

THE SCHOOL OF THE PROPHETS

Learning In The Classroom Of Life

By

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**COMMENTS
AND
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

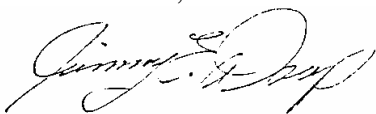
It is with great appreciation to The Way ministry, the Board of Trustees, Dr. Victor Paul Wierwille, Rev. Craig Martindale and to my colleagues Mr. Douglas Emerson, Rev. John Lynn and Rev. Ross Tracy that I submit my contribution to this research paper dealing with the school of the prophets.

It has been one of the most exciting and rewarding adventures of my life. To have the opportunity to work with men so dedicated to the accuracy of God's wonderful Word has truly been an honor and a humbling experience. The months of labor that have gone into this paper have given me a greater understanding and a deeper love for the Word of God.

I wish to thank Mrs. Bernita Jess who helped us so often with Aramaic translations and our secretaries who worked so diligently on the typing of this paper, Mrs. Ann Simmons and Mrs. Jane Tomberlin.

It is my wish that this work be a blessing to all who read it, but more importantly that the four of us stand approved before God because we have rightly-divided His Word.

In His service,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jimmy E. Doop".

Jimmy E. Doop
The Way Corps
New Knoxville, Ohio


"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ...." My deepest thanks and appreciation go to the following people for enabling me to be a part of a great research team in writing "The School of the Prophets": Dr. Victor Paul Wierwille, Rev. Craig Martindale, Rev. Jim Doop, Rev. John Lynn, Rev. Ross Tracy.

A special note of love and appreciation goes to the following people for their limitless giving: Mrs. Bernita Jess and Mrs. Ann Simmons.

Words on paper do not come easily in expressing the last seven months of pure "heartbeat" research and fellowship, with my colleagues. I thank God that He looks upon the heart of a man to know his inner thoughts and intentions. My fellow workers on this research team are strong men of God and have added greatly to enhance my in-depth spiritual perception and awareness.

May God's grace abound to all those who read this paper and may the eyes of their understanding be enlightened that they may know what is the hope of His calling, and what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to those who believe, according to the working of His mighty power.

In His service,


Douglas L. Emerson
The Way Corps
New Knoxville, Ohio

It has been about ten years since I have done a "research paper," and those that I did in college and high school did not really interest me. Consequently they were a drag to write, and I always looked upon them negatively. Thus I appreciated the opportunity to work on something that interested me, and pushed myself to overcome any remaining negative attitude about writing a paper.

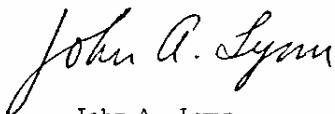
I enjoyed going through Acts and the epistles looking for the specific topic of leadership training. Some of that which other writers had to say about the subject was interesting, but overall I was amazed by all the junk written about the Bible. When I looked, in the libraries we visited, at the thousands and thousands of books by nearly that number of authors, I again thanked God that I am privileged to know the truth. I'm sure glad I could just take the PFAL class and not have to wade through all that error.

Besides of course the knowledge I gained from the Word per se, I also learned from Jim, Doug and Ross in working with them. I appreciated their spiritual insight, especially in the Old Testament and gospels which they worked.

Four people trying to agree sentence-by-sentence through more than a hundred pages was a real exercise in human relations. Each had to swallow any pride that tried to creep in concerning what he wrote. We had to keep our eyes on the goal and work together to achieve it. With four different styles of writing and expression, this took some renewed mind doing.

I hope that what we put together will be profitable to the outreach of the Word, but even if no one ever reads it, I know that I learned some valuable things from being able to participate in the project. Thank you for the opportunity.

In His service,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John A. Lynn". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and address.

John A. Lynn
The Way Corps
New Knoxville, Ohio

The privilege of sharing in writing this paper has been a great delight for me. Our working together toward a common goal has enabled me to better understand and appreciate those with whom I labor in this ministry.

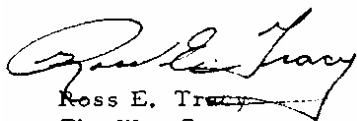
The study, writing and sharing necessary in this paper has reminded me so much of the body of Christ. It was very necessary for each of us to be patient and consider the needs of the others. Our individual attitudes and responses were most important for all concerned. As we worked and struggled together, we were able to see the fruition of our efforts come into reality.

The mental discipline required to do the work on this paper was especially appreciated. I not only enjoyed writing my section of the paper, but also the challenge of fitting it in with the work of the other men.

My greatest learning from this project was to discover our ministry's format for writing a research paper. I approached the assignment from the training I had previously acquired concerning such a project. In conferring with the others with whom I was working, I discovered documentation was not necessary and that the works of other scholars are considered less important than I had previously thought. Of course I was able to gain greater appreciation for our position, and greater regard for the authority of the Word. I learned that this authority makes a distinct difference in the way in which a research paper is written.

I personally want to thank you, Dr. Wierwille, for the privilege of being a part of this learning experience. It was most rewarding to share in the joy of this composition.

In His service,



Ross E. Tracy
The Way Corps
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PART I

INTRODUCTION

Words have from the beginning of his history been man's basic form of communication. Therefore God, who is Spirit (John 4:24) and as such is inaccessible to man in terms of the five senses avenues of learning, chose this medium to make known His great love to all men. Words can either be spoken or written, and of God's, the psalmist by revelation wrote, ". . .for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name" (Psalm 138:2). But God also added a unique third dimension to the *logos* when ". . . the Word was made flesh. . . ." (John 1:14) in the person of His only begotten son, Jesus Christ.¹

That God exists, and that He is a God of infinite order and precision is obvious even from a cursory examination of His creation. But it has only been by knowing His Word that men have found the keys to walking in fellowship with the Creator. Jesus Christ, the living Word, who perfectly renewed his mind, declared to his heavenly Father that he spoke ". . . the words which thou gavest me. . . ." (John 17:8). Jesus always spoke exactly what God told him to speak.

But before and after the time of Christ's coming, God had to find other men to proclaim His Word, courageous men willing and able to stand faithfully for Him and bring to pass His purposes in the face of Satan's never-ending attempts to foil divine design. Only a relatively few men rose up to receive with meekness, retain with conviction, and steadfastly hold forth with boldness God's matchless Word. Those who did were vitally concerned with teaching others to stand with and after them so that God's will for man could be consummated.

¹Wierwille, Victor Paul, *Jesus Christ Is Not God*, pp. 81-122.

It is with Jesus Christ, with some of those men whose faithfulness in Old Testament times made possible his coming, and with one who thereafter received and boldly declared the greatest revelation God has ever given, that we will deal in the body of this work. We shall see how, while carrying out their God-given mission, they communicated to their disciples the spiritual heartbeat necessary to lead God's people in the paths of righteousness.

PART II

THE SCHOOL OF THE PROPHETS

INTRODUCTION

The voices of prophets have been dynamic in the shaping of Biblical history. The prophets have been God's voice to His people throughout the centuries. Though methods and mannerisms of prophets have varied, it has still been God's Word being held forth. The variations of the prophetic movement must be understood if one is to see the ebb and flow of God's direction to His people throughout the pages of His Word.

One of the earlier examples of the movement may be seen as Samuel anoints Saul and instructs him to go to the "hill of God." Here he is told he will meet "... a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them. . . and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man" (I Samuel 10:5, 6). This literally meant that he would have the spirit of God upon him. This was God's Word of instruction for Saul at that particular time, given in a manner that Saul could understand.

GOD'S WILL FOR MAN

It has always been God's will for man to have a knowledge of divine matters. For example, I Corinthians 12:1 illustrates this desire. "Now concerning spiritual *gifts* [spiritual matters] brethren, I would not have you ignorant." Each of God's spokesmen taught the people in accordance with what he received from God.

Throughout history God has chosen spokesmen to hold forth His Word for Him. One such man was the great prophet Samuel, who said to the people of Israel, ". . . God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and right way" (I Samuel 12:23). Another was Jethro, who instructed Moses concerning his responsibility to the children of Israel.

Exodus 18:20

And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.

From the very beginning, God established the family unit in order that the parent could implement for the child necessary teaching and instruction. Ideally, no one is better qualified or in a better position to teach than a father his own child. We can be sure that it was not an arbitrary whim which caused the Lord to charge parents with this responsibility. The father-son teaching relationship began with Adam and is still the same today.

From the first man, Adam, we see God's instruction:

Genesis 1:29; 2:16, 17

And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb

bearing seed, which *is* upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which *is* the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Fathers since Adam have given similar instruction to their children. "You may do this but you may not do that, for if you do, harm will come to you." What father wants harm to come to his children? A loving father teaches his children "the good and the right way." When Adam disobeyed God, his Creator, he lost his communication with God. And it is not until Noah that we again see God specifically instructing man.

Genesis 6:13, 14

And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood...

God's direction and instruction to Noah made possible the continuance of mankind and animals. All other flesh on the earth was destroyed. These verses amplify the father-son relationship. God as a father instructs Noah as a son, and in turn Noah instructed his biological sons, who were to propagate the human race. "And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation" (Genesis 7:1).

The apex of the entire record of Noah is found in Genesis 6:8, 9: "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. . . Noah was a just man *and* perfect in his generations, *and* Noah walked with God." In such a relationship with God, Noah gladly received instruction from his heavenly Father. He in turn

fulfilled his fatherly responsibility of correctly training his own children. It is most evident that effectual teaching took place. There was an abundance of evil in the world at this time yet Noah led his family according to God's direction (Genesis 6:5). Had he not faithfully instructed them, how would they have known "the good and right way?"

Again the father-son relationship is clearly exemplified in the record of Abram. God talked with Abram and instructed him concerning the future. Abram in turn fell on his face in reverence and respect for his heavenly Father (Genesis 17:3). God then made a wonderful promise to Abram.

Genesis 17:4, 5

As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

The love that Abraham had for God further illustrates his concept of himself as a child before his heavenly Father.

The perpetuation of God's truth was dependent upon Abraham's faithful teaching to his people. Here again the importance of the family structure is seen. Fathers needed to instruct their children in the years to come so that God's Word could be held forth to His people. "And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations" (Genesis 17:9).

The inspiring record of Moses once again clearly shows the father-son teaching relationship. From his birth, Moses was a man chosen by God for a specific mission. We see the prevailing omnipotence of God beautifully unfold in the life of Moses. Born a Hebrew, hidden in the bullrushes, discovered

and adopted by Pharaoh's daughter, nursed by his own mother, educated by the Egyptians--this was a most spectacular sequence of events (Exodus 2:1-10). Moses was God's man. The ultimate plan and purpose of God then materialized as Moses obeyed God's Word.

God's father-son relationship with Moses is further evidenced by the burning bush experience of Exodus, chapter three. Here God instructs Moses as to His plan and gives him the authority to carry it out. Moses is told to go to King Pharaoh to bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt. He went as God's special emissary with power and authority (Exodus 3:1-18). Further proof of his authority is given to Moses as God instructs him to use the rod in his hand. This was physical evidence of his God-given appointment (Exodus 4:1-9).

The relationship of a father to a son can also be seen as God provides for his child Moses. Moses in turn cared like a father for the needs of the people of Israel. He led them from the bondage and tyranny they had experienced for many years.

Finally set free, Israel dwelt in the wilderness. Here Moses continued to teach and instruct them in the will of the Lord. As their spiritual father, Moses was God's chosen man for that time. But when he feared that the Israelites would not believe his calling to deliver them, God reassured him by way of the rod in his hand to overcome fear. Moses, however, questioned his own capability for the mission.

And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I *am* not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I *am* slow of speech, and of a slow tongue... And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and he said, *Is* not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well...

Therefore God appointed Aaron to be the mouthpiece for Moses, to speak what was revealed to Moses. "And Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people" (Exodus 4:30).

Once again with Aaron it is possible to detect the father-son relationship. As God met every need that Moses expressed, so He established Aaron in a position of authority so the people could receive the knowledge and will of God in their lives.

Aaron, a Levite, had not only the authority to be a mouthpiece for his brother, but also the responsibility of being a priest. The Levites, those of the tribe of Levi, were to care for the tabernacle.

Numbers 1:47-50

But the Levites after the tribe of their fathers were not numbered among them. For the Lord had spoken unto Moses saying, Only thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi, neither take the sum of them among the children of Israel: But thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that belong to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle.

In Deuteronomy 18:1-7 it becomes obvious that the Levitical and priestly functions were one. "The priests the Levites. . ." (Deuteronomy 18:1). Here again in the establishment of the priesthood we see the continuance of the father-son relationship for the instruction of God's people. The priests came from one tribe, the descendants of Levi, where the interrelatedness was apparent. God's instructions to Moses were to have another of his family assist him. Therefore, the priestly orders were given to Aaron and his sons. The priests

then served as the spiritual fathers to the children of Israel. At this point we should examine some of their functions.

The priest had to sprinkle blood of the offering that was sacrificed in the sanctuary for the atonement of sin. He also laid the sacrifice upon the altar and lit the sacred fire. The priest further had to pour out the drink-offering, and to perform the whole service connected with the altar of burnt offering and the altar of incense.

Outside the sanctuary, they alone could pronounce the blessing upon the people. They had to make the distinction between holy and profane, clean and unclean, and to instruct the children of Israel in all the statutes which God had given them through Moses.

The priesthood adequately served the people of Israel until the period known in the Word as that of the Judges. By that time a degeneracy of the priesthood had become apparent. Priests were compromising the functions of their office and no longer held the position of prominence that they once maintained. This is evident from the Scriptures, especially in Judges 17.

Even though the degeneration of the priesthood had taken place, the father-son teaching concept still existed. Micah, a man who made molten images and had a "house of gods," consecrated one of his sons to become his priest (Judges 17:5). Later a young man came out of Bethlehem in Judah, a Levite, who came to the house of Micah. Upon invitation by Micah, he became a priest to him (Judges 17:7-13). "And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest..." (Judges 17:10). It is also significant that, as Judges 17:6 points out, "In those days *there was* no king in Israel, *but* every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes."

THE COMING OF SAMUEL

This period of degeneracy left God without a true, strong spokesman and thus virtually stilled His voice to Israel. But out of the depths of that despair, God initiated a new way in which His voice could be heard. The coming of Samuel instituted this new epoch of moral power: the prophetic order. Prophets had existed before Samuel's time; for example, Abraham and Moses (Genesis 20:7; Deuteronomy 34:10). But it was the man Samuel who established the prophetic order to meet the spiritual needs of his day. Samuel was a Levite of the family of Kohath (I Chronicles 6:28), and he gave to the prophets a position of importance they had never before held.

