

LESSON TEXT: John 1:1-51

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Many people (including “theologians”) continue to say that Jesus Christ of Nazareth never claimed to be God in the flesh. Apparently they give no credence to the Gospel according to John. If the Gospel of John exists for any reason it is to **document evidence** that Jesus did make such a claim. Not only so, but John records evidence to **substantiate that claim**--evidence which has stood the scrutiny of 2000 years of honest and dishonest historiographers.

The Gospel of John was written as a tool for evangelism. If ever we are to make believers out of non-believers, it will be done through this book! John said: “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book; ***but these are written that you may believe*** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.” (Jn. 20:30-31).

In this book there are **7 witnesses** (1:4; 1:49; 6:69; 11:27; 20:28; 20:31; 10:36); **7 miracles** (1:1-11; 4:46-54; 5:1-47; 6:1-14; 6:15-21; 9:1-4; 11:1-57); and **7 “I am’s”**--claims to deity (6:35; 8:12; 8:58; 10:11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1).

The most ancient and complete uncial Greek manuscripts now existing for the gospel accounts are of the Gospel of John (Chester Beatty papyri, A.D. 150 within 50 years of the original; and the Bodmer II papyrus (P75) the complete gospel of John except for a page or two, dating from about A.D. 200).

Gautama Buddha (536-483 B.C.) wrote, “Believe nothing on the faith of traditions, even though they have been held in honor for many generations, and in divers places. Do not believe a thing because many speak of it. Do not believe on the faith of the sages of the past. Do not believe what you have imagined, persuading yourself that a god inspires you. Believe nothing on the sole authority of your masters or priests. After examination, believe what you yourself have **tested** and found to be **reasonable**, and conform your conduct thereto.” If only Buddha had known the evidences about Jesus Christ!

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was Jesus called “The Word”? What does “Word” mean here? 1:1-5
2. Why did John the Immerser have to come as a “testimony” to Jesus? Why couldn’t Jesus simply “testify” of himself? 1:6-8
3. Who were the “we who beheld his glory”? 1:14 Where? When? What?
4. What is “grace upon grace” RSV (“one blessing after another” NIV) 1:16
5. Why did John the Immerser call Jesus, “The Lamb of God”? 1:29
6. How did John the Immerser’s immersion with water “reveal” the Messiah to Israel? 1:31
7. Were all these people mentioned in this text *real people* or just mythological? How do you know?
8. Why was Andrew so eager to bring his brother to talk with Jesus? 1:40-42
9. Why was Nathanael so quick to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah? 1:43-49
10. What did Jesus mean by referring to Heaven opened and angels of God ascending and descending upon him? 1:50-51; Gen. 28:14-17.

Documentation for the Historicity of Jesus Christ of Nazareth:

27 different New Testament documents; 6 earliest church historians, Polycarp, Clement, Eusebius, Irenaeus, Ignatius, Justin, Origen; 11 other ancient historians, Tacitus (b. A.D. 52-54); Lucian of Samosata (100-200); Flavius Josephus (b. A.D. 37); Suetonius (A.D. 120); Plinius Secundus (Pliny the Younger)(A.D. 112); Tertullian (A.D. 197); Thallus, Samaritan (A.D. 52); Phlegon, (0-100); Mara Bar-Serapion (ca. A.D. 73); Justin Martyr (A.D. 150); the Jewish Talmuds (A.D. 10-0-500). *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1979 states: “These independent accounts prove that in ancient times even the opponents of Christianity never doubted the historicity of Jesus, which was disputed for the first time and on inadequate grounds by several authors at the end of the 18th, during the 19th, and at the beginning of the 20th centuries.”--- *Evidence That Demands A Verdict*, by Josh McDowell, pp. 81-87, IVP.

LESSON TEXT: John 2:1-25

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Turning water into wine was the **first miracle** Jesus did. Don't ever let anyone tell you differently. There are all kinds of undocumented myths and fables about the miraculous things Jesus did as an infant and a child. The Bible gives **no credence** to those false stories at all!

This was a rather inauspicious miracle with which to begin a Messianic campaign! He answered his RSVP invitation to a wedding. The wedding was held in the little mountain village of Cana and almost on the q.t. he changes a few quarts of water into wine. He did not do this just to solve a social crisis. **He did it to create belief in him from his disciples!**

From these sequestered hills of Galilee, Jesus went directly to the swarming, bristling city of Jerusalem. There he challenged the wickedness of the Jewish leadership, not with a miracle, but with a physical display of righteous indignation. He "upset the apple-carts" of the cheating money-changers and animal-sellers who were defrauding tens of thousands of Jews from all over the world coming to the Temple for the Passover.

The key verse of this second chapter is 11. "This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him." They **did, indeed**, believe in him—enough that at a little later moment they "...at once left their nets and followed him" (Matt. 4:18-20).

It was "zeal for the Lord's house" that consumed Jesus. An anonymous American Indian is quoted as having said, "I don't know about having too much zeal; but I think it is better the pot should boil over than not boil at all." *Zeal* is closely related to *jealousy*. It comes via late Latin *zelus* from Greek *zelos* meaning "fervor, jealousy. The medieval Latin derivative *zelosus* has left English a double legacy; *zealous* and (via Old French) *jealous*. **Jesus was jealous for the sanctity, the holiness, and the purity of God's house.**

QUESTIONS:

1. Why would Jesus go to a wedding where wine was being served? 2:1-3
2. What did Mary expect from Jesus? 2:3 How could she?
3. Why did Jesus "rebuke" his mother openly? 2:4
4. Is Jesus's attendance here a justification for Christians to drink intoxicating beverages? (Rom. 14:21; 1 Cor. 8:12-13; 10:23).
5. Why did Jesus cleanse the temple? 2:13-21 Is it wrong to sell things in the church building, or in the "name" of the church?
6. What temple was Jesus talking about when he said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up"? 2:19 How many "temples" does God have?
7. Why didn't Jesus trust men? 2:24 Aren't we supposed to trust one another? Does Jesus ever trust us? When?
8. Does Jesus know what is "in" every human being? 2:25 How do we know he knows?

"Although the apostolic doctrine is replete with stern denunciations of 'drunkenness wherein is riot and excess,' yet the Apostles do not enjoin unconditional and perpetual abstinence as the way around over-indulgence. Their's too is the route of habitual moderation in all things (1 Cor. 9:25), since they are suspicious of any doctrine that promotes rigor of devotion, self-abasement and severity to the body through negative regulations that God did not give. Such prohibitions might have an appearance of wisdom, but are of no value in checking the indulgence of the flesh (Col. 2:16-23)...However, under special circumstances Paul could conceivably dispense with ANY given food, for instance, if it caused a brother to stumble (Rom. 14:21)...Jesus was a Jew living in first-century Palestine. Out of proper moral consideration for the needs and views of His people, He ate and drank the food common to His people (Luke 7:33-35)."

---Harold Fowler in, *The Gospel of Matthew, Vol. II*, pp. 526-533, pub. College Press

LESSON TEXT: John 3:1-36

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Africaner (ca. A.D. 1830-1880) was a Hottentot desperado of Mamaqualand. He was such a hardened character that the governor at Cape Town had offered \$5000 for him dead or alive. He and his men were the terror of South Africa. When Robert Moffat went as a missionary to Africaner's tribe the people at Cape Town never expected to see him again. They told him that Africaner would use his skull for a drinking cup. Trusting in God, the brave missionary preached the Gospel to these savages. His first convert was none other than Africaner. Later, Moffat took him to Cape Town with him. When the colonial ruler saw the savage changed into a humble Christian man, he said, "What a miracle!--This is the eighth wonder of the world!"

Our lesson in John 3 focuses on the **New Birth**. The above incident illustrates the results of the new birth. The question about the new birth which seems to plague most people, however, is, "*How* can a man be born again when he is old?"...or, "How do I *know when* I am born again?" That is precisely what was troubling the mind of Nicodemus, one of the rulers of Israel nearly 2000 years ago. Whether one **should** be born again or not is **not** an **option** for those who want to go to heaven. If your goal for the next life is heaven, you **MUST be born again (Jn. 3:3)**! If it is a **must** for human beings, God would not be ambivalent or vague toward humanity about **how it is to be accomplished**.

We shall study in this lesson, not only what Jesus told Nicodemus about the **new birth**, but what the Holy Spirit told the apostles after Jesus arose and ascended to heaven. There is much confusion in the world today about the new birth. BE IN BIBLE SCHOOL AND STUDY WHAT THE **BIBLE** ACTUALLY SAYS ABOUT IT!

