

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

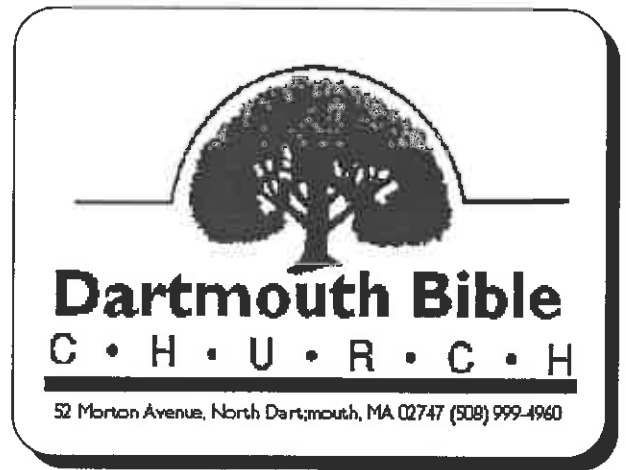
NOTES FROM THE PULPIT MINISTRY
OF DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH

SERIES: STUDIES IN JOHN

LESSON #1 SCRIPTURE: JOHN 1:1

SPEAKER: REV. NEIL C. DAMGAARD, TH.M.

DATE: APRIL 30TH, 1995



The Lamb, In the Beginning

INTRODUCTION Very possibly the Gospel of John is the most universally loved book of the Bible. It contains the verse most often memorized (3:16); it is the book to which we tend to direct both people who are seeking answers and those who recently have come to know Jesus; it contains some of our favorite stories of Jesus which do not occur in the Gospels by Matthew, Mark or Luke. The Gospel of John, we might say, is the textbook for Christianity 101. The British scholar Leon Morris said this about John's Gospel:

John's Gospel is like a pool in which a child may wade and an elephant can swim. It is both simple and profound. It is for the very beginner in the faith and [also] for the mature Christian. Its appeal is immediate and [also] never failing. *p. 12 Keyword Learning System*

We are beginning a series today which I am calling "Studies in John." And I want us to study John together for precisely the reason that Morris gave; it is both simple and profound. In our church we are blessed with a delightful mix of people, some of who are new in the faith and others who are mature. We can benefit greatly by taking a sustained look at John's Gospel. We will not deal with every verse though. For one thing I have preached from John 20 times in my ministry here already, 17 times in the past five years, and 5 times from John 3. There will be times when we will pull out the microscope and look at a passage in detail. There will be other times when we will back off and use binoculars and get a bigger picture. I am excited about looking at this Gospel and it is the first of the four Gospels we will have looked at in some detail from the pulpit here.

The Gospel of John was written by the apostle John, the son of Zebedee and Salome and the brother of James. He enjoyed a close relationship with Jesus of Nazareth and was one of the inner circle of His disciples. He is the only one of all the apostles to die as an old man. He also wrote four other books of the New Testament: his three letters, and the Revelation. His Gospel, he probably wrote from the ancient city of Ephesus in the latter years of his life. It was thought by critical and liberal scholars for many years that this book was surely *not* written by John, himself and was written in the late second century by someone simply *using* John's name--until p⁵² came along in about 1920. [See overhead] p⁵² is a little fragment, about 3½ X 2½ inches, of an ancient papyrus manuscript, all that's left of it, that was found in an ancient Egyptian trash heap. It was clearly dated (in part by the materials with which it was found) to be from about the year 135 AD, meaning of course that the original manuscript must have been written much earlier. This little fragment, with its few lines of ancient Greek writing on each side, is a piece of the Gospel of John! And its discovery clearly vindicated the Gospel's claim to have been written by someone FROM the time of Jesus, by an *eyewitness* to the events of Jesus' life. This always gets me excited because that is one of the main evidences WE HAVE for the authenticity of our faith--the eyewitness accounts of the New Testament. John's evidence for the deity of Jesus Christ is threefold: (1) the miracles He performed; (2) the words He spoke and (3) the testimony of witnesses who knew Him. John's evidences are OUR evidences, dear ones. We want people to place their confidence and full trust in Jesus, whom *we* say is alive. We want people to give their lives over to the words which Jesus spoke. We ask people to do that. We pray that they will. You see, people need answers. That's nothing new; they have always needed answers. But I am keenly aware (I'm sure you are too) that so many people all around us are hungry. That's why they're so cynical. They've been looking for answers and have been disappointed so much by all the foolishness and counterfeits in the world. They *sense*; they know there's more to life than just partying and making money and surviving; but they've been frustrated so far in knowing what it is.

John's evidence is our evidence, my friends. What he saw, is what people need. And we claim his evidence as our justification for talking about Jesus to people. Unbelievers are sometimes perplexed that we can be so sure of our brand of faith in God. Sometimes unbelievers try hard to disprove the veracity of our faith. They look at the failures in life matters that Christians sometimes experience and they say, "So, you know God, eh?" But still they are confronted with the Gospel of John, written by a man who knew Jesus. John also wrote these words (I John 1:1,2):

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life--and the life was manifested [appeared, NIV] and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested [appeared] to us...

And at the very end of the book we have John's own words about why he wrote this Gospel. He very likely at least knew about Matthew's Gospel and Mark's Gospel and Luke's Gospel; (maybe even had copies). But His Gospel takes a very different perspective from theirs. In 20:31 John wrote: *these [things] have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.* Believing in Jesus requires two things: knowledge and volition. Believing in Jesus requires an intellectual conviction about the evidences for Christ. And it requires a drive to follow Him. Do you have both? You need both just as the people to whom John wrote this book needed both. That's why he wrote the book, to create *faith in Christ* and to promote a following by people of Jesus, more and more new people who are hungry, looking for answers in a cynicism-bound world.

Now, John 1:1 echoes Genesis 1. In both places we have light and life. Let's launch into John's Gospel now and see what John saw himself:

1:1 John begins by tying Jesus to the beginning of time. John refers to Jesus as "the Word" (ho logos, ὁ λόγος). *Logos* is a deep word and John calls Jesus logos only elsewhere in 1:14, I John 1:1 & Rev. 19:13. A good meaning for *logos* is "a statement of reason." God's Son, come to earth as a man, in the flesh, is the appearance of REASON in its purest form. At Christmas we see sayings on coffee mugs and Christmas cards and banners, "Jesus is the reason for the season." That is like John would say it! He is the reason for living. He is life. He is reason. He is the one who makes everything make sense.

The Jews of Jesus' day, very much needed answers. They desperately needed an *explanation* for why their world was the way it was. They had no freedom. They were an occupied country. They lived with many depressing circumstances. They intensely needed *answers*. They needed the *logos*. And the Son of God wasn't just *invented* by God at Christmas. He had been around all along. He was there *In the beginning*.

Solomon wrote these words, which predict the Son of God and describe His presence *in the beginning*:

When He established the heavens, I was there. When He inscribed a circle on the face of the deep, when He made firm the skies above, when the springs of the deep became fixed, when He set for the sea its boundary so that the water would not transgress His command, when He marked out the foundations of the earth; then, I was beside Him; as a master-workman; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him, rejoicing in the world, His earth, and having my delight in the sons of men (Proverbs 8:27-31).

When the whole universe began, Jesus was there. (By the way, you figure, then, that since Jesus testified to a literal creation, He would know!) And the relationship back then (as now) that the Son of God had with the Father was very close (***the Word was with God***). The Father and the Son took supreme delight in each other. This was LOVE at its highest even before there were any such thing as "people." This former joy that God's Son knew with the Father before He came to earth as Jesus of Nazareth was so deep that it was never erased from His consciousness, either!

At the end of verse 1 we have the important phrase ***and the Word was God***. People in cults like the Mormons or the Jehovah's Witnesses (and others) have tried to lessen who Jesus was, to deny His deity by claiming that the clause *should* be translated ***and the Word was a God*** since the term "God" in Greek does not have the definite article "the" in front of it. But all reputable Greek grammarians have pointed out that the word "God" is plainly *definite*, and if it did have a definite article in front of it, that would imply that *only* the Word was God and would deny the deity of the Father and of the Spirit. John's Greek construction ***the Word was God*** proclaims the deity of the Son in the plainest way possible. Do not let any cultist ever intimidate you by saying that the Bible does not claim Jesus was God. It surely does.

The things that Jesus did and the words which Jesus spoke all are clearly the words and deeds of God, and that is part of John's purpose in writing this book. If you want a key word for remembering what the Gospel of John is all about [see overhead] think of it this way: here we've got a "J" painting, and is he ever turned ON with his picture! When you recall the Gospel of John, you'll immediately recall a "J On" painting the "sun" of God! Now you've got it! "J On" (John) paints a picture of Christ as the *Son* (sun) of God. The "Keyword" for this book. John--the *Son of God*. [Keyword Learning System, Walk Thru The Bible, 1992]

I would ask you to pray for this series of messages. Pray that this might be a time when the Book of John really grabs people in and around our church. Ask God to use Jesus words and His life in your life, indeed to *infuse* you with His life.....

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

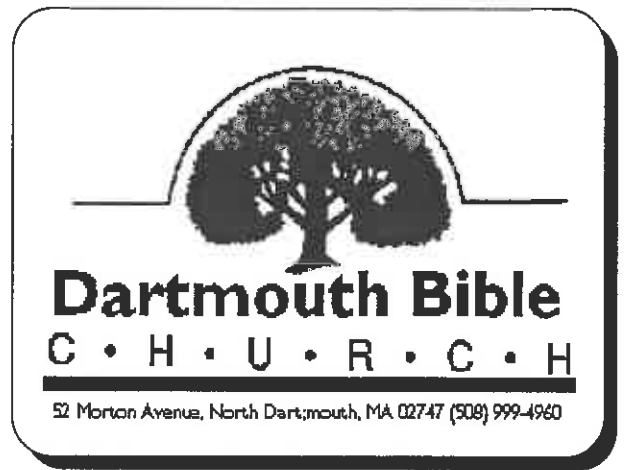
NOTES FROM THE PULPIT MINISTRY
OF DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH

SERIES: STUDIES IN JOHN

LESSON #2 SCRIPTURE: JOHN 1:3-5

SPEAKER: REV. NEIL C. DAMGAARD, TH.M.

DATE: MAY 7TH, 1995



Jesus Is Life and Light

INTRODUCTION Have you ever wondered whether Christianity really explains everything? Does the idea that Jesus is Lord of all the universe--that is what we say we believe--does that cover all the questions that people raise? Does it answer all the challenges and inquires about the meaning of life? We are persuaded that it does. We are completely comfortable with the idea that Jesus Christ is Lord of all. But it is an honest question, don't you think? And, one Christians should be prepared to answer. Our answer to those who would ask it is, "Yes, Jesus is Lord of all." Because in the beginning of all things, we are convinced that Jesus was right there, face to face with God, and in fact He WAS and still IS God [See [John 1:1,2](#)]. Our basis for such a belief rests on the testimony of John, the apostle. He wrote this Gospel we are beginning a look at. And in his first chapter, he starts right out with deep matters; in fact, with answers to deep theological questions before he ever says anything about what Jesus did or what He actually said.

I must confess that although I have often recommended to a new Christian or a "seeker" that they should begin their acquaintance with the Bible through reading the Book of John, I am often a little embarrassed because I know what they will encounter in the first chapter: theology. And I cringe a little when they first read that chapter. I almost am tempted to say, "Go on to chapter two." Because chapter one reaches into deeper questions than the average seeker is asking! But for our purposes, let's dwell on those deeper questions just a little, together...

1:3 Now we read in vs. 3 that Jesus was the one who originated everything that exists. That means, also by the way, that He, Himself, was not created. He always was. Always. And in the divine wisdom and cooperation God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit all united in creating the physical universe. Yes, I know our own little average star is 93 million miles away from us. I know that the nearest other star is hundreds of light years away. I know that the known universe is vast in size and that its physics are almost incomprehensible to our little brains. But Jesus made it all. He *spoke* it all into existence. That is what John proclaims. That is what I believe. It is a mind-boggling concept that ALL THIS could come from one being's mere decision and spoken directive. Perhaps the very *awesomeness* of that idea is why John called the son of God the LOGOS here... [Note: John Calvin translates "logos" as the "Speech" of God.]

In Hebrews 1 we read that writer's statement about Jesus. It is a fascinating passage! Jesus is the center of the Father's attention. The Father has appointed the Son *heir of all things*, and it was through His Son that the Father *made the world*. And if you want to know something about what the Father is like, look at the Son (verse 3) for HE is the *exact representation of His nature*. And the Son actually holds the universe together just by HIS decree. Perhaps THAT is the most awesome attribute of the Son of God. Is He THAT powerful? When the disciples (including, by the way, John) saw Jesus say to the storm on the sea *Hush* AND IT OBEYED HIM, they went, "Whoa, who IS this being?" He's the Son of God, dear ones. He's not just some prophet, some bhagwan, some mullah, some guru, some professor, some mentor. He is the very Son of God--the same One whom we try to draw close to on Sunday mornings. That's who we *especially* try to draw close to on the first Sunday morning of the month when we celebrate His table... He is the one and only Son of God, through whom you and I and everyone who ever was or will be, and all the planets and all the stars and all the solar systems in the universe came to be. We, are HIS idea! See I Cor. 8:6 too...

1:4 Then in the next verse we have a marvelous proclamation. In the Logos was *life and the life as the light of men*. Pretty heady stuff, don't you think? It may seem awfully heady and abstract until a person comes face to face with life's dilemmas and paradoxes and tragedies and atrocities and seemingly pointless disasters. At THAT moment a person starts to ask deep questions. What IS life? What does it *mean* if it can be snuffed out so quickly and so randomly? We believe that life is only fully understandable by placing JESUS at the center of life. He is the one who invented life and He is the one who makes it meaningful. Jesus is the one who breathed into Adam

the breath of life and He is the one who became, as Scripture elsewhere says, the second Adam, offering NEW life to any and all who will receive *that* from Him.

Life is something I think people want. They don't want to feel that living is pointless; just mere existence. They want to *feel alive*. They want to *feel purposeful* and *useful*. Many demonstrations of this striving could be given...

People experiment with drugs to achieve a higher level of sensation or escape. People are constantly hungry to learn new skills like flying an airplane or dancing or painting--why? To experience *life* more fully.

Religion in general testifies to man's need to construct meaning for existing.

Bears don't have a religion. Wombats don't have a religion. Why not? Because it is instinctive to man only to search and inquire and know what living is all about?

Before I became a Christian I suppose my religion was music. I was (and still am) deeply touched by music. It is the sound of something *other*. It echoes that there is *more out there*. I sensed that even as a non-Christian, but I sense it even more now. The very existence of music says to me that life goes further than just get-up, have-a-bite, go-out, gather-bites-for-tomorrow, go-home, go-to-bed.

