

Record of Sermons delivered during the month of November 2017

(added progressively after each Sunday)

(see following pages)

Come – See Who Christ Is – conclusion

Per S Olyott

(Review of last week) -

Continuing the items of note from Chapter 7.

Previously we have had the first two of these (people have varying views of Christ) and a start on the second (why don't they see it?) . We take up further details of this item and then develop the final two.

- You see this attitude again in verse 27-29: “When the Christ comes,” they say, “there will be an element of mystery about Him. There's no mystery about this Jesus. We know where He is from. He can't be the Christ.” Since it appeared to be they decided that it must be the way it is. The same applied at verse 43, where a different group of people are saying, “If He really is the Christ, He can't come from Galilee, we all know that when the Christ comes He will come from Bethlehem from the stock of David. This Jesus can't be the Christ.

If they had got behind the appearance of how it seemed to them, they would have found that Jesus did come from Bethlehem. Born in Bethlehem; went to Egypt, just like the prophet said; became a Nazarene and ministered in Galilee. But no. The way it appears must be what it is, because that's the way the native (fallen) human heart thinks.

That's how people react today. They're not really very interest in getting behind what seems to them – to get the truth. They see things a certain way and their pride, their self-centredness tells them the way they see it – that must be the way it is. They may not adopt that attitude to other intellectual disciplines, but when it comes to the things of God. Down come the shutters on their mind. “I see it that way. It must be that way.”

That's why people don't see the truth. They're not looking for it.

- The third item follows on from the second and answers the question: What is necessary to be able to see the truth?
Verses 17 & 18: *¹⁷ If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. ¹⁸ The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.*

People often say, “Prove to me that the Christian Faith is true.” We should not fall for that bait. Come straight back with a question: “If you become convinced that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, will you do everything that He demands of you?” As often as not, one finds that their objection to the Christian Faith is not intellectual at all, it's simply that they don't want their lives to change. If Jesus

Christ makes it plain through His word that you should give up certain practices that you now have. Take up certain responsibilities and duties, which you now avoid. Will you do this? Will you live your life in submission to Him? **Are you willing to do His will** – if I can demonstrate to you that He is who He says He is? The majority, as then and also as now, will say, “No”.

It's because they're not willing to do His will, that they do not know if Christ's teaching is from Himself or from heaven. It's a moral question that keeps people away. They don't want their lives to change. They don't want to repent. They DO want to stay as they are. They want to continue to enjoy the pleasures that they think are far more satisfying than those which come from Christ's hands. There's a condition that's to be fulfilled to be able to see the truth.

On the other hand if that condition¹ is present in them then they say, “O Lord if you are really there, show yourself to me and I will do whatever you demand.” “O Christ if you really are the Son of God, make it plain to me from John's Gospel and I will submit to you.” When people from their 'heart of hearts' speak like that, and they put themselves at the disposal of God then they come to see – They do!

Another thing that keeps people from accepting the truth is that they have no clear rule for deciding who is truthful and who isn't. Jesus gives them one in verse 18: He doesn't just give them a condition. He gives them a rule.

If someone tries to bring attention to Himself. He's a quack. But if someone comes along and his burning concern is to bring credit and attention to God, he's real. That's what Jesus is saying,

When you see the so called leaders of the 'world' religions (as opposed to true Christianity) and measure them by that standard, it's clear that without exception they must be counterfeits.

But when you measure Jesus Christ by His own rule, you find *He is true, and in him there is no falsehood.*

- Fourthly this chapter has already told us much about the Lord Jesus Christ. That there are: widely varying views about Him; it explains why people can't see that truth; it explains what is necessary to see the truth; and now we consider other wonderful things about the Son of God, as follows:

Jesus exercises a wonderful sovereignty.

Verse 6. *“My time has not yet come, Verse 8. ... for my time has not yet fully come. Verse 30. ³⁰ So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come.* They couldn't take Him and crucify Him, without His express permission. He exercised a marvellous sovereignty. He went at last to the Cross, taken by wicked hands, as a willing

¹ What follows describes the outcome of the 'condition' being satisfied. But in this passage the actual nature of the 'condition' is not made explicit. Elsewhere it is. In the first 6 chapters we have been reminded several times (one with the earlier references to Nicodemus) that only those who have had a supernatural change of heart – a new birth – are able to respond in the way being described here. The true thirst for God can only be generated in the sinner by the Holy Spirit. A true perception of the divine nature of Christ's teaching is granted to those who earnestly desire to do God's will, that is: true believers (in contrast to merely profess to be seeking) who have already had their corrupt nature 'converted' at the 'new birth'.

victim.

To hear Him was a wonderful experience.

Verse 14. ¹⁴ *About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching.* ¹⁵ *The Jews therefore marvelled,”* That was a rare thing! ... saying, *“How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?”* What did they mean? Here was Jesus preaching in the Temple. People were enraptured. So profound – with great majesty – was how He spoke. They couldn't believe that someone could speak like that, unless he'd had a top rate education. But Jesus had only been to the Synagogue school at Nazareth and had left at age 12 or 13. He had been to school but not at a grade that they would have considered that he had 'studied'. How can a man speak with such eloquence and conquering power; such marvellous truths which baffle and stretch the mind, when He has only been to a village school? Jerusalem was the centre of Jewish learning, with a host of 'doctors of the law'. There they were with mouths open listening to Him. Marvellous experience for those that could 'see'.