"God doesn't just patch--He renews; God doesn't just reform--He transforms men by His power."
--Merrill C. Tenney, professor at Wheaton College, IL.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Jesus blurt out the necessity for new birth when Nicodemus had already confessed belief in Christ? 3:1-3
2. What do you think Jesus meant by his answer to Nicodemus's question, "How can a man be born when he is old?" 3:4-6
3. How is a person "**born of the Spirit?**" 3:5-9 (see Acts 2:38; 8:26-40; 10:44-48; 18:8; 22:16; Rom. 6:1-6; 8:5-11; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:22-24; Gal. 6:15; Col. 3:10; Titus 3:5; 1Pet. 1:3; 1:22-23; Jas. 1:18; etc.).
4. Why did Jesus expect Nicodemus to understand and believe this? 3:10-13 (see Ezek. 37:1-28).
5. Why did Jesus illustrate the new birth with Moses and the serpent? 3:14-15
6. What does the "golden text" John 3:16, have to do with the new birth?
7. Does man have to **do** something in order to be born again? 3:16-21 What?
8. When men started to argue about being purified, what did John the Baptist say? 3:22-30 What does this say about him?
9. Will good religious people go to heaven without obeying Christ? 3:31-36

"The true story of the *Mutiny on the Bounty* has often been retold. One part that deserves retelling was the transformation wrought by one Book. Nine mutineers with six native men and twelve native (Tahitian) women put ashore on Pitcairn Island in 1790. One sailor soon began distilling alcohol, and the little colony was plunged into debauchery and vice. Ten years later, only one white man survived, surrounded by native women and half-breed children. In an old chest from the *Bounty*, this sailor one day found a Bible. He began to read it and then to teach it to the others. The result was that his own life and ultimately the lives of all those in the colony were changed.

Discovered

in 1808 by the *USS Topas*, Pitcairn had become a prosperous community with no jail, no whiskey, no crime, and no laziness."

—*The Gospel Herald*

LESSON TEXT: John 4:1-54

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Seth Wilson, Dean Emeritus of Ozark Christian College, overheard two student-preachers in the cafeteria on the old No. Wall campus talking about the difficulties they were encountering getting sinners to respond to their evangelistic efforts. One student said to his companion, philosophically, "Yeah, it's just like they say 'You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink.'" Seth promptly corrected the fledgling preacher, "Young man, it is not your business to make the horse drink--it is your business to make him thirsty!"

And that is what evangelism is. It is making people thirsty for Jesus, the Water of Life. That is what Jesus did in the event we will study in John, ch. 4. He couldn't make the woman drink, but he could make her thirsty. That's exactly what Jesus did with his delicate presentation of himself as the Water of Life and her need for him.

But of course as Christians we must have a hunger and thirst ourselves to do the will of God--just as Jesus did in John 4:34. Otherwise we will let physical things crowd out the important service of EVANGELISM! It is recorded of John Harper, preacher at Moody Memorial Church in Chicago, in the early 1900's, that he was obsessed with winning the souls of people to Christ. Harper booked passage on the fateful voyage of the *Titanic*. Dr. W.B. Riley relates the death of Harper: "When the *Titanic* was struck by the iceberg that drove in her sides, and sent the ship to the bottom, John Harper was leaning against the rail pleading with a young man to come to Christ..."

It has been estimated that about 95% of all church members have never led anyone to Christ--the best fact in soul-winning is contact!

—Paul Lee Tan, op.cit

QUESTIONS:

1. Why do you think Jesus "had" to pass through Samaria? 4:1-4
2. Why was the woman surprised that Jesus would speak to her? 4:4:7-9 Would you surprise anyone if you talked to them about Jesus?
3. What is "living water?" 4:10-15 How does one become "thirsty" for it? (Matt. 56; Psa. 42:2; 63:1; 143:6; Isa. 55:1; Amos 8:11)
4. Why did Jesus bring up the subject of her "husband?" 4:16
5. Why did the woman ask about the proper place to worship God? 4:19-20
6. What does Jesus mean in predicting a time when God would be worshiped "in spirit and truth?" 4:21-24 Wasn't God worshiped in spirit & truth in the OT?
7. How could a Samaritan woman know anything about the Messiah's coming? 4:25-26
8. Was Jesus really more interested in winning souls than in eating? 4:31-35
9. 9. "One sows and another reaps"--does that still hold true? 4:36-38
10. 10. Many believed because of the woman's evangelism--has anyone believed because of your evangelism? 4:39-42 Don't you know **more** about Christ to tell than that woman did?
11. 11. There are four exemplary traits in the nobleman from Capernaum that made Jesus attracted to his plea--can you name them? 4:46-54

"I care not where I live, or what hardships I go through, so that I can but gain souls to Christ. While I am asleep, I dream of these things; as soon as I awake, the first thing I think of is this great work. All my desire is the conversion of sinners, and all my hope is in God."

--David Brainerd, missionary to North American Indians
1718-1747 (*Encyc. of 7000 Illustrations*, 1979, Paul Lee Tan)

LESSON TEXT: John 5:1-47

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

One Jewish view of Jesus: “We know he lived and have a vague idea of what he preached but there it ends. The widespread idea that the Jews, while rejecting Jesus’s claim to divinity, consider him a great teacher and moral figure is completely false. We do not accept his claims and we are oblivious to his teachings; we are simply not interested in him nor in what he had to say, any more than Christians are interested in Mohammed.” *Living Jewish*, Michael Aseri, 1978, Everest House, p. 224.

“I have thought that if the transfiguration were to take place in the Orient, we would find Jesus on the Mount in conversation with Buddha and Confucius. Because modern missions believe thus, Christianity can and does join hands with the non-Christian religions.”--spoken by Ms. Jessie M. Trout, former missionary to Japan and later National Secretary for *World Call*, international magazine for the Disciples of Christ--quoted in the *Christian Advocate*, 1947, p. 51.

ARE THESE PEOPLE BLIND? OR CRAZY? Is Jesus divine? Is he God? Did he claim to be God? Did he prove his claim? **YES TO ALL THE ABOVE!** Yes, Jesus is divine; Yes, Jesus is God; Yes, Jesus did claim to be God; Yes, Jesus proved that claim! In spite of dishonest disclaimers and scoffers, **history**, seen and heard by eyewitnesses, **cannot be ridiculed out of existence**. The claims of Jesus to be God were **authenticated** in time, in space, in history. The **deity** of **Jesus** will be our lesson in John 5. His *persona* is unparalleled. There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT YOU AND YOUR FAMILY BE IN BIBLE SCHOOL TO ABSORB THIS LESSON!

“He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.” John 5:23—THAT GOES FOR JEW, MOSLEM, CHRISTIAN, BUDDHIST, HINDU, OR ANY OTHER HUMAN BEING ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH!

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Jesus heal only one man when there were “multitudes” of ill people lying around the pool? 5:1-9
2. Why did Jesus heal the man on the Sabbath? 5:9-15
3. Why would claiming to be equal to God make **anyone** angry enough to kill? 5:16-18 Do people get that angry about Jesus’s claims today?
4. What “honor” does the Son claim belongs to him in 5:19-24?
5. Which “dead” will hear Jesus’s voice and “live” in 5:25-27?
6. Which “dead” will hear Jesus’s voice and “come forth” from the tombs in 5:28-29?
7. Why wouldn’t Jesus’s testimony be true if he bore witness to himself? 5:31. Was Jesus ever untrue about himself?
8. What three undeniable witnesses are there to the deity of Jesus? 5:30-40
9. How did Jesus know these Jews did not have God’s word abiding in them? 5:38
10. If the Jews received those who came in their own names, why did they reject Jesus? 5:43-44
11. How will Moses accuse the Jews to God? 5:45-47 Isn’t **that** ironic?

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* uses 20,000 words to tell about Jesus, and never hints that he did not exist. This is more words than the *Britannica* allows for Aristotle, Alexander the Great, Cicero, Julius Caesar, or Napoleon Bonaparte. The late H. G. Wells blasphemed Jesus, yet he felt compelled to discuss Jesus on 10 pages in his *Outline of History* and never questioned that a man named Jesus did live.

---7000 Illustrations, Paul Lee Tan, op.cit.

LESSON TEXT: John 6:1-71

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Back when the Republic of Rome was founded (ca. 509 B.C.), its citizens were very “religious.” The essence of their religion was in sacrifices. At home the offering would normally be a bit of cake or wine placed on the hearth or dropped into the domestic fire; in the village it would be the first fruits of the crops, a ram, dog, or a pig; on great occasions, a horse, a hog, sheep, or an ox. Holy formulas pronounced over the animals supposedly turned them into the gods who were to receive it. In this sense, the god himself was sacrificed; and since only the intestines were burned on the altar; priests and people ate the rest as they superstitiously believed the strength and glory of the god passed into the feasting worshipers. Sometimes human beings were offered in sacrifice. A Roman law had to be passed as late as 97 B.C. forbidding human sacrifice.

