

John Chapter 12

When giving ministry from the gospels, it is always necessary to be wise in our interpretation. The Church did not begin until Acts Chapter 2 so it is particularly important not to apply everything we see in the gospels to ourselves. What we often can see of course are word pictures of things which were about to be. The Church is not mentioned in John's gospel but we do find two occurrences of the word Church in Matthew, in chapters 16 and 18. This may seem strange for Matthew is especially the gospel written with the Jew in mind. But the Lord is surely indicating that if Israel will not receive its Messiah, He will bring in something new while Israel is set aside for the present. This new thing was to be called the Church.

Hence in John's gospel, we see particularly in chapters 12 to 17, things which would relate to the Church in its unique character and worship. But first of all, in John chapter 12, we see pictures of what was then future. In verse 24, we have that well-known verse, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit". The death of Christ is the foundation of all God's dealings with mankind, in all ages. This chapter speaks not only of the death of Christ, but also of the fruit that will result from the corn of wheat. We have three groups represented. We begin at Bethany, the home of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. We then move on to Jerusalem where the Lord is acclaimed by the Jews. Then we hear of certain Greeks who indicate their wish, "We would see Jesus". In these three groups, we see the three main classes of mankind – God does not divide humanity by race, creed, or colour. Rather He sees men in the three groups mentioned by Paul – Jew, Gentile, and Church of God (I Cor 10:32). So, Bethany is a picture of the Church, the triumphal entry into Jerusalem is a picture of the restoration of the Jews, and the enquiry of the Gentiles represents the future blessings of the nations.

We begin with Bethany in chapter one. "Then Jesus, six days before the Passover came to Bethany." What a contrast between Bethany and Jerusalem. Sixteen out of the twenty one chapters of John's gospel describe events that took place in Jerusalem, yet not once do we read of the Lord and His disciples ever spending a night there. Indeed, if we look at the last verse of John 11, we see that the city had become a very hostile place for Him. The command had gone out from the chief priests and Pharisees "that if any man knew where He were, he should show it, that they might take Him".

Bethany was different, for in this little village there was a home which had received Him, and where He was welcome. Indeed Bethany became so precious to the Lord that in Luke 24 we read, "He led them out as far as to Bethany." There were places in the Lord's life which were fixed by prophetic utterance. Thus according to Micah 5:2. He had to be born in Bethlehem of Judaea. He had to be brought up in Nazareth for the prophets had said, "He shall be called a Nazarene" (Matt 2:23). Jerusalem would be the place of His death, for "it cannot be that a prophet perish outside of Jerusalem"(Luke 13:33). But Bethany was a place of the Lord's own choosing. When He left for heaven, He left from Bethany for it was the nearest place on earth to heaven. The same is true of the Church of God today. It is the nearest place on earth to heaven.

The first person mentioned in this home is Lazarus, "Which had been dead, whom He raised from the dead". This is the picture of a man who is living a resurrected life, on the other side of death. In Ephesians chapter 2, Paul speaks of Jew and Gentile that they have been quickened together, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places. We are not in heaven yet, but God looks upon us as being citizens of

heaven. For Paul, this was not simply a theoretical idea, but a longed-for reality. His ambition in life was to know the power of His resurrection ie to live his life in such a way that this world no longer hold any attractions or temptations for him. He wished to live as though he was already taking part in the resurrection. John chapter 11 has much to say about Lazarus. No less than three times, we read of the Lord's love for Lazarus. The first is in verse 3, "Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick". The message from the sisters is designed to touch the heart of the Lord. But was it true that the Lord really loved Lazarus when verse 6 says, "He abode 2 days still in the same place. " As if to dispel the doubts in our minds before they even arise, John records in verse 5, "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus". But can you imagine the initial disappointment at Bethany when the Lord didn't arrive after two days. These were the 2 days that it took the messengers to find the Lord and return. But 2 days came and went, then a third day, then a fourth. Perhaps the people of Bethany were asking the same question, for it is not until they have seen the tears on the Saviour's face that they said, "Behold, how He loved him". There is one more touch of the Spirit of God in John's writing. Both the sisters, and the men of Bethany, used the word "phileo" which means "to be fond of". But the Spirit of God in verse 5 used the word "agape" which is used of the love of God in John 3:16. Thus, the Lord's love for Lazarus was greater than even the sisters or the men of Bethany could appreciate.

