

The Jesus I Know

A Collection of Articles

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Chapter One

JESUS THE WAY

Jesus had just said, “And you know the way where I am going” (vs. 4), which led Thomas to ask, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?” (vs. 5). The statement of verse six is Jesus’ response to Thomas’ question. Notice that Jesus did not say, “I am a way,” but “I am the way.” On another occasion Peter asked, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn. 6:68). Jesus’ answer to Thomas agrees with Peter’s statement, but it more directly says to Thomas and all generations since him that He is the *only* way to the Father. The last part of verse six says, “no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

None can doubt that Jesus is speaking of his approaching death. His disciples could not go with him to the Father now, but the time would come when they would follow him. He is telling them that he is the one and only way to fellowship with God. This way would be made possible through his death.

But more specifically, how is Jesus *the way*? Let’s take a brief look at three aspects of this remarkable and unique claim.

THE WAY OUT

1. *Of the bondage of the law.* Jesus is the great emancipator. He delivers from the bondage of the law. He is in fact the *only way* out from the law which held men captive to sin. The law offered deliverance when it said, “do this and live” (see Gal. 3:12, “HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM”). The only problem was “do this” meant do all the words of the law every moment of every day for one’s whole life without ever breaking one single commandment! This “works” approach to deliverance proved ineffective, so much so that Paul says, “by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal. 2:16). Man needed deliverance from this “curse of the law” (Gal. 3:13), and Christ was the only way out from such bondage (Gal. 5:1; Acts 15:10-11). The law of Moses was nailed to the cross of Christ (Col. 2:14). Through Christ’s death it was abolished (Eph. 2:16) and taken out of the way (Col. 2:14). This is the **ONLY WAY** we could have been delivered from the bondage of the law.

2. *Of the bondage of sin.* The law made no satisfactory provision for sin (Heb. 10:1-4), and yet all who were under the law sinned (Rom. 3:23) and were thus left without hope. Sin results in death, or spiritual separation from God (Isa. 59:1-2; Rom. 6:23). The law is called the “ministry of death” and the “ministry of condemnation” (2 Cor. 3:7, 9). When man proved unable to keep the law perfectly the law pronounced him a sinner. He was therefore in effect in bondage to sin without any hope of deliverance in and through the terms of the law. Jesus’ death was man’s only hope of a way out of the bondage of sin. It is in fact the *only way* out.

THE WAY IN

The way out is in one sense also the way in. Jesus not only delivers us from the things which hold us in bondage, he also by the same act introduces us to, and seeks to bring us into, the things which make such deliverance possible.

1. *Into a new covenant.* The same act that removed the old covenant also introduced the new covenant. By his death the first covenant was made old and abolished (Heb. 8:13; Eph. 2:16), but by that same death a new covenant was ratified and established (Lk. 22:20; Heb. 9:15-22). The new covenant being better than the old (Heb. 7:22; 8:6), brings those who come into its provisions a better hope (Heb. 7:19) because it is enacted on better promises (Heb. 8:6). Christ is the mediator (Heb. 8:6; 9:15) and guarantee (Heb. 7:22) of this new covenant. The new covenant “gives life” (2 Cor. 3:6) and is the “ministry of righteousness” (2 Cor. 3:9). Jesus Christ is the *only way* into this new covenant.
2. *Into remission of sins.* Through the shedding of his blood Christ has also opened up the way into the forgiveness of sins. He made this announcement himself at the time he instituted his supper. He took the cup and said, “Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for remission of sins” (Matt. 26:27-28). With the offering up of Himself “we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh” (Heb. 10:19-20).

The same blood that ratified and established the new covenant was also shed “for the remission of sins” (Matt. 26:28) Those who are brought into this covenant are promised, “FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES, AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE” (Heb. 8:12). Those who believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God (Jn. 8:24), repent of their sins (Acts 2:38), confess their faith in Christ (Rom. 10:9-10), and are baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12) have their sins forgiven because at the point of their baptism they are brought into Christ where forgiveness and salvation are found (Eph. 1:7; 2 Tim.

- 1:10). Christ is the *only way* into forgiveness and salvation.
3. *Into newness of life.* As we are raised up with Christ from the waters of baptism we are “raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so that we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4). We are a new creation of God (Eph. 2:10; 1 Cor. 5:17) with respect to righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:24). We have now been made free from sin so that we are no longer to serve sin but righteousness (Rom. 6:16-18). This is the “abundant life” that Jesus has made available (Jn. 10:10). Jesus is the *only way* into this new life.

THE WAY THROUGH

But how can the one who has been delivered from the bondage of sin into a new life be successful in his war against sin? Paul argues that such a victory is possible only through Christ. “Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Rom. 7:24-25a). Again, “But thanks be to God who always leads us in His triumph in Christ . . .” (2 Cor. 2:14). Paul’s confidence was in Christ, and so much so that he affirmed, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13).

1. *Sorrow and suffering.* Christ is our way through sorrow and suffering. Jesus spoke to burdened souls when he said, “Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.” To comfort them he spoke of the place he was going to prepare for them (Jn. 14:13). Even in the midst of sorrow and suffering he wants our joy to be made full (Jn. 16:24), and he has done and is doing all that is necessary to such joy. Even Christ himself was not exempt from sorrow and suffering. He was able to rejoice in the midst of them. He is also able to make this possible for his followers. Peter encourages Christians who are suffering for Christ’s sake, “to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation” (1 Pet. 4:13). The Christian’s joy is “in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:4). Christ is the **ONLY WAY** to real joy in sorrow and suffering.
2. *Anxieties and cares.* Christ knows that it is not easy to be free of anxieties and cares in this life. He is greatly concerned that we will be overcome by them. But he reminds us that we may find peace in him. “These things,” he says, “I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage, I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16:33). He teaches us that the key to success in overcoming anxieties and cares is to trust in God (Matt. 6:19-34). Jesus Christ is the **ONLY WAY** to freedom from anxieties and cares in this world.
3. *Temptation.* It was Jesus who taught us to pray that we will not be led into temptation (Matt. 6:13). Paul tells us that God will not allow us to be “tempted beyond what [we] are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that [we] may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13). We may be assured that no

trial or trouble will befall us that will be unbearable, providing we trust God for help. Jesus is the ONLY WAY of endurance in the time trial and temptation.

Chapter Two

JESUS THE TRUTH

The highest truth known by man is God. Man can learn of God's "invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature" by observing "what has been made" (Rom. 1:20), but he cannot come to know some things about God apart from a special divine revelation. When Jesus said, "I am . . . the truth" (Jn. 14:6) he was claiming to be such a revelation. He continues in verse seven, "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him." Philip responded by saying, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us" (v. 8). Jesus then said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (v. 9). How are we to understand this claim of Jesus?

REVEALER AND REDEEMER

1. *He reveals the Father.* Jesus was not the Father; He was the "only begotten Son" (Jn. 3:16) of the Father. But to see him, he said, was to see the Father. How could this be? Hebrews 1:3 says the Son of God "is the radiance of His [the Father's] glory and the exact representation of His nature." The truth of God was being revealed and made know to men in the person of Christ. Jesus was the embodiment of truth. Because the Word had become flesh and now dwelt among men (Jn. 1:1-2, 14), the Father was now being revealed through the Son. "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God [later manuscripts read, 'Son' here, ww], who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him" (Jn. 1:18). Philip had failed to understand that this was what the Son was doing. When he said, "Show us the Father," evidently he wanted to see God with his natural eyes, perhaps by some supernatural presence. Jesus was a supernatural presence from the Father, but Philip had not seen Him as yet in that way. If only he had "known" the Son, he would have known the Father also (v. 7).

Jesus had been in the midst of his disciples for months now. They had heard his words and seen His deeds (cf. Jn. 5:19-21). But their close association with him had not yet led them to discover the divine perfection of the Father in the Son. Why had they not seen? Prejudice and sin had likely hindered them so that they had not seen as clearly as they should. Jesus seems to think that Philip should have known Him better. He reassures Philip, however, by saying, "From now on you know Him, and have seen Him" (v. 7). The new knowledge they were to have of the Father was so near and so certain that he speaks of it as already present. Future events, such as the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, in addition to the great occasion of Pentecost, would have a tremendous impact upon the minds of his disciples. With their new spiritual insight they would have a much better understanding of both the Father and the Son. Then they will see that the Son was revealing the Father to them.

2. *He is redeemer.* Any careful student of Scripture knows that Jesus is more than just "a mighty act of God in history" who came to reveal the divine attributes of the Father, such as His holiness, goodness, compassion, etc. The central message in the New Testament is that Jesus of Nazareth is the Savior of men. He came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). He did not come merely to bring God to men (by revealing his divine attributes), but to bring men to God by opening up "the way" to the Father. He was "Immanuel, which translated means, 'God with us'" (Matt. 1:23), and as the very representation of the Father he did reveal and make known the Father to us. But more than this, as the God-man he would "save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). The fact that he was "the truth" has an important bearing upon his claim to be the Savior of the world. As the truth he is also the way to the Father. One cannot come to the Father for salvation except as he is directed to him by Christ as the truth.

In redemption, Kenneth S. Kantzer said, "his uniqueness is absolute. Other acts of God are simply preparatory and have no ultimate significance apart from the act of God in Jesus Christ. Like Christ, the prophets also spoke, but the prophets did not redeem" It is in Jesus as Savior that we see him as the truth in an absolute sense.

"THE WHOLE TRUTH, AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH"

1. *Supreme truth.* Jesus is not truth "of a sort," nor is he just a truth among many truths. In a very special and unique way he claims for himself, "I am . . . *the* truth." Of all the truth that is in the world (truth had been spoken by others, such as the prophets of the Old Testament period), Jesus is the supreme truth. As B. W. Johnson put it, "He is the Truth; not merely truth, but the Truth, truth embodied and speaking to men; the key of all truth, and in himself a revelation of all truth needful to lift men to God."

2. *Objective truth.* Webster defines “objective” as meaning “of or having to do with a known or perceived object as distinguished from something existing only in the mind of the subject, or person thinking; hence, being, or regarded as being, independent of the mind; real, actual.” When Pilate asked, “What is truth?” he asked the question of the ages. Men yet ask the same question with the implication that truth is not objective (i. e., real, actual), that it cannot be known. Is there any such thing as objective truth?

Wasn't this Pilate's question? Either truth is objective reality (is real, and can be known), or it is subjective (is not real, and cannot be known, because it does not exist outside of, or is not independent of, the mind). As Jesus stood before Philip, he did so as an objective reality (outside of and independent of Philip's mind), and He claimed, “I am . . . the truth.” We must conclude therefore that Jesus believed that truth is objective, and that in a supreme way he is that truth.

Jesus could not make this claim unless he is the very embodiment of truth. Others before him had spoken the truth, but no one had ever claimed to be *the* truth. But anyone who is the truth must also speak the truth. So in addition to claiming to be the truth, Jesus also had a good bit to say about the truth which he spoke. He who was the truth revealed truth not only in his very person, but through words as well. He challenged men to receive his words, just as they should have believed Moses (Jn. 5:46). If they had believed Moses, he told them, “you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how shall you believe My words?” (Jn. 5:46-47).

So truth is objective, not only in the person of Jesus Christ, but also in the words which he spoke. It is because Jesus is the truth that those who are wise will both hear and obey His words (Matt. 7:24-27). His words are “spirit, and are life” (Jn. 6:63), and by them men shall be judged in the last day (Jn. 12:48).

3. *The full truth.* He who is “the truth” and is “full of grace and truth” (Jn. 1:14) is full and complete truth. No one else “among us” could have promised to send the Helper, or the Holy Spirit, to guide the apostles “into all the truth” (Jn. 14:26; 15:26 16:13). This “all truth” would not only be the truth, but it would be “the whole truth, and nothing but the truth”! In Jesus “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3); “in Him all the fullness of the Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him [we] have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority” (Col. 2:9-10). It is in him that we gain “a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself” (Col. 2:2). Our assurance that we have the full truth rests in this fact: “. . . His power has granted unto us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence” (2 Pet. 1:3).
4. *The final truth.* The fact that Jesus is the truth is proof that God has no “latter day revelations.” God is not still making known truth independently of that “all truth”

into which the apostles were guided in the first century. This “body of truth,” often called “the faith” in an objective sense, has been “once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). “That which is written” is our sole authority in religion, and we are not permitted to add to it, or go beyond it, nor are we allowed to take away from it (1 Cor. 4:6; 2 Jn. 9; Rev. 22:18-20). Scripture “cannot be broken” (Jn. 10:35) because what has been written are “the commandments of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:37).

Chapter Three

JESUS THE LIFE

The third claim Jesus makes for Himself in conversation with Thomas and Philip, as recorded in John 14:5ff., is, “I am ...the life.” He uses the definite article as he did in the first two claims. This use of the article, as in the other instances, demonstrates the uniqueness of the claim. He does not claim merely to be life, but he claims that he is “the life.” The last two claims have special significance in their relation to the first claim that he is “the way”. Through his death and his going to the Father Jesus would open up the way into fellowship with the Father. He could not have accomplished this great work had he not been the truth and the life.

One sense in which Jesus is “the life” is that all life (cf. Jn. 1:3), both physical and spiritual, finds its meaning and origin in him. Paul affirms that “in Him all things hold together” (Col. 1:17), and John begins his gospel by saying, “In Him was life.” But when Jesus said, “I am ...the life,” there seems to be no doubt that he meant spiritual life. John also likely has spiritual life in mind when he says, “In Him was life,” because he immediately adds, “and the life was the light of men,” where “light” must refer to the spiritual realm. But how is it that Jesus is “the life” in a spiritual sense? In the statement “in Him was life” there is a reference to the very essence of the Word who was “with God, and ...was God” (vs. 1). From this description of the divine nature of the Word as he was in the beginning John takes up the word “life” and gives to it its truest and highest meaning. Life in the very best sense of the term belongs eternally to the Word which was with God, and was God.

THE MANIFESTED LIFE

The first epistle of John begins with the expression, “What was from the beginning,” and in so doing takes us back into eternity again when the Word was with God. We do not

know for sure that this expression refers to the Word until we read on in the verse. This becomes clear when we see John describe “what was from the beginning” as that which the eyewitnesses had “heard,” “seen,” “beheld,” and “handled.” At this point we can know for sure that he is speaking of the Word as he does in his gospel record.

By this statement John indicates that what had been with God (“What was from the beginning”) had now come into the area of human experience. The Word had made himself known in history: “And the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us” (v. 2). The emphasis in this verse “is the historical reality of that to which John bears witness. It is the eternal life, he says, which was with the Father and then appeared to us. The language used here is precisely that which was used of the personal Word which was with God in the beginning (Jn. 1:2). It was the personal manifestation of the eternal life in the historical person of Jesus which was of crucial importance for the writer---and his readers” (I. Howard Marshall).

The word “manifested” is the key word in the second verse. It is used two times in this one verse. The term means to bring to light or make known what already exists. What was it that had already existed but had now been made known? The “life” was what had been from the beginning, and now “the life was manifested,” or made known. This is a favorite word of John to describe Jesus’ first coming (1 Jn. 3:5, 8; cf. Jn. 1:31). He also uses it to refer to the second coming (1 Jn. 2:28). But how was the Word manifested when he came into the world? John is more specific in his gospel when he says, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn. 1:14).

When the Word “became flesh” he was not converted into something different from what he was when he was “with God, and . . . was God.” He simply entered into a new state of existence. He assumed or took on a new nature when he became man, yet “the life” that was in him as the Word was ever the same. This life was now “manifested” in flesh.

THE ETERNAL LIFE

John says that the life that was manifested was “eternal life.” Could we expect anything less when we consider that this “life” or Word not only was “with God,” but it also “was God”? Could he be God and not be eternal? This in itself shows that the words “became flesh” in John 1:14 do not mean transmuted into flesh. How could that which is eternal be converted into that which is transient and temporary? The word “eternal” only brings out what is inherent in the concept itself. It describes the eternal quality and duration of the life which he is in himself.

Jesus tells us that “the Father has life in Himself,” and “He gave the Son also to have life in Himself” (Jn. 5:26). This describes the self-sufficiency of both the Father and the Son. Each has eternal life inherent in himself — or, perhaps we should say, each has life as an independent possession. Even though this life was in the Son as well as in the Father, it

was “given” of the Father to the Son. At first this does not seem consistent with John’s earlier claim that “in Him was life.” So, how are we to understand this statement from Jesus? Surely it must refer to the time when the Word became flesh. As the Word Jesus ever had life in himself, but as he stood before the unbelieving Jews and made this statement, “he was vindicating his own authority and action, by connecting them with the Father’s will and action. And he was not, as he stood before the Jews, simply the Eternal Word, but, rather, the God-man” (Alvah Hovey).

LIFE IN THE SON

God had planned from eternity to make life available to man “in Christ Jesus.” Paul refers to this eternal purpose of God as “His kind intention which He purposed in Him” (Eph. 1:9). When the time was right God would “sum up all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth” (Eph. 1:10). John speaks of this plan of redeeming man in terms of life in Christ: “And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life” (1 Jn. 5:11-12). Only God who “has life in Himself” could make this life available, and no one but Christ, the Son of God, whom the Father “gave... to have life in Himself” could offer “life in the Son.” The Son was the only One to lay hold of the claim, “I am ...the life.”

Jesus himself shows how one may pass “out of death into life,” i.e., by hearing his words and believing him (the Father) who sent him (Jn. 5:24). To pass out of death into life is to leave the realm where death rules and to pass over into the realm where life rules. John shows that the realm where life rules is “in the Son.” Paul, describes the sphere of death as “the power of darkness,” and the sphere into which one is transferred as “the kingdom of His beloved Son” (Col. 1:13).

One cannot have the life which Christ offers unless he is brought into him in whom life is found, that is, into Christ. What is to be gained “in Christ” when one passes out of death into life? Redemption and forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7), salvation (2 Tim. 2:10), freedom from condemnation (Rom. 8:1), and all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3). But how does one get “into Christ”? He is “baptized into Christ” (Rom. 6:3, 4; Gal. 3:27). Other things must precede water baptism into Christ, such as faith (Jn. 8:24; Mk. 16:16), repentance (Lk. 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38; 17:30, 31), and confession of one’s faith in Christ (Rom. 10:10; Act 8:37), but one comes “into Christ” at the point of his baptism into Christ.

In baptism one is “buried with Him [Christ] through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead so we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). Could we find a better description of how it is, and at what point, one passes out of death into life? We die with Christ in baptism, and we gain newness of life in Him as we are raised up with Him. God has “made us alive together with Christ (by grace ye were

saved), and raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:6). Wonderful thought! Marvelous grace!

My friend, do you have this “life in the Son”? No one but Jesus Christ could claim, “I am ...the life,” and no one but Christ can make you alive in him today! Would you not put your trust in him, and “arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16)? As Ananias asked Saul, “Why do you delay?” Jesus Christ is “the life,” obey Him TODAY!

Chapter Four

JESUS FROM ABOVE AND ABOVE ALL

There are many ways to evaluate the life of our Lord while he was on earth, but there is none more challenging than to look into his own mind to see how he thought of himself. What did Jesus think, what did he teach about his own relation to the living God while he was yet on earth? Did he know that he was one in nature with him? What does his own estimate of himself in relation to those who had gone before tell us? What do his works say on this question? What does Jesus himself say on these matters?

HIS RELATION TO THOSE WHO HAD GONE BEFORE

Jesus’ life and ministry on earth was within a certain historical setting. They were connected with what the prophets had foretold and with the message of John the Baptist. Yet, even though this connection is there, one is at once struck by the conscious assurance with which Jesus himself detaches and differentiates himself and his work from those who had gone before. There is yet fulfillment and consummation, and Jesus had come to bring this to pass. All that had gone before was only the breaking of the road, a period of preparation. He had come to bring to completion what had been begun by his predecessors.

With reference to himself Jesus declared, “Behold, a greater than Jonah is here. . . . Behold, a greater than Solomon is here” (Matt. 12:41, 42). He informed the people of his time about these truths concerning himself in order to impress upon their minds these two important facts: (1) If more than Jonah was here and the people of his time repented, then the people of Christ’s generation were under greater obligation to repent than were the Ninevites. (2) If the queen of the south came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear Solomon, and more than Solomon was here, then the people of Christ’s generation were under greater obligation to hear the one of whom this is affirmed.

What may we learn about the work of Jesus from this statement? We may learn that the most exalted figures among prophets and kings are not so great as Jesus. Along this same line Jesus says, “Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see. For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them” (Luke 10:23, 24). In a similar way, John the Baptist is said to be greater than all the prophets and kings under the Old Covenant, and yet “he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he” (Matt. 11:11). Jesus sets his own work higher, and he does not do so only relatively, but absolutely. His work transcends all that had been done previously by the prophets and kings of all the former generations. He is conscious that his teaching is something wholly incomparable and perfect (see Luke 4:18ff.).

