

A STUDY IN THE LIFE AND WORK OF JESUS CHRIST

By Nell Truesdell

Part III

From John the Baptist's Imprisonment Through the Choice of the Twelve Disciples
(The Historical View)

During the eight months that Jesus remained in seclusion in Judaea on a bank of the Jordan River where His disciples baptized converts, we may assume that He pondered and came into a full realization of His own Divine Nature. When news of the countless numbers of men who flocked to the area where He and His disciples abode reached the Pharisees, the Lord left Judaea and returned to Galilee. He made a short visit to Cana, and possibly went to Capernaum. Because a feast of the Jews came up in the Spring of A.D. 28, Jesus made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. There He healed an infirm man at the Pool of Bethesda on a sabbath day, and this act provoked the religious leaders to persecute and seek to slay Him. In the abiding strength of the Spirit that was in Him, He began to talk back to them and revealed that He did not learn the secrets of God from schools or priests, but from His Father who kept nothing from Him. "I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, . . . for the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth." Such talk of intimacy with God infuriated the Jews; and Jesus' straightforward statement, "For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man," drove them to desperation.

In plain language Jesus pointed to four witnesses that bore testimony that he was doing the will of the Father which had sent Him into the world: 1) John the Baptist, "Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth"; 2) the miracles, "The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me"; 3) God Himself, "And the Father Himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me"; 4) the Scriptures, "Search the Scriptures; . . . they are they which testify of me."

At this time, Herod, infuriated at John the Baptist for openly reproving his immorality, imprisoned the Prophet. When this dark news reached Jesus in Jerusalem, He immediately left for Galilee to escape the reach of civil authorities. This probably occurred in the early Spring of the year A.D. 28. Jesus, on His trip northward, now openly took up the cry of John the Baptist, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"; and, preaching the gospel through all the region of Galilee, He visited and taught in the synagogues. He was welcomed everywhere, for the Galileans had witnessed His miracles and had heard Him talk in Jerusalem during the feast. Thus began the second period of Jesus' active ministry.

Eventually He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. As was His custom, He visited the synagogue on the sabbath day and, because He stood up to read, was handed a scroll. From it he read the 61st chapter of Isaiah, closed the book, handed it to the attendant, sat down, and said, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." His gracious words pleased His listeners and they whispered to one another, "Is not this Joseph's son?" However, as He continued to speak, the direct impact of His message created in them disquiet, then consternation, and ultimately wrath.

To emphasize His prescience regarding His message and its rejection by His own people, He reminded them that the blessings of their beloved prophets Elijah and Elisha had fallen on foreigners instead of Israelites. During a prolonged drought, Elijah had blessed a widow at Sidon; and, when countless lepers in Israel were in need of healing, Elisha had cleansed none near the shore to come to help with the catch; and both boats were loaded to the point of sinking. This material evidence of a miracle forced Peter to realize his inadequacy, and, falling to his knees before Jesus, he implored, "Depart from me: for I am a sinful man, O Lord." When both boats got to shore, Jesus told Peter, Andrew, James, and John that they would now become fishers of men; and, when they had disposed of their fish, they forsook their trade entirely in order to follow Jesus.

Jesus' word was powerful, for He spoke with authority. He did not repeat formulas and quote rules like the scribes. His speech was pure and strong. On a sabbath day, when He entered the synagogue in Capernaum, He was accosted by a man with an unclean spirit. "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God." This tormented man was healed instantly when Jesus calmly said, "Hold thy peace, and come out of him." The fame of this miracle spread throughout Galilee.

Simon Peter's mother-in-law terrified at the prospect of her daughter's husband leaving his flourishing fish business for the dubious honor of following Jesus of Nazareth, fell into a high fever. When Jesus, with Andrew, James, and John, went to Peter's house after leaving the synagogue and was told that the woman was suffering. He went in to her, took her by the hand, and immediately all fears left her. She realized that actually she had nothing to worry about, so she got up and prepared a meal for the five men. Doubtless she, from that moment, was one of His most ardent champions. That very evening, countless people suffering with all kinds of diseases were brought to Him and He healed them every one. So busy was He that He had no time to rest or to pray; He had to go out into a desert place before dawn to commune with God. Even there, He was followed and implored to return to the city; but He refused, for He knew He had to go throughout all Galilee to teach, preach, and heal among the people. His fame spread to Tyre on the north, Decapolis (in Syria) on the east, Idumea on the south, to Jerusalem, and the region beyond Jordan.

