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“THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME”

The Memorial service of our Lord is first and foremost a service of remembrance as He instructed His disciples nearly 2000 years ago. It is a remembrance of all that our dear Saviour underwent on our behalf “pouring out His soul unto death” and all that it will ultimately mean for all mankind. It is a simple service, though rich in meaning, and in its simplicity it takes us in spirit back to its inauguration by our Lord Himself in an upper room in Jerusalem.

In Luke 22:14-16 we read – “And when the hour was come, He sat down. And the disciples with Him, and He said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” This was not to be just another Passover, important as its observance was to every faithful Jew, but the introduction of a memorial to a far greater and more far-reaching deliverance, than that in Egypt. That event remembered in each Passover foreshadowed the far greater deliverance shortly to be accomplished by our Lord. The type was to give way to the antitype, the shadow to the reality.

It is that antitype that we memorialize each year as we participate in the commemoration of our Lord’s death as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, as John the Baptist announced Him early in His ministry. We remember again all that His perfect offering has meant to His people, including all of us, and will ultimately bring to all mankind. This occasion brings us back each year to the very foundation of our faith, and we can echo the apostle’s words – “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” (1 Cor 2:2) This is the sole and solid basis of faith, the tie that binds all who truly love the Lord, who love to praise Him and do His will.

The three gospel accounts and the later one of Paul tell us in simple terms that, after the Passover supper had been finished, our Lord took two of the elements already on hand from that supper and gave thanks or asked a blessing on each before passing them to His

disciples. Nearly 2000 years later, we read again His words before we partake of the same two elements and our thoughts travel back for a moment to the upper room where our Lord Himself so lovingly served those ones so dear to Him. His promise is that “where two or three (or more) are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matt 18:29)

The Passover, instituted many centuries before our Lord’s first advent, celebrated the deliverance of the nation of Israel from the bondage of Egypt, and was to be a perpetual reminder of God’s provision through His servant Moses. “This day shall be unto you for a memorial, and ye shall keep it as a feast throughout your generations....and it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses.” (Exod 12:14,26,27)

In the choosing of the lamb for the Passover, the striking of the blood on the doorposts and the saving of the firstborns, what foreshadowing of our Lord’s sacrifice and its efficacy is so clearly presented. The apostle Paul makes the beautiful link over to our Lord in 1 Cor 5:7,8 where he says “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened, for even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the

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unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” Again in Rev 13:8 we read that Jesus was “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

God in His wisdom and foreknowledge saw the need and provided the perfect, unblemished and all-sufficient Lamb. This is our confidence – “Christ our Passover, sacrificed for us.” The apostle Peter also beautifully lists the qualities of Christ our Passover in 1 Pet 1:18-20 – Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world but was manifest in these last days for you.”

Apart from His blessing of the bread and the cup and passing these to His disciples, only a few words of our Master in the actual service are recorded. In the case of the bread, all accounts add our Lord’s words “this is my body”. Luke in his gospel and Paul in 1 Cor 11 also add that it (His body) was given or “broken for you”, that is, for the disciples and by extension all His people. The unleavened bread pictured His perfect life given for all mankind. On Him, as the “bread of life” the Church throughout the gospel age has been sustained. “I am the living bread, if anyone eat of this bread, he shall live for ever, and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world”. (John 6:51)

All four accounts refer to the cup as representing His blood, the blood of the new covenant, which will ultimately bless all mankind. Matthew adds the Lord’s words “drink ye all of it”. It is the privilege of all those who recognize in our Lord’s shed blood their own salvation and whose will is to follow in His steps in appreciation and appropriation of His merit in their

own lives, to participate in this remembrance service. The only qualification which Paul adds is that each take part in a fitting, worthy manner recognising the reality of that which the elements portray. This is not to deter any seeking to follow Christ from taking part, but to encourage self-examination first and then if the heart is right to take part.

The same apostle also points out that our partaking of the bread and the cup binds us with the Lord Himself and all His true people. “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the of Christ? For we being many, are one bread, and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread.” (1 Cor 10:16,17) Again, “for unto you it is given on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me” (Phil 1:29,30) This is the privilege of every child of God – “if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be glorified together.” (Rom 8:16,17) Communion, participation now in His and His people’s sufferings, communion in His glory later, what a prospect!

How blessed, then. Is the privilege of remembering our dear Saviour and Lord in the simple but wonderful way which He established nearly twenty centuries ago! Let us remember how He has blessed and kept us through another year. Let us renew our vows of consecration as we set out on another year of our pilgrimage. Once more, our Saviour invites us to His table, to take eat of the bread and drink of the cup in thankfulness and renewed dedication to the service of Him “whom having not seen, ye love, in whom, though ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”: (1 Pet 1:8)

CITIES OF REFUGE

**“God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present help in time of trouble.”
(Psalm 46:1)**

What a wonderful thought the Psalmist brings out in this verse, that God is our “refuge and strength”. David was well aware of the Cities of Refuge, their legal status and how this provided a place of refuge for those who had broken God’s laws. However he would have realized that they were only temporary places of refuge compared with what God had to offer to those who were faithful to Him.

The apostle Paul when writing to the Hebrews also

realized the advantage that we now have when he states, “we who have fled for refuge” (Heb 6:18). Those he wrote to were very familiar with the “cities of refuge” and their purpose to protect a Jew or even a stranger who had accidentally killed a person making them liable to death under the “eye for an eye” provision of the Law of Moses. Under the provision of the “cities of refuge” God had made allowances for protecting them until they could plead their cause. Our Heavenly Father knew that as imperfect human beings mistakes can be made that were not deliberate or malicious. What lessons can we as believers in Christ learn from this feature of the Jewish Law and what it tells us about our relationship with our Heavenly Father.

Cities of Refuge in the O.T.