But can we ask the question, "Why would the Lord love this man so much". After all, Lazarus appears to have said little of note. At least, not worthy enough to have been included in our Bible. Neither did he do anything worthy of recording for posterity. So why did the Lord love Lazarus. All that is added about him in John 12:2 was that "Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him". Lazarus obviously enjoyed the company of the Lord Jesus. He loved to be where He was, to drink in every word, enjoy every moment. Lazarus is an illustration of what the assembly is, or ought to be. Sitting at the table speaks of communion, or fellowship.

In the world there are many clubs and societies for one thing or another. Those who love art join art clubs, those interested in history join historical societies. People of like minds join themselves together. But the assembly is more than just a meeting of like minds. It is a fellowship. The word fellowship suggests a sharing. What is the thing that we share together. Paul says in 1 Cor 1:9, "God is faithful by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord". John puts it another way in 1 John 1:3. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ". So, we share together the things of His Son. Putting these two thoughts together, we share with the Father the things which we share concerning the Son. We share with the Son the things concerning Himself. The Father, Son, and saints are joined together, sharing together the things of Christ. The two on the road to Emmaus entered into the spirit of this fellowship when the Lord revealed to them, "the things concerning Himself". How did this leave the couple. "Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us by the way". They set off sad, and came back glad. This is the lesson of Lazarus.

The second lesson is from Martha. She didn't serve alone in John 12, for there they made Him a supper, but what characterised Martha was that she loved to serve. John 12 is an advance on what we read about the previous time she served, for in Luke 10 she was complaining to the Lord about Mary. "Bid her therefore come and help me". The Lord, however, gently rebukes her. "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her". Not only what we do but how we do it will be judged by the Lord in a future day. I would assume that Martha's service in Luke 10 would not be to her credit, for she had a bitter spirit. She is still serving in John 12, but without complaint.

We too are "saved to serve". Paul often called himself and his companions, "bondservants of Jesus Christ". He speaks of his work in the gospel as a work for God "whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son".

So, we have Lazarus speaking to us of communion, and Martha speaking of service. The third member of this household brought to our attention is Mary. "Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly". Mary is now seen as a picture of a worshipper. She is always seen in the same place – at the feet of the Lord Jesus. In Luke 10, she sat at His feet and heard His words. Those words had captivated her heart. But in John 11, it is a sad meeting for Lazarus has died. Martha came and said to the Lord, "If Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died". In a way it was a statement of faith. The would have healed Lazarus had He been present. But now after four days, the situation in Martha's opinion is hopeless. Her faith now can only cling on to the hope of a resurrection in the last day. Mary comes next and says exactly the same words, but they are prefaced with this comment, "She fell down at His feet". Now she is seeking solace from the Saviour. She gets it, not in words only, but in the power of the Lord to raise Lazarus from the tomb. Thus she has witnessed one of the Lord's greatest miracles. His words and His work therefore bring Mary again to His feet in John 12 – this time as a worshipper.

Mary is one of three women in the gospels who came to worship Him. The unnamed woman of Luke 7 came to wash His feet with her tears, wipe them with the hairs of her head, and then anoint them. The Lord says of her, "Her sins which are many are for given her, for she loved much. Her love was in proportion to the extent of her forgiveness, and so she worshipped Him.

Mary Magdalene also came on that first day of the week in the spirit of worship. She came for different reasons than the others. Her life had been transformed by meeting the Saviour. Before she met Him, it was said of her that she was possessed of seven demons. What a miserable wretch she must have been. But one day she met Him, and what a difference He made. Together with other women from Galilee, she was not content only with that life changing experience but followed Him from Galilee ministering to Him of her substance.