HIS RELATION TO MESSENGERS OF HIS DAY

What is true of those who had gone before was also true of Jesus’ contemporaries, including the twelve disciples whom he had chosen, John the Baptist, and others who were messengers of God. Jesus was no ordinary messenger. It is true that like other messengers he received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38), and did much of his work by the Spirit of God (Matt. 12:28). But to say this is not to tell the whole story. The rest of the story is what makes him greater than all the others. Others received the Holy Spirit, and did mighty works by the Spirit of God, but there was this major difference: they could not communicate anything from God to man except what was revealed to them by the Holy Spirit. They had not come down from heaven, they were “of the earth,” but “he that cometh from above is above all” (John 3:31).

In this passage Jesus is contrasted with others like John the Baptist. Those “of the earth,” as was John and all other earthly messengers, speak from an earthly standpoint and experience. However, one who “cometh from above” speaks from a heavenly standpoint and from experience. He is “above all.” Of the one who is “of the earth,” Alvah Hovey says, “Such a man cannot speak as one from heaven; for he has never been there, and is a stranger to the experience of that higher world. The Evangelist does not here deny his own inspiration, or affirm that his teaching is confined to earthly things; but he confesses that he cannot bear witness of heavenly things, or teach more than is given him by another” (**Commentary on the Gospel of John**, p. 108).

Did Jesus know anything except what was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit? Was he no different in this respect than other messengers of God? Those who think so need to explain this passage. How was Jesus “above all,” as this passage of scripture affirms, if it is not in the way we have explained in the two preceding paragraphs? Even if Jesus received the Holy Spirit “without measure,” as some believe, this does not explain the statement in John 3:31 that Jesus is “above all.” The difference brought up in this verse between Jesus and other messengers *is not a difference in degrees of the Spirit* which one may possess. In this passage of scripture, the difference is *from whence one comes* to bear his testimony. Jesus is “from above,” all others are “of the earth.”

This means that while on earth Jesus had those things that would be required of one who had come down out of heaven to bear *direct* testimony of heavenly things. He had the same mind he had as God while he was in heaven, and he had a divine will, divine emotions, and divine consciousness. Let those who affirm that Jesus was divine, but that he was without a divine mind, will, emotions and consciousness while on earth, explain how without these divine characteristics he could have borne *direct* testimony of things he had heard and seen in heaven? Without these qualities how could he recall his experiences while he was in heaven, and thereby bear direct testimony of the Father, as this passage (John 3:31) claims for him? Such testimony would have to arise out of his own personal experience of having been in heaven, having known the Father there, and having heard and seen the things of the Father while he was in heaven.

It was because Jesus was “from above” and not “of the earth” (Jn. 3:31) that he could testify of what he had “seen and heard” (Jn. 3:32). What he testified was not simply truth that was “revealed” to Him in the same way that truth was revealed to John the Baptist, Peter, or Paul who were just ordinary men chosen by God to be his inspired messengers. These men who were “of the earth” were “sent from God” (see Jn. 1:16), but they were not “from above” so that they could speak what they had “seen and heard” of the Father in the same way that Jesus could. One who “speaks of the earth” is one who “has not looked on truth absolute in the heavenly sphere” (Wescott).

All men, including even the apostles, were different from Jesus in this respect. The Holy Spirit was not given to Jesus to enable him to “remember” what he had “seen and heard” when he was in heaven, nor was he given to “lead” and “guide” him into all truth, in the same way he promised to send the Holy Spirit to the apostles. Jesus was the truth (Jn. 14:6), and he spoke what he “knew” and what he had “seen” (Jn. 3:11-12; 7:29; 8:55) of the Father in heaven.

What is meant by the word “know” in these passages where Jesus says he speaks what he knows of the Father? It means that he had *immediate knowledge* of heavenly things. He knew because he was from above and was above all.

It was Jesus’ origin (he came down out of heaven) and divine nature (he was God manifest in the flesh, John 1:14; 1 Tim. 3:16) that set him apart from all earthly messengers. It is this truth about Jesus that explains the other things that separates Jesus from all other messengers. A good example is what is said of Jesus and the Holy Spirit that is not said of messengers who are “of the earth.” There were some things which Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and all earthly messengers had in common: they were all “sent” by God, and they all “bear witness.” But one important difference should be noted: the Son “sends” the Holy Spirit to the disciples (John 15:26; 16:7), just as the Father does (John 14:26). Surely Jesus was not given the Spirit “without measure” (as some wrongly understand John 3:34) to enable him to send the Holy Spirit to the disciples, was he? The promise of Jesus to send the Spirit to them puts him on an equal with the Father and lifts

him above all of the other messengers of God.

His Relation To The O. T. Institutions

The new and absolutely transcendent element in Jesus' teaching had its ultimate roots in his boundless authority, and in his own person. Comparing him to the Old Testament institutions there was nothing great and holy in the Old Covenant, not even its temple, nor the Sabbath day, and not even its law which was now subject to his will and authority. The Sabbath was an institution of God (Ex. 20:8f.; Deut. 5:12, 14), yet, Jesus said, "But I say to you, That in this place is one greater than the temple" (Matt. 12:6), and the temple was superior to the Sabbath. Claiming superiority over the temple meant he had authority over the Sabbath as well. But to leave no doubt on the matter, Jesus went on to say that the Son of man was "Lord even of the Sabbath day" (Matt. 12:8). Jesus had full authority to control and regulate the Sabbath day as he saw proper.

Jesus was also superior to Moses and the law. This superiority over the law was reflected in his manner of teaching, for the people marvelled at his teaching, "for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:28, 29). Instead of quoting from the rabbis of former times, as other teachers were accustomed to do (this, they thought, gave authority to their message), Jesus spoke as one who had authority in himself, and the people noted the difference. Also, unlike the prophets of old, Jesus did not appeal to a special divine commission. He acted of his own right. We never hear him say, "Thus says the Lord," words used by the prophets to indicate that they were speaking by divine commission from Jehovah. He speaks only of his own authority, out of his own knowledge, of his own right: "But I say unto you" (Matt. 5:18, 20, 22, 26, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44; 6:2, 5, 16, 29; 8:10, 11, etc.).

What is the significance of these claims of Jesus to be superior over the two leading institutions of the law (temple and Sabbath), as well as superiority over the law itself? In the mind of the Jews the temple, the Sabbath, and Moses and the law were all inseparably linked with Jehovah God. In them the will of the all-holy God was expressed, and, for this reason, it was hard for them to understand the claim of Jesus to be superior to them, *except in the sense that in his inmost being he knew himself to be wholly one with Jehovah.* Jesus took his stand exactly where to Jewish minds only One stands, God himself.

HIS RELATION TO MIRACLES DONE BY OTHERS

Others besides Jesus worked miracles. Even in the Old Testament we have reports of miracles worked by some of the prophets. Elijah and Elisha even restored the dead to life (1 Kings 17:19ff.; 2 Kings 4:32ff.; 13:21). Jesus did not work greater miracles than those worked by others in either the Old or New Testament, but the *manner in which he worked his miracles* was different. Jesus always worked his miracles in absolute concurrence

with the Father (John 5:19f.). In raising Lazarus he “lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me” (John 11:41). With the Father’s assent to what he was about to do, “He cried in a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth, and he that was dead came forth . . .” This, and all the other of Jesus’ miracles, were worked *as natural operations of his own being*. It is not from the Father (though always in absolute concurrence with him) but from himself that the influence proceeded: “. . . I will; Be thou clean” (Mark 1:41); “Ephpheta. . . Be opened” (Mark 7:34); “Talitha cummi . . . Damsel, I say to thee, arise” (Mark 5:41); “Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house” (Mark 2:11).

Someone may ask, “But how is this different from how miracles were worked by others?” The answer is that others did not use the same language Jesus used; language which shows that Jesus saw himself working miracles of his own will and by his own power, and yet in perfect union (being of one nature and one will) with the Father. The disciples worked miracles in Jesus’ name (Luke 9:49; 10:17; Acts 3:6; 16:18; 19:13); they readily conceded (even if his name was not always pronounced) that the mighty works which they did were by his will and by his power. Not one of them ever thought of himself as in union with the Father in the same sense that Jesus thought of himself in relation to him. They were but disciples and acknowledged Jesus to be their Lord, and they thought only in terms of doing what they did in his name and by his authority and power.

Chapter Five

JESUS’ KNOWLEDGE OF THE FATHER

A remarkable thing about Jesus Christ is that one is not able to separate his teaching entirely from his person. This is not true of Moses, the great lawgiver of the Old Testament period, nor has it ever been true of the founders of the world’s great religions, such as Buddha or Muhammad. We can separate the teaching entirely from any of these men and exhibit them independently of their persons. But this is not so of Jesus Christ. One cannot preach what Jesus taught without preaching Jesus Christ himself. Very early in his ministry Jesus centered the issue upon himself: “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? . . . But whom say ye that I am?” One of the last things he did on earth was to institute the memorial supper in memory of himself: “This is my body . . . This is my blood. This . . . do in remembrance of me” (1 Cor. 11:24, 25).

From the very beginning Jesus urged upon his disciples unconditional attachment to his person. Their imitation of him must extend even to the bearing of his cross: “He that

taketh not up his cross, and followeth me, is not worthy of me” (Matt. 10:38). He insisted upon this just as strongly as he did in other places on obedience to the will of God. He asked the same for himself that he demanded for his Father in heaven, namely an unflinching faith and a boundless love. The greatest commandment is to love God with the whole heart and soul (Matt. 22:36-38), but at the same time, “He that loveth father or mother more than me,” Jesus said, “is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me” (Matt. 10:37). Where in all the annals of history, has a mere man ever laid, or dared to lay, his contemporaries, indeed all humanity, under the obligation of such utter devotion to his person? How are we to understand such demands in light of Jesus’ own teaching about himself?

THE SON OF GOD

The only explanation lies in the fact that there was a consciousness within Jesus which transcends all human standards. Jesus is not merely with God; he is God himself. He knows himself to be substantially one with God. The manner of his prayers reflects this awareness. He alone says “My Father.” When he speaks of the disciples he says “your Father” and “their Father,” never “our Father.” This shows that he saw himself as “*the* Son of God,” not merely *a* son of God among many others. He was aware of this at a very early age. His unique union with God as his Son is revealed in his words to his mother when she found him in the temple: “Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49). This consciousness of his unique Sonship was confirmed by God himself at his baptism (Matt. 3:17), and yet again on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:5).

The testimony of John is that “we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14; on “the only begotten” cf. John 1:18 and 3:16; on the “glory” of the Son cf. John 17:1, 5). Others also received the same impression that Jesus was shere deity. What else would have caused the unclean spirit to cry out, “Thou art the Holy One of God” (Mark 1:24; cf. v. 7), or the centurion at Capernaum to say, “I am not worthy that thou shoudest enter under my roof” (Luke 7:6), or Peter, bowing to his knees, to exclaim, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8)?

Jesus must have understood his Sonship in a transcendental sense. He knew himself to be the judge of the world (John 5:22), and because all judgment had been committed to him by the Father he affirmed that “all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father” (John 5:23). His own teaching, he said, will judge men in the last day (John 12:48). As Son he also saw himself as transcending the servants (prophets) in the parable of the landowner who planted a vineyard and sent his servants to the vine dressers to receive his fruit (Matt. 21:33-46). In the place where he declared that of the day of judgment “no man knoweth, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father” (Mark 13:32), he places himself not only above man in the ascending scale, but also above the angels.

“NEITHER KNOWS ANY MAN THE FATHER BUT THE SON”

The best insight into Jesus’ awareness of his own unique relation to the Father as Son is found in the following passage

:

And at that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him (Matt. 11:25-27).

The Father was at that time making his will known through the word and works of the Son. It was being received by “babes,” or those who had a “more teachable moral and mental condition” (McGarvey). The same truths had remained hidden from “the wise and prudent.” “The reference is of course to wisdom and intelligence misused, perverted through pride, separated from a child-like spirit” (Broadus). See Matthew 13:13ff. This best describes the Scribes and Pharisees, and other teachers of the law, who put their traditions above the word of God, but it does not apply to them exclusively. It includes the worldly-wise as well (cf. 1 Cor. 1:26, “not many wise after the flesh”). Jesus rejoiced that the Father was pleased to make his will known to the “babes.” Jesus saw in their reception of his teaching an expression of God’s graciousness and compassion in making his will known to them. In the remaining part of the passage three affirmations are made about the Son and/or the Father.

1. *“All things are delivered unto me of my Father.”* What a remarkable claim is this! There is nothing which is held by the Father alone; whatever the Father has also belongs to Jesus. The word translated “are delivered” (*paredothē*) is first aorist passive indicative, and is rendered “have been delivered” in the ASV and the NKJV, “have been committed” in the NIV, and “have been handed over to” (footnote, “were given over”) in the NASB. At some past time not specified, perhaps when he entered upon his ministry, or when God’s eternal purpose was formed for man’s redemption through Christ.

“All things” is not limited to his rule over men, but includes all honor and greatness, all authority and power, and mankind and angels. The statement sounds much like the testimony of John the evangelist concerning Jesus as recorded in his gospel. “All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine” (John 16:15). “And all mine are thine and thine are mine” (John 17:10). “For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man: but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father” (John 5:21-23). “As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he

should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him” (John 17:2).

2. “*And no one knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son.*” The prefix (*epi*) on the compound word rendered “knoweth” (*epiginōskei*) gives it the meaning “knows fully,” rather than simply “knows.” This is knowledge derived directly and intuitively, not knowledge revealed to him by the Holy Spirit as other messengers of God had a knowledge of God revealed to them. In John 7:29 Jesus uses *oida* to show he has full knowledge of God. This knowledge, he says, belongs to him “because I am from him, and he sent me.” He could not be “from” the Father without having been *with* him; he is in fact the one “who is in the bosom of the Father,” and out of this close union with him, “He has explained Him” (John 1:18, NASB).

In John 8:55 Jesus says, “Yet ye have not known Him [the Father, *ww*], but I know Him . . .” Again, when Jesus speaks of his own knowledge of the Father in this passage he uses *oida*. Hendriksen points out that the word here means, “I do know him intuitively and directly (having been in his very presence from all eternity; cf. 1:18). It is fair to add however that the wicked Jews had neither the one [they had no intuitive knowledge of him, *ww*] or the other [they did not know him directly since they had not been with him in heaven, *ww*] kind of knowledge (cf. 8:55 with 7:28); and that Jesus possessed both; i.e., he knew the Father both intuitively and by experience (cf. 8:55 with 10:15; 17:25).” On “but I know him” in John 8:55, Hovey says “know” means to know “by an immediate, eternal, and perfect fellowship of thought, feeling, and will; and this may be called absolute knowledge (see Matt. 11:27; John 1:18; 3:13; 5:20, 22, 26, 36).”

The knowledge the Son has of the Father is the same kind of knowledge the Father has of the Son. The same verse that says “neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son” first affirmed that “no man knoweth the Son, but the Father.” No one can know the Son as the Father does, and no one can know the Father as the Son knows him. With our finite minds we will never be able to fully comprehend the fullness of the nature of either the Father or the Son. Who, for instance, can fully comprehend the divine nature of the Father, or the mystery of the union between the divine and human natures of the Son of God? But the Father and the Son know each other fully because they are of the same nature and work.

This was the meaning of Jesus’ statement, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30). Was Jesus no different than Peter and Paul or other inspired messengers of God, except that he had a full measure of the Spirit, as some might claim? That can hardly be the case.

If Jesus’ knowledge of the Father is the same kind of knowledge the Father has of the Son, as Matthew 11:25-27 affirms, how can it be accounted for as knowledge received by a revelation of the Holy Spirit? If this knowledge of the Father is not revealed knowledge, but is direct and immediate, does it not follow that in the

language of this passage Jesus is claiming knowledge that is his *because he is deity*, is of the same essence, and has been with the Father in heaven? It is knowledge like the knowledge the Father has of the Son. This means it is not revealed knowledge. If the knowledge of the Son of God was not revealed knowledge, but intuitive knowledge (knowledge he brought with him from heaven, and which he still has because of his continuing oneness in nature with God the Father), does this not mean that he was a divine personality *with a divine mind* even while he was on earth?

It also follows that any claim that Jesus exchanged his divine nature for a human nature when he came to earth, or that though he was “deity” he was such without possessing a divine mind that could know as God knows, cannot be true. Any who might make this claim cannot account for the fact that Jesus claimed that while he was on earth he had direct and immediate knowledge of the Father just like the Father has direct and immediate knowledge of the Son..

Sometimes we hear it said that Jesus had only one *nature* while on earth, and that was a *human* nature. These same people also usually believe that he was only one *person* while he was on earth, but that in person Jesus was “God.” It is true that Jesus was one in personality while he was on earth, but how could he have the direct and immediate knowledge of God that Matthew 11:27 and similar passages affirm of him if he was the “God” or “deity” they make him out to be? Would not such knowledge *brought directly from heaven* require that he have the same *mind* on earth that he had while he was in heaven? If so, such a *divine* personality would have to be more than just an “eternal spirit” without a divine mind, will, and emotions, and without such attributes of deity as knowledge and power. How could such a “being” be called “God” in the true sense of the word? If Jesus had only a human mind as a result of having only one nature, and that nature was human, how could he have brought this knowledge of the Father with him from heaven to earth?

It is no wonder that those who hold this view of Jesus have sometimes described him as “just a man, an ordinary man like you and me,” while he was on earth. That in “being” he was stripped of such attributes of deity as knowledge and power. This view of Jesus can never be harmonized with Jesus’ own understanding of himself while he was on earth.

The Father and Son stand in a wholly unique, exclusive communion with each other; a communion made possible by the fact that they are Father and Son on the divine level. In the words of this passage (Matt. 11:27), and other passages that state essentially the same truth, Christ’s *essential* relation to the Father is established, both in heaven and on earth. The knowledge each has of the other grows out of this essential relation between them. To the Jewish mind no perfect knowledge of God was possible to man. Only God can have such knowledge of himself. No mere man can have that knowledge of God, and, on the other hand, only God can have perfect knowledge of man. But Jesus, out of his own unique relation to God, emphasizes that he and he alone has the same perfect knowledge

of the Father that the Father has of him.

This knowledge of Christ is his because he and he alone is the Son. Jesus, according to his own understanding of himself, said, “Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?” (John 14:10; cf. John 10:38). This unity of nature with the Father is such that Jesus could say, “If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also” (John 8:19). Why was this? Because even though “the world hath not known thee,” Jesus prayed to the Father, “I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me” (John 17:25).

3. “*And he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.*” There is no way to the Father except through the Son. According to this context the Son will make the Father known only to those who want to know him and who will open themselves to him, i. e., to the “babes” of v. 25. All the wisdom and intelligence of the world will not give a true knowledge of the Father. He can be known only as the Son “willeth to” make him known. He “wills” to make the Father known to all who will “come” as he invites all to come and take his yoke and find rest in vv. 27-30.

CONCLUSION

This is the Jesus we know. We do not know the Jesus some preach today. The Jesus we know is the Jesus who alone is “*the Son of God*,” and as the unique Son of the Father knows the Father and the Father knows him. This is but another reason why Jesus is “above all” (John 3:31). It is not because he had received the Holy Spirit without measure, as some think. This is not the reason that Jesus while on earth knew the Father and the Father knew him. If this were the reason, how would we explain the Father’s knowledge of the Son? Whatever reason is given in Matthew 11:25-27 for the knowledge of the one, that same reason is given for the knowledge of the other.

In light of this, which is the Jesus you know?

Chapter Six

(NOTE: There is much speculation about Jesus receiving the Spirit “without measure,” and some questionable conclusions about Jesus and the Holy Spirit have been drawn based upon this view of John 3:34. R. C. H. Lenski contends that this verse applies to John the Baptist, not Christ. His comments on vv. 31-34 are given in the piece below. I have added the title of course, and I have also taken the liberty to insert some brief notes on what words are referred to when it is not clear from

what has just been said, or from what immediately follows. These brief notes, or in some cases a single word, are followed with “ww” to let you know these are my words — Walton Weaver)

“For God Giveth Not the Spirit by Measure”

by R. C. H. Lenski

“31) The Baptist has thus far spoken of the relation between Jesus and himself, shutting off the foolish notions voiced in the complaint of his disciples. Now he turns to the other side, and the relation of Jesus to men, which includes in particular also his relation to these complaining disciples. The Baptist wants them to follow Jesus as Andrew, John, and the others did. Their whole view of Jesus must be changed accordingly. Thus we receive the supreme part of the Baptist’s final testimony of the Sonship of Jesus. He that comes from above is above all men, he that is of the earth is of the earth and of the earth he speaks; he that comes from heaven is above all men. The heavenly origin of Jesus makes him supreme over all men, who are wholly of earthly origin. Both substantivized present participles ὁ ἐρχόμενος and ὁ ὢν (that is, the one coming from above, and the one being or who is of the earth, ww) are used without reference to time, and is used to express origin or source. Yet we should note that the former is a standing designation for the expected Messiah. Even now since he has come he is in the eminent sense ‘the Coming One.’ Since the entire contrast from verse 27 onward deals with persons, ‘above all’ must mean not ‘above all things’ but ‘above all men.’ Of him who is ‘of the earth’ nothing can be said except that ‘he is of the earth,’ on a level with all others who are like him and above nobody. Hence also all his speaking, whatever utterance he makes (’Ο’Ο’Ο’Ο’Ο), is of the same nature, ‘of the earth’. On the other hand, ‘he that comes from heaven’ (now using this elucidating phrase) ‘is above all men’ not merely in his speaking but in everything. The two ’Οά’Ο’Ο’Ο’Ο show that the contrast is here not between Jesus and the Baptist only but between Jesus and all men in general. This mighty contrast these disciples must know and keep in mind.

