



# **FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH**

**(Writings of John--II)**

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These lessons were written for the Emmanuel Pentecostal Sunday School by the pastor, Robert D. Kalis. This is the ninth in a series of twenty quarterlies (5 years) covering the greater part of the historical portion of the Bible. This series is now complete. The titles are listed below and are available to any and all:

|                                |                                 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| The Men and Women of Genesis   | The Miracles of Jesus           |
| Lessons From Exodus            | The Parables of Jesus           |
| Wilderness Examples            | The Personal Ministry of Jesus  |
| Possessing the Land of Promise | According to Luke - I & II      |
| The Days of the Judges         | We Beheld His Glory (John-I)    |
| Israel's Early Kings           | Full of Grace & Truth (John-II) |
| Lessons From the Kings         | Holy Ghost Acts - I             |
| The Captivity and Return       | Holy Ghost Acts - II            |
| Matthew: The King and          | His Kingdom - I & II            |

## INTRODUCTION

"Full of Grace and Truth" covers the last part of John's Gospel and also takes a brief glimpse at the general epistle of I John and the book of Revelation. It is the companion of "We Beheld His Glory," which covers the first 13 chapters of the Gospel of John.

It has been observed that the Gospel of John is the heart of the New Testament and that the 14th through the 17th chapters of John are the heart of John's gospel. Truly, these chapters are among the richest in all scripture. The manifestation of Father and Son to the obedient believer, in chapter 14; and the fruitful abiding life in chapter 15; and then the ministry of the comforter set forth in chapter 16; with our Lord's High Priestly prayer in the 17th chapter, make this section sublime. Only the Divine Son of God could utter such wonderful words of life and power.

The general epistle of I John is particularly useful to young believers and those recently converted and born again of God. Reuben Archer Torrey, well known Bible teacher advises new believers to study this book first. It teaches the facts which every believer should know.

The three lessons from the Book of Revelation are intended to whet your appetite for this wonderfully mysterious message.

## LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED

Read: John 13:36-38; John 14

Memory Work: And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. John 1:14

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The hope of ultimately joining our Lord in the Father's house is an anchor for our souls in time of trouble.*
2. *The authority of Jesus' claim to be the life, the truth, and the way, marks Him as indeed the Divine Son of God.*
3. *The ministry of Jesus was to be continued by the disciples and ultimately by believers of every age.*
4. *Love demonstrated by obedience, brings a greater manifestation of the Divine reality of Jesus, the Son and of God, and of God the Father.*
5. *The Holy Spirit works to make the Father and Son real to us inwardly.*

I Whither Goest Thou? Four questions are asked by four different disciples in the passage covered by today's lesson. Peter, as usual, was first. He understood, as the other disciples finally did also, that Jesus was about to die. What Peter wanted to know, was where Jesus would be after His death. The warm-hearted Peter would have liked to go with Jesus even if it meant his death, also. At least Peter thought that he was willing to die with and for his Lord. But Jesus told Peter that he could not follow Him at that time, but later he would indeed follow His Lord into the Father's kingdom. Jesus also warned Peter that he would deny the Lord three times before the next dawn despite Peter's avowal that he was ready to die for Jesus.

The disciples must have been struck with consternation when they realized that with Jesus their Master gone, they would be left alone in the midst of the hostile Jewish leaders. If Peter, their leader and spokesman, was going to fail and deny the Lord, what could they expect of themselves? With Judas' betrayal and Peter's denial, the ranks of the disciples were shaken deeply. But Jesus reassured them with comforting words. "Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God; believe also in me" (John 14:1). They were not to lose faith in Him even when He was dead. He disclosed that in His Father's house (and that includes the whole universe, material and spiritual) were many abiding places. He was answering Peter's question and teaching truth to all the disciples, and to us who read these majestic words. He was going to prepare a place for us in His Father's house. He promised that He would come again to receive them unto Himself so that they (and we too) might be with Him. Jesus then told the disciples that now they knew where He was going and also the way to where He would be.

II How Can We Know? Thomas abruptly broke in on the Lord's reassuring speech and contradicted Him. "Lord we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? (John 14:5). Jesus said to Thomas, "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (vs.6). To the Father: that was where Jesus was going, and there is only one way to the Father and that is through the Son, Jesus Christ. No greater words have ever been uttered. No other name is given under heaven whereby we must be saved. Jesus alone is the way to the Father. Free Masons attempt to come to the Father through the medium of nature. While the marvels of creation manifest the wisdom and Power of the Creator, they do not bring the admirer to the Almighty. Some presume to approach God-Jehovah directly without any mediator. Such an idea is foolhardy, for without holiness, no man can see God. That unique holiness is obtainable only through faith in Jesus and the atonement made for us at Calvary. The Jehovah's Witnesses, who deny the Divinity of Jesus Christ, fool themselves and deceive their disciples, when they teach direct access to the Father's house without coming through Jesus. Good works, however commendable, and self-denial, and penance, cannot bring us to the Father either. It is only a living faith in the living Savior that opens the way to the Father.

The intellectual world professes to seek for truth. Yet most

of the effort of the intellectuals of this world is directed toward skepticism and what is not truth. Jesus simply stated, that He, Himself, was truth! To know and have Him ought to be the consuming passion of our lives. As we possess Him, and He us, we have the truth. If the great ones of this world would spend as much time and effort to seek Jesus Himself as they do studying and developing "scientific theories", they would soon know the truth which could set them free.

The life Christ possesses and offers to us is eternal. This includes not only quantity in eternal unmeasurable years, but quality of life. The new birth and the working of the Holy Spirit within the believer develops a whole new consciousness of spiritual realities. We begin to see the Lord. God speaks to us and we know His voice. Of course, the great majority of these revelations are inward. Audible words and visible manifestations are the exception rather than the rule, but nevertheless the communication of the Lord to His followers is very real. The unbelieving and unregenerate world knows nothing of this, and unquestionably thinks us mad or deluded when we speak of such things. Nevertheless, this is life eternal: to know God the Father and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. It is comforting to know that this glorious and rich life does not end with death. It is eternal both in quality and in quantity.

*When we've been there ten thousand years  
Bright, shining as the sun;  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we first begun.*

III Shew Us The Father: When Jesus told the disciples that now they knew the Father and had seen Him, Philip suggested, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us" (ch.14:8). He thought that if only they could see the Almighty God and Father that they would be satisfied. But Jesus wanted them to see the Father in Him. He was the express image of the Father. Let us be sure that we do not have different conceptions of Father and Son. The Father is often thought of as the ancient of days, the Almighty Creator, and all seeing judge and administrator of punishment, while Jesus the Son is perceived to be warmly human and full of compassion and kindness. Such differences are utterly false. Jesus is the absolute incarnation of the Father. God so loved the world that He gave. The love that we see and admire in Jesus was the reflection of the love of God. All the kind works of Jesus on earth were only

such things as Jesus saw His Father doing. Let us also consider the parallel that as Jesus was the perfect manifestation of the Father, even so we are to show forth the beauty and glory of Jesus in our lives. There must be many sincere seekers in this world who are crying, "Show us Jesus, the Lord, and it will satisfy us." The grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit can empower us to show forth the beauty and glory of our Lord despite our weaknesses and frailties. In this way the ministry of Jesus can continue through us and we can do the works of Jesus and the greater works of which He spoke (vs.12). It is our union with Him that gives power to our prayer requests. The promise to grant whatsoever we ask is to be understood in the context of union with Him and His will, and not by the mechanical adding of the phrase, "in Jesus' name" to our requests.

IV Manifested to Us and Not To the World: The promise of the Comforter or Advocate was given on the condition of obedience to the commandments of Jesus. Yes, Jesus was going to leave the disciples in a few hours but He would not leave them comfortless. He would come to them again, this time through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Jesus could not remain with them any longer in the flesh, but the Holy Spirit would remain with them forever. The unbelieving world cannot receive the Holy Spirit because they cannot see Him. But the believers would recognize the Holy Spirit as the very Spirit of Christ and He would dwell with them and be in them.

Peter had boasted that he loved the Lord so much that he would gladly die for Him. Jesus knew Peter better than Peter knew himself. But now Jesus explained how our love, as well as Peter's, should prove its sincerity. "If you love me, keep my commandments," Jesus explained (vs.15). "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him," he continued (vs.21). This loving obedience is preferable to untimely death. The foremost commandment in the Gospel of John is to believe on Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus urged His disciples to maintain that faith in the face of His death. In response to that steadfast obedient faith, He would manifest Himself to them. This magnificent promise is in effect for us today also. When we prove our love for Jesus by our obedience to His sayings, He inevitably manifests Himself to us.



Judas (not Iscariot of course) wanted to know how Jesus would manifest Himself to the disciples, and not to the world. Jesus explained that the Father and Son would come to abide inwardly with those who so loved and obeyed His Word. These verses (21 and 23) have been called the greatest in the Bible, and that claim is hard to dispute.

While Jesus Himself would not be present with His people, to speak His mighty Word to them, the Holy Spirit whom He was to send, would remind them of His Word and guide them. He gave the disciples the benediction of peace. Yes, they too, would have tribulation in the world even as He. But, thank God, He overcame the world. He ended as He began with the assuring words, "Let not your heart be troubled."

Finally, Jesus listed three important facts. First, He had foretold these things in detail so the disciples would believe when they realized that all had come to pass. Second, He assured them that Satan, the prince of this world, would find no way to defeat the great sacrifice for sin, or to hold Jesus in death. Finally, He deliberately went right into the face of crucifixion because of His love for the Father who had commanded this redemption.

The first Lord's Supper ended with these words, and they arose from the supper and proceeded to Gethsemane. The discourse which follows, in John 15, 16, & 17 was given either on the way to Gethsemane or somewhere in between. Let us claim the manifestation of His abiding life, and prove our love to Him by our loving obedience to all of His commandments.

## LESSON 15

## ABIDING IN THE VINE

Read: John 15

Memory Work: Review John 1:1-14

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Our union with the Lord Jesus is of supreme importance.*
2. *Vital union with Christ enables His disciples to continue His blessed work in this world.*
3. *Keeping the commandments of Jesus is vital to the abiding life.*
4. *We are to expect animosity from the people of the world, and yet be witnesses for Christ to them.*

I The True Vine: After the passover supper, and the first Lord's Supper, Jesus and His disciples went forth from the upper room toward Gethsemane. The moon, of course, would be full at Passover time, and as they went, they no doubt, could see the vineyards on the hillsides surrounding Jerusalem. The vine was the national emblem of Israel. On the main gate of Herod's temple a golden representation of the vine reminded all templegoers that Israel was God's own vine. The Psalmist sang, "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt" (Psalm 80:8). The ballad tells the story of Israel's inheritance of Canaan and subsequent punishing attacks by the enemies around them (Ps.80:8-19). This is all done in the figure of a vine. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea also use the figure of a vine to represent Israel. The complaint of God against Israel, His vine, was that they did not bring forth the desired fruit.

Shortly before the Last Supper and the discourse now under consideration, Jesus had illustrated, by a parable, the failure of Israel to bring forth fruit unto God. The parable of the vineyard was clearly an indictment of Israel (see Matt.21:33-43). It concluded with the final judgment of Israel as a nation, "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken

from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt.24:43). The nation to whom the kingdom is given is not a single political nation of this world, but the "nation" born in one day: the day of Pentecost. That nation is the true church of Christ made up of many believers from various nations and denominations. They are those who have been born again of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

So Jesus told His disciples that He was the true vine and that they were the branches. Israel had failed to bear fruit unto God. Despite Israel's failure, the purpose of God would not suffer. The life of God was in Christ and as the disciples abode in Him they would bring forth fruit unto God. This goes for us today, as well as for the disciples in that day! The life of God is communicated to us as we abide in Christ. That life, flowing through us produces the fruit God desires in each of us.

