

FOLLOW THE LAMB WHITHERSOEVER HE GOETH.

– JAN. 8. – JOHN 1:35-46. –

"Behold the Lamb of God!" – John 1:36.

JOHN'S mission was to bear witness to Jesus. He knew him well from his infancy to manhood, and as cousins according to the flesh they doubtless had discussed various features of the divine law, and they were of one heart as respects service to the Lord. Neither could begin a public service until thirty years of age, since this was one feature of the Law, but John being six months the elder was thus privileged to begin his ministry six months in advance of our Lord. During that brief period he had evidently made a considerable commotion as a reformer, his message being, "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." – Matt. 3:2.

The Jews had been waiting for the Kingdom for centuries; they realized that the Kingdom given to Saul, David, Solomon, etc., had not fulfilled the promises, and that a Kingdom in a larger sense, and under a greater than David and a greater than Solomon, was to be expected. The Apostle assures us that this thought was continually before their minds. (Acts 26:7.) John's mission to that nation, therefore, was the announcement that the fulfilment of the divine promise was at hand, and that in order to be ready to receive the divine favor they should repent of sin and turn to the Lord. And as our Lord declared subsequently, if that nation had believed John and acted upon that belief they would have been ready to receive the Lord himself, and to have fulfilled to them all the gracious promises of the Kingdom to which they were heirs, as the natural seed of Abraham.

It was because they were not in a right condition of heart that they were not fit to have the Kingdom, the promise of which, therefore, was taken from them, to be given to a new nation, a peculiar people, a royal priesthood – which God has been selecting from amongst all peoples,

kindreds and tongues, during this Gospel age, and which will now soon be completed, and be glorified, and begin the work of blessing all the families of the earth, as the Spiritual Seed of Abraham. – Gal. 3:29.

John did not preach to the people that they should believe on God, for he was addressing only the believing, covenanted people, Israel. His message was respecting things already known to them, and believed by them. He therefore exhorted merely repentance from their sins, and a return to their proper and covenanted relationship with God. In all this John's ministry is very different from the ministry of the apostles to the Gentiles, who not only had been without knowledge respecting God's purposes, Kingdom, etc., but also without faith or any ground of hope. As the Apostle declares, they were "without God, and having no hope in the world." Nor did any hope reach them, nor was the Gospel message sent to them, until after Israel's rejection in consequence of their rejection of Messiah.

"The baptism of John" was to the Jews only, and was wholly different from the baptism appointed for [R2417 : page 14] those called from amongst the Gentiles. The Apostle makes this fact very clear in Acts 19:2-5. John's baptism was not a baptism into any *thing*, or into any *body*, whereas our baptism is a baptism into Christ, as members of his body. John's baptism merely signified the putting away of sins, and thus to return to a condition of holiness and consecration already enjoyed. Our baptism signifies something very different from this – not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the submission of our consciences, our wills, fully and unreservedly to the will of Christ, that we should henceforth have no will of our own, but be guided entirely by the will of our Head, as members of his Body. Thus becoming dead to self-will we are reckoned alive as "new creatures," "members in particular" of the Body of Christ. – 1 Cor. 12:27.

The Jews as a nation had already been baptized *into Moses* (1 Cor. 10:2), the mediator of their Law Covenant, and to the Jew, Christ took the place of Moses, and his New Covenant took the place of the Law Covenant, so that any Jew, already baptized into Moses, and already thus in covenant relationship, would, by merely accepting Christ as the Messiah, the antitype of Moses, and the Mediator of the New Covenant (and, in harmony with his faith, repenting of sin), be adopted, reckoned as a member in the Body of Christ, instead of as a member of the Body of Moses. All others, however, who were of the Gentiles, and not of the natural seed of Abraham, are not to come first to Moses and the Law, and then through John's baptism into Christ, but are to ignore the Law Covenant entirely, and avail themselves of the better covenant direct, and hence they are instructed to be baptized into Christ, by being immersed into his death, and to testify to *this* consecration outwardly, to their fellows and before God, by an immersion in water.* – Rom. 6:3,4.

*Our friends of the Disciple denomination wholly misunderstand this matter, and are practising John's baptism of repentance and remission of sins, instead of the baptism of Christ. They should note the Apostle's words and correct this matter, as he instructed others to do in his day – by a fresh baptism. – Acts 19:2-5.

We have no record that John the Baptist was ever immersed himself – nor would we need to have, since he evidently was a godly man, living up, to the best of his ability, to the standard of the Law Covenant. His baptism, as he himself explained, was only for sinners, – those who had been living knowingly in violation of the principles of righteousness. Hence also John objected at first to the baptism of Jesus, assuring him that he was not a sinner, and that if Jesus needed to be baptized, much more appropriate would it be that John himself should be immersed. "I have need to be baptised of thee, and comest thou to me?" But our Lord, while admitting the force of John's argument that a baptism of repentance and remission of sins would not be appropriate in his own case, requested him to proceed with the matter anyway, intimating that he had some other reason why it was

right. The fact is that our Lord's baptism was the beginning of the Christian baptism: it symbolized the consecration which he had just made (at the first hour of manhood), his full consecration to do the Father's will, even unto death; – the giving up of his human life, a sacrifice on behalf of the world. It required all of the Lord's three and a half years' ministry to complete what was there symbolized, and he said just before his crucifixion, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." (Luke 12:50.) And so with the baptism of consecration, "death," into which we are to be baptized: as members of his Body we are to become living sacrifices, dead to the world, alive toward God, as is particularly set forth in Rom. 6:3-5.