“32) With this clear, the Baptist proceeds to the speaking of Jesus, save that λαλεῖν is too ordinary a verb to apply to him. **What he has seen and did hear, of that he bears witness; and no man receives his witness.** That this is, like his origin, testimony of things seen and heard in heaven goes without saying (1:18). Grammarians have difficulty with the two verbs, one a perfect, the other an aorist, ‘has seen,’ ‘did hear.’ They ask whether the perfect is aoristic, or the aorist is used in the sense of the perfect. They certainly can be understood most easily just as they stand. The perfect is extensive: what Jesus has seen in heaven all along; the aorist is punctiliar noting the past fact (historical). Jesus ‘has seen’ all there is to be seen in heaven and can testify accordingly. The aorist ‘did hear’ is not added as a duplicate of all that Jesus also heard in heaven, all the lovely

music in the heavenly language in the conversations with God. The aorist is specific and refers to the punctiliar word or commission which sent the Son forth into the world. It indicates the counsel of God for our salvation, the loving commands of the Father, 7:16; 8:28; 12:49, 50; etc. Of these things Jesus came to testify.

“The καί (‘and,’ ww) coordinates two contrary acts: this superlative testimony and its rejection. Not by mere revelation does Jesus speak as did the prophets of old, but from actual presence in heaven he ‘bears witness’ at firsthand, absolutely directly. Nothing truer and more trustworthy can ever reach men. And the things he testifies thus are the very ones men need most of all, the fact and realities about God in heaven, his will, purpose, and plans concerning men. ‘And his testimony---this wondrous testimony---no one receives. The very coordination of the statements lets us feel the enormity of the guilt implied, as in 1:10, 11. To receive testimony = to believe it; not to receive it = to disbelieve it, refuse to trust it, treat it as a lie. The fact that the negation is not meant to be absolute the very next words show.

“33) **He that did receive his witness did seal that God is true.** At this point and through the next verse commentators present views with which we cannot agree. Who is this that received Jesus’ witness and sealed that God is true? The Baptist here does what he has done in his previous statements, he allows us to infer to whom he is referring. Both the aorist participle and the aorist main verb are definite, each denoting a past act. The Baptist refers to *himself*. There were, indeed, a few others besides the Baptist who also did receive Jesus’ witness. In a manner the words apply also to these. But in their full sense they apply only to the Baptist himself. As far as the receiving is concerned, he stands first and foremost and helped the first of his own disciples also to receive Jesus’ witness. At this very moment he is trying to make his remaining disciples do the same. The actual situation is sometimes lost sight of, and the comment of some expositors reads as though the Baptist here utters abstract, general statements, like a man who is writing a book not like one who is talking face to face with a few men in order to move them to a definite act. The Baptist here virtually tells his disciples, ‘I did receive his witness, I did seal,’ etc. To let this aorist λαβων (the one receiving him, ww) refer also to such as in the future will receive Jesus’ witness, is to extend its force too far. Such a thought is an inference not the meaning of the word itself.

“When the Baptist speaks of sealing that God is true, veracious, *verax*, he, of course, does not mean that God’s being true would not be sufficiently certified without such a seal. The declarative ὅτι (“that,” ww) (R. 1034) states what the seal attests. God is true even if all men called him a liar. A seal is not intended for the person issuing a document but for the one to whom it is issued, to assure him. So God himself adds seals to his truth not for his own sake or for the truth’s sake but for our sakes. What does the Baptist mean by saying, ‘He that did receive his witness did seal that God is true’? Here again some generalize: the seal is faith or the saving effect of Jesus’ testimony. This, they say, acts like a seal or proof, helping to assure the believer and others that God is true in his revelation of Jesus. Thus again sight is lost of the actual situation: the Baptist trying to

assure his disciples who were finding fault with Jesus. And how faith and trust in error and deception? Does it, too, 'seal' and make error truth? The Baptist is speaking of *himself* and by no means of himself as an ordinary believer. He is divinely commissioned (1:6), to him special direct divine revelation was given (1:31, etc.). He had far more than his own personal faith to append as a seal, he had his word and testimony as a prophet of God, the word of the revelation he had received. For his disciples this seal ought to have great weight. There were to be others like this, namely the apostles (1:14). Their personal faith is an entirely minor matter. The seal they present is far higher.

"34) The commentators who misunderstand v. 33 are also not clear with regard to v. 34. **For he whom God did commission speaks the words of God; for the Spirit gives not from (insufficient) measure.** What does γάρ ("for," ww) prove or explain? The fact that faith acts as a seal? Impossible. The thought of v. 34 runs in an entirely different line. Only properly related statements can be joined by 'for.' Therefore v. 34 does not refer to Jesus himself but to the Baptist. The simple story is this: John tells his disciples, in order to convince and assure them, that he himself puts the seal of his authority and his person on God's truth that Jesus is the Messiah; and then, in order to establish the weight of this statement more fully, he explains (γάρ) that he, sent by God, utters nothing less than the words of God, and this he can do because the Spirit gives such utterance to him in adequate measure.

"He whom God did commission' is the Baptist and not Jesus. The claim that only one 'from heaven' (v. 31b) can be 'commissioned' is contradicted by 1:6 and 1:33, where the Baptist is the one 'commissioned.' In v. 31, 32 Jesus is ὁ ἐρχόμενος, 'the One Coming.' Now it is true that Jesus, too, is 'sent' or 'commissioned,' and that he afterward tells the Jews much about his 'Sender.' But here the fact that Jesus is sent is out of line both with what precedes and what follows. The aorist ἀπέστειλεν (sent or commissioned, ww) indicates the past act when God sent the Baptist on his great mission. Thus sent---let his disciples note it well---he speaks the words of God, literally, 'he utters the utterances of God.' For λαλεῖν (speaks, ww) is the opposite of being silent; and ῥήματα (words, ww) are merely utterances, whereas λόγοι (a word not in the verse, ww) are the thoughts put into statements. Of Jesus the Baptist has just said far more in v. 32, namely that he 'testifies' the actual things he has seen and did hear in heaven. Why would he now reduce this exalted statement? But of the Baptist this is, indeed, the highest that can be said: God places his words on his prophet's lips. He is in the same class with the prophets who were sent before his day.

"Another γάρ ("for," ww) explains how the Baptist can utter God's words, 'for the Spirit gives not from (insufficient) measure.' It is hard to decide from the Greek whether God is the subject of the sentence, as our versions take it, or whether it is 'the Spirit.' The sense, fortunately, is quite the same, for the point to be explained is the Baptist's ability to convey God's utterances. He can do this if *God* gives him the Spirit in proper measure; or if *the Spirit* gives him the utterances in proper measure. Yet this γάρ clause convinces so many that Jesus is here meant and they do not think that it could be the Baptist. The

present tense of the verb, δίδωσι (“he gives,” ww), which means ‘continues to give,’ should give them pause. If Jesus were referred to, this would have to be the aorist ἔδωκε, ‘did give,’ i. e., when the Spirit descended upon him ‘as a dove.’ This continuous bestowal is vouchsafed to the Baptist, as it was to the prophets before him, day by day for his work.

“Finally, οὐκ ἐκ μέτρου is taken to mean ‘unmeasured,’ ‘without measure,’ ‘not by measure,’ a litotes for ‘in complete fullness.’ This misconception has led many to refer the entire verse to Jesus. The phrase means: not in narrow or insufficient measure, as though the ordinary limits could not be exceeded. The English has no corresponding idiom; ἐκ is not our English ‘by’ (in the phrase “by measure,” ww). The Spirit (or if we prefer the other subject: God) gives as he wills, in richest measure, by revelation and by inspiration, the words he wants his messengers to utter. This, indeed, establishes the fact that the Baptist, as God’s messenger, can and does speak God’s own words when he points his disciples to Jesus. The Spirit sees to it that he is properly equipped. The disciples have every reason to believe and to obey his words as being ‘the utterances of God’ himself.”

THE INTERPRETATION OF ST. JOHN’S GOSPEL, PP. 286-292

CHAPTER SEVEN

JESUS THE WORD THAT BECAME FLESH

John 1:14 says that the Word “was made [became] flesh and dwelt among us.” “Made” or “became” flesh does not mean that Christ’s divine nature was transmuted into humanity, but that he as the divine personality was incarnated in the nature of man. This Word “was God” and had been “with God” (vs. 1), but he who was God came and “dwelt among us” by becoming man. But if the Word came from heaven and “dwelt among us” as a mere man --- just an ordinary guy like you and me --- how was he yet in heaven as God and on earth as a mere man at the same time? Or, if he wasn’t in heaven, where was he?

THREE POSSIBILITIES

At least one of three possibilities exists:

- 1) The Word as God was transmuted into humanity when he became flesh and

- “dwelt among us.” In this case the Word as God ceased to exist, and there were only two personalities in the Godhead while Jesus was on earth!
- 2) The Word which was God remained in heaven, and Jesus as a man was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a woman, and came and dwelt among us.” In this case the Word as God did not himself come and “dwell among us”!
 - 3) The Word as God *really did* come down from heaven and became man (a true incarnation). In becoming man the Word *really did* “dwelt among us” It was he as the God-man who was “Immanuel,” which being translated means, “God with us” (Matt. 1:23).

To affirm either of the first two possibilities is to deny the incarnation. If we were to assume for the moment that the first of the three possibilities listed above is true, how would we explain just *how God can cease to exist as God?* One of the qualities of deity is that he is eternal. How can a being who is eternal be converted into a being who is transient and temporary? If one affirms the second possibility then the Word which is God never left heaven, so an incarnation would not be possible. Only the third possibility is viable.

But what does the word “became” in the statement, “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,” mean?

AN EXPLANATION AND A WARNING

B. F. Westcott, in explaining the words “was made [became] flesh” (Jn . 1:14), has in his comments also issued a warning that we would do well to note:

Owing to the inherent imperfection of human language as applied to the mystery of the Incarnation, both these words are liable to misinterpretation. The word *became* must not be so misunderstood as to support the belief that the Word ceased to be what He was before; and the word *flesh* must not be taken to exclude the rational soul of man. The clear apprehension of the meaning of the phrase, so far as we can apprehend it, lies in the recognition of the unity of the Lord’s Person before and after the Incarnation. His personality is divine. But at the same time we must affirm that His humanity is real and complete. He, remaining the same Person as before, did not simply assume humanity as something which could be laid aside: *He became flesh*. He did not simply become a man: He became “man.” The mode of the Lord’s existence on earth was truly human, and subject to all the conditions of human existence; but He never ceased to be God. And the nature which He so assumed He retains in its perfection (1 John iv.2 . . . 2 John 7 . . .). As compared with the corresponding phrase *to come in the flesh* (1 John 1.c.), the phrase *became flesh* brings out especially one aspect of the Incarnation. The former marks the unchanged continuity of the Lord’s Personality, and the latter the complete reality of His Manhood.

One of the main warnings in this quote from Westcott is against taking the word “became” in John 1:14 to mean that the Word ceased to be what he was before, or taking the word “flesh” to exclude the rational soul of man. To hold the view that some have

expressed on Christ's humanity one would have to define the word "became" in the very way Westcott warns against. In doing this one would destroy the unity of our Lord's person before and after the incarnation. By the word "became" the apostle John is affirming that *the infinite became united with the finite*. The Divine Personality did not take on a second person, but a second nature. It is true that the "mode of our Lord's existence on earth" was changed. He "was truly human, and subject to all the conditions of human existence, but He never ceased to be God."

JESUS AS THE WORD "DWELL AMONG US"

The Word did not remain in heaven but come and "dwell among us." He could not do both at the same time. When he came into our midst, he was no longer in heaven. If Jesus *as the Word* did not "dwell among us" we could not logically speak of his pre-existence. The only logical connection between the Word as God and the person identified as Jesus on earth is that the Word as a divine personality was the person called Jesus. Jesus on earth was the Word who had come and "dwelt among us" except now in human flesh. The view that the Word (that is, God) was transmuted into a man in effect says that Jesus *as the Word* did not dwell among us.

From other passages of scripture in the gospel of John we learn that the *person* the apostle John describes in John 1:14 was the one who "heard," "knew," "had seen," and was "taught" of the Father. *That person* who was speaking at the time these claims were made was saying that these things were true of *him*, and he was the Word that had become flesh and was now dwelling among men. He does not say these things were true of the Word that yet remained in heaven, or the Word who had been transmuted into a mere man. *This person* had come down out of heaven to do the will of him who sent him (see Jn. 6:38). *This person* "had come from God, and was going to God" (Jn. 13:3). In anticipation of his return to heaven Jesus himself said, "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven" (Jn. 3:13). Did *that person* who was walking among and working with men at that time *actually come down out of heaven*? Our answer of course is, he most certainly did. How could this be if he were "just a man" among men?

The Son of Man, the *person* who at that time "dwelt among" men, was the "I am" of John 8:58. This Son of Man would be crucified, and Jesus in answer to the question, "Who are you?" (Jn. 8:25), said in verse 28, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He . . ." Later in this same chapter he affirmed, "Before Abraham was born, I am" (Jn. 8:58). He did not say "I was" as though he were claiming mere pre-existence, but he said, "I am." (We will have more on this claim at another place) The Hebrew writer says he is the "same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). This affirms *absolute existence*, not just pre-existence.

"THE WORD BECAME FLESH"

As the terms “became flesh” are used here they describe the *Incarnation*. Lenski thinks the aorist of the word “became” states the historical fact and “marks the momentary act which made the Logos flesh, to remain flesh in the sense of man forever after.” He strongly rejects any view that would make the word rendered “became” mean “a transformation of the Logos into flesh. The Word did not cease to be what it was before; but it became what it was not before — *flesh*.” In the words of Paul in 1 Timothy 3:16, “God was manifest in the flesh.” And we might also add his words from the same verse, “great is the mystery of godliness!” because they certainly describe what is true of the incarnation. No human mind can begin to fathom how the Word, described as both the creator and God in verse 3, could assume the nature of man.

The word “flesh” is used in different ways in Scripture. Sometimes it means “body,” and “body” is equal to body, soul and spirit. Jesus is quoted as saying, “a body You have prepare for Me,” in Hebrews 10:5.

Chapter Eight

JESUS AND HIS SELF-EMPTYING

In commenting on Philippians 2:5-8 it has sometimes been affirmed that Jesus divested himself of godhood and became just a man. One person worded it like this:

The American Standard version replaces “humbled himself” in this text with “emptied himself.” Jesus, prior to his birth could adequately be described as equal with God. He divested himself of, the glory, honor, divinity, godhood and became subject to the Father as a man. Whatever qualities and characteristics had been his as divine were foregone. Whatever privileges and powers there might have been were stripped from him. He was a man.

IMPLICATIONS TO CONSIDER

The Word was divested and stripped of godhood. Who is this one referred to in this quote as “himself,” “he,” “his,” and “him” who “divested himself” and was “stripped”? Who is this that “abdicated his position for reasons that seemed good to him (the human race he loved). . . and became part of a subject race.”? Is this not the Word which was in heaven, the same as the one who “being in the form of God . . . emptied *himself*”? Is this not the Logos, the Word who was God? If so, the Word did not remain in heaven

because he “divested himself of the glory, honor, divinity, godhood, and became subject to the Father as a man.” “He abdicated his position . . . He became part of a subject race.” But, suppose we are told, neither did he come to earth as God, or deity. We must grant of course that the Word “became man” because this is what John says, and he also said that the Word did “dwell among us” --- *but was this Word transmuted into a man?* If so, there was no second person in the Godhead when Jesus was on earth, or if there was a second person in the Godhead at that time, he was a mere man! How can we have a mere man existing as a second person in the Godhead? So which is it? Either possibility is absurd, to say the least. Watch carefully these questions::

Is there a second Person in the Godhead NOW since Jesus' ascension, or is Jesus a mere man now as he sits at the right hand of God exercising all rule and authority? If a mere man now, is he to remain a mere man throughout eternity, or will he regain his Godhead (be transmuted back into this status) sometime in the future? How can a mere man be changed into God since God has no beginning?

This is the kind of problem one would face in trying to explain how God can cease to be God if he had been God in the first place!

Who is keeping company with whom? Is it necessary to say that the Word divested himself of . . . divinity, [and] godhood” when he “emptied *himself*”? If one were to say that these things were not fully recognized by Jesus while he was in this new state of existence, such a statement might go unnoticed, but when one says that Christ's self-emptying mean he divested himself of all the divine prerogatives, that is quite another matter. One would be wise to go slow here, especially when one's main objective is to emphasize Jesus' humanity. Must we rob Jesus of his divinity while on earth to be able to successfully defend his complete humanity?

We would do well to watch the company we keep. Who holds a particular view does not in itself determine whether it is true or not, but surely when it comes to matters of this kind we should be greatly concerned about where we come out. George Lawlor wrote:

Writers and commentators have greatly extended themselves in attempting to explain this classical statement of Christ's humiliation. Certain erroneous views which are positive denials of either Christ's deity or His true humanity, or both, have been widely advocated. The Unitarian expositors, together with current modernist leaders and liberal theologians, actively reject the fact of the two natures in the one person of Jesus Christ, and so deny the truth of this great passage. However, their false allegations may be refuted by a simple, accurate, scriptural exegesis of the passage. It seem most certain that the expression “He emptied Himself” cannot mean that He who was with God, and who was God, could renounce His essential nature and cease to be God. A contradiction like this involves the mind in darkness and is most assuredly excluded by the Scriptures. The One who came into the world to dwell among men is Immanuel, ‘God with us.’ We must be careful not to take anything away from the testimony of this great passage. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in becoming man, entered into the experience of human limitation, human weakness and impoverishment,

human dependence, and human subjection. This was in singular contrast with the glory and plenitude He possessed in the form of God (*When God Became Man*, pp. 81-82).

The wording in Philippians 2:6-7 does not require that we reach the conclusion that some have reached on the meaning of the words in these verses. We should want to be on the high side in our interpretation of the words “emptied himself” rather than be on the low side. Some who have been conservative in their opposition to Calvinism (even though we might say rather loose in how they define it) have in the past proved to be quite liberal in how they define the word “emptied” in Philippians 2:7. In fact, the more liberal view of Jesus’ humanity has no doubt been developed as a result of an attempt to be extremely conservative in one’s opposition to what he sees as Calvinistic tendencies. In the past some adopted an extreme view (a doctrinal stance that many consider to be not only liberal, but heretical as well) of Jesus’ humanity to be able to safeguard a theory that Jesus did not “have to sin.” Yet, in our judgment, the issue about Jesus and temptation is minute compared to the question of whether the self-emptying of Jesus means that he divested himself of his divinity and godhood when he came to earth.

DEFINITION OF TERMS: “EMPTIED HIMSELF”

Emptied Himself of What? To answer this question we must give some consideration to the following matters.

- 1) *Incarnation a voluntary act.* Whatever is involved it is clearly stated that he did it himself. The word “himself” in the Greek text is in a forward position for emphasis. Paul wants us to note that this was a voluntary act. It was not something imposed upon him.
- 2) *The Meaning of “Emptied”.* Actually the word translated “emptied” in Philippians 2:7 may be understood in either of two ways. Some have seen it in its metaphorical sense, and others in its metaphysical sense. When the word is taken in its metaphorical sense it is translated “he made himself nothing” (NIV) or “he made himself of no reputation” (KJV). The metaphysical rendering would be “he emptied himself.” The other four times where this same word is found in the New Testament (Rom. 4:14; 1 Cor. 1:17; 1 Cor. 9:15 and 2 Cor. 9:3—in the second passage the word is active voice, in the other three it is passive) the metaphorical rendering would be favored, and would be rendered “to make null and void.” On the other hand, the metaphysical sense finds some support in the three times this word is used in the Greek version (Septuagint) of the Old Testament (Gen. 24:20; 2 Chron. 24:11; Psa. 137:7). In each of these verses something was “emptied,” i. e., a jar, a chest, and Jerusalem (“razed”), respectfully. It is difficult to decide which of these senses is to be preferred in Philippians 2:7, but in view of the New Testament uses of the same word it seems that the metaphorical sense is the best candidate.

But even if the word in Philippians 2:7 should be translated “he emptied Himself “ it would still be necessary that we answer this question: how did he empty himself? Three answers have been offered:

a) *He Emptied Himself of the “Form of God” (v. 6).* The debate over the meaning of the word “form” in this verse has been extensive. The question of exactly what “form” refers to with reference to God has been answered in two ways.