The wonder of living and of life from the cradle to the casket, comes from the hand of the Savior who made us, who died to re-make us, and who IS making us into a building in which He can live. Jesus is the whole meaning of life, because life itself comes from Him. Jesus is not one who *reacts to* life; He is the inventor and sustainer of life itself.

John means more deeply though, that Jesus is the meaning of *spiritual* life. Every person has a mind and a body. But we all have something more--we have a spirit. We are physical beings, but more than that we are *spiritual* creatures. Life is physical, yes. But it is spiritual too. Jesus Christ is the center of the spirit world even as He upholds the physical world by the *word of His power*. The great lie and deception that is so prevalent in Western society is that "Jesus is just all right with me." He's cool. He's OK. He's one of many lights. He's one way of looking at things. When someone says that to you, my friends, they are making no concession. They are mimicking a lie of Satan. Jesus is not one of many lights in the world. He is THE light, or so says the apostle John, anyway. John says the Word, the *logos, was the life and the life was the light of men*. This is a deep thing. Christ is where life comes

from originally; OK... And He is life-lived-most-fully, OK... And life in Him was revelation for all mankind. That's heavy. He is God, revealed. The great Greek scholar A.T. Robertson wrote this:

John's statement is curiously like the view of some physicists who find in electricity (both light and power) the nearest equivalent to life in its ultimate physical form (*Word Pictures*).

Actually, I find this easier to grasp on a personal level. Before I became a Christian, I was striving to find meaning in life. Music and relationships were two tools to *feel alive*, but they were sometimes disappointing. Before I became a Christian, I believed in God and I believed in Jesus. But He was distant, remote, untouchable. I was out of touch with Him. I figured He was there--that much I gained from my Lutheran upbringing--but I didn't see how He was very relevant or even interested in me. But then in 1972 I became a Christ-follower, a Christian. I adopted a set of doctrines which I decided to believe in my head, AND I started working on a living faith, too. I began to *pursue* God personally. Soon I started to really realize that pursuing Jesus brings life and light.

It brought *life* in that I was overwhelmed with a sense of *purpose*, of "logos", of "reason", you might say. I felt alive. I wanted to go to church. I wanted to discover other Christians. I wanted to read the Bible and more than that to *study* it out. This was new. I looked at myself and saw that I had not been like this before. It was new life. I had more energy than before. And there was a new hope. Man, I was *excited* about the future!

Pursuing Jesus also brought *light*. I was excited about having a new framework for making sense out of things. When I was a new Christian I was an engineering student. I studied science, and how things work. Beyond that, I was studying human-factors engineering and how man interfaces with machines, so I was already doing a sort-of built-in search for meaning. Coming to know Christ and experiencing the new life He gives shed LIGHT on things. It made me a better engineer student even, and in fact my grades took a big boost, which I attribute to my conversion to Christ [the quarter before I became a Christian I achieved a 1.0 average; the quarter I became a Christian I achieved a 2.3 and the next quarter a 3.2]. He lit up my life! Jesus brought *life and light* into my existence. And He is still doing it. I still soak up the life that comes from prayer and Bible study and fellowship and serving Him. I still interpret the world around me by the light that He gives.

But, I don't think a person can discover the meaning of life by study or by effort in searching. *Life and light* must be revealed to him or her by God. Seeing God and really coming to an understanding of who Jesus is, does not happen by human attempts to figure Him out. Verse 13 tells us otherwise...

1:5 John posits that the world into which Jesus came did not naturally understand or welcome Him. It was a world of *darkness*. But "the light kept on shining in spite of the darkness that was worse than a London fog..." [A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures*].

Whether the mayor or the governor or the talk show host or the stage performer or the general or the high school principal realize it or not, we live within a world that is spiritually dark. The Enlightenment of the 18th century was a hoax. Knowledge does not make the darkness subside. Only the light of the Word of God, of the Son of God can overtake the darkness and make it flee. The text says that *the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it*. Probably a better way to translate that is *the darkness did not overcome it*. We live in a society wrestling today as never before in this century with issues of light and darkness. We wonder "which will win?" Ultimately, the light always wins. It wins on a national scale.

When the government starts to realize that the *safe sex agenda* really only results in greater misery and that abstinence is the best thing to teach school kids, the light wins.

And the light wins on a personal level. When we chose a dark path on something we eventually come around to realize that the light was the way to go. When we bow to the light and accept His ways and embrace them and change our lives so that we *abide in the light* then the light wins out over whatever darkness is still around.

Is Jesus the Lord of all the universe? Is there enough life and light in Him to meet with any question and any problem people can come up with? Yes, oh yes. There is no other way to live than to seek the Savior, to bore deep into His Word and to enjoy the relationships He brings us to have and to hold.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

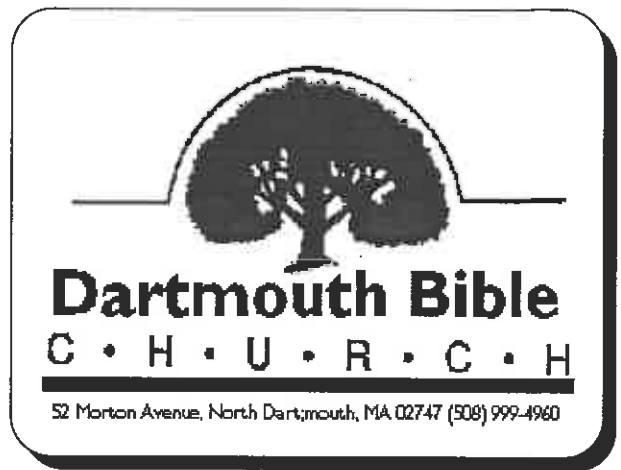
NOTES FROM THE PULPIT MINISTRY
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SERIES: STUDIES IN JOHN

LESSON #3 SCRIPTURE: JOHN 1:6-13

SPEAKER: REV. NEIL C. DAMGAARD, TH.M.

DATE: MAY 14TH, 1995



The Light Which Passes Between Generations

INTRODUCTION I want to tell you about my grandmothers. I had two. My father's mother, I've mentioned to you before. Her name was Metha Hansen. She came to this country from Denmark (through Ellis Island, no doubt) in about 1891, following her betrothed who had come over the previous year, them both being 20 years old. They left family and friends in Denmark forever and made a new life together in northern Wisconsin where they raised eight children, the youngest being my Dad. I only remember Metha personally from one visit we had there in 1960 at Thanksgiving, two months before she died at 90. I remember her slipping me a couple of pieces of candy behind my Dad's back and being enchanted at that.

My other grandmother was named Mary Ella Hardeman. She was from west Tennessee from a very well-known Tennessee family that goes back all the way back to Jamestown. Mary Ella and her husband (my grandfather) raised nine children, number six being my Mom. Now I mention my grandmothers to you, not because either was a typical evangelical woman. Neither was. Metha was Danish Lutheran and Mary Ella was sort of nominally Church of Christ. I have heard no tales of Bible-reading or prayer-meeting-attending or missions involvement or anything like that. But I think both were probably regenerate women and privately and quietly I think both probably loved the Lord. But here is what both passed on to my parents and ultimately to me (I hope): three qualities that just seem an awful lot like Jesus: steadfastness, dependability, and absolute honesty. These are characteristics that while not exclusively Christian, they *ought* to be true of all Christians.

When a person comes to the Light, his life changes. Where there was darkness or dimness or confusion before now there is clear thinking--at least as far as how to get to God is concerned. The apostle John calls Jesus Christ "the Light." He paints a picture that before Jesus came into the world, the world was living in darkness. He makes no distinction between cultures; he just speaks of the whole world. And he says that Jesus is the light of the world, the only light that the world needs. If you think of Christ that way--as the light--then how is He communicated today? He isn't here, physically. His Spirit is here, but people cannot see the Holy Spirit. We need somehow to show Jesus to people in other ways. We need to somehow shed the light of the Gospel into people's lives. One way that happens is from mother to child. Now, this passage in John 1 isn't specifically about motherhood. It's about the light. But today let's apply some of the things we read about in John 1 to the Christian family. It is in the Christian family probably, that more light is passed "per capita" than in any other organization. My grandmothers did not pass me the knowledge of the Gospel. But they passed what light they had. Their character for steadfastness, dependability and honesty were godly traits. I wish the evangelical Christians I know today had as much steadfastness, dependability and honesty as my grandmothers possessed. But the light that Metha and Mary Ella had, I saw in both my parents. You see, light is not *only* theological understanding and fine points of doctrinal truth. Light also includes "how to live" stuff; *character* and *integrity*. The apostle John is talking about theology in chapter 1, but as he mentions another John--John the Baptist--*that* John was very much concerned with matters of character and integrity. He looked around him, and specifically at the religious and political leadership of his day, and saw that it was in many ways morally bankrupt. He saw little light in them. But when Jesus arrived on the scene, HE was the Messiah and the light of the world in a moral way too.

Let's think about John the Baptist for a minute (verses 6-8). He is a fascinating individual. But I don't know if you would have liked him, especially. He was not a man-of-the-world. He was not "hip." But there was an appeal which he had, sufficient to win him his own followers. He was careful however, to make it plain that he was only a forerunner. His mission was to "herald" the Messiah. John himself was not the light--he bore witness to the light.

Maybe it's painfully obvious to us that John the Baptist wasn't the One. But at the time it may have needed clarification. People today still get confused about what they believe and why they believe it. Do you believe in Jesus because your mother or grandmother told you to or expect you to? Let it be clear, dear ones, you do not owe your religious faith to your parents. You should not choose your life's creed out of

allegiance to parents. You should ask yourself, "Now of all the religions, which is the Light?" All John the Baptist wanted was for people to embrace the Light, by faith. He did not want people to embrace him and miss the true Light. And the apostle tells us that the Baptist was *sent from God*. John the Baptist's ministry was planned and ordained by God even before he was born. He was going to be the last of the Old Testament-style prophets.

Let me apply this to Moms and grandmothers. Their primary job is to point their child or grandchild to the Light. Of all their responsibilities the main priority is to acquaint their children with Who the Messiah is, how you get to know Him and what He expects of us. Mothers and grandmothers (Fathers and grandfathers too) spread the Light between the generations by *heralding* the news about Jesus Christ. Now, I did not hear the Gospel from my mother or from either grandmother, and I am living proof that God is not limited to using parents as heralds. I did receive some light from my family but not the light of the Gospel.

At the Promise Keepers training this weekend in Worcester, of the five of us men who attended none of us had mothers who passed the light of the Gospel on to us. But all of us have wives who can do it or who have done it or who are doing it. All have *born witness to the light*. Let me give this charge to mothers and grandmothers today. Your greatest mission is to make the light of the Gospel plain to your children and grandchildren. It isn't a hard thing. But it should be repeated and restated and illustrated and then lived out. My grandmothers did not have opportunity to talk to me about Jesus and I don't think they would have if they did have opportunity. But they did live lives of integrity, of steadfastness, dependability and honesty that I was aware of. I never would have seen either grandmother cheat on her husband, steal money, leave her kids for some outside interest, or do anything of a shady nature at all. But the primary responsibility is to share Christ with the child. And to bring out that Bible and uncover the light. Kids today need a great deal of light and that is because there is so much darkness.

As John the Baptist was a *reflector* of the true light, so parents need to be that today to their children. If you look at a full moon, you know that the moon is not generating the light; the sun is and the moon just does a beautiful job of reflecting it. That's what we do as parents and grandparents. We reflect the true light, and it is wonderful how light does pass between generations. I believe that if the light of Jesus Christ is passed WITHIN families, it has a much greater impact. Oh, sure, we have Gospel radio tapes and videos and conferences. But the deepest impact for Christ

comes when a child sees Jesus Christ in his Mom and in his Dad and in his grandparents on a day-in and day-out basis. That has a much deeper and lasting effect on a child. I notice a number of well-known people around who while not in pursuit of Christ at the moment, DID have an upbringing under the sound of the Gospel and they refer to that frequently. They cannot escape Him!

In verse 9 John reiterates that Jesus is the *true light*. He is not a false light like a ship might mistakenly follow on the coast and then become shipwrecked by being misguided. A person will never become shipwrecked by pursuing Jesus. Other "lights" will shipwreck a person, but Christ will not. Now, John says that Christ, being the true light, *enlightens every man*. The Quakers appeal to this phrase for their belief that to every man is given an "inner light" that is all the guide he needs to get to heaven. I don't think this means though, that every person on the planet receives from God a special revelation that ultimately will draw him or her to God. I think it means that all the real light that people receive come from Christ.

You know, I think that if Jesus were here with us in the flesh and we could see and talk to Him literally, and spend time with Him--I don't think He would just do Bible study the whole time with us. I think He would talk about a lot of subjects. He would shed His marvelous light on anything we might ask Him about. All true and good knowledge derives from Him, whether its theological or electrical or physical or biological or economic, etc.

In verse 10 we read that Jesus was in the world, a world that He, Himself, had made. What an incredible thing. I can hardly imagine the wonder of that. Jesus made the whole world just by speaking it into existence and then He, Himself, came down into it as a real human, looking, acting, living just LIKE one of it's creatures. In fact, not just *imitating* one of its creatures but truly BEING one of its creatures in every way except for the sin part--which, of course, is no small difference.

I have said this before but I see it still and I want to say it again here today. I don't think that inside of many of us we really want Jesus to have *really* been *in the world*. Christians are often trying to live as though *they* were not in the world. And I think it is unsettling to believe that Jesus was really IN the world, even if we consent that He was not "OF" the world. But dear ones, we must believe what was true. Jesus was a man in every respect except for sin. And AS a man, He revealed the light of God. He demonstrated HOW to live and HOW to THINK. That's our mission too. We need to be real people and not be fake people. We need to bring the light of the Spirit that

resides within us, OUT of our lives and bring it to bear on a real world which is locked in darkness.

And we need to not be surprised if we don't always get a sympathetic reaction. In verse 11 John says that Jesus *came to His own* (the Jews, His own family, even the whole world that He had made) *and those who were His own did not receive Him*. Rejection of the light is a basic part of human life. Now I want to say this very carefully. If your children or grandchildren reject the light, absorb that rejection philosophically. First of all, NOT RECEIVING CHRIST is something that even his own closest associates did and they had Him right there. Second, if your children or grandchildren reject the light their rejection may only be temporary. The mind of an 18 year old is not the mind of a 28 year old. Now, I believe that God intends to bless many, many families with RECEPTION of the light right within their own families. He has chosen, I am convinced, that often the light WILL be received by a child from his Mom or Dad or grandparent. But if they do not, take it somewhat philosophically. Now, of course, I am not saying that we are callous and that should not feel sadness or grief when my child turns away from Jesus. But if they do, don't go into the hospital over it. If you do that, you are saying that YOU are the sovereign. You strip God of His sovereignty and you defeat and quench the Spirit within you which is ever working to produce joy in you. You must not let your children rob you of that which God is trying to give you. You must always submit to God as a sovereign God and remember that EVERY time a person receives the light of the Gospel they do it by His sovereign grace, ultimately.

