify God and finish this great work, Dan.9:24. Finish the transgression, Isa.53:5. Make an end of sin, Rev.20:3. Make reconciliation for iniquity, Col.1:22; 1Pe.3:18. Bring in everlasting righteousness, Rom.3:21-23; 2Cor.5:21. Seal up the vision and prophecy, Rev. Anoint the Most Holy, Eph.2:20-22.

John 17:5. "The glory which I had."

Our Savior God had an essential glory before He came. That glory was veiled in flesh. He prays to be reinstated in that glory. Our great High Priest/Mediator/Advocate is truly glorified.

John 17:6. "I have manifested thy name."

Seven considerations:

I have manifested unto them thy name.
The Father's interest: "Thine they were."
The gift of them to Himself.
The reception of Him and His message.
Father, remember I am glorified in them, v.10.
The Father's sympathy, v.14. "The world hated them."
They are not of the world, v.14

Names of God:

Jehovah-Jireh: The Lord will provide [Gen.22:14]. Abraham on Mt. Moriah.
Jehovah-Nissi: The Lord my banner [Ex.17:15]. Victory over Amalek.
Jehovah-Shammah: The Lord is there [Ex.48:35]. The city that hath foundations whose builder and maker is God.
Jehovah-Ropheka: The Lord that healeth thee [Ex.15:25]. When the people were healed of diseases.
Jehovah-Tsidkenu: The Lord our righteousness [Jer.33:16]. When the people were justified.
Jehovah-Shalom: The Lord send peace [Jud.6:24]. When He spake peace to Israel.
Seven times in this prayer, Christ reminds the Father that He had given His people to Him.

"Out of the world."

The world, the flesh and the devil sought to keep them, but the Father gave His people over to Christ that He might raise them to a position of union and communion with Him; not the heavens, earth or dominions but He gave Him His people.

"Kept Thy Word."

Jn.14:23, for communion.
Jn.15:11, for joy.
Jn.16:33, for peace.
Jn.15:7, for power.
Jn.15:7, for answered prayers.

John 17:7. "All things..."

2Cor.5:18, reconciled.
Heb.2:10, recognition.
Jn.13:3-4, responsibility.
Mat.28:19, resources.

1Cor.3:21, rewards.

John 17:8. "Given unto them the words..."

By His words we know the Father. The Gospel was given to Christ to carry out [Jn.7:16]. Christ is God's Ambassador [Jn.3:33-34; De.18:18-19]. His work was successful: "they have received them."

John 17:9. "I pray for them..."

The previous verses were an introduction. Here we have an intercession.

He --- came for us; lived for us; died for us; rose for us; ascended for us; entered heaven for us; presents His blood for us; prepares a place for us; claims mansions for us; had the scriptures written for us; sent the Holy Spirit for us; will come again for us.

"I pray not for the world."

The unbelieving world that hates God, is condemned.

John 17:10. "Mine...thine."

Mine by grace, creation, gift, purchase, surrender of ourselves. Practical results of this privilege: 2Cor.7:11, holiness; 2Tim.1:12, persuaded; Jn.14:1; 16:33, peace. Glory is the display of the fullness of God.

John 17:11. "In the world."

He is not in this world continually as He was for 33 years.

"I come."

Rest, joy, river of life, no enemies, able to enjoy the fellowship of the redeemed, no more despised and rejected. Our Lord Jesus Christ is past the travail of His soul.

"These are in the world..."

This is a place of trial, place of danger, place of temptation. He has left us in the world to: illuminate the darkness, "Ye are the light of the world." Form our character: learn to trust, learn hope and love, learn our God. Honor and glorify His name: "Keep through thine own name." Here we learn wilderness lessons but are kept by supreme authority.

John 17:12. "I kept them in thy name."

He knew our sorrows; experience our trials; endured temptations; shared in our nature. His name: Ex.3:13-15; 34:5-7; Num.6:23-27; 2Cor.13:14. They had need of being kept. They could not keep themselves. Judas was the son of perdition; a thief; a devil. He did not fall from grace, but he did fall from an exalted position, a high office. Judas may have been one of the 12 that our Lord might taste the sorrows of betrayal, or that, as a spy upon Christ, he might be called to testify, "I have betrayed the innocent blood" [Mat.27:4] that the scripture might be fulfilled.

John 17:13. "I come to thee."

As they refer to Himself: "I come as a representative of my people"; "I come as a pledge of my love for them"; "I come in the value of a finished work"; "I come on the grounds of justice and truth." As they refer to the Father: the travail of His soul is satisfied; He comes to awaiting glory; He comes to the heart of His affection. As they refer to His people: I come as High Priest; I come in acceptance; I come in righteousness.

"My joy..."

Fulfilled, not just offered; in themselves, not another. Character of His joy [Jn.15:11]: full, complete, abiding, unchanging. Nature of His joy: He gives --- "His" peace; "His" rest; "His" strength; "His" life; "His" fullness; "His" grace -- in doing the Father's will; fulfilling the Father's work; witnessing to the Father's word.

John 17:14. "Thy Word...the world hated them."

The Word lived out is hated. The Word is paralyzed by worldliness in Christians. The world hated the persons, the principles, the profession and the presence of those who live by the Word. Those who live by the Word, have a different nature; different spirit; different worship; different conduct; different character; different portion. Three essentials to true Christianity: 1] Regeneration: new and divine life in the soul by the Word. 2] Separation: from the world; received Christ in the heart. 3] Consecration: to God; by sovereign grace, we love His ways.

John 17:15. "Keep them from the evil."

God's glory is more fully displayed by keeping us from evil here, then crowning us with glory there. The words, "keep them", is the point of the whole prayer. Keep them in spiritual conflicts [Eph.6:11-12]. Keep them from humiliating failures in service [Mk.14:20]. Keep them in bodily suffering. Keep them in the burden of self [Rom.7:24]. Keep them from all spiritual hurt [Ps.121:7].

John 17:16. “Not of this world.”

They are born of God [1Jn.3:19]. They are partakers of the divine nature [2Pe.1:4]. They are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ [Rom.8:17]. They are pilgrims and strangers.

John 17:17. “Thy Word is truth.”

God alone can sanctify His people through His truth. We cannot preserve ourselves or glorify ourselves. God has in mind for His people to be holy:

1. Elect, to be holy [Eph.1:4].
2. Predestinated, to be conformed to His Son [Rom.8:29].
3. Redeemed, to be purified to Himself a peculiar people [Titus 2:14].
4. Called, by the Holy Spirit to a holy calling [2Tim.1:9].
5. Truth revealed, that we might be sanctified [Jn.17:19].
6. Restoreth our soul, to be led in paths of righteousness [Ps.23:3].
7. Chastens us, that we might be partakers of His holiness [Heb.12:10].

Sanctify [Jn.10:36; Ez.36:23-27] involves the setting apart of certain people for blessing, and the Lord directing them to communicate those blessings. The Lord is praying that they will know for themselves, and then communicate, truth.

John 17:18. “Thou hast sent Me..”

His preexistence. “Thou hast sent me” [Jn.17:18]. He didn’t come on His own accord. “He sent me” [Jn.8:42; 16:5]. Sent and commissioned. “The Father sent the Son to be the Savior...” [1Jn.4:14]. Sent and qualified. “Fullness...” [Col.2:10; “All power...” [Mat.28:19]; “Authority...” [Jn.5:27]. Sent officially: Prophet [De.18:15]; Priest [Ps.110:4]; King [Ps.2:6]. Sent responsibly: “I must work” [Jn.9:4]; “I must bring” [Jn.10:6]; “Must be lifted up” [Jn.3:14]; “Must be fulfilled” [Lu.24:44].

John 17:19. “I sanctify Myself...”

The idea behind this is: “I dedicate, I consecrate, I set apart My whole self including – Person, offices, fullness, righteousness, interests, existence for this purpose.” For a purpose – for their sakes. We live a life of faith, and that is a life of sanctification. The ground of sanctification is who He is and what He has done; not who we are and what we have done. We cannot be more sanctified than we are because He cannot love us more, be more perfect or accepted, be made more suitable for glory. Truly sanctified has not to do with our persons, the natural man or the flesh; but for illumination of mind and heart through the truth.

John 17:20. “Them also which shall believe on Me.”

He now prays for the whole Church. We are all included here. He prays as the Head of the Body. He prays as our Representative. He is the Object on whom we believe: we believe *in* God; we believe *in* the Word of God, the Bible; but we believe *on* the Lord Jesus Christ as the Savior who took our place, died in our place, was wounded for our transgressions, whose blood cleanses us from all sin, who is now resurrected and lives for us. Justifying faith is: 1] Knowing what He has done, Isa.53:11 2] Assenting in the heart (believing on Him), 1Jn.5:10-11 3]Accepting Him, Jn.1:12 4]Trusting Him, Eph.1:13-14.