The setting for the provision of the cities of refuge was the time when the Jewish nation had just come through the forty years in the wilderness and had conquered and entered the Promised Land. These were tough times for this fledgling nation, vengeance was a way of life to people, backed by the law of God. The family of a slain person were more often interested in repaying eye for eye than in the careful examination of the circumstances to see whether the offending party deserved the severity of the punishment that grief and anger dictated. God knew that not all the sins of the people were deliberate and willful, and although Divine Justice did not differentiate between sins, Divine Mercy could and so the Cities of Refuge were established.

“Then the Lord spoke to Joshua, saying, Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, Designate the cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you through Moses; that the manslayer who kills any person unintentionally, without premeditation, may flee there, and they shall become your refuge from the avenger of blood. And he shall flee to one of these cities, and shall stand at the entrance of the gate of the city and state his case in the hearing of the elders of that city, and they shall take him into the city to them and give him a place, so that he may dwell among them. Now if the avenger of blood pursues him, then they shall not deliver the manslayer into his hand, because he struck his neighbour without premeditation and did not hate him beforehand. And he shall dwell in that city until he stands before the congregation for judgment, until the death of the one who is high priest in those days. Then the manslayer shall return to his own city and to his own house, to the city from which he fled.” (Joshua 20.1-6)

Six cities were set aside by the Lord’s command as cities of refuge. They were centrally situated so that people could reach them from any point in Israel in a minimal period of time, as we read in Joshua 20:7-9 – “So they set apart Kedesh in Galilee in the hill country of Naphtali and Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and Kiriath-Arba (that is Hebron) in the hill country of Judah. And beyond the Jordan east of Jericho, they designated Bezer in the wilderness on the plain from the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead from the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan from the tribe of Manasseh. These were the appointed cities for all the sons of Israel and for the stranger who sojourns among them, that whoever kills any person unintentionally may flee there, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood until he stands before the congregation. (NAS)

Of these six cities of refuge, three were east of Jordan as selected by God and given to Moses before the Isra-

elites crossed the river into the Promised Land, and three west of the Jordan as later given to Joshua. We read in Numbers 35:6,7 – “the cities which you shall give to the Levites shall be the six cities of refuge, which you shall give for the manslayer to flee to, and in addition you shall give forty two cities. All the cities which you shall give to the Levites, shall be forty eight cities, together with the pasturelands.” (NAS) The cities chosen were then all of them cities of the Levites, which would ensure that they were free from all tribal bias or prejudice. The tribe stood separate and distinct from all other tribes, as the religious representatives of the nation. It was fitting, therefore, that these refuges from justice should be of the Levite wards – under their protection.

The purpose of cities of refuge was to temper justice with mercy; they were established, not to protect willful murderers, but for those who unintentionally through error or accident, took the life of another, which is what we know as manslaughter. Anyone taking a life was worthy of death under the decree of Gen 9:6 – “whoever sheds man’s blood by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man. (NAS) Even self-defence or the result of an accident was no excuse. Anyone believing himself to be free of malice, willful, intentional murder could flee to one of these cities of refuge and there be protected from the full demands of the law against his life. He could obtain a measure of mercy without the condoning of his offence. It is of interest that the routes leading to these cities of refuge were to be built and kept in good order, free from stumbling stones, with bridges over water courses, etc., so as to afford the refugees full opportunity for a rapid flight to secure safety.

Moreover at frequent intervals signboards were erected pointing in the direction of the city of refuge and bearing the word “Refuge”. It was also a custom among Jews that two scribes should accompany the refugee. Their purpose was to persuade the avenger, should he overtake the culprit, to permit him to reach the city of refuge and to have a proper trial. This was to recognize the justice of vengeance, while instilling into the minds of the people the principle of mercy. Most of the people felt sympathy for the person fleeing from an avenger to a city of refuge, as they realized that at some time they too may commit a similar offence and thus likewise need to seek refuge and mercy. On arrival the person was not free, but had to stand trial before the elders of the city representing the congregation of Israel. Then he was received into the city and protected until such time as the trial could take place.

Justice and Mercy

His cause was to be carefully investigated. The court had to be satisfied that the death was not caused by

any of the following actions of the refugee –

- if he struck him down with an iron object,
- if he struck him down with a stone in his hand,
- if he struck him with a wooden object in the hand
- if he pushed him out of hatred, or threw something at him while lying in wait
- if he struck him with his hand in enmity. (Num 35:16-21)

The next verses list reasons for the person to be able to stay on in the city of refuge –

- if he pushed him suddenly without enmity
- if he threw something at him without lying in wait
- if he struck him with any deadly object of stone, without seeing him, while not his enemy nor seeking his harm. (Num 35:22,23)

The intention of these cities of refuge was not to defeat the ends of justice, but that while serving justice, mercy might be extended to those who were eligible for it. If a person was found guilty of murder then the city of refuge could not save him from the death penalty. If he were acquitted of any malice, he was not freed but was obliged to remain in the city of refuge or within its suburbs of 1 000 cubits beyond the walls, as we read in Num 35:24-28 – “the congregation shall deliver the manslayer from the hand of the blood avenger, and the congregation shall restore him to his city of refuge to which he fled, and he shall live in it until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the holy oil. But if the manslayer shall at any time go beyond the border of his city of refuge to which he may flee, and the blood avenger find him outside the border of his city of refuge, and the blood avenger kill the manslayer, he shall not be guilty of blood, because he should have remained in his city of refuge until the death of the high priest. But after the death of the high priest the manslayer shall return to the land of his possession.” (NAS)

The high priest was one of the most prominent individuals in the nation and his death, therefore, would be such a notable event as to be known throughout all the tribes. This would allow the convicted to leave the cities of refuge and to return to their homes free from danger from the avenger, whose opportunity expired with the death of the high priest. Were he to avenge after that, he would be a murderer. This placed a heavy penalty upon carelessness or passionate actions. The penalty included separation from family, and restriction of liberty. This showed that the careless person inflicting serious injury on another, as a result of his actions should suffer the inconvenience of having to stay in the city of refuge and the loss of his freedom

for whatever period elapsed before the death of the high priest.