And in general, I believe God intends that we derive much joy by seeing the next generation embrace the Savior just as we have. He has ordained that a major source of joy is NOT in getting material possessions, NOT in making more money, NOT in living in a bigger house. It's in seeing our children and grandchildren learn about the light of Christ and then begin seeking more light for themselves.

Is Jesus Life and Light?

by Neil C. Dangard

Adapted from the morning sermon
Dartmouth Bible Church
North Dartmouth, Massachusetts
May 7th, 1995

Wave you ever wondered whether Christianity really explains everything? Does the idea that Jesus is Lord of all the universe—that is what we believe—does that cover all the questions that people raise? Does it answer all the challenges and inquires about the meaning of life? Christians are persuaded that it does. We are completely comfortable with the idea that Jesus Christ is Lord of all. But the question is an honest question—and, one Christians should be prepared to answer. Christians' answer to those who would ask it is, "Yes, Jesus is Lord of all." Because in the beginning of all things, we are convinced that Jesus was right there, face to face with God, and in fact He WAS and still IS God [See John 1:1,2]. Our basis for such a belief rests quite unsopistically on the testimony of John, the Apostle. He wrote this Gospel, a piece of the first chapter that we consider here. And in his first chapter, he starts right out with deep matters; in fact, with answers for deep theological questions before he ever says anything about what Jesus did or what He actually said.

I must confess that although I have often recommended to a new Christian or a "seeker" that they should begin their acquaintance with the Bible through reading the Book of John, I am often a little embarrassed because I know what they will encounter in the first chapter: theology. And I cringe a little when they first read that chapter. I almost am tempted to say, "Go on to chapter two." Because chapter one reaches into deeper questions than the average seeker is asking! But for our purposes, let's dwell on those deeper questions just a little, together....

JOHN 1:3 We read in vs. 3 of the first chapter of John that Jesus was the One who originated everything that exists. That means, also by the way, that He, Himself, was not created. He always was. Always. And in the divine wisdom and cooperation God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit all united in creating the physical universe. Yes, I know our own little average star is 93 million miles away from us. I know that the nearest other star is hundreds (?) of light years away. I know that the known universe is vast in size and that its physics are almost incomprehensible to our little brains. But Jesus made it all. He spoke it all into existence. That is what John proclaims. That is what I believe. It is a mind-boggling concept that ALL THIS could come from One Being's mere decision and spoken directive. Perhaps the very *awesome*ness of that idea is why John termed the son of God the LOGOS here in John 1... [Note: The great Swiss-French Reformer John Calvin translated "logos" in John 1:1 (Λογος) as the "Speech" of God.]

In the first chapter of the Book of Hebrews we read that writer's statement about Jesus. It is a fascinating passage! There Jesus is depicted as being at the center of the Father's attention. The Father has appointed the Son *heir of all things*, and it was through His Son that the Father *made the world*. And if you want to know something about what the Father is like, look at the Son (verse 3) for HE is the *exact representation of His nature*. And the Son actually holds the universe together just by HIS decree. Perhaps THAT is the most awesome attribute of the Son of God. Is He THAT powerful? When the disciples (including, by the way, John) saw Jesus say to the storm on the sea *Hush* AND IT OBEYED HIM, they went, "Whoa, who IS this being?" He is the Son of God. He's not just some prophet, some bhagwan, some mullah, some guru, some professor, some mentor. He is the very Son of God—the same One whom we try to draw close to on Sunday mornings. That's who we *especially* try to draw close to on the first Sunday morning of the month when we celebrate His table... He is the one and only Son of God, through whom you and I and everyone who ever was or will be, and all the planets and all the stars and all the solar systems in the universe came to be. We, are HIS ideal! See I Cor. 8:6 also.

JOHN 1:4 Then, in the next verse we have a marvelous proclamation! In the Logos was *life and the life as the light of men*. Pretty heady stuff, don't you think? It may seem awfully heady and abstract until a person comes face to face with life's dilemmas and paradoxes and tragedies and atrocities and seemingly pointless disasters. At THAT moment a person starts to ask deep questions. What IS life? What does it *mean* if it can be snuffed out so quickly and so randomly? We believe that life is only fully understandable by placing JESUS at the center of life. He is the one who invented life and He is the one who makes it meaningful. Jesus is the one who breathed into Adam the breath of life and He is the one who became, as Scripture elsewhere says, the second Adam, offering NEW life to any and all who will receive *that* from Him.

Life is something I think people want. They don't want to feel that living is pointless; just mere existence. They want to *feel alive*. They want to *feel purposeful and useful*. Many demonstrations of this striving could be given....

People experiment with drugs to achieve a higher level of sensation or escape. People are constantly hungry to learn new skills like flying an airplane or dancing or painting—*why?* To experience *life* more fully. Religion in general testifies to man's need to construct meaning for existing. Bears don't have a religion. Womrats don't have a religion. Why not? Because it is instinctive to man only to search and inquire and know what living is all about?

Before I became a Christian I suppose my "religion" was music. I was (and still am) deeply touched by music. It is the sound of something *other*. It whispers that there is *more out there*. I sensed that even as a non-Christian, but I sense it even more now. The very existence of music says to me that life goes further than just get-up, have-a-bite, go-out, gather-bites-for-tomorrow, go-home, go-to-bed. And my discovery is that the wonder of life, of living life from the cradle to the casket, comes from the hand of the Savior who made us, who died to re-make us, and who IS making us into a building in which He can live. Jesus is the *whole* meaning of life, because life itself comes from Him. Jesus is not one who *reacts* to life; He is the Inventor and Sustainer of life itself.

John means something more deeply, though, than that Jesus is the center of living. He is the meaning, the epicenter of *spiritual* life. Every person has a mind and a body. But we all have something more—we have a spirit. We are physical beings, but more than that we are *spiritual* creatures. Life is physical, yes. But it is spiritual, too. Jesus Christ is the center of the spirit world even as He upholds the physical world by the *word of His power*. The great lie and deception that is so prevalent in Western society is that “Jesus is just all right with me.” He’s cool. He’s OK. He’s one of many lights. He’s one way of looking at things. When someone says that to you, my friends, they are making no concession. They are mimicking a lie of Satan. Jesus is not one of many lights in the world. He is **THE** light, or so says the apostle John, anyway. John says the Word, the *logos*, **was the life and the life was the light of men**. This is a deep thing. Christ is where life comes from originally; OK... And He is life-lived-most-fully; OK... And life in Him was revelation for all mankind. That’s heavy. He is God, revealed. The great Greek scholar A.T. Robertson wrote this: “John’s statement is curiously like the view of some physicists who find in electricity (both light and power) the nearest equivalent to life in its ultimate physical form” (*Word Pictures*).

Actually, I find verse 3 easier to grasp on a personal level. Before I became a Christian, I was striving to find meaning in life. Music and relationships were two tools to *feel alive*, but they were sometimes disappointing. Before I became a Christian, I believed in God and I believed in Jesus. But He was distant, remote, untouchable. I was out of touch with Him. I figured He was there—that much I gained from my Lutheran upbringing—but I didn’t see how He was very relevant or even interested in me. But then in 1972 I became a Christ-follower, a Christian. I adopted a set of doctrines which I decided to believe in my head, **AND** I started working on a living faith, too. I began to *pursue* God personally. Soon I started to really realize that pursuing Jesus brings life and light.

It brought *life* in that I was overwhelmed with a sense of purpose, of “logos”, of “reason”, you might say. I felt alive. I wanted to go to church. I wanted to discover other Christians. I wanted to read the Bible and more than that to *study* it out. This was new. I looked at myself and saw that I

had not been like this before. It was new life. I had more energy than before. And there was a new hope. Man, I was excited about the future!

Pursuing Jesus also brought *light*. I was excited about having a new framework for making sense out of things. When I was a new Christian I was an engineering student. I studied science, and how things work. Beyond that, I was studying human-factors engineering and how man interfaces with machines, so I was already doing a sort-of built-in search for meaning. Coming to know Christ and experiencing the new life He gives shed LIGHT on things. It made me a better engineering student even, and in fact my grades took a big boost, which I attribute to my conversion to Christ [the quarter before I became a Christian. I achieved a 1.0 average; the quarter I became a Christian I achieved a 2.3 and the next quarter a 3.2]. He lit up my life! Jesus brought *life and light* into my existence. And He is still doing it. I still soak up the life that comes from prayer and Bible study and fellowship and serving Him. I still interpret the world around me by the light that He gives.

But, I don’t think a person can discover the meaning of life by study or by effort in searching. *Life and light* must be revealed to him or her by God. Seeing God and really coming to an understanding of who Jesus is, does not happen by human attempts to figure Him out. Verse 13 tells us otherwise...

JOHN 1:5 John posits that the world into which Jesus came did not naturally understand or welcome Him. It was a world of *darkness*. But “the light kept on shining in spite of the darkness that was worse than a London fog...” [A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures*].

Whether the mayor or the governor or the talk show host or the stage performer or the general or the high school principal realize it or not, we live within a world that is spiritually dark. The Enlightenment of the 18th century was a hoax. Knowledge does not make the darkness subside. Only the light of the Word of God, of the Son of God can overtake the darkness and make it flee. The text says that *the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it*. Probably a better way to translate that is

the darkness did not overcome it. We live in a society wrestling today as never before in this century with issues of light and darkness. We wonder “which will win?” Ultimately, the light always wins. It wins on a national scale. When the government starts to realize that the safe sex agenda really only results in greater misery and that abstinence is the best thing to teach school kids, the light wins.

The light also wins on a personal level. If we—even as Christians—choose a dark path on something of a personal nature, we eventually come around to realize that the light was the way to go. When we bow to the light and accept His ways and embrace them and change our lives so that we *abide in the light* then the light wins out over whatever darkness is still around.

Is Jesus the Lord of all the universe? Is there enough life and light in Him to meet with any question and any problem people can come up with? Yes, oh yes. There is no other way to live than to seek the Savior, to bore deep into His Word and to enjoy the relationships He brings us to have and to hold.

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DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

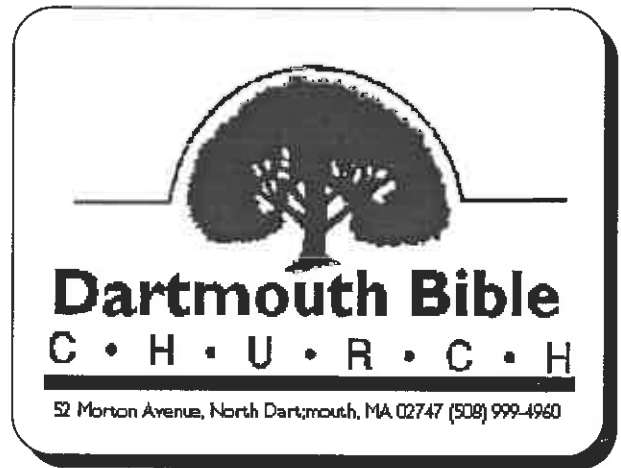
NOTES FROM THE PULPIT MINISTRY
OF DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH

SERIES: STUDIES IN JOHN

LESSON #4 SCRIPTURE: JOHN 1:12, 13

SPEAKER: REV. NEIL C. DAMGAARD, TH.M.

DATE: MAY 21ST, 1995



The "Rights" of "As Many As"

INTRODUCTION We hear much talk today about "civil rights." There is lots of discussion today about the rights of ethnic minorities to enjoy the same privileges and luxuries as any ethnic majority. It is believed that certain Indian tribes inherently possess rights that other people-groups do not have or they might be exempted from certain laws, all because their human rights in the past were violated by the English and Dutch colonists. There is an agitated discussion and social conflict that has arisen stating that non-heterosexual people should have the same access-rights as heterosexual people. Regularly we hear talk about whether or not a convicted criminal still possesses certain rights, and which ones. Civil Rights has almost become a religion unto itself in our time. Baseball players even, claim that they possess the right to salaries which increase commensurately with their bosses profit margins. And in our church too, we practice the enjoyment of a few "rights." Physically disadvantaged people have the right to use the elevator. Members have the right to vote on church voting matters. You enjoy the right to pray and to minister your spiritual gift. The second paragraph of the *Declaration of Independence* begins

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among men...

The first ten amendments of the *Constitution* were ratified Dec. 15th, 1791 and form what is known as the *Bill of Rights*. It is of course interesting to us as Christians that in several places in both the *Declaration* and the *Constitution* the original framers appealed to God--the God of the Bible, we assume--as their Justifier and final Defender in stating these "unalienable, Creator-endowed Rights." But Thomas Jefferson and James Madison and the

Now, John's Gospel really begins with the backdrop of unbelief. The Son of God came down to the planet and into the world and yet *the world did not know Him* (1:10b). Then, in verse 11 John tells us that Jesus *came to His own and those who were His own did not receive Him*. Here He is, Israel's long-awaited Messiah, but Israel did not welcome Him. There was no coronation, no public and political inauguration. And more often than not the individuals whom Jesus encountered did not *join up* and follow Him. But some did. And of those who followed Him at first, some remained with Him and actually became permanent disciples. These were the ones who were granted this certain powerful Right. But the whole of "Christianity" began with just a handful; a motley and humble crew. A small group, who may have been given at times, despite the signs and wonders they could perform, to feel lonely and insecure and powerless. By the time John wrote this, that motley crew had multiplied to motley crews in many cities but still, Christians were greatly in the minority. They were still largely misunderstood in the public arena.

Now, let me ask you, do you ever feel misunderstood and lonely with your faith; like you have your neck stuck out because you are a follower of Jesus Christ; like you're "on the outside" of the mainstream of society; like a person without a country or a person, even, without a family? If you do not feel *some* alienation from this present world I have to wonder whether you really know Jesus, because it seems to be part what comes with following Him. Full appreciation of the Right of closeness to God, is dependent on sensing the *need* to obtain that Right.

Now, in verse 12a John says that even though His own people did not receive Him, some did. He says *But as many as received Him to them He gave the right to become children of God...* "As many as" is a wonderful phrase. Each and every one. Regardless of background. The same bunch of people who did, were given the Right. A motley crew maybe by human standards, but this same group right down to the last one, THEY get the Right. The Right to what? To *become children of God*. Now you may wonder that everyone *already* is a child of God, "we're all God's children," by virtue of just being born. But here John means something much more than just being a creature of God. He means a CHILD of God's Own Personal Family.

Let's look it this way: In the Bible there are consistently two groups of people singled out for mercy from God's perspective. These are the ones that God's people are supposed to pay special care in ministering to. They are the widows and the orphans. Why are God's people supposed to be especially caring to them? Because they are the ones that have no family.