When Jesus said, in his sermon on The Bread of Life, “...unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you...” he sounded like a pagan to the Jews around him. They said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” Jesus did not mean a literal eating of his physical flesh and blood. That would indeed have violated the law of God (Lev. 17:10) and would have been of no value anyway (Jn. 6:63). Eternal, spiritual Life does not consist of food and drink—it comes from every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4). **We partake of his divine nature through his promises (2 Pet. 1:3-4). We are in him and he is in us when we keep his commandments (Jn. 14:23; 1 Jn. 3:24).** Jesus emphasized that we assimilate his divine nature when we acknowledge he is God in the flesh teaching us (Jn. 6:45; Isa. 54:13), and make his teaching the basis of our whole life.

Dallas Willard says in his book, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 1998, Harper, “Helmut Thielicke points out that we often wonder if the celebrities who advertise foods and beverages actually consume what they are selling. He goes on to say that this is the very question most pressing for those of us who speak for Christ. Surely something has gone wrong when moral failures are so massive and widespread among us. Perhaps we are not eating what we are selling.”

QUESTIONS:

1. What was Jesus testing Philip about? 6:6 Does he test **all** people about the same thing?
2. How could 5 loaves and 2 fish feed so many people? How do you know this **really** happened? 6:9-14
3. Why didn't Jesus let them make him king? 6:15 Wasn't **that** what he claimed to be?
4. How can believing be “the *work* of God? 6:29. I thought we weren't supposed to “**work**” for our salvation (Gal. 2:16)?
5. How is Jesus's **flesh** the **bread** for the life of the world? 6:51
6. Why would Jesus try to portray the spiritual relationship he wants from us with such a **bizarre** thing like “eating his flesh and drinking his blood? 6:52-59. Did he expect people to understand this? Do you?
7. How does a person “**eat**” Jesus's words 6:63? Can you think of ways to illustrate this from everyday life today?
8. Why did many disciples draw back and follow him **no more**? 6:66
9. Why did the **twelve** decide *not* to draw back? 6:68-71

“The editor of a well-known London newspaper sent a letter of inquiry to 100 important peers, members of parliament, university professors, authors, merchants—a varied list.

The inquiry was: ‘Suppose you were sent to prison for 3 years and you could only take 3 books with you. Which 3 would you choose? Please state them in order of their importance.’ Out of the replies

98 put one book first on the list—the Bible.

Few of those men were keen about religion; many were not even church goers;

others were agnostics or atheists. Yet they knew that no other book could give them cheer and comfort to help in dark, difficulty days.”

—7000 Illustrations, Paul Lee Tan, op.cit.

LESSON TEXT: John 7:1-52

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

One afternoon, John Scott Eldon, Lord Chancellor of England, noticed that there were only 11 men in the jury box. He was summing up and had already spoken for 2 hours, so was a little disconcerted. "There are only 11 men in the jury box," he told the foreman, "where is the 12th?" "Please, my lord," said the foreman, "he was called away by an urgent message just after lunch. But it's all right--he's left his verdict with me!"

That's rather humorous; but prejudice (pre-judgment) is no joke. Did you know that after the telescope had been invented, many of the followers of Aristotle positively refused to look through the instrument because it threatened the overthrow of Aristotle's opinions about the universe?

One sage has said, "Prejudice, if not altogether invincible, is perhaps the most difficult of all errors to be eradicated from the human mind." In our lesson in John, ch. 7, we will learn about a number of prejudicial views of Jesus Christ--from his human brothers, to the Jewish populace, to the Pharisees--all made unfair judgments about Jesus.

Carsten Thiede, lecturer in German and Comparative Literature at the Univ. of Geneva, writes "There are hardly any universities now where true Christian belief is taught. Modern theologians and philosophers *claim* to use objective methods of literary analysis in determining that much of the NT is legendary. But as I compare the writings of these critics, I find that they are working with **pre-formed biases**, leaving out any historical truth which might contradict their own beliefs." Peter wrote that some people will "deliberately ignore the facts" (2 Pet. 3:5); Paul wrote that some would "refuse to love the truth" (2 Thess. 2:10-12). But Jesus demands, "Do not judge by appearances, but **judge** with **right** judgment."

"It is with narrow-minded people as with narrow-necked bottles; the less they have in them,
the more noise they make in pouring it out."

--Alexander Pope (1688-1744), English poet & satirist.

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the purpose of the Feast of Tabernacles? 7:2 Was there any **Messianic** significance? (cf. Zech. 14:16-21).
2. What pre-formed bias did Jesus's **brothers** have about his messiahship?
3. 7:1-9 Did any of them ever repent?
4. What pre-formed bias did some of the Jewish **populace** have about Jesus? 7:10-13 Why did some say one thing and some say another/
5. What did Jesus mean by, "if any man's **will** is to do his will?" 7:17
6. How does one "judge with **right** judgment?" 7:24 Are we to judge at all?
7. Why did some say no one would know from where the Christ would come? 7:27
8. Had the Spirit **not** been given at all before Jesus was glorified? (See Psa. 51:11; Isa. 63:10-11). Then what did John mean in 7:39b?
9. Why did some think Christ came from **Galilee**? 7:40
10. Why would Jesus's **manner** of *speaking* stop the officers from arresting him? 7:46
11. What estimate did the Pharisees have of **themselves**? 7:48 of the crowd? 7:49
12. What do you think of **Nicodemus** now? 7:50-51 compared to 3:2ff

Talk about a pre-formed bias!

"There is absolutely no conclusive evidence that Jesus ever really existed ...these stories about him must be considered nothing more than folk tales...but there is never going to be any way of verifying them one way or another..." ----- the late atheist Madelyn Murray O'Hair, stated this on the campus of Drake University--copied from the *Garman Ledger*.

Note by PTB: If there's "**never** going to be any way of verifying them one way or another," then, of course there's never going to be any way of verifying them one way or another--so Madelyn couldn't have been confused with the facts--the lady's mind was already made up!
I would imagine she's changed her mind by now!

LESSON TEXT: John 8:1-59

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The following quotation is from the *Cadet Prayer*. It is repeated every Sunday in chapel services at West Point (U.S. Army Military Academy). "Make us choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong, and never to be contented with half truth when whole truth can be won. Endow us with courage that is born of loyalty to all that is noble and worthy, that scorns to compromise with vice and injustice and knows no fear when right and truth are in jeopardy."

History declares that Henry Clay was about to introduce a certain bill in Congress when a friend said, "If you do, Clay, it will kill your chance for the presidency." "But is the measure right?" Clay asked; on being assured it was right, said, "I would rather be right than be president!"

Truth, honesty and integrity do not come to us automatically. We cannot be passive and have the truth. If we are to have truth (i.e., the "kingdom of heaven") we must actively pursue it (Matt. 13:44-45). To possess the truth a person must want the truth, learn the truth and do the truth. Moral decisions, commitments to honesty, and right actions purchase truth for us.

In our lesson for John the 8th chapter, we will learn what the mind of Christ thinks and says about truth. Truth is resident in a Person, not merely in facts. Truth has to do with the historical personage of Jesus Christ and our knowledge of him, rather than in peripheral circumstances.

The ultimate question is, "WHAT VALUE DO YOU PLACE ON TRUTH? George Washington said, "Few men have virtue to withstand the highest bidder." What will you give in exchange for the truth? Do you want truth above everything else? COME TO BIBLE SCHOOL AND FIND **JESUS**, THE WAY, THE **TRUTH** AND THE LIFE!