It is doubtful that anyone at that time but Samuel could have imagined the idea of a school for training men unconnected with the priesthood. As James Sime says, ". . . he was the outstanding man of the age, the master who alone was capable of gathering pupils around him, the prophet who alone had special authority to teach and preach in the then dislocated state of divine worship."²

Out of this low spiritual ebb, however, God raised up His man to meet the crisis of the hour. It was still God's will for men to have a knowledge of divine matters and so His voice to the people became the voice of a prophet.

Chapters two and three of I Samuel provide an indication of this time of crisis. "And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was precious [costly] in those days; *there was* no open vision [no revelation]" (I Samuel 3:1).

²Sime, James, *Samuel and the School of the Prophets*, pp. 99-117.

Eli was the High Priest, but the behavior of his family was hardly appropriate. His two sons, also priests, were involved in scandalous and wicked acts. There were many dark moments in the history of Israel in the time of the Judges--idolatry, lust, treachery and bloodshed often prevailed. But none were more dark than in this time of Eli and his family at Shiloh. As mentioned, the people of Israel had often been grossly wicked, but in this case it was the salt that had lost its savour--those who should have led the people in the ways of God that became the ringleaders of evil.

Eli's sons were wanton examples of greed and lechery. Their greed preyed upon worthy men who brought offerings to God's sanctuary in obedience to His law. Their lasciviousness seduced the very women who came seeking their spiritual guidance. They shamelessly took no pains to conceal their wickedness.

And how did Eli, the high priest deal with this iniquity? In the worst possible way. He weakly spoke against it, but he did not act with the authority that was his before God. Eli was old, and his eyes had begun to "wax dim" (I Samuel 3:2) which means his eyesight was failing. In verse three, it says "And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord...." The lamp in the sanctuary always represented the presence of God. The mention of the lamp further indicates the symbolism of the condition of the times. Verse seven is significant, especially considering the crisis of the hour. "Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him." The very one to meet the need of the hour did not yet know the Lord.

The Scriptural record of this event is rather revealing as to the character of Samuel. In verse four of the third chapter of Samuel, the Lord calls Samuel and he answered the Lord, "Here *am* I." He then ran to Eli and said "Here *am* I; for thou

calledst me" and Eli said "I called not; lie down again." This occurred three times before the priest, Eli, perceived that the Lord had called Samuel.

The readiness with which the young man sprang from his bed time after time, and the meekness and patience with which he asked Eli for his orders, without a word of complaint about the old man's apparently unreasonable conduct, makes it very clear that Samuel had learned to subdue to things--his body and his temper. In such circumstances the body is very apt to overcome the mind. But Samuel's mind overcame his body. And so he heard the voice of the Lord and said "Speak; for thy servant heareth." "And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of His words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to Beer-she-ba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord" (I Samuel 3:19, 20).

Since the Word of God was rare in the days of Eli the priest, we know that the schools of prophets were not yet in existence. They arose during the lifetime of Samuel. We believe that Samuel was the human founder of these rather institutionalized prophetic bodies. As such, he is pictured "...standing as appointed over them..." (I Samuel 19:20).

During Samuel's lifetime we witness the downfall of the sanctuary at Shiloh. The ark of the covenant was taken away by the Philistines (I Samuel 4: 1ff), and thus the representation of God's presence was removed from the midst of His people. With the fall of the sanctuary and the attendant priesthood, there arose a serious situation (Jeremiah 7:12). Idolatry and apostasy made their appearance (I Samuel 7:3, 4) and there was need for strong leadership that would protect the rights of the theocratic nation.

Since the priests failed at their duty as teachers of God's law, it was necessary that the nation should be brought to a

recognition of its apostasy. Apparently no one stood in a position of such high respect as did Samuel, and it was he who brought into being the bodies known as schools of the prophets. Thus an attempt was made to check the declining religious fervor of the nation and to bring the people back to the law of God.

THE WORD PROPHET

The development and usage of the word "prophet" has evolved from a vast background. This usage includes reference to the false prophesy and prophetic movements of pagan cultures. We observe in understanding the word "prophet" that there is great overlapping of usage allowing the co-existence of several terms at the same time. In I Samuel 9:9 it says "...*he that is now called* a Prophet was before time called a Seer. " Samuel was called both a prophet and a seer (II Samuel 24:11). One possible suggestion for the usage of "prophet" and "seer" in the same passage is that during that period of time each had a specific function.

In studying the Scriptural usage of the word "seer" one comes to realize a special relationship of the seer to the king. (II Samuel 24:11, I Chronicles 21:9; 25:5, II Chronicles 29:25; 35:15). In all these passages the seer is in a special advisory capacity to the king. He is sought out for advice concerning God's will for the people. In these passages the word prophet is used in terms of one bringing forth God's Word to all the people and not just the king. The difference in meaning between the two words decreased as time progressed and with few exceptions they were used synonymously.

The words for prophet in the Bible are quite significant. In the Old Testament he is called "*roeb*," "*hozeth*" and "*nabhi*." The first two terms are almost synonymous, both meaning "to see," suggesting a man of vision. The prophet is thus as one whose sight pierces through the veil that hides the world of divine things. The word "*nabhi*," which means "to bubble up" or "pour forth" presents the prophet as a man of speech, one who boldly proclaims God's Word. The difference between the first two terms and the third lies in the fact that the first two point to the method of the prophets receiving his information

and to the nature of the information, whereas the third points to the method of delivery of his message.³

One meaning of the word "*nabhi*" is "one inspired of God, one who *gives forth the Word of God*."⁴ For example, we read:

Amos 3:7, 8

Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. The lion hath roared, who will not fear? The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?

Jeremiah 26:15

But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the Lord has sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.

In addition to these strictly technical terms, the prophets had applied to them other designations which were descriptive of their office and work. They were "keepers" or "watchmen." ". . . He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night?" (Isaiah 21:11). "Also I set a watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken" (Jeremiah 6:17). Another term frequently given to the prophets was "man of God," or "the man of God." "And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said. . . " (I Samuel 2:27), "And he said unto him, Behold now, *there is* in this city a man of God, and *he is* an honorable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass. . . " (I Samuel 9:6). "... David the man of God. . . " (II Chronicles 8:14). "And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel..." (Deuteronomy 33:1).

³*Standard Bible Dictionary*, "Prophecy, Prophet," p. 704.

⁴*Harper's Bible Dictionary*, p. 582-584.

The term "man of God" or "the man of God" indicates an especially close relationship between the prophet and God. The term is most frequently used of the great prophets like Moses, Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha. It was first used of Moses (Deuteronomy 33:1) and continued in use until the end of the Israel's monarchy.

Another designation given to the prophets is "servant of God." "And the Lord said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked. . ." (Isaiah 20:3). "And the Lord hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets... " (Jeremiah 25:4). "...Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou *art* God in Israel, and *that I am* thy servant. . ." (I Kings 18:36). The word servant is the Hebrew word "*ebed*" meaning "bondsmen, slave, one that is employed in the service of a king." It has specific reference to a servant of the Lord, one who is doing the will of God, as a true worshipper, and one who executes the purpose of God.⁵

Another term frequently used is "messenger," one who stands in the presence of an august personage, as a minister before the king and communicates or interprets the king's will to the people who have no immediate access to him.⁶ A prophet was then a servant of God who represented Him before all men. "Who *is* blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger, *that I sent*. . ." (Isaiah 42:19). "That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers. . ." (Isaiah 44:26). "Then spake Haggai the Lord's messenger. . ." (Haggai 1:13). "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me. . ." (Malachi 3:1). The prophet, sent as a messenger, carried God's message to His people so they could know His will for them.

⁵Smith. R. Payne, *Syriac Dictionary*, p. 395-397.

⁶*Standard Bible Dictionary*, "Prophecy, Prophet", p. 704.

SONS OF THE PROPHETS

Another oft-used term referring to the prophetic age is "sons of the prophets." Samuel had long been engaged in teaching and training the sons of Levi for the priesthood. In addition he had students under his care who were called sons of the prophets, a name which indicated a new sphere of labor, a new institution in the country, a new effort to awaken interest in spiritual matters among the Hebrews.

The communities of these prophets are referred to as "schools of the prophets." They were located in such places as Jericho (II Kings 2:5), Gilgal (II Kings 4:38), Ramah (I Samuel 19:18), Gibeah (I Samuel 10:5, 10), and Bethel (II Kings 2:3). From these centers they exerted a strong influence.

The phrase "sons of the prophets" is analogous to the phrase "sons" or "children of Israel." It did not mean that they were all descended from a common father (Amos 2:11; 7:14). In the schools the head masters were referred to by the students as father (II Kings 6:21). This is simply showing reverence to them in respect to the position they held. It again emphasizes the father-son relationship in light of the spiritual authority which the teacher had. In II Kings 2:12 we see that, as Elijah is being taken up in a whirlwind, the student Elisha "saw it and cried My father, my father...." The record in I Kings 19:1ff tells us who Elisha's parents were, so it is obvious that Elijah's fatherhood to Elisha was spiritual.

Historically, the rise of the schools of the prophets can be seen from before the time when Saul was anointed to be king (I Samuel 10:5, 10). There were members of prophetic guilds and societies appearing in the eleventh century B. C. and they were referred to as "bands" (I Samuel 10:5) or "companies" (I Samuel 19:20) of prophets. The "sons of prophets" appear two

hundred years later in the 9th century, B. C., in association with Elisha (II Kings 2:3; 4:1, 38; 6:1, 2). These guilds of professional prophets continue to appear as indicated (I Kings 18:4; 22:6; II Kings 23:2; Jeremiah 26:7, 8, 11) until the fall of Jerusalem in the early sixth century B. C.⁷

The basic foundation for the "schools" which Samuel set up can be seen in the Word many years before his time. In Genesis 14:14, ". . .when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained *servants*, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued *them* unto Dan."

Who were these three hundred and eighteen trained men? It is important to note that the word "servants" was not a part of the original text and does not define the answer to our question. For accuracy we must read the passage without the word "servant." The question remains the same, who were these trained men?

A casual reading of this passage might imply that these were a group being maintained specifically for the purpose of armed protection, for the defense of Abram and his family. However, there is a deeper meaning implied in the Word. It also states that they were "born in his own house." This could imply several possibilities. They could have been from Abram's immediate family or tribe, or they could have been the children of hired servants working for Abram. Most likely they were born into the clan or tribe since banding together for protection was the natural development of the tribe in that culture.

The Aramaic usage of the word "trained" means "an armed youth, in their prime of youth, with the essence and vigor to

⁷*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, "Sons of Prophets," p. 426.

come to full maturity being fully armed."⁸ This definition from the Aramaic would lead one to believe that the distinction was purely military, with reference to those young men who were trained to protect the tribe from attacks. This is quite possible but there are some other considerations to be made.

The Syriac Dictionary lists two possibilities for the word "trained": "youth" and "new academy."⁹ If the word can correctly be defined as "new academy" then the implication of a training school increases. It could be that this word "trained" in Genesis 14:14 does refer to a special school, not only for the purpose of military training but also for training these youth in the ways of their leader Abraham, the prophet.

One more important consideration must be made concerning oriental tradition of the times. The father of a household was always responsible for the training and development of its members. It was his responsibility for the training and development of its members. It was his responsibility to see that they be properly trained, especially in the ways of God. Understanding this tradition, it becomes possible to consider Genesis 14:14 as one of the first schools of the prophets. Certainly Abraham, the prophet, the man of God of his time, fulfilled his responsibility to his people by training others to follow in his footsteps.

Genesis 18:19

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

⁸*The Syriac Dictionary*, R. Payne Smith, p. 395-397.

⁹*Ibid*, p. 97-397.

Exodus 18 is the record of Moses setting aside certain of his people to train as advisors to the people. They were to declare and administer God's law among the people. Certainly then this was at least a form of a "school of the prophets." Moses instructed his men concerning God's law and God's will for the direction of the people.

Numbers 11:10ff records discontent emanating from God's people, and their anguish weighs so heavily upon Moses' heart that he tells God he is not able to handle the situation. Angry with the people, the Lord told Moses to gather 70 elders of Israel for instruction. Moses gathered the elders together before the Lord, the spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they prophesied.

These three records show us the continuous line of spiritual training that has existed through the centuries. It is not until Samuel's day, however, that we are able to gather substantial information regarding the rise of the prophetic movement and the formation of "schools" for their training.

"It is not to be supposed then, that Samuel created the prophetic order as a new thing before unknown. The terms both of the prophetic and of the regal order are found in the Law as given to the Israelites by Moses (Deuteronomy 13:1; 18:20; 17:18) but they were not yet developed because there was not yet the demand for them."¹⁰

It is significant that in their concept of God, the Israelites desired concrete evidence of Him in the form of signs, miracles and wonders. In Genesis, we see the Patriarchs honored by God with such happenings. Men of God like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, received prophetic direction in critical periods of their lives. The life of Moses is no doubt the richest example of God's miraculous ways of guiding His men.

¹⁰*Smith's Bible Dictionary*, "Prophet," p. 545.

In his development of the school of the prophets, Samuel marks an epoch. He is called the seer, not in the lower sense of soothsayer, but as a tried and trusted spokesman for Yahweh. As the name "sons of the prophets" indicates, these were disciples who gathered about a master. They seem to have remained in their respective settlements while such masters as Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha moved from place to place. II Kings 2:1ff is a fascinating account of Elijah and Elisha traveling from school to school. As their locations suggest, these developed near important political centers and influenced nearby rulers and authorities.

It may be readily seen that the schools represented spiritual reform to the people and encouragement for the nation to return to God. Throughout the history of Israel, prophecy tended to increase during periods of national conflict. In the time of Samuel, the rise of prophecy was due to the intense feeling caused by the subjection of the Israelites to the Philistines and by a growing desire for independence. This led to the roving band of men who went through the country exhorting the nation to come back to God's covenant and become a strong people once again.

At its outset, the prophetic movement was patriotic as well as spiritual. These political overtones may have diminished the reputation of the movement, an attitude that was perhaps reflected in the proverb "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (I Samuel 10:12b). But whatever may have been their social status, these prophetic bands had an intense and consuming loyalty to their God and country. That loyalty alone made possible the independence of the people and the establishment of the monarchy.

Two centuries after the time of Samuel, prophetic bands again appear in the Word. However, this does not mean they were not in existence during this period. The Syrian wars of the

ninth century coincided with their rise to prominence. The prophets now appear in close connection with Elijah and Elisha and apparently were quite numerous (I Kings 18:4, 13; II Kings 2:7; 4:43).