At last they sent the 'religious police' to arrest Him, because of the claims He was making. (Such people have no sensitivity for art or culture.) It appears that these 'bouncers' for the Temple were chosen because they were able to be single-minded in the discharge of their duties and were not easily swayed by the 'niceties' of culture or the eloquence of an argument. They were chosen so as not to be distracted from their task to control – no matter what. They came to arrest Christ. But there was something about the way He spoke that disarmed them completely. ⁴⁵ *The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, “Why did you not bring him?”* ⁴⁶ *The officers answered, “No one ever spoke like this man!”* “The way He speaks is beyond and above the way that it is possible for man to speak.” The divinity of His words struck them, such that they felt unable to stretch forth a hand to arrest Him.

To listen to Christ was a marvellous experience.

Because His claims were wonderful. Verse 16. ¹⁶ *So Jesus answered them, “My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.* Verse 28. ²⁸ *So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, “You know me, and you know where I come from? But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know. And verse 29. ²⁹ I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me.”* Further, verse 37. ³⁷ *On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.”* At this stage in the festival there were all those prayers thanking God for water (annual rain in the present circumstance and remembering the provision of water when the nation was in the wilderness with Moses). He says, “If you want your thirst really quenched. Then come to me!” A direct claim to be God. But just as when He spoke about spiritual bread he was speaking of spiritual water – to satisfy men's needs. He was speaking of the Holy Spirit.

When people come to Jesus as supplicants for forgiveness and pardon and

salvation. His gift to them is the Holy Spirit², who resides in the believer's heart, making Christ real to that believer. Giving an abundant life and heavenly hope; spiritual appreciation; and fills his life with joy and gladness. This is what He was speaking about. Such wonderful claims!

His knowledge was wonderful.

From verse 1 we are told the Jews were out to kill Him. People were talking amongst themselves, "Isn't this the one, whom they're out to kill."

(verse 25) Jesus looks right into their hearts at verse 19, saying, ... *Why do you seek to kill me?*" He could see beyond the eyes and shape of the people who were listening – right into their consciences and motives. He could read their thoughts. He knew them through and through.

His present Position is wonderful.

Verse 32-36, where our Lord speaks words which nobody there understands. He says, when the people have been sent to arrest Him (verse 33) *"I will be with you a little longer, (just six months) and then I am going to him who sent me.*

³⁴ *You will seek me and you will not find me³. Where I am you cannot come."*

There He was speaking about His exaltation. Not so long into their future they would go to His grave and find He wasn't there. For 40 days He would prove Himself alive. Then in sight of His disciples He would ascend. The world would spend the next 2000 years looking for His body and never find it. Seek and seek and never find. All sorts of strong rumours and also transformed lives. But not find Him. Of course! Because He is no longer with us. His Spirit is with believers. But His body is in heaven at the right hand of Majesty on high, until He comes in that way (bodily) again with glory and all the holy angels with Him.

They thought he might be off on a Gentile preaching tour. They just couldn't understand that He was talking of His return to heaven where He came from. Back to His former glory, with His 'humiliation' over. Of the exultation of His bodily nature together with His eternal divine nature. That's where He is now and He speaks to us from there through these passages in the Scriptures that His Spirit caused to be written by the Apostles – the last of whom (with the privilege of recording the 'last words', in the Revelation) being John.

His promises and invitations are wonderful.

Verse 37. *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.* Every legitimate desire in the human heart is satisfied in Jesus Christ.

Your should desire pardon. You'll find it in Him.

Your should desire peace with God. You'll find it in Him.

Your should desire forgiveness of sin. You'll find it in Him.

Your should desire a life with communion with God. You'll find it in Him.

Your should desire that all your talents, should be used to the full and to the glory of God. You'll find that's possible when you come to Him.

2 Verses 38 and 39 make His reference to the water He shall give (Which will flow out of the believer in abundance as the 'fruit of the Spirit) relates to the special coming of the Spirit firstly at Pentecost. The Spirit has of course been active from the very beginning, and throughout the Old Testament period. However at Pentecost He entered into a more intimate relationship with all believers, making the Holy Spirit the Messiah's gift to His people.

3 Here Jesus is speaking to unbelievers. In the Matthew passage where He says 'seek and you shall find', He is talking to believers who have that changed perception brought about by the 'new birth'. Matthew 7:7-8 where Jesus was speaking about a true thirst for God, that only the Holy Spirit can generate in the sinner.

You'll find everything you need in Him. He's a ever flowing fountain. Marvellous. But more than that, those who come to Him. Themselves become flowing fountains, with an abundance of blessing in their life which actually overflows.. So that they are not just people who are selfishly enjoying heavenly blessings, but they enrich the world themselves. The world has been wonderfully enriched by those who have come to Christ.

Almost every civil liberty you enjoy, was secured because of the activity of Christians in society.

All sorts of other blessings have flowed to the world: progress, particularly in medical science and the care of the sick; education; fighting for the stability of family life and individual freedom. Because many people have been motivated to please God and in doing so they became 'salt' which savoured the whole of society. They themselves becoming blessings to others.

So many people who have come to Christ, where assisted in this journey by seeing Christ in somebody else. And in many cases the message they heard, came through somebody else. Those – somebody else – were not just receiving the living water which flowed from Christ, but the abundance of the flow meant it flowed from them on to the blessing of other lives.

