

“The Way, the Truth, and the Life”

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

—*John 14:6*

THESE WORDS, SPOKEN

by Jesus to his disciples, indicated that their continued favor with God would no longer be through Israel's Law Covenant, but through him.

This being the case, Jesus gave particular attention during his First Advent to informing his Jewish brethren of the special opportunity which would soon be theirs of being a house of sons, rather than merely a house of servants.

This privilege given to the house of Israel would be realized in proportion as they were faithful to the light that came to them. Before they could become sons of God, it was first necessary that Jesus should be their Redeemer, make reconciliation for sins, and open up a “new and living way.” (Heb. 10:19,20) This he had come to do, but he had not yet finished that work. Those Jews who followed Jesus, and

who would come to understand God's eternal purposes and arrangements, and act in harmony with them, had to first be made free. They must be liberated from the condemnation resting upon them due to their sinful condition and their inability to carry out faithfully the requirements of the Law Covenant. Thus Jesus promised the Jews who believed on him as their Messiah that this understanding "shall make you free."—John 8:31,32

All these things, however, were at this time mostly a mystery to Jesus' followers. They were known fully only by our Lord himself, having been made clear to him because he had been begotten by his Father with the Holy Spirit. There were many things the Master said that were hard to understand. He often spoke in parables, and in dark sayings. (Matt. 13:34,35; Ps. 78:2) On one such occasion, his disciples said in apparent frustration, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" Some even left following him altogether.—John 6:60,66

Jesus anticipated this condition of things as he spoke in words which were not yet possible for his disciples to understand. Even among the Jewish religious leaders who opposed Jesus, the declaration was made, "Never man spake like this man." (John 7:46) Jesus was, in reality, telling those who followed him: "From me you have heard words very different from those of the scribes and Pharisees. Continue with me for a little while. If you will do this, you will understand the situation fully in due time. You have begun to exercise faith in these things and will be blest accordingly. Continue in that faith and have patience. As you fully become my disciples you will be granted a deeper knowledge of my Father's plan,

and this will make you free from the rituals, ceremonies and traditions which your religious leaders continually bind about you and all the people. It will give you all the blessings and privileges that come to the children of God.”

BLESSINGS BEGUN AT PENTECOST

Paul tells us, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (I Cor. 2:14) Those of sincere and honest hearts who continued to follow Jesus, though not yet filled with the Holy Spirit, saw that he was different from any other teacher or leader of the Jews. Jesus was loving, kind, sympathetic, merciful and forgiving. It is recorded: “All bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.” (Luke 4:22) His demeanor and attitude were not that of a “natural man,” but one imbibed with the power and influence of God.

When Pentecost came, the Heavenly Father received all who had continued in Jesus’ word, and they were begotten by the Holy Spirit into God’s family. Their eyes of understanding were illuminated, and they began to discern spiritual things. All the light did not come at once, but it progressed as the days and years went by. They were now, however, in a much fuller sense, Christ’s disciples, recognized as such by the risen and glorified Lord, and by the Heavenly Father. Through faith in the redemptive merit of Jesus’ blood and full dedication to the doing of the Father’s will, Christ’s followers were not only made free from the Law Covenant

arrangement, but made free from Adamic sin and death. (Rom. 8:1-3) Being “in Christ,” as Paul states, they were each “a new creature.” Old things had “passed away,” and all things had “become new.”—II Cor. 5:17

In his prayer to the Father, Jesus said, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” (John 17:17) By the word “truth” Jesus was referring to the revealing of God’s plan through the Holy Spirit, and the sanctifying influence that should result based on that knowledge being received into an honest heart. This sanctification, or the process of being made holy, began with the Pentecostal blessing, and still continues to operate in the life of each individual child of God. Sanctification gradually progresses as each footstep follower of Christ allows the Truth to have its designed influence towards holiness in thought, word and deed. Thus, we can appreciate the import of Jesus’ words, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.”—John 8:31

To continue in Jesus’ word is, in reality, to become more acquainted with the Heavenly Father; to know more about his character attributes of wisdom, justice, love and power; to understand more fully his will, his methods, and his plans. Such knowledge is necessary in order for us to be sanctified by the Truth. As our opening text states, however, Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life,” and the one through whom we come to know the Father. The Scriptures testify, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, ... he hath declared him.” “He that hath seen me,” Jesus stated, “hath seen the Father.”—John 1:18; 14:9

ONLY BY CHRIST

Christ is the sufficiency which God has provided for us in all respects. He has been “made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” (I Cor. 1:30) We first received, through learning of his sacrificial work on our behalf, the necessary wisdom and instruction by which we may, through his merit, come to the Father. Christ is our wisdom all along the way. The Heavenly Father had a glorious plan before the foundation of the world, which was first alluded to in Eden, just after man’s fall. (Gen. 3:15) In due time, God gave a further intimation of that plan through Abel, Enoch, Abraham, and still later through Moses and the prophets. How and when the world was to benefit from it, however, was still hidden.—Heb. 11:4; Jude 1:14; Gen. 22:18; Luke 24:44

A key component of the wisdom brought to us through Jesus is indicated in Paul’s assertion that Christ “hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” (II Tim. 1:10) Though the Old Testament contained many promises and veiled prophecies of the future, the substance of the Gospel was not declared, nor understood, until Jesus came. The apostle says that our salvation “at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.” (Heb. 2:3) Our Lord began to speak it, but the secret of the Gospel and its wisdom was not fully revealed until after Pentecost. Even in Jesus’ case, it was not until after he was begotten of the Holy Spirit that he himself comprehended it clearly and began to set before us the way of “life and immortality.”