"No family" people especially touch the heart of God. God is a family-God. He puts people INTO relationships. He builds the family unit. Man tears it apart but God "joins together." It is His nature and His plan. So, being handed

boys did not invent the concept of "rights". Going all the way back to the Gospel of John we read in that Gospel about another particular "Right"; a *Great* Right--one not automatically endowed to all people by their Creator but possessed only by certain people. And a powerful Right, it is.

It is more powerful than the Right to Life.

It is more powerful than the Right to Liberty.

It is more powerful than the Right to pursue Happiness, as important and self-evident as those three Rights may be...

This Right is, in fact, the most powerful and precious Right that any man, woman or child can ever possess. I want to talk about this Right today. Because it is a Right which makes all other supposed rights pale alongside it. Here's what we're saying: **True Christians have every right to claim closeness to God and to live out their daily lives "as if" that were really true.** Imagine that you received a personal invitation from the Lord Jesus in the mail one day. And this invitation invited you to live right in His own house, to travel with Him, to eat meals with Him, to talk to Him anytime. That's what I mean "as if..." True Christians enjoy the Right--a "Super-Right" that John speaks of--to practice a CLOSENESS to God. The best Moslem does not possess this right. The best Jew does not possess this right. The best Spiritist, Unitarian, New-ager or Catholic do not possess this right. Only true followers of Jesus Christ can live as true members of God's own family and enjoy the closeness of that relationship. And this right to claim closeness to God far transcends all other "rights".

He says that certain people own a Right, the conditions of which stretch far beyond the grave. And this Right endows its possessor with privileges in this life which are almost too good to be true. Now, all of us enjoy certain privileges that we consider that we own, by right. If you possess a drivers license than you assume and you value your privilege to operate a car, a truck, a bus or a motorcycle. If you know someone in "high places" you may enjoy the privilege of walking into their office and sitting down and saying, "So, how's it going?" But there is a difference between a privilege and a "right."

I've always loved airplanes. And I have never had the privilege of being invited into the cockpit of a big jet airliner, but I've seen others invited in. They are extended the privilege of seeing close up all the controls, the view from the cockpit, the seats where the crew sit. But it is the *pilot* who possesses the right to sit in the left seat, to fire up the engines, to fly the plane. For him (or her) the flying of the airplane is his/her right. He has been given a certificate which grants him authority to fly. It is his seat; the plane is under his command. It is not just a privilege; it is more than that. It is his right.

What we read about today in John 1:12,13 involves the most powerful and precious Right that any man, woman or child can ever possess on this planet.

the paperwork which says "Genuine Member of Jehovah's Own Family" and it being called a *right* is a pretty big thing!

And John uses two verbs in describing ENTRANCE into this select group. He says that this Right comes to **1) as many as received Him...2) those who believe in His name.** Two ways of describing the same thing. First, a person receives the Right of calling himself God's own child by *receiving* Christ. To "receive Christ" means to welcome Him, to take His side, in the Greek word that is used. It does not mean to take communion or to simply participate in any other church ritual. It means to deliberately, sincerely and intentionally sign up on His team, to say that "I am on His side." Some did this back then and many would not. Today some do this and it is the same I think; many will not. Fine. But anyone who *does*, dear ones--ANYONE AT ALL--those are "knighted with the Right" to *become* God's own family members, spiritually speaking.

It is then that person's RIGHT to pray whenever he wants.

It is that person's RIGHT to tell other people about Christ.

It is that person's RIGHT to go to heaven, in the first second after his last breath.

The other way John describes the person who possesses this Super-Right, is as the person *who believe in His name.* Believing is not necessarily easy. Believing in Jesus means believing in someone that you can't see with your eyes. It means not only believing that He still exists but actually *entrusting your life to Him*, surrendering your decision making to Him, depending on the truthfulness of the things He said. That is all part of "believing in His name" and "receiving Him." That's what the first "motley crew" did. They entrusted themselves to Him, surrendered their decision-making to His will, as to God's will. And they decided to lean on the truthfulness of the things which He said.

If He said "what God has joined together let no one put asunder" then OK, we're not going to rip apart anything which He has put together.

If Jesus said "turn the other cheek" then OK I'll squash my anger and my desire for revenge and do it His way.

If Jesus said to "love my brother at the same level on which I love myself" then OK I'll decide to live that way, though it's tough sometimes...

You know, many people lose their earthly rights. They sometimes have them taken away or they might forfeit them. But this is one Right which cannot be undone. It can't be dissolved by another person, by a tragedy, by Satan or even by yourself. Once you receive Christ and believe in His Name, WHAM--you are received into God's own family right that moment. It is Sonship, not just being a house-guest. You immediately become an actual child of God. And at the same time you begin a for-the-rest-of-your-life process of transformation INTO a real, live child of God. It is both instantaneous and also then a gradual process.

In **verse 13** John goes deeper into this Super-Right. True-children are **born**. He says that the **EVENT** of receiving Christ, of believing in His name which results in getting the Super-Right, didn't start with you at all! The *birth-event* didn't begin with you. Now, if that is a blow to your pride I am sorry. But it is logical. A baby that is conceived in his or her mother's womb did not come up with the idea himself or herself. It was the Mom and Dad's idea. Spiritually speaking, a person believes in Jesus' name not ultimately because **THEY** come up with the idea. It is God's idea. When a person is born-again (***born from above***; do you see that in vs. 13?) it is **NOT** from **bloods** (literally). In other words spiritual re-birth doesn't happen because of the two "bloods" of the parents, or we might say because the parents were believers or the grandparents or the whole family heritage. And, it doesn't happen because of ***the will of the flesh or the will of man*** (the sexual impulses of man or woman). A new Creation with the Name-plate "God's Own" doesn't happen just because of *natural* causes; just because two people make a baby. No, it happens by God's doing. It is His will to create a new creature. ***If any man is in Christ he is a new creature...*** (2 Cor. 5:17a). God decided to create re-born people. It isn't ultimately man's will that determines who does and who doesn't receive Christ. It is God's will.

That fact, after you get over the shock of it, lets you relax. Evangelism, done in the best and smartest and most tactful ways possible does not *guarantee* that anyone in particular will be given the right to become children of God. Ultimately, God decides that. So does that mean I don't need to tell anyone about Jesus? No, we still need to tell as many people as we possibly can about the Light, about the Savior. But who does and who does not respond is beyond our control and beyond our rights. He gives the Right. He may give it someone you don't like. Too bad. He may give it to someone you love. Praise God. But regardless of how you react to verse 13 it still stands. Now let's close by asking "so what?" I have been given the right to become a child of God. What's that do for me?

First, it gives us confidence. It defeats uncertainty about whether you will make it too heaven when you die. This is the most basic part of our faith.

Second, having the Right to call yourself a child of God should equip you with joy. It is a deep joy that you don't have before you receive Christ.

Third, the right of becoming a child of God gives you authority in the spirit-world. As powerful and intelligent as Satan may be he must step aside to the authority of the one who has believed in the name of the Son of God. We need not fear him.

Fourth, becoming a child of God by God's declaration gives you the right to participate in the body of Christ and to identify closely with the body.

*We hold these truths
to be self-evident, that
all men are created
equal, that they are
endowed by their
Creator with certain
unalienable Rights,
that among these are
Life, Liberty and the
pursuit of happiness.
That to secure these
rights, Governments
are instituted among
men...*

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

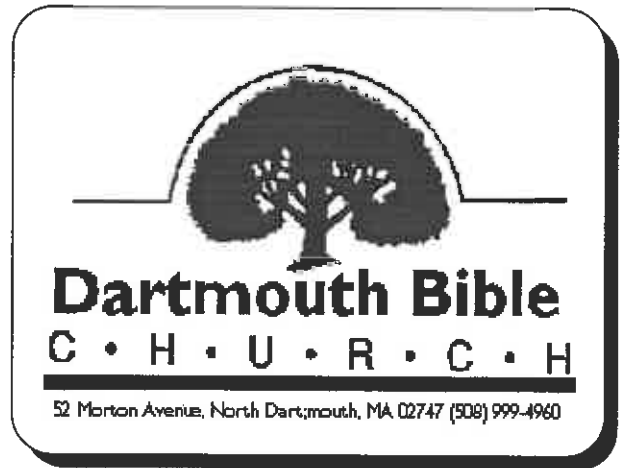
NOTES FROM THE PULPIT MINISTRY
OF DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH

SERIES: STUDIES IN JOHN

LESSON #5 SCRIPTURE: JOHN 2:1-11

SPEAKER: REV. NEIL C. DAMGAARD, TH.M.

DATE: JUNE 4TH, 1995



Cana: the Beginning of His signs

INTRODUCTION I've asked this question before, but let me ask it again: How do you think most people that you know perceive of Jesus? Your friends and family and the people you work with...how do you suppose they think Jesus was?

Some would think He was a severe and humorless holyman.

Some might think about it, and say that they think He was a revolutionary teacher.

Still others I am sure would say that they think of Him as a hard working carpenter who was also a good-deed doing spiritual example.

I am also sure that some of your family and friends and co-workers would say that they believe He was the Son of God, holy and perfect and utterly fearsome; and therefore completely unapproachable.

The passage in John's Gospel that we look at today relates one of His most interesting miracles.

It is not the most dramatic. Several other incidents seem to have inspired greater awe in people--this was one was quite "private."

It is not the most strategic for the lives of those who benefited: no one is healed, raised from the dead or exorcised in Cana.

But this is the first or eight miracles that John recorded in his record of Jesus' life and it is interesting for a number of reasons. It reveals some things about Jesus that add a lot to our picture of His nature. My friends, I believe that we need to know Him. We need to know Him far better, so that we can know what to expect from Him and how He deals with us. We need to become ever more acquainted with the Savior and the first tool we have for developing more intimacy with Jesus is this written

record of His life. We also need to know Him increasingly better so that we can accurately tell *other* people what He is like. So, from this miracle then, what was He like--and therefore what *is* He like?

Well, the most obvious thing about Jesus is that He is powerful. I think it's funny how skeptical people want to find some other explanation for His miracles than simply that He is powerful. I would think you would *want* God to be powerful, wouldn't you? And of course, our conviction and belief that Jesus was and is God. So, for Him to transform ordinary water into feast-quality wine is no big deal. But it is interesting why He should do such a thing. His mother approached Him and put the problem to Him. His reply might seem confusing at first. It might seem confusing because it was abrupt. *Woman...* which may be better translated to us as *Madam...* And then He said *What have I to do with you, My hour is not yet come*. He discerned that she wished a demonstration HERE, NOW of His Messiahship, a fact with which she was surely acquainted--she had endured long years of waiting herself as perhaps she fell under people's suspicion for her claims about the "first Christmas."

But His reply was appropriate. He's just there at the wedding on invitation as a guest, and she evidently wanted Him to supernaturally resolve the wine crisis. By the way, it was not really a superfluous request. Jewish weddings at that time ran for up to seven days. Much liquid beverage was needed. And since water was not typically consumed and pasteurization, of course, did not arrive until the 1800s. Wine was the typical drink, diluted though it may have been. Sometimes you will hear Bible teachers suggest that this "wine" was really only grape juice. Let me assure you it was wine. That it was probably *diluted* seems clear enough from the evidence. Raw wine in its purest form was not only expensive but also dangerous and the Scripture certainly had plenty to say about the dangers of intoxication. But to press the moral point and say that it must have been Welch's Grape Juice is to handle the text unintelligently, in my opinion. It was wine and even diluted, they needed more for the duration of the wedding.

I don't want to gloss over the wedding aspect. Weddings are a great time and Jesus wanted to BE at a great time. Donald Grey Barnhouse entitled the chapter in his commentary on John dealing with this incident *The Life of the Party*. It was not beneath our Savior to be at an event like a wedding. Now their weddings were more dignified than our weddings. I think sometimes even Christian weddings go short on dignity and long on trying to act as much like the world, or accommodate non-Christians attending as possible. This wedding feast in the town of Cana was no

worldly party with revelry and drunkenness and lustiness and indulgence. It was a fun time and a happy time. But it was a dignified event. And Jesus wanted to be present.

But I don't think He was planning at first to begin the unveiling of His full identity. I think He reacted--yes, reacted--to the circumstance. He pondered it and then decided to deal with the problem. But He would do it on His own authority not because Mary interceded. Dr. Barnhouse points out that "he wanted it clearly understood that Mary was not to assume the role of 'mediatrix' or intercessor with Him." And he performs this sign for two other reasons:

1) to be a blessing. To demonstrate that Messiah would be a blessing to His people. The Shepherd is not always yelling at the sheep. Much of the time He is grooming, feeding, providing and blessing them. This sign was not just some empty magic trick. It met a need. It blessed the people.

2) to *manifest His glory* (vs. 11). It is the *beginning of His signs*. He would perform many signs, all of which point to something greater than just a wowie-zowie show of power. That is the cheapness of many of the supposed "signs and wonders" that are claimed to be taking place today. They are cheap imitations of the true power of God's Spirit. True signs point to something greater than just a magic trick. They point to the DIVINE MAJESTY and AUTHORITY of GOD (as the song *Majesty* talks about). If Jesus does a miracle or a sign, there will be no mistaking Who is the source. People will look up in awe and worship God and give Him credit.

This miracle was the first one of these events. It blessed the people and we don't even know if news of it went beyond the disciples. But THEY saw Who Jesus really was. And they were bolstered in their confidence and in their understanding because of it.

Now, what can we learn about Jesus from this?

- 1 He wants to be a blessing. That is because He is a loving God.
- 2 His power transcends earthly physics.
- 3 He was Who He said He was, even before He actually started saying it.
- 4 He was more than happy to be a part of an appropriate celebration.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

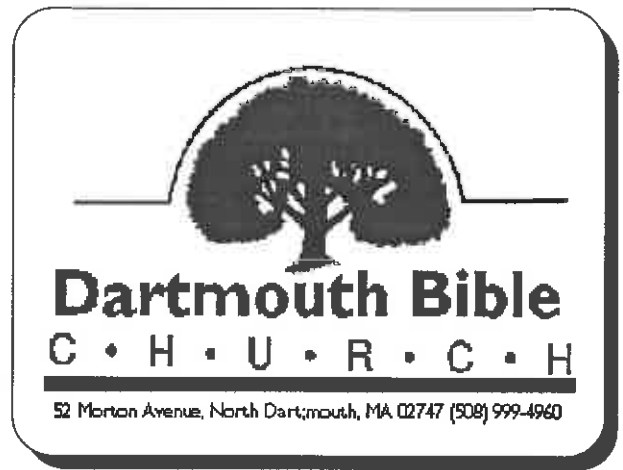
NOTES FROM THE PULPIT MINISTRY
OF DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH

SERIES: STUDIES IN JOHN

LESSON #6 SCRIPTURE: JOHN 2:12-25

SPEAKER: REV. NEIL C. DAMGAARD, TH.M.