Added to the mounting popular excitement was the report that a leper had been cleansed. Jesus had asked the man not to say anything about this miracle but to present himself quietly to the priest and make the usual offering for his cleansing. Contrary to the request, the man broadcast his healing so that Jesus could not enter the city openly, but had to take refuge in the wilderness to pray and to rest. Still the crowds sought Him and would not be denied; so He again entered Capernaum. He must have gone to Peter's house, which by this time He must have called home. When news of His presence spread, Pharisees and doctors of the law came out of every town in Galilee, Judaea, and Jerusalem, mingled with the masses, and listened and watched, while Jesus taught and healed.

At one time so many pressed into the courtyard of the house where He was that all space was filled. Members of a family carrying a sick man lying on a couch had to climb to the roof, lift away some of the covering, and let the man down by ropes in front of Jesus. When He saw their faith, He said to the sick of palsy, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." To the Pharisees, this sounded like an assumption of God's power and they questioned, "Who can forgive sins,

but God alone?" Jesus demanded which was easier to say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," or, "Rise up and walk." Then, to drive His point home, He said to the sick man, "Arise, take up thy couch, and go into thy house." The onlookers were amazed and were filled with fear at such power.

Jesus went out to a spot on the shore of Galilee where a multitude gathered around Him. After He had taught them, He walked past Matthew's booth where he sat to collect customs and, catching his eye, said simply, "Follow me." Matthew, who must have been seriously considering this Man and His deeds, left all and followed Jesus immediately. To celebrate this choice, Matthew prepared a feast and invited Jesus and His disciples to be honor guests. Matthew's friends who were also publicans and sinners like himself, were there and the Pharisees took note that Jesus ate and drank with them. When Jesus heard their criticism of Him, He said, "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Many questions on other points in the law were hurled at Jesus, who appeared to ignore all of the sacred traditions that formed the fabric of Jewish worship by His lack of fasting, His choice of the new over the old methods of observances, breaking the sabbath by plucking and eating grain, and healing a man with a withered hand on the sabbath. The Pharisees, filled with madness, counselled with the Herodians how they might destroy Him. Jesus, who was aware of their treachery, withdrew with His disciples, to a lonely spot on the seashore. But the crowds would not let them alone; they followed, and He healed them all, asking that they should not make Him known.

In the early summer of A.D. 28, Jesus withdrew to a mountain where He continued all night in prayer to God. When the day broke, He chose the twelve men from among the multitude of disciples who were following Him, and from that hour, those twelve continued with Him to the end of His earthly experience. Until this time, Andrew, Peter, James, and John were with Him most continuously; however, they did not follow Him completely until after the draught of fishes. Now the entire twelve were named, and all, to a man, were Jesus' intimate companions on His preaching tours, His trials, crucifixion, and resurrection.

(To be continued next month.)

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SPIRITICITY, June 1951

FATHER

By Alden Truesdell

"Have I been so long time with you, and yet thou hast not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" Centuries before Jesus' time, the Psalmist envisioned God as "A Father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows." In praising God for His mercies, the Psalmist sang, "I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him: . . . He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation." Isaiah, in splendid prophecy, foresaw the advent of Jesus Christ and proclaimed, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

The Psalmist identified the Father as the one who would inaugurate David and perpetuate his line. Isaiah saw the advent of a Saviour of mankind. Indeed, from the wording of his prophecy, he saw nothing less than the mighty God Himself, the Everlasting Father becoming manifest in the realm of men.

Of the Prophets of old, Malachi expounded the most vital concept of the Fatherhood of God: "Hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?"

Obviously not one of the Prophets felt close enough to God to consider himself in the light of a worthy son. This office remained for Jesus to fill, and, as we read the record, we are duly impressed by His capable portrayal of this intimate relationship between Himself and God, the Father. "I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me," He said to the Pharisees. To Thomas He declared, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." To the Jews gathered round about Him, He stated plainly, "I and my Father are one."

What then, shall we say of the Father that has not already been said by our Master? How apparently fruitless our efforts to explain or to describe Him! The unfathomable Presence, unaffected by anything we say, stands in its place and answers us, "Yes, I am all that, and more."

Where is the Father? Jesus Christ settled that question: "The Kingdom of God is within you." That is, God, in His Kingdom, is within your consciousness.

In our modern time, Tennyson in one of his poems described the Father as being closer than breathing and nearer than hands and feet.

We need no longer look to a faraway God of futurity and futility. In the doctrine of Jesus Christ we have an instruction so vital and intimate that any man is encouraged to feel himself to be right now an inheritor and a partaker of sonship with the One Father of all. To curb man's tendency to seek for material things to satisfy himself, Jesus said, "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him." To relieve tension and give freedom from need of any kind, He advised, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these it things shall be added unto you."

Jesus constantly emphasized the son's access to the Father through a child-like acceptance of the spiritual Father-son relationship. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. . . . Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in Heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven." In our spiritual relationship, we are all babes in Christ.