II Abide In Me: This chapter is often called "the abiding chapter". Nine times in the first ten verses of this chapter, the word abide occurs, giving us the keynote for this important teaching of Jesus. Our labor for the Master can only produce good fruit if we maintain that vital union with Christ which allows His life to flow through us. How to abide in Him, is therefore of vital importance to the follower of Christ. Two sides of the abiding life need to be understood and practiced. They are, fellowship and obedience. The Christian has the opportunity to live in constant communion and fellowship with his Lord. There must be times of personal seeking after the Lord. No servant of Christ can bring forth lasting good fruit without a personal devotional life. We can learn to practice the Presence of the Lord even while we are occupied with the activities of the day, but this is no substitute for that personal closet meeting with the Lord. We must love God's Word and meditate therein (vs.7). It is as we become saturated with the Word of God that His purposes and standards become clear to us. The Christian worker may receive help and edification from many devotional books and commentaries, but these must never take the place of the "One Book". Only the Bible is totally inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is the Word of God that does not return void. That cannot be said of man's words. If you would abide in Him, do not neglect personal prayer and meditation and the study of the Word of God.

"If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love,"

Jesus explicitly explained. Our obedience to His commandments is necessary to the abiding life. During the Last Supper, Jesus emphasized that "new commandment" which the disciples desperately needed: to love one another. One of the greatest failures of the church during the gospel age has been the fighting and disagreement among the believers. This is a great stumbling block to unbelievers. Let us beware that petty differences of doctrine do not produce disunity and unloving attitudes. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." But Jesus also gave other commandments to His disciples. Notably, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus commanded genuine humility as well as absolute purity and perfect honesty. There is no abiding life without obedience to these commandments and therefore no real fruit-bearing. Beyond the obedience to the recorded commandments of Jesus is the necessity to obey His leadings and guidance given to us personally in our times of devotion. The Lord often prompts us to witness to someone or to make a visit or a call. It is important that we promptly obey the leading of the Spirit if we are to abide in Him and bear fruit.

In summary let us consider what will cut off the abiding life for us. Neglect of personal earnest devotional prayer, Bible study, and the practice of the Presence of God, will cause the life of God to wither in us. Persistent or deliberate disobedience will also kill the abiding life. We cannot indulge the lusts of the flesh or go on a pleasure binge and expect to abide in Him and bring forth good fruit.

III Fruit Bearing: Fruit is mentioned eight times in the first sixteen verses of this chapter. We are to bear fruit, more fruit, and much fruit, and it must be fruit that remains (vss. 2, 5, & 16). Elsewhere, the Lord taught that only a good tree can bring forth good fruit. A corrupt tree will bear corrupt fruit (Matt.7:17-18). It is important that we fully understand what is meant by "fruit". First in importance in the definition of fruit, is fruit unto holiness to be borne in our own personal lives. Since we cannot bear good fruit unless we personally are wholesome plants, the priority belongs here. Paul lists the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. We cannot produce this by our own effort. It is the result of abiding in Christ. But though we cannot produce it of ourselves, this is not to say that we can do nothing about it. "If ye abide in me," Jesus promised, "ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done

unto you (vs.7). So we can pray for this fruit in our personal lives. The importance of this personal fruit unto holiness is clearly taught in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus warned that many who claim the right to enter the kingdom of God on the grounds that they have done many wonderful works in His name, will be thrust out because secretly they were workers of iniquity. Therefore, it is clear, that it is of the utmost importance that we bear the fruit of personal holiness. Let us put our foot down on everything in our lives that is the opposite of the fruit of the Spirit.

The second part of bearing fruit has to do with our ministry or service to others, both Christians and unbelievers. We are all commissioned to go into all the world and preach the gospel, and we are all to edify and encourage one another in the faith. Twice in this chapter the Lord links the fruit-bearing life with prayer (vss.7 & 16). We are to pray for the power of God to make us effective in our work for the Lord and in our battle against the evil one. In this way the ministry of Jesus is continued in us as it was in the disciples.

IV Ye Are Not Of The World: Jesus warned His disciples that their ministry would not be received without opposition and persecution. If the world was hostile to the Master, it could be expected that it would also resist His servants. Because we renounce the world and its materialism and pleasures, therefore the world hates us. May God help us always to remember that we are not of this world. Let our rejection of its priorities and social customs reprove the children of this world. And may we be ready always to witness for our Lord.

After Pentecost, the disciples experienced this teaching of Jesus, and we can learn from their experiences as to what to expect as we work for the Lord. When the lame man was healed in the name of Jesus, through the ministry of John and Peter, the anger of the scribes and Pharisees was aroused. They persecuted the disciples and threatened them. But the disciples chose to obey God rather than man. They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name and prayed for boldness. When they prayed the place was shaken and they were all filled anew with the Holy Spirit. Let us, too, pray for boldness and let us pray until we are shaken and filled with the Holy Spirit, that we may prove that we are chosen and ordained to go and bring forth fruit that will remain.

## LESSON 16

## THE COMFORTER PROMISED

Read: John 16 (daily)

Memory Work: Review John 1:1-14

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The true disciple of Christ can expect hostility from the children of this world.*
2. *Jesus promised that the coming of the Holy Spirit would advance the work of God, and be preferable to His ministry in the body.*
3. *The work of the Spirit, through the witness of the believers, convinces the world of sin, and righteousness, and judgment.*
4. *The work of the Holy Spirit guides the believers in the way of truth.*
5. *The true work of the Spirit always glorifies Christ and not Himself, or manifestations.*

I Prepared For Persecution: The teaching of Jesus continues on from the fifteenth chapter without any break. He had warned His disciples that the world would hate them even as it hated Him (ch.15:18-21). Now He specifically foretold that they would be excommunicated from the synagogues, and even be put to death. by those who thought they were serving God (ch.16:1-2). The reason for the unwarranted persecution was that the persecutors did not know God. Today, there are many who are occupied with work related to the Christian religion who do not know God. Work for God is no substitute for the knowledge of God. May our main occupation be to know God and Jesus Christ, His Son, by a clear revelation within.

The holy and separated lives of the followers of Jesus ought to be a pungent witness to the world today. Woe unto us if all men speak well of us. Old customs and habits are to pass away from those who are in Christ, and everything is to

become new. There is too little of this holy separation from the world today. Too many "Christians" clink their social drinks and dance to Satan's music, living just like the children of this world. No wonder the world does not hate them. Let us cut off the worldly pleasures and find our joys in serving the cause of Christ.

II It Is Expedient: Sorrow was gripping the hearts of the eleven as they realized that Jesus was about to die. They were loyal to Him. They even professed to be willing to die with Him. They, no doubt, had grave misgivings as to what the future would hold for them without Jesus present. Now Jesus told them that it was expedient or profitable for them, for Him to go away. He explained that only after He had gone from them could He send the Holy Spirit to them. No doubt, they would have preferred to keep Jesus in the flesh with them, for they could hardly understand how anything could be better than having Jesus Himself with them. While Jesus was present with the disciples in His body, He was limited to being in one place at a time. He could only speak to as many people as could hear His voice in that place. Comparatively few could benefit from His physical presence. But all that changed when Jesus ascended to the Father after His death and resurrection, and sent forth the Holy Spirit to reside among believers for ever. Now Jesus can minister and reveal Himself to people in many parts of the world simultaneously. He speaks by His Spirit and people hear His Word in many places far removed from each other. No wonder He said, "It is expedient for you that I go away." And not only is the ministry of Jesus multiplied by the agency of the Holy Spirit, but the witnesses are given supernatural power to accomplish that ministry. Disciples who were timid and unbelieving before, were made bold and powerful by the infilling of the Spirit. Truly, it was in the best interest of the church of Jesus Christ, for Him to go away physically and return by His Spirit to abide with us always.

III The Work of the Spirit in the World: Jesus had told the disciples that the Comforter would "testify of me" (ch.15:25), "and ye shall bear witness" (vs.27). The Lord depends upon human vessels to bear His message. The Lord needed the disciples then, and He needs witnesses today. Jesus outlined the work of the Comforter for the disciples. First, He described the

work of the Holy Spirit to the children of this world. Jesus' life and earthly ministry were almost over, and comparatively few had believed on Him. A great work remained to be done. If Jesus had such meager results from His ministry, what could be expected from His disciples? If left alone they would fail. But help from the mighty Holy Spirit was promised. Working with and through the disciples, He, the Comforter, would convince the world of sin and righteousness and judgment. The work of the Spirit often awakens the conscience. This is a good beginning. The awakened conscience convicts of sin committed and of righteousness unobtainable, and of judgment pending. But that is not the full work of the Spirit. By the reading of the Gospel or by the hearing of the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, the Holy Spirit works further than an awakened conscience. The Spirit then convinces the people of this world of sin forgiven, and of righteousness imputed, and of judgment accomplished. In short, the Holy Spirit working in concert with the Word of the Gospel, written or spoken, illuminates the atoning work of Calvary. The greatest sin of the world is that they do not believe in, and recognize Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of God. The fear of ultimate retribution haunts the conscious and subconscious spirits of mankind. Praise God for this marvellous work of the Spirit that convinces that faith in Christ brings forgiveness, imputes righteousness, and satisfies the judgment due us.

IV The Work of the Spirit in the Church: The powerful working of the Comforter was not to be limited to converting unbelievers, however. The Spirit was sent to guide the believers into all truth. The Spirit of God brought to the mind of the disciples the things which Jesus had spoken. This work of the Spirit is responsible for the Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. But the work of the Spirit was not confined to bringing to remembrance what had been said, but also in communicating new truth to the believers. The disciples were incapable of receiving all the teaching which they needed, Jesus said, "ye cannot bear them now" (vs.12). It was the office of the Spirit to teach them as the needs arose and as they were able to bear it. It was by the guidance of the Holy Spirit that the Epistles and Revelation were written, and by the Spirit that the books of the New Testament canon were chosen to complete the written word. But the Spirit is even today guiding the church of Christ into all truth. Such new truth, of course, is



never contrary to the written Word of the Holy Scriptures. The Spirit, also reveals things to come. The gift of prophecy is inspired by the Spirit. While that gift includes much more than foretelling future events, that, too is included. The early Christians were warned through the Spirit and so escaped the destruction of Jerusalem. He will still make known to us what we need to know.

V The Work of the Spirit Regarding Christ: Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, "He shall glorify me." Exalting Jesus and making Him very real is the true work of the Holy Spirit. There is at present an unfortunate emphasis on the phenomena of the manifestation of the Spirit among many Pentecostals and charismatic believers. The Holy Spirit does not promote the manifestations of His own working, but glorifies Jesus. To those who receive a true infilling of the Holy Spirit, Jesus always becomes more real and glorious.

VI A Little While: The disciples were greatly puzzled when Jesus told them that in a little while they would no longer see Him, and that after another little while they would see Him because He was going to the Father" (vs.16). They discussed this among themselves until Jesus explained it to them. He told them that soon they would weep and lament while the world would rejoice. Clearly, He spoke of His death by crucifixion. "But," He told them, "your sorrow shall be turned into joy." What a tremendous explanation. He did not say that their sorrow would be followed by joy, but turned into joy. Is that not exactly what the terrible suffering of the cross became? We glory in the cross. By the cross, the disciples received the benefits of the atonement, and so their sorrow was literally turned into joy.

Jesus used the appropriate picture of a mother suffering the pains of birth. The intense suffering is soon forgotten when a healthy child is born. Even so the dark suffering of the day of crucifixion would be swallowed up in the glorious dawning of the day of salvation. When Jesus spoke of the little while they would not see Him, He spoke perhaps of the three days and nights before His resurrection, but more likely of His ascension to the right hand of the Father. Then another little while and they would see Him again, but this time in a new and spiritual way, when He came to them again on Pentecost. So today, we see Him in the Spirit, high and lifted up, His glory filling all the heavens.

This wonderful work of the Spirit inspires a prayer relationship, in that we are made so one with Christ that we may ask anything in Jesus' name and know that the Father will grant it. When Jesus told the disciples that He came from the Father, and into the world, now to leave the world and return to the Father, the disciples said that now they understood Him perfectly, and believed in Him completely. Finally, Jesus warned them of impending tribulation, and promised them peace in Himself and through Him, ultimate triumph, for, He said, "I have overcome the world." So, as we are one with Him, we too, may have peace, and overcome the world.