It was at that time, during the reign of King Ahab, that we see the political importance and power of the prophets. Jezebel was attempting to destroy the prophets of Elijah so that the prophets of Baal could flourish. She recognized their power and influence as a threat to the false prophets of Baal whom she supported. Elijah did not hesitate to appear before the king and command him to gather the prophets of Baal. Elijah was a man of God with power and influence over the king as well as over the false prophets of Baal.

By studying the scriptures regarding Samuel, Elijah and Elisha, we see their great political impact upon the people. The prophets, committed as they were to stand upon the Word of God, brought about a spiritual as well as a political change in their nation. It is noteworthy that many "rank-and-file" prophets also played important roles in effecting this change.

The schools of the prophets were the products of a certain period of history. They were God's way of meeting a crisis situation in the lives of a people He had called to be His own. Amidst the throws of paganism and international conflict, God's Word continued to live. As one looks historically at this period of time, an insistent question pushes its way to the forefront, what happened? Why did not the prophetic schools continue in the life of Israel? The answer to this question is twofold.

First of all, the later schools of the prophets in the time of Elijah and Elisha became more professional. Sometime thereafter, the real purpose for their existence became obscure. The importance of God's Word living among His people began

to lose significance as prophecy became just another profession.

The words of Jeremiah and other prophets reflect the tenure of the time:

Jeremiah 23:1,2

Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture ! saith the Lord. Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them. . .

Isaiah 28:7

...the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink... they err in vision, they stumble in judgement.

Micah 3:5

Thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that make people err, that bite their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him.

Hosea 9:7

The days of visitation are come, the days of recompense are come; Israel shall know *it*: the prophet *is* a fool, the spiritual man *is* mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred.

Coupled with this spiritual fall of the prophets, certain religious reforms became laws of the state in Josiah's time. This outward acceptance dealt only with some of the external needs and did not affect the hearts and lives of the people. As law, these principles superseded the living, prophetic Word. Even in Jeremiah's time when the laws of Deuteronomy were state law, he perceived that this reform was merely external

and continued to demand something more: not reform, but regeneration.

Another contributing factor to the degeneration of the prophecy was the fall of the state. With the destruction of Jerusalem, a subject for prophesy ceased to exist. Ironically, this destruction had been prophesied (Isaiah 3:5-26).

It is interesting to note some of the background characteristics of these schools of the prophets. In so doing one can better understand and appreciate their contribution to the history and development of Israel, God's chosen people. Students came out of all the twelve tribes of Israel to make up a separate "tribe" or school devoted to the study of sacred learning. This is particularly significant when one considers the impact of the schools upon the nation. With representation from every tribe, there was greater insight and understanding of a nation in crisis.

The students were of all ages, some single, some were married men, some with children (II Kings 4:1). It is significant that people from such widely varied backgrounds united in purpose to intently serve God.

Academic qualifications for students were not too extensive, however there were certain requirements. Each student had to exemplify fitness to learn and desire to receive knowledge and understanding from the teacher, the man of God. Discipline was very important in the life and training of these prophets. In addition to their disciplined daily lives, they had to demonstrate a willingness to obey commands given (II Kings 2:16, 17). Humility and obedience were prerequisites for learning. Dedication to serve God's people was also of prime importance.

Of course, the law, the Word of God, was taught in these schools. The Word came not only by God's Spirit upon the teachers, but also by their knowledge of the Scriptures. There was great discipline in these schools because written manuscripts were not plentiful. Much memorization took place in order that the law could be learned. It was their knowledge of the Word that gave them a basis for learning.

Music and poetry were also important subjects of the schools. Regarding certain periods of the prophetic time, we read of bands of prophets with instruments (I Samuel 10:5). These musicians would rove the countryside singing and prophesying to the people. When these musical groups first appeared on the prophetic scene, their ministry was rather extensive. Throughout the prophetic movement, music was considered quite important.

Methods of learning and instruction in the school of the prophets were as varied as the style of living permitted. Much of the instruction in the Word was handled by the lecture method (II Kings 4:38-44).

A second method of instruction that was also important and effective was that of example. The schools were usually located near the home of the man of God if he did not live with them. The students could watch the man of God, work with him, walk with him, and learn from his many practical examples of applying spiritual principles (II Kings 6:1-7). The example of a man's life allows him to put into practice that which he teaches.

Another great provision for instruction was the practice of communal living. It was a simple way of life. The communities were often small, located just outside the cities. The married couples lived in their own homes. The students grew some of their own food, and spent parts of each day

working at various tasks necessary for their survival. Some of their support came from the giving of the people to whom they ministered. In this type of living situation many important lessons were learned. Practical application of the principles of the Law was the foundation for their lifestyle.

The Scriptures contain other interesting information referring to methods of instruction:

II Kings 3:11

But Jehoshaphat said, *Is there* not here a prophet of the Lord, that we may inquire of the Lord by him? And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here *is* Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah.

Whenever the kings would get into trouble, they would look to God for assistance. They believed that through the prophets they could get answers to their problems. In this case, Elisha was the one who had poured water on the hands of Elijah. What was the significance of pouring water on the hands of Elijah?

In the schools of the prophets, the man of God gave the students many menial tasks to do; scrub floors, wash clothes, etc. This training was designed to break any pride in the students. If they got angry or indignant, then the man of God would tell the student that he had no humility and that he was too proud. Often they would then expel him. The most humiliating thing one could do was to pour water on the hands of the man of God. This showed that all pride had been removed and that he was finally very humble. This training took perhaps two or three years. So here Elisha was considered to be a fully qualified man. Elijah was the man who had taught him meekness. Without pride, Elisha was able to receive guidance from God.

"Pride *goeth* before destruction..." (Proverbs 16:18). If one is full of pride, he is not trustworthy. A major goal in the school of the prophets was to break pride and to teach humility. Then the Word of God could be more readily learned by the student.

Another subject taught was history. Israel was a nation with a great history of being led through many crises by the mighty and powerful hand of God. This was another time of crisis for the nation of Israel and it was important for the students to understand from a historical perspective the importance of the hour.

Obviously numerous other subjects must have been taught in these schools. It is important to remember that all the subjects taught were directed toward one purpose, that of training students to become trustworthy servants of God who could lead a nation in crisis back to God.

CONCLUSION

The training was geared to ingrain within the students certain characteristics which we can see evidenced in prophets throughout the Old Testament. Regarding a prophet, we see that: He was always an uncompromising individual; he could not be bound by public opinion (Jeremiah 7:1-8). He was conscious of a divine call that held him to the task set forth by his God (Isaiah 6:1-12). He was conscious of the privilege of access to the inner counsel of Yahweh (Exodus 33:7-11). He was usually a man of action, with a certain ruggedness of body and character that commanded attention in any gathering (II Kings 1:3-8). He was conscious of God's authority and backing in all situations (Jeremiah 32). He was very definitely a man of prayer (Isaiah 6:1-12; Exodus 19:3-19). He was clean and consecrated in life and character (Daniel 1:3-5). He was an outspoken critic of evil in the social order (Amos 5:1-6). He was God's man to reveal the future to the people (Ezekiel 2:1-10).

We shall observe in the following section of this study a great forward thrust in the prophetic movement. Following the ministry of the prophet Malachi, Israel wandered aimlessly in a spiritual void until God brought forth the greatest prophet of all time. It was Jesus Christ who declared to man the greatest proclamation of God's glory ever known.

PART III

THE SCHOOL OF "THE PROPHET"

INTRODUCTION

"I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me I speak these things" (John 8:28). In the heart of Jesus Christ, as in no other, God lived. Their communion was a union which authorized the sayings "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30) and "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). He lived to do the will of God. The love from heaven that filled and surrounded his life became articulate in his teachings and in what he expressed; the Father he knew, he made known.

He strode along the shoreline with a dream burning in his heart, to fulfill the words of the prophet Isaiah:

Luke 4:18

The spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

Four hundred years of darkness engulfed a dying nation. People were losing hope. The Word of God was especially precious in those days. The Lamp of God was running out. Religion oozed thick. Paganism raged like a flash fire. God's chosen people were once again, like the Israel of Old, making "bricks without straw." Suddenly. . . sheer light! The Day Star from on high had come.

One man's voice echoed what had been said by the prophets centuries before, shaking imperial Rome to its roots. Truth wedged itself into a world of darkness. Those who dwelt in the valley of the shadow of death saw great light.

His words were life-giving, refreshing; they flowed like a cool mountain stream and yet they were explosive, impacting. His words penetrated the cancerous error taught by the religious traditionists.

He was called by some the "Great Physician" (Luke 4:23), by others "the Lamb of God" (John 1:36) which taketh away the sin of the world. By those who were close to him he was called Christ, the son of the living God. The Messiah was a man approved of God, whose every breath declared the Father he loved.

Luke 11:11-13

If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if *he ask* a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall *your* heavenly Father give. . .

Those who debated with Jesus Christ were overwhelmed by his teaching and example. False accusations about him went through their hands like water. They found instead a powerful, courageous, tender and compassionate man teaching sharply from the Psalms, the Law and the Prophets--an iron hand in a velvet glove. He spoke no evil against Caesar. Wise like a serpent in spiritual matters, he was harmless as a dove. His calling was heavenly and his many years of disciplined training were now being tested. Could the Word that he had etched into the tables of his heart sustain him? Could this Word paralyze the death-dealing power of the devil?

Hebrews 5:8

Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.

In Jesus Christ we see "will power"--a mind tempered with spiritual steel. Nothing could change its course or divert it from its chosen path. Only such tenacious believing could bring a new kind of love, the love of God in the renewed mind in manifestation.

John 17:26

And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare *it*: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them.

"Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him" (Mark 1: 16-18). Those words spoken on the lips of believing to humble fishermen of Galilee must have challenged and perplexed their minds, for they were masters at their trade. The prize catch that they were to seek was the most dangerous and unpredictable of all--man.

There was no doubt that the twelve were sincere and religious men. However, at the time of their calling they were rooted and grounded in wrong doctrine and teaching. The disciples were prejudiced, superstitious, narrow-minded, unlearned, hateful, jealous, prideful, and full of Jewish misconceptions. The soil of their hearts needed much cultivation, yet they were enthusiasts. They still had hope in the promise of a divine Kingdom, with the Messiah, Jesus Christ, as its Lord and King. Their concept of God and the Kingdom of heaven was narrow. It had to be changed. Jesus Christ used many parables to depict the Kingdom to those who had ears to hear and eyes to see. These parables flew like arrows to a target, showing his purpose and mission for Israel.

These twelve simple men left everything to follow him--the way, the truth and the life. They, as God's spokesmen, were to replace the proud priests, and the scribes whose minds were corrupted and debased by the wisdom of this world. And what rewards were to be theirs.

Matthew 19:28

And Jesus said unto them. Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

These words must have astounded even the bold Peter. They, a band of Galilean fishermen, judge the twelve tribes of Israel? Impossible! What about the prophets and great teachers of old? Surely they must come first! Jesus Christ knew the scriptures. He studied the "schools of the prophets" like those of Moses, Samuel, and Elijah. God as spirit could only move by way of the believing action of courageous, committed men. He longed for trained men who would (carry the ball and run with it). It was Jesus Christ's desire and mission to select men who would live and travel with him at all times. More than companions, they must be men who could be trained as leaders to propagate the faith after he was gone.

Mark 16:15

And he said unto them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

These men who experienced daily fellowship with their Master felt his heartbeat, learned what they should be, do, and teach as ambassadors. The training of these men was Christ's main responsibility as a leader.

Matthew 10:26, 27

...for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.

His educational program was frankly and distinctly preparatory. He called his disciples with a promise and challenge "to become fishers of men." His goals and vision consistently maintained an atmosphere of the forward look, a stretching-forth kind of walk. The atmosphere of a commendable school is always progressive. To develop such an atmosphere, a teacher had to be of the highest caliber.

The school of the "Prophet" had its time of preparation as well as its time of launching out into the deep. Why should not all the schools of the "church" in this day and time be distinctly preparatory? The aim of education is action. The twelve embodied that aim. They were men with fighting hearts. Though they had no academic credentials, they sat at the feet of the greatest teacher that ever walked the face of the earth. Such an education, covering the whole gamut of life, could not be bought at any price.

Acts 4:13

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

Our goal is threefold in purpose. First, to set forth the credentials of Jesus Christ which establish him as the Master Educator; secondly, to unveil the methods and techniques that he utilized; thirdly, to discover why his training school was so dynamically important to the accomplishment of the mission that God had set before him.

CREREDENTIALS OF JESUS CHRIST

"...Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." In the Aramaic the word for "fishers" is "sayade," meaning "hunters" or "fishers." "Will make you fishers of men" means you will catch and convert men by speech. The enemies of Jesus Christ tried to catch him by the word which, in Aramaic, means to trap by hunting. They hunted up words and then asked him certain questions which they thought he could not answer (Mark 12:13).¹¹ Jesus Christ told his men that if they would follow, he would teach them to stand before kings without fear, and to proclaim boldly the words of life.

Down through the annals of time, students have lived with their teachers, (eating and traveling) with them, and learning from personal experience. Thus Moses trained Joshua, who spent over 40 years with him and later became his successor.

Numbers 11:28

And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, *one* of his young men...

In like manner the prophet Elijah trained Elisha. In their time, students were considered servants because they ministered to their teacher's every need. In so doing, they assisted their masters in a multiplicity of situations. The school of "hard knocks" can in no way be surpassed. Learning is doing.

The Schools in which Jesus Christ learned were not the schools of the Scribes, but the schools of obedience, of love, of simplicity, of believing, and of cheerful toil. That which he

¹¹Lamsa, George M., *Gospel Light*, p. 168.

studied diametrically opposed the tradition of Rabbinical thought. Scripture, nature, and life flooded his mind.

The normal education of a Jewish boy of plebian class was almost exclusively scriptural. Hebrew parents were, as a rule, his sole teachers.

Deuteronomy 6:7

And thou shalt teach them [scriptures] diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou riseth up.

The home set the standard for learning. The father instructed his children, and commanded them that "they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment" (Genesis 18:19).

A love of education and a hunger for instruction in the Law characterized the heart of Judaism. Christ's knowledge of the sacred writings was profound and extensive. He carved them upon his heart. He alluded to many proverbs taught him by his parents. But whatever the boy Jesus Christ may have experienced and learned as a young man under the tutelage of Joseph and Mary, his main source of education was the scriptures and revelation from his heavenly Father. That still small voice worked mightily within him. "He increased daily in wisdom and stature" (Luke 2:52).

Jesus Christ frequented the synagogues. He listened intently to teachers skilled in presentation, yet wrongly-dividing the scriptures. He watched the obvious struggles for power and prestige, and learned to understand the scribes and Pharisees. The synagogue showed him the corruptness of the human heart. He wretched within at the disloyalty to God and His Word.