All these things from Christ in this seventh chapter. So look and see who Christ is. Believe Him. Believe in Him. Come to Him and enter into the blessings that He promises. The alternative is too horrible to mention!

[2335]

Pray that we are spiritually enlightened, come then to Christ alone and be the saints gathered here today! Amen.

Five Great Truths About Christ

Per S Olyott

(Review of last week) -

Chapter 8 is lengthy. First we will look at a broad overview and then seek out the Five Great Truths about Himself that Christ reveals.

The events of Chapters 7 & 8 mainly⁴ occur six months before the Crucifixion. At Jerusalem at the time of the Festival of Booths (Tabernacles), mainly in the Temple precinct. This Festival was a time of tremendous rejoicing, which spanned some eight days. It commemorated, God's giving of the harvest that had been safely gathered in; the same God who had led them through the wilderness, where they had lived in temporary 'tabernacles' for 40 years; this God who had at last brought them into Palestine and had given them the riches of earth with the sky above giving its rain, so that it was a fruitful land. So they had this full week of celebrating and rejoicing every year.

Despite the joy, it was a time of mounting tension. In chapter 7, we saw that there were small groups of people in Jerusalem discussing the identity of Jesus Christ. This included groups of Pharisees and Sadducees, Temple authorities and Scribes, who were plotting the death of Christ. But they were unable to arrest Him.

When they sent people to arrest Him, the officers who went to arrest Him, were totally disarmed, by the wonder of the things He had to say. Feeling themselves totally unable to lay hands upon Him. *His hour had not yet come!*

Chapter eight tells us what happened on the day after the eight days of celebration were over. Our Lord went back to the Temple. Sat down – because that was the method of preaching then -- to preach.

The authorities used this opportunity to bring before Him a woman, who had been caught in adultery. In this incident we see our Lord dealing – with matchless skill – the trap that they were setting for Him. He showed that these authorities had no right to judge this woman. [In fact in their eagerness to find some fault with Jesus they had breached their own laws of dealing with such cases.]

He speaks the words, which at least she would never have forgotten: (verse 11)
“Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”

That incident over, our Lord then returns to the teaching that He had been giving the day before. When He gives the phenomenal claim of verse 12: *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”* He then goes on to explain how He lived His life with perfect fellowship of the Father. Later on He issued to the crowd a challenge: (verse 46) ⁴⁶ *Which one of you convicts me of sin?* This meeting with no

⁴ Several translators mention that the verses 7:53 to 8:11 are not found in most of the best Greek manuscripts of this Gospel. The ancient manuscripts that do contain them locate them in various places. The evidence suggests strongly that while these verses were not part of the original manuscript of this Gospel, in all probability they were of apostolic origin and do reflect an incident that actually occurred during Jesus' ministry.

response.

He showed to the people, the Pharisees in particular, how blind they were and how wicked they were to keep opposing Him. They were furious at what He had to say! Notice the evident scorn of verse 53: *⁵³ Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?*

The chapter ends at verse 58, with Jesus saying, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”* It's with those words ringing in their ears, with their hearts filled with fury, that Jesus passes right through the midst of His enemies (as if He was hidden) unnoticed and out of the Temple area.

Now for the five great truths about Christ:

- The Lord Jesus Christ is tender with the sinner. (verses 1 - 11)
The Scribes and the Pharisees were undoubtedly thrilled when they caught a woman in the act of adultery. They didn't care for her. She was just a pawn to be used in their plot. They drag her before Christ publicly there in the Temple precinct, with their question! (verse 5) They're almost drooling at the mouth that they have such an example with which to trap Jesus. *⁵ Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?*

It looks like they've caught Christ at last. If Jesus says, “I agree with Moses, she should be stoned.” Immediately to everybody present He will appear hard. It will appear that Jesus Christ is an unfeeling Judge. It will appear that He is heartless. So that no sinner who looks to Him for hope will ever feel able to approach Him, because the whole image of the Son will be changed, into someone who is hard and heartless, who is quick to condemn the sinner. Who's first thought is to think of the condemnation of the sinner. This would be the legacy for all future sinners. Who would come to such as Saviour from that day on?

But this would not have been on the mind of the Pharisees. This wouldn't be their hope and expectation. They would have no appreciation or concern for such an outcome. Their expectation was that if He answered the way that agreed that she should be stoned that He would be in open defiance of the Roman overlords who reserved the sole right to condemn to death. Thus opening up Jesus to death at the hands of the Romans, since for all their wants, the Jews could not carry this out themselves. If on the other hand, Jesus says, “I don't agree with what Moses said.” Then the Pharisees have all the ammunition they want. They can say, “Here he is. He disagrees with the Old Testament. He has set himself up against the Scriptures. We've got him!”

So it seemed, which ever way Jesus answers He is caught. They were certainly sure of it. They think that at last they can settle Him once and for all.

But our Lord Jesus Christ is not quick to condemn sinners. He's slow to anger and abounding in love. (Psalm 103:8) So we see the matchless wisdom with which He handles the situation. They press the question. But our Lord, sitting on His preaching stool, stoops down and in the earthen floor writes with His finger, ignoring the question totally. Christ's first thought is not your condemnation as a sinner. You can approach this greatest possible 'friend of sinners', knowing that the first thought in His mind is NOT your condemnation or punishment.