John17:21. “They all may be one...”

The unity of the children of God: Unity of the Spirit, Eph.4:3. Unity of the faith, Eph.4:13. Unity of heart (they were of one accord), Acts 4:32. Unity of love (knit together in love), Col.2:2. Unity of peace (bond of peace), Eph.4:3. Unity of mind (perfectly joined together, of the same mind), 1Cor.1:10. Unity of judgment (discernment), 1Cor.1:10. The divine union of the Son of man and the Son of God is the closest possible union (hypostatic union); the union of love of the Father and the Son and the union of the will of the Father and the Son are close unions.

“They may be one in us...”

God, the fountainhead from which we draw. Christ, the channel through which blessings flow. Holy Spirit, the power through which we serve.

“That the world may believe...”

The character of Christians is the Bible the world reads. The closeness of the Christians shows the love the world needs. The Christ-likeness of the Christians reveals the honor and happiness the world needs.

John17:22. “Even as we are one.”

Union with God, with Himself, in Himself; is still there. Union with the Almighty is the greatest of all conceivable blessings. Union with God provides the grace needed: salvation, justification, sanctification and fruitfulness are all of God’s grace.

John 17:23. "They may be perfect in one."

The Lord is in us regardless of station in life, age in Christ, knowledge of Him. Made perfect in one: God must fail before we can fall. Christ's fullness; the Holy Spirit's power assures this. Made perfect in one: not in denominational separations but in the oneness of His Body. The world is hindered in believing by the power of Satan; the absence of a visible King; the weakness of God's children. The world will know, when we declare the Gospel. The world will know, when we love one another. The world will know, when we live out our faith.

John 17:24. "I will... they be with Me...behold My glory."

His will is above all enemies and oppressors. Shall we be busy with things that displease Him? Shall we work at sin as if bound to it? Shall we listen to the discordant sounds all around us?

John 17:25. "O righteous Father."

The One the Lord always pleased. The One He prayed to before the sufferings of Calvary. The One He presented a finished work to. The world does not know Him but is in darkness and ignorance of God and His ways.

John 17:26. "I have declared Thy name."

God's love for Christ is not just known, but realized and possessed. He prayed.... That they may be made perfect in one. The world may know that thou hast sent Me. Thou hast loved Me. The love the Father has for the Son may be in us. Christ is in us.

John 17

FINISHED THE WORK.

What a fellowship! Eternal in its nature between the Eternal Son and the Father
Both equal in their being - conversing, caring, creating both as one together
In every act committed there was consistent and perfect unity
Through all of the ages past and present - oneness seen in conformity.
A work to do, and together, before the world their careful plans are made
To display God's character, a design, an intricate foundation for the universe is laid.
Chosen names are given as Eternal Persons prepare their love to show
Mercy, grace and love are all displayed in Christ's sojourn here below.

Then there is nothing more to do in preparation - the time has come
And the eternal Son arises from His high and lofty celestial throne.
All those involved in God's redemptive work now take their place,
Angels dispatched with startling messages pass through space
To unsuspecting believers to tell them of a miraculous birth -
The Son begins His work in a virgin's womb - God is on earth!
Scripture after scripture and prophecies one after the other are fulfilled
In birth, in life, in ministry, in teaching - before the waiting, watching ones these unfold.

God is in Christ, the work the Father gave to do is as good as done
For Jehovah's faithful Servant is none other than God the Son!
The display of miraculous acts manifest God's holy name,
The words the faithful Son gave to His own, and God's are just the same!
Antagonism came from every side; He kept His own and still prays to keep
Those given by the Father out of the evil world, still there like helpless sheep -
But they need never fear because even now the Father and the Son are near
And the Promised One, the Spirit too has come - He is really here
Within His own - and so His prayer is answered - not only earthly work is done,
But those He loves; He keeps through earthly struggles - we are as good as at home!

"I read and listen and learn, Father God, as I read the prayer of the Lord. He was in the current of the divine will. And even though the cross-work lay before Him, there never was a question or doubt about its effectiveness or accomplishment. 'The finished work of Christ' is often mentioned by men, but no one but Thee can measure such an accomplishment that will affect all of the universe forever. I worship at the thought of it, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 17:21. *"That they may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."*

UNITY: the cross and the oneness of believers.
The battle is being fought all over the world -

Sounds of the conflict come at times to our ears.
We take time to pray for those who like canon fodder are hurled
Into fierce battles where hearts fail them for fear.
But remarkably they are winning in places where there are
Forces of opposition united to stop the Gospel's advance.
Our prayers seem effective and though the warriors are few -
There are many who surrender and are joined to the Vine as a branch.

Here where I live, it seems like the enemy is resting -
Maybe waiting for a future time to make his attack.
But this is a deception; here he is gradually wresting
Those nearing the kingdom by taking a different track.
Here he has divided our forces making us little groups that are weak.
And it takes all our efforts to just stay alive.
Here our forces divide, each making vain attempts to seek
Supremacy over all the others hoping they won't survive.

Instead of being one in purpose and with grace -
We are splintered like kindling that is easy to burn.
And instead of the true Gospel preached and believed by faith -
Most of the enemy walk among us and openly spurn
The message of religion that is only a compromise -
Leaving those who claim to be Christians no different than others.
Scorning and ignoring the false Gospel that doesn't change lives -
Brings nearly to a standstill the work of faithful brothers.

When sinners come to the cross there is a fundamental change.
No matter who they are or what group they are from -
There is a death that takes places absolving every claim
That sin once had - and the old life of sin is truly done.
A new creation with new life-forces makes itself known to the world -
The crucifixion of the old man is not something we can hide.
Though the soldiers are few; with the Spirit and the Word -
The enemy among the people of God can no longer abide.

"Almighty God, give to Thy servant an understanding today of how to stand against the 'fifth column' that has infiltrated the 'Christian' churches that have removed the preaching of the cross from their curriculum. May I not overlook or ignore those who are still in those places, who are my real brothers and sisters, but seek to encourage them when we meet. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 18:1-18

WENT BACKWARD AND FELL

"When Jesus had spoken these words," must refer to the prayer the Lord Jesus Christ made for His own people. In the prayer He made to the Father about God's work for them, He also identified characteristics of His disciples that describe those who have eternal life. They know the Father and the Son. It is not only the words they say that show the reality of faith but, more importantly, the actions of life that reveal the characteristics of the divine nature. The Lord Jesus made earnest intercession on their behalf as He asked the Father to keep them, sanctify them and unite them. His desire was that they would be with Him and they also would share His glory. Not only would His love be in them but that He would be in them - "Christ in you the hope of glory." Whether they understood much of what Jesus prayed or not, is not told us, but we know what He prayed and we know what those words mean to us now. How blessed and wonderful it is to be the objects of such holy intercession.

At the beginning of Jesus' ministry over three years previous to the events recorded here, Jesus told them of this sign of His deity. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Now the time had come for a testing time for His disciples. As the band of men and soldiers came led by Judas, Jesus woke the sleeping disciples and met these men outside the garden and in His majesty declared openly His deity - "I AM." Wherever God reveals Himself in power and authority, men are helpless before Him. On this occasion those two words moved them to go backward and fall down before Him. God at times allows events and circumstances to happen in which helpless men can only acknowledge, "This is an act of God."

Not only in majesty and authority did the Lord Jesus Christ identify Himself, but in meekness, power under control, He submitted Himself to feeble men and allowed them to bind Him. He interceded on behalf of His own, when He made sure the disciples were free to go. Peter filled with zeal, made a hesitant and fearful

attempt to defend Jesus. Weak courage without knowledge has no real value in the work of God. We need to know the mind and will of God before we try to take His work into our own hands. In mercy and meekness the Lord Jesus restored the damage caused by Peter's impetuous act of cutting off a man's ear. Aiming at a man's head instead of his heart is not an effective way of doing God's work.

When our ambition for God takes control of our service for Him instead of our responsibility, then we are in danger of acting in the energy of our flesh. To be guided in our efforts to serve God means we must be willing to wait for His time even though waiting is very hard to do. Not only may we be acting only in the weakness of our fleshly nature, but we may be acting contrary to the purposes of God. We can make more damage at the end of a matter and it is only God who in mercy can act to recover what we have lost and hindered. It is important that we know His word and act on that lest we be found going contrary to God.

Deceit as seen in Judas' actions has the devil himself as its source. He is a deceiver and the father of lies. The betrayer who had kissed Jesus was among those who went backward and fell. His last impression of the Lord Jesus Christ in His majesty, would be from the prostrate position of one bowed before the Savior - "That every knee should bow ... and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." Judas betrayed the "innocent blood" of the Savior and the last words he heard from the Savior were, "I AM." How very dark and dismal is the state of one who has rejected and betrayed the Savior. "Deeper down than Tyre and Sidon, shall the Christ-rejecter go."