Luke 11:52

Woe unto you, lawyers! For ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.

Jesus Christ searched the scriptures daily. He drove his mind deeper and deeper into God's wisdom. He penetrated those old Hebrew revelations to uncover divine mysteries. Jesus recovered the keys to knowledge.

Jesus Christ grasped all the important aspects of life. He saw a servant working for two masters, loving the one and hating the other. He later taught that "No man can serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24). In the market place he observed merchants cheating. They deceitfully measured products with short and long measures.

Christ knew the responsibilities of a good shepherd. He walked along the Galilean hills watching the sheep. He knew that the good shepherd never discriminated between his own sheep and those of his neighbors. The good shepherd bound the wounds of any sheep no matter who owned it.

John 10:11, 12

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

Among the sloped valleys he saw the lily instead of the flower. He considered the lily and how it grew. A king in all his glory was not arrayed like the smallest lily. From the soil up, he understood life's processes. His teachings abounded with illustration upon illustration of the life he experienced. John 10:10 revealed that Jesus Christ came that we should have life and that we should have it more abundantly. The Greek

usage for life is the word "zōē" indicating "life in all its manifestations, from the life of God down to the life of the lowest vegetable. Its only source is God, who is the 'living one'. We live only in and by His life. In Him we live and move, and have our being."¹² The Master was more than qualified as a teacher of life from God down to the soil.

How could he prove to people that the greatest weapons in spiritual warfare were love and meekness? Many constantly discussed why the great Rabbis had not discovered the truths which Jesus Christ taught. His mind reached out to find a way to get these truths of God's Word into practical application. Thoughts of Moses, Samuel, and Elijah flashed before his eyes, giving him the answer. He would begin his own school founded upon the integrity of God's Word. The school of a "prophet." He promised to make them "to become fishers of men."

When Jesus Christ gathered his little school of twelve pupils, he knew that their thoughts concerning the kingdom were narrow. He saw the need to widen their concepts. Their thoughts revolved around the glitter and splendor of Solomon, a restored Kingdom of David, imperial Rome crushed, God's chosen people free from bondage. In vivid contrast, Jesus Christ made known a Father who loved them, a spiritual kingdom, a freedom from within.

The twelve were not completely free from the distorted standards which caused the Pharisees to value a sheep above a man (Matthew 12:12). In their judgment the man who was great had many servants and lorded authority over them. Into this tangled snare of confused and erroneous thinking the Great Teacher came. He untangled the snarls, eliminated the useless and harmful, put first things first and last things last, brought

¹²Bullinger, Ethelbert, W., *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance*, p. 453.

about order out of chaos, and truth in the midst of error. In remaking their erroneous thought processes he remade their very lives.

Mark 10:42-44

But Jesus called them *to him*, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister. And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

If, then, we are to understand Christ's method of educating his men or founding this new way of life, it must be through two great agencies: his teaching and fellowship. He knew that obedience should not proceed from fear. Obedience by fear was but disguised disobedience. The man that obeyed God through terror would obey his opposite if he were still more terrible. To the Son of God obedience indicated love.

So we take a long hard look at the Great Educator and how he lovingly burned God's Word into the hearts and minds of men full of latent abilities. Hiddin within simple fishermen were unpolished diamonds of strength, strength visible only to the Master's eyes.

In the period of their discipleship, hearing and seeing set the foundation for future believing. The twelve were babies born into a new world, whose first lessons involved the use of their five senses. They observed the strange sights that surrounded them.

Luke 10:23,24

And he turned him unto *his* disciples, and said privately, Blessed *are* the eyes which see the things

that ye see: For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see and have not seen them and to hear those things which ye heard and have not heard *them*.

What the twelve disciples saw eclipsed that which was witnessed by the prophets of old: Moses, Elijah, David and Isaiah.

Another important key was that Jesus taught them with true authority, and not as the scribes who merely had the seat of authority. His words exuded power, inherent dynamite. He spoke the mind of God.

Luke 4:32, 36

And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his Word was with power. And they were all amazed and spake among themselves, saying, What a Word is this.

Jesus Christ instructed them thoroughly concerning his strength and his mission. The first principle in receiving truth from God is--be meek! Jesus Christ said "I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29). Meekness is not weakness! His conduct harmonized with this statement. He taught them that "no man knew the Father save the Son and him to whom the Son should reveal Him" (Matthew 11:27). The Master compared his relationship with his disciples to the illustration of the vine and the branches and taught them that apart from him they could do nothing. He taught them that inner peace was available. He guaranteed victory over the world.

John 16:33

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; *I* have overcome the world.

The twelve were to imitate his life as exactly and precisely as children tracing footprints on a snowy day in the woods.

I Peter 2:21

...Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.

Jesus Christ taught them who he was, what he had come to accomplish, and what he would do for them and for the world.

Like other Hebrews of that day the twelve were legalists. They thought that painstaking obedience to the letter of the law was the highest form of righteousness. Jesus Christ taught them how to think in terms of motives. Think love! Think compassion! Think giving! He led their attention away from the outward act to the inner thought. From the inner thought flowed the outward act.

They followed worn-out pathways, entrenched in the thinking of their times. Their vision narrowed into long tunnels. Jesus Christ slowly and painstakingly expanded their vision of liberty and freedom. He lived principles. Therefore, he constantly explained and illustrated principles of righteousness, forgiveness, trust, charity, believing and service. He worked hard to give his students a correct understanding of these matters.

Jesus Christ dealt with negatives in his teachings. He understood the principle of recognizing the problem before you handle it. Practically every one of the virtues he taught came alive by being highlighted against a dark background. The devil hides in dark corners. Jesus Christ brought him out into the light. He unveiled the devil's snare, and taught his men how to deal with the adversary.

Luke 10:19, 17

Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. . . And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.

He set forth the pride of the Pharisee in colors that magnified, and then pictured the humility of the Publican. He described the forgiving person and unforgiving person in one parable. He told of five slothful virgins and five watchful. His virtues exploded before the people's eyes. Christ explained, compared, illustrated; then covered the same ground again, repeating the process with new explanations, new comparisons, and new illustrations. Repetition is an art, a great key to learning in any school.

II Peter 1:12

Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know *them*, and be established in the present truth.

We do not see in the Word where Jesus told his disciples to bestow upon him any particular title. However, they called him "Rabbi" or "Teacher" signifying one who educated or instructs.

John 3:2

The same[Nicodemus] came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that *thou* doest, except God be with him.

Great multitudes followed Jesus Christ to hear him teach the Word of God. Children were drawn to the light and simplicity

which he manifested. This is characteristic of a true teacher. Women as well as men sat at his feet. Great teachers of the law like Nicodemus, a man of the Pharisees, marvelled at his knowledge. Officers of the Roman Imperial Army marched in to arrest him, but they were swept up with the words of life that he spoke and could not lay a hand on him. The common people – beggars, tax collectors, sick – gladly heard him, evidence of his greatness as a teacher.

Jesus Christ's ministry was comparatively brief. Teaching, however, cannot be accurately evaluated by its immediate effects. It is vital that we consider the long range goals of "all that Jesus began both to do and to teach." Fruit of Christ's teaching appears throughout the New Testament in the form of thousands of conversions, organization of the Christian Church, and beginnings of worldwide "ambassador" programs.

Successful teaching rests on sound principles. Jesus Christ taught flawlessly, therefore his teaching methods must have been in harmony with such principles. We must now examine techniques and methods as to how the Master Teacher brought his twelve disciples to that apex of teaching ability, where they were fully persuaded to "catch and convert men by their speech."

TEACHING TECHNIQUES AND METHODS OF JESUS CHRIST

Teaching takes definite directions because of the nature of the mind and the laws of the learning process. There are certain rather clearly defined steps in the teaching methods of Jesus. With a teacher and a single pupil, the teaching process is reduced to its simplest form.

In John, chapter four, in the record of the woman at the well, we see a basic pattern of some of the teaching methods and techniques which Jesus used. In all witnessing situations a door of utterance needs to be opened. This is called initial contact with follow-through. He first won her confidence. He was too great a teacher to attempt instruction before the woman was ready to listen. Sheer walls of impossibility loomed in front of the Master. Not only was the woman a Gentile, but in the East a man on the road could speak to no woman but his wife. Jesus Christ reduced these mountains of tradition to mere dust by seeing the person's need. He cast aside a half-dozen iron-clad social customs of his day in order to gain an opportunity to reach this Samaritan woman.

Realizing that fear limits the mind of man to four walls, Christ walked on the higher plateau of love. He never broke the Law, but rather he walked above it on that thin, immutable red line that threads through the whole Word--love.

She saw at once his dissimilarity to other Jewish teachers, for he was free from bitter prejudices. She knew that he had something that she did not have. Jesus Christ excelled at making the transition from the concrete to the abstract. He spoke of the water in the well of Jacob. At first they spoke of the concrete, the material, then suddenly of the abstract, the spiritual.

John 4:10

... If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; *thou* wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

But he never allowed truth to remain abstract. Truth had to find concrete application of the woman's life and conduct.

Jesus Christ controlled every situation, particularly the handling of objections. He made use of situations as they arose, and never allowed himself to be diverted from his goal. He established friendly relations with the woman and spoke with her concerning the water of life, thus revealing God as a forgiving and loving Father who desired fellowship with His children. The woman first saw him as a Jewish Rabbi, then as a prophet, and then as more than a prophet. His teaching of the Word turned her mind to the great hope of her people. Simply and quietly the teacher said, "I that speak unto thee am he" (John 4:26).

She raced home and enthusiastically witnessed to what she had heard. Many of the people in the village believed on Jesus Christ because of her testimony. Spontaneous action is a good indication that teaching has been successful. We see Jesus Christ's use of curiosity as a great lever of motivation to arouse inner hunger. By arousing curiosity, Jesus Christ produced in the woman a mental condition needed for the presentation of important truths. His analogy of drinking water to living water hit home.

Jesus' teachings pulsed. They came alive. He never taught by remote control. His teachings were always directed to the immediate now.

Mark 4:9

And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Every time he taught the Word, it was directed to the heart of an individual, or individuals in a specific group. He knew that the one day's teaching may not meet the next day's needs. God worked in him "to will and to do of His good pleasure." His life and teachings were inseparably blended. How could a true teacher of God's Word separate his teaching from his actual life?

The need to teach as effectively to one person as to a whole multitude predominated his life. The condition of the multitudes appalled him. A statistical coldness hung over the crowds, but he had compassion for the individuals who made up the multitudes. He did not see people as belonging to special cliques or groups. He just looked at man and loved him for what he could become.

Mark 6:34

And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd and he began to teach them many things.

To him the centurion was not merely an officer of a foreign army but an individual with a need.

Luke 15:6, 7

. . . Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

You do not see "Word over the world" in the multitudes. He taught on the value of one man, and applied the principle of each one win one in his life.

Mark 10:17, 21a

And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one runner, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? Then Jesus beholding him loved him...

Jesus had a plan. He knew what he was doing in each step of his ministry. God told him! He was keenly aware that all leaders needed a plan of action when they taught. His people, Israel, were starved for vision.

Proverbs 29:18

Where *there is* no vision, the people perish.

Jesus Christ had a battle plan. He was a tactical genius. He became "the captain of their salvation." The Commander-in-chief upstairs called the shots and Jesus Christ knew how to follow orders. He knew that success depended upon his setting for his disciples practical goals to build their believing (Luke 10:1). Jesus Christ knew to what point he wanted to bring them, what he needed to teach, and how much they would receive. He also knew what he could not teach. He needed achievable goals and that is exactly what was promised to the twelve before they enlisted. "Follow me and I will make you to become fishers of men." The condition was that they follow. He then led his disciples to the victorious accomplishments of these goals. At least they knew the promised results, and had hope.

The daily walk of this teacher was not a "Twentieth Century Fox" production with miracles every five seconds. But rather it was a slow, steady growth, like the unfolding of a flower.

His life was one of minute-by-minute decisions. This is how Jesus spent most of his time--not flashing, nor hammering, nor sparkling, but pushing with even pressure. As he taught the basics of the Word: believing, giving, loving, a soft glow radiated from his heart to his men. Changes in the twelve were hardly perceptible. Most of the disciples were not aware of the depth of teaching that he imbedded in their lives until they looked back after the day of Pentecost. Then they perceived the significance of the truths the Lord had taught them.

Mark 4:31, 32

. . .like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: But when it is sown it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs. . .

He never taught beyond the understanding of his group. As the shepherd walking through dangerous mountain passes, never so fast that his sheep would trip and plummet to their death, so Jesus Christ led his disciples up craggy heights of traditional error to the peak of truth.

Jesus Christ was an individualist. Likewise, each of the twelve had his own lifestyle. He did not want them to suppress the very things that made their personalities unique. He did not want them to blur and dilute those distinctions, because they would have lessened that which was truly theirs alone to give. Jesus Christ did not want them to change their personalities; however, he wanted them to renew their minds to God's Word and hold it forth as individuals, not as carbon copies of his personality.

He saw them as individuals, varied as the snowflakes. The Word which he communicated brought out the real Peter, the real John. Jesus was always superbly himself. He copied no one, pretended for no one. He was unique, forthright, yet with

all his power of self-expression, never selfish. That is why Jesus drove himself to set an example for them to imitate. He wanted the twelve to emulate the principles that lived and smouldered in his heart, and never the personality. He never begrudged people their abilities.

Jesus Christ was concerned with work on the inside of a man. The outside is a reflection of the inside. Knowing the heart of man, he confronted the great dual challenge of bringing out this individualism while maintaining the family relationship. He required that each be a self-contained unit within the family, and see that when it came to the integrity of God's Word he had no friends. Jesus Christ taught them that they were responsible to God as stewards of His Word to stand "come hell or high water." But until the day of Pentecost, the twelve apostles often wavered in their commitment.

Mark 3:33-35

Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

Jesus Christ was never afraid to state a principle plainly. He said with great emphasis "Ye must be born-again" (John 3:7) and "Have the believing of God" (Mark 11:22). His language was free from words such as "probably," "if," "but," "more or less," "generally speaking." He taught the twelve never to be afraid of committing themselves to a position if it lined up with truth. God's Word was not to be defended. Jesus implanted within the depths of their souls that these principles would one day mean success or failure in their missions.

Of course, he was never content just to state principles. He followed through in two ways. First, he did so by his daily consistency in living the principles of love and truth that he taught. Second, he illustrated his messages from a multiplicity of angles. He was a master at crystallizing his material. Jesus did not badger his disciples into applying the principles. He did a great deal of counselling but never set himself up as counsellor. The master simply let anyone who felt a need come and talk to him. He never picked on men for their imperfections. Jesus Christ allowed every man to make up his own mind. He wanted them to set the standards for their lives after he set for them the principles of God's Word. Jesus Christ knew that God and only God was the Great Judge of all men's hearts.