"I had rather starve and rot and keep the privilege of speaking the truth as I see it, than of holding all the offices that capital has to give from the presidency down."
--Brooks Adams, *American historian (1848-1927)*

QUESTIONS:

1. What does the **OT** say about the Messiah as the "**Light of the World?**" (Isa. 9:1; 42:6; 49:6; 60:3; Mal. 4:2; Lk. 2:32). 8:12
2. What is "judging **according to the flesh?**" 8:13-20
3. What is the consequence of "dying in your sins?" 8:21-24 (cf. Heb. 2:1-4)
4. Can you think of 3 ways in which a person may have freedom by knowing the truth and continuing in Christ's word? 8:25-36
5. What is truth? (See John 18:38; and John 14:6)
6. How does the word of Jesus "**have free course**" or "find a place" in you? 8:37
7. Is the devil totally committed to lying and murdering? 8:44 Is the devil a *total* "no-good?" Why does he want to make us "no-goods?"
8. Are there actually people who refuse to believe something because it is the truth? 8:45 (Jn. 3:18-21; 2 Thess. 2:9-12; Jer. 6:10; Isa. 39:9-11; Ezek. 12:2; Zech. 7:11; 2 Tim. 4:3-4) WHY? HAVE YOU EVER....? Be honest!
9. Why did Jesus say he did not seek his own glory, 8:50, when he kept doing miracles and signs to get people to **believe in him?**
10. How did **Abraham** "see" the "day" of Jesus? 8:56
11. What did Jesus **affirm** when he said: "...before Abraham was, I am?" 8:58

"The nimble lie

Is like the second-hand upon a clock;
We see it fly, while the hour-hand of truth
Seems to stand still, and yet it moves unseen,
And wins at last, for the clock will not strike
Till it has reached the goal."

---William Wadsworth Longfellow, "Macello De-Corvi,"
Michael Angelo: A Fragment, 1881

LESSON TEXT: John 9:1-41

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Helen Keller was born a normal child but she contracted a brain fever that destroyed her sight and hearing before she was two years old. Because of this condition, she could not speak. By the time she was 16 she had learned to speak well enough to enroll in a preparatory school. In spite of her disabilities, she rose to international fame for her help to other handicapped people. Her books have had wide circulation with translations in more than 50 languages.

Shortly before her 16th birthday, Helen Keller expressed pity for the **real unseeing**, for those who have eyes yet do not see. Her long years of physical blindness had given her a spiritual insight which enabled her to enjoy life in all its fulness. She said: "If the blind put their hand in God's, they find their way more surely than those who see but have not faith or purpose." She also said: "I thank God for my handicaps, for through them I have found myself, my work, and my God."

In this lesson we will learn about some people (the Pharisees) who couldn't find the Incarnate-God (Jesus) when he was standing right in front of their eyes! We will learn about a father and mother who refused to acknowledge what they saw with their eyes because of fear. But we will also learn of some who saw when they didn't have eyes!

Jesus came to the world to perform crucial, delicate surgery on the spiritual "eyes" of mankind. When people go to him, cooperate and acknowledge the evidence of his deity, he will cure their spiritual blindness and they will see. But if they do not cooperate, but draw back and oppose him, they will be blinded to spiritual reality. They will **never see!**

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the disciples ask about the blind man's sin? Why did Jesus answer as he did? 9:1-5 (for another cured "blind" man see 2 Cor. 1:8-11; 12:7-10)
2. Why did Jesus spit and make clay for the man's eyelids and have him wash in the pool of Siloam---couldn't he have healed him without this? 9:6
3. On what basis did the Pharisees declare Jesus was not from God? 9:16
4. On what basis did the former blind man declare Jesus "a prophet?" 9:17
5. What was so fearful about being "put out of the synagogue?" 9:18-23
6. Why did the blind man "marvel" at the unbelief of the Pharisees? 9:30
7. Does God hear sinners? 9:31 (Acts 10:1-8)
8. Does John 9:39 contradict John 3:17? Why not?
9. What does Jesus mean by, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt..."? 9:41 (see Matt. 5:3; 2 Pet. 1:9; Rom. 2:19ff).
10. Don't you think this 9th chapter would make a good 3-act tragic-comedy? Why don't you write it up?

"The world stands out on either side
No wider than the heart is wide;
Above the word is stretched the sky--
No higher than the soul is high.

The heart can push the sea and land
Farther away on either hand;
The soul can split the sky in two,
And let the face of God shine through."
---Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950)

LESSON TEXT: John 10:1-42

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

John 10 focuses upon the *followers* of Christ as much as it does Jesus himself. It contains lessons on the difference between true human shepherds of God's flock and false ones; it contains lessons on proper behavior of God's "sheep" toward the "Good Shepherd"; and of course, it has the beautiful declaration that **Jesus is** The Good Shepherd who lays down his life for "the sheep."

William Barclay wrote: "The Church runs a double danger. It is always under attack from outside. It often suffers from the tragedy of bad leadership, from the disaster of shepherds who see their calling as a career and not as a means of service. The second danger is by far the worse; because, if the shepherd is faithful and good, there is a strong defense from the attack from outside; but if the shepherd is faithless and a hireling, then the foes from outside can penetrate into and destroy the flock. The Church's first essential is a leadership which is based on the example of Jesus Christ."

The shepherd-sheep relationship of ancient Palestine was extremely earnest. It was much more intimate and serious than that of Americans with their pet poodles and hamsters. Hebrew shepherds lived out in the fields with their sheep; called them by name; fought wild beasts to protect them; tramped over high mountains and into deep dark ravines to rescue the straying ones. Their flocks were their livelihood (Heb. 13:17). And the sheep were **totally dependent** upon their shepherds; they recognized the shepherd's voice and **followed** him! Please read the following scriptures to prepare for Sunday's Bible School lesson: Psa. 23:1-6; Isa. 53:6; Isa. 40:11; Ezek. 34:1-31; Micah 5:4; Zech. 11:4-17; Matt. 9:36-38; Lk. 15:3-7; Acts 20:28-35; 1 Pet. 5:1-5.

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want..."
The 23rd Psalm "has charmed more griefs to rest
than all the philosophies of the world."
---Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1878)

QUESTIONS:

1. Is it possible for "thieves and robbers" to get into the "fold" by **another** way? 10:1 Would you be able to recognize a "thief or robber" in your "fold"? How? (Acts 20:28ff; Ezek. 22:25,27; Matt. 7:15-23).
2. Name the characteristics of the **true** shepherd of God's sheep--do you know the voices of your shepherds? 10:2-6 ("know" in the Bible means, "heed")
3. Since Jesus is the **Door** of the sheep, what is the responsibility of the true shepherd? 10:7-9
4. Name the characteristics of the hireling--what is the difference between the hireling and an erring shepherd? How does one arrive at that judgment? 10:10-13
5. What is the **one** virtue that distinguishes Jesus as the **Good Shepherd**? 10:14-18
6. When is the Feast of Dedication? 10:22 What does it commemorate? Was it a *mitzvah* (commandment)?
7. Once saved as a sheep of Jesus, can we ever be lost and snatched from his hand? 10:25-30
8. How does Jesus prove he is not guilty of blasphemy by calling himself God? 10:33-36 What does Jesus mean by, "...the scripture cannot be broken"?
9. Is Jesus overemphasizing the **empirical** approach to faith in him? 10:37-38 (see Clark Pinnock's statement below).

"The facts backing the Christian claim are not a special kind of religious fact. They are the cognitive, informational facts upon which all historical, legal, and ordinary decisions are based.
--Clark Pinnock, *Set Forth Your Case*, Nutley: Craig Press, 1967, pp. 6,7.

LESSON TEXT: John 11:1-57

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

This chapter is burned into my mind. How could I ever forget it now? It was the text Prof. Kenny Boles used at the funeral of my own dear mother. I have preached from it myself at numerous funerals; I have taught it for nearly 37 years in the Bible college classroom; but until that day, March 27, 1984, it had never touched my heart and soul quite so deeply. Now I know what the apostle Paul meant... "by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope." Rom 15:4

No matter how many years you've been a Christian, and no matter how strong you think your faith is, when one who is near and dear dies, you will probably want to say with both Martha and Mary, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" John 11:21,32.

Four hundred years before the birth of Christ, Socrates, the renowned Greek philosopher-teacher, drank the poison hemlock and lay down to die. "Shall we live again?" his friends asked. The dying Socrates is said to have replied, "I hope so, but no man can know."

But now, **everyone can know** by trusting Jesus. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die." That promise may be trusted on the basis of eye-witnessed, physical, scientific evidence. After Jesus said this, he immediately raised the dead body of Lazarus, actually, physically, completely back to life. And later, of course, he raised himself from the dead to prove that **HE** (not someone else) **is the resurrection and the life.**

Yes, my mother lives, now, because she trusted Jesus. And so may I and mine, and you and yours--if we trust Jesus. This is the GOOD NEWS--the only really good news there is! Let's all gather to Bible School and read it again, and rejoice again!