- (1) Some say it refers to *the very nature of God*. The word itself (*morphe*) originally meant “that which corresponds to reality.” There was another word in Greek (*schema*, trans. “fashion” [KJV] in verse seven) which was used in contrast to this, meaning “merely appearance rather than reality.” If this distinction continued in New Testament times many feel that the word should then be understood in its Greek philosophical sense of essence or nature. After a lengthy discussion on the derivation and meaning of the word, and how it compares with the word often used in contrast to it, Lightfoot concluded that the expression “form of God” “must apply to the attributes of the Goghead. In other words, it is used in a sense substantially the same which it bears in Greek philosophy.” It refers to “the true divine nature of our Lord.” Again, he says, it “implies not the external accidents but the essential attributes.” Many conservative commentators agree. F. F. Bruce, writer of the commentary on Philippians in the New International Biblical Commentary series, quotes Lightfoot with approval on the meaning of the term “form” here.
- (2) Others believe this word refers to *the mode in which God's essential being is expressed*. Vincent says of this term:

As applied here to God, the word is intended to describe that mode in which the essential being of God expresses itself. We have no word which can convey this meaning, nor is it possible for us to formulate the reality. *Form* inevitably carries with it to us the idea of *shape*. It is conceivable that the essential personality of God may express itself in a mode apprehensible by the perception of pure spiritual intelligence; but the mode itself is neither apprehensible nor conceivable by human minds. This mode of expression, this ‘setting’ of the divine . . . essence . . . is the perfect expression of a perfect essence. It is not something imposed from without, but something which proceeds from the very depth of the perfect being, and into which that being perfectly upholds, as light from fire.

The more conservative authors who say that “form” means the external expression of God do not mean that it does not speak of something intrinsic and essential. As Alva McClain says:

It is indeed external form, that which strikes the eye, but as such it accurately represents the underlying nature from which it springs. If this be the significance of the term, then to say that Christ Jesus was ‘existing in the form of God’ is to affirm that He was very God

manifesting Himself in some external form through which He could be known probably to the inhabitants of heaven for what He truly was.

Vincent makes this equally clear in the following statement:

To say then, that Christ was in the form of God is to say that He existed as essentially one with God. The expression of deity through human nature (v. 7) thus has its background in the expression of deity as deity in the eternal ages of God's being. Whatever the mode of this expression, it marked the being of Christ in the eternity before creation. As the form of God was identified with the being of God, so Christ, being in the form of God, was identified with the being, nature, and personality of God.

Whatever the expression "form of God" means in this verse, Paul Feinberg has raised some serious grammatical problems which lead us to reject the view that Jesus emptied himself of this "form." He points out that the words "form of God" are a part of a participial phrase "being in the form of God." This phrase modifies the word "who" which precedes it: "*who* being in the form of God," and is the subject of the inflected verb "thought [it]" (KJV). Furthermore, the words "form of God" are separated from the word "emptied" which starts verse seven, with the word "but." Thus, grammatically it is not possible that "form of God" is the *object* of "emptied." The point of the passage is not that Christ emptied himself of whatever he was before the incarnation.

b) *He emptied Himself of His "Equality With God."* The question raised here is the same as that just considered regarding the expression "form of God." Is "equality with God" the object of the word "emptied"? Is this passage saying that Jesus emptied Himself of His equality with God? Not necessarily. A. T. Robinson says that "to be equal with God" is an accusative articular infinitive object of thought [it]" rather than the object of "emptied."

But someone asks, if Jesus did not give up his equality with God, what does Paul mean when he says he "thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation [emptied himself]"? The first part of this statement has been variously explained. Some have understood the word translated "robbery" (*harpogmos*) to mean to snatch or seize; others take it to refer to an object seized, or to be seized (thus making it equal to the same word with the *ma* ending instead of *mos*). The difference in these two views involves whether *harpogmos* is to be taken in an active sense (to snatch or seize), and whether "equality with God" is to be viewed as the object or the subject of the seizing. I am convinced that the word *harpogmos* should be understood in its plain" grammatical meaning, "the act of seizing." If this is correct, being on an "equality with God," is not the object, but the subject, of the seizing.

This was the view adopted by Joseph Agar Beet many years ago. He explained:

Had Christ looked upon the Divine powers He possessed in virtue of His equality with God as a means of taking for Himself the good things of earth, to His thought equality with God and high-handed seizure would have been coincident, and might have been spoken of as identical.

But of course Christ did not so view his equality with God; instead there was a sense in which He surrendered the full exercise of his divine powers in order that he might become a servant. He could have used them for his own selfish ends, but he did not. Richard N. Davies says, "He did not lay aside, lose, or relinquish the divine attributes when he became a man, but refused to use them for His own safety, welfare, and glory." Paul is describing the Son's mode of viewing his divine prerogatives; He did not view them selfishly, He thought first of the needs of others. This is the kind of mind Paul is calling on Christians to adopt.

- c) *He Emptied Himself by Taking "The Form of a Servant" (v. 7).* When J. B. Lightfoot comes to define the meaning of "emptied" at the beginning of verse seven, he says, "stripped *Himself* of the ensigna of majesty" (not deity or divine nature), and he does not give the slightest hint of even the remotest possibility that our Lord laid aside His divine nature. In fact, he rather emphatically says, "He divested Himself, not of His divine nature, for this was impossible, but 'of His glories, the prerogatives, of Deity . . .'" This is a good illustration of how those who define "form" to mean the divine nature do not necessarily think that "emptied" in verse seven refers back to the "form" (divine essence or nature) of verse six.

It does not seem necessary either to say that when Christ took on the "form of a servant" he emptied himself of "the form of God." This would not be a necessary prerequisite to becoming man. The point is not that Jesus exchanged one "form" for another *form," but, as Bruce puts it, that "he displayed the nature (or form) of God? in the nature (or form) of a servant."

Benjamin B. Warfield said it well in the following way:

It contains no intimation, however, of the cessation of these circumstances or disposition, or mode of subsistence; and that, the less in a case like the present, where it is cast in a tense (the imperfect) which in no way suggests that the mode of subsistence intimated came to an end in the action described by the succeeding verb (cf. the parallels, Lk. xvi.14, 23; xxiii.50; Acts ii.30; iii.2, II Cor viii.17; xii.16; Gal. i.14). Paul is not telling us here then, what our Lord was once, but rather what He already was, or, better what in His intrinsic nature He is; he is not describing a past mode of existence of Our Lord, before the action he is adducing as an example took place --- although the mode of existence he describes was Our Lord's mode of existence before this action --- so much as painting in the background upon which the action adduced may be thrown up into prominence. He is telling who and what He is who did these things for us, that we may appreciate how great the things He did for us are.

We are reading in verse seven the answer to the question, how did Christ empty himself? The first part of this verse says it was by taking on the form of a servant. Instead of using his divine powers selfishly, or as a strong hand with which to lay hold of good things for himself, He "emptied himself." How?. By an action upon himself which was the exact opposite of grasping, i. e., by taking on the form of a servant. This necessarily involved

the laying aside in some sense the full operation of his powers, because he refused to use them for his own selfish purposes.

No Independent Use of His Powers

If we are asked in what specific way this was done, I would prefer to say that he laid aside the *independent* use of his powers and prerogatives. This is not to say that Jesus did not have these attributes, or that he *could not* use them. We are saying that Jesus did not exercise these powers *independently of the Father*. That this was the case can be established many times over from his own statements in the gospels. Perhaps the best suggestion of this is to be found in those statements where Jesus speaks of having received “commandment” from the Father. In John 10:18 Jesus, speaking of his life, says, “No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down of My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I have received from My Father.” The Father also gave him “commandment, what to say, and what to speak” (Jn. 12:49). Nowhere does he claim to act independently of the Father, but in all of his doings it is always the Father in him and he in the Father. Even the “power, right, or authority” he claims in John 10:18 is equal to the commandment of the Father. At the time of the incarnation, when “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us,” Christ “received commandment” to die and rise again. This is the point Jesus makes in John 10:17-18.

Such statements clearly affirm that Jesus *could not* (even though he was free to do so) act independently of the Father's will — “I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me” (Jn. 5:30). This was our Lord's purpose in coming. “For I have come down from heaven, no to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me (Jn. 6:38). We would expect that there would always exist perfect agreement between the Father and the Son.

Chapter Nine

JESUS AND TEMPTATION

Some years ago a controversy arose over whether Jesus while on earth was truly God and truly man, or was he “just a man.” Whenever this issue raises its ugly head it always stirs

quite a controversy.. And why shouldn't it? If Jesus was a mere man, not God in the flesh, how would he be different from other men? The real question was, could Jesus possibly be 100% human and 100% deity at the same time?

THE 100% PLUS 100% ARGUMENT

Have you ever had someone to ask you the question,, "If Jesus was 100% deity and 100% humanity then to which half are you talking?" Well, some will remember that some years ago we were asked that very question. The point was that anyone who went to school should know better. Wouldn't we have learned in any math class that one hundred percent plus one hundred percent adds up to two hundred percent! "There's no such thing as two hundred percent, except when it comes to profits, or loss. There=s no such creature," we were told.

We weren't long in learning, of course, why this was such an important subject to some people. But before we come to that, let me tell you what comes to my mind when I think about the point that was being made back then.

Have you ever read or listened to a "oneness" preacher in debate trying to defend his belief on the Godhead? He will chide, ridicule, and attempt to make fun of his opponent who defends the position that there are three persons in the Godhead. He will ask, "If the Father is God, and Jesus is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, how many Gods are there?" He will count them off on his fingers: "God the Father, number one! God the Son, number two! and God the Holy Spirit, number three!" " Friend," he will go on to say, "I don't know where you went to school and studied math, but one, plus one, plus one, equals three!! My opponent believes in three Gods!"

When the opponent explains that he does not believe in three Gods, that he believes in one God in three persons, the oneness debater will come back and ridicule his position further by making it out that because he believes there is one God in three persons then he must believe that person number one is 33 1/3% of God, person number two is another 33 1/3%, and person number three is the final 33 1/3%! But, of course, he doesn't believe there are three Gods, and he doesn't believe the one true God is divided up into three equal parts of 33 1/3% each.

So, in view of this point, let us ask ourselves, in what way was Jesus fully God and fully man while on earth? The way in which this 100% argument was being made at the time had the appearance of saying that for Jesus to be both 100% deity and 100% humanity while on earth would make him two persons, a position that to my knowledge no one holds. Jesus Christ in his pre-existent state, during the time of his incarnation, and now while he is in heaven, has been and ever shall be only one person.

It is interesting that in the discussions on this subject, those who contended that Jesus

was “just a man” while on earth tended to shy away from using the word “person” when talking about this subject. It seems clear that when they ridiculed the idea of Christ being 100% deity and 100% humanity at the same time, they had two persons in mind. But rarely would they come right out and use the term “person” in their writings when speaking of Jesus. They evidently believed there was only one person, which was the human person of Jesus, because they didn’t believe you could have both deity and humanity in one person.

THE POSSIBILITY OF TEMPTATION

Could Jesus be tempted while he was on earth? This was the question that was asked, and one person who said yes, Jesus could be tempted, went on to say, “The temptation was real, and he could avoid it. He didn’t have to sin, and men don’t have to sin. Jesus left us the example.” It was then that we knew not only why the issue of Jesus and temptation had come up, but also why it was linked with the question of his deity. In order to show that man does not “have to sin” (having been convinced in their own mind that those “on the other side” must have believed that man does “have to sin”) they introduced Jesus as a mere man while on earth as an example of one who lived perfectly. And, not only that, but he lived a perfect life as a mere man for the very purpose of showing us that all other men can do the same, man “does not have to sin.”

What did these brethren mean when they said that Jesus was a man *just as* the rest of us are men? One brother, after quoting James 1:13, said, “for God cannot be tempted. If Jesus was God while he was here upon this earth, then he could not be tempted.” If this statement said anything at all it said that Jesus was not God while he was here on earth! I don’t know how it could have said any plainer than that, do you?

In discussing Hebrews 4:15-16 and 2:18 we were told repeatedly that if Jesus was God while on earth then he could not be tempted. Yet, the passage in Hebrews clearly says he was tempted. This left us with only two possibilities: 1) either James 1:13, which says that God cannot be tempted, is speaking of God as pure spirit, and would not apply to God incarnated, or 2) Jesus laid aside his Godhood when he came to earth. Most held then, and would still hold today, to the first option. Others held to the second. But when one adopts the second view it becomes necessary for him to reject all the claims Jesus made for himself, as well as all of those made for him by others. These claims clearly establish that he was God while on earth.

I realize, of course, that some will deny that they rejected all the claims. But as a matter of fact they did when they said that his claims only proved him to be divine while he was in heaven, not God in the flesh. But, we should remember, that the homage rendered to him was rendered to him on earth, and if these men were right, that meant that such homage was rendered to a mere man, “just an ordinary guy like you and me.”

No one would argue that the Word, which was God (Jn. 1:1-2), could be tempted in his pre-incarnate state. But the apostle John tells us that the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" (Jn. 1:14). From this I would assume that most of us do believe that while Jesus was in the state of his humiliation he could be and was tempted. Not all, however, came to this conclusion. Some did argue that Jesus was not subject to temptation while he was on earth. But I believed then and I believe now that it is true that he who was not created and not subject to temptation took on the nature of the creature, and in this state was susceptible to temptation. The very fact that there were now two natures in the one person of Jesus Christ means that he now was susceptible to being tempted. It is true, as we shall see, that in becoming man he did not thrust aside and renounce his Godhood, but by taking on flesh he did thereby become subject to being tempted.

But, we yet are asked, *if Jesus was God while on earth, how could he be tempted?* Our answer is, every being is liable to temptation whose nature is on the one hand susceptible to good, and, on the other, does not necessarily shut out the possibility of evil. Our Lord entered into a new state of being when he became man, a state that was necessary for the redemption of mankind (Heb. 10:5 with Heb. 2:14-15). He became incarnate in human flesh (Jn. 1:14) in that "a body" was prepared for him (Heb. 10:5). When he as the Lord took on the form of a servant, he thereby became susceptible to all the temptations of the flesh. And what is temptation? A temptation may be either an attempt to seduce one to do evil, or an attempt to prevent one from doing good. As the incarnate Word Jesus Christ was capable of either of these kinds of temptations. It was not necessary that he surrender his Godhood in order to be tempted as men are tempted. Being fully God and fully man I believe the incarnate Son was capable of thinking and feeling like God and like man.

We do not expect that this explanation will satisfy everyone, but to my mind at least it covers the facts of the case. I admit that no mere man can fully comprehend the incarnation. How can there be united in one person perfect and complete Godhood, and at the same time perfect and complete humanity? I do not understand how that can be; but we must not toy with the notion that our Lord surrendered his Godhood when he became man, nor should we be willing to surrender any essential part of his manhood to be able to affirm his perfect and complete Godhood..

Chapter Ten

JESUS — DIFFERENT FROM YOU AND ME?

We are sometimes told that if Jesus was not just an ordinary man like you and me, then he had some special privileges, and if so he would not be an example for us in temptation? Let me say first that I would not say, nor have I ever believed, that man “has to sin,” or that he is compelled to sin. But is man able to live an entire lifetime without sinning? I don’t think so. But that does not mean he cannot avoid sinning. It simply means that all men *will* through the weakness of the flesh sin. No one should say in an attempt to prove otherwise that Jesus was “just an ordinary man like you and me.” How can we say that about the incarnate Son of God? We should avoid using language that uses the words “just” this or “just” that when describing the person of Jesus. Such expressions will always get us into trouble. I do not know all the differences, but there are enough of them that I know I am not *just* like Jesus was when on earth, and he was not *just* like me.

HIS KNOWLEDGE OF THE FATHER

What “ordinary man,” for example, can claim the knowledge Christ had of the Father? Jesus said he did the things he saw the Father doing (Jn. 5:19). Is this what ordinary men do? Why not, if Jesus was *just* like you and me? Do ordinary men “know” the Father in the same way (just like) Jesus knew him? Jesus said, “I know him, and keep his word” (Jn. 8:55). How did he know the Father? Not just as an ordinary man, but as he shows only three verses later, “Before Abraham was born, I Am” (Jn. 8:58). How can one who claims that he is the great “I Am” be *just an ordinary man like you and me*? He knew the Father in a way that no ordinary man knew him. In John 8:38 Jesus speaks of “the things which I have seen with My Father,” in verse 26 of the things which he had “heard from Him,” and in verse 28 the things “as the Father taught” him. Note how when Jesus speaks he always identifies himself as the same one who “knew”, had “seen”, had “heard” and was “taught” of his Father.

Have you noticed how Jesus distinguishes himself from his disciples by the way he refers to the Father and to God? Go over to John 20:17 and see how he speaks to Mary about his Father and the Father of his brethren, and God and his brethren’s God: “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and to your God.’” Did you notice it? “My Father and your Father,” and “My God and your God.” Why not simply, “our Father,” and “our God”? Because Jesus clearly sees himself in a different and superior relationship to the Father and to God than he sees his brethren. God is the Father and God of both, but not in the same sense. Jesus as the son of God is not God’s son in the same way as we are the sons of God, and God is also his God in a far superior sense. He never speaks of “our Father” or “our God.” So to say “Jesus was just an ordinary guy like you and me” falls far short of identifying exactly the true personhood of Christ. While on earth Jesus was not someone different from who he was when he was with the

Father before the incarnation. The only difference was that the same person who had been with the Father had now taken on another nature. He had become, or had taken on flesh. He had come to dwell among us, as John says. All the indications are that Jesus retained his Godhood when he put on flesh. This was no ordinary man just like you and me.

HIS KNOWLEDGE OF MAN

What ordinary man knows man as Jesus knew man? It is said of Jesus that he “knew what was in man” (Jn. 2:25). What kind of knowledge was this? I think I know some people, but no man knows man as Jesus knew man. This is a different kind of knowledge. The emphasis is on the words “He Himself” in this passage. It says that “He Himself knew what was in man.” Only God knows men in this sense: “Thou, even Thou only knows the hearts of all the children of men” (1 Kings 8:39). This is true of God the Father, and it is equally true of Jesus while he was on earth. Not only that, but Jesus you will notice, had this kind of knowledge “in Himself,” and for this reason he was no ordinary man like you and me.

HIS ACCEPTANCE OF WORSHIP

If Jesus was just a man like you and me, why did he accept worship (Jn. 20:28; Rev. 1:17)? If you do not wish to say that Jesus was “worshiped” (but see Matt. 8:2; 9:18; 9:38; and 14:23), then you choose the word that you think best applies. I will ask the question in a different way: what other “ordinary guy “ would have accepted such *acknowledgment* as Jesus accepted here in these passages? Thomas calls him his “Lord” and “God” and John bowed down before him. Peter wouldn’t permit Cornelius to do this to him (Acts 10:25-26), neither would the angel which John, the beloved apostle, “heard and saw” and “fell down to worship” (Rev. 22:8-9). Hebrews 1:6 says, “And when he again bringeth in the firstborn into the world he saith, And let all angels of God worship him’ (ASV).

Chapter Eleven

JESUS OUR PERFECT EXAMPLE

We have been asked, if Jesus was not like us how could he be our example? Some apparently cannot understand how Jesus could be our example if he was not *exactly* like

us *in every respect*. Of course I have always believed Jesus was “like me” ‘in every respect *in his human nature*. But this is not the point. I could just as well ask, since all now are at least *saying* (we might question whether their argument will allow it) that they believe Jesus was deity while on earth, then we need to ask, was Jesus like us in *this* respect? How could any say that he was?

MANHOOD NOT REQUIRED FOR EXAMPLE

But does Jesus have to be “just a man” before he can be our example? If so, how are we to understand those passages where God the Father is himself given as our example? When Jesus says, “Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5:48), does he not give God himself as our perfect example in this respect? John says, “We love because He first loved us” (I Jn. 4:19). Is God our example in love? Peter quotes the Old Testament passage which was directed to Israel which says, “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:16), and thereby requires that Christians be holy because God is holy. To show that God is our example in holiness, he said in the preceding verse, “But like the Holy one who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior.” Who invented the rule that to be our example Jesus had to be “just a man”? It did not come from the Bible!

Jesus could be our example in many ways, and yet not be our example in everything that he was and did. He is held up as our example in love (Rom. 15:12), endurance (Heb. 12:2-3) suffering (1 Peter 2:20-22), humility (Jn. 13:12-15; Phil. 2:5-11), temptation (Matt. 4:1-11), faithfulness (Heb. 3:4-6), etc., but there is no proof that his perfect life is meant as a demonstration to prove to men that they may be just as successful as he was in resisting sin. This is not the point in either Hebrews 4:15 or Hebrews 2:17-18. I have no problem with saying that Jesus’ resistance to sin shows me that I can resist sin, but where is the passage of scripture that shows that Jesus’ perfect life is meant to prove to me that I also can live perfectly?