When the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world, there was no question as to what that would cost. The Lord Jesus Christ knew what was ahead of Him and had no intention of avoiding it. There would be suffering, loneliness, rejection and death in that "cup" when He would put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. The Father had given Him this work and He took it willingly. It is always "holy ground" when we see divine Persons subject to one another. True, Jesus was going to suffer as a man for us, but He was still the great "I AM." He never for a moment gave up His divine nature to become the "I WAS." Yet as the Son, He was obedient to His Father. As a man, He was obedient to His God. As the Lamb of God, He was the one acceptable sacrifice for sin and he did not seek any way to avoid that purpose.

There were two trials Jesus would have to go through: one was religious and the other political. The religious trial by the Jewish leaders was a perversion of their own laws and yet they were determined to pursue that as far as they could. It was there Peter and John came to see what would happen. John was known and went into the palace first while Peter was outside. Whether we want to or not, true believers cannot really blend in very long with the world and the people of the world. Light and dark don't mix. The moral and spiritual differences cannot be hidden. They are bound to show. The problem comes when we try to find our satisfaction and comfort in the same place unbelievers go.

The cords that bound the Savior, Peter must have known could not keep Jesus captive. He knew who Jesus was and what he had power to do. He probably expected some miraculous act of deliverance to take place and wanted to see it. When the pressure came on him to identify himself, he was afraid because Jesus was still bound. There are costs to discipleship that we may not be aware of until we are in very adverse situations. That is when we are tested as to the degree of our commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ. It is in those times the reality of our faith in Christ is put to the test.

John 18:11. *"Then said Jesus unto Peter, 'Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?'"*

MY FATHER HAS GIVEN: the cross and the word of God.
He stood there in holy dignity, men lying before Him on the ground.
Bigotry with its blind bias, unfair prejudice, willful ignorance
Brought men to the praying place, control by the power of darkness
Treachery, passion and hate all unite to extinguish the Light.
Again, the calm words and question of identity -
There was no lack of identification, it was positively clear -
This was the One, the only One that could bear away the sin of the world.
Sin was in the cup the Father gave Him.

Looking ahead in silence as the Lamb is led by frail mortal men
He could see the agony the red sweat marks testified to.
Not a clueless creature, but omniscient, He could already taste
The sharp bitterness of a body hung upon a tree.
Physical pain of every wound known to man is anticipated -
For sin had wrought its dark deeds on men in every way.

Yet here, in One sinless Person, every physical pain known -
Agony was in the cup the Father gave Him.

Led from that garden came the One who knows the focus of man's rejection -
They wished upon Him the greatest possible harm.
But unknown to men in hatred so blind and intense against good -
The rejection of being despised and tormented by man
Was only a pale representation of what is involved in breaking God's law.
The consequences of that curse could only be dealt with by the sinless One.
The curse was in the cup the Father gave Him.

An unlikely key was in the hand of a zealous, failing man;
Peter's sword was used to pierce the lock to the righteous cup.
A bloody ear; a miracle of healing - though displaying deity
Could not turn away His holy lips from the cup the Father gave.
The key was sheathed again, the words spoken plainly
Pointed to the cross and all that would be accomplished by one act of obedience,
The Father gave Him the cup; no man, no demon could do such a thing -
The cross was in the cup the Father gave Him.

"O Righteous God, my Father: may You always forbid me from glorying in anything but the cross and the One who there drank the cup You gave Him. May I always find my joy and the subject of my preaching to be in the cross. May I glory in it forever. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,

John 18:19-19:16

WHAT ACCUSATION

Accusations against Jesus were such that even in a religious trial there was nothing that could be found in Him that was contrary to the Word of God nor the laws of the land. Blessed accusations have been made: "Thou art true," made by the Pharisees; "This just person," made by Pilate; "Innocent blood," made by Judas; and "He saved others," made by the chief priests. Some were spoken in sarcasm and scorn, guilt, and even fear, but all were true concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. The only witnesses against Jesus in the religious trial were those who could not agree among themselves because they were false witnesses. When we are called to speak publicly of our Lord, it is important that we support our statements with the words of scripture. Some people have said Jesus could have sinned but He chose not to. Others say He began His Sonship when He was born as a man in Bethlehem instead of being the Eternal Son of God. These opinions of men are wrong. We are responsible to speak rightly of our Lord Jesus Christ when we testify to His Person and His work.

The angry Jewish leadership had been secretly plotting against Jesus all through the years of His public ministry. They knew the deception of their own hearts but justified their treachery because their positions and livelihood were in jeopardy by the truth Jesus taught. Everyone had opportunity to hear what Jesus said because it was taught openly. He taught God's truth in the temple, in the synagogues, in the open air and in homes so everyone would know the truth who had "ears to hear." In contrast, those who now sought a reason to condemn Him had plotted in secret to have Him put to death. They schemed and planned in private because they feared the people who had been blessed by Jesus. When we speak for God, what we say and do must be honest and open to scrutiny as to being the truth, scriptural and having a reasonable purpose behind the teaching. The whole purpose of public preaching and teaching is for "edification, exhortation and comfort." We do not have to fear the condemnation of God when we speak appropriately and in fellowship with Him. Other people may condemn, but speaking under the guidance of the Holy Spirit is that to which God can add His blessing.

The political trial of Jesus began with Pilate asking a reasonable question of the Jews. "What accusation do you bring against Jesus?" By the words they used to answer the question, it was made clear to Pilate the Jews wanted a death sentence passed on Jesus. Accusing Jesus of being the king of the Jews did have political ramifications that Pilate knew he had to address. But the remarkable reply of Jesus stating that His kingdom was the kingdom of truth, brought Pilate up short. He had been cynical and scornful of both the Jews and Jesus, but now became cautious and curious.

An appropriate answer when we are challenged as to our beliefs, our convictions and/or our actions, is not some off-the-cuff response. A thought-provoking, intelligent answer to a question is never out of place. To take time and form a responsible reply to the sometimes, cynical comments people make, can change an argumentative conversation into a meaningful discussion of truth. The answer of Jesus to Pilate stopped the

judge from being only a dispassionate referee of a serious charge, to being one who was personally involved in a moral and spiritual decision.

The comments Pilate made after Jesus said, "Everyone who is on the side of truth listens to Me," are now of a serious nature. He knew it was for envy Jesus had been brought to him by the Jews. He knew Jesus was a just person, not a law-breaker. He knew Jesus was an innocent victim of jealousy. But this feeble, weak-willed, self-centered, cowardly judge was also a people-pleaser. Even more contemptuous is that he was more concerned about his position than what was right and just. He was willing to overstep the bounds of the law by having Jesus beaten and publicly humiliated even though he had declared Him innocent. The crown of thorns and purple robe did not pacify the anger and animosity of the Jews. The leaders called for the crucifixion of Jesus.

Far too often the opinions of the unbelieving public around us intimidates us and we find ourselves tempted to compromise what we know is right for the friendship of the world. "The friendship of the world is enmity against God." The god of this world will loudly proclaim the unfairness and narrow-mindedness of those who follow our Lord Jesus Christ. We do not have a positive influence for righteousness and truth by doing what is acceptable with a sin-loving majority.

When Pilate finally heard the Jews say Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, it made him fearful. He had heard the authoritative words of Jesus about the kingdom of truth. He knew Jesus wasn't about to conquer Rome with an army. But he also knew nothing was hidden from Jesus. After Jesus plainly judged the whole matter in one short statement, Pilate could see the consequences of what was happening before him. Pilate himself was judged for murder by proxy. They were all guilty to one degree or another. No wonder Pilate was afraid because the King of truth had just passed a judgment on him that he knew was right. His own acquittal of Jesus was meaningless and he knew it.

To be a crowd-pleaser is not uncommon among all of us. Most people will bow to pressure from peers or from popular opinion and will either remain silent or go along with what they know is wrong. A person's job, friendship with those around, public acceptance often makes a person do the same thing as Pilate. He knew what he was doing was wrong. He knew the decision to release Jesus to be crucified was totally unjust, but he did it anyway. He could "wash his hands" of the whole matter as much as he wanted, but he was still guilty of supporting injustice and of allowing a murder to take place openly and with his permission. He must have lived with a guilty conscience the rest of his days.

We need to commit ourselves to truth and righteousness no matter what others say or do. We need to be willing to do what is right in spite of what other people or even the law may think is okay. Our lives are to be lived for God and according to His will because our King is the King of Truth.

John 18

THE CUP.