"THOSE WHO LOVE GOD NEVER
MEET FOR THE LAST TIME"

QUESTIONS:

1. Why would Jesus say the illness of Lazarus was "not unto death"? Didn't he know Lazarus was going to die? 11:3-4
2. When the disciples were alarmed at Jesus's intention to return to Judea, why did he answer by talking about "walking in the day" 22:5-10
3. Why was Jesus "glad" he was not present when Lazarus died? 11:14
4. Why does John mention how long Lazarus had been in the tomb? 11:17
5. If Martha believed in the resurrection, why did Jesus ask her about believing in him? 11:21-27
6. How is it possible that the Son of God could be "deeply moved and troubled" and "weep"? 11:33-35
7. Why did Jesus pray before calling Lazarus forth? 11:42
8. Was Lazarus really raised from the dead? How do you know? 11:44
9. Did the Pharisees believe Lazarus was raised from the dead? 11:47
10. Was the prophecy of Caiaphas inspired by the Holy Spirit? 22:49-52
11. If this resurrection of Lazarus is just symbolic or mythological, would you still respect Jesus's teachings as a way of life? (1 Cor. 15:12-19; 25:32).

After Sir Walter Raleigh was beheaded in the London Tower they found in his Bible these true and striking lines written the night before his death:

*Even such is time, that takes in trust
Our youth, our joys, our all we have,
And pays us but with age and dust;
Who in the dark and silent grave,
When we have wandered all our ways,
Shuts up the story of our days.
But from this earth, this grave, this dust,
My God shall raise me up, I trust!*
---C. E. McCartney, in *7000 Illustrations*

LESSON TEXT: John 12:1-50

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

A beekeeper will tell you how, when the little bee is in the first stage, it is put into a hexagonal cell, and enough honey is stored there for its use until it reaches maturity. The honey is sealed with a capsule of wax, and when the tiny bee has fed itself on the honey and exhausted the supply, the time has come for it to emerge into the open. But, oh, the wrestle, the tussle, the straining to get through that wax! It is the “strait gate” (pressurized, difficult) for the bee, so “strait” that in the agony of exit the bee rubs off the membrane that hid its wings, but once through the “strait gate” the little bee becomes able to fly!

Jesus went through **troubles** in his earthly life. Our lesson in John 12 records Jesus’s own statement about his troubled soul. It is interesting that John used the Greek perfect tense verb *tetaraktai*, to describe Jesus’s “trouble” (Jn. 12:27). That means Jesus was troubled in his soul all the way through his earthly ministry in fulfilling his Father’s commandments. That fits with OT prophecies about the Messiah’s difficulties (Psa. 22:1-22; Isa. 49:1-4; Dan. 9:26; Zech 11:13; 12:10). It fits with his temptation experience (Matt. 4:1-11). It fits with his statement in Lk. 12:50 that he was under constant pressure (“straitened” KJV) until his mission was fulfilled. And, it fits with his agonizing cries in Gethsemane, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death...” (Matt. 26:36-46). But, when Jesus got through his trouble, he laid aside his mortality, and “flew” away home to heaven and God the Father.

Jesus says in our lesson chapter, “If any one serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also; if any one serves me, the Father will honor him...And I know that his commandment is eternal life.” We’re struggling through the “strait” capsule of “flesh” now--but soon we’ll “fly” away to the bosom of Jesus! Be in Bible School learn how to “get through and fly!”

“The years of our life are three-score and ten, or even by reason of strength fourscore; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.” ---David, King of Israel--Psalm 90:10

QUESTIONS:

1. Wasn't Judas correct in saying that the ointment should have been sold and the money given to the poor? 12:1-7 Why did Jesus want it poured out?
2. What did Jesus mean, “The poor you always have with you...” 12:8
3. Why would the Jews want to put a man to death who had already been dead once? 12:9-19
4. What would “Greeks” be doing worshipping at a Jewish Passover? 12:20-22 Why would they want to see Jesus?
5. Why did Jesus answer the request of the Greeks with a statement about “dying and serving”? 12:23-26
6. Wouldn't we be better off if the Bible had never told us that Jesus was “troubled”? 12:27-36 Can you trust a Savior who had difficulty obeying God?
7. Does God keep people from believing? 12:39-43
8. What “**commandment**” of God **is** eternal life? 12:44-50

Bill Wallace, missionary surgeon, from Knoxville, TN, went to Wuchow, China, in 1935. He was told that during the first 50 years of Protestant missionary work in China only one missionary had reached the age of 40. Bill Wallace was not deterred--he stayed in China. The Korean war came in 1950. Communist soldiers came and “planted” a pistol in his house, arrested him and took him to prison. The following weeks were nightmares of interrogations, beatings, false and slanderous charges, more beatings, and starvation. His prison mates often heard him crying out in agony. Prison guards used long poles at night to jab him into unconsciousness. Near the end of one brutal day in February 1951, a missionary in an adjoining cell asked how he was holding out. “Trusting in the Lord,” came the weak reply. Bill Wallace died at age 43, to “fly” away to the bosom of Jesus. A book and a film was made about his life. “Much fruit” resulted from Wallace’s following Jesus to “death.”

Scores of young men and women have subsequently committed their lives to missionary service .

By Their Blood, by James & Marti Hefley, 1996, Baker, pp. 70-72

LESSON TEXT: John 13:1-38

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Dr. J. F. Cowan once told the story of a small religious college that was having financial difficulties, even though their academic standards had been exceptionally high. One day a very wealthy man came on the campus, found a white-haired man in overalls painting the wall, and asked where he could find the president. The painter pointed out a house on the campus and said he was sure the president could be seen there at noon.

The inquirer went away but at noon returned and knocked on the door of the house where he had been told the president resided. He was admitted by the same man he had talked to on the grounds, though now attired differently. The visitor had lunch with the painter-president, asked a number of questions about the needs of the college, and told him he would be sending a little donation. Two days later a letter arrived enclosing a check for \$50,000. The humility of a man, who was not too proud to put on the clothes of a workman and do the job that needed doing so badly, had opened the heart and the purses strings of the wealthy visitor.

In 1953, I was introduced to Walter Goodman of whom it was simply said, "he's one of the trustees of Ozark Bible College." Walter was in work-clothes, laying cement blocks on a Saturday, building the chapel of the "old campus"--the only worker present. I thought at the time, "What kind of a college is this where trustees lay blocks and get dirty? Five years later, when I enrolled as a student, I found out--it was a Bible college which taught that "a preacher is not greater than his Master!" John 13:16.

This is a servant-hearted congregation, too. We don't say that to boast, in fact we're Biblically-wise enough to know we "are unworthy servants still, for we have only done what was our duty (Luke 17:7-10). A congregation must have a servant-hearted group of "shepherds" leading in the steps of Jesus. When all is said and done, this is the primary proof to unbelievers that Christians believe in Christ! Since none of us has reached perfection in our service to Jesus, let's all be in Bible School and learn from the Master in John, chapter 13! O.K.?!

QUESTIONS:

1. Why were the remarks of John 13:1-3 *prefaced* to the incident of Jesus washing the disciple's feet? 13:1-3
2. What was behind Peter's *refusal* to let Jesus wash his feet? 13:4-7
3. What did Jesus *mean* by his reply? 13:8
4. Is "foot-washing" ordained by Jesus to be literally practiced *today*? 13:12-17
5. What kind of *blessings* have you received from "washing feet"? 1 Tim. 5:10
6. Why didn't Jesus stop Satan from entering Judas? 13:21-27
Could Judas have stopped Satan? Was Judas "*demon possessed*"?
7. How can love be a "*commandment*"? Can you love "on command"? 13:34 Is it possible to be charitable without loving? 1 Cor. 13:3 What is the greatest commandment? Lev. 19:18; Matt. 5:44; 22:36ff. Did Jesus ever command a church to love? Rev. 2:4-5
8. If you were asked "What *is* love"?--what would you answer? 1 Jn. 5:3
9. Was Peter *really* willing to lay down his life for Jesus? 13:37-38
Why did Jesus *predict* Peter would deny him three times--why not just let it happen?

"Beware of all the paradoxical in love. It is simplicity which saves, it is simplicity which brings happiness...Love should be love."
--Charles Baudelaire

"Serve from Latin servus, (slave)--has been a rich source of our English vocabulary. It is the direct ancestor of serf...and of the second syllable of concierge (janitor, major-domo)...From the verb servire, serve--come deserve, dessert, sergeant, servant, and serviette."

--*Dictionary of Word Origins*, John Ayto, 1990, Arcade Pub., p. 469

"Love is the vital essence that pervades and permeates, from the center to the circumference, the graduating circles of all thought and action. Love is the talisman of human weal and woe--the open sesame to every human soul."
--Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 1860

LESSON TEXT: John 14:1-31

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

“Remember when Grandpa told us the story of...” “I can just see him now, plowing with his team of horses...” That’s what grandchildren say when they get together, at family reunions looking at old pictures and reminiscing. “I know she’s gone, but there are little reminders of her all through this house--and her presence is very real to me every day...” That’s what mothers who have lost young daughters to death often say.