NOTES:

## THE HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER

Read: John 17 (daily)

Memory Work: Review John 1:1-14

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Jesus prayed that He might glorify the Father through His death on the cross.*
2. *He also prayed to be exalted to the place of glory with the Father where He could intercede for humanity.*
3. *For the eleven apostles, Jesus prayed that they would be kept from the evil in the world, and in union with the Father and Son.*
4. *He prayed that the disciples would be filled with His joy and that they would be sanctified through God's truth.*
5. *For the church, or those who would become believers through the witness of the disciples, Jesus prayed that they might be one with the Father and Son, and be filled with the love of God.*

I The Hour Is Come: Somewhere along the way to Gethsemane, Jesus stopped with His disciples to lift His heart in prayer. He prayed first for Himself, then for the disciples, and finally for all who would believe in the ages to come. His prayer reaches out to embrace us today, and we may, and should, claim the answer to it fully. Several times in the Gospel of John we read of "the hour" in connection with Jesus' sacrificial death. "Mine hour is not yet come," He told His mother at the wedding in Cana. Several times we read that the Jews could not lay their hands on Him or take Him, because His hour was not yet come. Then, when the Greeks asked to see Jesus, He announced that His hour was come. Here, in this great climactic prayer Jesus, began by stating that "the hour is come." It was

the hour He had in view from the beginning. It was the hour of glory. He was to glorify God by His obedient sacrifice, and God was to glorify Him by accepting that sacrifice as the perfect atonement for sin, sealing His glory by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The glory of the cross was that it opened the door of salvation and eternal life to as many as would receive it.

Here, in this exalted prayer of Jesus, we have a revealing definition of life eternal: it is to know God in His reality and to know Jesus Christ whom He sent (vs.3). The revelation of His person to us constitutes true eternal life. To know facts about Him is not enough. To know all that He taught is not enough. We must know Him! He is anxious that we know Him, and through Him, the Father also. Life eternal does not only relate to the quantity of life, in endless ages, but in quality of life, with all of our spiritual potential awakened by the quickening touch of the resurrected Son of God. Our seeking ought to be more for Jesus, Himself, than for knowledge, or for blessing and gifts from the Saviour. To know Jesus in the power of His resurrection and in the fellowship of His suffering, is worth more than all other knowledge and blessings and gifts. We ought to desire the powerful manifestation of the Presence of Jesus in every meeting, for it is through that personal encounter with Jesus Himself that seekers receive life eternal and the new birth.

In the first five verses of this chapter, the Lord Jesus prays for Himself: first, to complete the redemption of the world through His vicarious sacrifice, and finally, to be restored to the glory which He shared with the Father before the creation and incarnation. When Jesus rose from the grave, and then ascended to the glory of the kingdom of God, He took His place on the throne at the right hand of God the Father. There, in all His glory, He sent forth the mighty Holy Spirit, and there He continually intercedes for us, that we might be saved to the uttermost (see Heb.7:25).

II For Them Which Thou Hast Given Me: In verses 6 through 19 Jesus prays for the eleven disciples. These men had been chosen by the election of God. As long as Jesus was with them He kept them in the way of faith. Only Judas was lost, and that was because it fulfilled the scriptural prophecies. The other eleven had been given the word which God had given to the Son to teach in this world. The disciples had heard those

words and had received them and kept them. Further, they had recognized that the words were from God, and indeed that Jesus Himself was sent from God. But now Jesus was about to leave them. Without Jesus present how could these disciples be kept in the way of God? The power of Jesus' prayer brought effective help to these weak disciples. "I pray not for the world," Jesus said to the Father, "but for them which thou hast given me" (vs.9). Yet, indirectly, that is the best prayer Jesus could pray for the people of the world: that the disciples would be kept and empowered to witness and finish the work given to them by the Lord. What did Jesus pray for His disciples? First of all He prayed that they should be kept in unity and harmony (vs.11). Thank God that there is an overseeing power to keep us. We could not keep ourselves any more than the disciples could keep themselves. They had often quarrelled with each other. Sometimes they were jealous of each other. Jesus had always kept things straight but now He would be absent. They needed His prayers. Jesus also prayed that they would be kept from the evil around them. Jesus' personal work in this world was just about finished, but there remained the tremendous work of the propagation of the Gospel and the overcoming and dispossession of the evil one from the earth. This task was to be begun by the disciples. Jesus therefore did not pray that they should be taken out of the evil world, but that they should be kept from the evil in the world. The tremendous task they began so well is carried on by the Lord's ministers and witnesses today. Let us claim the answer to this prayer: to be kept in spiritual unity and harmony with the Lord and our fellow workers, and to be kept from the evil which surrounds us in the world in which we are called to witness.

Jesus also prayed that the disciples might have His joy fulfilled in themselves. There is real and lasting joy in union with the Lord and in doing the work He has given us. There are many noble causes in this world to which people devote themselves, but they are earthly and temporal at best. Some devote their energies and talents to foolish and even to evil causes. But there is only one cause truly worthy of our total devotion. That cause is the manifestation of the glory of God in the earth and in the lives of men and women. Real, lasting, and fulfilling joy, comes from union with Christ in the purposes of Christ. If you lack fulfilling joy, dedicate your body, soul, and spirit to the cause of Christ and His kingdom. His joy endures even in the midst of tribulation.

Finally, Jesus prayed for the disciples that they would be sanctified through the word of truth (vs.17). This word, sanctified, means separated, or set apart. The disciples who were to do such a great work for God in this world had to be separated from its lusts and pleasures. To lift the world out of the mire of sensuality and materialism the disciples had to be more with God than with men. They were to be in the world, but not of the world. They could not indulge in all the pleasures of this world or live for the material possessions this world offers, and still hope to convince the children of this world to become strangers and pilgrims here, and to seek an eternal city to come. Surely the prayer of Jesus was abundantly answered in the lives and ministry of these eleven, for they gave themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word during their lifetimes, and then willingly laid down their lives for the cause of Christ. May we see the necessity of separation from the world as the requirement for union with the Lord in our work to lead souls to saving faith in Jesus. We cannot join the toasts of the world to happiness through materialism and pleasure. We cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils. Let us come out and be separate and touch not the unclean. By our separation from the evil in this world we convict it of its sin, and by that same separation, or sanctification, we make possible our union with the Father and Son, which brings the power to our witness and service.

III For Them Which Shall Believe: Jesus' marvellous prayer spans the ages. In verses 20 through 26 He prays for believers of all ages. We are definitely included, and His prayer for the believers of all ages was for unity. He prayed that we might be one with the Father and Son and that we might be one with each other. Our union with the Lord is of primary importance. Only as we are in vital union with Him can we know what He desires us personally to be and do for Him. And only in union with Him can we obtain the power necessary to accomplish the work He gives us to do. The unity among believers is a basic unity based upon the common salvation. But the divisions of Christianity are a source of shame, especially the many Protestant sections. The unity Jesus prayed for here is not to be found in an ecumenical church that will satisfy all shades of doctrine and spiritual temperaments. It is rather in a basic rebirth, and transcending manifestation of the life of Christ in true believers of many diverse Christian persuasions.

Jesus also prayed for the church that they might be with Him and behold His glory. While we have momentary visions of the glory of Jesus now, and enjoy the manifestations of His Presence, the glorious fulfillment of this prayer is drawing us on in faithful anticipation of His return. Finally, Jesus prayed that His love would fill us. That love makes obedience easy. Let us claim that love in all its fullness. A baptism of the love of God will make all our service for the Lord a joy. Every sacrifice will be a pleasure. May all this prayer, find an abundant answer in us.

NOTES:

LESSON 18

GETHSEMANE AND TRIAL

Read: John 18

Memory Work: Review John 1:1-14

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Jesus deliberately went to Gethsemane where He knew Judas could find Him.*
2. *As Peter's zeal to defend the Lord with the sword was misguided, so our zeal without knowledge may cause trouble. Nevertheless, the loyalty in the heart counts for much.*
3. *The natural heart, like Peter's, may vacillate between overzealous loyalty and cowardly repudiation.*
4. *No fair hearing was intended for Jesus. They only gave Him opportunity to incriminate Himself.*
5. *Pilate is revealed as a perceptive Governor, but without the courage to act against public pressure.*

I The Garden of Gethsemane: The crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus are the subjects of the ultimate sign recorded by John to prove the Divinity of Jesus Christ. Seven outstanding miracles have already been recorded as well as seven profound claims of Jesus, which lead to the inescapable conclusion that Jesus was and is indeed the Son of God. But the record of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection is the most climactic sign of all.

After the majestic prayer for the disciples (John 17), Jesus chose to go to the garden of Gethsemane. This was a place where Jesus often went. It was a place that Judas was familiar with. Jesus knew that the traitor could find Him there. He might have gone elsewhere and hid from Judas and the mob he led, but Jesus knew that His hour was come, and steadfastly



and determinedly proceeded to present Himself for the vicarious sacrifice. John does not record Jesus' prayer in the garden nor the disciples' sleepy indifference. The author of the fourth gospel emphasizes the deliberate submission of Jesus to the cruel and agonizing death on the cross.

When Jesus cleansed the temple at the very beginning of His ministry, the Jews demanded a sign from Him proving His authority to so act. Jesus, speaking of His own body said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (ch. 2:19). To Nicodemus, the Son of God revealed that, "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (John 3:14). He knew from the beginning, not only that He was to die to make atonement for humanity, but also how He was to die; lifted up upon a cross. Now that the hour had come, Jesus did not hide from His enemies. Judas led the combined forces of the chief priests, who were Saducees, and, the Pharisees, to the garden rendezvous. Saducees and Pharisees were for once united in their determination to get rid of Jesus. The majestic Son of God did not wait for Judas to find Him in the garden, but He went out to meet the betrayer and the band he led. Nothing was just happening. Jesus was totally aware of all that was to transpire, and He boldly confronted Judas and the crowd, and asked them whom they sought (ch.18:4). They answered that they sought Jesus of Nazareth. When He said, "I am he," they were startled and went backward and fell to the ground (vs.6). He repeated the question again and they again responded that they sought Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus again told them, "I am He," and continued, "if you seek me, let these go their way" (vs.8).

II Peter's Erratic Behaviour: But Peter was not ready to go his way. He had a sword, and taking it up he swung wildly and sliced off the ear of Malchus, a servant of the high priest. The Lord rebuked Peter and told him to put away the sword. "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" He reasoned. Even in this traumatic hour Jesus was full of love. His love for the Father was manifested in His taking willingly the cup which the Father had given Him to drink. His love and care for the disciples was evident when He presented Himself to the mob and requested that they let these disciples go their way. His love for his enemies, even in this terrible hour, was revealed when He healed the wounded Malchus and restored his ear. What perfect love! May we receive such

a baptism of His spirit that the same love will manifest itself in our lives and attitudes.

"Then the band and the captain and the officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him" (vs.12). What an unnecessary action. He offered Himself to them willingly. If He had chosen to resist them how useless those ropes would have been! But Jesus meekly, but majestically submitted to their actions. They led Jesus to Annas, the high priest and son-in-law to the real power of the Jews: Caiaphas. It was Caiaphas who had given the counsel that it was expedient that one man should die for the people (vs.14). Several of his sons had turns as high priest as well as Annas, his son-in-law. Peter followed the procession, as did one other unnamed disciple (undoubtedly John). The other disciple went right in to the palace of the high priest but Peter stopped at the door. The fellow disciple spoke to the girl at the door and got Peter inside. She asked Peter if he was one of Jesus' disciples. He denied it and said that he was not. There inside Peter warmed himself at the fire where the servants and officers of the high priest also were gathered. While Jesus was being interrogated, they asked Peter again if he was one of Jesus' disciples, and he denied it again and said, "I am not." When a relative of Malchus, whose ear Peter had cut off volunteered that he had seen Peter in the garden, Peter again denied any association with Jesus. John spares us the details of Peter's cursing and swearing. Immediately after Peter's third denial, the cock crowed and poor Peter who had been so sure of himself, was reminded of Jesus warning, that before the rooster would crow twice he would deny his Lord thrice. Are not our hearts and natures similar to Peter's? In the time of glory and blessing we are very sure of our loyalty and consecration, but in the face of persecution and difficulty, the natural heart wavers. Thank God for Pentecost. The infilling of the Spirit changed Peter. The baptism of the Holy Spirit bring us the power to be loyal and courageous.