Further consideration of the Father-Son relationship between Jesus and His Father finds Him honoring His Father: "I honour my Father." Jesus Christ, in His willingness to do the will of His Father, completed His work and entered into His Father's rest: "I go to my Father." The same Father will reveal to each person how he may labor to enter into his rest and dwell consciously in the Father's House forever.

SPIRITICITY, June 1951

MAN IN THE UNIVERSE

By Robert Applegate
(Continued from last month.)

In the May SPIRITICITY we discovered that the universe seems to be running downhill, because the energy that is the life of the universe is continuously being resolved into heat and dispersed throughout the vast reaches of empty space. According to this physical view, man is but a microscopic part of the universe, and he both is caught in the general disintegrative process and also reproduces the process within himself. He seems to receive the energy that sustains his life from the food he eats (which, in turn, has derived it from the light of the sun), and he gives this energy back to the universe largely in the form of heat. In performing this transfer of energy, his physical organism becomes so clogged with waste products that eventually he poisons himself and dies. Thus he plays his minute part in the cosmic tragedy and in so doing destroys himself.

We discovered, however, that, although it is true that the physical universe is passing away, it is also demonstrable that this universe is not real, but is the product of man's reasoning based on the reports of the senses. It is interesting to note that the most advanced scientists are also approaching this point of view. One of them declares that all the scientific theories of the nature of the universe are but pictures that help us to understand the observable data and, as pictures, can make no claim to objective reality. Another goes further declaring that all the physical laws and properties that have been discovered by the scientists are entirely subjective and could have been deduced a priori from a study of the nature of man's mind without man's turning his attention to the universe around him. Thus all that we can really know about the physical universe is that it is changing and transient.

Since, by the admission of the scientists themselves, it is impossible to arrive at objective facts by studying the external; and the only things that we can know about the nature of the universe are our own theories, which are the products of the nature of our intellects, the futility of seeking the final answer to the nature of the universe by following the reports of the senses is readily apparent. We may thus, without hesitation, reject these reports entirely to follow the reasoning that declares that the only Reality, the Source of all energy (or life) and all knowledge, is the eternal, immutable Being of God. This Being, then, is the true Universe and the only worthwhile object of attention and study. Furthermore, it follows that, if the true Universe is spiritual and man lives in that Universe, then man must be a spiritual being and in no wise subject to change, deterioration, or death. Thus, when man, an immortal being, gives his attention to a changing, perishing, unreal physical cosmos in the hope of learning something, he is simply being childish and is forgetting Who and What he is.

The foregoing discussion may sound abstract and hypothetical. It is, however, capable of immediate, empiric proof. In fact, it has been proved irrefutably already. In the realm of physical science, when someone has a new idea, he performs an experiment to test its validity. If the experiment turns out satisfactorily he proclaims his idea as a scientifically established fact. He does not, however, insist that others accept it as such on his authority, but he invites them to perform the experiment for themselves. If we take this

accepted scientific method of demonstration and re-demonstration and apply it to the spiritual Universe of which we have just been speaking, we may conclude that, if our observations are true, it should be possible for someone to demonstrate in a convincing manner his own eternal, unchanging spiritual nature; and then for any one who wished to do so to repeat the experiment for himself. As soon as we formulate the problem in these terms, we can see that Jesus Christ performed the initial experiment two thousand years ago with complete success. He asked us to have faith enough in His demonstration to follow in His footsteps and to make the same experiment ourselves: "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in Him."

(To be continued)

Alphabet Of
DAILY MEDITATIONS
For Every Week Day Of The Month

JUNE 1951

1. ALL things ARE become new.
2. We BEHELD His glory.
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4. The Spirit of the Lord shall CARRY thee.
5. The Lord of hosts shall DEFEND them.
6. He that ENDURETH to the END shall be saved.
7. FEED My sheep.
8. Every creature of GOD is GOOD.
9. The Lord is my HELPER.

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11. The Lord make you to INCREASE IN love.
12. I will JOY in the God of my salvation.
13. Unto Me every KNEE shall bow.
14. The LAW of the LORD is perfect.
15. Thou hast MAGNIFIED Thy MERCY.
16. The day of the Lord is NEAR.

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18. Whosoever is born of God OVERCOMETH the world.
19. Wisdom is PROFITABLE.
20. Thou shalt QUICKEN me again.
21. The eternal God is thy REFUGE.
22. The Very God of peace SANCTIFY you wholly.
23. Be ye TRANSFORMED.

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25. A man of UNDERSTANDING walketh UPRIGHTLY.
26. Ye are of VALUE.
27. The WORD effectually WORKETH in you.
28. The land shall YIELD her increase.
29. He hath a great ZEAL for you.
30. Blessed be the Lord my strength.

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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.