Our Refuge and Strength

Our theme text “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble” draws to our attention the antitypical significance of these cities of refuge. As we look at our own lives, it becomes apparent that we, like those fleeing to the cities of refuge, are under a death sentence. If our Heavenly Father were to pursue us with the full weight of divine justice, it would result in our death without hope. Paul tells us – “through one man (Adam) sin entered into the world and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Rom 5:12 NAS) As a result we all “fall short of the glory of God”, (Rom 3:23) and learn that “the wages of sin is death.” (Rom 6:23) From the moment that we recognize that we are sinners in the eyes of our Heavenly Father and that on our own we cannot stand in His divine presence, we come to see the picture of the Cities of Refuge. On our own we would have the avenger, Divine Justice, on our trail, and it is only a question of time before we would be overtaken and destroyed under the Adamic death sentence.

We can see from the account of the cities of refuge the similarities to our own refuge in Christ Jesus! He is our shield and refuge against the penalty of all our sins – except those that we commit willfully against the knowledge that we have received through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Christ does not shelter the obstinate, nor the unrepentant sinner, but He does shelter everyone who accepts Him and realizes “that they were :born in sin and shapen in iniquity” (Psa 51:5) Paul in Romans 5:12 tells us that “through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned” (NAS) We have all inherited sin through our birth.

To seek refuge in Christ we must first flee from our old life and practices, finding the only refuge God has offered – forgiveness and life in Christ Jesus, Fleeing to the city of refuge pictures our own repentance and conversion from sin as we flee from the world. We must be honest and earnest in our desire to stop sinning with our body, our mind and our affections. Like the ancient Hebrews who sought the city of refuge, having faith that they would there be safe, we too must seek Christ by faith. We are assured that we will find protection but we have to accept and act on that promise of protection. We know that without Christ we are subject to divine wrath against sin.

When we make the decision to flee unto Christ for refuge we are assisted on the way, as with those fleeing to the cities of refuge, by the signposts we find in God’s Word that give us encouragement on the way.

Not only is there the Word of God to assist us, but also as in the Cities of Refuge where the roads leading there had to be kept in good order to assist the refugee, so we have the Holy Spirit to help smooth our way. Like those fleeing who had the sympathy of those along the way, we are fortunate to have fellow travelers to assist and encourage us on our journey, as we are told in 1 Thess 5:11 – “encourage one another, and build up one another.”

Our behaviour in the City of Refuge is set out for us in the rules and regulations that Christ Jesus Himself laid down for us. He has also shown us the way ahead as He learned obedience by the sufferings He endured, and we too will have to please God in the same way, being prepared to sacrifice friendships, wealth and earthly pleasure as well as possibly family as we enter our life of sacrifice. What a privilege we have in abiding within the hallowed precincts of the salvation, deliverance and refuge in Christ which God Himself has provided for us. In Romans 8:33,34 we are reminded, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”

When looking back to the Cities of Refuge we see that protection was only available to those who accidentally and not willfully took a person’s life. Under Christ’s refuge, similar conditions apply – His covering robe of righteousness is a refuge to cover our weaknesses and ignorance, the result of the fall. It does not provide a place of refuge from willful and intentional violation of the divine law. As in the Cities of Refuge, our motives and intentions will also need to be thoroughly investigated to make sure that we have the right heart condition to seek Christ’s protection.

This refuge in Christ is intended only for those who are “new creatures in Christ Jesus”, whose sinful course prior to having a knowledge of the Lord is counted, not as intentional or willful, but as of ignorance. Our responsibilities for willful sin may therefore be said to begin with and keep pace with our knowledge of the divine law. Although acquitted of the sins we have committed it is necessary that we continue to “abide in Him” – we cannot take off His robe of righteousness. If once we accepted the offer of refuge in Christ and should then leave the place of refuge, abandoning our trust in the precious blood of Christ which cleansed us from sin, then we would have abandoned the mercy and forgiveness which the Father had extended toward us through His beloved Son.

On the other hand, we are reminded of the reason and the result of continued standing in Christ – “(He) is

able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in His glory blameless with great joy. To the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Jude 24,25)

How long will we have to abide in our antitypical city of refuge? The answer is that we must be “faithful unto death” if we wish to receive “a crown of life”, (Rev 2:10 KJV) How long are the antitypical cities of refuge needed? Until the death of the antitypical High Priest. This has already been largely accomplished; our Lord and Master has finished the work that the Father gave Him to do, it now remains for the members of His body called out down the gospel age to finish their course in death. In Col 1:24 Paul states – “Even now I rejoice in the midst of my sufferings on your behalf, and in my own person I am making up whatever is still lacking (and) remains to be completed on our part of Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of His body, which is the church.” (Ampl Vers) The promised result of these sufferings we read of in Rom 8:17 – “if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.”

Soon the whole body will be complete and the Gospel Age with its purpose of calling out the Bride of Christ will come to an end. Then the new dispensation will be ushered in and no longer will our imperfections need the covering robe of Christ’s righteousness so that we can stand before divine justice. We read in Rev 20:6 – “Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection, over these the second death hath no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.” (NAS) We will be made like our Lord and Master, presented before the Father blameless, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, without any vengeance against on the part of divine justice.

The entire arrangement is of our Heavenly Father, His justice is the avenger of sin, and His Son Christ Jesus is the refuge and deliverance. We acknowledge our Lord Jesus and appreciate highly His work for us, the redemption accomplished through His sacrifice. We must also appreciate all the blessings which come from the Father through Him; thus honouring the Son we honour the Father also. It is nevertheless fitting that we should remember that all these blessings are of the Father and are through the Son.