It's only when they press the question again, that our Lord has anything to say. It's not the question He presses, it's the question the religious zealots are pressing. [Often the case today also! Religious people today as they look out on a sinful world, very often the first thought that comes into their minds are condemnatory thoughts. Negative thoughts. That's not the way it is with the 'friend of sinners'.]

They press the question. So our Lord says, verse 7, raising Himself from the stooping posture, *“Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.”* “Whoever has no sin, then you throw the first stone.” Having said that our Lord bends down again to write in the sand, not giving the Pharisees a second glance. When He at last looks up, not one of them is to be seen, Starting with the oldest - the one with whom the greatest responsibility lay, coming down to the youngest. One by one they leave. They are convicted by their consciences. Jesus has in effect said to them that if you apply the same severity to your own lives as you are willing to apply to this woman's life, where will you stand? Which one of you is without sin?

Their consciences are pricked. This one remembers a certain sin that condemns Him in the eyes of God. On the conscience of another there comes a sense of sin. Until at last they go out one by one until the Lord Jesus Christ is left alone. Conscience does its work, Marvellous.

The only One who has the right to condemn the sinner, because He is sinless, is now alone with this particular sinner. How would she feel?

She is publicly guilty. She has felt the power of His words. Her own conscience has been pricked as the others' were searched. They've gone one by one. He remains. He remains because He is to establish to the world that He does have the right to condemn the sinner. He does! Because He alone is sinless. But instead He says these words, verse 10, *“Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”*¹¹ *She said, “No one, Lord.”*

Now Jesus didn't pronounce a word of pardon to her. He had done that: – “Your sins are forgiven.” – to many other people, but not to her, because there had been no expression of repentance, yet, by this woman. No expression of faith. None the less He will have sinners know that His first task and His first interest is not the condemnation of sinners, so He says to her, *“Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”* He makes it plain that He doesn't condone or approve of her life. He makes it plain that He doesn't overlook her sin. It's noted and recorded in the memory of the Son of God. But His first interest is not in the judgement or the condemnation of the sinner. His first interest is that **this sinner should finish with her sin**. The first thing He's interested in: *from now on sin no more*.

The matchless wisdom of the Son of God! He's not been caught in the net that's been laid for Him. But at the same time He's made it plain to all the world that He remains the 'friend of sinners'. No sinner can ever be scared of coming to Christ. Although He knows all your sin; reads your heart; sees into your conscience – He's tender and welcoming to people who break the Law of God. Never condoning sin! Never approves of sin. **He always demand repentance from sin**. But His first interest is not the condemnation of the sinner. The first interest of Yahweh has always been: That the sinner should turn and live.

But it won't always be like that. At the last judgement the eyes that searched the hearts

of the accusing Pharisees, will be the eyes into which you will have to look. At the last judgement it will not be a time for mercy. It will be the time of sentence. But the last judgement has not yet come. The eyes that see into my heart and yours are the eyes of the Son of God, who although God has committed all judgement into His hand, He has not yet begun His work of judgement.

His work at the moment is to offer mercy, freely to the sinner. To assure all sinners that He remains yet their friend. So the first truth is that Jesus Christ is tender with the sinner.

[1847]

Pray that we are spiritually enlightened, come then to Christ alone and be the saints gathered here today! Amen.

Five Great Truths About Christ – continued

Per S Olyott

(Review of last week) -

The lengthy chapter 8 contains within it: Five Great Truths About Christ.

Last week as well as a broad overview we showed that Christ is tender with the sinner. But nevertheless always demands repentance from sin. In this life the 'friend of sinners': looks to redeem them from the sin that they are no more to do. All sinners can come to Him, confident that He will offer mercy! His priority is not to condemn but to save. At the last day, however His anointed role as God's judge will then come into play, the time for mercy will be over. Then it will be judgement, condemnation and sentence: most dire, for all unrepentant sinners. Even those who have previously died "in their sin".

- The second great truth about Christ is mostly found in verse 13 -29. (We'll come back to verse 12 later.)

The Lord, Jesus Christ who is **tender with the sinner**, has a **unique relationship with the Father**. The Pharisees couldn't work out where he had come from or where He was going. But Jesus was clear! So now He instructs the world about this unique relationship:

What has it to do with the truth that we have already learned?

There is hope for the sinner, because of this second truth.

Consider verse 16 and 29 together:⁵

Here is Jesus Christ telling the world that He is commissioned to come into the world by the Father. And yet although the Father has sent Him, it doesn't mean that He has left the Father behind or that there is any distance between the Father and the Son. If parents send their child on an errand, they are absent, for a time, from each other. The child comes back. There has been an absence a break in the fellowship. There's no living communion between them whilst they are apart. Jesus is saying this isn't the way it is with Him and His Father. His father has sent Him and yet His Father is with Him! So that He is not alone. So He tells us that as a man He is in the world yet in perfect communion with the Father. A great truth! That's why our Lord's words had such power. Because when He spoke the Father also bore witness to His words. The words of the Son of God are also the words of the Father.

Hence He is able to say in verse 18: ¹⁸ *I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.*"

To know the Son is to know the Father. (verse 19) ¹⁹ *They said to him therefore, "Where is your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also."*

To love the Father is to love Christ: (verse 42) ⁴² *Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own*

⁵ ¹⁶ *Yet even if I do judge, my judgement is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. ...*

²⁹ *And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him."*

*accord, but he sent me.*⁶

There is this intimate relationship whereby to love the Father is to love Christ and to love Christ is to love the Father although they are two distinct Persons. One is within the other – which is a fathomless truth.

