

THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

WHO AM I?

The Psalmist often took an introspective look as he meditated upon the benevolent mercy of God. In Psalm 8 we have the haunting refrain, "*What is man that thou art mindful of him?*"

Again, in grateful consideration, the writer honestly states: "*What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?*"

Made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26) for His glory (Isaiah 43:7) it ought to be normal for all ages to magnify His greatness. A new song meditates upon this matter: "Who am I that Christ should die for me?"

We certainly stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene and wonder how He could love me—a sinner condemned and unclean! Yes, made by Jehovah, saved by Jesus (Matthew 1:21), taught by the Bible. If I can live productively as a Christian and praise God, a golden street of glory awaits me!

Comprehending these truths truly warms the heart. "*Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: and let men say among the nations, the Lord reigneth*" (I Chronicles 16:31).

In addition to all of these considerations, our Redeemer has bestowed upon our earthly existence the marvelous power and privilege of prayer. We can actually communicate with our Maker! He talks to us in the Scriptures, and we send our thoughts to Him in petitions before the throne of heaven! "*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you*" (John 15:7).

Who Am I?

I am a soldier of Christ fighting the good battle of truth (I Timothy 6:12). God has supplied the sword of the Spirit which is the word of the Lord (Ephesians 6:17). Protected by the shield of faith, we go forth valiantly and victoriously as we confront Satan and his forces. Always outnumbered, we still are always triumphant when we never wander away from the captain of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10). When we absolutely trust in God, no power can defeat us as we journey toward eternity (Romans 8:30).

Who Am I?

I am a soul-winner for Jesus! There is no greater joy than helping to redeem lost mankind. We work with Christ in this work of eternal consequence (I Timothy 4:16). When we realize that the value and worth of one soul is greater than all the wealth and treasure of the world, we will pursue sinners bound for hell and turn them back to righteousness (Proverbs 11:30). Sharing the mercy and grace of our heavenly Father will grant us peace and joy. "*Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other*" (Psalm 85:10).

Who Am I?

I am a pilgrim on earth (I Peter 2:11) on my way home to everlasting bliss. This earth is not my home; mansions on high await me (John 14:1-3). When this earthly tabernacle crumbles into the dust of all finite things (II Corinthians 5:1), a heavenly goal is within reach (Hebrews 11:16).

The language of I Chronicles 29:11 fits here exceptionally well: "*Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all*

IN SPITE OF MYSELF

Text: _____

I. In Spite of Myself God _____ a _____

Notes:

In Spite of Myself God _____ His _____

Notes:

III. In Spite of Myself God _____ my _____

Notes:

BEHOLD HIM SENT FROM GOD

Text: _____

I. Behold the _____ of God

Notes:

II. Behold the _____ of God

Notes:

III. Behold the _____ of God

Notes:

IV. Behold the _____ of God

Notes:

that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all."

In the little one chapter book of Jude, we are overwhelmed by the grand words of verse two that tell us of the mercy, peace, and love that is available to Christians.

Who Am I?

Perhaps, most of all, I am one who should be the most grateful person who ever lived. In spite of the past mistakes, we can look forward to being in the presence of Deity forevermore! God sent His Son to give me abundant life (John 10:10) now and in the world to come! *"I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High"* (Psalm 9:1-2).

A great song by Charles (Rusty) Goodman is appropriate for this lesson: "When I think of how He came so far from Glory, Came and dwelt among the lowly such as I; to suffer shame and such disgrace, On Mr. Cal'vry take my place. Then I ask myself a question, **Who am I?** The answer I may never know; Why He ever loved me so; That to an old rugged cross He'd go, for who am I."

-Johnny Ramsey

THE HEART

While walking down a street one day, I passed where a man was washing a large plate-glass window. There was one soiled spot, which defied efforts to remove it. After rubbing hard at it, using much soap and water, and failing to remove it, he found out the trouble. "It's on the inside," he called out to someone in the store.