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble.” (RC:06/05)

“In the shadow of thy wings will I make
my refuge” Psa 57:1

MARTHA AND MARY

We are first introduced to Martha and Mary in Luke 10:38-42: ³⁸Now it came to pass as they went that he entered into a certain village, and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. ³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word. ⁴⁰ But Martha was cumbered with much serving, and came to him and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. ⁴¹ And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: ⁴² But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.' We know from other scriptures that this village was Bethany and this was not the first time that Jesus had visited Bethany, and it was not the first time that He had visited the home of Martha. In most cases we are just told that Jesus went to or stopped in Bethany and no details of the visit are given. However, from remarks and actions of both Martha and Mary it is obvious that Jesus spent the time in Bethany teaching.

Martha and Mary are typical of the characters of many of the called-out ones of the Gospel Age, and as such we can recognize some of our own characteristics in these two sisters. Martha has been represented accurately as a type of activity - bustling, energetic, impulsive, well qualified to be head of the household and to grapple with the stern realities and routine of actual life. Strong and vigorous in intellect, anxious to give a reason for all she did and requiring a reason for the conduct of others, one who combined diligence in business with fervency of spirit. Mary, on the other hand, was a type of reflection. She was calm, meek, devotional, contemplative, sensitive in feeling, ill suited to battle with the cares and sorrows, the strifes and grief of the encumbering world. Her position was at the Lord's feet, drinking in those living waters, asking no questions, declining all arguments, gentle and submissive, the picture of a childlike faith 'which bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things.' (1 Cor. 13:7)

It was natural that the presence of the Lord caused some stir in this little household and Martha, the busy eager-hearted hostess, hurried to and fro with excited energy to prepare for His proper entertainment. Mary, likewise intent on welcoming the Lord and knowing that her sister was only too happy to attend to His material comforts, sat at His feet and listened to His words. This was the ancient posture of disciples and learners - they sat at the feet of their teachers, that is, beneath them in a humble place. Hence Paul is represented as having been brought up 'at the feet of

Gamaliel' in Acts 22:3. When it is said that Mary sat at Jesus' feet it means that she was a disciple of His, that she listened attentively to His instructions and was anxious to learn His doctrine. We might note in our scripture too that it says Mary also sat at Jesus' feet, so we have to presume that Martha at some point of time was at His feet as well but then became encumbered with these duties.

Martha enjoyed the task which she had chosen and was quite able without any assistance to do everything required. She was not to blame for her active service but a little bit of jealousy disrupted her peace of mind when she saw Mary still sitting at Jesus' feet. It seemed to her that there was a certain amount of injustice in this situation, although we can be sure that if Martha had asked Mary to help she would have done so immediately. Troubled in spirit Martha somewhat impatiently and not quite reverently asked Jesus if He really thought it was all right for Mary to sit before Him while she herself was taking care of all the work and would He please just speak to Mary and get her to help her with the evening meal. I think we can picture children doing this sometimes, getting jealous and appealing to their parents for help. How true it is that this is a picture of the Lord's people down through the Gospel Age right up to the present time. Little petty jealousies plague us of the faith and bring discouragement to so many, yet as we have more nearly attained the stature of a perfect man in Christ there grows a calmer, gentler view of these weaknesses and more patience and understanding in improving them.

The answer of Jesus beginning with 'Martha, Martha' makes us imagine the half sad, half playful, but wholly kind and mild feelings which lightened His faith as we read: 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things, but only one thing is necessary; for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.' In saying this Jesus did not mean to exalt the reflective character of Mary over the active character of Martha; either may be necessary at one time or another and both must be combined. Jesus was reproving the spirit of fretfulness and fuss, the lack of peace and calm in Martha, and He wanted her to understand that at the time of His visits to their home she should only provide for His simplest needs so that the remaining time could be devoted to higher things. In this sense Mary had chosen the better part. It was the decision she made in putting first things first that brought the Lord's approval. Martha, on the other hand, while properly filled with the true spirit of hospitality was nevertheless overdoing the part and

thus her mind was troubled and she was unable to enjoy the evening's fellowship. Has not this same thing been true in our own experiences?

Our next scene is to be found in John 11. In verse 1 we are told of the sickness of Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and Martha. It is instructive to note in verse 5 that although Jesus had previously approved of Mary sitting at His feet, John here records that Jesus loved Martha, her sister and Lazarus. By this John beautifully shows the impartiality of Jesus, His appreciation of the sincerity of those who serve Him and seek to please Him. At first the sickness of Lazarus came as a surprise to the two sisters. As they discussed the matter they could not understand it, but of one thing they were sure - if the Lord had been present, it would not have happened. And so, as they watched Lazarus slowly sinking, they decided to send a message to Jesus. Notice the message that they sent. It is evidently reported in their own words. 'Lord, behold, he whom you love is sick.' There is no complaint, no urging of immediate action, just a simple statement of facts. No doubt the message veiled an unexpressed care that they could trust Him to read the inner longing in their hearts.

Even in their great sorrow they could not press Him to come for they were aware of the dangers that awaited Him in Judea. They merely informed Him of the situation and leaving it to Him to decide how He should act. The sisters knew the love that Jesus bore for them and that if anything could be done for Lazarus Jesus would do it. So we too, knowing full well that Jesus loves us, should realize that when we cry to Him in our hour of need it is enough to remind Him of our knowledge of His love and assure Him of our abiding confidence in Him.

