

If Any Man Will Do His Will He Shall Know of the Doctrine

"The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His Way"—Psalm 25:9

JOHN CHAPTER SEVEN

IN our readings we are following again the life of the Lord Jesus Christ during his first appearing and work on the earth. As we have seen from many exhortations, a close study of his life has yielded many valuable and enlightening thoughts.

This morning our remarks are based on John 7. Throughout this whole chapter, as we ponder upon its verses, one thought comes continually to mind: the complete control by God of all things, and especially in relation to His beloved Son.

"After these things . . ."

"These things" has reference to the events following the Passover mentioned in Jn. 6:4. There was a 6-month interval between the Passover celebration of ch. 6, and the Feast of Tabernacles mentioned in 7:2.

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"After these things Jesus walked in Galilee:

for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him" (v. 1).

Although he was one of them, yet the Jews hated Jesus with a bitter malice because he had healed a man on the sabbath day and proclaimed himself to be the manifestation of God—

"And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath" (John 5:9).

"Afterward Jesus findeth him in the Temple and saith unto him, Behold thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee. The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus which had made him whole.

"And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day. But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

"Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father" (vs. 14-18). —

They could not rise to the idea of God manifesting Himself through a Son. They reacted with bitter hatred and anger at Jesus' claim to be manifesting the words and works of God.

This, brethren and sisters, is the natural man, hating everything alien to the flesh. It reacts with anger and malice to the manifestation of godliness, instead of being humbled by the realization of its own exceeding sinfulness.

Christ "came to his own and his own received him not." Christ knew their hearts as he knows ours. We claim to be his brethren and sisters. Do we humble ourselves and seek to understand and follow after his words and example he sets here before us or do we become angry and resentful?

It is only by overcoming this natural tendency of evil that we can be among those recognized and loved by Christ at his second coming.

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"Now the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles was at hand" (v. 2).

The Feast of the Tabernacles was the feast of thanksgiving that God commanded Israel to keep. It followed the autumn harvest at the agricultural year's end. It pointed forward to that final deliverance through Christ from sin and death at the end of the millennium—the final ingathering of God's Harvest of the earth.

Christ was the very centre and pivot point of all their celebrations, yet the Jews failed to recognize him who now tabernacled among them.

Christ would gain strength and comfort from this feast, looking beyond the lonely path of suffering that lay ahead to the time when sin and death would be swallowed up in victory. He would recall the prophecies of old foretelling the time typified herein, when earth would be—

"Filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

Thus he would be strengthened to—

"Endure the cross, despising the shame, for the joy set before him."

We too should be strengthened by considering these things. Though now encompassed with trials and sorrows, we know that the day will dawn when sin and death shall be destroyed. Those who have been faithfully striving to be like their Lord will eat and drink with him in that glorious Kingdom of righteousness.

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"His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence and go into Judea that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest; for there is no man that doeth anything in secret and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, show thyself to the world.

"For neither did his brethren believe in him" (vs. 3-5).

His natural brethren believed not. They wanted Christ to go into Judea. They marvelled at his miracles, but did not accept them. Galilee, located about 60 miles north of Jerusalem, was a mixed, Gentile area; Judea was a Jewish one.

His brethren thought only of Christ's ruling now, for if he was the Messiah why didn't he go to the feast and manifest himself before all? They could not understand why he did not stay in Jerusalem, why he did his miracles in far off places which would gain him no glory in Jerusalem. They thought Christ should become popular. It is a lesson to us: do we try to make Christ popular, wanting to serve both him and the world, adjusting his commands to fit the world's ideas?

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"Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come" (v. 6).

This had a double meaning. It was not time for Jesus to attend the Feast of Tabernacles, nor was it time for him to manifest the power and glory of the Father before all.

This his brethren failed to realize, for they saw only the kingship and conquering power of the promised Messiah.

They didn't comprehend the need for his great sacrifice of suffering and death before the crown of glory could be attained.

The time was definitely fixed in the mind of the Father both for Christ's crucifixion and glorification, and for his manifestation as King of kings and Lord of lords when he would compel universal acceptance by all the world. The time has still not yet come; but it WILL come. Will WE be prepared?

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"But your time is always ready."

His brethren desired present and instant gratification, the pleasing of the natural man in which there is no plan, no principle to guide, no patience.

How different are the ways of God in which there is delay, waiting, spiritual growth, and refining before the final harvest!

We too naturally desire pleasure and immediate joy, but we must follow the example of our Master who endured the trials that accompany separation from the world: being unpopular and peculiar in this life, working and growing spiritually in patience for the fulfilment of God's plan and purpose. Those of us who are now willing to share the suffering and shame that Christ endured will share the happiness and joy of his future manifestation of glory when all will be put under him.