My Dad and I had a shop together. Now, every time I go into that shop I never fail to see something to remind me of him. There are the old tools he used for 40 years as an electric lineman. There are the intimate idiosyncrasies of “W. D.” still there in the things he collected and the way he put up the tools. I “see” him there almost every day. I expect to hear him say, any moment, “What’cha doin’...?---need any help?” He’s gone, but he’s here. His body is gone but what he taught me is still here--some of it I live out in my life every day. His body is in the grave, but the life he lived is just as real to me today as it was over a quarter of a century ago. The principles by which he lived are so much a part of me it is almost automatic for me to do things the way he did.

When Jesus was ready to take his bodily presence out of this world, he told his beloved “children” (the apostles), “I will not leave you desolate” (Gr. *orphanous*, “orphans” John 14:18). The 14th chapter of John is **not** about Jesus---2nd comingC **it is about his coming back in the person of the Holy Spirit**. The entire context of chapters 14-15-16-17 are about that “return” as the **Counselor**. After his bodily departure, he and the Father sent the Holy Spirit back to the world---and it was none other than Jesus himself as the **Counselor (14:17)**. This provided the world with a new, more intimate, powerful relationship with God and Christ than ever before (John 16:7)--that was difficult for his apostles to grasp. And it’s still difficult for most Christians to grasp today! People do not have this intimate relationship with Jesus in the Spirit, simply because they are unwilling for his **word** and his **way of life** to take over their personalities and let **him** live his life in them. It’s not a matter of spectacular-miracle; it is a matter of surrendered-mind and soul!

QUESTIONS:

1. Why does Jesus say, “In my Father’s **house** (Gr. *oikia*) are many **rooms** (Gr. *monai*)? What “room” was Jesus preparing, into which he would “receive” the disciples and live with them? 14:1-3
2. Can you prove that Jesus is the **only** way to God? 14:6-11 How?
3. How will Jesus’s going to the father make it possible for believers to do “greater works” than he did? 14:12-14
4. Who is the “Counselor” the Father gave to the world? 14:15-17 Is he your Counselor? How? Do you need another? Why?
5. How could the disciples “see” Jesus if the world could not? 14:18-21
6. Has Jesus made his “home” (Gr. *monen*, “room, lodging, abode”) with you? 14:23
7. Since we don’t have peace in the world, what good are Jesus’s teachings? 14:27
8. Why would Jesus expect the disciples to rejoice that he was going to die and leave them? 14:28-29
9. Did Jesus really know the “goings and comings” of the devil? What did he do to stand against the devil’s “coming”? 14:30-31 Do we have the same information and power Jesus had about the devil? (2 Cor. 2:11).
10. Is it possible to have intimate, powerful, mental, emotional, spiritual relationships with a man who died 2000 years ago, with whom neither you nor I have talked, ate, wept, laughed and lived? As intimate as a father-mother-child-mate relationship? HOW?

“If you want to get in touch with your feelings,--
fine--talk to yourself, we all do.

But if you want to communicate with another
thinking (person), get in touch with your thoughts.

Put them in order, give them purpose, use
them to persuade, to instruct, to discover...”

William Safire, in *Words of Wisdom*, 1989, Simon & Schuster, p. 61

LESSON TEXT: John 15:1-27

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

If Jesus makes his “home” with you in his Spirit, he will produce the fruit of his life in you. Just as deceased parents or mates continue to “counsel,” by their “spirits” left behind, Jesus wants to “counsel” all his “children.”

But what is “counsel”? Look at these synonyms: “admonish, reprehend, warn; direct, order, prescribe; charge, enjoin, prompt, urge, advocate.” I still remember when B. A. Austin was preaching at College Heights he said that many who came to him for “counseling:” did not want “counseling”--they wanted him to agree with their own conclusions and reinforce their own decisions! B.A. said his counseling was primarily pointing people to the word of God in the Bible.

Jesus wants to be our Divine Counselor, through his Spirit, by his Word. But, he warns, if we choose his counsel it will involve “pruning” of the branch. The Divine Counselor’s “knife” is sharp (Heb. 4:12) and the “branch” will bleed and think itself impoverished by the Counselor’s insistence that it be “cut loose” from carnality (Heb. 12:11). However, the “pruning” is done so that the “branch” may allow the full force of the living Spirit of Christ to flow into it and produce the “good fruit” which endures unto eternal life. If pruning tomato plants and fruit trees of their “sucker” branches is necessary for the bearing of good fruit, how much **more** is such pruning necessary for the branches of God’s vineyard? (Psa. 80:8-18; Isa. 5:1-7; Ezek. 15:1ff; 19:10-14; Hosea 10:1-12).

Being counseled by Jesus will produce *fruit* (Jn. 15:1-11), *friendship* (15:12-17), and *foes* (15:18-27). Don’t make an appointment for **Christ’s** counseling if you are unwilling to accept **his** conclusions and decisions for you!

“Advice is seldom welcome. Those who need it most
like it least. A good scare
is more effective than good advice.”
--Meggido Message

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Jesus use the figure of the vine and branches? 15:1
2. If a branch is already bearing fruit, why “prune it”? 15:2
3. Take a branch away from the vine and what happens to the branch? 15:3-6
4. How do we *abide* in Jesus? 15:7-10
5. What is *joy*? (Greek, *chara*; Latin *gaudium*) 15:11 What was Jesus’s *joy*? Are you *full* of Jesus’s *joy*?
6. What is the difference between a “friend” and a “servant”? Which are you---Jesus’s friend or his servant? 15:12-17 Can a servant ever be a friend?
7. *Must* a person *really* be hated by the world in order to belong to Jesus? 15:18-21 (see also James 4:4; Matt. 10:22; 24:9; 1 Pet. 4:12ff; 1 Jn. 3:13;). Is it surprising the world hates Christians?
8. Why does the world hate Christians? 15:22-24
9. By what cause does the world justify its hatred of Jesus? 15:25 Have you, as a Christian, ever been hated without cause? What did you do about it? Is it alright for a Christian to prosecute with legal means an unjustified harassment or bodily harm?

In counseling, don’t assume you’re always going to be understood....I wrote in my column that one should put a cup of liquid in the cavity of a turkey when roasting it. Someone wrote me that “the turkey tasted great, but the plastic cup melted.” So now I say, “Pour a cup....”
--Heloise

“He who calls in the aid of anyone of equal understanding, doubles his own; and he who profits of a superior understanding, raises his powers to a level with the height of the superior understanding he unites with.”

---Sir Edmund Burke

LESSON TEXT: John 16:1-33

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Once, in the Navy, I had an immediate superior (officer) who had my complete respect, undying devotion, and absolute confidence. He never “threw around” his rank although I knew who “was in charge” and was glad to acknowledge it. He was kind, capable and took care of his men. He and I often bemoaned together the unrewarded accomplishments of conscientious enlisted men and the unpunished carelessness of the lazy ones. He said, “If I ever get promoted up the ladder to command in this outfit, things will change.”

Sure enough, he was promoted high up in the chain of command in the fleet. It broke my heart to know he was leaving our unit. I thought, “he won’t be here to enjoy anymore; he won’t be here to take my side; I really don’t like the Navy anymore now that he’s going.” But it was to my advantage that he left. Things **did** change. Good work **was** praised; bad work was **punished**; work was satisfying. He came to see me on inspection tours and wrote to me occasionally. About a year later it was a joyous occasion when he had me transferred to his staff where I received an assignment of much more significance and satisfaction. I served with him through the Korean War. I thought of this experience when I read John 16:5-11. Despondency gripped the apostles as Jesus talked of “going away.” But it was for their advantage and that of the whole world. Not until his death, resurrection, ascension, and return in the Person of the Holy Spirit could he convict the world of his all-encompassing authority over sin, righteousness and judgment and give believers his divine **joy**. While most people today think it would be advantageous to have Jesus back on earth in the flesh, Jesus answers with a resounding, NO!

“Without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy. As the outcome of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls.