She no doubt witnessed many of the Lord's miracles and could speak of the gracious words which He spoke. Her faith followed Him all the way to Calvary. When all of the disciples bar John had abandoned Him, a little group of women stood afar off at the Cross. They entered into the sufferings of the Saviour. And even after He had died and his body had been taken down by Joseph and Nicodemus, they followed Him on to His burial. Truly, for all of the above reasons, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb on that first day of the week to anoint, as she thought, the dead body of the Lord. Nicodemus and Joseph had already embalmed the body but she wanted to add something of her own that was purely personal. Little wonder then that, when the Lord rose again from the dead, He appeared first, not to one or all of the disciples, but to the one who loved Him the most, Mary Magdalene.

Coming back to Mary of Bethany, what else can we say about her. The writer tells us how much she brought. It was a pound – you might think, only a pound. Yet John adds the words, "very costly". Later on in this gospel, we read of Nicodemus in chapter 19 who brought a hundred pound of ointment – yet not a word is said about its value. It must have cost an absolute fortune, for Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews and obviously a wealthy man. I think the true value in each case was not in its value in the market place but its value in the courts of heaven. In John chapters 3, 7, and 9, we read of Nicodemus that he came to Jesus by night. One has assumed that in chapter 3 he came not willing to be seen by others. In chapter 7, the council of the Sanhedrin are speaking out against the Lord Jesus. Nicodemus who, we are reminded, came to Jesus by night, speaks up for Him but in a very feeble way. "Doth our law

judge any man before it hear him". It is not until chapter 19 that Nicodemus comes with another secret disciple, also a member of the Sanhedrim, and he and Joseph of Arimathaea together bury the body of Jesus.

But Mary of Bethany, on the other hand, was no secret disciple. Her heart was on her sleeve and in John 12, she just wanted to show how much she loved Him. The Bible says about her one pound that it was "very costly". This expression is only found twice in our Bible. The other occurrence is in Matthew 13. There we read in verses 42 and 43, "The kingdom of heaven is like a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it ". The expression "of great price" is our expression "very costly" in John 12. It tells me that the Lord put the same value on Mary's worship as He Himself put on the Church, which He loved and for which He gave Himself (Eph 5). We see another example of how the Lord's value of things differs widely from that of men. In Luke's gospel, the Lord took note of a poor widow who came to the temple and cast in her two mites. It was only a pittance compared to what others were putting in, perhaps with a great display. But the Lord says of the widow and her mites, "She hath cast in more than they all". They out of their wealth put in much – she out of her poverty put in her all. Somehow I think the widow did not starve that night. "The Lord who sees in secret shall reward thee openly".

What else can we deduce from Mary's ointment. It is described as a pound of spikenard. Spikenard comes from a perennial herb. It was not grown in Israel, however. It was a native of north India, imported into Israel. So too with our worship. It does not have its origin in this world – it comes from a different sphere altogether.

This was true also of the ingredients that made up the holy anointing oil of Exodus 30. The myrrh came from the Arabian desert and Africa

The cinnamon came from Sri Lanka

The calamus came from India

The cassia came from East Asia.

All the ingredients came from outwith the Land. This would speak of Christ Himself, of course. When we come as worshippers, we dare not bring ourselves. We bring Christ, a man who is outside of this world altogether.

Mark in his gospel tells that the ointment came in an alabaster box, which was broken and all its contents poured out upon Christ. The box would never again be used on anyone else but Him. No part of the ointment could be kept for another.

The incident shows how much God desires our worship. In John Ch 4:23, the Lord says to the woman at the well, "The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth for the Father seeketh such to worship Him". The Lord's own desire for worship is seen in His response to the ten lepers who were healed in Luke 17. He laments in verse 17, "Were there not ten cleansed but where are the nine?. Was there only one returned to give God the glory?. Both Father and Son are seeking worshippers. Hebrews 8:3 tells us of our great high priest – "It is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer". We see in Nehemiah 13 what happens when the people fail to worship. That room which should have been filled with the tithes and offerings of the people of God was filled with the household stuff of Tobiah, a sworn enemy of the people of God throughout the book of Nehemiah,

Some have commented on the differences between the accounts given by Matthew and Mark, compared to that given by John. In the first 2 gospels, the un-named woman anoints His head – in John she anoints His feet. The truth of the matter is surely that she anointed both His head and His feet. The feet are obviously a much less honourable part of the body than the head. To anoint the feet was therefore an act of even greater reverence than to anoint the head. In Luke chapter 7:46, the Lord

says to Simon the Pharisee, His host, "My head with oil thou didst not anoint, but this woman hath anointed my feet". To stoop at someone's feet was to show both humility and reverence, and in John 12, Mary displayed both.