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**"The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil"
(v. 7).**

In v. 4 we have read where Christ's brethren had said, "Show thyself to the world," meaning their fellow Israelites. However Jesus gave this word "world" the deeper meaning of the embodiment of all evil, of which their fellow Israelites were a part. Christ hated all that was evil, and tells us—

"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also.

"If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father.

"But this cometh to pass. that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause" (John 15:22).

In 1 John 2:15-17 we are commanded—

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

"For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and pride of life—is not of the Father, but of the world.

"And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

The world had no quarrel with his brethren at this time, for they bore no testimony against it; but Christ proclaimed the righteousness of God, denouncing the world's abominations and hypocrisies, and thus aroused its hatred, In Ps. 69:8 we read—

"I am become a stranger unto my brethren and an alien unto my mother's children, for the zeal of Thine House hath eaten me up."

Christ's true brethren are only those who "love not the world or the lusts thereof." At this time he had to forsake the fleshly counsel and desires of his brothers for the counsel and guidance of his Heavenly Father.

Only those who forsake all things for the Kingdom of God's sake can hope for a place in it.

If we truly love God we cannot love the world with its honours, activities, pleasure and associations.

The world presses upon us every waking moment, and we must always keep this commandment and example of Christ before our minds. If we want to be a part of that glorious company of redeemed ones we must not be of the world but put away all its interests.

At the judgment seat there will be only 2 classes: those who loved the world and those who love the Father. The one passes away into oblivion, while the other receives that precious gift of life evermore.

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"Go ye up unto this feast. I go not up yet unto the feast, for my time is not yet full come.

"When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee. But when his brethren were gone up, then he went up also unto the feast; not openly, but as it were in secret" (vs. 8-10).

The Mosaic Law was still in force, and therefore Jesus tells his brethren to keep the feast. Generally it was observed by only lip service, for the majority failed to realize its true significance and to recognize him who was in their midst.

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"Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he?"

They knew he would be there, and looked for him only to ridicule, find fault and kill. The Jews were the chief rulers, scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees—leaders of the people, sunk to petty traditions of men instead of loving and obeying the Law of God.

They were in positions of authority in Jerusalem. They were responsible for the preservice of righteousness and godliness, but through their vain traditions deceived the people.

The lesson is clear for us in relation to the Truth in the ecclesia. We are responsible for its pureness, and grave consequences will occur if we allow it to become impure.

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"And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him; for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay, but he deceiveth the people.

"Howbeit no man spoke openly of him for fear of the Jews."

"Much murmuring"—there was much conversation among the multitude at the feast as to whether Christ was the real Messiah or whether he was an impostor deceiving the people.

Those who secretly felt that he was a true prophet would not openly confess him for they feared the Jewish rulers. They were not willing to endure the suffering that would come with the following of the Lord; and by their keeping quiet, the Jews were restrained from killing him till the set time came.

"Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the midst of the Temple, and taught.

"And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" (14-15).

In the middle of the Feast (about the 4th or 5th day, as it lasted 8 days) Christ went up to the Temple and began to teach. The word "taught" is taken from the Greek root **dao**—"to learn," and denotes formal and continuous teaching as distinguished from mere casual sayings. This was probably the first time that he did so openly in Jerusalem.

(At the age of 12 he had asked questions but did not take the role of a formal teacher.)

By waiting until the Feast was half through there was time for much of the stir about him to subside, and entering unexpectedly into the city and teaching in the Temple created a certain awe for him before the wrath of the rulers had time to break it. This awe or marvelling (from the Greek **thaumazo**, "to admire or wonder at") at the teaching of Christ with such authority was aroused because he was to them "unlearned," not having attended their rabbinical schools.

But his knowledge was from above for he spent his whole life searching the Scriptures and praying to his Heavenly Father for guidance and help to fulfil His will in everything.

Christ could answer the tempter with a "Thus it is written"—"Have ye never read?"

The Pharisees thought they were the only ones who could rightly interpret the law of God. They were offended when Christ revealed their hypocrisy. So today the churches claim to be the only ones to interpret the Bible, but it is for us to follow the example of the Scriptures to study them continually FOR OURSELVES and not follow the ever-changing ideas and traditions of men.

Rabbinical practice was to quote the teacher from whom they had received their sayings. Jesus was not "taught" of the Rabbis, but his teaching was not his own: it was from higher source, the Highest of all authorities—

"Jesus answered them and said, My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me" (v. 16).

This was a complete answer. It recognized, admitted, and explained the two things they had observed with such amazement—first, that he was not a qualified teacher in the customary sense but, second, he exercised the office of teacher with outstanding, even unique, ability far beyond their own.