Therefore, Jesus stated the truth as grandly and inspirationally as possible. He used imaginative illustrations to enlighten the eyes of people's spiritual understanding. He would not normally spell out to his hearers implications of truth in terms of detailed action. "Go and sin no more" he said to the woman (John 8:11). Jesus did not delve into the personal details' of her life. He knew that she grasped the principle. To work it out would be her own challenge and her own opportunity.

Christ worked the same way in teaching his students. There are instances where Jesus would say "just believe" (Luke 8:50). However, he had previously given instruction concerning the principle of believing. He was not one to make terse statements like "just believe" without first having laid a foundation of truth. Jesus Christ knew that men grew by accomplishment, not by suppression. He challenged people at every crossroad.

The Lord taught from the revealed Word of God, the Scriptures, as well as by his own life. He watched the

Pharisees. They kept their personal lives locked up, allowing themselves to be seen only under dress-up conditions. In the Word, he watched the Prophets of old open their hearts and lives to be known and read of all men. Their lives were fishbowls. The people of Jesus' day were unable to observe how the Pharisees coped or failed to cope with daily living. Jesus Christ taught hour by hour, day by day, in close and continuous contact with his disciples. He knew that if people observed him teaching God's Word only within the confines of the classroom or synagogue, then he would in effect be teaching them that God's Word is applicable only in such a context.

The Messiah's whole life involved teaching. The twelve were instructed not to think of teaching apart from the rest of their lives since it would be thus rendered ineffective.

Matthew 5:14, 15

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

When people discover that a teacher's life is inconsistent with the Word he teaches, or even if he succeeds in keeping them from finding this out, they come to feel that a person's private life has little to do with the Word he teaches.

Jesus Christ's life mirrored a 24-hour-a-day teaching ministry. Everything he attempted drew the attention of questioning minds. He pressed fervently toward the goal. The Master's joy, love, peace, and relaxation pivoted around giving. His minimum giving to the Father was one hundred percent. Jesus laboured night and day not to be held chargeable to any man. He came that his people, Israel, should have the more abundant

life. Jesus lived the more abundant life and communicated this way to his people.

Self-discipline activated his every move. He trained as an athlete. What prowess ! When everyone else went back to the locker room for the day, Jesus continued his training. He always ran beyond the required distance. Jesus Christ was a "more-than man." More than abundant! More than a conqueror! His minimum giving was one hundred percent. He had great reserve strength and power beyond the breaking point. This principle epitomized his entire walk with the twelve.

John 21:25

And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.

Jesus did the majority of his teaching "on the go." He walked many miles on many roads. These were not silent miles. He used his environment. He used nature as a background for many of his lessons; fields and laborers, vineyards and landowners, sheep and shepherds, vines and branches. The twelve were learning that life truly could bubble.

The human ear and eye never get tired of hearing and seeing life. When Jesus and his disciples walked along the brook Kidron their ears always welcomed the gurgling sound of water rushing over the pebbles. Their eyes never tired of seeing a green blade of grass growing in deep rich soil. Why? Because of the life. The majority of the Lord's examples had life. Seldom would he teach using an inanimate object. Why? No life! All life around them became potential examples for teaching.

John 6:33

For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

Jesus Christ required privacy only for meditation and prayer. Privacy was perhaps one of the greatest sacrifices Jesus made for the sake of his teaching ministry. The twelve were learning the basics of commitment.

Mark 1:35

And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

One of the first keys in teaching is the art of awakening and holding attention. Jesus Christ mastered the art of awakening attention, as well as the more rare art of holding it through the teaching. He knew that if all the pupils were paying attention, real teaching was in process.

As a boy in the temple he listened with courteous attention to the doctors of the law, but they also listened to him. "And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and his answers" (Luke 2:47). The common people heard him gladly and the multitudes hung on his words.

Jesus Christ called for attention. He was not averse to asking for the attention of his audience, especially when beginning to teach. "Hearken!" "Take heed!" He lost no time in gaining the attention of his hearers, and required their attention from the first word. It may be that the captivating nature of the first word had something to do with his success in gaining attention.

Mark 3:3

And they watched him. . . and he saith unto the man which had the withered hand. Stand forth.

As the man came forward in the synagogue, there would be no lack of attention on the part of the audience.

Jesus taught plainly. He never compromised on God's Word. He used language that attracted attention. Not only the content of his speech, but also his words demanded attention.

Figures of speech were his bread and butter, and he often used them in conjunction with incidents that aroused immediate and lasting interest. When he spoke about "false prophets in sheep's clothing with hearts like ravening wolves," (Matthew 7:15) the very vigor of his imagery held the attention of all that heard. He spoke of familiar things. He began his lessons with concrete illustrations and proceeded to the abstract only as his pupils were able to follow him.

Sometimes Jesus caught the attention of his hearers by a pointed question. At other times he made a statement so startling that it produced astonished attention. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:25).

The ability of Jesus to hold the attention of his hearers is also due to the fact that he had full command of his subject. He knew that knowledge which was fresh, inclusive, and clearly defined gave effective teaching power to its possessor.

Jesus began his lessons by talking about subjects in which his hearers were interested. He began his public ministry by preaching about the kingdom of God. This was a subject in which every loyal Israelite was interested.

The teaching of the scribes was often lacking in interest because it was so impersonal. They quoted the Old Testament, but could not speak out of their own glowing convictions.

Jesus spoke out of his own depth of experience and the contrast between his teaching and the teaching of the scribes was so marked that it astounded the multitudes.

He was evidently ever on the watch for opportunities to emphasize and explain spiritual truth. He never confined his efforts to fixed hours and established places. He had a battle plan, and he was always its master. A teacher must have great finesse and skill to seize upon casual remarks of pupils or the unforeseen events of the hour and make them instruments for imparting truth. Jesus could glean items from the casual conversation of his disciples and weave them into presentations of profound truth. His great parables grew out of these everyday events.

He saw the deeply rooted and widely inclusive needs of his pupils, but it was chiefly their immediate needs that he kept in view. He required them to do things which they did not wish to do and could see no reason for doing. Jesus had goals and objectives for his pupils which lay far beyond any the twelve had for themselves.

Jesus used object lessons. He once called for a penny to illustrate his answer. When he spoke of a mountain or a sycamore tree, it was right there within sight of his disciples.

Jesus also made truth plain through questions and answers. He asked questions that aroused thought rather than discouraging it. The first recorded utterance of Jesus is a question, "How is it that ye sought me?" (Luke 2:49). This question pierced the heart, right to the core of some great truth. "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things I say?" (Luke 6:46).

The answers of Jesus were as remarkable as his questions. He gave answers which were more than complete. Jesus Christ

knew the heart of man because God told him. He operated the revelation manifestations of word of knowledge, word of wisdom, discerning of spirits.

John 2:24, 25

But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all *men*, and needed not that any should testify of man: for *he* knew what was in man [by revelation].

Christ did not just make truth plain and then assume a "take it or leave it" attitude. He urged the acceptance of truth. "I am the light. . . walk while ye have the light" (John 9:5; 12:35). He earnestly persuaded God's people, using sharp reproof, when necessary. Literature offers no parallel to his scathing rebuke of the scribes and Pharisees. When he ceased to speak and turned from them, he had done all that a teacher could do.

Matthew 23:27, 33, 24; 24:1

Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men's* bones, and of all uncleanness. . . *ye* serpents, *ye* generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?. . . *Ye* blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. . . And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple.

THE MISSION

Fellowship characterized the relationship between Jesus and his pupils. He lived, camped, ate, worked, traveled, and taught with his twelve disciples. Christ walked with them all the time except when he went forth to pray. It was this fellowship which made him their teacher and they his pupils.

Jesus Christ's initial contact with Andrew was not by the sea of Galilee. Andrew and a friend had earlier followed him home where they abode with Jesus for that day.

John 1:38, 39

...Rabbi, where dwellest thou?... He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.

These home fellowships were vital in winning his first disciples, and were fundamentally important throughout his whole ministry.

The family relationship sits like a house built upon a rock--sure, firm, and solid. In Peter's home at Capernaum, Jesus kicked off his shoes. It was in front of this home that the multitudes gathered at sunset for healing. Jesus Christ spent his last days in the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Home fellowships where likeminded believers gathered to worship were the springboard for the Word spreading over the world.

Acts 2:42, 46

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house...

Jesus fellowshiped with his disciples and with larger groups of people as "one of them." They called him a friend of publicans and sinners. He must have communicated. It is little wonder that the multitudes did not understand the principles motivating this man. Love, believing, giving, and hope were foreign to the Israelites.

Such fellowship of the righteous Messiah with unrighteous sinners was something of which the Hebrew prophets had only caught glimpses. Jesus ingrained righteousness into every fiber of his life. He manifested a humility which harmonized with his own declaration of himself. "I am among you as one that serveth" (Luke 22:27). Such a fellowship is felt rather than apprehended by intellect. Little children felt the pulling attraction of Christ's love. Zacchaeus felt that magnetism when Jesus called him down from the sycamore tree.

Although the Lord mingled with his disciples as "one of them", he still remained their leader and teacher. Law as well as freedom stabilized his school. Mutual respect bound teacher to pupil. He thus kept and strengthened their respect for him, an attribute of a great teacher.

Discipline abounded in the school of Jesus Christ. Its presence permeated his teaching program. Discipline is derived from the Greek word "*mathētēs*" meaning "trained one" or "taught one."¹³ The verb "*mantheteuo*" and "*manthano*" mean "to be a disciple, to instruct, to learn, or to teach."¹⁴ Discipline to the average person denotes a negative, slave-driving kind of authority. Through the years, man has adulterated its true meaning to the end that the very word instills fear in people's lives. The real meaning of discipline lies within God's Word.

¹³*Youngs Analytical Concordance To The Bible*, p. 257.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 518, 595, 962.

John 8:31

If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed...

Those that continue in God's Word will become disciplined. "*Musar*" in the Hebrew is "to chasten, to correct, to discipline, or to instruct."¹⁵

Christ realized that discipline was a growth process of the renewed mind. He knew that the discipline which he taught his men would ultimately lead to their self-discipline. Self-discipline comes from training and instruction, to the end of positive action. Fear does not build discipline. Fear breeds fear. Jesus knew that when and where his twelve had fear, they could not have positive believing.

Proverbs 29:25

The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.

Love activates obedience. Love inspires believing. Self-discipline is loving obedience, an act of the free will.

Proverbs 22:6

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Jesus Christ mirrored this principle in his life. His heavenly Father brought him up in the way he should go. "As my Father hath taught me, I speak these things" (John 8:28). The word train in the Aramaic is "to instruct."¹⁶ Children were to be disciplined or instructed by love, not by fear. Fear encases. Love activates. Many times his love entailed a verbal "rod of

¹⁵*Youngs Analytical Concordance To The Bible*, p. 156, 203, 258, 518.

¹⁶Young, op. cit., p. 997.

correction." Jesus' training program built desire and positive believing. Success propagates success. Christ hunted diligently for and found the "keys of knowledge" to train his men in that good and right way.

The twelve were basically self-willed men with very little discipline. Peter and the eleven enslaved themselves with fear. Christ knew that fear was wrong believing. His criteria for them to continue in the Word to the point of self-discipline was based upon the law of believing. The Word of God taught that men existed by their believing. Men drew their very breath-life by their believing. The greatest challenge that Jesus faced was teaching his men how to believe.

Habakkuk 2:4b

...the just shall live by his faith [believing].

The first part of his training program required the twelve to follow and watch. They observed how the Master walked, how he loved, how he disciplined his life, how he believed.

John 10:37, 38

If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father *is* in me, and I in him.

Christ tested the believing of his pupils. Believing tried by the fire of life would not disintegrate. Such testing manifested itself in various forms: questioning the twelve, seeing their reactions to situations, and placing them in situations to see how they would respond. What is studying the Bible without believing? What is witnessing, teaching, or counselling without believing? What is hope without believing? Believing is the hub which holds together all the spiritual spokes upon which life is balanced.

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith [believing] is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Christ marvelled at the scarcity of believing in the lives, teaching, and thinking of God's people. The electrifying impact of the holy spirit given on the day of Pentecost spearheaded the first century church in its outreach of the Word. But had Christ not trained the twelve to believe, Pentecost would still be a dream in the mind of God. The world emanated hostility, and Jesus knew that his men must therefore be prepared to withstand its onslaughts. Christ confronted the twelve early in his teaching ministry regarding their lack of believing.

Mark 4:40

And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no believing?

John, chapter eleven, captures another incident of disbelief—the death of Lazarus. When the disciples learned that Lazarus was not merely sleeping as they had at first supposed, they panicked. Christ drove the Word straight to their hearts with his stark honesty. He said:

John 11:15

I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.

Jesus Christ emphatically stated in another instance that the same Father who fed the fowls of the air and clothed the field would provide for all their needs. Knowing their disbelief, he interjected, "O ye of little believing."

Christ challenged Phillip by asking him to feed the five thousand. Phillip ran true to form by immediately looking to

the senses. He lacked believing and shifted his sights to temporal matters.

John 6:5, 6

When Jesus then lifted up *his* eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Phillip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.

Christ deliberately tested Phillip that he might prove him in the day of battle.

Another test followed swiftly on the heels of the above, for that same evening the wind blew contrary on the Sea of Galilee. The twelve were in the midst of the sea. Jesus stood on the shore. He saw them in great difficulty and walked upon the sea, nearly passing them by. When the twelve spotted Jesus walking on water--fear struck their hearts. The storm on the sea taught them an important lesson in believing. They were learning how to put their hands in the hand of the man who stilled the water.

Jesus took an emphatic stand concerning community unbelief:

Luke 9:41

And Jesus answering said, O unbelieving and perverse generation how long shall I be with you, and suffer you?

Mark 6:6

And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.

Strewn liberally across the pages of God's Word are incidents

which depict the great believing needed for the twelve to stand in the day of adversity. To help them attain this, Christ subjected them to a minute-by-minute test of learning and doing. Jesus capsulized this whole walk of believing in two verses of scripture.

Mark 11:22,23

...Have [the] faith [believing] [of] in God. For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith.

To maintain spiritual fellowship with God, one must believe. Persecution and temptation challenged the twelve at every crossroad. In order that his disciples might be tempered as steel, they needed to be tested in the jungle of unbelief. How would Christ reproduce himself in the lives of twelve men pregnant with doubt, worry, and fear?