Whoever would have thought "the cup" would take the Son of God
Who holds all power in heaven and earth in His own hands,
From bended knees and prostrate form as He to the Father prayed -
He arises and is bound as common mortal man would be retained in public.
A fatal kiss, remnants of strong prayer in bloody streaks on His face - a final miracle,
The first swallow of "the cup" is taken, and the Son of God is led away!

Whoever would have thought "the cup" would place the Son of God
Before those priestly offices Almighty God Himself ordained
To represent Him before the people - whoever would have thought
They would proclaim a death sentence on Him who holds their breath.
And in defiance to the holy word they pledge to uphold,
The second swallow of "the cup" is condemnation by those supposed to be His servants.

Whoever would have thought "the cup" would leave the Son of God
Alone before false accusers; betrayed by a "three and a half year" companion,
Denied by one who proclaimed fidelity unto death itself takes place,
Abandoned by the faithful few who followed Him, then fled.
"Lover and friend" no longer to be found to help bear the load -
The third swallow from "the cup" leaves Him as alone as a single sparrow.

Whoever would have thought "the cup" would stand the Son of God
Before an earthly judge though He Himself is universal Judge
Of the quick and dead - and that frail judge declares innocence

On every count four times over, knowing envy was the culprit.
Still under pressure of place and privilege easily lost
The fourth swallow from the cup - a guilty man goes free - the just must die.

“Holy God, who is righteous and just in all Thy doings: I pray I never will forget or in any way diminish the terribleness of the cup the Lord Jesus had to drain. The path He walked to the cross was full of bitterness. The cross itself: the humiliation associated with it, the pain and suffering there, the load of the “iniquity of us all” was all in that cup He drained. May I never ever be willing to trivialize such bitterness as He had to drink on my account. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

John 18:13, 28; 19:16. *“And led Him away to Annas first...Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment... And they took Jesus and led Him away.”*

LED HIM.

The fulfillment of scripture was one of the evidences of who the Lord Jesus was. There was no mistaking the fulfillment of Isaiah 53. He who had every source of power in the universe in Himself, was led as an animal would be led. Two sides of the nature of a sheep are contrasted in Isaiah 53. In verse 6 the stubborn, ignorance of a sheep that demands its own way, is spoken of concerning us. In verse 7 the uncomplaining submission that conquers suffering by absorbing it is presented in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He was led from the garden to where the ancient priest sat waiting for Him to come. Annas had left the office of the high priest in AD 15 but apparently still exercised great influence over the tenure of his son-in-law Caiaphas who was high priest until AD 36. Annas would have been aware of the impact of the work and life of the Lord Jesus. His question about the disciples and his doctrine would not have been one of honest inquiry but of seeking to find discrepancy in His life and testimony. For the Lord to have been following behind the basest of men was evidence of His humility and willingness to do His Father's will and fulfill the scripture.

He was led to the palace of the high priest in the dark of night, against laws that protected the innocent victim of man's envy. Yet bound and walking behind those who took the place of leading and guiding, and walking in silence came Him who holds the breath of every man in His hand. He who can create or destroy with the word of His power, was led to the high priest. Before Caiaphas came false witnesses to testify against Him who was led there. Even their testimony didn't agree. The priest who led the nation, put Him under oath to the living God to tell publicly if He was the Christ, the Son of God. Without any hesitation, the Lord Jesus declares who He is and what is yet to take place in the future. The priest tears his garments that never should have been torn. He who was led to the priest is condemned by the priest who should have taken the moral high ground as the spiritual leader of a nation.

He was led to the hall of judgment where the Roman governor came out to pass his judgment. He, to whom the nations are as a “drop in a bucket,” stands quietly before this man as he seeks some reason for His arrest. “Are You the King of the Jews?” The dialogue that follows reveals unmistakably, that an innocent Man had been brought before the judge. But to please the people and because of friendship with Caesar, this man condemned Jesus to die. He was taken to prison and to judgment and led to the cross to die.

He was led to the place of a skull. Why did He submit Himself to the frail ropes of man's leading? Why would He, who can burn the ropes on prisoners' hands in a furnace of fire without injury, follow so unresistingly? The scriptures of truth had to be fulfilled. The Substitute had to go this way. The evidence had to be there for all generations to see that the Lord Jesus Christ was the Lamb chosen to bear away the sin of the world. And so He was “led” by His own creatures to follow the path to the cross.

“I know Father that it was in the plan of redemption that the Lord Jesus should go this way. Yet it still seems hard to consider that the humiliation and rejection of the Savior was so demeaning that He would follow the leading of such sinful people and be willing to be led. I am humbled at this scene because it is so different from what I would be like. I wonder - would I be willing to follow in His steps? Amen.”

JOHN 19

CHRIST, THE SIN-BEARER

Introduction:

One of the most amazing events relating to the life of Christ has to do with the fascination then and today, associated with His death. Crucifixes are on buildings, in churches and are even worn as jewelry. The death

of Christ has received far more attention in art, music and literature than that of any other person. It probably has had more attention than all other great men combined.

There was nothing beautiful about the sufferings of Christ and His death. He died as a common criminal would, on a cross between two thieves. He had been severely beaten and then nailed to the cross. In spite of the shame and cruelty imposed on an innocent person, millions have been attracted through the centuries to His cross. Nothing like this exists in all human history. That the ugly death of a man on a cross nearly 2000 years ago – a simple common man by most standards – should exert such a universal attraction down through the centuries, is something that has no rational explanation – except for the one that He gave. “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep” [Jn.10:11]. He had said, “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me” [Jn.12:32-33]. Again, He said to Nicodemus, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish but have eternal life” [Jn.3:14-15].

Those who looked upon the “Sin-Bearer” on the cross as the One bearing my sin, have personally made it known as the Spirit of God uses them to speak for God. To prophesy that someone would die, is very easy because everyone dies sooner or later. But the prophecies about the death of the Lord Jesus Christ were not vague and hidden like those of a fortune-teller, or some short-term predictions that people make. These were made hundreds of years before they were fulfilled.

Daniel 9:24-26 predicted He would come into Jerusalem to die, and exactly 483 years later, as predicted, He entered Jerusalem a week before His death as Luke 19:37-44 says. After this, Gabriel prophesied in Daniel – “He was cut off, but not for Himself.” The betrayal by a “familiar friend” was predicted in Psalm 41:9. The 30 pieces of silver as the price paid for His betrayal was given in Zechariah 11:12-13. The mockery of His trial and the judicial process was prophesied in Isa.50:6; 53:7-8. False witnesses are mentioned in Psalm 35:11.

The details of His death are graphically described in Psalm 22 written 1100 years before they happened. The mocking, the darkness, the bodily suffering, the piercing of hands and feet, the stripping of His garments and gambling over His robe, was predicted. The thirst and even the vinegar [Ps.69:21] were mentioned. No broken bones [Ps.34:20], the piercing of His side [Zec.12:10], the wounds in His hands [Zec.13:6] were all prophesied.

Isaiah 53 is probably the best prophetic description of all that happened when Christ died. Miracles happened at His death were told about in eyewitness accounts: supernatural darkness, two major earthquakes – one at His death and one at His resurrection, the tearing in half of a very heavy, thick drapery from the top down, His death at the exact time of the one last prophecy fulfilled – these and many other events focus our minds on the “Sin-Bearer.”

The surprising circumstances surrounding His burial are vital because some people then, as today, will say that the “Christ-spirit” died and rose but not Jesus. Demons and unbelievers haven’t been willing to admit that “Jesus is the Christ”; that “Jesus is the Son of God”; that “Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.” [1Jn.5:1...]

It must be made certain that His body was buried after His death and that this was a well-known fact to friends and enemies alike. The ministry of burying Jesus was not left to Roman soldiers who may have defiled it and thrown it into a grave or Gehenna with the bodies of other executed criminals. If it had been buried by His disciples, there may have been charges that they hid it somewhere and claimed He was raised from the dead.

God arranged that two of the authorities, members of the governing body of the Jews, the Sanhedrin, would bury Him. They would have access to government officials, they had wealth enough to prepare a suitable place for His body until it could be raised from the dead. They would have been prepared well in advance, and they also were disciples. Nicodemus knew He was going to “be lifted up” right from the night of His conversion. Joseph wasn’t even from Jerusalem, but had a grave carved out of stone ahead of time in Jerusalem at exactly the right place where crucifixions happened. He knew exactly when Jesus died and rushed ahead of everyone to Pilate, getting there before the other people even knew He was dead. These two men, waiting for this day to come, had everything ready, acted immediately and then fade completely out of the picture. This one act may have cost them everything – even their lives. How remarkable the prophecy in Isa.53:9 about His grave.