The head would speak of an "official" anointing, as with the kings and priests of Israel. But the feet would speak of worship and devotion. Hence in Matthew 28, we read of the women who came to the tomb that "they held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him". It is also the place of instruction. Hence Mary in Luke 10 sat at His feet and heard His words. In the book of Acts, Paul recalls having been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel.

Again, we must comment on the Lord's words regarding Mary's act of devotion. In John 12:7, the Lord said, "Against the day of my burying hath she kept this." Was the Lord attributing something to Mary that was not really true? My assumption is that Mary in some way became aware of the Lord's imminent death and felt that this would be her last opportunity to carry out this deed. This perhaps explains why Mary of Bethany who was as devoted to the Lord as Mary Magdalene does not come to the tomb. She has already said her farewell. Was there something about those words spoken in the house in Luke 10 that led Mary to come to the conclusion that she did. Who can tell ?.

An additional thought is expressed by the Lord in Matt 26:13. "Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this that this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her". Obviously Mary's anointing is not part of the gospel message of salvation, nor does the Lord simply mean that her devotion would be recorded in the gospel records of our Bible. Surely, the Lord is here saying that wherever the gospel is preached, this woman's deed would be remembered. The preaching of the gospel and the worship of those who are subsequently saved go hand in hand in the purpose of God. God is seeking not just the souls of men – God is seeking **worshippers**.

One final comment on verse 3. Mary anointed His feet then wiped His feet with her hair. Mary's hair would bear the fragrance of that ointment for days to come. There was a fragrance about Mary that would mark her out as a worshipper. But the fragrance was not confined to Mary – the whole house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Others present felt the fragrance and knew that worship had taken place. They too got the blessing. That is the secret of true worship. The Lord, the worshipper, and others who sat by all got a portion of the blessing. But heaven also gets its portion. In Rev 4, we read of those four beasts or living creatures, that each one of them had a vial full of odours, and the odours are the prayers of saints. This is the sweet perfume of heaven.

But in verses 4 to 6, there is another value placed upon Mary's ointment. This is not the value of heaven but the value of the market place. This was the valuation of Judas Iscariot – three hundred pence. How much was this ? In Matthew 20, the Lord tells the parable of the master who went out to hire labourers at various times during the day. Each is given his reward – a penny. A penny is therefore the wages of a labouring man for a day. Mary's ointment was therefore, in the eyes of Judas, equal in value to a year's salary for a labouring man or woman. It shows the value of the ointment in monetary terms, and equally shows the devotion of Mary. She had laboured tirelessly for the Master. Every day was a day set aside for Him, another penny gathered. After a year had passed, she had gathered enough. She brought the ointment and gave it all to Him. But, as we have seen, the ointment was valued in heaven's sanctuary as being "very costly". Sadly, the lowest value of all was placed on it by the disciples who said in Matthew 26, "To what purpose is this waste?." It is a shame if in our generation, there could be Christians who have a low regard for worship. They would rather be busy in service, but God wants His portion first.

The complaint here by Judas had nothing to do with the poor. It was because of his greed, and now for the first time, we read that Judas was a thief. Judas was calculating no doubt how much he had lost in his dishonest share of the 300 pence. I believe it was immediately after this incident that Judas went to the chief priests. This is certainly suggested by Matt 26:14. "Then went Judas unto the chief priests". One might well wonder why it was that the Lord was betrayed by one of the twelve and not by someone outside the band of disciples. Was it not to show to all generations henceforth just how far profession can go. If a man can keep company with the Lord and His disciples for over three years, witnessing the miracles and hearing His words, and still go out and betray Him, who can doubt how far a professor can go today.