JESUS OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

In addition to his being the source of our wisdom, Jesus becomes our righteousness. He covers our sins and imputes to us his own righteousness, the merit of his redemptive sacrifice. This imputation brings us to a condition of complete righteousness in God's eyes. It is not actual perfection, but a condition of reckoned justification, which God is pleased to recognize in the way he has arranged.—Isa. 61:10; Rom. 4:7,8; 5:17,18; II Cor. 5:21

Jesus does not become the righteousness of everybody, not even of those who give some notice to his words, but to those alone who come to the point of full dedication and submission to the Father's will. There is a good reason for this, for only those who offer themselves to become members of his body during this Gospel Age—only the Spirit-begotten—would be profited by a justification by faith. Only these are now on trial for life. In the next age, during Christ's earthly kingdom, others will come to him. Now, however, justification, or righteousness, through faith, only comes to those who walk in his steps of sacrifice and service.—Eph. 2:8-10

JESUS OUR SANCTIFICATION

The step of consecration on the part of those who become Jesus' disciples is an initial step in the process of sanctification. God told Israel, "sanctify yourselves," then added, "I am the LORD which sanctify you." (Lev. 20:7,8) He is telling us, spiritual Israelites, to set ourselves apart by full consecration, and then he will direct our further sanctification through experiences, testing and trial. Jesus is our sanctification in the sense that he becomes our pattern of character,

behavior and service. When praying on behalf of his disciples, Jesus said, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified." (John 17:19) We are accepted in him, and his grace, advocacy and example enable us to attain complete sanctification.

God sets us apart by begetting us with the Holy Spirit to a new nature and making us prospective members of the royal priesthood, together with Jesus, our High Priest. (I Pet. 2:5,9) Our begetting with God's "holy Spirit of promise," is the pledge, or "earnest of our inheritance," which will be fully experienced when we are changed from the human to the spirit nature "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." (Eph. 1:13,14; I Cor. 15:52) The Holy Spirit, as the pledge of our inheritance, is given to us for the purpose of assisting in the process of sanctification already begun in us, until its completion.—Phil 1:6

JESUS OUR DELIVERANCE

In the text quoted earlier in which Paul says Christ is "made unto us ... redemption," the thought is that of full deliverance. Those who make satisfactory progress in attaining godly wisdom, who manifest a life lived as much as possible in harmony with the principles of righteousness, and who attain a holy character, set apart from the selfish spirit of this present world, will experience full deliverance from present sinful conditions, and from all imperfections of the flesh. This will be accomplished through the power of the first resurrection. (Rev. 20:6) Here also, Christ Jesus plays a vital role. He promised his disciples, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." "I go to prepare a place for

you And if I go, ... I will come again, and receive you unto myself.”—John 11:25; 14:2,3

While the Heavenly Father is the author of all wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, they are given to us through his Son, who is the Father’s representative. Jesus received the spirit of the Father and has shed it forth upon us. We are anointed through our Head as members of his prospective body. We know that God, who “raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus.”—II Cor. 4:14

JESUS OUR LEADER

It has been said that a good leader leads by example. This is especially true when we consider Jesus. His life exemplifies that of a guiding head, whose ability to lead was proven at great cost. God is our leader in the greatest sense of the word, and he has appointed his Son as the shepherd of his flock. As our shepherd, Jesus leads his sheep in the “paths of righteousness,” and as they pass “through the valley of the shadow of death.” (Ps. 23:3,4) He watches over the sheep, uses his staff of guidance and care, protecting them from those who would do them harm, especially the great adversary, Satan. The shepherd’s desire for the sheep is that goodness and mercy will be with them every day, making “all things work together for good.” He continues his care over them until, if faithful, they enter into and “dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”—vss. 1-6; Rom. 8:28

We know that this relationship with Jesus was made possible by the laying down of his life as a “ransom for all.” (I Tim. 2:5,6) Our Lord spoke these words with reference to himself, “I am the good shepherd:

the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep.” (John 10:11) This was further shown by his words, “Greater love hath no man that this that he lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends.” (John 15:13,14) It was Jesus’ desire to willingly lay down his life for us. We as his sheep, his disciples, must desire to walk in his footsteps, and gladly follow his example by laying down our own lives daily in sacrifice. With this comes trials, testings and experiences that involve joys and sorrows, all of which are designed to transform our character into the likeness of our shepherd.—Luke 9:23; Rom. 12:1,2; I Pet. 4:12,13

REWARD OF TRUE DISCIPLESHIP

Jesus’ expression, “Then are ye my disciples indeed,” implies a distinction between real disciples and those who are disciples in name only. Since we desire to be Jesus’ disciples in the fullest sense, let us mark well the expressed condition, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.” (John 8:31) The hypocrisy of discipleship in name only is wholly displeasing to the Lord.