As we approach the subject of the “Sin-Bearer,” we must do so with reverence and dignity; with respect and quiet spirits that are not just overwhelmed with emotions. We are looking here today at the most significant

event that has ever happened. There is a certain kind of awe when we look at what God allows us to see of the events of that day. Half of the hours that past, were hidden in darkness. It is not becoming of us to try and speculate on what God has covered in supernatural blackness. I expect we will be a bit fearful as we speak of this day and the sufferings the Lord Jesus Christ endured. Let this Bible study be one of reverence and godly fear.

John 19

THEN CAME JESUS FORTH.

Dignity in His Person; Courty in His Bearing; Holy in His Character
Godly in His Nature; Manly in His Vjsibility; Servant-like in His Submission
A cluster of thorns sanctified and forever remembered because of Him.
Like a sheep led to the slaughter, He comes forth mocked by men.
A robe of purple on Him, mans' feeble attempt at defining royalty.
A silent victim has authority in the face of foolish mockery.

The Son of Man; The King of the Jews; The Son of God
He feels as a man; He presents as a king; He has all power as Lord
Jesus of Nazareth is known to men by His city.
He is the King of the Jews yet by people and soldiers shown no pity.
He is eternal in His Being - forever in the past and future - the Son of God.
In this time and place of His-story, He is fulfilling the written Word.

The Innocent is Condemned; The Victim is Crucified; The Substitute Dies
As Sheep silent before shearers; The Lamb led to Slaughter; the Just dies for the Unjust
The whole world is guilty before God; the Lamb bears away the world's sin.
The death Christ died was when He was made sin for ungodly men.
In our place condemned Jesus suffered alone and died.
Now by His grace and love, believers are justified.

Mockery is over; Judgment is done; His Passion has passed
Satan has been defeated; Sin's price has been paid; Death lost its victory
Everything the Lord Jesus had to do was accomplished.
Every aspect of the work He came to do was finished.
Private men came forth publicly and His body carried -
To a nearby tomb, where only for the weekend, His body was buried.

"O God, I follow the written words, but inside of me I follow Him and see Him come forth before the hardened eyes and hearts of those who live only for themselves. I follow and see Him come forth from the presence of a deeply embarrassed judge who knows what is right, but does wrong. I see Him come forth through the gates of David's city - and His own, to die outside the camp, and I willingly go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. I love Thee Lord Jesus. Amen."

THE SENTENCE, v.1-16

v.1. The Lord Jesus had been declared not guilty of any crime. He had been sent to Herod, but Herod sent Him back to Pilate. Pilate had no right to scourge an innocent person, but he told the soldiers to do that anyway.

v.2. Crown of thorns: proof of the curse God put on the earth [Gal.3:13]. Cursed is anyone who is hanged on a tree. He was bearing our curse.

v.3. Purple robe: this was an act of mockery. They placed on Him kingly garments. In Mat.27:28, it is called a scarlet robe. In Lu.23:11 it is called a gorgeous ("lampros") robe. These were the colors in the veil, tabernacle covering and the gate. Blue and scarlet make purple and "lampros" is white.

Smote Him: this fulfills the scripture, "he gave His face to the smiters;" they insulted Him.

v.4. Another declaration of innocence: six people declared Him innocent. [1] Judas [2] Pilate's wife [3] Herod [4] Malefactor [5] Centurion [Pilate]

v.5. "Behold, the Man": Pilate may have been looking for people to be sympathetic towards Jesus when they saw Him beaten.

v.6. Chief priests and officers: they had no authority to crucify Him. Jewish law was to stone the one who blasphemed; another declaration of innocence.

v.7. Our law: the law commanded blasphemers to be stoned by those who condemned the victim. The Jews accusations against Christ....

- He said destroy the temple and He would rebuild it in three days
- He said He was the Son of the Blessed, the Son of God
- He was a malefactor; a lawbreaker
- He would not give tribute to Caesar because He was the King

- He stirred up the people

v.8. Pilate's fear: when he heard Jesus was the Son of God, his superstitious mind was fearful

v.9. Pilate's question: "Where did you come from?" Pilate had not acted on what he already knew, so the Lord refused to tell him more.

v.10. Pilate's anger: he was used to prisoners trying to please in order to be let off

v.11. Authority: the law doesn't give authority to set the guilty free and have an innocent one killed. God gave Pilate this authority to work out His plans. Some people are guilty of greater sins than others.

v.12. Declared innocent again: he wanted to maintain Caesar's friendship and did not want the Jews to accuse him to Caesar. He might lose his position. The Jews hated Christ more than they hated Caesar.

v.13. Pilate's decision: the "Pavement" was an elevated place there he could sit above the people and pass sentence.

v.14. The Passover: [Num.28:16-17] there were to feasts the Jews kept. One was to remember the salvation of the firstborn before they actually left Egypt, and the other was the feast of unleavened bread.

v.15. No king but Caesar: a decision was made in haste and publicly that put them under the rule of others for hundreds of years.

v.16. Pilate's response: he delivered Jesus to be crucified. He chose to please man rather than God. Over all this was God's sovereign plan to offer His only Son because of our sins [Rom.4:25; 8:32]

THE CRUCIFIXION, 17-24

v.17. Bearing His cross: there is no evidence of Christ being weak. When we read of Simon bearing it "after Jesus," Mr. Crawford indicates in his book on Luke, Simon had to lift up the post of the cross which would force the Lord to bend lower under the load. The "Place of the Skull," "Golgotha" (Hebrew); "Calvary," are all referring to the same place.

v.18. Crucified Him: the Jewish leaders and nation were charged with His crucifixion. Peter makes that statement in Acts 2:36, "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." (Master and Messiah).

Two others: these men were criminals, malefactors, thieves – Jesus was between them.

JESUS "IN THE MIDST."

- Acts 2:22. "In the midst of you." Jesus in the world.
- Jn.19:18. "Jesus in the midst." Jesus on the cross.
- Ps.22:14. "My heart... melted in the midst of My bowels." Jesus in His sufferings.
- Ps.22:22. "In the midst of the congregation." His exaltation.
- Ps.110:2. "Rule in the midst of thine enemies." His future glory.
- Rev.1:13. "In the midst of the...candlesticks." His priestly work.
- Isa.12:6; Hos.11:9; Rev.5:6; 7:17; Mat.18:20; Lu.24:36; Jn.20:19,26. "In the midst..." of His people; with His people – the Holy One: in the past—the Peace-Giver; in the present – Jesus Himself; in the future – the Lamb.

The Tree of life: [1] in the midst of the garden [Gen.2:9; 3:3] [2] in the midst of the paradise of God [Rev.2:7; 22:2].

The Lord's People (in the present):

- Walk in the midst of trouble [Ps.138:7].
- In the midst of people of unclean lips [Isa.6:5].
- In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation [Phil.2:15].
- In the midst of wolves (as sheep) [Mat.10:16].
- In the midst of the fire (walking) [Dan.3:25].

Trespass in the midst: Achan, after the fall of Jericho [Josh.7].

A woman in the midst: condemned by men and the law because of sin [Jn.8:9].

A little child in the midst: the kind of people in the kingdom of heaven [Mat.18:2; Mk. 9:36].

The veil rent in the midst: the way opened to God [Lu.23:45].

John 19:25-27. *"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold your son!' Then said He to the disciple, 'Behold your mother!' And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home."*

THEY WERE THERE.

They were there at the cross where the Savior hung;

The others were far away.

His mother wanted to be near her Son,

To hear what He had to say.

The women who knew Him from early life,

And had followed Him wherever He went;

Knew the pain that would strike to His inner self,
As under sins' load He was bent.

He had said before what would happen to Him,
How He would suffer and bleed and die.
They had heard the words, now right before them,
It was happening as they had heard Him say.
But they wouldn't leave Him, they knew who He was;
They had heard and had seen and believed.
The scriptures of truth and words of the law,
Now at this place of the curse, were fulfilled.

His mother who bare Him, and kept in her heart,
All the things that He said and He did;
Were there to behold, though like pieced with a dart,
When her Son spoke His last, final words.
The other women there, with support and with faith,
Were not about to leave Him alone.
But when the darkness covered the earth,
They couldn't see Him, as there for our sins He atoned.

John was there too, by the One that he loved
And knew to be the Savior of men.
He was in the right place where his faith clearly showed
He could be trusted to give Mary a home.
John was there when sins He forgave, and the thief He did save;
When his Lord spoke directly to him.
He was there when the words of accomplishment came;
He was there when the Lord bowed His head

To be right where He wants when a work's to be done;
Or some privilege to share with Him there;
Is a blessing so great that we can then pass along;
To our children, that they also may share.
The work of the Lord that He does in our time;
May seem small when we look from afar.
But when we are there, close enough to see Him,
Then we realize how He views it all.