III Trial Before the Jews: John does not record the formal charge against Jesus, which was blasphemy. He tells of their interrogation. Annas, the high priest asked Jesus of His disciples and of His doctrine. The Lord responded that He taught everything in public. He spoke to the people in the temple and in the synagogues. He assured them that He had taught nothing in secret. He told the high priest to ask those who heard Him

for they knew what He had said and taught. This infuriated the Jews and one of the officers smote Jesus and rebuked Him for speaking so to the high priest. But Jesus did not back down. "If I have spoken evil," he said, "bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?" (vs.23). Perhaps the wicked conspirators were convicted by the contrast of the open and public ministry of Jesus, while they had secretly met and conspired to get rid of Jesus. They had done things in secret going so far as to bribe Judas to betray Jesus.

Annas had sent Jesus to Caiaphas, still bound, but the interrogation of Jesus was not conducted to ascertain the truth of Jesus' guilt or innocence of the charges against Him. It was only conducted to attempt to trip Jesus into testifying against Himself. He was indicted and judged and sentenced in their hearts and minds before He was ever interrogated. Having officially decided upon His guilt, the Jews took Jesus next to the governor's palace.

IV Before Pilate: It was very early when the Jews came to Pilate with their prisoner. The governor probably had been advised of their appearance. At any rate, he seems to have been up and ready for them. The Jews did not want to enter his judgment hall because that would defile them ceremonially and prevent them from eating the passover. How they strained at the gnat, yet swallowed the camel in conspiring against Jesus! Pilate was contemptuous toward the Jews. "What accusation bring you against this man," he asked? They responded in kind, "If he were not a male-factor (evil doer) we would not bring him to thee." The other gospels reveal that the Jews changed the charge, which had been blasphemy before the Sanhedrin, to treason and conspiracy before Pilate. To compound their hypocrisy they asked freedom for Barabbas, who really was guilty of treason and conspiracy as well as murder (see Mark 15:7). Pilate suggested that they judge Jesus by their law. But they protested that they were not allowed to put anyone to death. All this was arranged by the providence of God, for had the Jews been allowed to execute capital punishment they would have stoned Jesus, and the scriptures indicated that He was to be lifted up in crucifixion. Now Pilate knew that the Jews had only brought Jesus to him to approve their sentence of execution. He had to speak to the Jews in the courtyard and then return to the judgment hall to interrogate Jesus. Jesus' appearance must have surprised Pilate for he

asked with apparent astonishment, "Art thou the king of the Jews?" Jesus then questioned Pilate, whether the question was his own sincere inquiry, or if it had come from the Jews. Pilate was angry and demanded to know what Jesus had done. The Lord told Pilate of His kingdom and assured him that it was not of this world. Jesus avowed that He indeed was a king, and had been born to bear witness of the truth. Pilate surely had had his fill of untruth and hypocrisy, and asked cynically, "What is truth?"

He went out to the courtyard again and gave his verdict to the Jews. "I find no fault in this man." Thereupon he should have released Jesus, but the poor, weak, political pawn attempted to appease the vocal insistence of the mob by offering them a choice of liberty for Jesus or Barabbas. The hypocritical Jews blatantly chose Barabbas, a murderer, guilty of the very crimes they unjustly charged Jesus with. Truly, the human heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

NOTES:

## SUFFERING, DEATH AND BURIAL

Read: John 19

Memory Work: John 1:1-14

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The tragedy of Pilate's life was that, although he pronounced Jesus not guilty, he capitulated to the vicious jealousy of the Jews and remained in unbelief concerning Jesus.*
2. *What seemed to happen spontaneously and naturally in regard to the betrayal, trial and crucifixion of Jesus, in reality was prompted by the overriding providence of God.*
3. *The death of Jesus was accomplished when He personally yielded up His spirit. "It is finished," was not the despairing cry of a defeated victim, but the triumphant shout of the victorious conqueror.*
4. *No doubt is left as to the complete physical death of Jesus.*
5. *The death of Jesus finally inspired an open act of faith by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, who had been secret believers at.*

I Pilate's Cowardice: The Roman governor had at least one opportunity to believe in the Lord Jesus. The things Jesus said to him opened the door of opportunity. All that Jesus said to Pilate was not intended to influence the governor to release Him, but rather to give him the opportunity to believe and receive eternal life. Pilate had pronounced the verdict that Jesus was not guilty. Despite this clear pronouncement, he did a vicious and totally illegal thing in ordering Jesus to be scourged. The soldiers of Pilate tortured Jesus and mocked Him. Then Pilate brought Jesus out to the courtyard where the Jews

waited. He was dressed in a mock purple robe and had a crown of thorns pressed on His brow. Pilate vainly appealed to their pity. "Behold the man," he cried. But the Jews responded only with the demand, "crucify, crucify." Pilate sarcastically suggested that they take Him and crucify Him. He knew, of course, that they could not do that. Once again Pilate announced that he found "no fault in him" (vs.6).

Then the Jews introduced a new charge against Jesus, "We have a law," they explained, "and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God" (vs.7). That frightened Pilate and he immediately took Jesus back into the judgment hall for further consultation. He demanded to know the origin of Jesus. The Lord, however, gave him no answer. Pilate insisted on a response and boasted of his power to release or crucify Jesus. On the natural level, that may have been true, though it seems his power to release Jesus was intimidated by the political pressures brought to bear upon him. On the spiritual level, however, Pilate had no power except to do what was ordained by the sovereign and almighty God. Jesus pointed out this fact to Pilate and concluded that the Jews who delivered Jesus to Pilate had greater guilt than the governor. The Redeemer knew that He was going to the cross. These proceedings gave one last opportunity to those concerned to put their faith in Jesus, the Son of God. Neither Pilate and his soldiers, nor the Jewish priests and Pharisees were taking Jesus' life from Him. No, He was laying it down by His own choice according to the commandment He had received of His Father (ch.10:17-18). He had the power to lay down His life and He had the power to take it up again. In the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, after He had cleansed the temple of the merchants, the priests had demanded a sign from Him to confirm His authority to so act. Jesus had said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (ch.2:19). They ridiculed His claim, of course, for they did not understand that He spoke of the temple of His body. Even at that early date Jesus knew and forecast the ultimate sign which would prove His Divine Sonship. Pilate and the vicious Jews were the natural instruments used to bring about that which was before determined by God the Father. Pilate's boast was empty.

The Jews told Pilate that if he let Jesus go, he would be unfaithful to Caesar, for Jesus claimed to be a king and rival. The governor brought Jesus out again and said "Behold your

king." They cried out, "Away with him, crucify him." When Pilate asked contemptuously if he should crucify their king, they responded with blatant hypocrisy, "We have no king but Caesar" (vs.15). Finally, Pilate capitulated. He yielded to all the pressure and despite his avowal that he found no fault in Jesus, he ordered Him to be crucified. In a sense Pilate had been on trial, and it was he that was found guilty of cowardice and illegal administration of punishment. That day, sentence was passed on Pilate. He had to live with the bitter memory of his cowardice for the rest of his days. Several different traditions exist concerning the subsequent life of the cowardly Roman governor. All agree in one respect, that his life was ended by suicide.

II What I Have Written: Jesus went forth bearing the cross. The majestic simplicity of the record suggests that Jesus, even in this dark hour, was in full control of the situation. He went forth without the city wall to Golgotha, the place of a skull, where they crucified Him. Two others were executed at the same time. Jesus was crucified between the two thieves indicating that He was the most notorious of the three. After yielding weakly to the pressure of the Jewish leaders, Pilate wrote the inscription of Jesus' crimes, to taunt those wicked hypocrites. "The King of the Jews," Pilate wrote, in three languages: Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. This was significant, for Jesus' death was not just a local matter. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. Hebrew was the language of the religious leaders of the Jews. Greek was the language of the culture of the empire. Latin was the language of the government. All who passed by could read the accusation. The Jews protested that Pilate should write that Jesus claimed to be the King of the Jews. Here Pilate remained firm. "What I have written, I have written," he insisted. It was but small consolation for those disciples who had loved and followed Jesus.

III The Scripture Fulfilled: The soldiers divided the clothing of the victims of the cross between themselves. Jesus' coat was one piece, without seam, and rather than tear it in pieces the Roman soldiers agreed to cast lots for it. This was exactly as foretold in the prophetic Psalm (see Psalm 22:18). From the cross Jesus arranged for John to care for His mother, who must have been a widow at this time. Jesus was aware that all things had been accomplished. He, who had offered the living

water to the woman at the well, and who had invited any and all to come to Him and drink, now cried out in physical suffering, "I thirst." This, too, was a fulfillment of the scripture (Psalm 69:21). They gave Him vinegar to drink. Finally, He cried out, "It is finished," and yielded up His Spirit.

The Jews wanted the bodies down and out of sight for their Passover holiday, so they requested the hastening of the deaths of all three victims. This was done by breaking their legs. When the brutal soldiers came to Jesus, they found Him already expired and therefore did not break His legs as they did the other two felons. This, John records, was to fulfill the scripture, "A bone of him shall not be broken" (vs.36). That scripture concerned the Passover lamb (Ex.12:46), which was the type of Jesus, our Passover, and the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Finally, a Roman soldier pierced the side of Jesus with his spear. When he did so, both blood and water (serum) spilled out. This was a conclusive proof that Jesus was indeed dead. John verifies that he himself witnessed this and emphasizes the truth and reality of Jesus' death that his readers should believe this last and ultimate sign that Jesus is the Son of God. Even this act of the Roman soldier fulfilled the scripture from Zechariah 12:10: "They shall look on him whom they pierced" (vss.34-37).

That word of Jesus, "It is finished," was spoken with a loud voice. It was not the last gasp of an expiring victim, but the triumphant shout of a victorious conqueror. The scripture had been fulfilled. Atonement had been made. The redemption of humanity was accomplished. Satan had been met and defeated. IT IS FINISHED! Lo, He is the mighty conqueror, even in death. He did not expire directly from the brutal crucifixion. He died when He willed to yield up His spirit to the hands of the Father. Then, the Son of man, who in this world had no place to lay His head, at last bowed that sacred head to rest in death on the cruel cross.

IV The Precious Body: Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea, both members of the Jewish Sanhedrin,, and previously somewhat timid and secret believers, now came forward and boldly requested the body of Jesus. Joseph was rich and had a new sepulchre in his garden, no doubt for his own use, but now consecrated for the burial of the Lord. So Jesus died with the wicked and was buried with the rich in His death as prophesied by Isaiah (ch.53:9). Nicodemus brought an abundant supply of myrrh and



aloes, the spices used for burial and together he and Joseph prepared the body for burial with tender and loving hands. No shadow of any doubt can remain as to the actual and complete physical death of Jesus. John carefully documents all of the proofs to the intent that we might believe on Jesus the Son of God who rose again on the third day. He truly laid down His life of His own will and choice, for our redemption, and then He took it up again on the third day. Praise God for redemption. It is finished! He is the mighty conqueror even of death and the grave.

NOTES:

## LESSON 20

## THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Read: John 20

Memory Work: Review John 1:1-14

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The evidence of the empty tomb, and the grave clothes within, and the stone rolled away, convinced the author of the physical resurrection of Jesus.*
2. *The transformation of Mary from a grieving worshipper into a joyous herald, is convincing proof of the resurrection.*
3. *The physical appearances of Jesus totally convinced the disciples, including the reluctant Thomas.*
4. *The glorious death and resurrection of Jesus, taken with the seven miraculous signs chosen and recorded by John, should lead every objective reader to the conclusion that Jesus is indeed the Son of God and worthy of our complete trust.*

I The Empty Tomb: John does not give us a complete history of the resurrection of Jesus. He chooses certain incidents and individuals which fit into his theme. We learn of Mary Magdalene, of Peter, of John, of the disciples, and of Thomas. The first thirteen verses of chapter 20 describe the events at the empty tomb on that first Easter morning. Mary Magdalene came very early. She did not think of the obstacle of the stone, but when she got to the tomb she saw in the early morning darkness that the stone was rolled away. She ran back to the city and found Peter and John and told them that the Lord had been taken away out of the sepulchre. The two disciples were obviously surprised and ran to the grave as fast as they could. John was the quicker and probably the younger of the two and arrived first. He stooped down and looked into the

tomb. He saw the linen wrappings apparently undisturbed and so did not go in. He probably thought that the body was still enclosed by the grave clothes. The tomb was dark and the body was interred with the feet nearest the door. Seeing the white linen wrapped about what appeared to be Jesus' feet he probably assumed the body was still there. But Peter came thundering up to the sepulchre and brushing past the beloved disciple, boldly entered right in. Peter also saw the linen wrappings like a cocoon lying there, but he discovered that the napkin which had been wrapped about Jesus' head was in a place by itself, some distance from the other wrappings. It still held the contours of the sacred head of Jesus but it and the body wrappings were empty. John also went into the tomb and he observed the evidence and immediately came to the inescapable conclusion that Jesus had risen from the dead. They did not at that point understand the scriptures foretelling the resurrection. They were convinced by the evidence of the rolled stone and the undisturbed grave clothes wrapped about nothing.