Thus in verses 26 -28 and 38: He only speaks what His Father has taught Him, only speaking what He has heard from His Father. There are no independent words. All the words He speaks are the Fathers words. All that the Father speaks He speaks through the Son.

Verse 29: Christ says that He can never be separated from the Father. And in verse 49: That He spends His life honouring the Father. Again at verse 54, that the Father honours Him. In short what Jesus has to say is summarised in verse 55: ⁵⁵ *But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word.*

A Man said all that! Someone who had faced all the temptations from infancy through to manhood. Someone who had been in family life, school, then work. Lived in the neighbourhood; knew the life of county and town amongst 'rough', ordinary people. Was able to say that He was in perfect fellowship with the Father. All your hopes of heaven depend on that being true!

He's tender with the sinner, but He would be no good to the sinner, if it were not true that He's lived where we live. But in perfect fellowship with the Father and always doing those things that are pleasing to the Father.

If there were just one, fault in Christ, He would have to die for His own sin and could never have died for yours! If you have to have a righteousness that commends you to God, you don't have one of your own but He's willing to reckon one to your account. But if He does not have perfect righteousness, then nowhere else is there a perfect righteousness of man that can be reckon to you. You could then never be commended to God. So you depend for your salvation as much on the life of Christ as for the death of Christ. That's why this second truth from Chapter 8 is so important: Jesus Christ – the Man – has an unique relationship with God the Father.

- The third truth: Mostly in verse 21 – 38: The Lord, Jesus Christ **diagnoses the trouble with the human race and prescribes the cure**. The One who is tender with sinners, perfect in fellowship with the Father; now looks at the human race and shows what it's trouble is. And also is able to provide the cure. How awful to go to the doctor; find out what is wrong but then to be told nothing can be done! But here Christ not only 'puts His finger' on the trouble He also provides the cure.

⁶ [Aside Some people say they believe in the Universal Fatherhood of God. (Others who know better sometimes speak as though this is their belief. We all need to be careful of unguarded language.) However those who believe this heresy will put in their 'what we believe' statements on their web-sites, or their handouts or their noticeboards at the front of their Church, that "they believe in the Universal Fatherhood of God". In other words that God is 'the Father' of everybody.

The text which should come to mind when you see that is verse 42: *"If God were your Father, you would love me, ..."* Anybody who has God for his Father is in love with Christ. Those people who love Christ have God as their Father. So people who claim that all the world has God as their Father, have obviously never taken note of that verse! Because all the world does not love the Lord, Jesus Christ!]

Verse 19: "The trouble with men and women is", says Jesus, "you neither know me nor my Father." That's what's wrong with the world, Men and women don't know God: who made them; around whom their life is supposed to revolve. In whom alone their life finds purpose. To whom they must go at last, to stand before Him. They don't know Him! That's what's wrong with the world (verse 14)⁷. They don't know the truth about Christ they don't know where He comes from or where He goes, because their perspective is an earth-bound perspective. Verse 23: ²³ *He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.*

Spiritual things seem strange to ordinary men and women. They being born spiritually dead, since the 'fall'. Their perspective is totally this-worldly, They think that the things they can touch, see and feel are the real things. While every thing else is 'unreal'⁸. "The trouble with the human race", Jesus says in verses 21 and 24, "is that it's dying. It's dying in its sins. Here are men and woman who don't know God. They can't see further than this world. Their lives are lives of sin. Which come under God's punishment, therefore they are dying."

"Here's the trouble with the human race", says Jesus in verse 21 – the place that He alone can enter into – they can't enter. Heaven's a closed door because of their sin. So what's the cure?

The cure is verse 12.

This verse must have been particularly powerful when the Lord said it. When the Feast of Tabernacles was on and shortly afterwards, they brought into the Temple all sorts of lights. (Even more remarkable than the 'City of Light' as seen from the first American manned orbit of the earth.) The Temple was a blaze of light. For more than a week. Why? Because as they camped out in those little booths, they were remembering the 40 years in the wilderness. For those 40 years they didn't know where to go. But there was a pillar of cloud in the day time and a pillar of fire at night. Yahweh lead them safely from Egypt and at last into the promised land. All they had to do was to follow.

In that great blaze of light in the Temple where our Lord is teaching, He turns to the crowd and says: *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* Just like they had to follow the old shekinah⁹ glory in wilderness days – "Follow me. You'll never walk in darkness again! You'll always walk in a blaze of light. You will be led, by following me, into LIFE!"

That's the cure. Here once more as we've seen in previous weeks, Jesus is pressing on the human race His exclusive claims. All the underlying troubles of the human race are spiritual. Because men and women are cut off from the source of their life. The only way back to fellowship with that life is by the One who has fellowship with that life. It's Jesus Christ alone. Thank God that He is tender with sinners.

As He said these words many believed on Him: verse 30. Which brings us to the fourth great truth:

7 ¹⁴ *Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going.*

8 Even a casual look at the history of secular science shows this a fallacy: Today we recognise the presence of radio-waves. Not so many Centuries ago they were unknown. Our senses could not detect them. Did this mean they did not exist?