AN INTERESTING STATEMENT

In a statement we have found very interesting, one brother in referring to Jesus once said, “Only one man (emphasis is on the manhood) was able to be sinless . . .” Did he really mean what he said here? If he did, then how does Jesus’ example prove that all other men are able to live without sin. How would all men be *able* if there has been only one man who was *able* to do it? No one has ever told us how only one man was *able*, which is the term that has been used of Jesus. Maybe someone will yet do that for us. Was it because Jesus had a “superb nature of . . . humanity,” or because of “his perfect, immaculate humanity,” other terms that this same person used to describe Jesus? *Was Jesus different from us in this respect?* If so, how could he be our example?

TEMPTED IN ALL POINTS “LIKE AS WE ARE”

It is true that Jesus was tempted in all points “like as we are.” But, again, who says that before this could be true Jesus would have to be “just a man”? The passages cited in Hebrews do not lead us to any such “necessary” conclusion. Jesus was really man, and these words show that this is true. But could he be really man and God at the same time and yet be tempted? I understand the difficulties presented to our minds on this subject, and there seems to be no question but that it was this very difficulty that brought some brethren to think that Jesus could not be both deity and humanity while on earth and at the same time be our example. It led one brother to say, “If Jesus was God while he was here upon this earth, then he could not be tempted.” This would mean that since Jesus was tempted he was not God while on earth. Yet, it was also affirmed that Jesus was deity while he was on earth! So which way is it? Both cannot be right. Before he was through this man said that he was not denying that Jesus was Deity. I have not seen this contradiction corrected. If someone thinks these statements do not contradict each other, then they need to show how the terms “God” and “deity” are being used. Is the term “deity” being used with a different meaning than the term “God” in such statements? Could Jesus have been deity but not God while on earth?.

I have to believe that Jesus, while he was both divine and human (both God and man) while on earth, was capable of being tempted, and that in being tempted, he passed through the *same experience* all men pass through *because he could have sinned*. This would not have been possible for him before he took on a second nature. Of course there are difficulties involved in holding the view that even though Jesus was both God and man in one person he still could be tempted. Questions arise in our minds that we are unable to answer. But I personally would rather hold this position, difficulties and all, than to adopt a position that says that Jesus divested himself of whatever qualities and characteristics were his as deity. Since one is involved in difficulties whichever way he goes, why not hold to the higher view of the person of Jesus while he was on earth?

DID JESUS RECEIVE HELP?

But, someone asks, did Jesus in his temptations receive *any* help from the fact that he was God in the flesh? Well, if he had any consciousness at all that he was God, if he had any remembrance at all of what his position was when he was in heaven with the Father, if he had any knowledge of God and of man above what ordinary men have, if he was fully aware of the mission he had been sent into the world to accomplish (and we have seen that all of this was true of him), then surely such knowledge and remembrance and awareness in themselves *made him different from you and me* in the hour of temptation.

Chapter Twelve

Jesus — Sin Condemned in the Flesh (1)

The eighth chapter of Romans is noted especially for its strong language of triumph, and most students of Scripture have greatly admired its sublimity. William Hodge says, "For fervor and strength of expression, for rapidity and vigor of argument, for richness in doctrine, for revelation of high and precious mysteries, and for a noble evaluation of sentiments, which pervades the whole, and bursts out at the end with irrepressible ardor, there are few passages equal to it, even in the sacred oracles, and certainly none out of them."

NO CONDEMNATION IN CHRIST

The keynote of the chapter is stated in the first verse: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." The terms "in Christ Jesus" bring to our minds *how* it is that there is no longer any condemnation. It is not simply because we have been baptized into Christ and added to His church, but because we are in vital union with Christ. To be "in Christ Jesus" is to be in Him like a branch is in the true Vine (Jno. 15:1ff.), or a limb in the body with Christ as its head (Eph. 4:14-16; 1 Cor. 12:13-31). Such relation between the branch and the Vine and the limb and the Head provides the vital link which gives life to the branch and the member. This vital union means that we "do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (cf. vs. 4).

The word "now" in this verse is used to contrast the present with the past. What had been true before is not true now. Before Christ came there was condemnation, NOW there is no condemnation "in Christ Jesus." Why had there been condemnation under the law? Was the law not designed to give life or deliverance? Paul had answered "yes" to this question when he said, "and this commandment which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me" (Rom. 7:10). There was a righteousness according to law, but no Jew, even though he sought it in this way, ever arrived at it. "Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works" (Rom. 9:30-32). Faith is the only way to justification. To seek justification by "works" is to seek justification by perfect works because this is what righteousness by law means. Paul had elsewhere said, "For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, 'CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM.' Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, 'THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.' However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, 'HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM'" (Gal. 3:10-

12). To seek justification through works is but to meet failure because the only way it can be attained is through faith. Paul came to feel a deep sense of failure on his own part under the law. Years later, he showed the secret of his new-found confidence: "not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith" (Phil. 3:9).

Paul had shown in Romans seven that the reason he stood condemned under the law was that sin had found occasion through the commandment to produce sin in him (Rom. 7:8, 11). The law worked through the medium of the flesh, and using the flesh as its medium it had brought him "into bondage to sin" (Rom. 7:14). The weakness was not in the commandment which was designed to give life, and was holy, righteous, and good (Rom. 7:10, 12), but instead brought death; the weakness was in Paul, but particularly "in my flesh," he says, "because the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not" (Rom. 7:18). There was a "different law in the members of [his] body, waging war against the law of [his] mind" (Rom. 7:23). This "different law" was the law of sin. This "law" has been called by some a *rule* or *principle*; others prefer the word *force* or *power*.

As a man who wanted to be righteous under the law Paul faced two problems: 1) sin as a ruling principle in his life with no hope of being freed from this power, and 2) recognizing his utter failure under law, under the same law he found no provision by which he might stand justified before God through forgiveness (cf. Heb. 10:1-4). Paul and all others under the law had miserably failed to arrive at a righteousness of their own derived from the law, and as a result of sin they stood condemned by the law with no hope of deliverance. He begins the eighth chapter with this wonderful note of encouragement, "There is therefore NOW no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

A NEW-FOUND FREEDOM

The reason for the wonderful truth announced in the first verse is that now the ground for condemnation has been removed. This is stated next: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death" (Rom. 8:2). "For" sets forth the reason why there is no condemnation in Christ. A new freedom has been given which delivers us from the law of sin and death. "The law of sin and of death" from which we have been set free is not the law of Moses. It is the "law in the members of my body" of Rom. 7:23, which is the principle or rule of sin in us. This issues forth into spiritual death (Rom. 7:24), thus, it is called "the law of sin and of death." Sin and death are personified as powers which control us.

Paul does not mean simply that we have been justified or freed from sin. He means also that as Christians we have been freed from the law or power of sin in our members. As a carry-over from the first four chapters of the epistle the thought of

justification is no doubt yet in his mind, but the position of this chapter in the book, as well as an exegesis of the passage itself, stands opposed to limiting these statements to that subject alone. Here he speaks specifically about freedom from "the law of sin and death" which he has shown in the previous chapter held him captive. In this immediate context it is subjection to THIS "law" that brings one into condemnation, so we would take the reference to "no condemnation" in verse one in a broad sense to mean continuance in a state of justification.

The thing that has made us free from this "law of sin and death" is "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." The latter law has superceded the former law, and we have been liberated from the one by the other. Just as the word "law" means power or force in the one case, the same word also means power or force in the other case. One "law" has been overthrown or destroyed by another "law." The second law is "the law of the SPIRIT of life," in which statement the reference is no doubt to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives "life," so that it is by the power of the Spirit that our freedom from "the law of sin and death" has been effected. Through this "law of the Spirit of life" we are enabled to freely adopt and obey God's law. This language reminds one of Paul's statement that "where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17). This statement is made in a context where he has been contrasting the two covenants. The ministry of the Spirit through the new covenant inspires a service that is rendered freely and lovingly. This is service that is far superior to that rendered under the old dispensation. New incentives are provided through the gospel which were not incorporated into the law. The gospel as God's power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16) is the basis of freedom from sin's guilt (justification), but it is equally the basis of freedom from sin's power so that we might serve righteousness. This point has already been thoroughly developed by Paul in the sixth chapter. "In Christ Jesus" shows that this new kind of life is made possible through our vital union with Christ.

THE WEAKNESS OF THE LAW

Paul now moves on to describe the method of the liberation he has just described in the second verse. But he does not get directly to it. He first describes for us what should be viewed as a basic weakness in the law: "For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh . . ." (Rom. 8:3a). He does not mean that the law itself was faulty. He had already conceded that the law "is holy and righteous and good" (Rom. 7:12). But there was something that the law could not do, and this he says was due to a WEAKNESS on the part of the law, i.e., "weak as IT [the law] was." What the law COULD NOT DO (literally, the impossibility of the law) is explained in the principle sentence which follows. That sentence is given in apposition to this part of the verse.

What was the weakness of the law? Whatever it was it was due to "the flesh." What does he mean by "the flesh"? He means the same thing he has meant by this term in chapter seven and the other two times he uses it in this same verse. R. L. Whiteside,

in his comments on Romans 7:18, describes "the flesh" as "the animal part of man, . . . a bundle of appetites and passions, which lead to sin only when they have enlisted the mind to plan and execute methods of self-gratification in an unlawful way." So, with this understanding of "flesh," how was the law weakened by the flesh? Stated another way, we might ask, through WHOSE flesh, and HOW was the law weakened THROUGH their flesh? Obviously, the flesh is the flesh of those who were under the law. But how was the law weakened "through" their flesh? The flesh was the *medium* through which the law attempted to accomplish its work, but it was a "weak" medium, and Paul says the law shared in this weakness. In view of Paul's discussion in the previous chapter, we may say that the flesh was a weak medium because it did not produce the willing obedience necessary so that one would not be held in bondage to sin.

In chapter seven Paul has described himself as desiring in his mind to obey the law of God, but then he found himself not carrying through in willing obedience. He was hindered by the flesh from rendering the obedience he desired to render to the law of God. The very "life" the law was designed to produce (Rom. 7:10) was not produced in him because the law itself proved to be "weak through the flesh," i.e. because the flesh as the medium of the law was weak, the law was not willingly kept. Some brethren are not willing to concede that the flesh is weak because they cannot think of weakness apart from a sinful and depraved nature. But by "weak . . . flesh" Paul does not mean sinful nature. "Flesh" in itself is neither morally good nor morally evil. When Paul says in Romans 7:18, "For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh," he does not mean that his flesh is sinful. He had just said in verse seventeen that "sin . . . dwells in me," and by "me" he means flesh. Sin *dwelt* in his flesh. But how was this? Lard says,

In it (Paul's statement, ww) sin is obviously personified, and viewed as obviously having its abode in the flesh, and as operating through it as an agent or instrument. This, more simply put, signifies that those influences, whether personal or otherwise, which induce sin, act, at first, and mainly, on the flesh, and through it cause the *me* that wills to sin. It is thus that sin dwells in the flesh and works evil.

The "flesh" is the weaker side of our nature (cf. Jesus' statement, "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak," Matt. 26:41---sounds like Paul in Romans seven, doesn't it!), but it is not itself sinful. That it is weak is demonstrated by the fact that sin most often enters our lives through the flesh.

But no one, to my knowledge, has ever said that man is in bondage to sin *only through the flesh*. Bryan Vinson, Sr., in speaking of the reason why the law of Moses could not free us from the law of sin and death, said, it "is one of weakness; it was, however, a weakness identified with the flesh. This weakness of the flesh is the condition that rendered them so liable to sin." I wonder why it is that when some brethren quote from brother Vinson here they quote the first part of this statement

without quoting the last sentence, and then pick up their quotation again with the next sentence in his commentary? Are they afraid of this brother's statement that the "weakness of the flesh is the condition that rendered them so liable to sin"? If so, they should not be quoting him as lending support to their view. Brother Vinson clearly understood that this part of verse three shows that the flesh is weak because it is through the flesh that we are "rendered so liable to sin." In his comments on Romans 10:4-5, he also said, "The weakness of the law was in the weakness of the flesh of those under it, a weakness displayed in the fact none kept it perfectly."

Chapter Thirteen

Jesus — Sin Condemned in the Flesh (2)

In this part of Romans 8:3 we have come upon God's remedy for the very thing the law proved unable to do. We will find the answer to the meaning of this expression by answering the question, what was the law unable to do, and why could it not do it? The answer lies in the problem Paul has been discussing in the previous chapter. In the Greek text the expression "it was weak through the flesh" is immediately preceded by the words *en hoi*, which mean "in that," or "in which," and, as E. H. Gifford says, "It points to that *in which* the inability of the law consists, namely in its being overpowered by the opposition of '*the flesh*' (vii.14-18)."

This is the reason why the law could not accomplish its work, and why God acted so decisively in the sending of his Son and robbed sin of its dominion in the flesh. By sending Christ into the world, He has delivered us from the power which sin had up to that point exerted "through the flesh." Had it not been for this decisive act on His part, it could not be said that we are no longer overpowered by the opposition of 'the flesh.' But now the power of sin through the flesh has been broken because through God's decisive act this usurper and tyrant has been "condemned . . . in the flesh."

Someone may say, "But 'the flesh' in this statement is Christ's flesh." Are you sure? If it means Christ's flesh, why did Paul not say "His flesh" instead of using the definite article with the word flesh? Is it not best to give the same meaning to these terms at this place that Paul has given to them in his previous discussion, and in the succeeding verses, since he does not say "His flesh"? I believe Paul speaks of flesh in general, not Christ's flesh, in this expression. Sin working through our flesh is the very thing Paul has been dealing with in the whole line of his discussion, and a thing the law could not overpower. God condemned sin in our flesh by *expiating* sin, but

we would also add, as the context would demand, by this very act He also has removed the power of sin in the flesh. As James Denney suggests,

We cannot . . . set the end against the means; the Apostle's doctrine is that the power of sin cannot be broken *except by expiating it*, and that is the very thing he teaches here . . . God's condemnation of sin is expressed in His sending His Son in our nature, and in such a connection with sin that He died for it---i.e., took its condemnation upon Himself. Christ's death exhibits God's condemnation of sin in the flesh. [In the flesh] is to be construed with [condemned]: the flesh---that in which sin had reigned---was also that in which God's condemnation of sin was executed.

CONDEMNED SIN BY A SINLESS LIFE?

Does Paul have in mind Christ's sinless life in this passage? I am not convinced that he does. This subject is often brought into discussions of this part of the verse. I tend to agree with Denney again on this point:

It is sometimes interpreted as if Christ were the subject: 'Christ by His sinless life in our nature condemned sin in that nature,' i.e., showed that it was not inevitable, and in so doing gave us hope; and this sense of 'condemned' is supported by reference to Mt. xii.41f. But the true argument (especially according to the analogy of that passage) would rather be, 'Christ by His sinless life in our nature condemned our sinful lives, and left us inexcusable and without hope.' The truth is, we get on a wrong track if we ignore the force of [concerning sin], or fail to see that God, not Christ, is the subject of [condemned] . . . Paul does not mean that by His sinless life in our nature Christ had broken the power of sin at one point for the human race; he means that in the death of His own Son, who had come in our nature to make atonement for sin, God had pronounced the doom of sin, and brought its claims and its authority over man to an end. This is the only interpretation which does not introduce elements quite alien to the Apostle's mode of thought.

It is definitely a misuse of Paul's statement here to infer that because Christ lived a sinless life (a subject that is not even for certain in this passage) all the rest of us have the ability to do the same! Nor is there any proof that "condemned sin in the flesh" means that "Christ's life convicts man as fully culpable," as one brother worded it. Again, I agree with Sandy and Headlam that "the parallel passage, vi.6-11, shows that this summary condemnation of Sin takes place in the Death of Christ, and not in His Life; so that [condemned] cannot be adequately explained either by the proof which Christ's Incarnation gave that human nature *might* be sinless, or by the contrast of His sinlessness with man's sin."

Paul has had a good bit to say about the place of Christ's death and my life in relation to sin, both as an alien sinner and as a Christian, up to this point in the book of Romans. Yet he has not, and there is no proof that he does this here in this verse, attempted to show that His "life convicts man as fully culpable." Instead, the point has been that our identification with Christ's *death* is God's answer to the sin problem.

This is true of initial justification, as well as of the continuance of justification, or practical Christian living. For the Christian, victory over sin is through identification with Christ's death, i.e., we have died to sin by being baptized into Christ's death, and into our own death to sin (Rom. 6:1-11). Christ Himself "died to sin" (Rom. 6:10). Not of course in the same sense that we die to sin, for He had no sin. He died to sin in that "by . . . [His] death . . . upon the Cross, a death endured in His human nature, He once and forever broke off all contact with Sin, which could only touch Him through that nature" (Sandy and Headlam). We have "died to sin" because "One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

Death to sin (or the flesh, for that matter, since this is the most common way of speaking of the medium through which sin works) is through crucifixion, and this death is a death with Christ. Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Following our death to sin we are identified with Christ's resurrected life (not His perfect life on earth), knowing that we shall live with Him (Rom. 5:10). For this reason we are no longer to serve sin, but are to walk in newness of life. We were saved from God's wrath by Christ's death, and we shall be saved by His life from the dead (Rom. 5:6-9); we now live unto Him who died for us and rose again (2 Cor. 5:15).

This is not to give Christ's perfect life an unimportant place in God's plan of redemption. It is simply to remind us that we were not condemned because of Christ's perfect life, and neither are we made blameworthy for that reason now. We are culpable because of the sins of our own choosing. Sin is a transgression of the law (1 Jno. 3:4).

It is true that sin in the flesh is an unnatural and usurping tyrant. I agree with the statement that "*sin has no inherent claim to the body*. God prepared neither Jesus nor us a body which compels sin." Jesus' perfect life is a demonstration of this truth. But this does not say that Jesus "condemned" sin *by his perfect life*. There is both a penal condemnation of sin and a condemnation of the power of sin in Christ's *death*, but there is no indication in Scripture that either of these was meant to be accomplished by His sinless life. Sin was overpowered or destroyed in the same way death, and him who has the power of death, the devil, was destroyed---"through death" (Heb. 2:14).

Death having been destroyed He now gives "release to those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:15).

It was in Christ's *death* that He "redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us . . ." (Gal. 3:13), and it is in our being united with Him in His *death* that we continue in that state of justification (Rom. 6:3-8). God "made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). It is because we are "in Christ Jesus" (united with Him in His *death* to sin, Rom. 6:10) that sin has been condemned in the flesh, and the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us (Rom. 8:3-4).

THE REQUIREMENT OF THE LAW FULFILLED IN US

In the sending of His own Son God accomplished in us what the law demanded, but had in fact been unable to produce. The law demanded complete, willing obedience, but it had failed to produce this because of the weakness of the flesh. Since none had been able to meet the requirement of the law, and all alike stood condemned, and were under God's wrath because of sin, something had to be done. So God did what He had planned to do all along; He sent His Son, and by His death on the cross He condemned sin by taking our sins upon Himself, and in the very same act dealt a death blow to the very power that had held men captive and in bondage. In His death He condemned sin "in the flesh," the very medium where it had worked so successfully to bring man under condemnation.

This death was the death of "the just for the unjust" (1 Pet. 3:18). He "bore our sins in His own body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness, by His wounds you were healed" (1 Pet. 2:24). God "made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). This is how Paul completes the thought in Romans 8:3 as he moves on into verse four: "in order that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." The first words in this verse, "in order that," show that this statement is to be understood as the reason God had for sending His Son and condemning sin in the flesh.

But what does "requirement of the law" (NASB) mean? The KJV has "righteousness of the law," and there has been much discussion on the meaning of this term here. The term "requirement" represents one view. If this is what Paul means by the word "righteousness" the meaning would be that the "righteous demands of the law" be fulfilled in us, or that the right conduct corresponding to the law's demand be fulfilled in us. This would be equal to the righteousness which satisfies the law's demand. Of course, none of us has done this because of the weakness of the flesh, as Paul has demonstrated in chapter seven. And for the same reason, none of us ever will accomplish what the law demands. But God has provided a way by which this very

thing may be done *in* us. R. L. Whiteside summarizes this point in the following statement:

under the law, the righteousness of the law could be fulfilled only by perfect obedience. In such obedience there would have been no sin — God would have had nothing against one who so lived. Now, it is the mission of the gospel to take sinners and make them righteous. When a person's sins are forgiven he is freed from all guilt, and is then as righteous as if he had never sinned. There is then no guilt attached to him--God has nothing against him. And so the thing that the law required, but could not accomplish, is fulfilled in those who obey the gospel. . . The gospel, in freeing us from sin and making us righteous, accomplished in us exactly what the law was unable to accomplish, but what it would have accomplished in us had there been no transgression of it.