It is a blessed thing to take the first step in the Christian life, which is the acceptance of Christ as our Redeemer and yielding ourselves fully to the Father through him. However, the reward of this step depends upon our continuing in his Word, and its teachings regarding the attitude of true disciples. The disposition of human pride might cause us to wander away from the simplicity of divine principles found in the Scriptures. We could be tempted to seek out new theories and philosophies of our own, or to investigate those of others who desire to be considered wise according to this world’s estimate. The

reward of continued discipleship, however, is based on the statement, “Ye shall know the truth.” (John 8:32) Having known it, therein we must abide. To those who may extend their search for truth to human theories, it will not be found there. Such will be, as Paul warned, “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”—II Tim. 3:7

Our Lord, the apostles and the prophets, together with the inspired writings of the Scriptures, provide the divine truths which we need to know and apply. We are to study and meditate upon them, to trust implicitly in them, and to faithfully conform our characters to them. This is what is implied in Jesus’ statement, “continue in my word.” Doing so is also entirely compatible with utilizing the many helps which the Lord provides through our brethren in the body of Christ, and as enumerated by the Apostle Paul. (Eph. 4:11-15; I Cor. 12:12-14) God always has raised up, and will continue to do so, such helps as might aid in the work of assisting and edifying the body of Christ. However, it is the duty of each member to carefully prove all things by the infallible Word of God.—I Thess. 5:21

If we continue in the Word of the Lord as earnest and sincere disciples, we shall indeed know that Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life,” and that there is no other means by which we can come unto the Father. With such a firm foundation of faith, we can be prepared and “ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.” (I Pet. 3:15) We can properly “contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 1:3) We can “war a good warfare,” and witness “a good confession.” (I Tim. 1:18; 6:13)

With courage we can “endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,” even unto the end of our earthly sojourn.—II Tim. 2:3

We do not come to a knowledge of the Truth all at once. Gradually, step by step, we are led into a greater understanding of its principles. Every step is one of sure and certain progress leading to further attainments both in knowledge and in the establishment of Christian character. Such gradual, but steady, progress allows the principles of truth to become a mighty sanctifying power in our life. It brings forth in our lives the blessed fruits of righteousness, peace, joy, love, meekness, faith, patience, and every other virtue and grace, which time and cultivation ripen to maturity.

Not only does the true disciple of Jesus know the Truth and become sanctified by it, but by blessed experience something of its liberating power also becomes known. As soon as any measure of it is received into a good and honest heart, it begins to remove the bonds of sin, ignorance, superstition and fear. Its restorative beams of light penetrate the darkest recesses of the heart and mind, invigorating the whole being, and even quickening the mortal body of the faithful.—Rom. 8:11

“THY WORDS GIVETH LIGHT”

These words from Psalm 119:130 point out to us the importance of the wisdom of God. God’s words only produce light, never darkness. Ignorance and superstition will eventually vanish before this light, and sin will not endure its brightness. This will be a blessed reality throughout the earth in Christ’s coming kingdom. Now, however, millions are still

under the blinding influence of error and other delusions practiced by the Adversary. Through his machinations they have been made to fear God as a vengeful deity, consigning most of his creatures to an eternity of torment. Thank God, those who have been blessed to receive his truth have awakened from that horrible nightmare and have come “out of darkness into his marvelous light.”—I Pet. 2:9

All such have also been made free from the fear now upon the whole world as the great political, religious, social and economic systems of our day are being shaken to the very core. (Heb. 12:25-28) They know that God’s object in permitting this mighty storm is to clear away the present systems of the world and that, after the storm shall have done its work, God will establish an abiding peace. (Isa. 9:6,7; 32:17,18; Hag. 2:7-9) Instructed by the Scriptures, they realize the necessities of the situation, and have confidence in divine providence, which can make even the wrath of man to praise him, and to make all things work together for mankind’s ultimate good.—Ps. 76:10

Having received the wondrous favor of knowing our Heavenly Father and his beloved Son, Christ Jesus, through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit as to the harmony of the Scriptures, let us continue in this knowledge, giving no heed to worldly doctrines, traditions or theories. Let us be faithful to the Truth under all circumstances, and defend it against every assault. Finally, let us prove our appreciation of the glorious light of truth by bringing forth its blessed fruitage in our lives, and by our loyalty and faithfulness, working out our salvation with fear and trembling, faithfully, even unto death.—Phil. 2:12; Rev. 2:10 ■