John tells us that they returned to their own home. That is interesting, for Jesus had committed His mother, Mary, to the care of John and she stayed in the house of John from that day on. After Peter's miserable failure and denial of Jesus, he wept and repented but did not have the opportunity to apologize to Jesus personally. We can well imagine the remorse of Peter as he went over his cowardly behavior again and again in his mind. John did not let Peter sink into the depths of despair. He must have found him and insisted on his coming home with him. The two walked and worked together for their Lord in the days which followed.

Meanwhile, Mary Magdalene stayed at the tomb. She stood there sobbing. As she cried she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre. There she saw two angels in white sitting where the head and feet of Jesus had been. They asked her why she wept so. She explained that "someone" had taken away the body of her Lord and she did not know where they had laid Him.

II The Risen Lord: Mary turned away from the tomb and discovered someone standing behind her. "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" he asked. She supposed him to be the caretaker of the garden and volunteered, "If thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away" (John 20:15). In tender and revealing tones He spoke

her name, "Mary!" It was the tone of voice and the tenderness that she instantly recognized, "Rabboni" she cried as she turned to embrace Him. "Touch me not," Jesus said, for I am not yet ascended to my Father, but go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (vs.17). So Mary had the great honor to be the first to see the risen Lord. Truly, she loved much and that love brought the manifestation of the resurrected Christ to her. The distinction of being the first to see the Lord after He rose from the dead went to one out of whom Jesus had cast seven demons. Mary did as Jesus had instructed her. With great joy she found the disciples and told them that she had seen the Lord, and related the message He had given her for them.

III At Evening: John does not record the activities of the Lord that afternoon, but we know from the other gospel authors that Jesus appeared to the other women, and to Peter, and to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. When those two finally recognized Jesus they ran back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples that they had seen the Lord. While they were gathered in that room behind locked doors, suddenly Jesus appeared in the room. He obviously had a glorified body for He did not use the door. The disciples were terrified at first, but He said unto them "Peace be unto you." The last thing He had said in the upper room at the last supper was, "Peace I give unto you." The three or four days since that precious time seemed like an eternity of anything but peace. All the way along Jesus had moved in the great peace of God. The disciples, however, were full of anxiety. Doubts had flooded in on them and they were torn and shattered until Jesus appeared. He brought back the peace to them. He showed them His hands and His side. Oh how glad the disciples were to see the Lord again. John omits the proof of the real substantial body of the Lord given by allowing the disciples to touch Him. Jesus also ate with them and noted that spirits do not have flesh and bones and do not eat. All doubts were removed except for those of Thomas, for he was not present. Once more Jesus gave them the benediction of peace (vs.21) and then commissioned them to go forth, even as the Father had sent Him forth into the world. Then He breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." The word was given. Just as God had said in the beginning, "Let there be light, and there was light," so now

Jesus said "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." The manifestation was not instantaneous but not many days hence they did in fact receive the infilling of the Holy Ghost. To the disciples the Lord gave authority to pronounce the forgiveness of sins to the truly repentant and the authority to retain the sins of such as would not confess and repent of their evil. Every Spirit-filled minister of the gospel has that same authority today. That authority, however, is dependent on the actions and attitudes of the individual dealt with. Such authority cannot be exercised at the whim of the vessel.

IV After Eight Days: Thomas had volunteered when Jesus returned to Judea to raise Lazarus from the dead. "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (John 11:16). Peter also professed to be ready to die for the Lord. At the crucial hour, when the shepherd was smitten, the sheep were scattered. Thomas was not to be found. Peter followed afar off and denied the Lord. Thomas was no doubt ashamed, and delayed rejoining his colleagues for some time. The other disciples brought him the glad tidings that they had seen the Lord. Thomas refused to believe it. "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe" (vs.25). On the first day of the next week the disciples were again gathered together and this time Thomas was present. Jesus appeared again, probably especially for the benefit of Thomas. The Lord again greeted them with "Peace be unto you." Then he called on Thomas to reach out his finger to the nailprints and his hand to the pierced side. He upbraided Thomas for his unbelief and called on him to "be not faithless but believing" (vs.27). Thomas was convinced. Whether he actually put his finger into the nailprints and his hand into the pierced side is immaterial. He cried out, "My Lord, and my God" (vs.28). Here we reach the ultimate of John's thesis. Jesus is the Son of God. Even the doubting Thomas; who had seen the seven signs which John has recorded, as well as the many others not recorded in this book; was finally convinced by the death and resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Jesus spoke to Thomas and said, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen and yet believed" (vs.29). Of whom was Jesus speaking here? All present at the time had seen the evidence. Perhaps he was looking into the ages to come and seeing the multitudes

who would believe in Him and in His resurrection from the dead. Let our faith find expression in our worship of Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

NOTES:

## FEED MY SHEEP

Read: John 21

Memory Work: And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. John 20:30-31

What we should learn from this Lesson

- 1. The Lord is anxious to manifest Himself to His people.*
- 2. The Lord is interested in the everyday chores of our lives.*
- 3. Our service for the Lord should be motivated by deep and sincere love for Him.*
- 4. Each of us must fulfill our own call and not worry about the call of other workers.*

I These Are Written: The last chapter of John (21) and the last verses of the previous chapter (vss.30-31) are an appendix to the Gospel of John. The author has followed a very definite pattern in presenting proofs of the Divinity of Jesus Christ. The last two verses of the twentieth chapter reveal the method of John's selective narrative. He has chosen seven signs which Jesus performed in the presence of His disciples. He has chosen these seven from among many others because they manifest the glory of Jesus and lead the objective reader to the inescapable conclusion that Jesus is indeed the Son of God. It is through faith in Him that we receive eternal life. Added to the seven great miracles of the book of John are seven strong declarations of the Lord Jesus concerning Himself. They are known as the "I Am's". The Gospel also contains seven witnesses who testify that Jesus is the Son of God. The body of this beautifully inspired treatise ends with the 29th verse of the twentieth chapter. Then follow the two verses explaining the selective nature

of the narrative, and then the twenty-first chapter which illustrates the involvement of our Lord in the natural and spiritual affairs of our individual lives.

II Gone Fishing: On the way to Gethsemane Jesus had told the disciples that after He was risen He would go before them into Galilee (Matt.26:32). The angels at the tomb reminded the women that Jesus had said this (Mark 16:7). Twice Jesus had manifested Himself to the disciples as they were gathered together on the first day of the week. First on the Resurrection Sunday evening, and then exactly one week later when Thomas was present (John 20:26). There were also several manifestations of the risen Lord to individuals in between. The disciples must have become somewhat restless, and remembering that Jesus had told them that He would go before them to Galilee, they went there. It was home to many of them and at least four of them were fishermen. Without Jesus physically present to direct their activities or to give them the instruction they needed, the disciples were at a loss to know what to do. Peter finally volunteered, "I go a fishing." The others agreed to go fishing also. Of course, fishing is an honest and noble profession, but Jesus had told Peter and his fishing partners, some time before, that from thenceforth they should "catch men" instead of fish. So this was an excursion into backsliding for these disciples. But Jesus did not reprimand them at all for their weakness. In fact, after they had fished all night and caught nothing, He appeared on the shore and called to them asking if they had caught anything. They may have thought for a moment that He was a prospective buyer from the town, but when He said, after their negative response, "Cast your net on the right side of the ship and ye shall find," (ch.21:6) John immediately perceived that it was the Lord. Peter, at once put his garment on and jumped into the water to come to Jesus. The old enthusiasm was still there, despite Peter's recent failure. The ship was only a little way from land. The net had, of course, been cast on the right side of the ship, and it enclosed a great number of fish. Peter left the other disciples to take care of the fish while he rushed to Jesus' side. When the boat came to the shore Peter helped bring the net in and when the big fish were counted they found they had 153. Miraculously, the net had not broken. The disciples found that Jesus had kindled a charcoal fire and already had fish and bread ready for them. He asked them to bring some of the fresh fish they had



just caught and He fixed those also. So they had a fish and chips cookout with the resurrected Lord as chef and waiter. This was the third time that Jesus had manifested Himself to His disciples since His death and resurrection (vs.14).

The Lord is anxious to manifest Himself to us also in our common everyday surroundings. His first two appearances were on the occasions when the disciples were gathered together for fellowship, but this third time He manifested Himself to them in the midst of their secular activity. For us also the manifestation of the glory and presence of our Lord need not be confined to our religious gatherings. He is ready and anxious to manifest His Presence and glory on a daily and continuing basis.

III Feed My Sheep: After they had enjoyed that unique breakfast, Jesus spoke to Peter. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" he asked. Peter, before the crucifixion had assured the Lord that even if all the others were offended in Him, yet he would be faithful. Despite Jesus' warning, Peter had miserably failed, denying the Lord three times. Now the Lord gave Peter three opportunities to confess his love for the Savior. Peter answered, "Yea Lord, thou knowest that I love thee" (vs.15). But the word that Peter used for "love" was closer to "like" or to "feel affection for". Nevertheless, Jesus responded, "Feed my lambs." But then Jesus repeated the question and Peter answered as before, "Yea, Lord: thou knowest that I like thee." This time Jesus told Peter to "care for" His sheep. The verb which Jesus used this time means more than feed. It includes all that a shepherd does for his sheep including protection and direction and discipline. When Jesus asked the question the third time, He used Peter's word for love: "Simon, son of Jonas do you like me?" This grieved Peter and He responded, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I like thee." Perhaps Peter feared to profess His love for Jesus again lest he fall into the same sin of denial again. He had certainly learned a lesson, not to boast of his love and loyalty. For the third time Jesus charged Peter to feed His sheep. The fishing excursion was over. There were more important things for Peter to do. If we "go fishing" when Jesus has called us to catch men or feed His sheep, we will catch nothing.

Our motives for witnessing or for preaching and for all of our Christian endeavors must be, real love for Jesus. Love for Him will make us patient and persistent in that labor. When trials and persecutions arise, love for Jesus will enable us

to overcome these difficulties. Let us contemplate His love for us, the love that inspired Him to lay down His life for us, and let us pray for "More love to Thee, O Christ."

IV Follow Me: The Lord had foretold and forewarned Peter concerning his denial. Now He foretold of his faithfulness unto death. He reminded Peter of his impetuous nature as a young man, but foretold of Peter's submission in his aged years, even to death on a cross. Historians of the first century verify that Peter was indeed faithful, and rejoiced in his martyrdom, requesting to be crucified head down, since he felt unworthy to die exactly like the Lord. Finally, Jesus instructed Peter to follow Him. In the final analysis this is all we have to do to please the Lord and to fulfill our calling. Let us be sure that we follow Him. We must follow His teaching, and His example, and we must follow the leading of His Spirit.

V What Is That to Thee: Peter, having received the prediction concerning himself, suddenly became interested in Jesus' plans for John. "And what shall this man do?" he asked. Jesus responded, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me." Jesus as much as told Peter to mind his own business. He had enough to worry about in himself. But this comment about John received wide circulation. The rumor spread far and wide that John would not die, but would be still alive when Jesus returned in His glory. When John outlived all the other disciples, and survived an attempt at execution by the Romans, this misconception seemed to have some credibility. John was very careful to note what Jesus really did say to Peter. The beloved disciple ends his writings in the Gospel with a strong affirmation that all that he has written is true. Truly, the life of every believer is richer because of the things John has testified concerning Jesus, the Son of God.