This part of verse four, according to Whiteside, is speaking of justification. The point made in this quote is a valid and important point. But I am not sure that when Paul speaks of justification he thinks of it in a vacuum. There is a continuance in justification, and sometimes Paul weaves the two so closely together that we would do an injustice to him to attempt to minutely dissect them. Is not what we find here equally true of continuance in justification, and does not Paul include this in his statement? The second half of verse four says, "who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the spirit" (our versions give a capital letter for "spirit," but the Holy Spirit does not seem to be meant here; the opposite of "flesh" is "spirit"). This is a statement of fact. No "if" is attached to it---we do not walk according to the flesh. By Christ's expiating work on the cross not only has provision for forgiveness been introduced, but the power of sin over the flesh has been broken. There is a new regulating principle now, a new life-principle, "a newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). Now we walk in that "newness," we do not "walk after the flesh"---sin has been condemned in the flesh!

We are not enabled by this new life-principle to live totally free of sin, but of course under the system of grace where forgiveness is available, such as that which Christ has brought, sinless perfection is no longer a requirement. That would be necessary only where one attempted to attain a righteousness of his own. This was not the meaning of verse two, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death." But those who are "in Christ Jesus," who are united with Him in His death, who are rooted and grounded in Him, and continue to abide (settle down, take permanent residence) in Him---these people "do not walk according to the flesh." The requirement of the law (full and willing obedience, even though not perfect obedience) is fulfilled in them; they walk according to the spirit, or keep their mind set on doing those things that are in their spiritual interest.

Because of Christ's death, and our identification with Him in that death, sin no longer overpowers us through the flesh, yet we are not altogether free from its power. Lard

defined "law of sin and death" in verse two as "whatever law we may happen to be living under," and said "it becomes the law of sin so soon as it is broken, and by that act." He said it "can not be the law of sin, which is in our members . . . vii.23; for, from that law, we have never been freed, at least not wholly; nor shall we be to death." I dissent with him on his view that the "law of sin and death" is any law we happen to live under, but I can appreciate his understanding that we never have been, nor shall we ever be, *wholly* freed from the power of sin in our members. Paul, I think, is saying that we have been freed from sin's *control*; sin is no longer the usurper and tyrant it once was in our lives.

(For those who are rooted "in Christ" the final victory will be theirs, not because they have lived totally free from sin, but because they have not allowed sin to reign in them as it once did. Christ's death has wielded the mortal blow to sin and death, and the final victory will be ours because we are "in Him." Marshall E. Patton said it well when he wrote, "While the man *in Christ* still has his carnal appetites, they do not keep him from attaining unto righteousness in God's sight, because the atoning blood of Christ covers his sins. Therefore, the man in Christ who strives for righteousness as the man in Rom. 7:14-24 is counted righteous in God's sight. This is the meaning of Paul's statement: 'That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit' (Rom. 8:4)," Searching the Scriptures, Dec., 1968).

Chapter Fourteen

JESUS AND THE FEAR OF DEATH

The Lord of heaven would not have condescended to become man (assume human nature) had it not been for the world's need of a Savior. But why was it necessary for him to become man in order to save man from sin? The writer of the book of Hebrews answers after this fashion:

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Heb. 2:14-15, NKJV).

The Hebrew writer's answer to our question is that Jesus' work of redemption involved suffering and death on his part. Assuming flesh or taking on our human nature was made necessary by the nature of his mission.

THE CONTEXT

1. *The Divine Purpose (vv. 9-10)*. The mission of Christ in coming into the world as man was clearly redemptive (i. e., he came into the world to become the author of our salvation, v. 10). As Christ was made perfect through his own sufferings, he also (and by the same process) brings many sons into glory with him (v. 10). In doing this he accomplishes the very purpose of God, and in a way (i. e., through the suffering and glorification of Christ) that is consistent with the Father's own being (see v. 10a, "for it was fitting for Him"). Christ's sufferings included the fact that he must "taste death for everyone" (v. 9).

Hebrews 5:8 helps us understand how Christ was "made . . . perfect through sufferings" (v. 10). According to this passage Christ "learned obedience" through his sufferings. Not obedience to God's law, but prayerful and believing submission (implied by the term trans. "being heard" in v. 7) to the sufferings which came upon him in the discharge of his special vocation as our Savior. It was not "perfecting" as a moral development that the writer has in view, but rather how our Lord became perfect (complete) in fully submitting to the vocation given to him in accomplishing the redemption of mankind. He not only suffered, but he learned from the sufferings (he had to more or less work himself into his place in God's plan in this way, or through sufferings) the perfect (full, or complete) obedience. This was the full or complete submission to the Father's will as it pertained to his place in the work of redemption, the very purpose for which he had come into the world.

2. *The Sanctifier And The Sanctified (v. 11a)*. Verse 10 shows us that the saved are themselves sons of God, and that Christ identified himself with his people in suffering that he might bring them to glory with him. Christ is therefore "the sanctifier" and his people are "the sanctified." But what does the writer mean when he says we "are all of one" (NKJV)? In some sense the sanctified have been made to be one with the sanctifier. Some say we are "one" with Christ because he assumed our nature, or became flesh. Others see a spiritual reference in the expression: we are one with Christ because we are the sanctified, and as the sanctified we are also sons of God with him. In other words, God is the common Father of both him who sanctifies and they who are sanctified through Christ. The context itself develops both of these views so it does not seem necessary that we choose between them. God's people are one with Christ in a spiritual sense, and they are also one with him by being of the same human nature. That Christ become "one" with us in the latter sense was made necessary by the nature of his work to be accomplished as our Savior (i. e., he must go through sufferings and death on our behalf). After all, the sanctified have become so "through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10).

3. *Christ Is Not Ashamed To Call Us Brethren (vv. 11b-13)*. This is true because Christ has identified himself with his people through his sufferings and death in order that he might bring them to glory with him. It is evident that the writer viewed the passages quoted from the O. T. (Ps. 22:22 and Isa. 8:17-18) to have been spoken by Christ. The first quotation (v. 12) shows he called his people “my brethren,” then the next two quotations (v. 13, both from Isa. 8:17-18) supply additional proof which help establish the affirmation. The first quotation from the Isaiah passage, “I will put my trust in him,” does not prove anything as it stands alone. It must be taken with the second quotation from Isaiah.

The “children” whom the Father has given him are his “brethren” who have been named in Hebrews 2:11, and (as the first quote from the Isaiah passage shows, v. 13) it is these brethren with whom he proudly associates. He associates himself with them in an act of faith, or by putting his trust in God as he goes through his sufferings on their behalf (i. e., so he might take them to glory with him, v. 10). In this act of faith Christ became the author and perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:1-2), and in doing so he gave us an example as to how we should live our lives out to completeness just as he did. He was the first to begin (the author) and the first to carry through to completeness (the finisher) that life of faith which we also are to live all the way to the end.

CHRIST SHARED WITH US BLOOD AND FLESH

This brings us to the first thing affirmed of Christ in v. 14: “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same . . .” We should keep in mind the reason that has already been given as to why this was necessary (i. e., that he might suffer and die for mankind). This reason will be drawn out in more concrete terms in the next part of the verse and the verse that follows. But for now we must give brief attention to what is meant by the terms “blood and flesh” since this is what the first part of this verse affirms that Christ shared with us in order that he might accomplish the divinely appointed purpose for his death described in the words that follow.

We are a little surprised with the order of the words in this statement because elsewhere we find the word order to be “flesh and blood,” not “blood and flesh.” But surely the word order in this passage does not give us a different meaning. It is possible that “blood” is mentioned first in order to call attention to the natural unity of mankind (cf. Acts 17:26, “And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth”). Although the terms “flesh and blood” are not used in the Old Testament, the expression came to be a common way for the Jews of a later period to describe human nature in contrast to God. Peter seems to use the terms in this way in Matthew 16:17, and Paul apparently did the same in Galatians 1:16. The expression is used in contrast with spiritual powers or forces in Ephesians 6:12. In 1 Corinthians 15:50

Paul says that “flesh and blood” cannot enter the kingdom of God.

From these uses of the expression we may conclude that flesh and blood are what make a man less than a purely spiritual being. The terms describe that which is in man that makes him corruptible and liable to death. The terms are not equal to the term “flesh” (sarx) as it is often used by Paul in his writings, even though the physical flesh and blood are always behind his use of that term. The point that is being made by the Hebrew writer is that Christ had to assume physical flesh and blood in order that he might be put to death. Hence “the days of his flesh” (Heb. 2:7) are the period of his earthly struggles and suffering.

Why was it necessary that Jesus Christ become man, or enter by incarnation into our mode of existence, when he came into the world? The clear answer according to Hebrews 2:9-13, as we have seen in our study thus far, is that through sufferings and death he might take many sons into glory. This redemptive work was made possible because he shared with us “blood and flesh” (Heb. 2:14a). The passage now before us takes us one step further. It shows that if Christ was to deal adequately with the problem man faced, certain things had to be destroyed. John says, “for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). The Hebrew writer uses similar language here. He says that Christ shared “blood and flesh” with his children “that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14b).

THE DEVIL AND THE POWER OF DEATH

The word rendered “destroy” (*katargeō*) has a meaning ranging from “make ineffective, powerless, idle” to “abolish, wipe out, set aside” (Arndt-Gingrich, *Greek English Lexicon*, p. 418). Since the devil still exists and is still active on planet earth, the meaning best suited to this passage is the first possibility, to “bring to nought” (ASV), or render impotent as though no longer existing. “The power of death” that is mentioned here is parallel in expression to the terms “sin reigns in death” in Romans 5:21. The latter means that the sovereignty of sin extended throughout the whole province covered by death. This sovereignty of sin is a sovereignty of the devil just as death is a sovereignty of the devil. They both came into the world through him, and both were realms in which the devil held sway. The devil’s power is his empire, and his empire is in the province of both sin and death. For the devil to have sovereignty in the realm of death does not mean that he has the power to inflict death. The Bible nowhere teaches that the devil has this power. He is not an angel of death as many have supposed.

DELIVERANCE FROM BONDAGE

To render the devil powerless in the realm of death does not do away with death itself. It was “through death” (i. e., by means of Christ’s death) that the devil who had the power

of death was made impotent. It was the death of Christ that robbed him of his empire in the realm of death. But death is still with us. After Christ's work on the cross was finished it was still true that "it is appointed for men to die once" (Heb. 9:27). This is not to say that the sting of death has not been removed, for it has (1 Cor. 15:55). Death, just as him who has the power of death, has been rendered impotent through Christ's death and resurrection (Heb. 2:14; 2 Tim. 1:10; 1 Cor. 15:26; 1 John 3:8f.). But the Hebrew writer is making an additional point. Note Hebrews 2:15: "And release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." When the devil was rendered powerless by Christ's death on the cross man was released from a bondage due to the fear of death.

This helps us understand better what the nature of the devil's empire in the sphere of death is, and what the limits of its exercise are. The two words that best help us in this respect are the words "fear" and "bondage." In some way man's freedom had been up to this point restricted (he was held in bondage) by a fear of death. What is the fear of death that the author has in mind, and when was this so, or what period of time is involved? It seems clear that it is more than the natural shrinking from death brought about by the dread of pain, the misery, and the dissolution which attends it. Most people experience this kind of physical shrinking in the face of death. But such fear does not bring men into bondage.

Whatever is meant by the word "bondage" here, it was something men were under "all their lifetime." For this reason it was a state of misery from which they desperately needed to be released. Perhaps the key to understanding this passage is to be found in the primary purpose of Christ's death. Christ died for the ungodly (Rom. 5:6), so that he might reconcile man to God (Rom. 5:10). He offered himself as a sacrifice for sins (Eph. 5:2; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15, 21). Through his death he became "the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

The fear of death that holds men in bondage is fear of the consequences of sin. Paul declares that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). It is man's sins that separate him from God (Isa. 59:1-2). Man fears this separation. He knows that following death there is judgment where he will be held accountable for his sins (Heb. 9:27). During the Old Testament period this fear of death was more pronounced because "life and immortality" had not yet been fully brought to light as it now is through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 1:10). In the absence of this fuller knowledge there was in the Old Testament believer this fear that God might reject his person, and visit upon him his sins. There were times when this fear was not present in their minds (cf. Ps. 23:4), but it was never vanquished and wholly laid aside (cf. Job [Bildad called death "the king of terrors," 18:14], Hezekiah, and some of the Psalms). They lived in hope that the day would come when God would no longer remember their sins (Jer. 31:34), and the Hebrew writer assures his readers that that day had indeed arrived (Heb. 8:12-13). Jesus has released us from this fear because death is no longer a sign of the lack of full acceptance with God as it was to those under the old dispensation.

DID JESUS FEAR DEATH?

Those who are in Christ are no longer in bondage to the fear of death. Jesus' victory over the devil is the same thing as victory over the fear of death, since his empire has death as its sphere of operation. If we have been released from this bondage, then surely our Lord who brought us deliverance from it, was not subjected to it himself. Was he who became flesh in order that he might release us from this bondage of the fear of death a subject of that fear himself? Most assuredly not. Without question he passed through all the weakness of fleshly life, but unlike all others before him, he proved himself not only to be exempt from the fear of death, but also to be victorious over "him who had the power of death, that is, the devil."

1. *His death the means of victory over death.* Instead of being a thing to dread, death for Jesus was the means by which the victory over death would be accomplished. Death for him was but a step in his divinely appointed vocation. It was not put on him against his will. It was through death that he consciously completed his work on earth as Savior. Every step of the way, including this final step, he did what he did, not for his own sake only, but for the sake of his brethren. It was in their interest, and in order that he might take them with him (see v. 10), that he assumed flesh and blood and passed through sufferings and death.
2. *The meaning of Hebrews 5:7.* But, it will be asked, did not Jesus pray that the Father would save him from death (Heb. 5:7), and this being so, does this not show that Jesus feared death? Whatever the object of the fear mentioned in this verse ("and was heard because of His godly fear," NKJV) might be, it should be clear that it could not be the same fear being discussed in Hebrews 2:15. That fear was based upon one's uncertainty about his full acceptance before God. Jesus could not have had this fear because he had no sins. This fear, as already pointed out, prevented even God's people from enjoying liberty under the Old Testament dispensation, because it had sin at its roots. Not having "sure and certain knowledge of life beyond death," as we now do through the death and resurrection of our Lord; and not yet having been brought to the full assurance of the gospel of the remission of sins, as a rule, at least, death was viewed as a dread (a thing to be feared) rather than as a step into a better life. This does not describe our Savior's attitude in the face of death.

The KJV renders the word at this place simply "feared" (eulabeia) while other versions translate this term "piety" (NASB), "reverent submission" (NIV), or "godly fear" (ASV, RSV, NKJV). This Greek word is found only here and in Hebrews 12:28 (along with *deous*, "awe") in the New Testament. The clear meaning of reverence, or godly fear, in the latter passage would indicate that "godly fear" is the preferred meaning in Hebrews 5:7. The Hebrew writer does not say that Jesus feared death, but that he had a reverent fear of God. This godly

fear is best seen in Jesus' words, "Not as I will, but as You will" (Matt. 26:39; Mk. 14:36), which follow his request, "If it is possible let this cup pass from Me." Jesus shrank from the "cup" of suffering the wrath of God (note where "cup" = a metaphor of divine judgment in Isa. 51:17, 22; Jer. 25:15, 17; 49:12; Ezek. 23:33) as the bearer of man's guilt. He knew that in his death on the cross he would be forsaken by the Father (Matt. 27:46). He dreaded the prospect. But for his godly fear the Father answered his prayer, yet he did so in full compliance with the Father's will (as Jesus himself had requested) by accepting his death on the cross as the final and complete execution of his own (the Father's) will.

3. *If Jesus feared death itself.* If this is the meaning of Hebrews 5:7, as we firmly believe it is, then there is no indication in this verse that Jesus feared death itself. To say that he feared death because "he did not have sure and certain knowledge of life beyond death" is to say that he was no more than a man while he was on earth — and, even more, that he was a man who was no better than those under the former dispensation "who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." But it would also make all those declarations that Jesus made during his lifetime concerning his own death and resurrection meaningless. What, for example, would be the meaning of this statement: "Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself" (John 12:31-32).

Could Jesus know that through his death he would "destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil" (Heb. 2:14), that "the ruler of this world will be cast out," and that he would "draw all peoples to" himself, without having sure and certain knowledge of life beyond death? Surely no one would affirm that Jesus thought this work (a work he had "come to this hour" to accomplish through his death on the cross, John 12:27) would be accomplished through his death alone, apart from his resurrection from the dead. Can he who spoke words of comfort to Mary and Martha at their brother's tomb, by saying, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25) fail to have sure and certain knowledge of life beyond death?

If Jesus believed in his own resurrection, as surely all must admit that he did (Matt. 16:21; 20:17-20; 26:32; Mark 8:31; 9:31; Luke 9:22; 18:31-33; John 2:19-22), then what was there about his death to fear that had to do with life beyond death? Was he fearful of his own standing before God, that perhaps he might be rejected by God? If so, would this not mean that he did not know that he had lived perfectly before God? If this is the case, how explain his challenge, "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" (John 8:46)?

Our Lord had no doubt about life beyond death when he said to the thief, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). At an earlier period he spoke with the same confidence, when he said, "I shall be with you a little while longer, and then I go to Him who sent Me. You will seek Me, and where I am you cannot come" (John 7:33-34). They could not go where Jesus would be because they had

rejected the Father. Sounds like Jesus had sure and certain knowledge of his own life beyond death, doesn't it?

If it is true that Hebrews 5:7 means "fear" (anxiety) and not "godly fear," it still would not necessarily follow that Jesus feared death itself. Some have thought that Jesus feared the possibility of failure, that he might give in to the severe temptations that would accompany the ordeal; others have explained the verse to mean that Jesus feared all the evils to which he was about to be exposed. Neither of these explanations satisfies my own mind on the meaning of the passage, as we have explained above. But whatever is the meaning of this verse, it does not seem possible to my own mind that the passage could mean that Jesus feared death itself because he did not have sure and certain knowledge of life beyond death.

Chapter Fifteen

JESUS AND THE THIRD TEMPTATION

When Satan told Jesus he would give him "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them," if he would fall down and worship him, it is implied that he had such power and control over these kingdoms and their glory, to deliver them into his hands. What is implied in Matthew 4:9 is expressly asserted by him in Luke 4:6: "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomever I will I give it." Whether Satan actually possessed the power and authority he claims for himself in these passages has been a much debated subject.

Since God himself is the Almighty, and the Bible does not teach dualism (that the world is under the control of two equal forces of good and evil, God and Satan), Satan could have no power except what has been committed to him. Whatever power he had was his only because it had been "delivered" to him. The extent of his rule is clearly indicated when he is called "the prince of this world" (John 12:31), and "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). In 2 Corinthians 4:4 he is called "the god of this world." John says that "the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19), and Revelation 12:9 attributes this to the fact that "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, . . . deceiveth the whole world." That Satan does not, however, have equal power with God is affirmed when of Christ it is said that "one stronger than he" had come to "assail and overcome him" (Luke 11:22).

A CLOSER LOOK

We will take a more careful look at those passages just cited which describe Satan's

power in the world.

1. *The Prince Of This World (John 12:31; 14:30; 15:10)*. The word “prince” in the Bible is not used just to refer to the heir of a king. It is also used as a title of a person with significant royal, military, or other authority (see Num. 22:15). The term was chosen by the KJV translators to translate more specific foreign titles (Dan. 1:3; 3:2; “nobles” and “satraps,” NASB). At other times the word is used to identify a high ranking angel in the spiritual realm. Daniel 10:13, for example, names “Michael, one of the chief princes,” and the reference seems clearly to be to a high ranking angel. As a high ranking angel, Michael is also called “the prince of Israel” (Dan. 10:21) and “the “great prince” (Dan. 12:1). In Matthew 12:24 Beelzebul is called “the prince of the devils” (better “demons,” and evidently a reference to angels who had fallen from their high estate). In this last passage, and in John 12:31, later versions like the RSV, NIV, NKJV, and the NASB translate the word “ruler,” but the KJV and the ASV have the word “prince.”

The “world” over which Satan rules is mankind in alienation from God. While the world appears to be Satan’s empire, or his sphere of operation, as a matter of fact, what he produces in the world (sin and death) becomes his empire. The “world” in this ethical sense is laden in sin and in need of salvation. In this realm men “loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19; cf. 1 John 2:15-17). Where sin reigns, spiritual death also reigns, for “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23).

2. *The Prince Of The Power Of The Air (Eph. 2:2)*. The only difference in this passage and the one just considered is that the terms “the world” are replaced by the terms “the power of the air” (i. e., “the air” = the atmosphere around the earth). Why this particular mention of “the air” as the place where Satan is cannot be known for certain. It may mean no more than that the air is the place where Satan dwells as the chief ruler, or prince, of the demons, or evil spirits. It probably means that the air is the place where such spirits live, and Satan is the prince of all such spirits who have the air as their place of abode. The Jews of Paul’s day believed that the air was Satan’s sphere of dominion, and Paul evidently teaches it as a matter of fact in this statement.