Believing and fear are as totally opposite to each other as darkness and light. The twelve were shredded by fear of both the known and unknown. Christ realized what an undermining effect this fear had in the lives of his men. Early in his training of them Christ opened their eyes to this danger. Jesus knew the devil's tactics and he knew the ocean in which they would fish. It was one filled with such animosity and hatred that even brave men sometimes quaked in their hearts. Having been on the front lines himself, Jesus prepared his men for what they would soon be experiencing.

Matthew 4:1, 3, 11

Then was Jesus led up by the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil. And when the tempter came to him, he said ...then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

The world, with its confused thinking and twisted values, sought to pull the twelve off their course. John wrote:

I John 2:15-17

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, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away. . .

Jesus Christ pointed out to his men that the fuel which made prayer burn was believing. "And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matthew 21:22). Believing among the twelve came in over quiet seas, as Jesus taught them how to control their emotions.

Christ sought to train his disciples to exercise believing in him and the Father. This was not to be a *blind faith*. Two great keys to believing are confidence and trust. All that Christ did in their presence aided in setting the stage for their believing in him and their trusting that he was both willing and able to meet their needs. The twelve had to be convinced that Jesus packed the power to lead them into battle.

The disciples saw his power in quieting the storm, in feeding the multitude, in healing the sick. He reflected knowledge and wisdom concerning future events. He perplexed and confounded the master logicians of his day. All of these experiences witnessed by the twelve laid the foundation of confidence and trust they were to have in him after the day of Pentecost.

In many different ways, in many different circumstances, in many different places, the disciples were to receive lessons

which would ultimately make them giants of believing. Jesus left his men alone at times for a reason. A bird never learns to fly until it is pushed out of the nest. Many times in the midst of afflictions Jesus left them on their own to prepare them for a later victory.

Mark 6:46

And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.

In wisdom and love, Christ did not attempt to make baby legs walk unaided or unsupported but when necessary took his disciples by the hand and led them in their initial steps of believing. His miracles were another very important instrument in their building of believing. Miracles showed both his authority and his power over Satan, the god of this world.

Luke 10:19

Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

The first phase of their training--following and watching--culminated with a trial mission.

Mark 6:7-10

And he called *unto him* the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them authority over unclean spirits and commanded them that they should take nothing for *their* journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in *their* purse: but *be* shod with sandals; and not put on two coats. And he said unto them, in what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. . .

Were they at this time ordained as apostles? Yes! Were they fully ready for this mission? Their hearts were still too narrow, their prejudices too strong. Too much of the Jew, and too little of the believer still loomed in their character. This first trial of Jesus' school is like a child allowed out of the house for the first time, with certain restrictions. Although the twelve were loaded to the gills with power, their assignment was geographically limited.

Jesus understood the learning process. Houses are built through wisdom and established by understanding. He sent them out by two's in areas close to home. In so doing he adhered to a proverb of wisdom.

Proverbs 27:23

Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, *and* look well to thy herds.

Their objective—reproduce what their teacher had taught them.

Mark 6:12, 13, 30

And they went out, and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them...and the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.

Responsibility as the shepherd of any flock necessitates watchful care of the sheep. As the "Chief Shepherd", Jesus Christ delegated authority and responsibility to his men. The disciples misunderstood and misapplied many of the principles that Jesus demonstrated to them, yet because of his great love for God's Word, he patiently continued the process of education.

Luke 10:1

After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before this face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.

Jesus commissioned seventy disciples other than the twelve to preach the gospel. The motive of this second mission paralleled the first. The seventy returned with great joy because even the devils were subject unto them through Jesus' name. But in the midst of this elation, Jesus warned:

Luke 10:20

Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

His instructions to both groups were very detailed and explicit. The Lord's directions to the twelve and the seventy were meant to be education for their future work. They literally were to live by believing. Those who belonged to Jesus' school existed from day to day, taking no thought for the morrow. He believed that there would be at least one person in each community who would welcome his ambassadors into their homes. Every Sodom had a Lot.

He explained in vivid detail the dangers lying in wait for them once they set out on their mission, and how they would be delivered up to councils, governors, and kings.

John 15:18, 20; 16:2

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. . .they shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service...

"When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into the next" (Matthew 10:23). "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light; what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house tops" (Matthew 10:27).

The twelve were infected with jealousy, respecters of rank, and full of pride.

Mark 9:34

But they [the twelve] held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who *should be* the greatest.

This pride mushroomed into a formidable threat. The success of their mission hung in the balance. What could these men of God do as ministers of the kingdom when their own hearts were full of ambitious passions? They quarreled among themselves, thus promoting contempt, confusion and every evil work.

In confronting the problem, the Great Educator of all times called a child to him. He sat in the midst of his twelve holding this pearl of meekness and they stared wide-eyed, knowing in their hearts that he had found them out.

Mark 9:36, 37

... and he said unto them, whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

Jesus taught them "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). Envy of position is an offspring of human pride, and is unknown in early childhood. A king's child would play with a beggar's child regardless of heritage or

color. Christ slammed home the principle that God was no respecter of persons.

The child also represented the weak, the insignificant, the helpless. Christ's men were to receive God's people graciously and lovingly, not grieving them by harsh, heartless, coldblooded conduct as did the Pharisees. Chapter upon chapter in the gospels is devoted to the Master's handling of pride.

Luke 9:54, 55

And when his disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

How could the twelve possibly receive the new birth on Pentecost without meekness?

Jesus taught his pupils to think. He did not always tell them the things he wished them to know. He asked questions and left his hearers to work out the answers. He veiled remarks which attracted attention from his pupils, aroused their curiosity, and provoked their thinking.

John 11:9, 10

Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in a day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.

Jesus required that his pupils be allowed to make many choices for themselves. He pointed out the consequences of right and wrong decisions. The house built on rock would endure, but the house built on sand would fall.

At a crisis of Jesus' life and mission when his followers forsook him, he compelled the twelve disciples to face the issue head on. He said "will ye also go away?" (John 6:67). He had taught them the best he could; they had to decide whether to follow the crowds or stand with him.

Education is a complex matter. Even when the teacher has done his best, there remains the human element of free will. The twelve knew they had to decide. Training and education will make a favorable choice all but certain. Peter answered for the group and declared their loyalty to their leader. One of the twelve turned away - Judas.

Jesus did not always allow his students to do as they chose. He found the right balance between law and freedom. At times he demanded obedience. In certain matters Jesus stood as a strict disciplinarian. He never watered down the program which he believed to be the Father's will. His training was peppered with spiritual principles. The Great Teacher led his pupils in the light of truth. This contrasted sharply with the Pharisaical leadership.

Matthew 15:14

Let them [the Pharisees] alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

At school the teacher assumes the authority of the parent. In his school, Jesus dealt with insubordination many times. Several such situations developed with Peter and Judas. Peter spoke for the eleven. When he was allowed to have his way, the other disciples followed him.

John 21:3

Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee...

The insubordination of Judas was slow, sullen, secret, and selfish, yet Jesus did not ostracize him. Judas made the ultimate decision to drop out of school and life.

Acts 1:18

Now this man [Judas] purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

To lose a pupil is heart-rending for a caring teacher.

Jesus' school exhibited a small world in itself and carried on education of the highest type. He built relationships characterized by love and service. He called his disciples "little flock" and he admonished them to love one another as he had loved them.

As his life neared its close, Christ found his instruction of the twelve at a critical stage. The disciples had lost the vision of his promise to make them "to become fishers of men." Fear dominated their every move, and then, suddenly, their master was dead.

"I go a-fishing" said Simon to his companions after they had returned from Jerusalem. "We also go with thee" replied Thomas, Nathanael, James and John. Fatigued by sorrow, they returned to their old ways, anxious to get out of the fight.

Psalm 78:9

The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle.

Imagine their comments: "We are but simple fishermen, not fighters. What would happen if we followed Jesus? We probably would be killed. He told us that our future would be very much like his own. And look how peaceful it is on our

lake. See how it glistens in the sun like a burnished mirror. Why be burdened with such responsibility; and obliged to think of others instead of ourselves? Look at those fish jumping out there, now that's a challenge. Let's go! ! !"

Jesus knew that this simple life they had earlier left behind was not so very intriguing. Why had they been so prompt to forsake their nets and boats and follow him? Maybe the blue waters of the Sea of Galilee did not satisfy the whole man. Maybe life was more than meat, and the kingdom of God reflected more than just responsibilities. "That night they caught nothing. "

Amos 6:1

Woe to them that are at ease in Zion. . .

When the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore in his resurrected body. He had come to show himself for the third time to his disciples. This time he came not to convince them of his resurrection, but to convince them to once and for all dedicate their whole minds and hearts to their mission as fishers of men. After fishing all night and catching nothing, Jesus then invited them to dine with him.

John 21:15

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him. Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee...

When Jesus asked the question a second and third time, Peter was grieved. The Master's love had finally melted his iron-clad and prideful heart. He was at last ready to meet the great challenge of leading the eleven to the day of Pentecost and beyond. Jesus then gave Peter last-minute instructions, and the two men arose with fire in their eyes.

Graduation day had arrived. Christ had done all that any teacher could do. In training Peter to carry on his work, he fulfilled the primary goal of a leader. There was then no turning back for Cephas. Later he was to write:

II Peter 2:20

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

The twelve went back to Jerusalem with joy to wait for the promise of the Father. The risen Christ had spoken to them of things pertaining to the Kingdom of God, and their thoughts of an earthly kingdom had vanished.

Acts 2:1-4

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the holy spirit, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Can we honestly say "mission accomplished" at this point? From a spiritual viewpoint, yes, but from a leadership viewpoint, no. Even at this stage Peter could still have walked away from the challenge before him. But the Master's words, "Follow me and I will make you to become fishers of men" burned even more indelibly in his heart once he had manifested the power from on high. Peter stood up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said:

Acts 2:14, 41

Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem,
be this known unto you, and hearken to my words. . .
and the same day there were added *unto them* about
three thousand souls.

Mission Accomplished!

CONCLUSION
"I HAVE MADE YOU TO BECOME
FISHERS OF MEN"

We have seen how Jesus taught his pupils to think deeply, clearly, and accurately. There was no trace of scholasticism in his methods or in the materials which he used, yet he was scholarly. He was never academic in his teaching methods or in his selection of subject matter, yet money couldn't buy the education he gave his men. In touching the thinking process of his pupils he touched the depth of their hearts. His teaching of God's Word also touched their emotions. Christ revealed truth to his disciples, and sparked their believing. He put an idea into their minds and was confident that it would be enough. The Lord directed their thoughts forward. Jesus Christ saw his men where he wanted them to be--"Fishers--of men. " He kept his eyes on the goal.

If he had done nothing more than impart right ideas concerning human relationships, as per Dale Carnegie, we could hardly consider him a teacher of the Word. Even if he had added to such intellectual enrichment of his pupils a program to train them in principles of leadership, we could still make no valid claim that he was primarily a teacher of the Word. But along with these things he taught his pupils about a personal God. He led them to know by experience this wonderful God and in this respect he truly was the Great Teacher.

PART IV

THE APOSTLE PAUL

INTRODUCTION

As he neared the city of Damascus and the end of his long journey, the man called Saul was increasingly anxious to reach his destination. Though his trek up from Jerusalem had been long and dusty, he still walked with the brisk, decisive step of a man with a mission. He was indeed such a man, and thoroughly equipped to carry out his task.

Saul had been born "of the stock of Israel" in the well known Grecian commercial center of Tarsus, where he was exposed to Greek culture. This being in the Roman province of Cilicia, he inherited the rights of a Roman citizen. He then received the best Hebrew education available in Jerusalem at the school of Gamaliel. This unique combination of the ancient world's three great nationalities, which later was to help make him Christianity's foremost spokesman, now well endowed him to accomplish his self-consuming goal of the extermination of all followers of "the way."

Suddenly a light far brighter than the noonday sun overhead blinded his eyes. As he fell to the earth in awe, questioning the heavenly source of the voice which accompanied this light saying, ". . .Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:4), he received a reply he was never to forget: ". . .I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. . ." (Acts 9:5). Here for the first time he met the wonderful Savior in whose steps he was to follow and whose name he was to proclaim from that day forth.

And then came the words of the Lord that set before this man the high and holy calling that had been his in God's foreknowledge since before the foundation of the world:

Acts 26:16-18

But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared

unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness [remission], and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

These words were still burning in Saul's heart when, his sight and strength restored, he was led by God into Arabia. Here his new Father began teaching him the in-depth greatness of the ministry of reconciliation to which he had been called. Once again we see the father-son teaching relationship illustrated in this period of isolated instruction.

How Paul's heart must have thrilled to know that he was a son of God with the incredible joy and privilege of reconciling men to God. Here his Father revealed to him the detailed aspects of his ministry as an apostle of Jesus Christ—messenger, ambassador, workman, witness, athlete of the spirit. Here Paul's vision of the goal set before him became clear. It is evident from his subsequent ministry that he so imbedded in his heart the goal of reconciling all men to God, that no task he had to perform en route could dissuade him. His was the epitome of the goal-oriented life.

Paul saw clearly that the ministry of reconciliation could only be carried out by way of the Word of reconciliation, which God committed to him. It was only by hearing the Word of God that a man could be saved and come to a knowledge and understanding of life's truths. Only that rightly-divided Word buried within the depths of a man's heart could bring him to an all-out, to-the-death commitment to boldly hold forth its greatness to others.

Paul's understanding of God's matchless grace, later so inspiringly communicated by him in his epistles, ignited within his soul an unquenchable flame of enthusiasm that burned within him to his last breath. Truly he could identify with the psalmist whose beautiful verse he undoubtedly read many times. "My heart is bubbling up and overflowing with a good thing. I speak of the things which I know by experience concerning God, the King. My tongue is like the pen of a ready writer" (Psalm 45:1--literal translation according to usage).

Paul saw God's grace in the light of his own prior zeal for Judaism, which had prompted his fanatical attack on Christianity. This served to heighten the intensity of his conviction to follow the Savior he had previously been persecuting. Illustrative of this are words he was later to write to the church at Corinth:

I Corinthians 15:9,10

For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace which *was bestowed* upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Paul realized before he began his labor as a workman together with God that such unceasing effort would be required to accomplish the goal set before him. With joy in his heart, knowing that ". . . Whosoever believeth in him [Christ] shall not be ashamed [disappointed in his expectation]" (Romans 10:11), Paul was certain that his labors would not be in vain.

As he was to share with the believers at Rome, he knew that "...whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13), In considering how best to accomplish his goal, he may have asked himself what he later also asked them.

Romans 10:14

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

Obviously Paul could not achieve this monumental goal by himself, nor was that ever intended as God's plan. Paul immediately saw the necessity of what he later shared with his beloved Timothy.