DATE: JUNE 11TH, 1995



The Problem with Commercial Religion

INTRODUCTION We're so glad you're with us this morning, but let me ask you, "Why are you here?" It is a basic question. What has brought you here today? People might attend church for a number of reasons--I trust and hope that the reason you are here is to be with your brothers and sisters in Christ and together with them, to offer worship, by faith, to your Savior and God. That is the reason to be here. I hope that it wasn't inconvenient for you to be here today, but on the other hand "too many churches today do everything they can to make the time of worship convenient for people. And some people attend church because they see it as a place for personal contacts or business advantage. But worshipping God is not always convenient. It demands true devotion and self-sacrifice" [*Life Application Bible Commentary*]. **True worship requires deliberate and pure motivation.** That's what I see in this section of John. Let's work through the passage...

The section before us tells of the first of two times, actually, that Jesus went into the Jewish Temple area that was in Jerusalem and single-handedly cleared the area of merchants. These were not ordinary merchants, selling food or clothing. They were *religious* merchants, selling Temple-approved animals of sacrifice. The time was Passover, one of the most holy Jewish seasons and people came from all over (Jesus included) to worship at the Temple. And they needed to worship in ways prescribed by the leaders - some ways taken from the Old Testament Law and some ways sort of added by the leaders of the day. But you could not just slide on in and worship in any old way you wanted. You had to abide by the Law and by the expectations of the day.

The Temple was God's house, literally. Jesus honored it as such, even though by this time the *shekinah* glory (God's presence) that had originally encompassed and indwelt the holy of holies had departed. It is important to understand that Jesus' driving of the merchandisers out of the temple was not an attack on the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. Jesus was not saying that these people had no right to worship God--it was how they felt about the worship of God and their approach to it. He was attacking *their way of carrying out worship*. The vendors and money-changers (changing money into Jewish money and then charging a fee--sometimes high--for the service) were embracing an evil spirit of avarice and greed and fueling it on the back of worship. That is what angered the Lord Jesus.

I must confess I would love to see the scene. The wrath of God is an attribute of His that is not popular today. There are many churches in which you will never hear the subject mentioned; indeed, some in which it would be thought as mythical. It is not mythical, dear ones. Yes, His love is great. His lovingkindness is everlasting. Dwell on that for a moment...But pressed and provoked He is *also* a God of righteous and holy wrath. It is very possible for God to grow indignant and to do so without the slightest danger to His love and patience. And here is a startling illustration of it.

It is so important, how we approach worship. I believe that Jesus loves and cherishes our worship of Him and I also believe that we need to be careful with how we approach worship. When we gather together in the love and affection of the Holy Spirit, and worship Him together, I am persuaded that He just really enjoys it-- so long as we come in full confidence of His righteousness and not in ours (which at best, is no better than *filthy rags*...) I think He values and appreciates our humble attempts to praise Him, thank Him, lift up His name, teach His Word and in prayer and singing. But still, how we approach worship is important. I believe we are too casual in our worship. Sometimes we slide in late; we distract each other; we prepare carelessly. We treat grace lightly. This should not be. Jesus saw the legitimate system of worship corrupted by what was essentially *self-centeredness* on the part of those in charge. His reaction was to throw people out.

Now, the *big* problem was that they had made a *house of merchandise* out of the Temple, which He called *My Father's house*. The crime was this: access to God is not for sale. If churches--any churches--ever give the impression that God's favor or grace or forgiveness can be bought, they are guilty of the same evil that these merchants and money-changers were.

Now, you must remember that much is about to change with Jesus on the scene. The whole character of how God's people worship Him is about the change. By 70 AD the Jerusalem Temple would be in ruins. There would be no *place* to go to, in order to offer up sacrifices. And Jesus Himself was now going to be God's *shekinah* glory. The resurrected Savior would become the center of worship, not the Temple in which the Spirit *used to* dwell. In the rest of this passage Jesus gave that famous prediction of His own resurrection, still years off. In verse 21 John explains that Jesus ***speaking of the Temple of His body***. Worship was going to transition from a place to a Person; an invisible but an alive Person. That is still hard for us to grasp.

Even today we struggle to understand that the reason we gather on the Lord's Day is for HIS pleasure. We gather to honor Him. Is that inconvenient? Is that hard to commit yourself to, once a week? Is it worth the effort? Worship is to do honor and to give deference to Jesus Christ. And one of the most dishonoring and cheapening insults to Him is to make worship something commercial.

It is our custom to minimize the issue of money in our church. We try not to make this a place where there is a lot of money changing hands. For one thing it is a small building and one activity may bump up against another easily. But our main goal is to keep the worship of the Lord free from any confusion that anything can be bought from God. Our greatest possession--eternal life; salvation--can be had in one way and in one way alone: receiving it as a free-gift. It cannot be earned. Perhaps that timeless truth lay at the heart of the indignation Jesus felt and displayed in the Temple area.

Now admittedly, it angers people sometimes if we get what some would construe as too serious about worship. But let me point you to the quote from Psalms 69:9 in verse 17: ***His disciples remembered it was written, 'Zeal for Thy house will consume me.'*** Jesus' incredible zeal for God and for purity in worship would endanger His life. He was perceived as a threat to the religious establishment.

We need pure worship, dear ones. And how do we achieve it? Well, it may be idealistic to expect it all the time but we work at it. He's worth it. Here are some ideas:

- 1 Prepare adequately.
 - a Begin Saturday night.
 - b Avoid Sunday morning stresses; that may mean for families that

whoever the secondary caregiver for children is, to help out more.

- c Spend some time in prayer before you get here. Corporate worship is to be a combination of deliberate individual efforts and a group effort. Some of what we do is individual and some is a group activity. And the process deserves the preparation of prayer before you arrive.
- 2 Come ready to bless the people who are here. Think through on whether this is so, or whether you are doing something that is basically self-indulgent.
- 3 Sing the songs.
- 4 Consider praying, helping with Scripture reading or being part of the Worship Team.
- 5 Pray for the message.
- 6 Take one verse with you each week to memorize.
- 7 Make the Lord's Day special; not just "day off #2" for you to enjoy.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

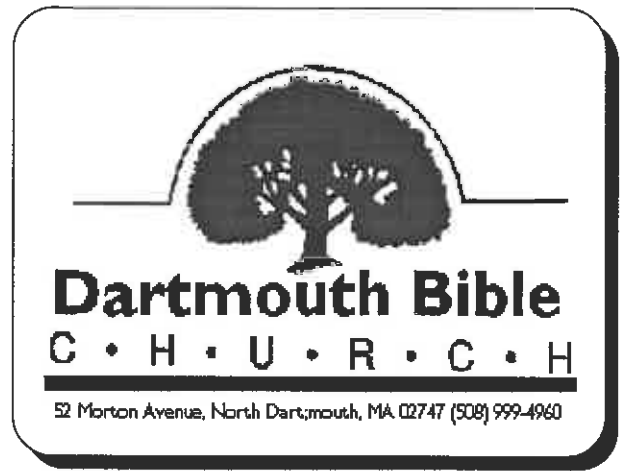
NOTES FROM THE PULPIT MINISTRY
OF DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH

SERIES: STUDIES IN JOHN

LESSON #7 SCRIPTURE: JOHN 3:22-30

SPEAKER: REV. NEIL C. DAMGAARD, TH.M.

DATE: JUNE 18TH, 1995



Accepting Change

INTRODUCTION Today is Father's Day and being one, I do rather enjoy it! I'm a father of two very special daughters and they are one of God's most precious blessings to me. I also have *had* a father, whom most of you are aware passed away last year. I was 41 when I had my final conversation with him. He was 27 when he had his last conversation with his Dad in 1941 and his Dad was 20 years old when he had his final conversation with his Dad, Jens Sorensen Damgaard back in Denmark in 1890. A son becomes a father and then before you know it he's passing the torch to his kid. Change comes screaming in on sons who become men before they know it and then become fathers before they know it and then *their* sons are becoming men. It seems like you just start getting used to one role and then your role starts changing. Change just happens--it's part of living. The question is, how well do we manage change?

I have been discovering e-mail lately. And among the 10 or so people I am trading talk back and forth with is a friend who was divorced a while back. In an e-mail this week he commented: "Never thought life would turn out like this but I have learnt to adjust. After all, that is what life is about, change and how we deal with it."

In our passage today there are several issues we could deal with. We could consider the issue of baptism because that is what is happening in this passage. We could just preach the Gospel from this passage very easily from verse 36. But what I want to consider is the matter of **accepting change, as John the Baptist illustrates it**. Because John the Baptist could see his role in life changing right in front of his eyes. And there were some of his friends who did not want his role to change, or who didn't really understand John's appointed role, and yet John negotiated the changes

before him graciously and decisively. I find that compelling. Because I do not always negotiate the rapids of change all that well. It is usually my feeling to like things the way they are. I get comfortable. But changes come, whether we always invite them or not and it is in our best interest to be able to see changes and to adapt to them in a godly and Spirit-filled way.

One change I feel that is keeping me on my toes is how my role as Pastor here is evolving or transforming. It is changing because the church is changing. My role as Pastor is changing a little, hopefully, because I am changing. My basic desire is to be the best Pastor for you I can be. But the way I spend my time, the things I choose to preach on and teach on, the ministries that I personally initiate or participate in, and indeed the fact that more and more other people need to be entrusted with decision making and ministry ownership--all of that engenders *change* for a Pastor of a growing and fluid church.

Another change I am experiencing is in my role as a father. Our girls aren't so little as they used to be. And my wife is prospering and growing in her work and in her own ministry and that impacts my role some as a father too. I need to see the changes that call to me, and adapt to them.

Now, John the Baptist was a unique and (I think) fascinating person. He was essentially the last of the Old Testament-style prophets. But being the last one made him the immediate forerunner and *herald* of the Messiah. He was the Ambassador to Israel from the country of Messiah! And I am sure that he was aware of this role from an early age. And his ministry overlapped with that of Jesus for a short time. But Jesus' followers were rapidly beginning to outnumber those of John. John's ministry had become very popular. People were moved by his preaching and by his integrity. They saw a real difference between John the Baptist and the Pharisees or other religiously established leaders. John was somehow more in touch with God than most of them seemed to be. His message was fundamental and more basic. Many were drawn to it. Many times a "grass-roots" kind of leader really attracts people. And this can be true of preachers too. John the Baptist attracted people who were tired of "the same old, same old." But when Jesus came along, His teaching and indeed, His very manner was even more fundamental. And *more* people began following Him. We can understand why from our perspective. Jesus was God's own Son. He was not just a prophet--He was the very Messiah ("chosen One of God") that Israel had been awaiting for hundreds and hundreds of years. He was not a prophet--He was *prophecy* and He

was ALL of Jewish prophecy rolled up in one man. John the Baptist somehow knew who Jesus really was and his reaction to the situation was different than that of his followers.

I think it is probably that from the moment that John first saw Jesus, he (John) knew that his ministry was going to change. His role was to *herald* Messiah, to announce that Messiah was coming and when He did arrive, to announce that HE IS HERE. But you know, you tend to become attached to someone you're following. John's disciples had, no doubt, grown attached to him. They had followed him around, hung out with him, watched him "rattle the cages" of the religious establishment. They were "his guys." And now their man is being upstaged by another "upstart," this Jesus out of Nazareth. You can imagine them thinking, "Yes, Jesus' words do carry real authority like yours, John. He *is* strangely compelling. But we're *your* followers, John. We've "signed up" on *your* team." A change is in the wind. Messiah has arrived. What are they going to do?

John's response to the situation was beautiful. I'm sure he knew that this day would come and he knew it for a long time. He had prepared himself for the eventuality of going from MVP (in sports: "most valuable player"), to just being an "all star." His response is captured in verses 27-30

In verse 27 John states that everything we have and are, has been ultimately given to us directly by God. This is true for all people, not just for Christian people. Cf. also Job 1:21; 13:15; I Corinthians 4:7. There is one God and He is a sovereign God. John was willing to look at his own calling and position in life as having been given to Him by God. It was not up to John to second-guess God's plans. He accepted the change in his own status by engaging God's perspective on things. God's perspective was that John was *not* the main event. He was only the "best man" at the wedding.

In verse 29, John illustrates how he feels about his role. He knows he, himself, is not the "bridegroom." He is the best man, and he is happy to fulfill that role. Are you happy in the role that God has providentially placed you? The best man in an ancient eastern marriage had three functions, and they were all important: 1) on behalf of the bridegroom, the best man asked for the hand of the bride; 2) he acted as the mediator between the bridegroom and the bride during the period of the betrothal; 3) he presided over the marriage feast, or what we would call "the rehearsal dinner." All of these functions were *important*. But he was not the bridegroom, himself. How about you? Are you content with the "lot" you have right now? Do you see that God has been IN

your being where you are, right now? John accepted the change of his role by enjoying the confidence in being in the center of God's will. He was doing what He was supposed to do and he got joy from that: *And so this joy of mine has been made full*, John said.

Third, John accepted the change in his situation (as he testifies in verse 30) by expecting no more for himself than what he was supposed to experience. He realized and accepted that from this point forward Jesus would increase in importance and his (John's) ministry would fade. It was a humble thing for him to do. Romans 12:3 tells us not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, but to think soundly about ourselves according to the measure of faith that God has given us. We need to NOT beat ourselves up about achievement or accomplishment. We can strive to achieve and to accomplish, but that must be met with *sound judgment* too.

So, we can deal with transitions, changes in our families and in the roles we play by:

- 1 Accepting change by engaging God's perspective
- 2 Accepting change by enjoying confidence in being in the center of God's will
- 3 Accepting change by expecting no more than what is appropriate for you within God's plan for your life.

Now, does John the Baptist seem almost "larger than life?" If it is any comfort to you it seems that he *did* slip into a time of doubt and discouragement and confusion (Matthew 11). John was not a perfect person. He was not immune from feeling insecure. But at that moment that we have read about in John 3 he had victory.

You and I need to enjoy victory too when changes confront us. I do not court change very often. I like things comfortable and stable. But changes always come and we can learn from John how to negotiate the rapids of change and how to do so with joy and godliness. Again: LOOK at things from the perspective of God's overall plan; enjoy the day-to-day process of being in the center of God's will (if you are not IN God's will, then do not expect joy to be there!); set up your expectations accurately, according to what you know God has for you.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

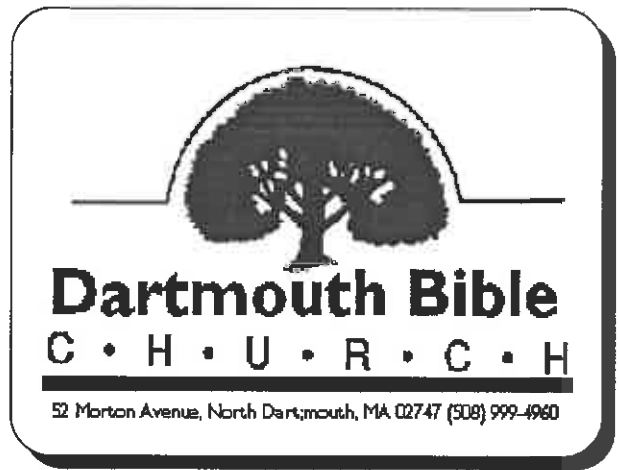
NOTES FROM THE PULPIT MINISTRY
OF DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH

SERIES: STUDIES IN JOHN

LESSON #8 SCRIPTURE: JOHN 3:31-36

SPEAKER: REV. NEIL C. DAMGAARD, TH.M.