Jesus received the sisters' message but made no immediate attempt to return to Bethany. Instead He said, 'The sickness is not to end in death but for the glory of God, so that the Son of man may be glorified by it.' (John 11:4) Our Lord's words here would seem to be as much to benefit the disciples with Him as for the absent sisters. He then remained two days longer in the wilderness of Perea where He had fled from the Jews. Our Lord next proceeded to discuss the case of Lazarus further: 'Our friend, Lazarus, has fallen asleep; but I go so that I may awaken him out of sleep.' These words only made the disciples think that this was one more reason why they should not go to Bethany for they reasoned that if Lazarus had been sick and was now resting, obviously it was wiser to wait for him to waken and go at a time when he had recovered from his illness. Then Jesus said plainly, 'Lazarus is dead.' Jesus next informs the disciples that for their sakes He was glad not to have been in Bethany at the time of the sickness and death of

Lazarus. Because of His absence Lazarus had been without the benefit of the Lord's presence and healing touch and had been permitted to die. In the overruling providence of our Heavenly Father this would prove advantageous not only to Lazarus and his sisters but also to Jesus' disciples. In the exercise of the Father's power, our Lord awakened Lazarus from the sleep of death.

In verse 19 we are told that many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary to comfort them concerning their brother. They needed all the sympathy they received, for all the past bright memories of Bethany seemed now desolation and sorrow. We may picture the scene - the stronger, more resolute Martha striving to stem the tide of sorrow; the more sensitive heart of Mary bowed under the grief too deep for words, able only to indicate by her silent tears her deep sadness. Thus they were when Martha, as soon as she heard Jesus was coming, went and met Him. It requires no small amount of strength in a time of bereavement to face an altered world, but again we have illustrated the strong character of Martha, her quick apprehension and vigorous action. When Martha reached Jesus just outside the village, she stood before Him and said, 'Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died.' These words were not intended as a reproach by Martha. Moreover, would she have allowed herself to complain of the Lord's course of action just at a time when she was about to make a very great request? On the contrary. She merely expressed her regret that Jesus had not been there at the time of her brother's illness, and this regret only helped to prepare for the petition she was about to make. 'Even now I know (although it was so late) whatever you ask of God, God will give it to you.'

How wonderfully restrained is Martha in this time of great sorrow. Of course, she hoped that included in her 'whatever' would be the awakening of her brother but she is too reticent to say it. The Master, her Lord, would know best what to do. Jesus responds to her faith with the word of promise, 'Your brother will rise again.' This assurance was capable of being interpreted either in the general sense as referring to the general resurrection or in the particular sense as having reference to the approaching awakening of Lazarus. It is more than likely that Martha sensed the reference to the approaching awakening of Lazarus, but not being sure she applied her Lord's words to the general last-day resurrection which she did regard as certain. This gave Jesus the opportunity to explain His words further and to declare expressly what she had hardly dared to hope. Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even if he dies; and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' (John 11:25,26) To the Master's searching

enquiry Martha replied. She said to Him, 'Yes, Lord, I have believed that you are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world.' (v.27) Following this noble confession, we read: 'When she had said this, she went away.' The record doesn't indicate, but it is probable that Jesus Himself had directed her to go, for she says to Mary, 'The teacher is here and is calling you.' (v.28) This message she delivered secretly. The secrecy, too, might have been part of our Lord's instructions, but likely as not it resulted from Martha's own wise and loving thoughtfulness - first to avoid unnecessarily alerting our Lord's enemies to the fact of His return, and second to provide her sister with the opportunity for a private talk with Jesus.

It is instructive to observe the characteristic differences in temperament between Martha and Mary as portrayed by John. These differences we previously noted in Luke, where Martha appears as a practical, bustling housewife and Mary as a devout contemplative disciple who chooses the one thing needful. The contrast as outlined is direct and with evident intent on the part of the writer that we should regard Mary as the one possessing those traits of character most worthy of emulating. Here in the eleventh chapter of John the contrast is also noted, but instead of being direct it is developed gradually. As John unfolds the story, the distinct characters of the sisters are seen not so much as a contrast but as blending into each other. He does not forget to mention that both are loved by our Lord in verse 5, that they each show deep sorrow for the loss of their brother, that they both sent to the Lord for help, and both alike express their faith in Him. Yet, notwithstanding this, the difference of characteristics is perceptible throughout the narrative. It is Martha who, with restless activity, goes out to meet Jesus while Mary remains in the house weeping. It is Martha who holds the conversation with Jesus, questions Him, reasons with Him, and in the very crisis of their grief shows her practical commonsense in the disapproval of the removal of the stone from the tomb. It is Mary who silently goes out to meet Him, silently and tearfully so that the bystanders suppose that she is going to weep at her brother's tomb. It is Mary who, when she sees Jesus, falls at His feet, and in uttering the same words of faith in His powers as did Martha, does not qualify them with any reservation. In all this narrative John does not once direct attention to the contrast between the two sisters. He simply relates the events of which he was an eyewitness without any comment.

But the two were real living persons and therefore the difference of character between them develops itself in action. Under the impulse of her devotion Mary, as soon as she heard the message, arose and quickly left the house. The formal sympathizers who had gathered

there watched her departure, but not knowing the reason, assumed she was going to the grave to weep there and console herself. Such, however, was not Mary's intention. The mention of her Master's name and the word that He was near and wished to see her brought joy to her heart and she sought His presence, there to obtain the strength and comfort which only He could give her. When she reached Jesus she fell at His feet, saying in the identical words used by Martha, 'Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died.' As already noted, there was no attempt on her part to discuss her grief. Her action at falling at His feet itself expressed the urgency of her prayer. Moreover, in the few moments that elapsed before the professional mourners arrived she was apparently so overcome by emotion that conversation was impossible. Jesus, who loved both Martha and Mary, was well aware of their differences in temperament and adapted Himself to them. With one He was able to enter into a discussion, to lead Martha's lively but not too enlightened faith in the doctrine of the resurrection to faith in Himself as the One in whom was life and through whom resurrection and life should come. To the sensitive spirit of Mary, on the other hand, He responds with silence, joining His tears with hers. Scholars tell us that the word translated 'wept' in 'Jesus wept' in John 11:35 is not the same word twice translated 'weeping' in John 11:33. In verse 33 there is the meaning of 'sobs' but here tears are to be understood, it is expression for a calm and gentle sorrow. To the tears of Jesus, the reaction of those present was twofold. There were those who said feelingly, 'See how he loved him' while others said cynically, 'Could not this man who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?'