II Timothy 2:1, 2

Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

His ability to ingrain the qualities of spiritual leadership into others would determine the extent of the outreach of God's Word by way of his ministry.

Very definitely the ministry of the apostle Paul is one with which we today can and should identify to the end of learning and doing. This is true basically because we also live in that church administration which began on the day of Pentecost. We have been commissioned to teach the same doctrine as Paul taught, most especially, of course, *the mystery* (Ephesians 3:6). Even he himself so exhorts us: "Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (Philippians 4:9).

No one before Paul, including Abraham, Moses, Samuel, and all the other men of God in the Old Testament, as well as our Lord Jesus Christ himself, was required to paint for the people's understanding of and subsequent action upon, such a complete doctrinal picture. He was sent by God primarily to

Gentiles of variegated backgrounds, most of whom were steeped in a morass of polytheistic idolatry. As such, they were unable to identify with the doctrinal foundation of the Old Testament, as could, for example, the people of Israel to whom Christ preached.

To such people it was Paul's mission to communicate Christ as the way of salvation and then show them their position in him. What a challenge it was to teach them the riches of the glory of the mystery to the end that they turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God. But what tremendous results there were via the ministry of this wonderful man of God.

In teaching "heathen" unfamiliar with the Scriptures, Paul was also without the benefit of advanced modes of communication and transportation. But he so effectually set up and carried out his methods that all Asia Minor had the Word of God. Hence it behooves us, as fellowservants with him, to study with great spiritual awareness the life and ministry of the man to whom God made known the greatest revelation He has ever given.

PERTINENT INFLUENCES IN PAUL'S UPBRINGING

We have already touched briefly upon the unique blend of heredity and environment which was Paul's, but it is here necessary to more closely examine his background. In so doing we shall see what principles of truth were then grafted into the fibre of his life and were later to profit him in carrying out his ministry.

Born into and brought up in a Pharisaic family, Paul's childhood was nurtured in the strictest aspects of Judaism. The home was the site of education, and the closeness of the Hebrew family unit enhanced the father-child educational process, so that in such a family Paul's parents were almost certainly dynamic influences upon his character. He was later to remember the effectiveness of the father-child teaching relationship, and to analogously employ it in the instruction of his followers.

It was the Old Testament scriptures, especially the book of Proverbs, upon which all Hebrew education and principles were based. Children even learned to read by using the Scriptures as primers. The religious fervor of the Hebrews made education a focal point in life, and as they devoted much time to the how of the educational process, they became virtually specialists in the field.

With religion governing life, the discipline involved in Hebrew education was never merely intellectual, but more often than not, ethical and spiritual. It was also very practical, combining learning with doing, to the end of one practicing the laws of Jehovah. Paul, as all Hebrew young men, was taught a trade by his father. The Rabbis said that a father who didn't so teach his son was bringing him up to be a thief. This

youthfully-instilled discipline to work, carried over into Paul's ministry, helped him to accomplish what he did. As a youth, Paul left his home in Tarsus and came to Jerusalem to be educated at the Pharisaical school of Hillel (Acts 26:4). Here he sat at the feet of the most celebrated rabbi of his time, Gamaliel. In the superb Hebrew educational system, the principles of discipline, obedience, respect for authority, and how to think practically, which had been rooted in him at home, grew and blossomed.

Some scholars believe that the assemblies of rabbis in Jerusalem, such as that in which Gamaliel was at the center, were possibly a continuation of the "schools" of the prophets. In any case, Gamaliel obviously knew the Old Testament in great depth, and no doubt employed the principles of spiritual education found therein, as those with which we have previously dealt. In so doing he effectively communicated them to his pupils, chief among whom was Paul.

Gamaliel's motives and methods conformed to the Hebrew system of learning. They were, by virtue of his superior ability, most effectual. He was a fine example of why the Hebrews attached such awesome importance to the position of a teacher. The Talmud said that while a father only gave you the life of this world, a teacher secured for you life in the world to come, and thus should be most highly revered among men.

The teacher's goal was to set discipline in the pupil's will, to the end of training him to self-activity. Industry and initiative were prerequisites for scholastic advancement. All methods were employed to fix knowledge accurately and permanently in the mind. There was much oral instruction, and the general atmosphere of discourse kept both teacher and student acutely alert. The ability to articulately express oneself was greatly stressed.

As with teaching at home, Scripture was the foundation of

rabbinical education. The example of Paul's later ministry plainly illustrates his vast knowledge of the Old Testament, both in letter and in practice of principle. In the light of his Judaic enthusiasm, Paul was dynamically impressed and inspired by the courageous lives of Abraham, Moses, Samuel, and other men who spoke for God no matter what adversity confronted them. His subsequent understanding of their importance as members of the believer's line necessary to bring forth the Messiah, heightened his conviction to follow their example. As we have seen and discussed, so he saw also the techniques they utilized in teaching and training others under their spiritual authority.

Thus ancestral, domestic, cultural and scholastic influences combined in the life of this man, Paul, to ably outfit him for the universal apostleship he received. He could reason with the Pharisees as a son of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin, and a former student of the great Gamaliel. He could speak Greek and was well versed in Grecian philosophy, logic, and literature. And he could travel freely throughout the Roman Empire as a citizen by birth, with all pertinent rights.

As we shall see, he fully utilized in his ministry as an apostle the leadership and teaching abilities initially developed in his earlier years. But in so doing he kept in proper perspective the insignificance of his worldly credentials compared to the spiritual qualifications God had given him in Christ. His scholastically imbued respect for the position of a teacher magnified to him the responsibility of leadership which God had given him. He also understood what a privilege it was to teach the gospel of the mystery, and this inspired him to absolutely unyielding commitment to serve God and His people.

I Corinthians 9:16

For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me, yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

PAUL'S ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FATHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS DISCIPLES

As stated, the goal of education is action. To be permanent, all instruction must be so clear and so capable of being grasped and understood that those who hear can retain it, use it, and hand it on. The effectiveness of all teaching is determined by how much of it is applied by those taught. We have previously seen God's design in establishing the father-child instructional pattern in the home, and in His relationship with His men, to most effectively communicate knowledge. To best carry out his goal of moving the Word, Paul established a similar relationship with those whom he taught.

I Corinthians 4:14, 15

I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet *have ye* not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

Such loving familial rapport greatly strengthened the respect of believers for Paul's spiritual authority. That such authority is to be constructive and edifying is apparent from Paul's statement to the fellowship in Thessalonica:

I Thessalonians 2:11, 12

As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father *doth* his children, That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

In such context, the exercising of correction and discipline is not arbitrary or excessively harsh, but clearly in line with the positive purpose of spiritual growth. Much exhortation, reproof, and correction to that end is therefore possible.

After his declaration to the Corinthians that he is as a father in the Word to them, Paul exhorts them to be "followers [imitators]" of him (I Corinthians 4:16). Probably the most basic type of learning is by imitation, and Paul is careful to explain the reason why he encouraged believers to imitate him. "Be ye followers [imitators] of me, even as I also *am* of Christ" (I Corinthians 11:1). His wonderful diligence in doing as he encouraged the church at Ephesus - "Be ye therefore followers [imitators] of God, as dear children" (Ephesians 5:1) - validated his appeal to them for adherence to his example. Where believers did so, as in Thessalonica, the results were tremendous.

I Thessalonians 1:5-7

For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men were among you for your sakes. And ye became followers [imitators] of us, and of the Lord, having received the Word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

Because dynamic influences of personality are so prevalent in any such interpersonal relationship as a teacher-pupil situation, the importance of the teacher's example cannot be overstressed. In Paul's case, his spiritual father-child relationship with his "students", their mutual manifestation of the love of God, the urgency of his message, and the constant pressure from the opposition he faced made his example most vital.

In the Eastern culture of those times, a servant was entitled to his freedom after a certain number of years. But one who at that time by the freedom of his will committed himself for life became a bond slave (a *doulos*) to his master. He was branded to indicate his complete servitude, and his master was responsible to care for all his needs. Paul often referred to

himself as a "*doulos*" of Jesus Christ. His living example of this analogy even more deeply confirmed his spiritual authority, and gave his disciples as inspirational guideline for their conduct, not only as bond slaves to Christ themselves, but also as trainees under Paul's loving leadership. This very much enhanced his ability to communicate knowledge to them.

Though such communication was basically spiritual, it in practice encompassed the mental and physical aspects of life, in which Paul's example did not diminish in brilliance. His discipline, persistence, stayed mind, flexibility, organizational expertise and goal-mindedness were obviously both inspirational and practically beneficial to his followers.

Paul's physical example and exhortation to his people to follow suit should be noted. The late Vince Lombardi, one of football's greatest coaches, and an avid devotee of superb physical conditioning, once said, "Fatigue makes cowards of us all." The fact that Paul walked countless miles over all types of terrain indicates his excellent physical condition. And his spine-tingling testimony to the Corinthians church in the face of slanderous charges against him clearly evidences his incredible discipline in pushing himself to the physical hilt.

II Corinthians 11:23-28

Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I *am* more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; *In* journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils by *mine own* countrymen, *in* perils by the heathen, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and

nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

Certainly the most sterling aspect of Paul's example was his unwavering stand for the absolute accuracy of God's Word. Not only did he boldly proclaim it in the face of great opposition from unbelievers, but he also spoke it within the family of God to reprove and correct someone in error, no matter who it was. This is often the more difficult. Such was the case when the great apostle Peter himself, because he feared the more legalistic Jewish believers coming from Jerusalem, withdrew from fellowship with Gentile believers at Antioch. In reality, the principle of God's grace was at stake, and Paul courageously rebuked Peter before the Antioch believers to publicly correct this error (Galatians 2:11-21).

In shepherding God's flock, Paul's walk of believing was often a very lonely one, especially near the end of his life when many previously devoted disciples had turned away in the face of persecution. Often there was no one present to see and learn from his steadfast example, but he stood firmly for his Lord and relentlessly drove himself regardless of who saw or cared.

The most vivid and beautiful illustration of Paul's father-child relationship with a disciple is seen in the spiritual union between Paul and Timothy. Paul's example and teaching steeled the young man to the degree that Timothy stood with him to the end when most others had deserted (II Timothy 1:15).

From the time these two left Lystra together after their initial meeting there, the faithful young man accompanied the great apostle on many exciting journeys. His total involvement with Paul enabled him to grow into a dynamic man of God to who Paul entrusted much work of the ministry.

I Timothy 1:3

As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine.

The great amount of time they spent together enabled Paul to pour into the depth of Timothy's receptive heart an understanding of the mystery, the foundation of the administration of grace in which they found themselves after the day of Pentecost. The Gentiles were fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel! This was a revelation so new and different that it shook all existing religious dogmas to their withering roots, and in reality toppled them to the lifeless soil of man's doctrines in which these roots decayed.

We see Timothy still standing with Paul in the face of everything Satan furiously threw at them, trying to erase all knowledge of the mystery. The young disciple must have received very illuminating insight into that revelation which so dynamically motivated his beloved father in the Word.

A statement in Paul's second letter to him is illustrative of the close communion which was theirs, and of how Timothy learned so much from the example set before him.

II Timothy 3:10, 11

But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of *them* all the Lord delivered me.

The verb "fully known" is the Greek work *parakoloutheo*. Its primary meaning is "to follow closely"¹⁷ and is so used in

¹⁷*The Analytical Greek Lexicon*, p. 304.

Mark 16:17: "And these signs shall follow [*parakoloutheo*] them that believe...." It also appears in Luke 1:3 in a dynamic usage where it means to follow or trace minutely with the thoughts.¹⁸

Luke 1:3

It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first [the text reads "from above"], to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus.

The words "having had perfect understanding" are the word *parakoloutheo*. In other words, having received revelation as to what to write, Luke wrote exactly that. This is a wonderful corroboration of the truth of II Peter 1:20, 21 that the Scripture came as men of God spoke what God told them to speak.

Thus Timothy literally walked in the physical, mental, and spiritual footsteps of the Apostle Paul, and received the greatest firsthand leadership training possible. As we have stated, the degree of effective action is the yardstick by which education, and especially training in the Word of God, must be measured. Paul's declaration to the Corinthian church places his pupil Timothy at the head of the class.

I Corinthians 4:17

For this cause I have sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.

Thus we clearly see once again the incomparable value of the actual physical togetherness of teacher and student. Timothy was of course, able to see for himself how Paul

¹⁸*The Analytical Greek Lexicon*, p. 304.

Paul's Establishment Of The Father-Child Relationship With His Disciples

operated in a vast diversity of pressure-packed situations. But most importantly, Paul was able to share his heart with his young disciple in the spiritual heat of the moment, when life's great truths are most lucidly communicated.

HOW THE WORD OF GOD WAS SPREAD

It is here necessary to discuss Paul's general pattern of organization of the ministry that was his, for surely its outreach was phenomenal. In our examination of this topic, we shall continue to place our emphasis on leadership training, for strong leadership obviously played a vital role in the spiritual surge that took place.

The word "apostle" means "one who is sent" and in accordance with the such a one, Paul moved out with the Word. He was constantly among the people ministering the Word to them. To be most effective, spiritual leaders of today must follow suit, for neither God nor people have changed. God's Word tells us that we are living epistles, and thus to be known and read of all men we must spend much time with them.

With the exceptions of spending two years and three months in Ephesus and eighteen months in Corinth, Paul seldom remained in an area more than five or six months. Yet in that comparatively brief space of time, he somehow communicated enough of God's Word to leave behind "churches" which, though still in need of guidance and encouragement via subsequent letters and visits, were obviously capable of great growth and expansion. We know this because it happened! "And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily" (Acts 16:5).

If it was necessary as he held forth the Word in an area, Paul worked at a trade to support himself, and we know from Eastern texts of Acts 18:3 that he was a saddlemaker. Such was often the case in his initial stay in an area when there were as yet no believers to meet his needs.

II Thessalonians 3:8, 9

Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labor and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

This consistent pattern helped him to instill in people the greatness of the Word to the degree that some believers ". . . addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints" (I Corinthians 16:15). This level of commitment was a primary reason for the Word prevailing as quickly and to the extent that it did.

As he ministered the Word in an area, Paul would find certain believers who possessed natural leadership ability, and who also showed extraordinary spiritual desire to serve God's people. With such he would work specifically to develop this potential. By God's guidance he would ordain elders, spiritual overseers, in the local assemblies of believers.

In accordance with the custom of the times in that part of the world, these leaders were almost always mature adult men and women. There were other advantages to such selections besides the common sense they had gleaned throughout their lives. Other people in the community knew them and were more readily able to form a close bond of believing with them. No doubt this familiarity also engendered trust concerning proper distribution of pluralities the believers shared to meet one another's needs.