DATE: JUNE 25TH, 1995



He Whom God Has Sent

Ο ΠΙΣΤΕΥΩΝ ΕΙΣ ΤΟΝ ΥΙΟΝ ΕΧΕΙ^{ἔσται-ἔχῃ} ΖΩΗΝ ΑΙΩΝΙΟΝ Ο ΔΕ ΑΠΕΙΘΩΝ^{ὑπαπαρτ.-ἄσμι} ΑΠΕΙΘΕΩ^{ἀπειθεῶ}
The [one] believing in the Son HAS ["hath"] life eternal; BUT [the one] disobeying
τῷ ΥΙΩ ΟΥΚ ΟΨΕΤΑΙ ΖΩΗΝ, ΑΛΛ ἡ οργὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ μένει ἐπ αὐτόν
the Son will not see life but the wrath of God remains on him (John 3:36).

INTRODUCTION There is a significant amount of confusion today about what is right and what is not right. This may or may not be so with you; but it is plainly so "out there in the real world." There is so much relativism. Like, take how one day we might take a verbal stand against immorality and the next we treat an out of wedlock pregnancy like a wonderful event. One day we talk to our Selectman about how we do not want a gambling casino built and the next we buy three scratch tickets. In New Bedford we have a great emphasis today on multi-culturalism and inclusiveness. Some of this is good, I think, and helpful for the diverse society we have. But some of it confuses people where we are told that all religions, for instance, are basically equally valid and right. I see that our children are being sent this message in subtle ways all the time.

On the other hand, I wonder if it has ever struck you how definite and sure the statements of Scripture are...? You and I might experience doubt as human beings and even as Christians, but when we turn to the Scripture we must admit that the Scripture at least, is plain and straightforward about what it says. That is because, in the case of the NT writings, the apostles were certain and sure about what they were

proclaiming. That is why John 3:36 is so blunt... **Jesus Christ is all anyone needs to have a personal relationship with God.**

This passage today is really off the "beaten path" in the Gospel of John. It lies between two well known sections and itself is rarely dwelt upon. But it contains the plain and blunt answer of the Bible to the relativism of today and of the apostles' day too. For the first century intellectual environment in Roman culture was no less relativistic than is ours, if not more so. (Nowhere is this better illustrated, by the way, than in Acts 17 where Paul goes up to Mars Hill and offers his contribution to the philosophical smorgasbord there.)

Now, we are not completely sure who is speaking these words in John 3:31-36. At first it looks like a continuation of John the Baptist's conversation with his disciples but it may be Jesus speaking or even the interjected comment of John the apostle, writing this down. But whoever is speaking, the words are powerful when you consider their weight for today's culture and the far-reaching effects of what they claim. The passage culminates in verse 36 and on that verse I want to focus today. But first let's see some basic facts (see the outline in your bulletin):

1. Jesus is the greatest (vs. 31)! Jesus is absolutely unique. He ***came from above***. No one else can claim that. All the rest of us began here on this world and look and sound like we're from this world. Mohammed is from this world; Buddha is from this world; Mother Teresa is from this world. Billy Graham is from this world. Jesus was not just some great teacher, although you hear people ignorantly *say* that. He is ***from heaven and is above all***.
2. Jesus spoke about things we can't see (vs. 32). Even though it is against mankind's nature to really believe the things Jesus proclaimed, He talked openly about heaven and God's real program for this planet. He takes us beyond and above this world into places and areas that only science fiction writers can speculate about.
3. Those who listen to Jesus admit that He accurately represents God's truth (vs. 33). From the moment that a person really takes the things IN which Jesus said and ***receives His witness***, that person is at the same time setting his seal of approval on God the Father's own testimony about Jesus, ***This is My beloved Son***. They are automatically *agreeing* that God is ***correct (true)*** in addressing Jesus as He does.

4. God the Son was filled up with God the Spirit (vs. 34). We believe that the apostles were filled and superintended by God's Spirit when they wrote the New Testament. All the more so, was Jesus full of the Spirit when He spoke.
5. God the Son knows unbounded love from God the Father (vs. 35). We often talk about how God loves us or about how we love God but how often do we think about how the Father loves the Son. The Son enjoys the full, unhindered and unbroken love of the Father. What an awesome thought! Now all of this sets us up for what is said in verse 36--the LOGICAL PROGRESSION of thought is important: *God the Father has loved God the Son and commissioned Him with full authority and power; power over all things* [what diplomats would call plenipotentiary power]; *therefore the sons, men, may trust in the Son.*

By the way: can you see the doctrine of the Trinity in this passage? Some people say, "the word 'trinity' is not in the Bible," and about this they are correct. But the doctrine of the Triune God, existent as a single *essence* but *three distinct persons* is so obvious from Scripture.

The last item on your outline says that your only hope is by embracing and clinging to God the Son (vs. 36). Let's consider this verse and let's look at it from the original Greek text...

The verse begins with *the one believing*. The Bible claims here, and in many places, that everlasting life is given to those who have an abiding faith in the Son of God--that's Jesus Christ. It is a universal promise. It applies to people who were living in the first century in Palestine. It applies to people living in the sixteenth century in Europe. It applies to people living in the nineteenth century in China. It applies to people living in the twentieth century in Africa. It will apply to people living in Australia in the twenty-first century who are not even born yet. It applies to anyone at all who will TRUST personally in Jesus Christ.

The one believing HAS eternal life. The Bible says that a believing person HAS eternal life--not *might* get it. It is the 3rd person singular, present, active, indicative of the verb $\epsilon\chi\omega$, to POSSESS, to HAVE IT IN HAND.

Dr. H. A. Ironside used to tell a story that went like this: A friend of mine preached on this Bible verse years ago. At the close of the meeting he went down to the door to greet the people.

A lady who was troubled about her soul came along. As he reached out to shake her hand he asked her, "Madam, how is it with you tonight? Are you saved?"

She said, "Oh, I don't know, sir; I hope so." He said, "Well, let me show you this verse:

'He who believes in the Son has eternal life.' Do you believe in the Son?"

"Oh, I do sir, I do believe on Him with all of my heart."

"Well, then, do you have eternal life?"

"I certainly hope so; I hope I have."

"Read the verse again." She read it: "**He who believes in the Son has everlasting life.**"

"Do you believe on the Son?"

"I do."

"Have you everlasting life?"

"I hope so."

"Well, I see what the trouble is."

She said, "What is the trouble?"

"When you were a girl they spelled very differently from when I was a boy."

She said, "What do you mean? I am not so much older than you."

He said, "When you were a girl h-a-s spelled hope and when I was a boy h-a-s spelled

has."

She exclaimed, "HAS! '**He who believes in the Son HAS eternal life.**'" And it changed her life!

Jesus Christ is all anyone needs to have a real, personal relationship with God and to possess NOW, eternal life. There is nothing tentative about it. If any person then or today entrusts his or her life to Jesus, believing that He is who He said He was, that He died as an atoning sacrifice for sin, and rose from the dead in victory over sin and death, that person--no matter where they are from or what they have done or how old they are or who they are; that person HAS eternal life. That's because Jesus is not just some smart philosopher. He is not just A way. He was not just a revolutionary leader. He was and is the very Son of God. **He who comes from above is above all (verse 31a).**

But the verse has a conclusion and we must not neglect it. REJECTING Jesus Christ has grave consequences. One might have expected the verse to conclude "He who does not believe in the Son shall not see life." But there isn't a significant difference between the two. The Bible always views *real, genuine faith* as something which ISSUES IN ACTION. In biblical teaching **faith and conduct** are necessarily linked. To believe in Jesus Christ is to obey the call of God. He has sent His own Son into the world to be the all-sufficient Savior OF the world. Believing that is an act of obedience to God. **COME OVER HERE AND CLIMB ACROSS THIS LADDER TO SAFETY**, calls the fireman. And the person does it in obedience!

But why should the unbeliever have to look forward to experiencing God's wrath? The answer is found in I John 5:10, **The one who believes in the Son of God has the**

witness in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the witness that God has born concerning His Son. God must do something about evil and unbelief is part of evil.

John the Baptist essentially testified to three things:

- 1) The Lord Jesus is the sin-bearer of the world (1:29).
- 2) The Lord Jesus is the Son of God (1:34).
- 3) The Lord Jesus is the Divider of men. For some people who believe in Him there is eternal life, but for others who reject Christ and do not believe in Him they must live "under the sword" of the impending wrath of God.

The opportunity is always there to believe. People can approach God by faith in His Son at any time. It doesn't have to be in a church and it doesn't have to be on a Sunday. It can be any time.

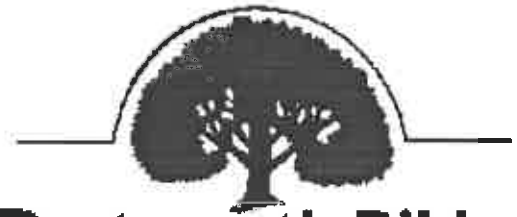
DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

NOTES FROM THE PULPIT MINISTRY
OF DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH

LESSON #9 SCRIPTURE: JOHN 4:1-15

SPEAKER: REV. NEIL C. DAMGAARD, TH.M.

DATE: JULY 2ND, 1995



Dartmouth Bible
C • H • U • R • C • H

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Thirst and *Thirst*

INTRODUCTION What is the most thirsty you have ever been? For e it was in 1966 when I was trying to play high school football for the first time. *Thirst* is what we're talking about this morning and there are some passages in the NT (in the Bible, really) that are just so basic and fundamental to spiritual "thirst." This is one of those passages. In John 4 we have Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan woman which at first glance seems to be a chance encounter but which was, I believe, much more than that. And the verses before us lay out very beautifully some of the basic issues that people struggle with, right down to today. John 4 is one of the most rudimentary and fundamental passages in all four Gospels. It aims at the most basic human issue and need.

So far in the Book of John we have met a number of significant people:

Jesus' mother, Mary

John the Baptist (and some of his followers)

Some of Jesus' followers

One of the most important men in Israel at that time, Nicodemus, *the teacher of Israel*.

Now in chapter 4 we meet another interesting person, a woman from the near-by land of Samaria. She is not a "somebody," she is probably, actually, one of the least noble people of her time. First of all she was a Samaritan. The Jews very much looked down on the Samaritans in that day. They were "half-breeds." They were typically thought to be stupid and foolish [Ecclesiasticus 50:25,26]. Second, she was a sexually promiscuous woman, perhaps a prostitute. And whereas Jesus has just met with *the teacher of Israel*, now he goes to the other end of the cultural spectrum. "Nicodemus

was an eminent member of orthodox Judaism...and here is one [the woman] who stood for a class of people whole-heartedly despised and rejected by that same orthodox Judaism" (Leon Morris, quoted by S. Lewis Johnson).

Now, to start off John tells us (vss. 1-4) that Jesus was going from Judea to Galilee and that ***He had to pass through Samaria***. Geographically, He had to do nothing of the kind. There were two *other* routes to take. Going to Galilee from Judea, via Samaria, would be like going from San Francisco to New York, via Miami [Barnhouse]. But, as Dr. Barnhouse puts it, "Jesus had to go through Samaria because before the foundation of the world, God knew that there were people in that town who would be saved. That's why Jesus had to pass that way."

Already there's a lot for us to learn here. Jesus specifically went to someone who was a social and moral outcast. He goes out of His way to get to her. What does that tell you about Jesus? It tells me that salvation is for all kinds of people and that Jesus' concern (and therefore God's love) extends further than our concern love might dictate. It tells me that Jesus was unconcerned about the approval of other people when it came to reaching the lost. To the clergy of His day (the Pharisees), Jesus said ***It is not those who are well who need a physician but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance*** (Luke 5:31,32). Did you ever notice that not ONE of Jesus' early disciples was a professional clergyman? They were people who, when He looked into their hearts, He could see that they *knew* they needed a Savior and He could see that they were hungry. He knew about this woman even from a long distance. Amazing! Or not--after all, this IS the Son of God.

In verse 6 we see a detail that we might gloss over if we don't look at it. In that verse John tells us that ***being wearied from His journey***, Jesus sat down by this old well at about Noon (***the sixth hour*** by Jewish reckoning). Now, the village was up on the hill overlooking the village and the villagers needed to walk daily down to the well--a 45 minute walk, each way-- which was by the road in the valley. The well is still there today; you could sit at the very spot! And this woman goes down for her daily draw of water. And that is where their conversation began. She can tell by His attire and His accent that He is not Samaritan, but Jewish. She expected no conversation from her but instead He actually asks her for something. There are people in your life and in my life that we would naturally shy away from. They are so different from us, or we have some preconceived feelings about "people like that." It is a common enough thing. But the Savior was not bound by fear or by prejudice. He

asked her for a drink. His goal is to evangelize her. And can you see that He does it by getting her to think.

Real Christianity does not *primarily* appeal to a person's emotions. It appeals to their *thinking* powers. Real Christianity invites a person to THINK through the claims of Jesus Christ and to consider them. Here, Jesus aims at getting the woman to think past just the basic needs of life--water, in this case. He wants to show her that SO MUCH MORE IS POSSIBLE. We are trying to get people to see the same thing. I see and talk to all kinds of people who *generally* think in terms of paying the mortgage or the rent, providing for their children as best they can, trying to drive a better vehicle, keeping their medical bills manageable, and so forth. They give most attention to "getting the daily water back up the hill." But that is not all people need...

Jesus said that He could provide *living water* such that once you drink from it you never thirst again. You see, there's thirst and then there's *thirst*. My e-mail friend in California celebrated his birthday yesterday by getting together with some musician friends, smoking grass and partying into the night. He has enough money, a good job and money for entertainment. He is reasonably content with his life. But I have been praying for him for 22 years now (so far) that another "thirst" would awaken within him. The need is there in him and in everyone. But until the thirst-mechanism switches on he will not seek. Jesus switched on this woman's thirst-mechanism. She had to go down that hill every single day to draw water from that old well. She knew what it was to be physically thirsty. But Jesus aimed at awakening in her a deeper thirst, a thirst such as can be quenched only by being born anew; by finding God; by experiencing redemption.