## WHAT A YOUNG CHRISTIAN SHOULD KNOW - I

Read: I John 1, 2, & 3

Memory Work: Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him. I John 2:15

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Every believer should know what precious possessions and privileges are his in Christ.*
2. *The believer must also know what responsibilities he has as a child of the King.*
3. *The Christian must work in faith with God to bring his life into harmony with the commandments of Jesus; and to the place where all that is done, or said, or thought, is pleasing to the Lord.*

I That Ye May Know: Having concluded our Sunday lessons from the Gospel of John, we continue for the next several weeks to study the other New Testament writings of John. The First Epistle of John is written for all believers. It is often called a general epistle, for it is not addressed to a specific assembly or to an individual. In his inspired Gospel, John recorded the purpose of the book near the end. "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name," John explained (John 20:31). In this Epistle the author explains the purpose of his letter again near the end of the treatise: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (ch. 5:13). As long as people are unsure that they really have obtained eternal life, the enemy has succeeded in blinding and impoverishing them. Seekers after God who have never come into the clear assurance of their salvation ought to read and study this book.

Reuben Archer Torrey, the great evangelist and Bible teacher, often directed new converts to the first epistle of John. It lays the foundation for what every Christian should know. The key word in the book is know. Over and over John assures his reader, "we know." It is worth while to mark this word in the text and also to write in a notebook just what we know, or should know. But the precious knowledge which the Lord desires His people to possess is not confined to the usage of this key word. In this and the next lesson we will note some of the prominent and important things we, as believers, should know. We must omit some because of space and time limitations, but you may develop your own exhaustive list of things every believer should know.

II Fellowship and Sin: The disciples knew Jesus naturally "after the flesh," but He taught them the way of spiritual fellowship with the Father. When the Spirit filled them on the day of Pentecost, they came into a life of fellowship with the Father and Son, by the Spirit, that was even more wonderful than the earthly fellowship they had enjoyed with Jesus while He walked and talked with them in His earthly body. The precious privilege of fellowship with the Father and with the Son belongs to every believer. Each must claim this rich gift for himself (ch.1:3). It is also provided that every believer should have joy "filled full" (literal Greek). Things and pleasures may produce some joy, at least for a while, but only the Christian life can fill our joy to the full.

Two important truths regarding sin are expounded in the first chapter. First, it is emphasized that all have sinned. If we say we have not sinned, we delude ourselves, and make God into a liar, for He has clearly declared that there is none righteous. Paul, also taught this foundation truth to the Roman Christians (see Romans 3:9-19). The Jews who had the commandments of God and disobeyed them, were guilty before God. The Gentiles, although they did not have the law of God, were nonetheless reckoned guilty before God. As a result of the fall, the very nature of every person born into this world is sinful. All are concluded under sin. The second fact regarding sin is that the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin. Instead of denying our sin, rationalizing away the guilt, or excusing our weakness, we are to confess (vs.9) our sins, and trust the blood of Jesus to cleanse us, not only from our sin, but even from all unrighteousness. We need not confess our sins to man,

except where our sin may have involved someone else, but we should be specific and confess them clearly and fully to the Lord, and in so doing be delivered from the guilt which sin produces. The regenerated believer is to set a high standard. He is to aim for a sinless life. Certainly a true believer does not deliberately sin. Yet, if a Christian does sin, he has an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous One (ch.2:1). The word propitiation means, "a means of appeasing", and this is exactly what Jesus did for us when He took our sins upon Himself and went to the cross for us.

III Knowing Him and Keeping His Commandments: This is the test of whether we have really come to know the Lord as our Savior and King: if we keep His commandments. The love of God is perfected in those who keep His word (ch.2:5). "Knowing Him," as it is used here is the equivalent of entering into the reality of an abiding life. The life of Jesus within us enables us to keep the commandments, and displaces our natural selfishness with a genuine love and generosity for others. No hatred can be tolerated in our hearts if we would be real Christians. We are to learn to forgive even the most outrageous offences against us. Jesus is our example. He prayed for forgiveness for those who nailed Him to the cross. If we hold a grudge or seek revenge for some wrong, we lose the light of real fellowship with God, and come into the darkness of Satan. Every Christian should know that he has forgiven every wrong ever done to him, and that he has a genuine generous love for the fellow Christians around him. Is there anyone whom you have not forgiven from the heart for a wrong committed against you? Often these roots of bitterness spring up between relatives or against a boss, landlord or neighbor. Forgive and forget! Love and give! Walk in the light!

IV Love Not the World: Every Christian should know that he does not love the world. James says that whoever desires to be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. What a terrible result. God deliver us from being a friend of the world or of loving it in any way, shape or form. John lists three categories of the love of the world: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. The Christian must crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, the material things of this world which look so attractive that they arouse covetousness in our hearts, soon grow old and decay. "They are all things of

clay, which last for but one brief day". Let us set our affection on things above. The praise of God is worth more than all the honors this world can heap upon us. Let the world give its rewards to its own, but let us seek the reward from God for faithfulness to Him and His Kingdom. Every Christian ought to get through with love of worldly pleasures and entertainments, and live to please Jesus.

In place of the things of this world the Lord would bestow on His followers the anointing of the Holy Spirit (ch.2:20). That unction teaches us more than much of the formal education we get in the world. Our place of fellowship with the Father and Son is more to be desired than any fellowship in this world. And that heavenly fellowship is eternal. We have all of eternity before us, to love and serve our Lord and to enjoy fellowship with the King!

V Now Are We the Sons of God: About twenty-five times the word know, in its various forms, occurs in the second and third chapters alone. We can only consider a few of the great truths which every Christian should know. You must dig out and meditate on the others for yourself. The Spirit inspired John to declare to every believer that even now he or she is indeed a son or a daughter of God. We see the imperfections in ourselves as well as in others, but we must remember that God is not through with any of us yet. When Jesus is manifested we shall be like Him. We are to work with God at purifying ourselves (ch.3:1-3). This is a lifetime job. The inspired record here reminds us that sin is of the devil, and we dare not tolerate any sin in our hearts. The standard is set very high. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin" (vs.9), is the inspired word of God, and we dare not dilute the force of this statement. The power of regeneration, the power of the blood of Jesus, and the power of the Spirit, are enough equipment to enable us to overcome every temptation. Yet, if and when we do sin we must not allow the enemy to bring us to despair. We then by faith, use our advocate, and confess, apply the blood, and go right on the high road of holiness.

Every believer has the right to know that he has passed from death unto life. If the slightest doubt remains we ought to deal with God and call upon the Lord until we know that we are indeed passed from death unto life (vs.14).

Every believer should have confidence in prayer. The Lord has provided the means of overcoming condemnation. The right-

eousness which is ours by faith gives us a holy boldness to come before God with our every need and desire. This boldness is developed by our obedience to His commandments and by our doing those things which are pleasing in His sight. Every Christian believer ought to govern his activities by this rule. So many questions are automatically answered simply by doing only what is pleasing in His sight (vs.22). Finally, every believer can experience the wonderful abiding life through the operation of the Holy Spirit which He gives to every believer who claims this portion. It is there for you. Don't lose this priceless gift by default. Claim your infilling and baptism now!

NOTES:

## LESSON 23

## WHAT A YOUNG CHRISTIAN SHOULD KNOW - II

Read: I John 4 & 5

Memory Work: These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. I John 5:13

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *How to discern the true work and ministry of the Holy Spirit from that of false prophets and evil spirits.*
2. *The test of the real work of God in our lives is to be recognized in a change from self-centered activities to genuine care for the welfare of others.*
3. *We prove our love for God by keeping His commandments.*
4. *Every believer has the right to the absolute full assurance of his salvation.*

I Recognizing Truth and Error: We are living in a time when there is greater recognition of the work of spirits than ever before. There is out and out Satan worship increasing around us. Transcendental Meditation has found hordes of ready participants. This deception is based on spiritual powers. Communication with the dead, seances, wisdom through the ouija board and other wierd manifestations, are becoming more and more popular. Not many who read this lesson guide are apt to fall into these demonic deceptions. But there are more subtle forms of spiritual deception. When some truth is mixed with Satan's lies, unwary believers in Christ are liable to be deceived. John warns us to test the manifestations of the Spirit. The true and pure work of the Spirit is always aimed at making Jesus real. False prophets will attract to themselves. The true ministry of the Spirit will not be manifested in raising money or inflating the reputation of a leader. There are many cults today who



profess to be filled with, and led by the Holy Spirit, and yet the fruit of their work is self glorification and uncleanness. The true work of the Holy Spirit is to convict people of unholiness, and to produce godliness. Don't be deceived by sensationalism. It is good, wholesome, everyday obedience to the teaching of Jesus, that the ministry of the Spirit will produce. Of course, any religious teaching that does not declare that Jesus Christ came in the flesh through the virgin birth is patently anti-Christian. Jehovah's Witnesses, the Moromon "Latter Day Saints", and Christian Science all fall into this category. The incarnation and the physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead, are absolutely basic to the Christian doctrine. On these two pillars the entire structure of Christianity rises or falls. The spirit of God gives us discernment, that we need not fall into the trap of error.

II Beloved, Let us Love: The natural man wastes his capability to love almost entirely on himself. The love of God is exactly the opposite. He loves even those who are hostile toward Him. God seeks to enrich and elevate the life of every human being in this world. The regenerated believer is to develop, by the work of the Spirit, a God-like love for all around him. We sometimes hear of "love triangles" which result in murder. A man says he loves a woman, but she loves someone else. So the unrequited lover shoots the woman. Did he love her? Of course not. He loved himself. He lusted after her for his own desires. That is not love. Real love is not a desire to get others for ourselves; but a genuine concern and delight in the welfare of others. Love is Divine.

But how are we to experience such a radical change in our inner nature? First by the new birth. When we are born again we have the potential to be like our Father in heaven. Then we are to contemplate His love for us. We love because He first loved us (ch.4:19). A teen-aged girl approached a famous evangelist after his sermon on loving God and keeping his commandments. "But I don't feel any love for God," the girl who had grown up in a Christian environment, protested. "Young lady," the preacher advised, "go home today telling yourself all the way, God loves me. All week long think of how much God loves you and how He has proved that love to you." The next Sunday the young woman came early to the service. She was all aglow. She couldn't wait till after the service, but sought out the preacher in his study and proclaimed how the love of God had

filled her heart that week so that she was willing not only to keep His commandments, but to do anything that would please Him. That is the way real love comes to us: by contemplating God's love for us. Then too, the God-like love we so lack naturally, becomes our portion when we are filled with the Holy Spirit. John Sherrill, the well known Christian editor and author testified that when he received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, he felt as if he had been immersed in love. He came away from that new experience dripping with the pure love of God for all around him. We ought to pray for Christ-like love. Study I Corinthians 13. Do not tolerate anything in your life that is contrary to the description of love given there. Take every shortcoming and failure to Jesus. Insist that those lacks shall be displaced by that all-sufficiency of Christ.

"God is love" (vss:8 & 16). This implies that if we have real love, we have God. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (vs.16). What a dwelling place! That love gives us boldness and casts out fear. When you know that someone really loves you, and you really love them, you are not afraid to share everything with them. This love-relationship with God does that for us. Fear is cast out. Confidence displaces fear. We have boldness in our relationship with God. John gives us a test for the reality of our love for God. He warns us not to be deceived into believing that we love God if we do not love those around us. "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (vs.20). Jesus said it also: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another" (John 13:35).

III Overcoming The World: The education of a believer in Christ is incomplete if he does not know that he is to overcome the world. Of course, this is a personal, spiritual overcoming. John previously explained that the believer was not to love the world (see ch.2:15-17). Here he goes a step further to admonish us to overcome the claims and the power of the world in our personal lives. It is not communism or capitalism or nationalism that we are to overcome, but the inward desire to be a part of this world. The natural man desires to own a piece of the rock (world). The believer is a pilgrim. His property and heritage are in heaven. The world devises fleshly pleasures and the believer must repudiate them and find his pleasure in things above: things of the Spirit. Help is offered to us to enable us

to overcome. "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (ch.5:4). Let us not get too comfortable in this world which crucified our Lord. Keep the pilgrim attitude with the eternal heavenly country in view.