The word “power” means rule or dominion. Paul’s point is that Satan is the “ruler” (RSV, NKJV, NIV) of all evil forces who reside in the atmosphere around the earth. Other passages show that he, and all other wicked spirits under his authority, do their work in the world, but in this passage Paul affirms that they have the air or atmosphere around the earth as their place of abode. Even Christians do not struggle “against flesh and blood,” Paul says, “but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:12). “Darkness” is

representative of the realm in which these evil forces rule; their dominion is in the area of ignorance, superstition, and sin. In this sense they rule over this dark world. Their actual sphere of operation is identified in this passage as “in high places” (same as 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:18, “in heavenly places”). Perhaps here it means the unseen realm in the world, including both good and evil forces. The phrase does not appear to be equivalent to “the air” in Ephesians 2:2. It does not have this meaning in any of the other places where it is used in the book of Ephesians.

3. *The God Of This World (2 Cor. 4:4)*. Only here in the New Testament is Satan called a “god.” All attempts to apply the term in this passage to the only true God rather than Satan have proved unsuccessful and are unnecessary. The word is a fitting description of Satan when it is used as Paul means for it to be understood. A similar use of the word appears in Philippians where Paul says of certain Judaizers, “whose god is their belly” (3:19). Like Romans 16:18, “for they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly,” the term “belly” in this passage is used to describe the desires of the flesh. To serve one’s belly is to make one’s fleshly desires one’s “god,” or the principle thing with him. In this same way, when those in the world give themselves to serve Satan, or he becomes the principle thing in their lives, he becomes their god. The “world” in this passage is humanity who has given itself to serve Satan. In this sense Satan is “the god of this world.”
4. *The Deceiver Of The Whole World (Rev. 12:7)*. The whole world has plunged into sin because all those who are in the world have been “deceived” by “the great dragon, . . . the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan.” The latter two terms tell us that this great “deceiver” is man’s accuser or slanderer (= the Devil), and man’s arch adversary, the one who stands as our opponent and antagonist (= Satan). The two terms describe his true character. As the “deceiver of the whole world” it should be remembered that “it was by deception that the world of mankind was plunged into sin (1 Tim. 2:14), and by which he has continued since to control men (12:9; 20:3, 8, 10). It is by deception that false religion, symbolized by the beast out of the earth, also gains adherents (13:14; 19:20); and it is by deception that worldliness, signified by the harlot, the great city, seduces her victims (18:23). Expose and remove the deception of sin and its power is nullified. . . .” (Homer Hailey).

SATAN’S OFFER TO JESUS

1. *What Was Offered To Jesus?* The three temptations presented to Jesus during this period of forty days was the challenge of deciding what he was to do and how he was to go about doing it. The basic issues raised in each temptation (following the order given in Matthew’s account in Matthew 4:1-11) were as follows:

Temptation No. 1: What would be Jesus' personal lot during the period of his ministry? Would he avoid personal suffering through the use of his special power as the Son of God? Why should he as the Son of God have to suffer hunger as other men do? Could he not avoid such suffering through the use of his own power as God's Son? Satan knew that he could have done so, and this was the nature of the first temptation. Jesus' response was that bread was important, but bread alone was not the important thing. He would not use his divine power to satisfy his own personal needs in order to avoid suffering.

Temptation No. 2: Would Jesus use spectacular display of himself and his power in order to get a following? Surely high acclaim would have been given him by the crowds below if only he would cast himself down from the highest point of the temple and trust God to bring him safely to the ground below. If he would leap from the wall, God would charge the angels to bear him up. Such a display would no doubt appeal to the Messianic aspirations of the crowds. They would likely hail him as "he that should come." But, again, Jesus knew this was the easy way, and a way that would only be chosen by one who was determined to avoid the way of suffering. To do what Satan suggested would presume upon God's favor by putting him to a test to see if he would keep his word. He refused to tempt God in this way. His spiritual ends were not to be accomplished by unspiritual means.

Temptation No. 3: Would Jesus attempt to accomplish his mission through political power? This was the kind of Messiah the people had expected and wanted. As Jesus looked out from the high mountain where he had been taken, he must have looked past the landscape to the political kingdoms of the world and envisioned them at his feet. At least this was what Satan intended for him to do. He offered Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them." Jesus successfully resisted the temptation by rejecting the devil's methods to accomplish his mission. He would not attempt to avoid the way of suffering for selfish and ambitious reasons, i. e., love of power and a desire to rule politically over others. He saw that surrender to Satan in this way would mean a divided loyalty, and he could not accomplish his true mission except through complete trust in God and service to him. This could be accomplished only through suffering.

In the third temptation Satan was not offering Jesus a way to accomplish his true mission. He was attempting to turn Jesus away from that accomplishment through worldly ambition. Jesus could not have saved the souls of men by establishing a worldly kingdom. Satan did not take him to that high mountain to show him the souls of men which he had come to save, but to show him "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them." As Luke 4:6 shows, it was the "power" and "glory" of these worldly kingdoms that Satan offered to Jesus. From that high mountain Jesus saw beautiful lands, towns, cities, and mountains, in addition to all the peoples of these kingdoms, and the temptation was to have the authority to rule over all that was included in these "kingdoms of the world," and the "glory" that would accompany this vast political power and all the possessions

that would come with it.

2. *Could Satan Have Delivered On His Offer To Jesus?* Was there an attempt at deception involved here? Did Satan really have the power he claimed for himself when he said, “I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish” (Luke 4:6, NASB)? What is the likely answer to this question?

J. W. McGarvey thought that “Satan’s promise to give Jesus the kingdom, when considered in connection with the capacities of Jesus himself, involves no very arrogant assumption of power.” Even though “the whole world lieth in wickedness,” it is not because Satan exercises in any sense absolute sway over the world. He could not give the domain and glory of the world to whomever he chose, and yet this is presumed in his offer to Jesus. Whatever ground he has gained in the world is not his by right. J. S. Lamar is quite right when he says that Satan’s “suggestion means . . . that they [the kingdoms of the world, ww] have been rightly delivered to him, i. e., by Him who alone possesses all things, and this is false.” His claim that the earth (all the kingdoms in the world, and their glory) had been delivered to him was, however, partially true. This is the meaning of those passages we have already considered. His claim that he could give it to whom he willed, however, was false. His lordship is limited in power and duration.

This means that had Jesus met Satan’s demands he would have conceded that he did in fact own “all this” (power over the kingdoms and the glory that belongs to them) by right, and this simply was not the case. There is no doubt that Satan’s power is great, but there is a greater power, and Satan’s days were numbered. So it was with half-truth and half-falsehood, and using the Messianic hopes of Jesus’ own people whom he had come to save, that Satan assaulted the integrity of Jesus in the hope of saving himself and his “domain of darkness” (Col. 1:13, NASB).

Satan, in other words, was inviting Jesus to join forces with him. He offered him authority over the world. In making this offer was he not hoping to retain authority for himself in the rest of the universe? He saw his own power being challenged, and his offer to Jesus in this particular temptation appears to have been an attempt to compromise so as not to lose his entire domain. A part dominion was better than nothing. McGarvey concedes that there was a way Jesus could have become cohort with Satan and gained the prize offered to him. But for this to happen it would take more than Jesus simply surrendering and coming under the power and dominion of Satan. He says that “it is quite certain that if he had consented, and had not by this consent lost the power and wisdom which belonged to him, he could have attained in a short time to universal dominion” (emphasis mine, ww). Whatever success he would have had in this way would have been due, not to Satan’s power alone, but to Jesus’ own power and wisdom as well. The fact of the matter is, in spite of his bold claim, Satan did not exercise absolute sway over the whole world so that he could give a major part

of his dominion away at his choosing.

WHEREIN LAY THE TEMPTATION?

What then was the nature and the force of the temptation brought against our Lord here? For one thing, he was tempted to concede that Satan exercised absolute lordship in the universe. Had Jesus given in to worship and serve him he would have been saying by his action that God did not occupy the position of total Lordship in the universe. John P. Lange correctly observes, “The point of the temptation lay in the boldness of the design--- Satan spreading out all at once a rushing picture of absolute sway over the world and of its glory, and then offering all this to the lowly and rejected Son of David, who of right could claim all the nations of the world as His inheritance, and the utmost ends of the world as his possession.”

Another aspect of this temptation would have been the attempt on Satan’s part to influence Jesus to establish the kingdom of Jewish expectation by outward power and pomp. This was the very role the Jews had expected their coming Messiah to fill. The desire Satan hoped to excite was that of worldly ambition. If he could but divert Jesus’ attention away from his mission in the world, which was to seek and to save the lost, his own mission would have been accomplished, and he could at least have saved a part of the universe for himself to exercise lordship over. But Jesus could not have established the true kingdom of God on earth had he given in to Satan’s conditions. He would only have become ruler of the kingdoms of the world. Like the other temptations that had gone before, the attempt here was to turn Jesus away from the accomplishment of his true mission in the world.

But Jesus, in his resolve to accomplish his mission and to do the Father’s will, stood firm. For the third time he made a direct appeal to the word of God: “Then Jesus said unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matt. 4:10). By using the term “Satan” Jesus exposed his true character and showed him to be the adversary that he was. By telling him to get out of his sight he showed both his great enmity toward him, and all the evil that he represents in the world, as well as his resolve to withstand his appeal. The rebellion was put down. The strong man was being cast out. God still reigns in the universe, and Jesus surely would destroy “every rule and every authority and power” set against God (1 Cor. 15:24).

Chapter Sixteen

JESUS — HOW SHALL WE VIEW HIS DEATH?

At the time of Jesus' death on the cross the enemies of Christ must have had a very decided view of what was taking place. To them the death of Christ would have meant no more than the execution of a common criminal, the eradication of a false teaching, and in some measure the extinguishment of a dangerous movement. The message of the cross has always been foolishness to those who are perishing, "but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18).

What does the cross of Christ mean to you? How do you view Jesus' death? Let's summarize the meaning of Christ's death in three words; what we might call the death of Christ in 3-V's.

CHRIST'S DEATH WAS VOLUNTARY

Many no doubt see little significance in Jesus' death because they view it merely as an accidental occurrence. But was it? The Old Testament clearly pointed to the death of Christ (Isa. 53). Paul says that it was Jesus "whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness" (Rom. 3:25). This was not something that came into God's mind at the last moment. Christ "indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifested in these last times for you" (1 Pet. 1:20). He was "delivered by the determined 'counsel and foreknowledge of God,' having been taken by lawless hands, crucified, and put to death (Acts 2:23). Jesus was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:81).

Was the cross in Jesus' own mind from the very beginning of his ministry? The language of Scripture will allow no other conclusion. At the time of his very first miracle Jesus says to his mother, "My hour has not yet come" (Jn. 2:4). Later when his disciples urged him to attend the feast of Tabernacles, He said, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready" (Jn 7:6). What was "his time"? Whatever it was, even though some of his enemies wanted to take him, no one laid hands on him (Jn. 7:44); the reason being, "for his hour had not yet come" (Jn. 8:20).

The answer to this question is not found until we come to chapter twelve of John. Certain Greeks came to Philip and desired to see Jesus. When Philip and Andrew brought their request to Jesus, he said to them, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be

glorified” (Jn. 12:23). By his illustration of the grain of wheat falling into the ground and dying, and his prayer that the Father would save him from this hour (Jn. 12:27), we are prepared to receive Jesus’ grand declaration of his own lifting up when he says, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself” (Jn. 12:32). John explains the meaning of this statement by adding, “This He said, signifying by what death He should die” (Jn. 12:33). That his death had been in his plans all along is clearly stated in the last part of verse 27, “But for this purpose I came to this hour.”

That Jesus’ death was voluntary is indicated at several places in Scripture. Jesus himself said of the laying down of His life, “...I lay down my life ...No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself” (Jn. 10:17-18). Paul tells us that Christ “loved the church and gave Himself for it” (Eph. 5:25). As Christians we are to “walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma” (Eph. 5:2). The voluntary nature of his death is the greatest proof of His deep and abiding love for us.

CHRIST’S DEATH WAS VICARIOUS

We must also see the death of Christ as vicarious. This means Jesus died in the place of others. The earliest indication we have in the New Testament from Jesus that this is how we must view his death is in the context of that passage where Jesus said, “I lay down My life” (Jn. 12:17). Back in chapter ten of John where Jesus presents himself as the good Shepherd, he said, “The shepherd gives his life for the sheep” (Jn. 10:11). John the Baptist had at the very beginning of Jesus’ ministry announced, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (Jn. 1:29). The idea of sins being taken away by a lamb is based on the offerings of the Old Testament, especially the Passover lamb. The only firstborn males who were spared were those in whose families a firstborn lamb had died instead. Paul makes the specific application to Christ, when he says, “Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:7).

According to Leviticus 17:11 blood is the symbol of life: “For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life.” Because blood makes atonement due to life being in the blood, the blood that is shed “makes atonement for one’s life.” Thus, one life is sacrificed instead of another. What makes atonement “on the altar” is the shedding of substitutionary lifeblood. T.J. Crawford well said: “The text, then, according to its plain and obvious import, teaches the vicarious nature of the rite of sacrifice. Life was given for life, the life of the victim for the life of the offerer”, or, more specifically, “the life of the innocent victim for the life of the sinful offerer.” In the final analysis, animal sacrifice would not do; it took “the precious blood of Christ” (1 Pet. 1:19; Heb. 9:22; 10:1-4). Peter says that “He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree” (1 Pet. 2:24), while Paul says that “Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many” (Heb. 9:28).

CHRIST'S DEATH WAS VICTORIOUS

We know from the very first promise of Scripture that has Christ in mind that he would be victorious. He would crush the head of the serpent, while the serpent would strike his heel (Gen. 3:15). It seemed at the time of his death that all was lost. Surely his enemies would have laughed at the time he hang on the cross if anyone would have suggested that the crucified was a conqueror. But that is exactly what God had promised in Genesis 3:15, and it was demonstrated finally that the victim was victor indeed.

The fact that Jesus came casting out demons, and Satan does not cast out Satan, is affirmed by Jesus to demonstrate that he has bound Satan, because one does not enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man (Matt. 12:25-30). Even though "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed ...He who sits in heaven shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision" and set his king on his holy hill of Zion (Ps. 2:2-6), in the very midst of their opposition. Jesus' death is only seeming defeat; it is in fact the very occasion of victory. Through his death he destroyed "him who had the power of death, that is, the devil," and gave release to "those who through death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14-15). "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" (1 Cor. 15:55). "Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57). Three days after Jesus' burial he emerged as "victor from the dark domain," and in that victory makes it possible for us to be victorious over sin and death.

CONCLUSION

Just as Jesus volunteered for the cross, he invites all would-be disciples to volunteer to follow after him (Matt. 16:24). As he died for others, he urges his disciples to die to sin and live for others (Rom. 6:17-19; 12:9-20; Phil. 2:3-4; Gal 6:10). Just as Jesus was victorious by his death on the cross, so he encourages people to share in the victory (Jn. 16:33; 1 Jn. 5:4: 2:13b).

Chapter Seventeen

Jesus — His Burial

The Hebrew custom of providing a burial place for the dead is first introduced in Scripture with Abraham's purchase of a cave in the land of Canaan for the burial of Sarah

(Gen. 23:1ff.). Although Joseph was first embalmed and put in a “coffin” in Egypt (Gen. 50:26), because of his own request before his death his bones later were returned to Canaan for burial (Gen. 49:29; Exod. 13:19). According to history many Jews of the dispersion of the Roman period also preferred to be buried in Canaan, their homeland. Some were buried in the ground (Gen. 35:8, 19). It was generally viewed as a dishonor to leave a body unburied (Deut. 21:23; 2 Sam. 21:12-14; 2 Kings 9:10), and whenever possible the preference would be to place one in a family burial place. Note, for example, the request of Joseph (Gen. 49:29), and that of Barzillai, the servant of Joab (2 Sam. 19:37). See also 2 Chronicles 21:20.

THE TOMB WHERE JESUS WAS BURIED

Tombs in New Testament Times. In New Testament times tombs had come to be a common place for burial. Even today in the city of Jerusalem one can visit the Tomb of Absalom (so-called) which dates from around the first century. This tomb is a building which served as a monument and it exhibits both Greek and Nabatean influence. Other tombs from the same period might be either a single connected cluster of underground tombs with niches for the various individuals and would serve the purpose of an entire family, or perhaps even an extended family or families. Some tombs however were simply an individual rock-cut tomb for one person. “The bodies generally were not enclosed in coffins ; after decomposition the remaining bones were then removed to a bone chamber in the floor or at the side of the burial ledge and the space reused” (Kenneth E. Bailey, “Burial Customs,” *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, pp. 95-96).

Some have thought that Jesus’ reference to “whited sepulchres,” or “whitewashed tombs” (NRSV), implies buildings like those mentioned in the above paragraph, but there does not appear to be any good reason why these terms could not include the other type of tombs (those hewn out of rock) as well. The stones used to close the tombs were probably whitewashed in the same way that the buildings were that were built for tombs.

A New And Expensive Tomb. The place where Jesus was buried was a new tomb which had been hewn out of rock by Joseph of Arimathea (Matt. 27:60), a town some 25 miles from Jerusalem. This was “his own new tomb,” meaning that he had just purchased the place and had the rock hewn out. It may very well be that these plans had been made in advance by Jesus. Why would Joseph have just recently purchased this burial place and have it all ready for use if it had not been planned in advance to serve as the burial place of Jesus?

Tombs hewn out of rock were expensive and were therefore purchased only by wealthy families. Joseph is described as “a rich man of Arimathea,” and a disciple of Jesus (Matt. 27:57). He was therefore able to purchase such an expensive place, and being not only a disciple, but also a member of the Sanhediran (“a prominent member

of the Council,” Mark 15:43 [NIV]), he was given a favorable hearing by Pilate when he approached him to make request for the body of Jesus. We are told, “then Pilate commanded [the centurion in charge of the crucifixion, Mark 15:44-45—ww] the body to be delivered” (Matt. 27:58).

But more was probably involved in Pilate’s decision than the fact that Joseph was a prominent member of the Council. Pilate’s granting the body of Jesus to Joseph was actually against normal Roman practice. Erich H. Kiehl points out that “according to law the body of someone executed on a charge of high treason could not be given to relatives or friends for burial; the idea was to prevent the burial site from becoming a shrine and focal point for any followers” (*The Passion of Our Lord*, p. 149). Kiehl’s own view is that the greatest motivating factor on Pilate’s part in giving the body of Jesus over to Joseph was his own conviction of Jesus’ innocence, which he had acknowledged more than once. Only this, he thinks, will explain Pilate’s willingness to ignore Roman law on this matter as he did.

The Tomb Was Closed and Sealed. After the body of Jesus had been prepared for burial (see the next section) it was placed in the tomb that had been prepared to receive it and a large stone was rolled to the door of the tomb (Matt. 27:60). The next day, the day of the Sabbath, the chief priests and Pharisees came to Pilate and asked that the tomb be “made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead . . .” (Matt. 27:62-63). Pilate granted their request: “You have a watch,” he said to them, “go your way, make it as sure as you can.” “So they went,” we are told, “and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch” (Matt. 27:66). It is uncertain whether Pilate gave them permission to use a temple guard, or whether he told them they could station Roman soldiers at the tomb.

This sealing of the tomb and the posting of a guard to make sure no one stole the body would prove to be strong evidences that the missing body of Jesus on the third day means he had been resurrected from the dead. Isn’t it amazing that what the disciples had not remembered—that Jesus had promised he would be raised from the dead on the third day—the chief priests and Pharisees understood and remembered, and were determined that no apparent fulfillment of such predictions should be accomplished by the disciples” (Alfred Plummer, *Matthew*, p. 408).

The Location Of The Tomb. The exact location of the tomb where Jesus was placed cannot be identified with certainty. We know that it was in a garden because Scripture states that as a matter of fact (John 19:41). There is also a reference to a gardener in John 20:15. It was close to the place of crucifixion, and probably in the area of the traditional cite of Aceldama (“the field of blood,” Acts 1:19) , near the junction of the Hinnom and Kidron valleys.

PREPARATION OF JESUS’ BODY FOR BURIAL

Joseph of Arimathaea, along with Nicodemus, the one who at first had come to Jesus by night, and also a member of the Sanhedrian (Jn. 3:1ff.), prepared the body of Jesus for burial. The body would have first been washed (see Acts 9:37). They then wrapped it in a linen cloth (“fine linen,” or “the linen”, Mark 15:46) and took it to the tomb where “the two men wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen” (Jn. 19:40, NIV). They probably tore the linen they had first used to wrap the body into these “strips” (NIV) or “cloths” (KJV) and with these they individually wrapped each limb of his body, and in this way “bound” it, “no doubt, between layers of myrrh and aloes, the head being wrapped in a napkin [see Jn. 20:7—ww]. And so they laid him to rest in the niche of the rock-hewn new tomb” (Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, II: 618).

