

A Study in the Life and Work of Jesus Christ

By Nell Truesdell

Introduction

The study of the Life and Work of Jesus Christ is a study in the unfoldment of human consciousness as it awakens into a state of being that transcends the limits of the mortal and lifts man into his true state of Sonship. The Spirit of God, implanted in man from the beginning, knows Itself in all Its fullness. However, man has become dulled to Its Presence and is unaware of Its existence in his life.

Man does not develop a spiritual consciousness. He lets himself unfold into a spiritual consciousness in ratio to his willingness to drop his limited awareness of self and accept the Fact that he is an original creation of God, made in His own image and likeness and endowed with His Name and Nature. Primarily, this is what Jesus Christ reveals to man. But man, himself, must make the voluntary choice to undertake to let the truth about himself - as Jesus Christ knew that truth - demonstrate or outpicture in his own life.

The length of man's life-span is of little consequence to this demonstration. In itself it neither limits nor does it augment the possibility of full realization. The time is NOW; the place is HERE. As Paul wrote to the Romans, "Now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. . . . Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." (Rom.13:11-12, 14.)

No matter how young or old a person is in this world, if he is ready to accept Sonship he will have plenty of time to demonstrate it. Jesus Christ took a mere three years to complete the cycle from human limits to divine attainment. The reader might question this statement, but he must realize that Jesus Christ was no super natural spirit above the limits of the flesh and the reach of the world; He was the manifestation of God who undertook the limits of the flesh and circumscription of the world that He might show mankind how to release himself from bondage to these agents. The writer of the Book of Hebrews put it thus: "Jesus the Son of God . . . was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Heb.4:14,15)

Release from bondage to the world, the flesh, and the devil is the lesson Jesus Christ came to teach all men. He taught that lesson in many ways. Each lesson is direct and leaves no room for speculation as to what He meant, or for argument about its truth. He taught by example, by parable, and by point-blank instruction that immediately could be discerned and understood. His unfailing acuteness of judgment left nothing to be implied. He spoke and acted without the need for deliberation or forethought, and His ideas were always clearly expressed.

The Baptism of Jesus

(At Bethabara beyond Jordan. Probably January 27 A.D.)
Read: Mt. 3:13-17; Mk. 1:9-11; Lu. 3:21-23a; Jn. 1:32-34.

When Jesus came to John the Baptist to be baptized in the Jordan River, John tried to dissuade Him and declared that he had need to be baptized by Jesus. But Jesus answered, "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." In this ceremony Jesus showed a respect that indicated that, as a participant, He shared with others the common thought, feeling, and action essential to a change of mind and heart regarding things spiritual. By this outer observance, He showed publicly His sincerity and readiness to dedicate Himself to God. Too, He revealed His willingness to undertake to abide by the principles involved in the rite.

Water baptism signifies the cleansing action that must take place in the consciousness before a man can enter into a higher or spiritual phase of existence. It is a symbol of denial that is necessary to continued spiritual unfoldment. By submitting to it, Jesus entered into an outer act of repentance that admitted His willingness to surrender secret human faults. He knew that "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite Spirit.'" (Psm. 34:18)

Not only did Jesus share in the Purification of the water baptism, but He obtained restoration to His original status as a Son of God after the rite; for immediately He went up straightway out of the water, saw the Spirit of God descending upon Him, and heard a voice from heaven saying, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He was redeemed throughout His entire being; He was saturated with and absorbed by Spirit. We know this, because right after the ceremony, the Spirit possessed Him so completely that It either led or drove Him into the wilderness so that Its cleansing action might continue in His interior nature. The outward ceremony of cleansing, initiation, and dedication prepared him for the next step: a transition of such magnitude that His entire being, inner and outer, was altered. This step took the form of the temptations in the wilderness.

We might observe here that Jesus later bore witness to the two phases of baptism, water and Spirit, when, in His talk with Nicodemus He said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (Jn. 3:5)

The Temptations of Jesus

(Probably Jan. and Feb. 27 A.D.)

Read: Mt. 4:1-11; Mk. 1:12,13; Lu. 4:1-13.

The record of the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness reveals that He submitted to a cleansing action in His consciousness of intense depth and scope. The temptations and His manner of handling them bear witness to the true inner spiritual baptism (or saturation) that was effected after He submitted to the outer water baptism by John the Baptist. Instead of having engaged in a purely formal outer act, He had entered into a complete inner spiritual reformation so powerful that it drove Him into seclusion and exacted from Him outright surrender of all of the human factors in His consciousness. The humanity of Jesus was an element in His make-up that He Himself had to subject to God. This factor would have indeed kept Him chained to the world, the flesh, and the devil had He been unwilling to relinquish it in full. He had to choose between submission to its cravings and the elevation of His consciousness Godward. That He chose to put natural desires under Him was the initial and decisive step that transformed Him from a mere announcer of the truth about God to a living Exponent of the Way, the Truth, and the Life of God among mankind. Instead of

becoming a teacher of things spiritual, He became a Deliverer from the things of the world.