IV That Ye May Know: At least 40 times in these five short chapters, the word know, in its various forms, has occurred. One more major thing every believer has a right to know. We are passed from death unto life. Maybe, or hope so, or even think so, are not good enough. We must know! Eternal life is too good to wait until the grave to enjoy. It can start now. It has to do not only with quantity (in years), but with quality. This quality comes to us through union with Christ. Just as Father, Son, and Spirit, bear witness in heaven so our body, soul and spirit are to bear witness to our regeneration. The Spirit of God bears witness with our Spirit that we are the children of God. You must know it. If you are saved, you will know it. If you are married you know it, you do not "think so," or "hope so." To every believer the right to know is promised. If you are not sure, call upon the Lord; express your trust in Him. His word is sure. Salvation does not depend upon our feelings, but upon His word. Thank Him for salvation until the Spirit bears witness within you that you are His! The Lord came so that His followers should receive a heavenly understanding. This is of more value than all the earthly knowledge in this world, and it is by this heavenly understanding that we come to know that we are passed from death unto life.

#### OUTLINE STUDIES ON I JOHN

##### Chapter I - Seven Privileges and Possessions of the Believer

- 1.The believer has the privilege of certain knowledge (vss.1&2)
- 2.The privilege of glorious fellowship (vss.3,6,&7)
- 3.The possession of fullness of joy (vs.4)
- 4.The possession of a wonderful message (vs.5)
- 5.The privilege and possession of a Holy walk (vs.7)
- 6.The privilege and possession of cleansing from all sin (vs.7)
- 7.The privilege and possession of cleansing from all unrighteousness (vs.9)

## Chapter II - Seven Comforting Views of Jesus

1. Jesus as our Advocate with the Father (vs.1)
2. Jesus as a propitiation for our sins (vs.2)
3. Jesus as our abiding place, or our life (vs.6)
4. Jesus as our anointer (vs.20)
5. Jesus as the Christ and Son of God (vss.22,23)
6. Jesus as the great Promiser (vs.25)
7. Jesus as the coming One (vs.28)

## Chapter III - Seven Great Facts About Believers

1. We are NOW children of God (vs.1)
2. We shall be like Him at His coming (vs.2)
3. We do not deliberately sin (vss.5,6,9,&10)
4. We know that we are passed from death unto life (vs.14)
5. We have boldness before God (vss.20,21)
6. We have success in prayer (vs.22)
7. We have the witness of the Holy Spirit within (vs.24)

## Chapter IV - Seven Great Lessons About Love

1. Love is of God (vs.7)
2. God is love (vss.8&16)
3. Jesus Christ is the supreme manifestation of the love of God.  
(vs.9)
4. If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another (vs.11)
5. He that loves others dwells in God and God in him. (vss.12-16)
6. There is no fear in love (vs.18)
7. We love because He first loved us (vs.19)

## Chapter V - The Seven-Fold Glory of the Believer

1. The believer's noble parentage (vs.1)
2. The believer's splendid victory (vss.4-5)
3. The believer's priceless possession (vss.11&12)
4. The believer's sure confidence (vss.14-15)
5. The believer's wonderful power (vs.16)
6. The believer's perfect protection (vs.18)
7. The believer's glorious knowledge (vs.20)

## IN THE SPIRIT ON THE LORD'S DAY

Read: Revelation 1

Memory Work: Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand. Revelation 1:3

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *This prophetic book directs our attention to Jesus who rules over all the events of time and eternity.*
2. *Special blessing is promised to those who read the book of Revelation, and keep the commandments set forth therein.*
3. *It was written to seven churches existing at that time, to prepare them for what was shortly to take place.*
4. *The description of Jesus reveals His inward characteristics. We are to strive to be like Him. He is to be revealed in us.*

I The Revelation Sent To John: According to early church traditions, some time after Paul was beheaded and Peter was crucified (upside down at his request) by emperor Nero, the Romans also attempted to execute the apostle John. He was to be boiled alive in a cauldron of oil. Twice, according to the tradition, the preparations were interrupted by fierce and frightening thunderstorms. Finally, Domitian, the Roman emperor, decided to banish John to the isolated island of Patmos where the elderly disciple was given the marvellous Revelation of Jesus Christ. Later, when the cruel emperor died, and a God-fearing man named Nerva was chosen by the Roman senate to rule the empire, Christians throughout the empire were released from prisons and delivered from persecutions. John was released from exile and went to Ephesus where he spent the rest of his life.

While John was in exile on the island of Patmos, the Revelation was given to Jesus by the Father. The Lord, in turn, sent it by His angel unto the beloved disciple, John (ch.1:1). John

recorded what he saw and transcribed what he heard. A particular blessing is promised to those who read the book, and keep the things which are written in it. Since the percentage of those who could read was small in those days, special note was made that those who listened to the reading of the book, and kept its commandments, would also receive particular blessing. For sixteen centuries copies of the book were made only by hand. They were few and far between. The majority of believers could only listen to the reading of the book of Revelation on rare occasions. Just think how privileged we are to have at our disposal innumerable copies, as well as many versions. Let us be sure we avail ourselves of this privilege, and read the book often, and keep the things written therein, that the blessing promised may be ours.

Too many Christians shy away from the book of Revelation because of the representations which are difficult to comprehend. There are, however, many passages which are clear and easy to understand. Since a definite promise is made to those who read it, we better not neglect the reading of this last book of the Bible.

II The Time Is At Hand: Unlike the book of Daniel, which the author was told to seal until the time of the end, this book is urged to be read and used by the church because the time was at hand. The system of interpretation, known as "futurist" relegates everything from chapter 4:1 on, to a time in the future when the believers will have been "raptured". It supposes that all the events represented by the visions seen by John throughout the rest of the book take place in the space of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years, and concern the Jews in a millennial period. This obviously robs the book of any relevance for us today. In reality, the vision of chapters 4 and 5 was a revelation of the ascension and enthronement of Jesus at the right hand of the Father, as seen from the heavenly side. Many of the visions of the book have already been fulfilled by such things as the apostacy of the Roman church, and the reformation. The rise of Mohamedanism, and the two global conflicts also, no doubt, are key events portrayed in the visions of the book. We are much further along in the prophetic calendar of the book of Revelation than is generally supposed. If the time was at hand when the book was written 1900 years ago, we can only conclude that its entire fulfillment is imminent. Let us read, and take heed to do what we are bidden in this book which was written especially for the church militant in this age.

III To The Seven Churches: Jerusalem had been the center of the Christian fellowship for some time. The pressures of Judaism upon the church there, eventually compromised the glorious liberty of the gospel. The center of Christian activity then moved, perhaps for a while to Antioch, but then to Ephesus. The book of Revelation is addressed to the seven churches of Asia. These were composed of predominantly Gentile believers. The specific epistles directed to these seven individual assemblies have a definite relevance for the church today, and particularly for each present day assembly.

The salutation of the book of Revelation reminds the believer that they have been redeemed and cleansed by the blood of the Savior (vs.5). He also has ordained that His disciples should be kings and priests unto God in this Gospel age. God's kingdom is not somewhere off in a distant, misty future, but we are now to be kings and priests unto our God (vs.6). We are to overcome now in this world. The power of our enthroned king is at our disposal. We may operate in His name in this present evil world.

The promise of the physical return of Jesus to the earth is set forth as a promise of hope for the believer, and as a warning of judgment for the unbelieving (vs.7). There are many frightening things recorded in this book, but the believer is comforted by the assurance that the King is in control all the time. He is the great I AM. He is the Alpha and Omega, that is to say, He is A to Z, the beginning and the end. He is Lord of all; which was (past), and is (present), and is to come (future), THE ALMIGHTY. Through all the trials and changes around about us, let us always remember that the Almighty Lord is in charge. "God is still on the throne."

IV In The Spirit: John had been filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. While exiled on the isle of Patmos, he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, when he heard and saw the things recorded here. This is important to remember. The Revelation of Jesus Christ is a spiritual revelation. It is necessary to be in the spirit to interpret the visions and revelations given to John while he was in the Spirit. Thank God that we too can be "in the Spirit" on the Lord's day and every day. Every believer has the right to an abundant filling of the Holy Spirit.

While in the Spirit, John heard a trumpet-like voice behind him instructing him to write what he was about to see in a

book to be sent to the seven churches of Asia: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. The disciple turned to see the One whose voice he heard. He beheld seven golden candlesticks and One like unto the Son of man walking in the midst of the candlesticks.

V At His Feet As Dead: John was as close to Jesus as anyone in His earthly life. He was in the inner circle. He had leaned on Jesus' breast at the last supper. He had spoken with Jesus innumerable times and had known Him intimately. But when he saw the Lord in all of His glorified beauty, John fell down at His feet, as dead. He describes what he saw, but all of these visible descriptions reveal the spiritual characteristics of our Lord. We know nothing of Jesus' outward appearance in His humanity. Tall or short, fair or swarthy, thin or robust, not a word of description do we have. But His inward beauty is given us in great detail, and it is in this area that we are to be like Him. John beheld the figure of Jesus clothed with a robe to His feet. The magnificent apparel of the Lord accentuates the importance of the vision. The description has seven parts and is to be understood as portraying the moral beauties of our Lord. The head and hair white like wool, symbolizes the eternal Being of God. The eyes like a flame of fire, indicate that from Him nothing can be hidden. Feet like fine brass as if they burned in a furnace, reveal Him as the One who will judge the quick and the dead. The voice of the Lord is awesome. It is compared to the sound of many waters. At Sinai the voice of the Lord terrified the Israelites. The voice of the Lord in majesty and authority is the central item in this description of the Lord. The right hand of the Lord holding seven stars, shows Him as having everything under His Divine control, authority, and skill. The sharp sword proceeding from His mouth, illustrates the authority and effectiveness of His word. The brilliant countenance of the Lord, reveals Jesus to be the supreme light-giver of the spiritual realm, just as the sun is the source of light in the natural world. The radiant splendor of this vision which John saw was indescribable. He who knew the Lord so intimately before, now could only fall down before Him as dead. The Lord spoke reassuringly to John. He put His right hand upon the apostle and told him to "fear not". He reminded John that He had been dead but now was living and indeed that He held the keys of hell and of death. Once more He told John to write the things which he had seen and would see thereafter.



Finally, the Lord explained the vision of the golden candlesticks and the seven stars which John saw in His right hand. The stars represented the seven angels (messengers, or ministers) of the seven churches, and the seven golden candlesticks typified the seven churches themselves. So the Lord gave the key to the interpretation of the book. It is a book written in symbolic terms. We may not be able to comprehend all of the symbols set forth, yet as we read it in the Spirit, more and more becomes clear and the greatest blessing of all lies in the fact that when all is said and done, Satan and his earthly dominion are defeated and destroyed, and Jesus Christ dwells in the midst of His redeemed saints, and reigns with them for ever and ever!

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## LESSON 25

## TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

Read: Revelation 2 &amp; 3

Memory Work: Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. Revelation 3:20

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The function of the church in this age is to give forth the light of God in this dark world.*
2. *The Lord searches out the failures and virtues of every assembly.*
3. *The Lord reproves His people that they might repent and be restored.*
4. *Glorious promises are made to those who hear and obey the instructions of the Lord.*

I The First Love: Ephesus: The Lord was revealed as the One walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. The last words of the first chapter explain that the candlesticks represent the churches. The function of a candlestick is to give forth light. The church in this Gospel age is to give forth the light of the glory of God. In the messages to the seven churches the faithful Lord deals with those faults that would dim or extinguish the light of the testimony of the churches. Words alone do not make a good testimony, but a consistent life does.

The Lord found much to commend in the Ephesian church. The ministry of Paul had borne abundant fruit in this place. There had been opposition to the preaching of the Gospel by the heathen worshippers of Diana (Acts 19:28). Vagabond Jews had attempted to cast out demons in the name of "Jesus whom Paul preacheth" and had been discredited (Acts 19:13-17). The believers multiplied and brought together their books of curious arts and burned them publicly (Acts 19:19). The word of God grew mightily and prevailed in the church at Ephesus. Before

Paul was imprisoned, on his way to Jerusalem, he passed near Ephesus and called for the elders of the church to come to him. He solemnly warned them that after his departure "grievous wolves" would get into the assembly at Ephesus, and attempt to draw away disciples after themselves. In the message to Ephesus in Revelation, it seems that the assembly had taken Paul's warning and resisted and overcome the attempts of these "grievous wolves" to exploit the flock. The Lord commends this church for their works and endurance. The Lord was pleased that they discerned the false claims of some who called themselves apostles. The Lord commended the Ephesians also for not accepting those who lived in wickedness. Their steadfastness in the midst of trying circumstances was also commended.