Apart from what is said in the last few days of the Lord's life, we know little about Judas. Yet if he were here today, he could tell us much that was true about himself. He could tell us about the day that the Lord called him. The Lord said one day, "Have not I chosen you twelve". Another verse says, "He ordained twelve that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach". Judas could therefore speak of leaving behind family, a home, a job, and all to follow a homeless stranger. He could enthral us today with his accounts of the Lord's miracles and His parables. He could surely speak of his own service, for the Lord makes an interesting statement in John 13:20 – "He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me". Who is He speaking about ?. Surely Judas, for in the very next verse He says, "One of you shall betray Me". When word got out about the betrayal of Judas, would there not be some in the towns and villages round about who might say, "I believed in the Lord when Judas and his companion came to our village". The Lord had sent His disciples out two by two, sometimes the twelve and sometimes the seventy. Judas and his companion would have preached the gospel of the kingdom and many may have believed as a result. I wonder how many have been saved since as the result of a word spoken by someone who was not saved himself. I was saved after hearing a minister speaking on the subject of hypocrisy and as a result, began to read the Bible for the first time and was saved a few days later.

Many might think it impossible though that an unsaved man like Judas could have a spiritual gift. We have only to go back to chapter 11 where we read of Caiaphas that he prophesied being High Priest that same year, that one man should die for the nation. In a day yet future, many shall say to the Lord, "Have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works." But the Lord shall reply, "I never knew you". Gift is no proof of spiritual reality. Think too of the Antichrist in a day to come deceiving many by his signs and lying wonders.

We might have thought from what was said earlier regarding Lazarus, that while we can see the beauty of fellowship, it is not much good when it comes to reaching others outside. But verse nine tells us that many came to see Jesus and Lazarus also whom He had raised from the dead, and in verse eleven, many believed on Jesus because of Lazarus. This resulted in Lazarus also becoming a target for the hatred of the chief priests. The world has no time for those who would live for the Lord Jesus.

But now in verse 12, we come to a very different scene. We leave the relative privacy of the home to join a procession through the streets of Jerusalem. The Lord is with His disciples, but many have joined Him from Bethany, those who had seen the miracle of Lazarus being raised. Now in the city much people that had come to the feast joined in. If Bethany is a picture of the Church, then this procession is a picture of the future re-gathering of Israel. Verse 13 tells us that they took branches of palm trees and went before Him. This reminds us of the Feast of Tabernacles, as recorded in Leviticus 23:40. "And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook, and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days". The last of the seven feasts of Jehovah

looks forward to a time of rejoicing when the nation will welcome their Messiah into their midst. John 12 is but a foretaste of what lies ahead for Israel. For the nation, the Lord's return will be just in time. Luke speaks of Israel being compassed with armies. The city is under siege and half will already have fallen when the Lord will return to the Mount of Olives. The mountain shall be divided to open up a way of escape for the citizens of Jerusalem. The Lord shall destroy His enemies in that day. No wonder the city will rejoice. The Lord looked forward to the event when He said, "Ye shall not see Me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt 23:39).

The Lord's followers quote from two Old Testament scriptures. The first is taken from Psalm 118:25, 26. "Save now (Hosannah)... Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord". This is the Psalm that speaks of the stone which the builders rejected becoming the head stone of the corner. The rejected Messiah becomes the acclaimed Messiah.

The second quote is from Zech 9:9. "Behold thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation: lowly, riding upon an ass, and upon a colt., the foal of an ass. " Only Matthew adds the word "lowly". It is omitted in the gospel of the Son of God. Neither quotes the words "and having salvation", for that will be fulfilled for Israel only when He comes again in glory.

It is interesting that of the seven feasts of Leviticus 23, only three are mentioned in the gospels. Luke 22 speaks of the feast of unleavened bread, which is called the Passover. These were fulfilled in the Lord's death. The feast of Tabernacles is mentioned in John 7 when the Lord is taunted by His brethren to go up to the feast. The feast of Tabernacles is also seen in picture on the mount of Transfiguration, when Peter suggests the building of three booths. In Leviticus 23, the people were to dwell in booths for seven days, a reminder of that first journey through the wilderness by a pilgrim people. There is no mention in the Gospels of the other four feasts. The feast of Firstfruits was fulfilled in His resurrection, and Pentecost or the feast of Weeks was fulfilled in Acts 2. But for Israel, they must first hear the rallying call of the Feast of Trumpets. This will lead them to the Feast of Atonement when Israel will repent of its sin, to be followed at last by the feast of Tabernacles.