Lazarus, when he was raised from the dead by Jesus, you will remember, “came forth, bound head and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth” (Jn. 11:44). The large mixture of myrrhs and aloes that were used to prepare Jesus’ body for burial (and no doubt the same would have been done for Lazarus and others) had been brought by Nicodemus (Jn. 19:39). These would serve to counteract the odor of death. Neither embalming (an Egyptian custom) nor cremation (called idolatry in certain Jewish writings) were permitted. The amount of the myrrh and aloes brought would be about seventy-five pounds in our weight. Kiehl gives the following description of these two substances:

Myrrh comes from a species of thorny-branched shrubs or trees that grow in Arabia, Ethiopia, and Somaliland on rocky ground. The stems and branches exude drops of oily resin. When they are cut, the resin flows freely, eventually solidifying. Aloes is a perfumed oil that comes from the tall and somewhat broad leaves of a species known as Aloe vera. Probably cultivated in Jesus’ time, Aloe vera is found today in Arab countries and in Palestine.

Because it was only a short time before the beginning of the Sabbath day which would begin at 6:00 p. m. that evening, the day of preparation was almost over when Joseph came to Pilate to make request for the body of Jesus (Mark 15:42). No doubt the disciples were in a hurry to make sure everything had been taken care of before the day of the Sabbath began.

THE WOMEN FROM GALILEE

Mark says that there were some women from Galilee, among whom were “Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jose” (Mark 15:47), who followed Joseph and Nicodemus and observed the preparation of Jesus’ body for burial (Luke 23:55). Evidently this means that they did not help with the burial, but they did watch and pay careful attention as the work was being done and saw exactly how the body was laid in the tomb. They had planned at a later

time to visit the tomb, and as proof of their love for Jesus they hoped to further apply “spices and ointments” (“ointment” is from the word also rendered “myrrh” used by Joseph and Nicodemus) to his body. Evidently the custom was that this was usually done over a period of several days. But they had to hurry to make careful preparation before the beginning of the Sabbath day. So they must have secured the needed materials, the spices and the ointment, immediately upon returning to their place of lodging (Luke 23:56). The earliest opportunity they would have would be on the first day of the week. Luke says that they “rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.”

When the women returned to the tomb early on Sunday morning they found the huge stone rolled away . . . and you know the rest of the story!! The empty tomb, the grave clothes undisturbed, the angels, etc.

CONCLUSION

What does the burial of Jesus mean to us? What is its significance? It means that Jesus was dead when they placed him in the tomb, contrary to some theories that would explain away the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Its significance is seen in the fact that Paul names it as one of the three cardinal facts of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-3). We also see its significance in our own conversion and the new life that we now have as Christians. Paul tells us that not only were we baptized into Christ’s death, but that in our baptism we were also *buried with him* in baptism (Rom. 6:3-4). As a matter of fact, the way he words it, we died to sin when we were buried with him in baptism! The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave is the greatest event in history, for his teaching amounts to-but little if he was not “declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 7:5). With reference to this stupendous proposition there are only two classes of people — those who believe that he conquered death, hell and the grave, and those who deny it. If Christ (lid not arise from the dead, “our preaching is vain.” “Your faith is also vain.” “Ye are yet in your sins.” “They also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.” “We are of all men most miserable” (I Cor. 15:12-19). If Christ did not arise from the dead, he was a deceiver, for he said he would rise (Matt. 16: 21; Mark 14:9). If he did not rise from the dead, the gospel is an imposition, redemption a myth, and heaven a failure. If he arose from the dead, he is divine, the “only begotten Son of God,” and the Saviour of the world. If he arose from the grave, we are “begotten again to a lively hope” (I Pet. 1:3). We have “life and immortality through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10). We will rise when he comes (1 Cor. 15: 51-57).

Chapter Eighteen

JESUS AND HIS RESURRECTION

by Ashley Sidney Johnson

Paul teaches that God “hath given assurance” (offered faith) unto all men that he hath raised him from the dead (Acts 17:3). Assurance is a strong word. But what assurance has he given? As this is simply a question of fact, let us appeal to the testimony submitted. The credibility of the witnesses and the nature of the evidence are the two questions to which our attention is called.

Friends and foes make the following admissions

1. There was such a person as Jesus of Nazareth.
2. He was born in the city of Bethlehem nearly nineteen centuries ago.
3. He lived at the time and in the country assigned him in the Bible.
4. He was a teacher, and many people forsook their evil practices for his sake.
5. He excited the Jews to wrath, and they crucified him on account of his teaching.
6. He remained on the cross until he was dead
7. He was embalmed and buried in the new tomb furnished by Joseph of Arimathea.
8. That the grave was closed by a great stone and sealed with the Roman seal.
9. That a guard of Roman soldiers, knowing that if they neglected their duty by falling to sleep they would Pay the penalty by death, was stationed at the grave with the command, “Make it sure as ye can” (Matt. 27: 65).
10. That the body was missing after the morning of the “third day.”

What became of the body? The soldiers say it was stolen by his disciples. Was this possible? Where were they when the theft was committed? Around the grave. What were they doing? They were asleep, according to their testimony (Matt. 28:13). How did they know the body was stolen? How did they know that the disciples stole it? How did they know that the body did not come to life and get out of the grave and walk away? Admitting that these soldiers were asleep, the disciples could not have “rolled the stone away” and secured the body without making sufficient noise to arouse them. If the body were stolen, why did they not produce it? Is it possible that a small band of disappointed and heartbroken men could evade the vigilance of the Roman army and all the Jews? The very thought is preposterous. The testimony of these soldiers is unreasonable, contradictory, absurd. It would not be accepted in any court of justice. It is a fabrication invented by the emissaries of the devil.

The disciples say the body came to life and arose from the grave. Were they expecting this? Not one of them (Luke 24:11) Had they anything to hope for by saying, “Jesus is risen,” if it were not so? Nothing, because the combined powers, religious and political, were against them. Were they

sincere? They attested their sincerity by dying for what they believed. Did they have sufficient opportunity to see and know him? “To whom he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). Here is proof-proofs-infallible proof. They saw him (John 21: 1, 2). They ate with him (John 21:13, 14). John saw him, Peter saw him, Paul saw him, all the apostles saw him, five hundred brethren saw him (1 Cor. 16:1-8).

This evidence is pointed, sufficient, conclusive. It would be accepted in any court of justice on earth. If any man doubts this, behold the results of the gospel seven days after the ascension. Admit that Jesus was an impostor, that his teachings were false, that he did not rise from the dead, what then? Twelve men, unaided by education, money or soldiery, stood up before the people, who knew everything pertaining to Jesus Christ, and persuaded three thousand, in a single sermon, to believe in the divinity of Christ and that he arose from the dead, and this in the face of the most malignant and intense opposition the world has ever known. Not only this, but the next sermon convinced five thousand more, and in forty years the gospel had spread over the entire Roman Empire, and after the expiration of eighteen hundred years the work moves on until the temples of superstition and sin are trembling on their foundations in every land, and all infidels who write a letter or a legal document sign their name, and endorse it the year of our Lord 1912. Look at the stupendous changes that Christianity has wrought! The man who can believe that this is the result of a lie has credulity enough to believe anything. If a lie has done all this, it is the author of more good than all the truth the world has ever known.

Well may we join the triumphant strain indulged by the apostle Paul: “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept, for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (I Cor. 15: 20-22).

Chapter Nineteen

Jesus — His Resurrection Miracles

The New Testament records three instances where Jesus brought a dead person back to life: (1) the widow’s only son in Luke 7:11-17, (2) the daughter of Jairus in Luke 8:40-42, 49-56 (and parallel passages in both Matthew and Mark), and (3) Lazarus in John 11:17-44. There may have been other such miracles worked by Jesus, but these are all that God saw fit to record for us in Scripture. John only recorded a small number of those miracles he knew about (John 20:30-31), and we are confident that the same is true of the other gospel writers. There are some things that are alike and some things that are different in these three resurrection miracles. We will begin with a few brief comments on some of the differences in the three cases recorded, and then we will make a few observations on the things that are alike. The reader may choose to follow along on the chart provided as we proceed.

SOME DIFFERENCES TO BE NOTED

Location. The first resurrection miracle worked by Jesus was performed in the small city of Nain. This town was only a few miles southeast of Nazareth in Galilee. It was a days journey from Capernaum, the city Jesus adopted after his rejection in Nazareth. Capernaum was probably the place where Jesus performed the second resurrection miracle (that of Jairus' daughter). This city is identified as "his own city" in Matthew 9:1, and it was after he had returned from the other side (east) of the Sea of Galilee (Luke 8:40) that he worked this miracle. The third resurrection miracle (that of Lazarus) was performed in Bethany, a small town two miles east of Jerusalem (John 11:1, 18).

The Persons and Occasion of Death. In the first resurrection miracle Jesus raised the *only son* of a *widow*, and he was being carried to the place of burial. In the second instance he raised the *only daughter* of a *married man* who was a *ruler* of a synagogue. In this latter case Jesus found her yet in the bed in which she had died only a short while before he arrived. In the third case Lazarus was a dear friend of Jesus himself, one whom Jesus dearly loved. Although the persons and the circumstances were different, they all had one thing in common: they all three had "died." There was no question about it. They were all DEAD. All present must have agreed to this one fact. Jesus would have known had it been otherwise, and so would others who were present.

Age and Duration of Death. A second thing that is different about these miracles is the age at which the three subjects died and the period of time they had been dead when Jesus brought them back to life. Jarius' daughter was a young girl, only twelve years of age, and had probably been dead only a few minutes when Jesus arrived at her home. The widow's son is described by Jesus as a "young man" when he restored life to him, and he probably had not been dead more than a few hours, assuming that they were following the normal custom of burying the dead as soon as the necessary preparations could be made. Lazarus however was a full-grown man (age unknown) and had been dead for four days.

SOME LIKENESSES IN THE STORIES

Jesus' Manner of Raising Them Up and the Response of the Dead. In each case Jesus gave a direct command to the dead. In the first two instances he said, "Arise." The first corpse was in an "open coffin" (NKJV), and the second was lying in bed. So "arise" would be the natural command. Lazarus was in a tomb, so he cried out, "Lazarus, come forth." How can the dead hear? you may ask. The case of Jairus' daughter supplies the answer to how the dead could hear and respond to Jesus' command. The record says, "then her spirit returned and she arose immediately." Ray Summers makes an interesting observation on this statement: "That part of her which animated the body returned to renew that animation. There is unquestionable evidence that people in that day believed that a person's spirit lingered about for three days after death hoping to get back into the body, but on the fourth day when the natural processes of death had definitely taken over the body, the spirit would go away. That was Martha's meaning when, concerning Lazarus, she said, 'Lord . . . he has been dead four

days' (John 11:39). Her concern was not so much with the unpleasant situation of opening the cave after those processes had started as it was with the fact that it was too late to help Lazarus. She, too, learned that when Jesus is present, it is never too late" (*Jesus, the Universal Savior: Commentary on Luke*, p. 103). It was not the dead body of the subjects that heard and responded to his command, but the spirit that had departed in death.

Response of Those Who Witnessed the Miracles. In each case the response was "fear" (godly reverence), "glorifying God," "astonishment," and "belief," or some combination of these. In the case of Lazarus even those Jews who rejected Jesus believed the miracle.

Jesus' Statements Concerning Life After Death. When Jesus made statements concerning what he would do for these people, he was always consistent in the language he used. This is illustrated in his use of the word "sleep" as he used it to describe death. In speaking of the daughter of Jairus he said he would make her "well," clearly referring to bringing her back to life. He does the same thing when he says, "She is not dead but sleeping." The Jews misunderstood this statement and scoffed at Jesus for it. They knew the child was dead, but so did Jesus. He used the term "sleep" as a metaphor to describe the quiet which death brings to the turmoil of life. He used this term also in the case of Lazarus (John 11:11) and promised he would wake him up.

LESSONS FROM THESE STORIES

- 1. Sickness and adversity are common to all.* Lazarus illustrates this point. He was a godfearing man, a disciple of Jesus. He still became sick and died. This point is also illustrated in other people in New Testament times.
- 2. Death is no respecter of persons.* It can come at any age. All gospel preachers who have preached a number of years have helped bury good people of all ages—infants, children, teenagers, young adults, middle age people, and old people. Some who were old enough to become Christians had not obeyed the gospel. They were waiting for a "more convenient time," but death caught them unprepared.
- 3. The blessings of Jesus are offered only on his terms.* He could have hurried on over to Bethany and saved Lazarus from death. But he didn't. He had something better in mind. He waited two extra days for Lazarus to die (John 11:6) so he would be able to "glorify God" and himself in Lazarus' resurrection from the dead (John 11:4). What would be done would be on his terms, not on the terms of Mary and Martha or anyone else. This is also true on what we must do to be saved, how we are to worship God, how the church is to be organized, how we are to be faithful to him, etc.
- 4. No resurrections from the dead are taking place today.* No one has the power to do what Jesus did in raising the dead. Many challenges have been made for those who claim to have the same power that Jesus and the apostles had to work such miracles to use that power to speak to the spirits of dead men and bring their dead corpses back to life, but none have been able to do it. This is the challenge of all challenges to those who claim such powers, and none can meet it.

5. *The fact of a future resurrection is comforting and reasonable.* It is comforting to know that the same Jesus who raised the widow's son, Jairus' daughter, and Lazarus will someday raise all the dead. Some will be raised to a resurrection of life, and some to a resurrection of condemnation (John 5:28-29). It was by raising Lazarus that he proved his claim, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). These resurrection miracles demonstrated his power over death. Death is the last enemy that is to be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26), and it will be destroyed by all being resurrected from the dead at Jesus' coming.

6. *We will never go wrong in doing a good thing out of compassion.* Jesus raised the widow's son because he "had compassion on her" (Luke 7:13). Whether it was because it was her "only son," or it was that she had been deprived of her livelihood in the loss of her son, or possibly even both, doesn't matter. Jesus restored her son to her because he had compassion on her. He often did a good work out of compassion (see Matt. 14:14 as an example). The weeping and mourning over the death of Jairus' daughter was no doubt out of sympathy for her parents (Luke 8:52), and that "Jesus wept" at the death of his friend Lazarus is evidence of the same thing on his part. Christians must learn to have compassion for the hurts of others, and out of such compassion they should go about "doing good" just as Jesus did (Acts 10:38).

7. *No "after death experiences" are reported in these examples of resurrection performed by our Lord.* There is not one testimony given from any of the three people raised by Jesus on what they experienced after they had been restored to life. What a contrast this is to those who claim today that they have experienced death and then were restored to life again. Some of the stories are ridiculous, especially the claim that they saw themselves floating around against the ceiling outside their own body! Exactly what part of themselves do you suppose they were seeing floating outside and above the body? Their spirit that had left their body? Then what was yet in the body that was watching their spirit float outside their body? The body was dead if the spirit had left their body (James 2:26; Eccl. 12:7). We don't really have any "after death experiences" taking place today, because there are no people today who are being restored to life after they have died..

Chapter Twenty

"WHAT SHALL I DO WITH JESUS . . . ?"

The question asked by Pilate, "What shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ" (Matthew 27:22), must be viewed as the most important question in the world. Not only was this a troublesome question for Pilate, but every person who has learned about Jesus Christ has faced

the same challenge.

Pilate must have known long before Jesus was brought before him that eventually he would have to face the question, “What shall I do with Jesus?” He must have heard many times the reports about Jesus, and, no doubt, these reports greatly disturbed him. It had proved to be no easy task to keep the Jews subdued. Those who worked under Pilate had surely kept him fully informed about what was going on in this region. It is doubtful that there was anything that Jesus taught and did that Pilate did not know. Jesus had fascinated Pilate’s wife. Her acquaintance with Jesus had come over a period of time, and so had Pilate’s. In addition to the many reports they had received, Pilate’s wife may have even heard this man teach in the streets of Jerusalem.

Once the religious and political leaders of the Jews had arrested Jesus, Pilate most likely suspected that someday a political crisis would develop and he probably would be the one who would have to deal with it. Then it would be not only the reports, but also the real person of Jesus that he would have to face. It was when Jesus was brought face to face before Pilate that this man was faced with the question, “What shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?”

You must remember Pilate’s problem is our problem as well. Just as someone brought Jesus before Pilate, so someone has brought this same man before you and me. We, like Pilate, are acquainted with Him. We have heard, or read, the reports from our New Testaments, and even beyond that, someone has brought this man right before us so that we, just like Pilate, cannot avoid Him. We not only have read or heard about Him, but we have come face to face with Him. We no longer question who this man is. We know Him. Our only question now is the same question Pilate faced: “What shall I do with Jesus that is called Christ?”

AN ANSWER REQUIRED

Pilate had to do something. Inaction on his part was impossible. He had to DO something. The question he raised was not, “What shall I think about Jesus?” but “What shall I do with Jesus?” Pilate knew that the religious and political leaders of the Jews had decided what they would do. They would do away with Him. Pilate was being pressured to make the same decision. But he was also being pressured to let Jesus go. Pilate’s wife wanted him to vindicate Jesus. She said to him, “Have nothing to do with that just man” (Matthew 27:19). Pilate agreed because he said, “I am innocent of the blood of this just person” (Matt. 27:24). He knew what he thought about him, but now, “What shall I DO with Him?” was his nagging question. To do nothing was impossible. He was being forced to make a decision.

Even though Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent, and in his heart he wanted to do the right thing, he was under tremendous pressure. Have we not at times found ourselves in this predicament? It may be that as you face this same question about Jesus you are pressured by the crowd to “crucify Him,” or eliminate Him. Do the same pressures that troubled Pilate trouble you? Are you worried about what others will think or do if you do with Jesus what you really want to do? So often we have so much in common with Pontius Pilate, don’t we? But just as Pilate learned that inaction is impossible, we must learn the same lesson. We must answer the question, “What shall I do with

Jesus?”

AN ATTEMPT AT EVASION

The Roman Governor wanted to put the responsibility of making a decision about Jesus off on someone else, for, we read, “he sent him to Herod” (Luke 23:7). Pilate did not have the moral courage to do what he knew he should do, so he turned Jesus over to someone else hoping he would do the right thing with Him. Do we have anything in common with Pilate here? We certainly do. How many husbands do you know who have attempted to turn the question of what to do with Jesus over to their wives? They favor their wives going to church faithfully, but that’s not for them. Parents sometimes send Jesus to their children, so that perhaps they will do the right thing with Him. They have shirked the issue, and left it to their children. They may encourage them in every way to go to church, but they themselves do nothing about Christ. They hope their children will do with Jesus what they do not have the moral courage to do.

My friend, you cannot shirk the issue. You cannot leave this matter to somebody else. Your attempt at evasion will fail, as it did with Pilate, because “Herod sent Him again to Pilate” (Luke 23:11). You just can’t get rid of the question, “What shall I do with Jesus?” Nevertheless Pilate still tried to shift the responsibility to someone else. He next wanted the people to decide. He would let them choose between Jesus and Barabbas. He saw this as the way out.

Do you suppose Pilate thought the people would make the right decision? I think he probably did. Surely, he must have thought, the people will ask that this innocent man be set free. But he did not understand the power of sin. Common sense and justice would have demanded that that be the decision of the people. But whoever thought that common sense and justice were compatible with sin? The people asked for Barabbas, not Jesus. That put the matter back in Pilate’s hands. Pilate must answer the question himself. And so must you. You simply cannot avoid the issue.

AN INCREDIBLE REJECTION

Pilate played the role of the coward. He rejected Jesus. His rejection was not due to his having examined the evidence and found it wanting. After he had examined the evidence his verdict was, “I find no fault in Him” (John 19:4,6). When the people cried out that Jesus be crucified, Pilate even sought to release Jesus, especially after Jesus told him that he would have no power against Him unless it had been given to him by God (John 19:11,12). But the people pulled Pilate in the other direction by saying, “If you let this man go, you are not Caesar’s friend.” The shouts and the threats of the people won out, and Pilate delivered Jesus to them to be crucified.

Maybe in his heart Pilate felt justified in his act, but washing his hands in water and saying, “I am innocent of the blood of this just person,” did not free him of responsibility. His responsibility as Governor was to free any innocent man. Pilate was guilty, and he failed because he was a coward.

Is that your problem if you have decided to reject Jesus? Are you afraid to confess your faith in Him? But you must believe on Him and confess Him to be the Son of God (John 8:24; Matthew 10:32,33). Are you afraid to turn away from sin through repentance, and be baptized into Christ that your sins might be remitted? But you must, or else you will also reject Him by rejecting his word and failing to obey Him (John 12:48-50; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:1-4; Galatians 3:26,27). If you have become a Christian already, are you afraid to own Christ and stand up for Him? What are you going to do with Jesus? Jesus says, "For whosoever is ashamed of Me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of man will also be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).

YOU WILL SOMEDAY STAND BEFORE JESUS

What we do with Jesus now will determine what Jesus shall do with us when He comes again. So make your choice, give your verdict, take your stand now. An old hymn challenges us to do just that, in view of the Lord's coming and His verdict toward us:

Jesus is standing in Pilate's hall
Friendless, forsaken, despised by all.
Hearken, what meaneth this sudden call:
What will you do with Jesus?
What will you do with Jesus?
Neutral you cannot be!
Some day your heart will be asking
What will He do with me?