The first step that everybody has to take in rebuilding his consciousness of God is to let go his already built-up physical-mental awareness of God. Experience in a limited material, mental, and religious environment fruits into a great mass of knowledge that must be broken up and washed away; for it includes aspects of good and of evil. Water baptism is a symbol of such a cleansing and, as such, represents true denial.

After His public baptism, Jesus' next major experience was in the wilderness. After any dynamic rejection of what formerly has been known as true (an experience that is always followed by the assurance of favor with God; e.g., This is my Son), a man finds himself in a wilderness, or waste place in consciousness. In this uncultivated and undisciplined region, all sorts of schemes for personal advancement heave up from hidden depths and present themselves in glowing tones and colors. Treasured personal ambitions tempt a man to utilize his Godgiven, though as yet untried and unproved, spiritual powers to exercise rule over things, persons, and regions in the world.

Before we take up the three major temptations (denials) which Jesus overcame in the wilderness, we should realize that He had already made the first denial that is essential to and precedes them; viz., He had turned His back upon His past way of life and had by so doing rejected family, tradition, and the mores of His generation.

In the world, the strongest hold upon the consciousness of anybody is exercised by his immediate family. E.g., when anybody steps into a career never before experienced by any member of his immediate family, he has to be strong enough to overcome the cries against his departure from the accustomed occupations of his family group. This necessary measure always faces any man or woman stepping out on his own, especially if the step is toward the things of God. When Jesus walked out of His home in Nazareth to seek John the Baptist at Bethabara, He shed His former submission to and responsibility for mother, sisters, and brothers, and broke their grip on Him so thoroughly that He was thenceforth free from bondage to earthly human ties.

The Gospels of Matthew and Mark report Jesus as questioning later, "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? . . . Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." (Mt. 12:48,49; Mk. 3:33-35.) Jesus thought so highly of Joseph that He used the term Father as His most loving and respectful tribute to God. However, He rejected the earthly father as the cause of His being and declared, "Call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven." (Mt. 23:9)

Jesus was never cruel in His rejection of human relationships. He had arrived at that point in unfoldment where He had to relinquish His hold on them and loosen their grip on Him. He was always kind to his brothers, even when they mocked Him; and He was unfailingly gentle with His mother all the days of His life on earth.

The first denial a serious truth student would make, therefore, is the denial of human relationships as the cause of or the prime factor in his existence. He would declare:

1. Past human connections offer no life to sustain me.

In the wilderness, Jesus' temptation to turn stones into loaves of bread, at the beginning of His long period of fasting, indicates that the sense of dependence upon material food for existence is strong in the human consciousness. Too, He had doubtless been considering ways and means by which He would present His teaching to men, and the tempter within might have urged, "This is a hungry country; feed it and have a sure way to popularity." But Jesus answered the enticement, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Jesus was awakened sufficiently in Spirit to realize, without argument, that materiality can never satisfy the soul hungry for the courts of the Lord. He knew that He must not attempt to satisfy any craving of His natural body by using supernatural forces. His miracle working capacity must not be sullied by the flesh in its demands for material blessings. He shrank from using, for His personal gratification, God-given powers. Other men were not able to use such powers for themselves because they were not yet awakened to them. Hence, He refused to do for himself what other men could not do for themselves.

When we, today, attempt to use spiritual prerogatives to quench our craving for things in the world, we are trying to turn stones into bread. Instead, like Jesus Christ, we should remember God and let our heart cry out only for the living God.

Jesus was familiar with the cries of the prophets to God. Job cried, "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food"; and Jeremiah, dejected and rejected in a land suffering utter ruin, had the courage to declare, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts." Centuries before, when the children of Israel were on the verge of making the transition from the wilderness to the Promised Land, Moses exhorted them to obedience toward God in this wise: "And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know, that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." The second denial, therefore, is:

2. There is no nourishment in materiality.

After this conquest, the persistent human personality, or devil, enticed Jesus to make a spectacle of Himself by displaying spiritual powers sufficient to keep Him from breaking His neck if He should throw Himself from some high place. The tempter knew that sensationalism, even if achieved through wrong methods (in this instance, that of Jesus' misuse of God's angels and their charge concerning Him), would draw crowds of curious people. But Jesus, knowing surely now that the flesh profited nothing, realized that the passions, agitating the mentals and stirring the emotions, are not conducive to spirituality. He was aware that ultimate destruction follows in the wake of succumbing to the pleasant enticements of the senses. This Man, wrestling with His indwelling Lordship, knew how unsafe He himself, as well as His future followers, would be if He were to use sensationalism to lure them to His cause. There is no satisfaction and no permanence in theatrical display; it is not a rock upon which anybody can stand secure. Jesus answered this temptation with, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Hence, the third denial is:

3. There is no gratification in succumbing to desire.

The evil one would not be thwarted. He showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. Jesus surely wanted His realization of Sonship to be known so that Sonship might be accepted by all men. In His mind's eye He could see that if He ruled the world as a monarch, He could make all men listen to what He knew to be true about Himself, and true about themselves; viz., "Thou art my beloved Son." The tempter whispered, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

This temptation assails every human being in the world: be a great power among men; be willing to pay the price for world rulership; satisfy all personal ambitions at any cost. Existence on this planet trembled in the balance as Jesus considered the possibility of world rulership. Fortunately, His masterly decision against world power saved Him and the whole race of mankind from annihilation; for it is possible that mankind would have suffered extinction had He failed at this point.

"Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Jesus refused, once and for all time, to use His spiritual prerogatives to elevate Himself to world leadership and to appease a craving to exhibit satanic self-power, as though power originated in the personal self. This point He settled with unquestioning determination: to serve the only Ruling Power there is - God, and the Love of God. The fourth denial that should be practiced is:

4. There is no attainment in self-seeking or in personal ambition.

Like Jesus, every man, who professes to be His follower, must turn away from all that tends to pull him into the choppy seas of mental and physical existence. Only then will he experience repentance, or a complete turning away from and a letting go of the things of the world as dependable and real. Then only will things eternal engross his attention to the point of ministering unto him sufficiently to satisfy his every need. With a fortitude that never flinched, Jesus set His face in the direction of God. He made Himself ready for the baptism of Spirit by participating in the baptism of water, the first step - a cleansing of the mind (consciousness) regarding personal relationships. In the wilderness, He remembered God and, at the height of every trial, put God first. Every desire of the flesh, the senses, and the will He subjected to God.

His natural desires for:

- (1) Warm personal affection
- (2) Limitless food supply
- (3) Strong irrational exhibitionism
- (4) World rulership; willful dominion over others

were denied so effectively in His consciousness that they never again appeared during His entire span of ministry. The people to whom He ministered wanted all these things just as you and I want them today. Jesus Christ gave them up for you and for me, and thus He became our personal Saviour. He stated the necessity of the same overcoming in our lives thus, "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

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SEEK GOD

By Alden Truesdell

It is good to know that God is willing to help us. It is also good to realize God's ability to do so; for there would be little point in setting aside our responsibilities and our individual desires in order to worship some incompetent agency that might or might not hear our petitions and respond to bless us.

There are now many teachers and preachers who are eager to give pilgrims assistance in the way they believe to be the right way to God. A safe test of the capacity of the teacher to instruct and of the preacher to expound is the effect that the teaching and preaching has on their adherents. If the people are being divested of their ills and woes and tribulations, this is a good sign. If they are being instructed in a God closer than breathing and nearer than hands or feet, a God who is an ever present help in every need, and if false concepts about God are breaking up and limited margins are giving way to expanding boundaries, then are the seekers being supplied with accurate instructions.

No better teaching will be found than that incorporated in the words of Jesus Christ. His words give definite instruction as to how to proceed in the way to find God, and furnish accurate description of the nature and character of God.

If you are fortunate enough to subscribe to the actual teaching of Jesus Christ, His words will save you from much haphazard seeking and unlearned questions. You will know within yourself that you are on the right track, because you will be, in a sense, the individual student of the one original Teacher and Miracle-worker, the One who spoke with authority. You will know that the words He spoke were spoken for you, and that the works He worked were worked for you. You will know His way to be the only way because He said it was, and He said it because it is true. "This is the way, walk ye in it." "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

At present there is a trend toward prayer because of fear of the unstable conditions in the world. While it is true that man's adversity is God's opportunity, we remember that there are some worshippers who have so loved God that they have prayed to and praised God continuously in days of prosperity as well as having prayed through emergency after emergency. Seek God and you will find such companions who are always themselves because God is willing and able to help along the way.

"I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause; which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvelous things without number." So said Eliphaz to Job.

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Alphabet Of
DAILY MEDITATIONS
For Every Week Day Of The Month

FEBRUARY 1951

1. ABIDE in me.
2. Thou lovest me BEFORE the foundation of the world.
3. I COME to Thee.

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5. I was DAILY His DELIGHT.
6. They shall mount up with wings as EAGLES.
7. FEED the FLOCK of God.
8. The GLORY which Thou GAVEST Me I have GIVEN them.
9. Ye are . . . of the HOUSEHOLD of God.
10. This mortal must put on IMMORTALITY.

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12. My soul shall be JOYFUL in the Lord.
13. He that KEEPETH thee will not slumber.
14. Your LABOUR is not in vain in the LORD.
15. MAKE not MY Father's house a house of MERCHANDISE.
16. The word NIGH is unto thee.
17. They shall OBTAIN gladness and joy.

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19. The Lord hath PLEASURE in the PROSPERITY of His servant.
20. Many waters cannot QUENCH love.
21. The RANSOMED of the Lord shall RETURN.
22. SANCTIFY them through Thy truth.
23. Glorify THOU me with THINE own Self.
24. He may establish your hearts UNBLAMABLE in holiness,

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26. This is the VICTORY, even our faith.
27. WATCH and pray.
28. YIELD YOURSELVES to the Lord.

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"When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

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SPIRITICITY is the working Power of the Spiritual Principle,
As electricity is the working power of the electrical principle.