9 The Shekhina(h) (also spelled *Shekina*(h), *Schechina*(h), or *Shechina*(h)) (Biblical Hebrew: **כִּישׁוּנָה**) is the English transliteration of a Hebrew word *meaning* "dwelling" or "settling" and denotes the dwelling or settling of the divine presence of God.

- The Lord Jesus Christ does **not accept every professed disciple**, as a true disciple!

He's tender with the sinner; He shows He is in fellowship with heaven; He says follow me: and into the light of life you'll enter. So people say, "We'll follow you. You're the one on whom we must rely. You're the way that we must go. We accept your claims – we'll follow you." But then Jesus turns to them to say, "I don't accept everybody who says, 'He's a follower of mine', as a true follower of mine." There's more to Christianity than a label. There's more to being a Christian than carrying the name, Christian.

Look at these verses, which speak for themselves.

Verse 31: You're not a true disciple unless you continue (abide) in Christ's word.

Verses 34-36: You're not a true disciple unless you cease to be a slave to sin.

Verse 42: You're not a true disciple unless you love Christ.

Verse 47: You're not a true disciple unless you hear God's words.

Verse 52: Unless you keep Christ's words.

Christianity is not just a case of saying: "I follow you", and then just being like you were before. It means not only to follow but to believe Christ's word; and continue to believe it. Obeying His word and keeping on obeying it. Hearing and continuing to hear Christ's word. Love and continuing to love Christ.

Becoming a disciple of Christ is not becoming a follower one day and then it's all over. It's that it starts on a particular day and then continues Our Lord is making it plain here that He accepts nobody else.

Christ wouldn't accept those hearers in John chapter 8, for a number of reasons. The first reading of chapter 8 can be a stumbling block for a new Christian. We read in verse 30: ³⁰ *As he was saying these things, many believed in him.* But then we read in verse 44 that He said to the same people: ⁴ *You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires.* How can people be said to 'believe in Christ', only to be told a few minutes later that they are 'children of the devil'. But there is more to following than just admiration. It means believing; obeying; going His way – ALWAYS! Jesus couldn't accept these people as Christians because at verse 37 they trusted more in their ancestry, than they trusted in Him. He saw that His word found not place in them. Because they were still governed by sin. Because they didn't love Christ – verse 42. Because they wouldn't and couldn't bear to hear His word – verse 43. Because they wouldn't believe what He said – verse 46. Because they wouldn't listen to the word of God from whom He had come – verse 47.

He couldn't accept them as His true disciples because there was no change and no continual 'following'. And before we get to the end of the chapter we see just how temporary their following was. The people who in verse 30 having heard what He had said then and were described as 'following Him', now in verse 48, said, *"Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?"* Then in verse 52, these same people who 'followed Him', these Jews, said, ⁵² ... *"Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, 'If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.'* And then in verse 53: ⁵³ *Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?"*

Then in verse 59 they took up stones to stone Him.

It's the same story that's been repeated over and over again in the centuries since! They have said, "Oh what a great figure is Jesus Christ. I'll follow Him. I'll accept His teaching. But very often those very people when they realise what Jesus is saying and demanding, have turned against Him. Who do they turn against? Someone who's tender with sinners; lives in perfect fellowship with heaven; diagnoses the trouble with the human race: dying in their sins for whom He is their only light – the only cure – since if they truly follow Him they won't stumble in the darkness. Someone who only accepts continuing followers as true followers.

Then He reveals the fifth truth:

- **His true identity.**

When you reject Christ or refuse to follow Him. Be it known that it is God you reject. God you refuse to follow. Verse 23 & 24. ²³ *He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. ²⁴ I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that **I am** he you will die in your sins."* Here Jesus takes the great name of God from the Old Testament – I AM. "If you don't believe that that is my identity, you must die in your sins."

Verse 42: ⁴² *Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me.* Further indication of the eternal generation of the Son from the Father!

Verses 56 – 58. ⁵⁶ *Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad."* ⁵⁷ *So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?"* ⁵⁸ *Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, **I am**."* Here it is again – the great name of God. Unveiling to the world that the God who spoke to Abraham, the God who walked with Adam in the Garden. The God of the Patriarchs. The God who spoke out of the Burning Bush, who said, "I AM – who I AM"¹⁰, was none other than He Himself. The Jews couldn't believe that. They took up stones to kill Him. But taking stones does not disprove a truth. (John 20:31) ... *but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

[2674]

Pray that this may be so for all the saints gathered here today! Amen.

¹⁰ Examination of the Greek text of the Septuagint Old Testament for Exodus 3:14 where the words translated, 'I AM' when God replies to Moses request for a Name by which to recognise God are found. They are the identical Greek words used in verse 58 of John chapter 8: *ἐγώ εἰμι* (ego eimi).

Jesus is God The Giver of Physical and Spiritual Sight.

Per S Olyott

(Review of last week) -

John chapter 9: It's autumn time. Six months before the death of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Three times a year all the Jewish men, and many of the women and children, came up to Jerusalem. On this occasion it had been the great feast of tabernacles: a whole week of special rejoicing. When they remembered when God had led them through the wilderness and brought them into the promised land, giving them fruitful harvests. It was a tremendous time in the Jewish calendar! A time of great gladness. People of all different parts of the country coming to meet their friends and being there in the Temple rejoicing. Eight whole days of Services and special thanksgiving.