The “Big Fisherman” Peter (1 Pet. 1:8-9)

QUESTIONS:

1. How did what Jesus said to the disciples keep them from falling away 16:1
2. Why couldn’t Jesus say these things to them from the beginning? 16:4
3. Name all the advantages you can that accrue from Jesus’s “going away.” 16:7 Do you think it would solve any of your problems or doubts to be able to see him in the flesh? Why? Think again!
4. *How* does the Spirit of Christ convince the world of sin, righteousness and judgment? 16:8-11
5. To whom is the promise, I will guide *you* into all the truth...16:12-15
6. Why did the world rejoice at Jesus’s “going away”? 16:20
7. When did Jesus plan to “see the disciples again...after a little while”? 16:12,22
8. Will God give us *anything* we ask? 16:23
9. When the disciples said, “Now we believe,” why did Jesus question their belief? 16:31-32
10. Do you have *peace* in Jesus? In your heart? In your home? In your financial situation? With your neighbor? What is peace? 16:33

“The surest mark of a Christian is not faith,
or even love, but joy.”
---Samuel Shoemaker

“Joy is the most infallible sign of the presence of God.”
---Leon Bloy

“To be able to find joy in another’s joy: That is
the secret of happiness.”
---Georges Bernanos

LESSON TEXT: John 17:1-26

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

God is a Creator whose essence is **unity**. In himself he is unified in what we call “the Trinity.” Even in his creation he displays it. Learn the lessons of the **unity** of geese, God’s web-footed frequent flyers who migrate as far south as Mexico in the winter and as far north as the Arctic Circle in the summer.

Geese fact #1 “As each bird flaps its wings, it creates an updraft for the bird following. By flying in a “V” formation, the whole flock adds a greater flying range than if one bird flew alone. The U.S. Air Force learned from this and often employs it in military maneuvers.

Geese fact #2 “Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to fly alone and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front of it.

Geese fact #3 “When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back into the formation and another goose flies in the point position.

Geese fact #4 “The geese in formation honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.

Geese fact #5 “When a goose gets sick or is wounded, two geese drop out of formation and follow it down to earth to help and protect it. They stay with their disabled companion until it is able to fly again or dies. They then launch out and try to catch up with the flock.

Today, there are over 300 “Protestant” denominations, divided even further into many factions (e.g., there are some 26 different kinds of “Baptists”). Within our own “brotherhood” founded to bring about the **unity** of all who profess to believe in the vicarious death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, there are three primary divisions with numerous “sub-divisions.” Thomas Campbell wrote in his *Declaration and Address*, that the objective of the “Washington Association” was for the “sole purpose of promoting simple, evangelical Christianity, free from all mixture of human opinions and inventions of men.”

Jesus passionately prayed for the unity of all believers--so why are we less unified than geese?

QUESTIONS:

1. How much does one have to **know** God to have eternal life? 17:3
2. Why would Jesus say the apostles had “**kept** God’s word” when in just hours he knew they would all deny him and flee? 17:6
3. To what extent must one “**receive**” the word of God to be claimed “**mine**” by Jesus? 17:7-10
4. How does being “kept in the **name** of God” insure Christian oneness? 17:11
5. How may we accomplish being “not **of** the world while we must be **in** the world”? 17:13-16
6. What is the experience called “**sanctification**”? 17:17---or is it an experience? When does it occur? How is it accomplished? How do you know?
7. For **whom** did Jesus pray “oneness”? 17:20 On what **basis**? See 17:26
8. What is Christian “**oneness**”? 17:21
9. What is Christian “oneness” to **accomplish**? 2:21-23
10. May unbelievers do not **see** in Christians the “oneness” for which Christ prayed? Why? What can you do to promote it? (1 Cor. chs. 1-4; 8-10; Eph. ch. 4, etc.)

“...the grand design and the native tendency of the Christian religion is toward unity...”

--Thomas Campbell, in *Declaration and Address*

“Give us a united church--but let it be fully and honestly united in its acceptance of the faith once given, rooted in the Bible, and climaxed in Christ, the Son of God and Savior of the world.”

---Dr. Walter Maier, founder of *The Lutheran Hour*

LESSON TEXT: John 18:1-40

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Our lesson concerns the trials of Jesus before the Jewish Sanhedrin and the Roman Procurator. And, did you know, modern Judaism has wanted to **retry** Jesus? A Jewish lawyer of Denver, CO, on the 26th of March, 1929, called together a number of leading Jews to discuss and deliberate and call for an assembly of the Great Sanhedrin, to review the jurisdiction, judgments and decrees of the Sanhedrin acting at Jerusalem during the dominion of Rome, and especially to consider and review the life and trial of Jesus of Nazareth after which the Great Sanhedrin would render a true decision and righteous judgment therein and thereby promote the spiritual welfare of all Israel.

Frank J. Powell, attorney and magistrate in London, England, documented this absurdity in his book, *The Trial of Jesus Christ*, 1954. Judge Powell concludes his excellent treatise: "There is a sense in which the trial of Jesus continues...and will continue to the end of time. It was not only an actual but a symbolic trial. *Mankind itself was on trial*. Not only Jesus but His judges, His accusers and the multitude of spectators consisting of Jews, Romans and Greeks--a cross-section of humanity--were on trial...They all rejected Christ--and the love of God which gave Christ--and chose Barabbas--the intense nationalist. So it has ever been. Those who refuse to acknowledge the claims of Christ condemn themselves, for they choose the evil and reject the good; they grasp the shadow and lose the substance." These are judgmental words from a judge!

The choice between the world is still: CHRIST OR BARABBAS? The choice is still: The kingdoms of men, or the kingdom of God? There is no such thing as "having the best of both!" **The kingdoms of men are passing away, but the kingdom of God abides forever because its King is Forever!**

No! Jesus can't be tried again. In fact, he never was on trial! Mankind was on trial! And we are still on trial! **How do you plead?**

QUESTIONS: (please read parallels, Matt. 26-27; Lk. 22-23; Mk. 14-15)

1. If Jesus knew this arrest was illegal and unjust, why did he surrender 18:1-11
2. Where did Peter get the sword? Why did he use it? What happened to Malchus's ear? Why did Jesus reprimand Peter for trying to protect him? 18:10-11
3. Why did Peter deny being a disciple of Jesus? 18:15-18 Was he afraid?
4. Who was Annas? 18:12,24 Why was he determined to question and indict Jesus?
5. Was Jesus's answer impertinent? 18:20-21 What about the "police brutality"?
6. Who was Caiaphas (see Matt. 26:57-68)? Why did he send Jesus to Pilate? 18:28
7. Why did Pilate ask Jesus, "Are you King of the Jews?" 18:33 (See Lk. 23:1ff)
8. Before whom else did Jesus appear on trial? (Lk. 23:6ff).
9. What were the Jewish charges against Jesus? 18:30 The Roman charges? Was Jesus guilty? What about witnesses? What were the findings of the Roman Procurator? 18:38-39
10. Isn't the kingdom of God in the world? Why did Jesus say it wasn't? 18:36
11. What is truth? Was truth arrived at in the trial of Jesus? 18:38

"Man is unjust, but God is just; and finally justice triumphs."
---Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Evangeline*, 1847

Ancient Roman judicial axiom, "*Fiat Justitia, Ruat Coelum*"-- "Let Justice be done, though the heavens fall." Pilate ordered Jesus crucified when he knew Jesus wasn't guilty--Pilate wasn't much for justice--but he saved his own neck. Have you ever been a Pilate?

LESSON TEXT: John 19:1-42

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

From a million-seller book comes this blasphemy: "There is no cause to doubt the crucifixion of Jesus, or that he had assistants to aid him in his bid for survival...Two things, however were indispensable to the success of a rescue operation. The first was to administer a drug to Jesus on the cross to give the impression of premature death, and the second was to obtain the speedy delivery of the body to Joseph...Jesus was taken from the tomb at the first possible opportunity for the entirely legitimate purpose of reviving him...There can be no clear proof, but we are entitled to imagine him as we have done regaining consciousness after he was taken from the tomb, and using these precious minutes to beg his friends to deliver a message to his disciples...*We are nowhere claiming for our reconstruction that it represents what actually happened, but that on the evidence we have it may be fairly close to the truth...*" (Italics ours), --**The Passover Plot**, by Dr. Hugh J. Schonfield

Dr. William Barclay said: "A book of enormous learning and erudition, meticulously documented...It demands to be read." Baloney! John wrote, Jesus "gave up his spirit" and John says the Roman soldiers knew Jesus was "dead" (Gr. *tethnekota*, perfect tense verb, meaning "emphatically dead"). John says, "He who saw it (John himself) has borne witness...his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth." Jn. 19:30-37. Now upon whose testimony shall we rely? Dr. Schonfield who was not there, or John, son of Zebedee, who was there? Do we want to be Christians on the basis of a "reconstruction...which may be fairly close to the truth..." or the testimony of an **eyewitness** who "knows he tells the truth"? But then, is it all that important whether Jesus died on the cross or died later after he was revived? What about the morality of a man who would plot and deceive about being Savior of the world; What about the OT prophecies that he would die by being pierced; What about the gospel records which bear the clear mark of eyewitness accounts; Was the apostle Paul deceived too (1 Cor. 15:1-3)?