We said that God has three divisions of mankind – Jew, Gentile, and Church of God. We have looked at the Church, then the Jew. Now it is the Gentiles who are prominent. Certain Greeks came to Philip and said, "Sir, we would see Jesus". Philip comes and tells Andrew and these two tell Jesus. This is significant for these same two disciples are prominent in John chapter 1. There Philip finds Nathaniel and tells him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write". Andrew finds his brother Peter and says, "We have found the Messiah". It is the first introduction of the Promised One to the people of Israel. But now in chapter 12, these same two men introduce the Gentiles to the Lord.

When the Lord returns to Israel in a future day, blessing will flow out to the Gentiles. In Matthew 25, the Lord tells those nations on His right hand, "Come ye blessed of my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Ten men will take hold of the skirt of him who is a Jew and say, "We will go with you, for God is with you"(Zech 8:23).

In verse 24 of this chapter, the Lord shows that all fruit that will result for God is based upon His own death. The corn of wheat must first fall into the ground and die, else it must remain alone. So it is the world of nature. We can keep a seed for ever on the table. It has all the potential to bear fruit, but unless it is buried out of sight, it will remain as a single seed.

In verse 25 to 26, the Lord now applies the same principle to ourselves. "He that

loveth his life shall lose it: and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal". If we keep our lives for our own selfish ends, there will be no fruit, either today or in heaven. We will be like the corn of wheat. Unless it does, it abides alone. This is John's way of expressing what is written in Mark Ch 8:28, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me... of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels". This future day will declare our faithfulness, or otherwise, to the Lord today.

As the Lord thus speaks of His death here, His soul is troubled. Verse 27 reads, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say, Save Me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour". As the Lord ponders His death, He is troubled. But does this mean that He is hesitating about the Cross. Is He having second thoughts about the Cross. Well in this very verse, He instantly dismisses any such suggestion. Would He ever ask, "Save Me from this hour" ? Not at all – "For this cause came I unto this hour". It is noticeable that in John's account of Gethsemane, He speaks of the cup only in a very positive manner. "The cup which my Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it" (John 18:11).

Sp does John in his gospel differ somewhat from the first three gospels. There the Lord prays, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me". We often hear it said that the Lord was here contemplating the Cross. If this is so, we should be able to substitute the word "Cross" for the the word "cup" in the Lord's prayers. So we are saying that three times over the Lord prayed, "If it be possible, let this cross pass from Me". This is the One who during the previous three years spoke often about His death. As early as John chapter 2, the Lord says, "Destroy this temple, and in three days, I will raise it up again." In Matthew 16, He tells His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer and be killed and rise again the third day. Peter rebukes Him for it but he is severely rebuked in return, "Get thee behind me Satan." If the Lord were praying in Gethsemane for a release from the Cross, would He not owe Peter an apology for the stern rebuke He gave him. And what about Peter wielding the sword in the garden. Peter is again rebuked, "Put up thy sword". More significantly the Lord adds, "How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be" (Matt 26:54). If the Lord were praying about the Cross, would Peter not be justly grieved at this second rebuke. He could argue, "I was trying to answer your prayers and you stopped me." And what about the Holy Mount ?. Peter heard the conversation of Moses and Elias as they "spake of His decease that He should accomplish at Jerusalem". Even on the very night He was betrayed, the Lord was speaking about His death. In Luke 22, He says in the upper room, "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer".