"It is my desire, Father, to not be far away when I should be near at hand. If I am wandering to some distant place or even in my mind, I am praying Thee to bring me back to the place where He is doing His work and fulfilling His word. It is my joy to see evidence of His saving grace at work in people young and old, saved and unsaved. When glory is brought to Him, I am gratified. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Summation: Pro. 4:20-21. "Keep them in the midst of thine heart."

v.19. A title: the statement on it was true. That was to tell the reason for His death.

v.20. Three languages: the writing was for all to know.

v.21. The Jews objection: they didn't want to be identified with Him [Jn.1:12]. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."

v.22. Pilate's refusal: "I have written." He writing makes clear to all the reason for Jesus' death.

v.23. Jesus' clothes: scripture is fulfilled again: "They parted my garments among them..." Why is the fulfilling of scripture so important?

v.24. Seamless robe: this reminds us of His sinless perfection; Scarlet robe – of the shameful rejection; Separated (linen) clothes (in the grave) – of His supernatural resurrection.

v.25. Stood by: standing by the cross were His mother, His mother's sister (Salome, self-examination); Mary the wife of Cleopas; Mary Magdalene (redemption)

v.26-27. John: accepting responsibility for Mary. Jesus was not being impolite or unkind when He called her "woman." Mary's other children were, up till now, unbelievers [Mat.13:55-56; Jn.7:3-5].

The third cry from the cross **"Woman, behold thy son, behold thy mother."**

- "Woman," a revelation of life: the seed of the woman [Gen.3:15]; the Son of God came, made of a woman [Gal.4:4]. Here was the woman, and there was her Seed. The word of God was fulfilled. The bruising of the serpent's head was about to happen. Life had come to end death.
- "Woman," a revelation of light: it is never recorded that Jesus ever used the word "mother" when speaking to Mary. He would never use a word that would give the slightest support to the worship

of Mary. Even when the wise men came at His birth, they worshipped *Him* and presented to *Him* gifts – not to *them*. Mary glorified God her Savior. Mary was blessed *among* women, not *above* women. Our last view of her in the Bible shows her praying *with* the disciples, not *for* them. Here the Lord is cutting the earthly relationship. John is now her son; she was John's mother.

- “Woman,” a revelation of love: the Lord had to go through the death of the cross alone. By using the word “woman,” He was sparing her from any insult that perhaps would come because of being her son. Mary didn't take John to *her* home; Mary is put under the care of John and he is in charge of her.

THE DEATH

v.28. Accomplished: between verse 27 and verse 28 was the three hours of darkness recorded in other Gospels. During that time “He bare our sins;” “He suffered for sins;” “the Lord laid on Him, the iniquities of us all.”

The fifth cry from the cross “I thirst.”

- The Deity of Christ: “Jesus knowing...” The first time His “knowing” was mentioned is in John 1:48, “Whence knowest Thou me?” The last was in John 21:17, “Lord; Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest, that I love Thee!” In between we read in John 13:3-4, “Jesus knowing the Father had given all things into His hand...” Our Lord was in full possession of His mental faculties. This was in the fulfillment of scripture [Lam.3:19] but contrasted with the vigor of the previous cry, is the dignity and intelligence of this one.
- The Devotion of Christ: “That the scripture might be fulfilled...” He makes this cry on behalf of the scriptures. The first three cries were on behalf of other people. Now, after the darkness and the distance is past, His mind is on the prophetic word. Although many scriptures had been fulfilled, the one about the thirst [Ps.69:21] had not yet been fulfilled. It wasn't the thirst that opened His lips but the scriptures that must be completed. These words were not so much an appeal as an appointment. This was an application that had to be fulfilled even in the midst of His affliction.
- The Dependence of Christ: “I thirst.” Thousands of angels could have come to His aid, but the One who created water cried, “I thirst.” The same verse that tells us of His essential deity, tells us of His absolute humanity. This is the mystery of godliness – “God was manifest in flesh.” He began His public ministry by hungering, and finished it by thirsting.

v.29. Vinegar: the scriptures were fulfilled now. This was the last prophetic one that must be fulfilled.

v.30. Finished: this is the most quoted one and perhaps the most well known. Peter wanted to “see the end” [Mat.26:58]. Calvary was the “end of all flesh” [Gen.6:13]. Calvary was the “end of the world” [Heb.9:26]. It was the “end of the law for righteousness” [Rom.10:4]. It was the “end of the Sabbaths” [Mat.28:1].

The sixth cry from the cross “It is finished.”

- Scriptures were finished: many references are made regarding the death of Christ in the Old Testament. These were now fulfilled and the texts of the prophetic statements give the picture of the Lord being despised and rejected of men, and at the same time, heaven's offering for sin. “He was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God...” [Acts 2:23]. He was cut off in the midst of His years, yet prolonging His days. He was cut off having nothing, yet seeing of the travail of His soul and being satisfied [Dan.9:26; Is. 53:11].
- Sufferings were finished: In His ministry [Mat.8:16-17] and in His death [Is.53:4] He suffered. “Surely He hath borne our grief and carried our sorrows.” All of the offerings He would have made in His life would have been reminders of the cross which was before Him. The Messianic Psalms and other scriptures that were His custom to read, would have been vivid in His mind as He thought of His approaching death. Three years of being misunderstood and misrepresented; of temptation and trial, were finished. Now He could bow His head and rest. Joy lay ahead of Him who endured the cross and despised the shame.
- Sacrifices were finished: [Heb.10:5-10] none of the thousands of sacrifices previously made could put away sins. They were only covered. By this one offering, He perfected forever those who were sanctified. The sacrifices are obsolete now. Christ's sacrifice rises above all those, and supersedes them. His offering is supreme, solitary and sufficient. Any other form such as the mass, is an insult to the finality of the work of Calvary. There can be no other atonement for sin.
- Service was finished: [Jn.17:4] His Father's work He started doing as a boy [Lu.2:49], was done. Now He could lay down His head. He had no place to “lay down His head” in His years of service. His work was not finished until the cross work was accomplished. The supreme work He came to do was complete. The work He is doing now in preparing a place for us in heaven, and appearing in the presence of God for us, is not part of the supreme redemptive work that He declared finished.
- Satan was finished: [Jn.12:31; Heb.2:14] Satan's power over believers is destroyed and his doom is certain. We are warned of the “wiles of the devil,” but are not to dread his power [Jas.4:7]. We

are told to “resist the devil, and he will flee...” The success of the cross spelled his doom. He will be bruised under our feet shortly [Rom.16:20].

- Salvation was finished: We are freed from the penalty of sins – it has been paid, and the wrath against it exhausted in the cry of triumph from the Lord. Freedom from the power and presence of sin follows as a result. We are saved by His life because we have been reconciled by His death. His second appearance unto salvation is because of His first appearance to put away sin. The Greek word for “It is finished,” is “*tetelestai*,” one word meaning “Finished.” God finishes what He begins. He finished creation. He finished propitiation at Calvary, and He will finish the good work He began in us, in the day of Jesus Christ [Phil.1:6].
- Sin was finished: [Jas.1:15] The death of the Lord Jesus Christ has finished sin. It does not have dominion over us. It is not our master. Because of what Christ did, there will be a time when sin is done away with and there will be only righteousness.

v.31. The broken legs: the Jews asked that this be done. They were careful to keep the law even when committing murder. There could be no broken bones in the Passover lamb [Ex.12:16; Ps.34:20; Zec.12:10].

v.32. The Lord’s promise to the thief could be kept because they both died that day.

v.33. Jesus was already dead: He gave His life as ransom for all. No one took it from Him. He laid it down Himself deliberately.

v.34. Pierced His side: perhaps the soldier was making sure, but he was really fulfilling God’s purpose. “Behold My hands and side...”

v.35. John testifies: he must have taken Mary home (“from that same hour he took her unto his own home”) and returned to the cross. John makes reference to the water and blood in 1John 5:6.

v.36. Explanations of God’s control over simple situations and

v.37. Over the actions of men. Some unexplainable things have to be seen from God’s view.

John 19:30. *"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, 'It is finished;,' and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."*

FINISHED! The cross and God's greatest work.

That was not just martyrdom when on the cross He hung.
It was not just an example of self-sacrifice or a work that was finally done.
There was far more than physical suffering involved that happened on the cross.
There was a work of God that was finished so we wouldn't be forever lost.

God reached to man in human form, though God He would ever be.
The righteous punishment for sin when Jesus was on the tree
Was a deed accomplished that would make it possible for us to be reconciled
To God in a righteous and legal way and that I could become God's child.

The price of redemption had to be paid that a holy God could justify.
The blood that flowed from Emmanuel's veins was the only way to buy
The slaves of sin and make them acceptable and forgiveness to obtain.
Redemption's price has been paid once for all and forever will be maintained.

There doesn't need to ever be a fresh application of Christ's blood.
Remission of sin was paid for at the cross and it satisfies a Holy God.
Anything anyone tries to do to obtain some additional favor,
Would be an unspeakable insult to the redemptive cross-work of the Savior.