Yet this year, it was a time of tension. We remember the events of John chapter 7: there were little groups of people in the streets of Jerusalem and they were discussing – not openly, because they were too afraid – the Lord Jesus Christ. They were afraid to do it openly because everybody knew that the Jewish Authorities were plotting to kill Him. Indeed in John 7 we read how the Authorities sent people to arrest Christ. But they came back empty-handed. “Why haven't you arrested Him?” ... “*No one ever spoke like this man!*” (verse 46)

The way the Lord spoke was disarming. A wonderful experience to hear the Lord Jesus Christ speak.

In chapter 8 we see Jesus in the Temple. This poor woman, caught in adultery, is hauled in and put before Him. With marvellous skill Jesus points out to the Religious Authorities that they have no moral right to condemn her.

He then begins to speak about Himself and His relationship with the Father.

Then at the end of chapter eight we see the astonishing claim that Jesus made (verse 58 of chapter 8): ⁵⁸ *Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”* If He had said to them, “Before Abraham was I was,” then they could have thought that they had a crank amongst them. But He took the very Name of God, which God had given to Moses to refer to Him, by the 'burning bush', and says, “*before Abraham was, I AM.*” ¹¹

Standing there, the Man, Christ Jesus, declared to Jerusalem, that He was none other than God.

There were temple stones nearby, used in the repair of the Temple. They began to take up these stones to throw them at Him, because they believed Him to be a blasphemer and should be stoned to death. But our Lord, miraculously comes unscathed from the Temple and is descending down the Great Temple steps.

That's where chapter 9 begins.

¹¹ This is the Name given **by** God as the name He calls Himself (see final footnote for last week). This is different from the Name given **to** God by the Jews – the Tetragrammaton. Which written in 4 Hebrew characters was not pronounced for many centuries so that the particular vowel sounds needed to make it a pronounceable word were forgotten. With limited sources to work from the first translation of the Hebrew Old Testament to English (an earlier translation by Wycliffe was from an earlier Latin translation) by Tyndale, guessed at 'Jehovah' as the pronunciation. This was then passed to the King James Version and since then has been embedded into literature and hymns to an overwhelming extent. While the only certainty would be to 'be there', Jewish opinion and many eminent scholars favour 'Yahweh'.

¹As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. So as Jesus left the Temple we see Him healing a man, who had never seen. This case aroused great interest:

The man himself was eventually brought before the Authorities, who questioned him very closely, about what had happened. Becoming more and more annoyed by his answers, until they actually 'excommunicated' him from the Jewish religion. The Lord then sought out this man who He had healed and He reveal that He was the Son of God. The man now with open eyes is saying to Jesus, "Lord, I believe!" (verse 38) And he worships Christ.

Ironically, cast out of the place of Worship. Told that he can never worship with the Jews again, the first thing that happens to him is that he worships the Son of God because the once (twice) blind man can 'see', even if nobody else can 'see', who Jesus Christ is.

So there were two 'receivings ' of sight that day. He received his physical sight and his spiritual sight.

It's an important story. Many people have received great comfort from verse three. Sometimes when a Christian is ill somebody else comes to them and says, "You are only ill because of some sin in your life!" It's exactly what they said to Job so many years ago.

Or they many say, "You're only ill because of some sin in your parents. If you can only find what that sin is and put it right that illness will disappear."

Jesus explains in verse three that although, sin is the cause of illness in the 'global' sense. It's not a particular personal sin, which is necessarily the cause of your personal illness. God permits illness in His world. Many of His people, many of His creatures, go through pain. That platform is the platform God's stands on to show that He's at work. To the praise of God, there have been and are many fine Christians, who have known lives of pain, but have exhibited great patience. That patience can only be attributed to the work of God in their lives. A display of the beauty of Christian character!

For example Joni Eareckson Tada, who after a diving accident as a teenager, became a total quadriplegic. After much rehabilitation she was able to develop a skill of painting with a brush held in her lips. She founded 'Jodi and Friends', whose ministry (which included a daily radio programme) has brought encouragement to thousands of people. She says that while she was a nominal Christian before the accident, she probably would have drifted through life except that God allowed something to get her attention. She said, "Today as I look back, I am convinced that the whole ordeal of my paralysis was inspired by God's love. I wasn't the brunt of some cruel divine joke. God had reasons behind my suffering, and learning some of them has made all the difference in the world."¹²

So we see a display of beauty in the lives of many Christians. Despite bodies racked with pain and disabilities of various sorts we see displays of the work of God which we never normally see. There can be blessings in pain for which we thank God. Consequently people have received great comfort from this chapter. Personal sin is not the cause of illness.

So now we look more particularly at this man who was born blind. We can notice three things:

¹² As described on pages 3,4,37 & 38 of *Where is GOD WHEN THINGS GO WRONG?* By John Blanchard.

- The great change that came over this man in one day: When he left his house that morning he was blind. He had never seen. People spoke of colour. He knew the words and the descriptions, but had no idea of what they were talking about. They spoke about the beauty of design; loveliness of the trees; startling beauty of the sunset. Heard all those words but had never seen it for himself. Blind. But before the day ended he came seeing! *So he went and washed and came back seeing.* (Verse 7b) That morning he had been a young man, living at home with his parents, very dependant on them. Despite all their courage there a many things blind people cannot do, of which sighted people are able. Yet by the time we get to verse 21 there is a new independence in this man's character. Perhaps for the first time his parents say, *“Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.”* He was despised – up to that morning. If you want to see how they treated blind beggars, look at verse 34. *“You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?”* Just a beggar – blind. The Jewish Authorities taught that if anyone was a blind beggar it was either his fault or his parent's fault. They were treated with contempt. To be a beggar – and a blind beggar at that!