So, if not the Cross, what else could the Lord have been praying about?. Could it not have been the experience of Gethsemane itself?. In Mark's account, He prayed that the hour might pass from Him. In Luke 22, He says to His captors , "This is your hour and the power of darkness". This phrase "the power of darkness" is the same as we find in Colossians chapter 1. We have been delivered from "the power of darkness" ie from Satan's power. Was it not this power that oppressed the Lord in the garden and from which He sought release. Is it because of the presence of evil that He says twice to His disciples, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation". Was it the Lord's prayers in the garden that the Hebrew writer had in mind when he wrote in chapter 5, Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up strong crying and tears unto Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared." If this does refer to the experience of Gethsemane, then how was the prayer answered. "An angel came and strengthened Him." Was it not because the angel gave Him the strength to go beyond the garden and move unto the Cross itself.

The Lord continues in verse 28, "Father, glorify Thy name", to which the Father replies,

"I have both glorified it and will glorify it again". The gospel of John is the gospel of glory. In John chapter 1, the writer says that "we beheld His glory, the glory of an only begotten of a Father". In the Lord's first miracle at Cana of Galilee, He manifested forth His glory and His disciples believed in Him". The sickness of Lazarus was not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now the Father's name would be glorified in the death of His Son. The Father replies, "I will glorify it again".

But what effect had this voice upon the multitude. Verse 29 tells us, "The people therefore that stood by and heard it said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to Him". The verse is but an illustration of the truth, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God". When the Father spoke at the Lord's baptism, it was first and foremost a word to John the Baptist. "This is my well beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased". Again, on the Holy mount, the Father spoke the same words to the disciples and added, "Hear ye Him".

Verse 31 now emphasises the true moral state of this world which is about to condemn the Lord to a cross. Sentence is passed upon it. "Now is the judgement of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out". The sentence has been passed and Satan lost his power when the Lord died and rose again. The judgement will not be carried out till a future day. In Rev 12, the devil will be cast out of heaven down to earth by Michael and his angels. Soon after, he will be taken and bound for a thousand years in the bottomless pit, before finally being consigned for ever to the lake of fire. Today he is sentenced, soon he will be condemned.

In verse 32, the Lord goes on to speak more about His death. He states, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me". The first part of this statement is explained in verse 33. "This He said, signifying what death He should die". That is, by a Cross. The second statement is much more difficult. It is not meant to be statement of gospel truth, for all men of course have not been saved. Rather it means all men without exception. It is true that believers have been drawn to Him, but one day it will be true of all. It looks forward to the words of Paul in Phil 2. "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow". There will be no exceptions in that day, for all will respond in heaven, upon earth, and even under the earth. It will fulfil the Lord's own words, "All who are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth".

Such thoughts of death were., however, unknown by the Jews in His audience. Their idea of a Messiah was one who would reign and live for ever. Who was this Son of man, who would be lifted up. They must have taken the title, the Son of man, from the Lord's own words in verse 23. "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified".

If in verse 35, He speaks of walking in the light, then in verse 36, He speaks of believing in the light, that they may become children of light. Light is a characteristic of God for "God is light". Thus we also are characterised by light as Paul says in I Thess 5:5, "Ye are all the children of light, and children of the day".

But having testified to them, it is significant that verse 36 ends with, "And did hide Himself from them". The time for testimony had ended. It was their last opportunity to believe in Him. Now there only remained judgement. Verse 37 shows the full extent of their unbelief. "though He did so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him". It is a foretaste of John 15. "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin". Also in chapter 15:22 He says, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not sin". Truly, He could say of Himself, "They hated Me without a cause".

All this was done, however, in fulfilment of the O.T. prophet. Isaiah said in chapter 53, "Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been

revealed". The arm of the Lord had been revealed in His miracles, yet for all that they would not believe His report. Isaiah 53 goes on of course to describe the sufferings of the despised and rejected Messiah. If chapter 53 says that they did not believe, then Isaiah 6 says that they could not believe. It was judicial blindness brought upon them through unbelief. "He hath blinded their eyes etc".

Following on from those who did not believe, and those who could not believe, there were those among the chief rulers who believed not but would not confess Him, for fear of the Pharisees. John in his gospel highlights two other secret disciples. One is Nicodemus who came to Jesus by night. The other is Joseph of Arimathaea – a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews.

The chapter ends with the Lord speaking about His words, which were in fact the Father's words. He that rejected these words would himself be condemned by these very same words in the last day.