Because of the cross there is incentive to live lives wholly pleasing to Him.
Appreciation for the sacrifice Christ made, makes it abhorrent to us to sin.
When sin besets us we feel within the urgency to return
In confession to God and with faith we trust a lesson we have finally learned.

Love for Christ is a reality that we cannot just pretend.
It is placed by God deep within when the Holy Spirit He did send.
He prompts our obedience and a deep commitment that from it we cannot shirk.
The accomplishments that took place at the cross is truly God's greatest work.

"O Father, this morning my thoughts go again to all that was accomplished when Jesus died on the cross. We probably will learn in the future and whole lot more was done than all we know now. For what I do know, I praise and thank Thee from my heart. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

THE BURIAL

v.38. Joseph of Arimathea: counselor, good man, just

v.39. Nicodemus: the size of his gift testifies to the love he had for the Lord.

v.40. Burial customs: only rich men had tombs in gardens.
v.41. His body had to be buried before sunset as the Sabbath began at that time. In this way the Lord would be three days and three nights in the earth.
v.42. **THE HUMILITY OF CHRIST:**
Ruth 3:4,14.

“Mark the place where He shall lie.” [In the Gospels]

His grace [Lu.2]: “lying in a manger.” The King of kings in humiliation.

“Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ

His faith [Mk.4:38]: “...hinder part of the ship.”

“I must finish the work of Him who sent me.”

His work [Matt.26:39]: “...fell on His face and prayed...”

“It is finished...”

His victory [Jn.19:42]: “There laid they Jesus.”

“I have power to lay down My life and I have power to take it again.”

He set aside the laws of birth, death and gravity.

“Bring the veil that thou hast upon thee and hold it.”

His humility: [Phil.2]

His Person: Our subjection to His person. Do we have a veil on to receive a blessing from Him?

His blessing: The size of the veil determined the size of the blessing.

“Uncover His feet.” [In the Gospels]

Matthew: The only One born a king.

Mark: The Servant

Luke: 2000 words to tell of the supernatural birth of the Perfect Man. 24:39; 7:38; 10:39.

John: The Son of God.

John 20:1-10

THE RESURRECTION

The Reality of the Resurrection:

“He is risen”, not something like Him; “He is the first-fruits of resurrection”; “a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have”, His resurrection was a literal resurrection. There were eye-witnesses: Mary, two on the road to Emmaus, Peter, then the ten apostles. A week later when Philip was there - the eleven apostles. The apostles went to meet Him at Galilee and there met with 500 brethren at once. He was seen visibly for forty days by all the apostles. He met with His brother, James, and then with Paul on the road to Damascus. The eleven watched His ascension into heaven from the mount of Olives.

The Reason for the Resurrection:

The Lord Jesus Christ was “Raised again for our justification”, [Rom.4:25]. One of the reasons for which Christ died was, “That they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again”, [2Cor.5:15]. There was divine approval given to the Person and finished work of Christ, in that “God raised Him from the dead.” He was raised again by “the power of the Holy Spirit.” He said Himself regarding His life-giving power in relation to His own physical life, “I have power to lay it down, and I have power to raise it again.”

The Results of the Resurrection:

Timid men were made bold [Acts 2:32] because they believed in a living Savior. Men were made resolute and strong as the Spirit of God gave power to the word they spoke. Christianity was made strong and spread to the far parts of the world and still goes on changing lives today. The way to heaven was made plain so no one needs to doubt their faith placed in the Lord Jesus Christ is in a real living Person. Salvation was promised, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” [Rom.10:9.

John 20

THE NEW DAY.

On that new day before the sun was up
The sepulcher was opened, they could not stop
The One who holds the key of life
From using that power while it was still night -
To bring about a brand-New Day
That liberates men from sin's dark sway,
And letting us know death is not the end,

By shedding light on a life that with God's does blend.
The opened sepulcher clearly does say -
The Risen Christ brought in a brand-New Day.

Mary came early while it still was dark.
Seeing the opened tomb, there was a leap in her heart.
Others came too going inside to confirm the fact
Something important had happened - not a normal act.
The news was out, "I have seen the Lord," Mary could say,
The Lord was risen from the dead - it was a brand-New Day.
The disciples were changed, though there still was fear -
Jesus was alive, to them in the evening He appeared.
From then until now, disciples know He is not dead -
A New Day is here and we will be with Him as He said.

The New Day started when the Savior arose from among the dead.
He conquered those who had conquered us, He is now our Risen Head.
Sin's power has been defeated by the payment He did make,
Satan's leadership is gone from those who God's free gift take.
Death lost its control when the Savior voluntarily gave
His life by choosing to lay it down so lost sinners He would save.
When He rose by power divine the grave then lost its sting,
Through death, burial and resurrection many children did He bring
To God, and each redeemed one will for ever say,
"When my blessed Lord rose from the dead, it began a brand-New Day."

"Holy Father God, I praise Thee for the great news of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It would be awful if our faith was placed in vain upon an uncertain hope. For the grace, mercy and peace that comes by faith in Christ, and the assurance of His life at Thy right hand and His promised return, I give Thee my grateful thanks, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 20:11-29

JESUS CAME

The doctrine of the resurrection of Christ leaves only two choices: To believe that Jesus rose from the dead without questioning the reality of event, or to be closed to the truth, deny it, try to explain it away. Comprehending the resurrection has a variety of responses. Some say it is a fairy tale; it is impossible. Others want to check out the facts but still remain puzzled because the facts have presented themselves positively to the world in the lives and faith of millions of people for nearly 2000 years. Still others accept the fact of the resurrection of Jesus in faith by accepting Jesus personally. When we believe in the bodily resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, our faith and our commitment to Him increases daily and leads us to understand the reality of His presence with us. That reality is experienced today and every day.

The key to the Christian faith is that He rose as He promised and He will accomplish all He has promised. The living Christ is the ruler of God's kingdom in which every believer in Jesus as their own personal Savior, is a citizen. We can be certain of our resurrection because of His resurrection. "Because He lives, we shall live also." The power that brought Jesus back to life is available to us. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is the basis of the Church's witness to the world. Every Christian's hope in life, and in death, is the resurrection of Christ.

John 20:16. *"Jesus saith unto her, 'Mary!' she turned and saith unto Him, 'Rabboni!' which is to say, 'Master!'"*

"MARY!"

Mary's coming - no more waiting or wondering.
The first day is here - the third since He died.
He said three days and three nights - the only sign.
No time to waste - this is no time to wait;
Darkness will soon be gone.
It is hard to see with the mind and eye.
The stone is taken away.
Day dawns in the mind and eye
Mary sees the space - empty!

Mary's running - they must be told; is it true?
He is taken away - no sign to see now.
Where is He - I want to see!

Where to turn next; who can help? Please!
These tears won't stop outside the tomb.
 Bending, looking, wondering.
Two in white easily seen through tears;
One at the head, the other at the feet
Mary sees the Grave-clothes between them.

Mary's weeping - I want to know: now, where.
He's gone - my Lord's gone. Where is He?
The two in white ask why and she turns away.
Another is here and asks why and who she seeks.
Why are you weeping? What reason can there be?
 Blinded eyes are opened by a voice.
 His voice; His word; His tone.
It is He - the Master, He speaks again!
Mary sees the feet, hands - her heart is full.

Mary's speaking - she has news and joy.
Her message is clear - He is alive.
His message is clear - I ascend to My Father
To your Father; to My God and your God.
 We are still in this together.
 We are not done - tell all He said.
He spoke, He appeared; Mary was right.
He is in the midst - He shows the evidence.
Mary sees His face - she is glad - and so am I!

“What can I say Father, except I am so glad my Savior is alive. I think I know some of what Mary knew. The joy, the exhilaration, the assurance: I haven't seen but I love - and believe. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

John 20:19. *“Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, ‘Peace be unto you.’”*

UPPER ROOM MEETING.

PRESENCE of the Risen Christ, v.19. “He stood in the midst.”

He was there, visible, real, Himself.
The same One who was on the cross.
The One who died and was buried.
He is here in the midst of His own people.

He is alive! Hallelujah!

PEACE from the Crucified Lord, v.19. “Peace be unto you.”

He gave His peace before to them.
He is the Prince of Peace.
He is the message of peace.
His peace is not like the world's peace.

Preaching peace by Jesus Christ, He is Lord. Praise Him!

POWER from the Breathing Lord, v.22. “He breathed upon them.”

There is work to be done.
There is a world that needs to hear the Gospel.
There is a call that is given and a call that comes.
There are people who have been given power. Thank Him!

SENT FORTH by Christ, v.21. “As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.”

A commission is given.
A message of glad tidings.
A challenge to rise to.
A charge by the Risen Head.