It is interesting that *at first* she hasn't a clue as to what He is talking about. She seems mildly intrigued that He would have any interest at all in her, since He is Jewish and all that. And if He is offering an easier water supply then she's certainly interested in *that*...

I think a fair portion of modern evangelical religion today seems to be offering an easier water supply to people. Dr. Larry Crabb observes that people today are being fed a diet of "recipe theology." That is, if they ask God He will either accommodate people's need to *feel good* or their need to *do good*. He says, "We either become preoccupied with feeling good or we feel pressured to do good. Neither lifts us up into God's larger story or invites us to participate in it" (*The Silence of Adam*, p. 56). And there the deal ends. As if all a person needs is enough daily H₂O. But that is not all a person

needs! And the BIG thing that a person--any person; every person--really needs would be GIVEN to him or her as a free gift by God directly if that person would just ask for it! **Living water** is available for the asking. You can't earn it. It can only be had by just asking God for it. And He would give it to anyone who asks for it. "Anyone?", you say. Well, Jesus went out of His way to offer it to a socially outcast, immoral woman. That's pretty much *anyone* don't you think?

Now what IS this **living water** that Jesus spoke of? Notice first, that there are two sources of water talked about here: 1) a well from which water is drawn and 2) a spring. The gift of God is a spring of water. It bubbles up in a lively fashion and never runs dry. That is what new life in Christ is about. Salvation--a made-new relationship with God, is what **living water** is. That's what Jesus Christ was making available to this woman. That is what is *still* available today. Now, I sense that there are many voices saying today, "No it's not." Many voices are saying, "Christianity doesn't deliver." Well, maybe not. Maybe Christianity doesn't always deliver like it's supposed to. But, my friends, JESUS delivers. Jesus Christ IS the spring of living water from whom we shall never thirst again. Later in this book, Jesus says, ***If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, "from his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water"*** (John 7:37,38). **Living water** is knowing God through Jesus, and it is then having the Holy Spirit right inside of you. What a pity so many people do not go to Jesus to fill up their souls.

By the way, I always get a kick out of the unlikely people that seem to become followers of Jesus Christ. I know I've made this point before, but it isn't always the people you might expect who end up loving Jesus Christ and being His most devoted and committed followers. I think we see that even within the small circle of our own church! It isn't always the people with the best handle on Scripture or the longest tenure as a church member or the most money that just can't get *enough of Jesus*.

One final theological point, if you please: If you never thirst again from Jesus' living water, by the way, then I would like someone who thinks a Christian can LOSE his or her salvation to explain this verse...

Jesus was explaining the greatest news on earth to this woman. HE, the Son of God, is living water. There is thirst, madam, and there is *thirst*. You can spend your whole life going up and down this hill, concerning yourself only with the first kind of thirst. Or, you can ask God to give you an eternal spring of life, bubbling up, fresh with mercy and power each day from now until forever. Next time we'll consider the second half of this conversation and the woman's actual response... What, by the way, is your response?

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

NOTES FROM THE PULPIT MINISTRY
OF DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH

LESSON #10 SCRIPTURE: JOHN 4:15-26

SPEAKER: REV. NEIL C. DAMGAARD, TH.M.

DATE: JULY 9TH, 1995



Worshipping in Spirit and Truth part 1

INTRODUCTION Worship, these days, is big business. Look at some of these ads from the new *Worship Leader* magazine... When you have so many Christians these days to accommodate--at least in this country--I guess it's fine to have such a lot of commerce and marketing surrounding the practice of worship. I believe, however, that God intends that when His people gather to worship Him that it would be something that a simple man or a simple woman is capable of doing. God desires His worship to be an unhindered and uncomplicated thing. I get a little uncomfortable sometimes with all the bells and whistles and software and equipment and just general *sophistication* that churches can get into with "putting on a good worship service."

Now for you: when you go to church, is worship for you, a simple thing? You, meeting alongside your friends here and just adoring God? Today we are looking into the conversation Jesus had with a woman that He had gone out of His way to find. He has initiated this talk with her and she is evidently not a person accustomed to deep conversations about theological subjects. Nevertheless He engages her, first, on her background (which was, to say the least, colorful) and then she diverts the discussion away from her personal life, and into the question of worship. Specifically, she wants to discuss the proper place of worship. It is this new track in their talk that Jesus uses to say some of the most important things in the whole of Scripture on *worship*.

So, I ask you again--is worship for you a simple thing? I had conversations with three people this week from three other churches in our area about worship. One man had just left his church over the subject of worship being too informal there for his tastes; a lack of control of children, specifically. A second fellow talked with me about how in the Christian school that their church sponsors, he believes part of the school's

1. A dispensational change in how God was governing His people was in the works. The word "dispensation" means an economy, a "divine ordering of the affairs of the world" or of His people. And in 4:21 Jesus said that a change was occurring right *then*. When Jesus came to the world, He changed some things with who His people would be and that affected how God is to be worshipped. The days were coming, and were beginning right then when God could be worshipped in more than one place. The old discussion about worshipping Jehovah either in Jerusalem or on Mt. Gerizim was becoming obsolete, and this "bad Samaritan" was the first to hear of it.

God's grace often takes a path through the lives of unlikely people. I love that, don't you? You would maybe think Jesus would unveil *dispensational changes* to the high priest or to the Sanhedrin or somebody like that. But He engages this subject with the "bad Samaritan."

2. In vs. 22 Jesus notes that there were two levels of worship, worshipping in ignorance, though sincerely perhaps. And worshipping in knowledge and with theological consistency and continuity. An example would a person today who is worshipping from a Roman Catholic or a Jewish background. We should evaluate that differently than we might some person worshipping from an Islamic or Moslem background. The Catholic or the Jew are coming from the same general direction that we are but they are not blessed yet with the "full program." The Moslem is seeking one God, but not from the same heritage and "bank of truth" as we are. There are two levels of worship that Jesus acknowledges...
3. The dispensational change that was happening would climax in a new kind of worship, which I believe, is what God always wanted from His people anyway. Jesus said that *true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth* (vs. 24). There are "true worshippers" and logically, then, there are FALSE worshippers. This goes against the grain of the thinking of quite a few educated people today who like to believe that there is no such thing as false worship; that all worship is acceptable to God. But Jesus said that the Father would be the object of worship, and that approaching Him was

enjoy the show? What do you think about how I'm running your life?" God IS spirit. And It is not just a little amazing to me that He *wants (for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers, vs. 23c)* us to worship and adore Him.

In one of those three conversations I had this week, the one with the guy who was leaving His church, he said to me that he had thought about visiting our church but that someone had told him that people aren't allowed to raise their hands in Dartmouth Bible Church. I told him that maybe someone had better tell me then. Raising hands pleases God if it is a spilling over of love and adoration. It is a mockery if it is just "learned behavior" or if it is not sincere. God is looking inside of us and at our whole lives. He is waiting to welcome our worship, in any appropriate gesture which we might like to bring before Him. But real worship focuses on God's being not just the what-He-has-done-for-me. I know that is hard. You have to know something ABOUT God as He truly is, before you can worship Him just for who He is.

We will look next week at worshipping Him *in truth* and in acts of DEDICATION. I hope you know Him, or are seeking Him. I hope that you are thirsty for living water and that you are *interested* in the subject of worship. We will always be talking about this and looking for ways to enhance the environment for worship. I'm going to keep checking out the worship accouterments ads, and talking to people from other churches about worship. I want us to really enjoy Him, and to return love and expression of appreciation to a wonderful God who loves US so much that He sacrificed His only Son to make our worship of Him possible!

Worship is

♥ *to be in wonder of the being of our God*

♥ *to acknowledge His goodness, position and power*

- Donald Grey Barnhouse

Worship is

♥ *a feeling and a conviction*

♥ *a set of intelligent and deliberate actions which communicate love and enjoyment of our God*

♥ *anything which personally says TO HIM: "I really appreciate you!"*

- Pastor Neil

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

NOTES FROM THE PULPIT MINISTRY
OF DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH

LESSON #11 SCRIPTURE: JOHN 4:24-26

SPEAKER: REV. NEIL C. DAMGAARD, TH.M.

DATE: JULY 16TH, 1995



Worshipping in Spirit and Truth part 2

INTRODUCTION This is the third message on this encounter by Jesus with the woman at the well in Samaria. If you haven't noticed it, let me tell you that I am fascinated by this chapter of Scripture. There is a lot here. And we are focusing on Jesus' statement to her, that God is seeking worshippers who adore and exalt Him *in spirit and truth*. Last week I suggested to you that to worship God *in spirit* means from within the human spirit. The kind of worship God is looking for is adoration and admiration and affection which comes from the inside of person, and overflows out. ✓

If you will look at the OT Book of Malachi for a moment, you will see the exact *opposite* of what God is seeking (Malachi 1). In that last book of the OT, God has a complaint against His people. They had grown bored with corporate worship. They were going through the motions and God would rather they had just stayed home. If the worship of God is going to make any sense at all, it must come from a sincere and loving heart and then express itself in any number of visible and external ways. All of this means, as we've said before, you and I need to prepare for worship if it is going to be an honor to God. If your spirit is assaulted in some way on Sat. night or Sun. morning, how can you effectively worship God *in spirit*? I don't think you can...effectively; giving Him your full attention and really exalting Him with a clean spirit.

Now, today we want to look at the second part of what Jesus said to that woman. He said that *those who worship the Father must worship in spirit and in truth* (verse 24b). So, what did Jesus mean by worshipping God *in truth*? He meant that the worship of God must be *governed* by truth. One commentary puts it this way: "If we are not worshipping 'in spirit' our worship will be dry and lifeless. Worship not done 'in truth' becomes deceitful or irrelevant" (*Life Application Bible Commentary*).

Worshipping *in truth* means that what we think about worship needs to be in line with what is true about God, us, the dispensation in which we live and everything in Scripture that comes to bear on NT worship. Here are some things that God is NOT:

He is never tired.

He is never distant.

He is never distracted.

He is not limited by time and space and He can be present in all people, at once!

He cannot be destroyed or overpowered. (Life Application Bible Commentary)

As far as the whom of worship is concerned, we worship God the Father. In OT times the heathen bowed before power. The ancient philosophers bowed before knowledge. Mystics bow before imagined angels and Mary and who knows what else. But the saints bow before the Father. "Implicit in this is the fact that there is also a Son" (S. Lewis Johnson). We also worship Him, and we also acknowledge that the Holy Spirit is worthy of worship but He is not the focus. The Father is the focus. Any worship which does not acknowledge the Trinitarian God is not worshipping *in truth*. Any cult which worships only one person of the trinity is not offering acceptable worship.

As far as the when of worship is concerned, since now we worship *in spirit* true worship takes place in the Spirit everywhere. If we wanted to worship on Friday night and to do it out in a field that would be fine. When the veil in the Temple was rent from top to bottom, a new era began. Worship was not limited to the Jerusalem Temple nor to the Sabbath day.

As far as the how of worship is concerned, it needs to be in accordance with the revealed Word of God. In the NT there is no shortage of guidelines for how God wants us to worship Him. But since true worship comes out of our insides, we need to give preparation TO our insides. God is not fooled or impressed with dressed up *outsides* when the insides are foul. But if your spirit is prepared and clean, and you do come to worship Him free of grudges and bitterness then I think He allows much creativity and variety in how we worship. A saint can worship Him with a *liturgy* and if his heart is clean, God applauds. A saint can worship Him with charismatic dance and contemporary music and if the heart is clean, God applauds. Such is the great freedom and liberty that NT Christians enjoy and I believe most of us are yet so unaware yet about this. Charismatic churches approach it but they get off the track theologically so easily, and then you have forfeited something in the *in truth* department.

You see, dear ones, God desires worship which is at the same time ORTHODOX and ALIVE. It isn't one or the other. I really believe that there is a delicate balance there that we need to always, year after year, be striving to maintain. And most churches tend to drift off balance. They lean one way and then overcompensate back the other so that their history tends to be like a see-saw: back and forth. One year they're all into doctrine and word-studies and theology. And then five years later they're into lots of special concerts and small groups...

But NT worship is neither boring nor goofy. It is *both* absolutely orthodox and alive. How do you structure corporate worship so that it's both? Well, that's the challenge to the worship-team. I think we need to always be doing things which are biblically sound. That means we have the preaching and exposition of the Word we have the Lord's Table; we have song-singing and prayer. Sometimes we may have a dramatic skit or sharing and testimonies. There is very little that actually is *institutionalized* but there is some: the Word and prayer--and all of our music fits under either one of those two.

Our worship needs also to be alive. That means no one portion drags. We don't spend too long on any one portion. Now, what's too long? In this TV generation it is a well-known fact that people have a much shorter attention span than they did a hundred years ago. So do we thumb our noses at that cultural reality and just *force* people to sit through long sermons or testimonies? I think that is an unintelligent and unkind approach. We need to accommodate *some* cultural realities in order to edify people where they're at. If we took an aboriginal Christian and told him he needed to put on a Brooks Brothers suit, Stetson cologne and a fine silk tie would that better prepare him for worship? I don't think so.

Second, alive worship is participatory worship. That's why I ask YOU to read the Scripture in worship, and YOU to lead the singing. That's why I desire some of the instrumentally talented children to begin to participate. The more of YOU that are involved, the better, so long as we don't create chaos. And when you give a testimony it should be short and to the point. So often, I think Christians give testimonies that they *think* are edifying to the body when all they really are is *narcissistic* and self-indulgent. The answer to that is not to shut down the testimonies but the *train* the saints into how to share an effective and edifying testimony. Now, I hate to be bored. And so I figure you do too. Alive-worship assists the saints to keep their eyes on Christ and to

enjoy the process. Consider Ephesians 5:18-21. In that passage we have some guidelines that I think we can apply to worship to keep it ALIVE...

You and I need a worship habit which is controlled by the truth of the Word of God. And we need a worship habit that is enjoyably alive and stimulating and exciting and motivating. Tonight we're going to share some encouragements about things we appreciate in one another. The purpose of that is not to give each other big heads but to publicly praise the Lord that we can see in each other things God is doing; that we are thankful for people's faithful service to a God who is faithful to us; and to build each other up. Basically, when you go out of your way to build your brother or sister up in Christ, that is an act of worship that you offer to the Lord.

Notice one other thing, please, back in John 4. In verse 25 the Samaritan woman then brings up the matter of the Messiah. Do you wonder what made her think of Messiah? I think she was *now* starting to make a connection. This Jew speaks like none she has ever met nor heard of. And in verse 26 Jesus makes the plainest claim of His identity of Messiah in the NT: ***I who speak to you am*** [He]. In the original NT Greek the word *He* is not there. John in particular records the several times when Jesus said ***I am***. When Jesus used that expression He was intentionally and deliberately identifying Himself as ***Yhwh***, Jehovah, and to this unlikely listener (the woman) He identifies Himself as Messiah, as the Son of God.