Yet this despised person – being despised from birth is worse than being blind from birth – was now confidently arguing with the top religious 'brains' of his day. Devastating them with his simple logic. Which we'll come to later. (next week)

Here's a man holding his own as the Religious Authorities really have a go at him. The man has changed remarkably as he stands before them and confidently speaks about Jesus Christ as he sees Him.

What was his knowledge of Christ? (verse 11) To begin with He only saw Christ as a man.¹³ Now look at verse 17, next he sees Christ as a prophet.¹⁴ Then at the end of verse 27 – “Will you also be His disciples?” He now sees Christ as a teacher to be followed. And then, verse 33: ³³ *If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.* He sees the work of God in the life of Jesus Christ. But now look from verse 35:

³⁵ *Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”* ³⁶ *He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?”* ³⁷ *Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.”* ³⁸ *He said, “Lord, I believe”, and he worshipped him.* In the morning, just like every body else, he sees Jesus as a mere man, by the evening he is a worshipper of the Son of God.

He had more than his physical eyes opened, that day.

- The second point is a greater miracle than the first. It's a far greater miracle to have your spiritual eyes opened than your physical eyes.

13 ¹¹ *He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ So I went and washed and received my sight.”*

14 ¹⁷ *So they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.”*

Here the opening of the physical eyes, is only a 'picture' of the opening of spiritual eyes. Of course his physical eyes were opened. It happened! A miracle. But it's one of those 'signs' in John's Gospel, where God does something in the physical realm to teach you a lesson in the spiritual realm.

This man had his spiritual eyes open on the same day as his physical eyes. It's very hard to understand what an opening of spiritual eyes is. So the miracle of his opening of the physical eyes is a symbol, or 'picture', intended to teach us lessons about the opening of spiritual eyes.

Here then are a number of elements of this lesson, which you should learn today:

a) A spiritual transformation can take place in a person in one day! Someone can wake up in the morning and not see that Jesus Christ is the Son of God to be Worshipped. A person can wake up in the morning and believe that Jesus Christ is a mere man, but before he goes to bed at night he may become a worshipper. A reverent disciple of the Son of God. That transformation may occur in a day. The chapter is intended to teach us that! By means of the physical miracle, we are expected to learn also how the spiritual miracle takes place.

Think of the marvellous joy, should a person come to a place where Christ's Word can have its effect – believing only that Jesus is a mere man – and rise from that Service, a worshipper of the Son of God! May that be the experience of all who haven't had it already. Pray that all can fully join in the next hymn: Amazing grace ... that saved a wretch like me! I once was ... blind but now I see.

b) So the next thing is how this great change comes about. The great change can happen in one day. By looking at the physical change we learn lessons about the spiritual change.

What you must recognise is that it was something done by Christ. Not by the man! Just as he could never have restored his own physical sight he could not create spiritual sight himself. You could imagine that ever since he was a young child he realised that he was different from the others, though he didn't realise how much he was actually missing. From his youngest years he longed to see. So if he had had any power of his own to be able to see, he would have used that power. But of course he couldn't do it for himself!

The change takes place only because of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Done by Christ! This was a 'sign'. Moral philosophers. Even people who claim to be Christian teachers, tell people to change themselves. Most people can't see the true identity of Christ, you might go to them and explain it to them in such a way, giving the impression that they have the power, in and of themselves, to see the true identity of Christ. But they don't! No person can call Jesus Christ, "Lord", except by the Holy Spirit (the Person which proceeds from the Father AND the Son).

No person, man or woman, boy or girl, can really grasp the identity of the Son of God and become a true worshipper of him, unless a spiritual transformation takes place in them, which is the work of Christ Himself.

c) Next we learn that this transformation comes about by an act of grace. By 'grace' we mean, 'undeserved kindness'. There were many beggars in Jerusalem. Jesus chose this one. Jerusalem was filled with people who were spiritually blind. Jesus chose this one, to open his physical and then his spiritual eyes. Men and women heaped scorn and contempt on the beggar, but the Lord of Glory noticed him and loved him and took him to His heart. The people, the Religious Authorities, cast him out. Wouldn't have anything more to do with him. Being cast out Jesus took him up. Using this context to unveil His true identity, so that for this man there would never be any uncertainty about it again.

It was an act of grace. If any of you see the truth about Christ. And enjoy seeing the truth about eternal, invisible things, it's because it's an act of grace. There are many who don't see. But you see! Among many spiritual beggars. But you are among those who have had your eyes opened. There are many whom Jesus Christ has been near to, but few in which the transformation has been brought about. And above all the credit does not go to you, because you're more discerning, or more educated, or more religious, or better brought up. The credit goes to Him who alone opens sinners eyes.

[2380]

Pray that this may be so for all the saints gathered here today! Amen.

Next week we continue to consider how the gift of spiritual sight comes about, by noting that it was: d) an act of power. Then we will consider the last of the three things that this passage from John's Gospel teaches.