When Paul left an area after such a relatively short time, the local believers were not only inspired but also virtually required to stand together on their own. In this regard, the method of learning by doing was dynamically put into effect. No one else was going to spread the Word, and it was up to

them to do so. Moved by his confidence in them, they went forth boldly proclaiming the good news of the gospel.

Of course, God backed up the Word taught with many signs, miracles and wonders. Paul had geared his leaders to expect these marvelous happenings as routine spiritual occurrences. In stark contrast to our materially oriented society, the culture of Paul's day was generally God-oriented. The vast amount of paganism and little accurate knowledge of God's Word at that time does approximate the situation today, but then it was most natural for people to discuss spiritual matters and look to a spiritual entity for help. In the midst of this culture, the rightly divided Word on the lips of enthusiastic believers spread like wildfire. The believing of the saints rose to incredible heights, and the results were correspondingly significant.

As we have seen with regard to Timothy, Paul usually took younger believers with him as he traveled to spread the Word (Acts 15:40; 19:29). They helped him by ministering to his needs, but more importantly, they were able to learn from him, as did Timothy. Obedience, attention to detail, and persistence in carrying out responsibilities are only a few of the qualities Paul instilled in these men. He also taught them to think for themselves, and to utilize godly initiative to give their utmost in everything they did.

He was able to monitor their progress and give them much practical experience via spiritual assignments commensurate with their desire and ability. Often he sent them to other areas as troubleshooters, where they had to stand on their own and handle tough situations. For example, he left Titus in Crete with the instruction that he should ". . . set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city. . . ." (Titus 1:5). In carrying out these responsibilities, Paul's "lieutenants" learned much while proving themselves capable of greater service in leadership. It was of that same Titus that he told the Corinthians believers, ". . . *he* is my partner and fellow-helper concerning you..." (II Corinthians 8:23).

How Paul must have rejoiced to see the Word live to such an extent in the hearts of men such as Philemon that he could say, "Having confidence in thy obedience, I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say" (Philemon 21). This was quite a testimony to the quality of his men's development from the one best able to evaluate their growth.

Paul set up the headquarters for his outreach to the Gentiles at Antioch, in Syria. He was joined by Barnabas, who had been sent from Jerusalem to look into the astounding reports that some Gentiles had received the holy spirit. There they preached the Word for a year, with many people being added to the church. It was then that they were instructed by God to begin the more extensive work whereunto they had been called, taking His Word to the Gentiles. So they departed from Antioch on the first of several journeys designed to establish new fellowships and to strengthen existing bodies of believers in as many cities as possible.

During the period of time from their initial departure until Paul came to Ephesus on his third journey and taught in the school of Tyrannus for two years, his methods as we have discussed them are clearly shown in Acts 13-19. In summarizing these tactics, we see Paul, accompanied by a number of his fellow laborers, travel to a city, go to the synagogue or wherever else the people were, and boldly preach the Word. Daily fellowships in homes were then set up all over the city, with a leader for each one. Living with believers such as Aquila and Priscilla whenever possible (Acts 18:3), he would stay long enough to teach, train, and ordain leaders in the fellowship. Occasionally he would leave behind at his departure some of his companions to further instruct the believers. Later he would write to them, systematically revisit their area, or send one of his men to minister to their needs.

As we read at the close of Acts 17, whenever Paul held forth the Word, "...some mocked: and others said, we will hear thee

again of this matter. . . " (Acts 17:32), which in reality placed them in the unbelieving category. Verses 33, 34 state that ". . . Paul departed from among them, howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed...." This delineation and subsequent separation of believers was no more clearly in evidence than in Ephesus. Here Paul set up and for two years conducted a unique spiritual training center at the school of Tyrannus.

With a population of about one third of a million, Ephesus was the most important city in the Roman province of Asia. A great commercial center due in part to its seaside location at the end of the Asiatic caravan route, it was also a natural landing point for travel from Rome. Besides being a center of learning and culture, Ephesus was the location of one of the seven wonders of the world, the Temple of Diana, and was thus the focal point for followers of this pagan cult.

After a brief visit to Ephesus (Acts 18:19-21), Paul returned to this stronghold of idolatry to further instruct the believers won to the Lord there by the golden-tongued orator Apollos. Besides teaching this handful ("about twelve"), he was "...disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 19:8) in the synagogue for three months. Then the opposition stiffened to the point where he withdrew "the disciples" to the school of Tyrannus, and daily taught them there for the next two years. The training center which Paul set up there was so effective that in that period of time "...all Asia [Asia Minor] heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10).

There are several significant word usages here in Acts 19:8, 9. In the synagogue Paul was "disputing and persuading." "Disputing" is the Greek word *dialegomai*, from which comes the English word "dialogue." It basically means

"to discuss."¹⁹ "Persuading" is the word *peitho*, which means "to speak with winning words."²⁰

He used both of these tactics in his initial presentation of the Word. Many people heard, and some believed and became "disciples." These were the "disciplined one" who hungered after the meat of the Word. These Paul could effectively teach, and he did so in the school of Tyrannus, where he was "disputing daily." In other words, he engaged in teaching them by discussion, question and answer, and any other way he could possibly share the Word in his heart.

Most scholars concur that the school of Tyrannus was probably a school building owned by a man named Tyrannus, and that Paul utilized this location each day during the times when the school was not in session. After the word "Tyrannus" in Acts 19:9, some texts add the words "from the fifth to the tenth hour."²¹ This would correspond to 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. our time, and was the period of mid-day rest, when the school would be in recess. Schools of that time did generally meet early in the morning, before the heat of the day. Paul could thus work to support himself in the morning, and whether or not the school of Tyrannus resumed its schedule late in the afternoon, he would still have had ample time each day to teach a great deal of the Word to his eager students.

We do not know if Paul paid any rent for the facilities he utilized in Ephesus, but it is significant that he did not build or buy a large place in which to meet. Spiritually, things were moving too fast for him to be tied down with such a piece of property. And Paul taught his followers this principle of not

¹⁹Bullinger, E. W., *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament*, p. 228.

²⁰Ibid., p. 583

²¹Jacobus, M. W. (Editor-in-Chief), *A Standard Bible Dictionary*, p.882.

being entangled with the affairs of life. They were traveling fast and far, and they traveled lightly.

The city of Ephesus was turned absolutely upside down by the Word of God emanating so dynamically from the school of Tyrannus. The nineteenth chapter of Acts tells of "special miracles", the dramatic exposure of vagabond Jewish exorcists as counterfeit, a giant occult book-burning ceremony and the resultant prevailing of the Word in that city.

Undoubtedly the happenings at the school of Tyrannus were the talk of the town, and besides a large part of the local populace, certainly many of the thousands of the travelers passing through came to investigate this spiritual phenomenon. Many who did so believed the Word they heard, stayed to learn enough to carry it forth themselves, and then departed for their homes. En route, they preached the Word all over Asia Minor, and then established strong fellowships in their home towns.

Paul no doubt also had a specific plan of outreach, and sent those willing to go anywhere into cities where he wanted to establish fellowships. He did a magnificent job of instilling in those he taught a boundless zeal for speaking the Word to others. Many in Asia Minor were very glad that he did.

HOW PAUL ESTABLISHED UNITY IN THE FIRST CENTURY CHURCH

The one thing that Paul most drummed into his disciples and which was probably the key factor in the explosive outreach of the Word, was the *unity* of the One Body, the very essence of the mystery. Maintaining this was a constant battle, and to the divided church at Corinth, for example, he wrote, "Now I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that *there* be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Corinthians 1:10).

He took full advantage of the tightness of the family unit and the respect for parental authority which was still quite prevalent in his society. Far more so than today, people could and did identify with the concept of God as a loving Father, and with that of believers as members of His family, tightly knit together by bonds of love and commitment. As we see in Acts 16 with the Philippian jailer and his household, the Word moved in terms of whole families being added to the church.

Despite the rather primitive methods of communication and transportation available to them, Paul and his men established a remarkable cohesiveness both within and among the areas to which the Word reached out. People far apart prayed for one another, visited and corresponded with one another, and gave of their material abundance to meet the needs of others they perhaps had never met. This was accomplished not only by teaching the Word *per se*, but also by Paul's application of leadership principles in his dealings with many individuals.

The primary goal of anyone in a leadership position is to direct those he leads to their best possible performance. In working with many different personalities, this requires great

wisdom to accomplish. Getting to know those whom one leads is therefore paramount in achieving this goal. The Apostle Paul obviously practiced this principle. In Romans 16, for example, he mentions by name 26 believers to whom he wanted to be remembered. He knew them personally and was concerned about each of them. Such was the case everywhere he went, and this loving, personal touch surely edified them to the end that they could and did edify others.

Paul employed many other principles designed to develop faithful men who could teach others also. First of all, he continually pictured his disciples in a positive light, seeing them as they were by God's grace, and not by their own nature. He treated all with equal love and urged them to do likewise (I Timothy 5:21). He prayed for his people (Philippians 1:9). He praised them (Romans 1:8). He gave them a good reputation to live up to (Romans 15:14). He forgave them, as in the case of John Mark, who under pressure had forsaken him and Barnabas (Acts 13:13), but of whom Paul later told the Colossians to "receive him" (Colossians 4:10). He also very much empathized with his people, and made sure they knew that he was a man of like passions, able to walk as he did with God because of his diligent application of concrete spiritual principles (II Corinthians 6:1-10).

The leaders that Paul trained applied these same principles, and an amazing solidarity of purpose was effected wherever the Word was on the move. At the root of this outreach was a dynamic understanding of the unparalleled excellence of the calling of the One Body, and hearts all over Asia Minor were knit together in love. Paul's statement to the Colossian fellowship illustrates the unity that was achieved. "For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order [literally, your shoulder-to-shoulder stand], and the steadfastness [literally, 'the solid front'] of your faith [believing] in Christ" (Colossians 2:5).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, words from Paul's own lips, spoken, very appropriately in this context, to the elders of the church at Ephesus, are most fitting. They beautifully summarize the love, commitment, diligence, boldness and tenderness that constantly poured forth from the heart of the man sent by God to carry forth the message of the gospel of the mystery.

Acts 20:18-21; 26-35

And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: *And* how I kept back nothing that was profitable *unto you*, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I *am* pure from the blood of all *men*. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. I have

coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

"God so loved that He gave. . . ." (John 3:16). From that moment of truth on the dusty road to Damascus, the love of God shed abroad in Paul's heart was manifest in service to God's people. He literally gave his utmost for God's highest, and headed the vanguard of Christianity in its greatest hour.

But he declared before the end of his lifetime that ". . . all they which are in Asia. . . ." (II Timothy 1:15) had turned away from him, and therefore had turned from believing the great revelation of the mystery he proclaimed. In the years that followed his death, the legalism and paganism which had already taken firm root within the church, grew and blossomed. This further divided the once unified One Body into a maze of confusion that has evolved to appear today as Roman Catholicism and "denominational" Christianity.

In light of the relatively rapid disintegration of Christianity compared to its earlier period of great impact on all of Asia Minor, some might say that Paul's was a "flash-in-the-pan" ministry. But the Word of God that he received by revelation was, and is, truth, and the gospel of the mystery lives today because of his faithfulness in writing and speaking that "good news." And that part of his heart and life revealed in the God-breathed Word he wrote still provides inspiration and instruction. Those desiring to learn how best to carry out the ministry of reconciliation committed unto them as sons of God would do well to take heed.

PART V

CONCLUSION

"But without faith [believing] *it is* impossible to please *Him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." This sixth verse shines brilliantly amidst the picture painted by the eleventh chapter of Hebrews of Old Testament men of God whose lives epitomized believing. Throughout the chapter we see some familiar names: Noah, Abraham, Moses, Samuel--spokesmen for God whose deeds of believing live again in example. Yet we read that "...these all, having obtained a good report through faith [believing], received not the promise" (Hebrews 11:39).

This wonderful promise of the Messiah, which they foresaw, and in the hope of which they walked, was gloriously fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He came as God's perfect spokesman, yet his message was directed only to Israel, and they rejected it, and crucified him. Jesus himself indicated that his mission was preparatory to something greater. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater *works* than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12). Yet at his death, the apostles whom he had instructed fled and hid in fearful confusion.

But he arose from the dead and returned to teach them once again. This time he taught of the promise of the Father, the power from on high which they were to receive and manifest (Luke 24:45-49). His instruction proved effective, for shortly thereafter on the day of Pentecost, the twelve apostles believed to receive that which had been God's desire to give ever since man's original disobedience and fall.

Having been also instructed by the risen Christ to be witnesses, the apostles, and in turn those whom they reached, went forth proclaiming his resurrection and the hope of his return. Although the growth of the early church was extremely rapid, and miracles practically commonplace, the theretofore

Jewish believers were unaware of what they actually had in Christ, and of the inclusiveness of God's promises.

Then a man named Paul rose up in believing to receive and declare the revelation of the mystery--"That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel" (Ephesians 3: 6)--and of the riches of the glory of that mystery, "...which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

Once the mystery was revealed by Paul, Satan could also know it. Realizing the mistake which sealed his eventual doom (I Corinthians 2:7, 8), God's arch-enemy marshalled all his insidious forces to divide, and thus render ineffective, the One Body of believers. As we have seen, Paul taught his heart out for a number of years, and for a while saw tremendous results. But for reasons perhaps known only in the hearts of those who succumbed to Satan's deceit, most who once stood with Paul turned from him, and thus from the truth of the Word for which he stood. The truth of the great mystery was submerged in a sea of religiosity which has ever since disillusioned a world groping in spiritual darkness.

For approximately 1900 years, Satan has, by a variety of tactics, so manipulated the world that the comparatively few men who have had great spiritual hunger have been denied any real opportunity to pursue their quest. Despite its clarity in Scripture, the mystery has for all intents and purposes remained virtually as hidden as before it was revealed to Paul. Hence the world has since seen no effective, unified endeavor of outreach like that of the first century church.

Not until today, that is. Today the light of the glorious gospel of redemption and salvation shines once again in all its in-depth radiance. Once more the mystery is being revealed. All over the world the hearts of more and more men, women,

and children are being knit together in love. A common goal unites them: the Word over the world.

With that rightly-divided Word of God as its foundation, and with the practical truth of the mystery permeating every aspect of its outreach, followers of the way (the lord Jesus Christ) are today adding a living supplement to the Book of Acts. The principles used to spread the Word remain the same, and, to the abounding joy of what is now thousands, and will be millions, so do the results.

A wonderful promise God made to His people Israel certainly holds true today for us as His born-again sons and daughters.

Isaiah 41:10-13

Fear thou not; for I *am* with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish. Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, *even* them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought. For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who *can* be against us?" (Romans 8:31). Christianity's greatest hour is yet to come.

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