The grave of Lazarus was a cave in the rock, a flat stone lying in the mouth of it. Jesus said, 'Remove the stone'. Here Martha raises an objection. 'Lord, by this time there will be a stench for he has been dead for four days.' It seems clear from these words that Martha now wasn't anticipating the miracle that the Master purposed. Evidently she supposed that our Lord's reason for opening the tomb was to look one more last time on Lazarus. This, however, would be no consolation to her now. Moreover, the dead man's sister would naturally shy away from seeing the ravages of death upon one who was so dear to her. Nor would it alleviate her sister's grief or that of Jesus. Both for His sake and therefore for Mary's as well as her own and the sake of the others present, Martha recoils from the thought of such a painful experience. However, in response to her objection, Jesus gently recalls His earlier promise: 'Did I not say to you that if you believe you will see the glory of God.' Many commentators understand our Lord to be referring to the conversation he had with Martha recorded in John 11:21-27. Indeed His words 'if you believe' in verse

40 do remind us of the expressions found in this passage, but the expression 'the glory of God' prominent in verse 40 is absent in verses 21-27, whereas it forms a prominent feature of John 11:4. Evidently then, it was the promise of John 11:4 of which Jesus now reminds Martha. He was aware that it had been reported to the sisters by their messenger, hence the expression 'Did I not say to you' stands for 'Did I not send you word?' These words are spoken to the faithful down through the Gospel Age to our own day. Often our Lord lets our needs attain extremity so that His intervention may appear more evident.

The stone being removed from the grave, Jesus then raised His eyes and said, 'Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but because of the people standing round I say it so that they may believe that you sent me.' (v.41-42) At first glance these words might seem strange, yet when we recall that the previous two days had been spent by our Lord in seclusion in the wilderness of Perea, it is not difficult to realize that He had received assurances from His Father that the great moment was at hand for Him to manifest the power of God in resurrection life. Having this assurance and being full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, Jesus now offers thanks to His Father in advance of the miracle. Now the great moment arrived. Every eye was fixed on Jesus, what will He do? Eyes strained, necks craned, everyone was watching and silent. We can almost picture the scene, where you could almost hear a pin drop. Then comes His authoritative voice, 'Lazarus, come forth!' At the word of command, the man who had died came forth bound hand and foot with wrappings on, his face wrapped around with a cloth. And again we hear the calm voice of Jesus: 'Unbind him and let him go!' Thus, in simplicity and yet with wondrous grace, Jesus performed His greatest miracle to the glory of God and as an illustration of the power which He will exercise when He comes in power and glory in His kingdom. 'Do not marvel at this, for the hour is coming in which all who are in the tomb will hear his voice and come forth.' (John 5:29) In that day the word of the Lord will not be obscure or corrupted by false teachers or by Satan's counterfeits. Instead, no evil shall be there, no dangerous areas to trip over, no sickness, no sorrow, no pain or death, and as Isaiah puts it: 'The work of righteousness will be peace, and the service of righteousness in confidence for ever.' (Isaiah 32:17) Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

On a third occasion, supper is being made ready and the Apostle John in his delightful way adds a few words so full of meaning – 'And Martha was serving.' (John 12:2) We can be sure the lesson learned by Martha on the former occasion remained with her, and now her service was within the bounds of sanctified common sense. During the course of the

evening the gentle spirit of Mary prompts her to give significant proof of the depth of her gratitude. Some fragrant ointment of nard contained as we gather from other gospel writers in a box of alabaster had been procured by her at great cost, either obtained for this anticipated meeting with her Lord or it may have somehow fallen into her possession and been kept carefully among her treasured gifts until some befitting occasion occurred for its use. With her own hands she pours it on his feet, stooping down she wipes them with her long hair in a further token of her devotion until the aroma filled the whole room with a sweet perfume. And what was it that constituted the value of this tribute? It was this: she gave her Lord the best thing that she had. Are we willing to give the Lord the best of what we have, to consecrate our time, talents, strength and life to Him? Not, as many do, to give Him the mere dregs and sweepings of our existence but, like Mary, anxious to take every opportunity of testifying that depth of obligation to Him under which we are laid. Let us not hold back, saying 'My sphere is lowly, my means are limited, my best offerings would be inadequate.' Hundreds of more imposing deeds may have been left unrecorded by the gospel writers, but Matthew records this: 'Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her.' (Matt.26:13)

Is this love for Jesus paramount with all of us, 'Do you love me more than these?' is His own searching test requirement (John 21:15). Happy will we be if it is so. There will be a joy in the very consciousness of making the effort for His sake, feeble and unworthy as it may be, in acknowledgment of the great love wherein He loved us. Let this be our privilege and delight to give Him our pound of nard, whatever it may be. Let us offer the fragrance of holy hearts and lives revealed by kindness, gentleness, unselfishness, flowing from the principle of grateful love to Him who, though unseen, has been with us as He was to that family in Bethany, a friend, helper, guide and deliverer. 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.' (Psalm 51:17) (DO/05)

Loves Sacrifice
And so beside Thy sacrifice,
I would lay down my little all.
'Tis lean and poor, I must confess;
I would that it were not so small.

But then I know Thou dost accept
My grateful off'ring unto Thee;
For, Lord, 'tis love that doth it prompt,
And love is incense sweet to Thee.

BSH 437

CHRIST THE GOOD SHEPHERD

'I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me – just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – and I lay down my life for the sheep.' (John 10:14,15).