And not only this but it went much further, for it disclaimed personal credit for this ability. He took no honour and glory to himself but gave it all to God.

Do we ALWAYS do the same? ALL our blessings, ALL things we have, ALL our abilities, are of God and for His use. Let us remember this, and use them to His glory, not our own.

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"If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (v. 17).

Jesus' teaching was for faith and action. It required a trial on the part of all who heard to "prove what is that acceptable and perfect will of God."

This is of vital importance— a single-hearted desire to please God and do His will.

By this means we will grow in knowledge, understanding, and conviction of the divine ways. We will further realize the true authority and wisdom of Christ's teachings. If we do not, to the limit of our ability, DO those commands of God that we NOW understand, we can never expect God to further reveal Himself to us.

On the other hand, if we do that of which we are aware: daily study of the Scriptures, love for the brethren and sisters, attendance at the meetings and separation from the world, then we can hope to be divinely helped to grow from babes in Christ to the full stature of the man Christ Jesus.

These words of Jesus indicate an experimental knowledge based upon a right understanding and patient effort to obey.

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"He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory. But he that seeketh His glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him" (v. 18).

What is Christ saying here? It is—if a man seeks only to honour his sender or teacher, sacrificing his own glory for that of another, he is shown to be a faithful witness. A man proclaiming his own message seeks his own glory, for the flesh is quick to honour itself.

Christ sought only to honour God and thus proclaimed God's message, not his own. In this he stands absolutely alone, for although he was worthy above all men to receive honour, glory and power, he took nothing to his own credit or advantage. Christ tells us this in John 5—

"Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.

"I receive not honour from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's Name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.

"How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?"

Here Christ contrasts his own end with theirs. They sought only human applause and thus could not believe, for he sought not the honour of men. As he goes on to tell them:

"Ye will not come to me that ye might have life—ye have not the love of God in you"

(John 5:40-42).

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"Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you keepeth the Law? Why go ye about to kill me?" (v. 19).

All their traditions were supposedly based on Moses' Law, but they failed to keep that which they professed. They knew, as Christ knew, that the Law forbade murder, yet they sought to kill Christ in the name of the Law.

Jesus on more than one occasion tells them that Moses whom they professed would be their accuser, as he says here:

"Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust" (John 5:45).

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"Moses therefore gave you circumcision (not because it is of Moses but of the fathers) and ye on the sabbath circumcise a man.

"If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, so that the Law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?"

He exposed them further in their failure to obey the Law to the letter as they claimed, because they constantly performed the rite of circumcision on the 8th day, even when the 8th day fell on a Sabbath. Though servile work was forbidden on the Sabbath, the circumcision of males on that day—which was certainly a servile work—was counted no infringement of the Law.

This was right. The law of circumcision, based on the promise to Abraham given before the Law of Moses, took precedence over the Sabbath.

But if they had understood this principle and applied it consistently, they would have had to admit that Jesus, on God's direct authority, was justified in making a man every whit whole on the

Sabbath day. Yet this one miracle of his (v. 21) caused much indignation and revulsion among the rulers and made them determined to kill him.

This contrast by Jesus between outward circumcision of the flesh and the healing of a man completely and wholly on the Sabbath is to teach us that the Sabbath was but a type of himself.

He was greater than the Sabbath rest, and it is only in him that men can find eternal rest—only through him can we be made perfectly whole.

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"Judge not according to appearance/ but judge righteous judgment" (v. 24).

Don't judge merely according to the technical letter of the Law, but in harmony with its spirit. The Law was a schoolmaster to bring all unto Christ, to the need for Christ, to the mind of Christ.

In this is something for us. We must not judge outwardly and shallowly, but must consider the true facts and Christlike principles of love and sacrifice, letting no personal feelings and prejudices sway our judgment.

We cannot do as the Scribes and Pharisees and reject the commandment of God that we may keep our own traditions.

In reading the Scriptures carelessly we might be able, on the surface from an isolated passage, to justify wrong actions, but if we search and compare Scripture with Scripture we will find the deeper spiritual meaning and oftentimes discover we have not been manifesting the true love and spirit and mind of Christ.

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"Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he whom they seek to kill? But lo, he speaketh boldly and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed this is the very Christ?"

There was conflict among the multitude, for some thought Jesus could be the Messiah; others, knowing only that he came out of Nazareth, said he couldn't be—

"Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is" (v. 27).

Jesus, perceiving their conflicting thoughts, "cried out" in a solemn impressive manner—

"Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am. And I am not come of myself, but He that sent me is true, Whom ye know not" (v. 28).

Yes, they knew his family associations at Nazareth, but they did not know that He was God's Son, that God had sent him, and thus they could not know God.