QUESTIONS:

1. What is scourging? What was its purpose? Was it legal? 19:1
2. Why was Pilate *afraid* when he heard the Jews say, "...he has made himself the Son of God"? 19:7-8
3. Why did those who delivered Jesus to Pilate (the Jews) have greater sin than Pilate who gave the order for his crucifixion? 19:11 Are Jews "Christ killers"?
4. How many times did Pilate try to release Jesus as innocent of the charges? 19:12 (and parallels)
5. Were the Jews really loyal and patriotic toward Caesar? 19:15
6. What is crucifixion? 19:16 Why was Jesus crucified (Gal. 3:13)
7. Why did Pilate leave his original writing on the cross? 19:18-22
8. On what day was Jesus crucified? 19:31,42 ("day of Preparation")
9. Why is there an absence of interpretative statements about Christ's death in the four Gospels?
10. Why the reference to so many prophecies about it?

"Crucifixion was Rome's punishment for slaves, foreigners, and criminals who were not Roman citizens. It was the most agonizing and ignominious death a cruel age could devise. Nails were driven through the wrists and feet, and the victim was left hanging there in agony, starvation, insufferable thirst and excruciating convulsions of pain. Death usually followed in four to six days. In Jesus's case it was over in six hours ...the actual immediate physical cause of Jesus's death was heart rupture. Under intense pain, and the pressure of his wildly raging blood, his heart burst open. It may be that Jesus literally died of a heart broken over the sin of the world. It may be that suffering for human sin is more than the human constitution can stand." --Halley's Bible Handbook, pp. 523,549

LESSON TEXT: John 20:1-31

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

You're not gonna believe this! This is how Dr. Schonfield explains in his book, *The Passover Plot*, the Gospel accounts of Jesus's appearances as a "resurrected Christ." The man in the garden who revealed himself to Mary as Jesus was the "unknown" man who drugged Jesus on the cross. The same "unknown" man caught up with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and Luke used *The Golden Ass*, by Lucius, as a literary example to tell his story of the two disciples. When the disciples were fishing (Jn. 21:10-14) "they did not know that it was Jesus..." and "...wouldn't say, ...Who are you?-- so, it was the same "unknown man" because the disciples, who knew Jesus so well, would not acknowledge him as Jesus.

Schonfield concludes, "There was no deliberate untruth in the witness of the followers of Jesus to his resurrection. On the evidence they had the conclusion they reached seemed inescapable. There was nothing to tell them what had become of his body...that...like Moses had been finally laid...in an *unknown* grave. Neither had there been any fraud on the part of Jesus himself. He had schemed in faith for his physical recovery, and what he expected had been frustrated by circumstances quite beyond his control...Yet...by an extraordinary series of contributory events, partly resulting from his own planning...In a manner he had not foreseen resurrection had come to him."

Think! Is Schonfield's "unknown man" what made the Jewish rulers bribe the tomb-guards to say Jesus's body was stolen; could the "unknown man" be what John "heard, saw with his eyes, and touched" (1 Jn. 1:1-4); is he the one Saul of Tarsus saw on the road to Damascus which caused him to throw Judaism aside (Phil. 3); is he the one who caused a "great company of Hebrew priests to obey the Christian faith (Acts 6;7); did Thomas see nail prints and a spear wound in the "unknown man"? Why does Schonfield use the word "unknown" so often?

QUESTIONS:

1. Were the women and the disciples eager to believe in a resurrection? 20:1-2
2. What did the "other disciple" believe when he saw the grave-clothes? 20:8
3. Why didn't Mary recognize Jesus at once? 20:15 Did the disciples believe the accounts of the women? 20:18 (see Lk. 24:11)
4. Why did the disciples believe when Jesus appeared in the upper room? 20:20
5. Why did Jesus "breathe" on them? 20:22-23 Did apostles have authority to forgive sins?
6. Why didn't Thomas accept the testimony of the other disciples? 20:24-25
7. Why were the Gospels written? 20:30-31 Is there belief in Jesus in any other way than through knowing the Gospel accounts? See Rom. 10:14-17

"Note that when the disciples of Jesus proclaimed the resurrection, they did so as eyewitnesses and they did so while people were still alive who had contact with the events they spoke of. In A.D. 56 Paul wrote that over 500 people had seen the risen Jesus and that most of them were still alive (1 Corinthians 15:6ff). It passes the bounds of credibility that the early Christians could have manufactured such a tale and then preached it among those who might easily have refuted it simply by producing the body of Jesus."
---John Warwick Montgomery, *History and Christianity*, 1964

"On the basis of historical evidence of existing biological knowledge, the scientist who is true to the philosophy of science can doubt the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, but he cannot deny it. Because to do so means that he can *prove* that it *did not* occur...To deny the resurrection of Jesus Christ on the basis of what biology now knows is to manifest an unscientific attitude according to my philosophy of the true scientific attitude."
--Dr. A. C. Ivy, head of Division of Physiology in Chicago Professional Colleges,
President of the American Physiological Society, 1939-1949

LESSON TEXT: John 21:1-25

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Peter went fishing (Jn. 21:3). Fishing was his trade! The Lord appeared and worked a miracle. Peter and those with him caught so many fish in their net they couldn't pull it in! Peter thought to himself, "*Hapa--am!*" (That's WOW! in Hebrew),...at last our Messiah is bringing us prosperity, just as the rabbis said he would...I'm gonna' make it big in the fishing business." Peter rolled up his shirt-tail, jumped into the Sea of Galilee, and did the Jewish "free-style" to shore. He pulled in the fish and, amazingly, his nets were not broken. Jesus had breakfast ready so they all sat down and ate. Just as Peter was about to open his mouth and tell the Lord how often he wanted to pull in a catch like that, the Lord said, "Peter, do you love me more than these other disciples?" Peter had bragged before, "I will never leave you..." (Matt. 26:31-33; Mk. 14:27-29; Lk. 22:31-33).

Peter replied, "Of course, Lord, you know that I love you!" Well, Jesus asked Peter that same question ***three times!*** And it hurt Peter's feelings--he was embarrassed and perhaps a little resentful. After the Lord told Peter "feed My sheep," and that he would later be arrested and executed, Peter said, "What about this guy, John?" Peter was still comparing disciples!

Does Jesus want to know how much ***you*** love him? Yes! Has he said ***you*** must die to serve him? Yes! Has he told ***you*** to "feed his sheep"? Yes! Both literally and spiritually. (See Luke 14:1ff; Rev. 2:10; Matt. 28:18-20; Rom. 12:6-8; 2 Tim. 2:1-2; 2:20-26; 3:15-17; Titus 2:3; 1 Jn. 3:16-18; Jas. 2:14-17; Matt. 25:31-46). Yes! Jesus has asked ***us all!*** "Just how much do ***you*** love me?"

What shall be our reaction? Hurt feelings, shame, embarrassment, resentment, or maybe just plain indifference--is that it? Or will we always be saying, "What about the other guy?" Why not just do what Jesus asks--do something, anything and everything we can to "feed his sheep"?

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Peter, knowing the Lord had risen, go fishing? 21:3 Didn't he remember Jesus called him to be a "fisher of men"?
2. Why didn't the disciples know the man standing on the beach was Jesus? 21:4
3. Why did they obey him about casting their net if they didn't know him? 21:6
4. What was it about the result of the casting that made John say, "It is the Lord"? 21:7 Why did Peter put his clothes *on* to jump into the sea?
5. Why didn't Peter wait and come into shore with the others? 21:7-8
6. Why did John write down the number 153--why not just say "a whole-lot of fish"? 21:11
7. Why didn't the disciples *dare* to ask Jesus who he was? 21:12
8. Why did Jesus think it necessary to question Peter's love for him? 21:15-18
9. What has "feeding sheep" to do with loving Jesus? 21:15,16,17
10. Who should feed the Lord's "sheep" and what are they to be fed? (Acts 20:25-36; Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Pet. 5:1-5)
11. How was Peter to die? 21:19 Why do you think the Lord revealed this to Peter?
12. If the Gospels do not tell us all Jesus did, how can we believe in him? 20:30-31

FEED MY SHEEP

"...attend to the public reading of scripture, to preaching, to teaching....All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

1 Tim. 4:13 & 2 Tim. 3:16-17

"Impression without expression leads to depression!"
--and just so, spiritual feasting without sheep-feeding leads to spiritual frustration ----ptb