We honor and bow before the Son of God too. Through the Bible He says to people today the same thing He said so plainly to the Samaritan woman: ***I am the Messiah***. What do we do with that fact? We seek Him, dear ones. And we keep seeking Him year after year. We strive and strain to draw up more living water for our lives from the well of Jesus Christ. Is your Christian life exciting? I know you do a pretty good job at worshipping Him ***in truth*** but is your worship ***in spirit*** too? We need both elements in order to offer worship such as the Father is seeking. May He show us more about this. May we be a worshipping church which makes worship an urgent priority and not just a hobby. And may it be both women *and* men, equally who hunger and thirst after a powerful worship habit. And may we show our kids that worship is ***vital*** for the Christian and one of the most important and indispensable things we DO as evangelical Christians. May they adopt worship as a central part of their ***identity*** so that when they are 22 and 25 and 30 themselves they are saying, "Worship of the true God; the living God is basic to who I AM. I learned it from my parents and from their friends, and it is now part of ME TOO."

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

NOTES FROM THE PULPIT MINISTRY
OF DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH

LESSON #12 SCRIPTURE: JOHN 4:39-42

SPEAKER: REV. NEIL C. DAMGAARD, TH.M.

DATE: JULY 30TH, 1995



The Effect of the Pure Word of God

INTRODUCTION We want to look today at one of the lesser known encounters that Jesus had. His talk with the Samaritan woman is well known, but the aftermath of that conversation is also important. After talking with her at the well Jesus ended up spending two full days with her neighbors. The event illustrates what happens when people have a pure, unfiltered experience with the word of God.

You will remember that in the beginning of this book, the apostle John referred to Jesus as *the Word*. That was one of John's names for Jesus of Nazareth. And one of the meanings for the Greek word for "word" (*logos*) is reason. Jesus is the One who brings sense to it all. And as the socially outcast Samaritan community spent these few hours with Jesus, with the *logos*, there was a great revival there. Our goal in Dartmouth Bible Church is not to create religious people. Our goal is not to build a group of people who just behave a certain way, go to church a lot and talk a certain theologically sounding language. Our goal is to introduce people to Jesus Christ and to the Word of God. There are a great many churches around who focus on doing beneficial works. That is fine, and in fact needful. But when a church loses its primary focus of introducing people to Jesus Christ they become defeated in the main thing that God intends for us. You see, we want to see Jesus. We want to be like Him. And we are convinced that the best way to *facilitate* that happening is to encounter the word of God; the pure word of God.

JESUS' GUYS Now, it often feels so easy to "beat up on" Jesus' disciples in the early days of their association with Him. And I really don't want to do that, but we must look at how they reacted to Jesus talking with the woman (4:27). Their reaction to Jesus' dealing with the woman was predictable--*they marveled*; they were amazed... Jesus had broken two cultural taboos: 1) Jews did not even *speak with*

Samaritans and 2) a male did not normally speak with a female stranger. You will notice, though, that they do not ask Him about it. John just remembered it... Then, they become concerned with his need for food but He turns that concern into a statement about His satisfaction in just being able to do evangelism. Like the disciples, we can become so concerned with physical needs² that we can lose sight of spiritual urgencies. For instance, I might feel like, "Lord, we need a bigger building. We can't survive without one." And He would say, I think, "Your **food** is to do My will for I have planted you there and sent you. Just concentrate on **accomplishing My work**" (vs. 34). We need to reach people for Jesus. We need to present Jesus to people who do not yet know Him. We need to work, and keep working on discipling people--making disciples; and *mentoring* each other and the new disciples He brings us, and *training* them in spiritual gifts, and so forth. That is the **food of Him who sent us**. He will take care of the rest. So like the disciples, we are inclined to be--"where's the food?" So like Jesus we *need* to be. "Just do God's work and let Him take care of the needs."

THE SYCHAR GUYS On the one hand you have Jesus' guys and on the other you have the guys from Sychar. I think John remembered something of a contrast between them as he wrote this down... But notice in these verses 39-42 how the pure Word of God affected the Sychar guys. It is a *primal response!* First, **many believed in Him because of the word of the woman**. There is the power of personal testimony. That can be moving and be used, providentially by God, to bring people to faith. And then in verse 41 we read (and this vs. is in your bulletin today) **and many more believed because of His word**. Have you ever seen that verse before? This is what we're doing in John in this series. We're checking out the "off-the-beaten-path" places. I'm not sure, to be honest, that before this week I had ever noticed verse 41 before. First, the testimony of the woman; then the power of the pure word itself (or, I should say *Himself!*) When people get to the place where they consider Jesus, Himself, they often will respond positively. The woman had that opportunity. It was her, Jesus and her waterpot (which, by the way, she left by the well). She discerned first, that He had a some kind of prophetic gift. *Then* it slowly dawns on her THIS is not *JUST* a prophet who can get me some indoor plumbing. This is actually Messiah. *Holy smokes!*

So her reaction was to go spread the news! Hey guys--*check it out!* And they do. And what do her friends find in this man? The same thing that she did: the very Son of God Himself; the very Chosen One and Promised One; the very ancient of days! Not down in Jerusalem. Not on Mt. Gerezim. Right here in this hot, dusty, road by the old watering hole; just as real and alive and powerful as we could ever imagine!

And they come by the score! Lots of people who want to encounter the pure word of God. Not religion. Not the law and the prophets. Not the Temple; this one or that one. The pure word of God. And John (who was there) tells us (vs. 42) that in encountering the pure word of God, they discerned that He was the ***Savior of the world*** not just of the Jews or even just of the Jews and the Samaritans. THEIR PERSPECTIVE IS IMMEDIATELY BROADENED. Jesus Christ is the *world's precious Savior*. He is the Man for this planet. He is the only redeemer that anyone, African, American, Portuguese, Chinese, Japanese, Indian or French ever needs.

You know, when people become new Christians they often depend on the individual who invited them to believe in Christ. That dependence helps in the beginning, but it can cause harm if it becomes central to their understanding of Christ. Spiritual maturity grows from one's *own* direct relationship with God.

I do not know what became of this group of Sycharian Samaritan Jesus-followers. It is probably at least three years before Philip will show up and perform signs and wonders in the name of the resurrected Jesus, followed by Peter and John (see Acts 8). What did these Christ-followers do in the meantime? We do not know. Perhaps they followed the ministry of Jesus by news about Him. Maybe they sent a couple or a few of their own to join His disciples. But Jesus did not forget them. He told the apostles (Acts 1) to go right to Samaria and follow up what He had started in that two day stint, right after they proclaim the Gospel in Jerusalem.

But the lesson for us today is the effect that the pure word of God can have on people. Have you ever read Hebrews 4:11,12,13? Let's look at these verses, please...

The pure word of God puts people in touch with the truth about themselves. It lays bare a person's motivations, his desires, his real wishes. And at the same time it gives REST. It puts a person at ease when he or she comes to understand how God really is. I think there is a subtle, always-there, nervousness in the world. People are not sure *how* God really is. So they, for instance, are so susceptible to superstition or fantasy to soothe themselves. But when you meet Jesus face to face and see how He really is, you get excited about it. He is wonderful, dear ones. He is worth serving. He is worth going to other people and saying, ***Come see a man who told me all the things that I have done*** AND didn't blow me away!

The job of this church is to put people in contact with the word of God, with the *logos*, the incarnate Word (we say) and the written word. If they can't read it, we find a

way to get it to them. If they don't understand it we work at teaching them to interpret it responsibly and comprehensively (like our current adult Sunday School class). If they are young we teach it to them *while* they're young. We encourage people to memorize it. We put it on our walls. We plaster it all over just about every printed document we print out. We sing it. We recite it. We share it. We pray it.

And again I say, if someone thinks that is brain-washing, then I say "amen." My brain needs washing. The word of God is startling sometimes. It is abrupt. He talks to me when I think He wouldn't. And He says things that probe right down into my innermost being. But it is wonderful and HE is wonderful. May God bless our efforts to teach it to our young, from Cubbies age right through high school.

It is easy for churches to become distracted from what they're really supposed to be all about. We can get legalistic, proud, we can fall into conflict and distrustfulness. We can get so fascinated with the technical minutiae of the Scripture that we forget to relate to the Author of the Scripture, Himself. May we never lose focus on our greatest purpose, to bring each other and any and everyone on the outside who will listen into a personal encounter with the pure word of God.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

NOTES FROM THE PULPIT MINISTRY
OF DARTMOUTH BIBLE CHURCH

LESSON #13 SCRIPTURE: JOHN 4:43-54

SPEAKER: REV. NEIL C. DAMGAARD, TH.M.

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The Second of Jesus' Signs

INTRODUCTION If you had lived in the time of Jesus, and saw Him and maybe watched Him do some of the things that He did, what kind of things would you remember? Would you be impressed by His words, His wisdom His way of debating or reasoning? Would you be touched with His compassion for openly hurting people? Would He be a hero to you, someone to follow down the road to liberation from Roman oppression? Would you be moved by His quiet claims to be someone more than a prophet only? The men who wrote the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) were real guys, after all. Each actually did think about what *he* wanted to record about the life of Jesus. We are persuaded that each was also under the inspiration of God's Spirit *as* he recorded his account of the life of Jesus but nonetheless, each was a unique individual. And John's Gospel especially reflects a unique purpose. As Dr. William Hendriksen puts it: "it is the purpose of John's Gospel to select only those events from the life of our Lord in which his deity becomes most strikingly evident" [*Commentary on John* p. 180]. So, what would you write down if you lived back then, if you saw Him and watched Him do what He did? Today, the question, "Who was Jesus?" is just as compelling to people as it was then. Who do you think Jesus was?

Now, at this point in Jesus' life His great Galilean ministry was beginning. Big chunks of Matthew's [4:12-15:20] and Mark's [1:14-7:23] Gospels are devoted to Jesus' Galilean ministry. Luke also devoted a considerable portion of His account of Jesus' life to Galilee [4:14-9:17]. John, however, records only two events from this sixteen month segment of His ministry: the healing of the court official's son (before us) and the event in chapter 6 where Jesus fed 5,000 men (not to mention who knows how many women and children) with five loaves and two fishes. That's it. John was moved to record only those two events. Probably he assumed that his readers were acquainted with the other Gospels by this point. So, now he adds his own account of this event, his purpose being to record this piece of evidence for Jesus' claim to be God's true Son.

In vs. 53 John reports that when the official checked out the details of when his son became better, and seeing the evidence, ***he himself believed and his whole household***. I would like to see that, a whole family coming to faith in Messiah at the same time. It sounds like what happens to the Philippian jailer much later in Acts 16 when he also ***having believed in God with his whole household*** (vs. 34b). I would love to see that. Faith spreading throughout a single family is a wonderful thing. And as this son got better and the Dad returned to tell them why, imagine the joy and wonder of the new faith in Jesus in that Capernaum family.

This again a second sign that Jesus performed, when He had come out of Judea into Galilee (4:54). You will remember perhaps that I told you one of the reasons I wanted to preach out of the Gospel of John was to take us back into contact, just with JESUS. This, dear ones, is the Son of God. He is powerful. He is sovereign. He is compassionate. He is now just as He was back then, 2,000 years ago in Galilee. Is He worthy to be followed? Is He worthy of your trust and dedication? Can He heal? Yes. But He does not heal just to be the star attraction. He does not heal just to "wow" people with His power. He needs ~~no~~ affirmation that He can do it. He can heal when He chooses, in order to bring glory to God. I believe it is completely appropriate for us to earnestly--even as this father did--ask Jesus to heal, especially family members. But we cannot demand that He move according to our will or our schedule. We must entrust ourselves, in faith, to ***Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven***. It isn't enough for us to just *say* we believe Jesus can take care of our problems. We need to ACT as if He can. Faith grows as we *use it*, dear ones. And today Christians do much talking about faith, and polishing its packaging. But we need to USE our faith as a tool to honor the Lord.

How?

The second of Jesus' signs was not to establish Him as a first class act. It was not to establish Him on the throne of Israel (and that is why, maybe, that He went back to Galilee at this point--to avoid any premature acclamation). It was to establish and validate His reputation as nothing less than the Son of God. That is the apostle John's main reason for writing his Gospel. John wanted it clear. Jesus is not just a good teacher. He is not just an intuitive and prophetic thinker. He is not just a philanthropist. He is not just a King. He is the Son of God, even as we recited earlier from our own *Affirmation of Faith*. He deserves our every devotion and surrender. He is fully worthy of it.

Now in 4:46 we see that Jesus went back to Cana of Galilee. That's where He had changed the water into wine at the wedding, which John said was the first of Jesus' signs. It was probably still news and a *certain royal official* comes up to him and asks Jesus to go to Capernaum to heal his son who was very ill, literally on his death-bed. Jesus' reaction might seem abrupt, until you realize that really, this man's faith was minimal, or as Hendriksen says, "he is still standing on the lowest rung of faith's ladder." There was ample evidence already for people to embrace Him as Messiah. Even though this man needs a miracle, He asks for one. Like many of the Galileans, he needed to be fed with *signs and wonders* (vs. 48).

But he was all wrapped up in the condition of his son, and that is not hard to understand. *Sir come down before my child dies*. Why didn't the man go to his boss, Herod Antipas (likely)? Why come to Jesus? Because they perceived Him to be the Miracle-Worker. Now from our perspective, that would be OK. Let's sing to Jesus the Miracle Worker! Let's focus on His power and what we can get from Him. But from *His perspective* that perception is far too low. He is not just a Miracle Worker. He is not just a prophet, even the Greatest Prophet. He is God's Son. Acknowledgment of anything less will not do. He was who He was and He is who He is today too.

So even though Jesus was a little grieved at the approach people were giving Him, did He refuse to help? No. Because He is full of compassion. CONSIDER Exodus 34:6,7; Numbers 14:18,19; 2 Chronicles 30:9; Psalm 69:16; 2 Cor. 1:3; Ephesians 2:4,5; Hebrews 4:16; James 5:11. John tells us that even from a distance Jesus could heal. He is the Master of the universe and He did not need to actually be present. And the court official believed. Again, a pure encounter with the Son of God, with the living Word of God produced faith. *The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to Him and he started off* (vs. 50a). Sometimes we have to drop ourselves at the feet of Jesus, my friends, pour out our needs and then go on, waiting to see what He will do.

It isn't easy to exercise faith. It is much easier to believe in God when we can SEE that He is here or that He is working. Going on in faith alone that He cares and that He hears and He is in control, requires courage and determination. Sometimes we have to do it alone and just wait on Him to move. But He always is faithful, dear ones. He will never go back on something that He has promised. IF He has promised it. The trick is to know what He has promised. The court official knew nothing even, of God's promises. Only that this Miracle Worker must surely care...