"But I know Him, for I am from Him, and He hath sent me" (29).

Jesus was sent by God, not as a co-equal and pre-existent part of a "Trinity," but as a created, obedient, submissive, dependent Son, in the mind and purpose of God from the beginning as Saviour of the world.

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"Then they sought to take him, but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come" (v. 30).

His time had not yet come. How often this thought comes out through the whole of the chapter! GOD IS ALWAYS IN CONTROL. He guides all things, and nothing will go contrary to His eternal will, for times and seasons are appointed by Him.

What great comfort and assurance there is in this! Only in a firm, unwavering conviction of this glorious Truth can there be any peace of mind.

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"The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and chief priests sent officers to take him" (v. 32).

When the officers sought to take him for fear of a serious demonstration in favour of Christ, they could only respectfully stand and listen when they reached him. Christ meekly tells them—

"Yet a little while I am with you, and then I go unto Him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am thither ye cannot come" (vs. 33-4).

The crowd wondered what he could mean about going away where he could not be found—

"Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?" (v. 35).

He referred to his coming ascension, to sit down on the right hand of God as our High Priest and Mediator, where no man can follow. The people knew nothing of this and therefore sought a solution according to their own knowledge. They could not understand him because they were too earthly and sensual. They by-passed his allusion to God as they thought he would go to the Gentiles and not be found.

Little did they know that the Gospel would be taken from them and given to the Gentiles. Again a lesson for us—if we are not faithful to the Truth it will be taken from us and be given unto others.

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"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood up and cried" (v. 37).

The last day of the feast, as we read in Lev. 23:39, was the 8th day and a Sabbath, that is, a day of solemn rest, a special holiday. It was the very end and completion of all the year's typical observances. On this final great day, as they terminated these shadowy Mosaic rituals, Jesus proclaimed—

"If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scriptures hath said, Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters" (vs. 37-38).

V. 38 explains the living waters "flowing from their belly" to have reference to the giving of the Holy Spirit to those who believed on him.

The invitation to "come to him and drink" is as true today as it was then. Jesus offers us the water of life while all around us is a dry and parched wilderness.

Will we come to him and live, or will we grope after mirages in this arid desert where all is vanity and vexation of spirit? Will we humble ourselves and drink of this water that offers us life everlasting, or will we foolishly partake of the world's wisdom to find ourselves at last with parched lips and empty vessels and be rejected as unfit for the Master's use?

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"Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ.

"But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem where David was?"

"So there was a division among the people concerning him."

In their self-conceit, they thought they knew all the law. They indeed knew the prophecy of Micah 5:2 which told them the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. But they failed to humble themselves and patiently investigate his background.

Yes, Mary and Joseph had lived at Nazareth, but at the appointed time Caesar taxed Judea, requiring them to go to Bethlehem, thus bringing about the fulfilment of the prophesied birth of Christ.

God works in natural ways to bring about His purpose. It is for us to discern in them their spiritual meaning and watch over our hearts that we be not like these blind Pharisees unable to reason or to recognize the Divine Hand at work, jumping to oversure conclusions instead of seeking to learn.

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"Nicodemus saith unto them (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them), Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?"

Nicodemus, one of the rulers who secretly believed, points out to his fellow-rulers their obvious disobedience to the Law by judging Christ before he was tried and heard. They answered in sharp rebuff, for their bitter hatred of Christ caused them to be angered at the slightest reference to their inconsistency.

"They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" (v. 52).

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8:1 belongs at end of ch. 7—

"And every man went to his own house. And Jesus went unto the Mt. of Olives" (John 7:52-8:1).

Every man went to his own comfortable home, but Christ the Son of God had no place to lay his head. They had much luxury and pleasure, while Christ had discomfort and inconvenience—he retired to the mountain to pray, to collect energy and strength from his Heavenly Father for the new labours of love and trials that awaited him upon the dawn of a new day.

Let us ponder well the lessons we have considered this morning. With whom do we wish to identify ourselves: the honourable rabbis of Christ's day, or the lowly despised Son of God?

In their day the Pharisees and Jewish rulers had much honour and esteem and worldly pleasure, and so today, the pleasures of this world appear real and appealing to the natural mind.

But where today is the glory of those Pharisees of old? All their glory and power lies with them in the grave, while Christ is now ever-living, and exalted above every man.

With what then shall we associate ourselves?—with the fleeting pleasures of the moment soon to vanish away, or with the present narrow and difficult life of a real and faithful follower of Christ?

When he whom we are here to remember this morning comes to set up the Kingdom, will we be worthy? Will we be watching and waiting? Let us consider these things as we examine ourselves in the partaking of the emblems before us. —D.C.