Go ye therefore!

REVELATION of Christ, v.20. “He shewed them His hands and His side.”

Reality is there to be seen.
Evidence is there to be seen.

Mercy's marks are there to be seen.
Love's imprint is there to be seen – forever!

Glory to God!

AUTHORITY from Christ, v.23. "Whoever sins ye remit, they are remitted."

Speak clearly so no mistakes are made.
Speak authoritatively so the truth is clear.
Speak powerfully as the Spirit guides.
Speak continuously so that no one forgets.

Preach the Word!

GLADNESS through Christ, v.20. "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord."

Joy in the heart because He lives.
Joy in the life because we have a purpose and message.
Joy in the voice with a song upraised in praise.
Joy in the soul because of fellowship with Him. Jesus lives!

"The Lord Jesus in the middle of His own people, is where He belongs, Father. It is a joy and a calm assurance to know that He is with us and in us and among us. His presence with us makes it possible to continue the work we are doing, even though at the moment, the work seems futile. I know this is not true, but this is one of those times when I wonder what we are really doing here that is of lasting value. Please give us something to go on with. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 20:30-31

THESE ARE WRITTEN THAT YE MIGHT BELIEVE

Resurrection power is the power that catapulted Christianity onto the stage of world history. The resurrection of Christ [Acts 1:22] **was** the purpose for which the early Christian community came into being. They were to bear witness to the resurrection of Christ wherever the Gospel was preached. The prime function of the Christian community today is to witness to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus to our generation and to the world of lost souls all around us.

The transforming power of the Gospel is not the ethical teachings of Jesus, but the resurrection of Jesus and all the implications that go along with that fact. The resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ opened the way for the unprecedented invasion into our world of the Holy Spirit of God. Joel prophesied it 800 years before it happened. When people received the Holy Spirit, that opened up a personal fellowship with God that is based on the reality of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is truly alive in His resurrected body and is a real touchable Person who represents us at the right hand of the throne of God.

The cross of Christ reveals man's basic problem – hostility against God. Some of those who were involved in the crucifixion of Christ, heard Peter preach and were called upon to repent and face up to the resurrected Jesus who was Lord and Christ. If they wanted to be saved, they had to demonstrate the reality of their faith and their sincerity by calling on the name of the Lord. Then they were baptized as evidence of the reality of their profession.

John 20:25. *"The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hands into his side, I will not believe."*

THE PRINT: the cross and its identification.

They are there: those visible evidences of an atoning sacrifice.
Those wounds will forever testify to a work that is done -
The indelible, unmistakable prints remain that human eyes
Will be assured among all the false Christs that He is the One.

They are there: The Presence of the Risen Christ was thus identified -
As He stood in their midst to show Himself to them.
Startled by His appearance for they had seen Him crucified -
He came to assure them by those prints, it was truly Him.

They are there: those wounds easily seen in His hands and His side -
He spoke Peace to them as their crucified Lord -
Now risen and visible, in no way trying to hide
Those pierced hands and feet prophesied in God's Word.

They are there: see them in stretched out hands and deep spear wound.
The blood has been shed and there is remission.
This silences all false testimony some make that He only swooned -
The cleansing flow paid the full price of redemption.

There will be false Christs come out of the darkness from time to time -
Making false claims to those who their words believe.
A simple test works that gives proof - ask for a visible sign
Of nail prints and a spear wound before you give any heed.

There will be the time when He comes for His own.
The prints will be there easily seen by all.
Thomas was assured that from death Christ had come
And the proof will still be there when for us He calls.

I don't know whether I will be allowed to touch the pierced hands,
Or if through His royal robes the wound in His side will be shown.
But I don't need to see visibly when by faith I can
Be identified with Jesus' death, for His death was my own.

"Father, I praise Thee for giving testimony in Thy Word of the evidence of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. As one who has been crucified with Christ, I trust my hands are holy as I lift them up to Thee in worship. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 21:1. *"After these things Jesus shewed Himself again to His disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed He Himself."*

SHEWED HIMSELF.

He was seen by the disciples behind the closed door of the upper room. There was fear and joy mixed. Fear of the Jews and gladness when "He shewed them His hands and His side." He gave them peace and a commission to do the same as He had done. "As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." He gave them the promise that the Holy Spirit would support their work. They were assured of His physical resurrection and had gladness of soul when He showed Himself to be truly the omnipotent RESURRECTED CHRIST.

He was seen eight days later in the same place behind closed doors. Thomas was here this time. He had heard and had not believed. He wanted his faith to be personal. He knew what to look for to have the assurance of the reality of the Lord's resurrection. He wanted evidence. And now he got it. "Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst..." He showed Himself again. But there is more this time. He lets them know He hears their words in private conversation, no matter where it is and no matter what is said. He hears, He knows, He understands the reason for the words and actions. Thomas believed and worshipped the Lord Jesus Christ, when he saw the marks in His body and heard the words of His mouth. There is gladness and blessing when He shows Himself to be the omnipresent LIVING CHRIST.

He was seen the third time [Jn.21:14] by His disciples by the sea in Galilee. They hardly knew what to be doing. Waiting is one of the hardest things we have to learn in our lives. They were together but inactive. They were together and ready for any suggestion. They were together and easily influenced to do what seemed natural. The place He met them was in private, at the breaking of the new day. He knew the emptiness of the boat. He knew the uncertainty of their minds. He knew the emptiness of their hands. He knew the emptiness of their stomachs – and He showed Himself to His disciples. When the boat was filled, "the multitude of the fishes;" when their hands were filled, they "were not able to draw it;" when the uncertainty was gone, "It is the Lord." He showed Himself to be the omniscient LOVING CHRIST.

Peter knew, as the challenge of love came, that He showed Himself. The others disciples knew, as they ate together of the provision He made, that He showed Himself. We know, as we feed of the living bread and drink of the living water, that He shows Himself today. He shows Himself to be with us; "even unto the end of the age." It is without question that we respond to His presence with joy and gladness today.

"Father, I am always glad when there is the privilege of seeing Him who is invisible to the natural eye. To be able to see Him through faith is one of my life's greatest pleasures. Amen."

John 21

BREAD AND FISH.

The labor is expended as day after day, fallow ground is turned
Until with suitable texture and water, the sun is able to warm the earth,
And the sower goes forth and sows precious seed that he has kept,
So that bread to supply the hungry comes out of the soil's depth.

The sun has not arisen when the fisher leaves the safety of land.
He labors on relentlessly until he can take with his own hand
The fruit of his toil in storm and wind - to some it is only fish,
But without his ceaseless labor, many meals by men would be missed.

From land and sea of God's creation comes just what we want and need.
The "staff of life" to give instant strength, and fish for the whole body to feed -
All of earth, both water and land, made by God for man's provision,
Is there for the taking by every man if each one makes the right decision.

It is unmistakable from the creation beginning to the very end,
God has from His fullness for each need we have He did send
"Bread and fish" for the body and also full sustenance for the soul
That through the Son of God, every person can be made whole

"Father God, I thank Thee for all the ways the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ has been revealed in the Gospel of John. His humanity and deity, His eternal Sonship, the fact that He is the Son of God - all of these remind me today of the great privilege of "being found in Christ." I give Thee my thanks in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

John 21:18. *""Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not."*

THY HANDS: the cross and our identification

It was not only a spiritual crucifixion Peter had before him.
The Lord Jesus revealed he would be crucified by men.
The cross he would die on was physical and real -
To Peter He chose this fact to reveal.

To those of us who live near the end of this day of grace -
Can through the centuries past, the way of God with His own people trace;
We realize most didn't know until it was about to happen -
How death would take place, or how from earth we would be taken.

But all of God's children have one special thing in common
All have been identified with Christ; the death of the cross is on them.
Of course, not all were nailed to a cross or tree -
But all know that Jesus died on the cross for me.

As far as God is concerned, when Christ died, so did I.
He gave His life for me, therefore in Christ I died.
The enemy cannot deny that my sin was to Christ imputed -
So now I live as a new creation, not just an old one uprooted.

The seed that was the Lord Himself, fell into the ground and died.
The fruit from that death is new life that always in Him abides.
Because He now lives, we who believe live in Christ today,
And the life He gave us, He will never take away.

But like Peter, I too must fall into the ground and die.
The new life that comes from me is something I cannot deny.
There is fruit that comes from each believer, and it springs
From the Life-Source Himself what He chooses to bring.

There should be evidence that I have been crucified with Christ.
Every true believer knows what it is like to be born twice.
The old man is mortified, in Christ, death has taken place.
The new man is alive in Christ by the work of God's grace.

"I believe Father, that there is evidence whenever one is saved by grace - of new life. May those who make confession of faith in Christ's death for them, live unto Thee from now on. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."