Abel, the first martyr in the sacred Scriptures was a shepherd. All patriarchs were shepherds. The confession of the sons of Jacob to the king of Egypt when they were asked their occupation was "We are shepherds, sir, just as our ancestors were." Moses, the sublimest historian and lawgiver in the history of the world, was a shepherd. David, the poet-king of Israel and the central figure in the history of the sacred people, was a keeper of his father's flocks. Therefore, the title of shepherd is one of great antiquity and one of great honour.

In the many sayings of our dear Saviour He pictures to us His character, work, office and relationship to His people but in none of these is the profound blessedness of our Lord presented more impressively than in the picture which has deeply affected the Christian heart in all ages, namely, Christ the Good Shepherd. Because of its intense tenderness, mingled with sublimest dignity, it is universally admitted to be the most familiar image in all the Holy Scriptures. And although the Saviour took to Himself this title before His crucifixion and with reference to His death for His sheep, it connects equally with His resurrection and His exaltation to glory. Indeed, as we see Him exercising His shepherding care over His disciples immediately after His resurrection it is evident that He intended that this title and office as the Good Shepherd should be a perpetual one. The Apostle Peter in his letter to his Christian brethren after Christ's resurrection speaks of it as a present office of our blessed Lord: 'You were like sheep going astray, but have now turned back to the Shepherd and Guardian of your lives.' (1 Peter 2:25). The Apostle Paul in Hebrews 13:20 speaks of Christ as even now 'that great Shepherd of the sheep' whom 'the God of peace brought back from the dead.'

There are two aspects of the subject that we are going to consider - first, the characteristics of Christ with regard to His people and, second, the characteristics of His people with regard to Christ. With regard to the first aspect, our Saviour has a living fellowship with His flock. This intimacy is not so clear until we become familiar with pastoral life and duty in the ancient world. In our country the connection between the farmer and his sheep is one of distance and mere monetary interest. It was very different in the regions and times in which this title obtained its high significance. In Palestine particularly, there was between the shepherd and his flock the closest union of

attachment and tenderness. It is a country of intense ruggedness and there were many dangers from torrents, robbers and wild beasts.

The shepherd could never leave his flock. He lived with his sheep by day and slept near them by night. His eye was ever on them and he became as familiar to them as one of themselves. He continually incurred personal risks and inconveniences for them. He learned to love them and to feel that his interests and theirs were the same. The hazards and the hardships of the flock were shared by him. When they suffered or were in want he took it upon himself, and he was never happier than when he saw them satisfied and in peace. So close and sympathetic was the union between the shepherd and his sheep that their feeling was what he most felt, and his will their will. Indeed, he and they were but one body – he the head and they the members, and the interest of the one was the interest of the other.

And this living fellowship the blessed Saviour has with all His people. He left His heavenly home, where it says in Proverbs 8 that 'He was daily the Father's delight, rejoicing always before Him', to live among sinful men. He experienced the burdens of their lives, their necessities and exposure, and gave Himself forever to their good and peace. Another and more glorious David, He stands out against the lion and the bear that His flock may live and He puts His life in the place of theirs. The Apostle Peter speaks of this in 1 Peter 2:24: 'He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.'

The Good Shepherd cares for His sheep. His heart is drawn out towards them. All His dealings with regard to them are conditioned by an undying affection for them. If any are fearful or weak or in need, His eye notices it and His sympathy is enlisted and the necessary help is given. We have the Saviour's beautiful promise in John 10: ²⁷'My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.' A good shepherd is also the faithful defender of his flock. He stands by them in every peril and defends them to the last extremity. And so Christ has loved His people even to die for them – 'Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends' (John 15:13).

Let us now look at the second aspect of this subject, as Christ is a shepherd so His people are sheep. This reminds us of our lost and exposed estate without

Christ. A sheep is an ignorant and defenceless creature by nature. It is quite incapable of self-government and perishes without someone to look after it for it has many enemies much more powerful than itself. It must have a keeper. We cannot be happy as our own masters. The sins and errors of the past, the bewildering difficulties of the present, and the darkness of the future are all sources of distress if left to ourselves. That is why the disposition of people of all classes and ages is to group themselves around great teachers, kings, conquerors, reformers and heroes. And yet as often as men have given themselves to these earthly leaders and human light, they have been disappointed and disillusioned.

It was in this helpless and lost condition that Christ found His people at His first advent: 'When he saw the multitudes he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd' (Matt.9:36). Thus, in due time, the Good Shepherd was sent from on high. He began the assembling of His flock, the elect, destined to be fellow heirs of His glory. They have been gathered out of every sorrowful state known in this erring world and have become a people separated unto God. Having bought them with His blood and graciously proposed Himself to them as their true Shepherd and drawn them by His loving ways and spirit, they have learned to know Him, to confide in His wisdom and goodness. They have separated themselves from the rest of the world to be one with Him as their ever-blessed Lord and Master. They not only have been taught who He is but they have a personal acquaintance with Him. They are satisfied that He is their true Shepherd, that He is everything that they can require, that they are His and that they are safe in Him.

Furthermore, they hear His voice. That was not true of those to whom Christ first addressed Himself: 'He came unto his own and his own received him not' (John 1:11). The haughty Pharisees and learned Scribes, too wise in their own conceit to take in the logic of the heart, demanded by what authority He did these things and called for signs from heaven to prove to them that the truth was true. The poor, uneducated fishermen at the first word felt a chord touched in their hearts and responded with loving confidence and obedience. They confessed by the revealing light in their hearts that He was 'the Christ, the Son of the living God' but the more favoured children of the kingdom would have none of Him. They did not know Him and would not hear His voice. They even made war with Him and persecuted Him unto death. Therefore, He turned His back upon that fold and looked elsewhere to find His sheep, which lay scattered among the nations or wandering in the dark wilderness of heathenism.