"Nevertheless," the Lord reprimanded, "I have against thee that thou hast left thy first love" (ch.2:4). The Lord called the church to repentance and threatened to remove their candlestick if they did not turn. How easily the human heart is turned from pure motives. This first message is most important. The people of this church were probably unaware of the decline of their love for Jesus. They may have been more active than ever. Somehow, the enemy had diverted their motives. It is not how much we do for Jesus that is of the utmost importance, but how much we love Him. There may be many who are called to do more for Jēsus than you are, but no one is called to love Jesus more than you are. We are to love Jesus Himself and not only His work. Let us all take heed to this warning and ask the Lord to search us to see if there is any decline in our first love for Him. May our first love increase until it becomes a passionate fire that devours every other love.

At the close of each message to these seven churches is an exhortation to "him that hath an ear,...to hear what the Spirit saith to the churches." The Lord Jesus also used these words eight times in the Gospel. It was always used to underline the great importance of the truth Jesus was teaching. We must take heed and profit from the teachings given to these seven churches. Also, at the close of each message is a promise of reward to those who "overcome". The Lord does give free gifts to His people, but He also has rewards for those who overcome temptations and trials, and serve Him in obedience to His leading. Let us look to ourselves, that we fight the good fight of faith and overcome our evil natures, and every temptation, that we may receive a full reward.

II I Know Thy Works: We must pass over the individual messages to some of the particular churches for lack of time and space. Note, however, that in the first four churches, there is a progression of evil. Ephesus was tested by false apostles. The hateful Nicolaitanes were present there but rejected by that church. Smyrna, the second church suffered because of the blasphemy of false believers who were of the synagogue of Satan. Pergamos dwelt in a place where Satan's seat was. They suffered from the doctrine of Balaam (uncleanness) and from the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes. Thyatira had the "depths of Satan" in their assembly. This seems to have been a doctrine of subtle evil that deluded many. The teachings of Jezebel the prophetess were tolerated in Thyatira. This was the seed of the great apostasy of the "dark ages" that destroyed the vital living relationship of believers with Jesus Himself, and substituted elegant rituals and worship of saints etc. The Lord knew each of these churches. He found something to commend in every one of them and extended the call to faithfulness and/or repentance to each.

Sardis was not beset by a surpassing evil doctrine or deception. There, danger came from a decay of the reality of their experience. We have seen this slow decline occur in several of the church denominations of recent times, where the fire of revival burned brightly at the beginning, only to be slowly quenched by formalism and outwardness. May we never be content with a name or a reputation. We must insist on reality.

III An Open Door: Two of the churches, Smyrna and Philadelphia, were not reprov'd for failures. Both of them were small and despised by those around them. Smyrna was poor in property and outward influence, but the Lord declared: "thou art rich!" How preferable it is to be rich in God, than in the natural things of this world. Both of these churches were persecuted physically. Those of Smyrna were exhorted to be faithful unto death, and promised a crown of life, and preservation from "the second death." Philadelphia was promised an open door of deliverance from its persecutors. So God works in different ways to perfect His saints.

The Lord is introduced to the church of Philadelphia as He that is holy and true, and He that has the key of David: who opens so that no man can shut, and shutteth and no man openeth. This church was commended especially for obedience to the word of the Lord. Because they kept the word of His

patience, the Lord promised to preserve them in the hour of trial that was to come on all the world. Our Lord has the keys of life and death: He has allowed some to come into His kingdom via the route of martyrdom. Others, He has delivered. James was beheaded, but Peter was delivered from the expectation of the Jews. The open door of deliverance for those of Philadelphia was to bring them into vital union with the Lord. The promise to them was that they should become pillars in the temple of their God and should "go no more out". The open door is before every one of us. By total consecration we may experience that death to self which is the open door to perfect union with our Lord.

IV Lukewarm: The church of Laodicea was in the most dangerous condition of all. It was large and prosperous, and equated these blessings with the approval of God. In reality they were miserable and poor and blind and naked. Smyrna was poor outwardly but rich inwardly. Laodicea was rich outwardly but impoverished within. This was a self-satisfied church. They felt they were in need of nothing. The Lord, however, counseled them to buy gold (reality) tried in the fire; and white raiment, representing the righteousness of Christ, in place of self-righteousness; and eyesalve, to see themselves as they were in reality. The danger of deception by false doctrine and false prophets is great to be sure, but the danger of self-deception is still more pernicious and subtle. We could all use a large dose of eyesalve to anoint our eyes to see our inward condition as it really is.

The Lord's love is revealed even to this church which He threatened to spew out of His mouth because they were lukewarm. His rebuke and His chastening were motivated by love. While it may be noteworthy that the Lord is depicted here as outside the door of this church, it is even more remarkable that He is there at all, still knocking despite their lukewarmness and failures. Even more remarkable is the promise made to those from this self-satisfied, complacent church. To those who overcome here, He promises a place with Him in His throne, in the same way in which He overcame and received a place with the Father in His throne.

Some think that the seven churches represent seven eras in the history of the church from Pentecost to the second coming. This may be so, but whether it is or not, the call to an overcoming life sounds forth in every message and if we are to

give light to all around us, our lives must shine more brightly than our words.

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## THE NEW HEAVEN AND EARTH

Read: Revelation 21 & 22

Memory Work: Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. Revelation 22:14

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The glorious hope of eternal life in union with God should inspire every believer to loving and faithful obedience to the teachings of our Lord.*
2. *The outstanding feature of the new Jerusalem is the glory of God shining in it. We may now experience a real foretaste of that glory.*
3. *Since nothing that defiles, or is unclean, may enter, we must be thoroughly cleansed now, so that we may partake of the glory shortly to be revealed.*

I A New Heaven and Earth: After the messages to the seven churches recorded in chapters 2 and 3. John was given a vision of the throne of God in the heavenly realm (ch.4). Then he witnessed the exaltation and seating of the Lamb on His throne at the right hand of the Father (ch.5). Then there follow a series of visions in the type of seven seals and seven trumpet blasts, and seven thunders (not recorded) and seven vials. These all deal with God's dealings with the inhabitants of the earth. Chapters 7 and 14 clearly proclaim that in the midst of all the evil and rebellion and self indulgence of the multitudes under the domination of the prince of this world, there are and will be those who are faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ. They overcome the temptations around them and "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

The judgments of God against the world and its system are pictured in chapters 6 through 20. They increase in severity and intensity. Finally, the political and economic world systems are destroyed. Then the false religious systems are judged and

and finally, the devil himself, and his evil principalities and powers are cast into the lake of fire with those inhabitants of the earth whose name were not written in that book of life. Let every reader make sure that their name is written in the book of life.

With Satan, death, the grave, and unbelievers, cast into the lake of fire, a new and glorious event occurs. A new heaven and a new earth appear. Peter spoke of it in his epistle: "nevertheless we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Peter 3:13). It is in perfect harmony with the teaching of Jesus in His parable of the tares. There, the messengers of the Lord gather out of His kingdom everything which offends, and all that do iniquity, and cast them into a furnace of fire to be tormented. When this is done, then the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt.13:41-43).

John saw the holy city, also called the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven (ch.21:2). He heard a great voice proclaiming that the dwelling of God was with men. The voice declared that there would be no more death. Sorrow, crying, and tears would be no more. In short, all the terrible results of the fall in Eden were reversed. Everything was new. The Lord commanded John to record this vision, assuring him that these words were true and faithful.

II He That Overcometh: Wonderful promises were given in the messages to the seven churches (ch.2 & 3), to those who overcame the tests and temptations peculiar to their situation. In chapters 7 and 14 of the book we find a company who refused to be conformed to the world, or allow their bodies to be controlled by the lusts of the flesh. They overcame "by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death" (ch.12:11). The glories of this new heaven and earth are offered to those who overcome (ch.21:7). On the other hand the Lord lists all those who cannot inherit these eternal blessings, but will be cast into the lake of fire. This list includes the "fearful and unbelieving, the abominable and murderers, whoremongers and sorcerers, idolaters and all liars" (ch.21:8). Heaven is a holy place. Sin can never enter there. We are in a desperate warfare with sin and the world and the flesh. We are given weapons which are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. Let us use these weapons and overcome natural desires of the flesh



and the pressure to be conformed to this world. Get the victory! The new Jerusalem, and union with our heavenly bridegroom is for overcomers! Do you know that you are an overcomer?

III The Bride: John the Baptist described the followers of Jesus as the bride (John 3:29). Here, an angel invites John the beloved to come with him to behold "the bride, the Lamb's wife" (vs.9). From a great and high mountain (in the new earth) John beheld a great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. Its dazzling radiance was the result of the glory of God. It had a great wall and twelve gates guarded by angels. The names of the twelve tribes were on the gates, and the names of the twelve apostles were in the foundations of the wall of the city. John saw the city measured. The length and breadth and height were equal symbolizing its perfection. The wall was jasper, the city with its streets was gold, and the foundations of the wall were garnished with twelve precious stones. The gates were of pearl. Everything in the city is pure and precious. We are bought with a price. We are redeemed not with corruptible things as natural silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus. Truly, the redeemed, the bride, are represented in the treasure hidden in the field and in the pearl of great price (Matt.13:44-45). John saw no temple. The perfect union of the Lamb with the bride, made a temple unnecessary. So glorious was the radiance of God, that there was no need of sun or moon. Night and darkness are abolished and the city abides in perfect security so that there is never any need to shut its gates. Nothing defiling, or unclean, or deceitful, shall in any wise enter the holy city.

IV The Book, the Water, and the Tree; of Life: Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life are permitted to enter the city. Within, the angel showed John the river of water of life which flowed from beneath the throne of God and the Lamb. Beside the river of life grew the tree of life bearing twelve manner of fruits, which ripened every month of the year. The curse from man's fall is gone. Whereas Adam and Eve and all their natural progeny were barred from the tree of life, and sentenced to till the ground which was cursed to resist their efforts; in the new Jerusalem the curse is gone. Access is granted to those whose names are written in the book of life, to drink from the water of the river of life,

and to eat the fruit from the wonderful tree of life, and to live forever and ever. Each of these representations of life is mentioned twice here at the very end of the Revelation of Jesus Christ: the book of life (ch.21:27 & 22:19), the river of water of life (22:1 & 17), and the tree of life (vss.2 & 14). The order is reversed the second time. Invitation is given by the Lord Himself (vs.16) to come and partake of the life-giving water of the river of God freely. Provision is made for every need of the redeemed. Let the invitation of Jesus to "come" be received as a royal command. He has opened up the way and made possible the overcoming of every obstacle so that whosoever will may come and take of the water of life.

V The Time Is At Hand: We are, no doubt, much further along in the progress of the fulfillment of the visions of the Revelation than is generally supposed. Both at the beginning and at the end of this book the Lord declares these things were to be shortly accomplished (ch.1:1 & 22:6). Twice, John was told, and he dutifully recorded that, "the time is at hand" (ch.1:3 & 22:10). Twice, blessing is promised to those who read or listen to the teachings of the book and keep the sayings of its prophecy (ch.1:3 & 22:7). To be sure, we do not know the day nor the hour of the second coming of our Lord, but we must know that we are ready. "Behold I come quickly" (or suddenly), ought to stir us up to prepare earnestly (ch.22:7 & 20). Unless we become holy now, the day may come when it is too late (see vs.11).

John certifies that he saw and heard these things and was told to publish them because the time was at hand. The "I John," of verse 8 is followed by the certification of Jesus Himself in verse 16 where we read, "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things." There follows a stern warning that no one should dare to take away any of the words of the prophecy of this book on pain of having his part taken out of the book of life. Neither dare any add to the prophecy lest God add to him the plagues recorded therein.

After John was released from Patmos, he returned to Ephesus and ministered actively there, despite his age. While there, his writings were sent out to other assemblies. Some Christian teachers believe that the first epistle of John was written after the book of Revelation. According to the traditions of the early church, John lived to a very great age and was the only disciple to die a natural death. His writings were included in the

canon of sacred scripture and have blessed many readers and hearers for nineteen centuries. They have inspired patience in tribulation and filled believers with hope that indeed, as the Lord spoke His last words in the sacred writ, "Surely, I come quickly." Let us respond as did John, "Even so come, Lord Jesus."

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