It was in connection with our Redeemer's symbolical baptism in water, which promptly followed his consecration to death at thirty years of age, and was the public declaration of that devotion unto death, that the Heavenly Father bore witness to his adoption to the divine nature. We are not informed that any but John witnessed the descent of the holy spirit upon him, but John bore witness that he saw the spirit thus descend, and that the Lord, in sending him to preach, had previously testified that this was to be the sign by which he would surely know the Messiah (John 1:32,33). It was in harmony with this that he declared to his disciples subsequently, as Jesus passed by, "Behold the Lamb of God." John doubtless knew and expected that some of his disciples would cease cooperation with him, to follow the Messiah. Indeed he declared to them, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

The two who heard John's testimony promptly followed Jesus with a view to getting as close to the fountain head of the truth as possible; and all must admit **[R2418 : page 14]** the propriety of their course. How this suggests to us our own proper course, to follow the Lord as nearly as possible, and to seek as much as possible to come into fellowship and communion with him. And the noble, self-ignoring course of John appeals to all who have the right mind upon

the subject – that similarly all of the Lord's servants should call attention to the Lord and not to themselves. Let us each bend our energies to pointing men to the Lamb of God, and not to self-seeking. And let us remember that following Jesus, in the best sense, means that we walk in his paths, strive to do as nearly as we are able what he would do to-day, taking our lessons from what he did and said personally, and from the instructions which he has left for us, through the apostles, respecting the path of fellowship in his sufferings, the path to glory and joint-heirship [R2418 : page 15] in his Kingdom. The Lord is found of all those who diligently seek him from right motives, and such are by and by to be granted full joint-heirship with him. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." – John 15:14.

The evangelist furnishes us the name of only one of the two who first heard John the Baptist speak of Jesus. It is possible that the Apostle John himself was the other one, and that through modesty he refrained from bringing himself into special prominence, in his own records, just as, in another place, he speaks of himself as "that disciple whom Jesus loved, who leaned on his bosom." Modesty is a gem, wherever found, one of the graces of the spirit, which all of the Lord's consecrated ones should seek to have largely developed and well polished.

The narrative of how Andrew found Peter and how Philip found Nathaniel (supposed to be the disciple called Bartholomew) is interesting, and shows that true devotion to the Lord is unselfish – desires to confer upon others all blessings and truths enjoyed. This is still the spirit of true discipleship: having found the great Light of the world, and having seen thereby something of the lengths and breadths, heights and depths of the divine character and plan, we are and should be anxious to serve the same favor to others. And this desire to serve the Lord, the truth and our fellows should be so strong in us as to make it impossible for us to withhold the good tidings from any selfish consideration. Indeed, if we have the spirit of the Lord, which is the

spirit of the truth, the spirit of true discipleship, we will be so anxious to make known the good tidings as to be willing to "lay down our lives for the brethren," – to help them "out of darkness into his marvelous light."

It will be noticed that these who found the Lord were full of faith respecting the Messiah, of whom Moses wrote in the first five books of the Old Testament, called the Law, and of whom all the prophets also wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the reputed son of Joseph. They had not yet learned that Joseph was not the father of Jesus.

Nathaniel's answer, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" reminds us of the prejudice which now exists respecting certain quarters from which good things may or may not be expected. For instance, some of our English friends tell us that when the present truth was first brought to their attention they were inclined to disregard it, and consider it unworthy of special investigation, simply because it came from America; for tho they might expect many useful things to come from America, the product of "Yankee skill," they had no expectation whatever that any new light upon the Scriptures would come from America, where they seemed to imagine everyone given over to cheating and muck-raking for wealth, and that consequently it would be one of the last places in Christendom in which the Lord would cause the harvest light to shine out for the blessing of his people. This undoubtedly has hindered many foreigners from investigating the truths which are now meat in due season for the household of faith. America is Nazareth with them, and they expect nothing of the kind from this quarter.

Similarly, others will inquire, What denomination backs up these religious teachings? and when told that no sect or party has endorsed these things, and that not many great, or rich, or wise, have in any sense of the word become interested, they say to themselves, if not to others, What could you expect? – Can any good come out of Nazareth? Nevertheless, all who are of the Nathaniel type of character, "Israelites

indeed, in whom is no guile," will find sufficient reason for investigating, and on investigation will find sufficient proofs to *satisfy them*, – "as nothing else would do." Our answer to all such objections should be that of Philip, "Come and see," – test, examine, prove for yourself.

Another lesson here, that should prove of value, is found in the words respecting Andrew, "He first findeth his own brother Simon." So all who find the Lord, and who are anxious to make him known to others, should similarly begin in their own households, with their own brothers and sisters, father or mother, or husband or wife. There is frequently a diffidence about mentioning the Lord and the truth to those who are of the family and home circle which is surely much out of place. True love for our kin should lead us to make an extra and special effort on their behalf.

In conclusion let us remember that those who follow the Lamb through evil as well as through good report – those who follow his teachings and example – are they who ultimately shall be with him and share his glory as members of his elect Zion. – Rev. 14:4.

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"Caesar's friends? or friends of Jesus?
Solemn question for to-day!
Friends of Caesar! Friends of Jesus!
Take your sides without delay.
If ye pause for man's forbidding,
Caesar's friendship ye secure;
If ye do the Father's bidding,
Scorn, reproach, ye shall endure.

"Free from Caesar, friends of Jesus!
Stand in phalanx! never fear!
Love, severely tried, increases;
Courage yet! the Lord is near!

Onward still, his name confessing,
Weaving crowns to grace his brow;
Lo! his hands are full of blessing,
Lifted for your succor now."