Jesus said in John 10:16: 'I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice; and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.' As the sheep know their shepherd, they know his call and obey it. More than once travellers have seen great flocks strung along the hillsides of the sacred land seemingly indifferent to everything that was passing, but the moment the shepherd gave his call to lead them down at evening to where they were to be penned for the night, instantly they lifted up their heads, left off their grazing and started after their leader. They heard his voice, they understood what he meant and they confidently obeyed. Even so Christ's sheep hear His voice and follow Him. In all the Christian centuries believers from many races and tongues have made their calling and election sure to be of the 'little flock' to inherit the Kingdom. Yet of whatever national blood, from whatever region brought or whatever social economy reared, they are all one in Christ Jesus, of the one fold of this age with one Shepherd: 'For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither bond nor free, there is neither male or female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you be Christ's then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise' (Gal.3:26-29).

No matter how much the sheep of Christ's flock may be scattered and separated in human eyes, wherever they are, they all know Christ and are known of Him. They hear His voice and so are joined together as one flock, members of the same fold and having only one Shepherd. Inwardly looking to Him as their Shepherd and in heart made acquainted with His saving grace, they are but one body with the same head and united in the one fellowship of life and salvation. 'Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God' (Heb.12:2). And yet with all the beauty, tenderness and bliss which attached to their present union with Jesus, it is but a dim and imperfect picture of what awaits this flock in the heavenly home: 'Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known' (1 Cor.13:12). 'Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen but what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal' (2 Cor.4:16-18) (BL:05/06)

"He shall feed the flock, like a shepherd"
Isa 40:11

LOVE IS ...GREATER THAN KNOWLEDGE

Dictionaries use several different words to define knowledge - *acquaintance, familiarity, conversance, perception, knowing, cognisant*, and *'aware'* are some of them. To some extent the definitions are circular in that *'acquaintance'* is defined as *"known, personal knowledge"*, and *'familiarity'* is defined as *"a thorough knowledge"*. Such circularity indicates that the concept of *knowledge* is not distinctly defined in the English language.

The Scriptures do not define 'knowledge' either. The first Biblical reference to 'knowledge' is in Genesis 2:9 where it is recorded that God planted *"the tree of knowledge of good and evil"* *"in the midst of the garden"*. There is no description of the tree; the record simply states *"the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise ..."*

Knowledge essential

The knowledge stored in our brain is essential for our body to function. Every task it performs, whether voluntary or involuntary, draws on the knowledge stored in our brain. Brain damage impairs bodily function and severe damage results in death.

Likewise knowledge was a critical factor in God's dealings with Israel - *"Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge ..."* (Isa. 5:13) In later times Israel had *"a zeal of God, but it was not according to knowledge"* (Rom. 10:2) and consequently they did not obtain that which they sought. (Rom. 11:7)

Knowledge is also an essential part of God's dealings with His church: *"For God ... hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."* (2 Cor. 4:6) *"That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God"* (Col. 1:10)

Obtaining knowledge

There are at least three ways by which knowledge can be obtained. One of the ways is by observation. Solomon declared *"For the living know that they shall die ..."* (Eccl. 9:5) Observation alone could have led him to that conclusion. Not one person had lived forever. Death was a certainty for every human being then living, and so he would have been justified in assuming that *"the living know that they shall die"*.

Knowledge is also to be gained through effort. Romans 15:4 says: *"whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through ... the Scriptures might have hope"*. In order to learn from the things written aforetime (in the Old Testament) we need to apply ourselves to the study of the Word. The Bereans were *"more noble"* because *"they searched the scriptures daily whether these things were so"*. (Acts 17:11) Paul exhorted Timothy to *"study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"*. (2 Tim. 2:15) In order to rightly divide the word of truth, Timothy had to study it. *"All scripture... is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"*. (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

However it is also important for us to realise that not even diligent mental application ensures spiritual knowledge. There are some who are *"ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth"*. (2 Tim. 3:7). Spiritual knowledge cannot be gained unless it is God's will and He reveals it to us by His Spirit: *"Paul planted, Apollos watered, but God gives the increase"*. (1 Cor. 3:6) *"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God... neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"*. *"But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit"* (1 Cor 2:14,10)

God has given knowledge to His servants down the ages as it was necessary to fulfill His plans. God *"filled him (Bezaleel) with wisdom, understanding and knowledge ... and in all manner of workmanship"* so that he could *"make all that I have commanded thee"*. (Exodus 31:1-6) Daniel was miraculously given knowledge to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream. (Dan. 2:19-23) Likewise the Apostle Paul was given his knowledge directly by God - *"the gospel which was preached of me is not after man, for I neither received it of man neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ"*. (Gal. 1:11-12)

Knowledge brings admiration

Nebuchadnezzar *"worshipped Daniel and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him"*. (Daniel 2:46) Likewise the miraculous gift of *"the word of knowledge"* given by God in the first century (1 Cor. 12:8) would have brought admiration, making it easy for them to be *"puffed up"* (1 Cor. 8:1). Hence we can understand why Paul assured the Corinthians that he *"came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom ..."* so that their *"faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God"*. (1 Cor. 2:1-5)

Knowledge inferior to love

1 Corinthians 13:2 reads *"And though I ... understand all mysteries, and all knowledge ..."* The mysteries to which Paul referred are the secret things of God. (Greek: *musterion*); the things that God has revealed to His chosen by His spirit. They are the things that set the spirit begotten apart from those who possess merely that knowledge that can be obtained by observation or effort. However Paul goes on to say that, although one might have such privileged spiritual insight, if this one does not have love, he is *"nothing"*. Consequently we can see the importance of the fruit of love. Even though knowledge is essential for our physical existence, has been a part of God's dealings with mankind, gives insight into God's plans, and brings admiration from those around us, unless the one who has the knowledge also has love, they *"are nothing"*. (1 Cor. 13:2)

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