Many are striving to cleanse the soul from its stains. They wash it with tears of sorrow; they scrub it with the soap of resolve; they rub it with the towel of morality, but still the consciousness of it is not removed. The trouble is, "It is on the inside." It is the heart that is bad. If the fountain is bitter, the stream will not be sweet.

That is why Solomon said, *"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life"* (Proverbs 4:23), and *"for as he thinketh within himself, so is he"* (Proverbs 23:7). Thus, we need to heed the instruction of the Psalmist, *"Thy word have I laid up in my heart, that I might not sin against thee"* (Psalm 119:11).

-Tom Moore

THE BOOK OF THE GOSPEL—4

Included within the hearts of many as one of the most beloved of the four gospel accounts is the book of John. This particular book contains some of the most vivid and illustrative language regarding the Christ of any of the others. Its approach to the given subject is fresh and attentive to the needs of its readership. As Matthew wrote particularly to the Jews to prove the Messiah-ship of Jesus, Mark wrote to the Romans to prove the Son-ship of Jesus, and Luke wrote to the Greeks to prove the perfection of Jesus, John wrote to a universal audience with the intended purpose of proving to all the world the power of Jesus Christ. By the time John wrote (around A.D. 85-90) the church had already spread throughout the known world but was facing heavy persecutions as revealed in the Revelation, written just a few years later. False teachers who denied the deity of Christ had infiltrated the church and was spreading their vicious lies of blasphemy throughout. By proving Christ's power, John proved His deity, a cornerstone of the Christian faith. And thus to ease the tide of error was John inspired to write this marvelous book.

While Matthew began Christ's story at Abraham, Luke began it at Adam, and Mark began at the start of His ministry, John's account went all the way back to eternity as he introduces Christ in the following manner:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not...And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:1-5,14).

Some have tried in the past and present to, like the Gnostics of John's day, deny the deity of Christ claiming the He was just a good man and outstanding teacher; but from the very outset, John's account went about to prove that Jesus Christ did not have His beginning with His incarnation, but was Himself already present in the beginning of time, thus eternal. Upon the same undeniable truth does Christianity still rest.

Like each of the other accounts, especially Luke's, John's account contains much material unique to only itself. It has been recorded that over half of the book is not found in any of the other accounts. In addition

"John records for the most part events that took place in Judea, giving us the only account of Jesus' early Judean ministry. In contrast to the Synoptics, he mentions very few incidents in Galilee. More than one half the space in John is given to the events and teachings of Christ during His last days on earth. John records Jesus' longest prayer (ch. 17)" (Dunn).

Therefore a study of the New Testament that includes a study of but one of the accounts is an incomplete study. Each of the books must be considered in order to fully realize and appreciate the extent of Christ's life and power.

Specifically, peculiar to John's record are two accounts in which the number seven finds great significance. First, of the many miraculous works performed by Christ and recorded in each of the accounts, John's record lists seven not mentioned anywhere else. Included among these are: (1) His first miracle of turning water to wine in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-11); (2) His healing of the nobleman's son (John 4:46-54); (3) His healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-9); (4) His feeding of the five thousand (John 6:1-14); (5) this particular occasion in which He walked on water (John 6:19-21); His healing of the blind man (John 9:1-41); and (7) His raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-46). These miracles fulfilled John's intended purpose for writing by proving Jesus' power over nature, distance, time, sickness, and death.

Second, peculiar to John are seven statements Jesus made alluding to Himself by beginning them with the two words "I Am." First, He stated *"I am the bread of life"* (John 6:35,48). Second, He stated, *"I am the light of the world"* (John 8:12). Third, He stated, *"Except ye believe that I am"* (John 8:24). Fourth, He stated, *"Before Abraham was, I am"* (John 8:58). Fifth, He stated, *"I am the resurrection and the life"* (John 11:25). Sixth, He stated, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life"* (John 14:6). And seventh, He stated, *"I am the truth vine"* (John 15:1).

Truly, the book of John is a marvel to read and a treasure from which all can learn. It gives hope to the world whereby man can live until that day when all things are unto them revealed, *"for God so loved the world..."* (John 3:16).

-Andy Brewer