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FINDING THE LORD'S JEWELS

- JOHN 1:35-51. - JANUARY 19. -

Golden Text: – "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth."

OUR last lesson showed us Jesus at the time of his consecration and its symbolization by baptism, when he received the holy Spirit, which to John the Baptist was the token that he was the Messiah. It was after this that Jesus was for forty days alone in the wilderness studying the divine plan, and particularly his own share therein, under the enlightening influences of the holy Spirit which he had just received. This, we see, brought also testing and temptation from the Adversary, suggestions of other and different ways from that which the Lord's Word indicated and which the holy Spirit now showed. Our Lord having passed through those temptations successfully, a victor, began his ministry of three and a half years of self-sacrifice even unto death. Naturally enough he went back to where John had been baptizing and preaching. How much fellowship he enjoyed with John is not stated, or how long he remained in that vicinity. Only the most perspicuous incidents are noted.

It was while Jesus was away in the wilderness that the Pharisees and Scribes asked John whether or not he was the Messiah and received bold testimony that he [R4115 : page 12] was not, and was not even worthy to be the menial servant of the great Messiah, who was to accomplish the fulfilment of the prophecies. This was just before our Lord's return, and on the next day (v. 29) Jesus – having returned from the wilderness – mingled amongst the people listening to John's preaching, etc., and it was at that time that John said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," and acknowledged him publicly, and

that he had the witness of the Spirit in seeing the dove resting upon him at his baptism. It was on the following day, as we read in our lesson, that John, standing with two of his disciples, pointed to Jesus in the distance walking and said, "Behold the Lamb of God."

"THERE COMETH ONE AFTER ME"

The beautiful simplicity and honesty of John the Baptist is remarkable because it is rare. The majority of even the noble-minded seem to have such a selfish, grasping disposition as to unfit them for a service of this kind committed to John. Apparently the majority would find it absolutely impossible to avoid the extolling of their own position and service and dignity in connection with whatever they would say in respect to another, but John seems to have been utterly oblivious of himself – he thought only of his responsibility as the Voice that should cry in the wilderness to them, announcing Messiah. Disowning all honor and distinction for himself, he directed the reverence of all hearts toward Jesus. Let us emphasize this, each in his own heart, as being the proper attitude for all of the Lord's honored servants. We are not to honor ourselves, but to honor him whom the Father has honored, our Lord and our Head. In proportion as we shall be faithful in this service and seek not our own but our Master's praise and honor, pointing him out as the one in whom is centered the divine plan – in this same proportion will we be exhibiting the spirit, disposition, which our Lord can approve and reward with a share in the heavenly Kingdom and glory. If we did not cultivate this spirit and have it in our hearts we would be unfit for the Kingdom – unfit to be entrusted with so great power, honor and glory and with immortality. "He that honoreth me I will honor," "He that is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of man be ashamed," "He that exalteth [praises] himself shall be abased; he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." – John 5:23; Luke 9:26; 14:11.

"ALL MEN WERE IN EXPECTATION"

The Scriptures inform us that at this time the whole Jewish nation was in expectation of Messiah. The records show this in connection with the time of our Lord's birth, the solicitude of Herod, the killing of the babes of Bethlehem, the journey of the wise men, etc. Doctor Farrar remarks on this same line: –

"We are informed by Tacitus, by Suetonius, and by Josephus, that there prevailed throughout the entire East at this time an intense conviction, derived from ancient prophecies, that ere long a powerful monarch would arise in Judea, and gain dominion over the world."

It was in harmony with this general expectation of the people that John's preaching drew such large crowds when he announced that the Kingdom of Messiah was nigh, and that all those prepared for a share therein should confess their sins, repent of them and reform – inviting them to symbolize this by baptism, but applying it only to Jews, and not in reference to their original sin – which under the Law was atoned for year by year with the blood of bulls and goats – but referred to repentance for all personal transgressions, misdeeds against the Law. We have our Lord's testimony for it that in proportion as the people believed John's message and acted thereon, in that same proportion they were ready for his ministry and the further truth of the Gospel. Hence we are not surprised that those who became the Lord's disciples were in some manner intimately and sympathetically acquainted with John and his preaching. Is it not a rule in divine providence that one step of knowledge and devotion leads to another? It was in harmony with this that the disciples of John the Baptist had the Messiah first pointed out to them, and thus the door was opened for their becoming Jesus' disciples.

SEEKING FELLOWSHIP WITH JESUS

The two disciples to whom John the Baptist made the remark, "Behold the Lamb of God," at once concluded that if they had found the Messiah whom John was introducing it was time to seek his fellowship, and if possible identify themselves with his ministry. Nor does John the Baptist seem to have offered the slightest remonstrance against their leaving off cooperation with him. The name of one of these is given in the narrative, Andrew; the name of the other is omitted, but it is presumed that it was John, the writer of this Gospel, whose modesty in such matters is indicated by the withholding of his name on another occasion also – when he refers to himself as "that disciple whom Jesus loved." How beautiful this modesty, how much it endears the character of John to all of us. A less modest man in writing of the matter would probably have told of how he first thought of following Jesus and invited Andrew to accompany him. But we can not only have much more love for John because of this characteristic of humility, but it gives us correspondingly more confidence in all he has written – that ambition did not warp or color any of his descriptions of the matters recorded by him.

The modesty of the two men is further exemplified by their course of conduct in following the Lord instead of approaching him boldly and saying, "Sir, we have the honorable distinction of being amongst the most prominent disciples of John the Baptist, and now introduce ourselves to you." On the contrary, they followed quietly, wondering where our Lord resided and how they might have an opportunity without obtruding themselves to become acquainted with him. Their reverence for him and their modest opinion of themselves restrained them from improprieties. However, after they had followed the Lord probably a considerable distance on his journey toward his abode, he turned to them saying, "What seek ye?" or, as we might translate it into the form of today, "Is there anything I can **[R4116**

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LESSONS FOR THE NEW CREATION

There are several lessons here that may profit us: (1) The humility of the disciples in their approach; (2) Their proper ambition to have all that God had provided for them and to make use of their opportunity – to progress from being the disciples of John to the discipleship of Jesus; (3) Their seeking in this unobtrusive manner to have fellowship with the Lord and to become better acquainted; (4) Our Lord's generous reception of them and hospitable invitation to his home; (5) His wisdom in not telling them the whole truth – neither about the heavenly things nor about the earthly trials and difficulties. Meat in due season is the Scriptural order – milk for babes, strong meat for those who are more developed, as the Apostle recommends.

How much need all the Lord's dear followers have for applying these various lessons each to his own heart and experience and practice! How many of us have had a zeal without wisdom, and have fed new beginners with strong meat, which has troubled and hindered them if it did not choke their interest. But we are all pupils, and let us all learn more and more to be wise as

serpents and harmless as doves, as earnest in showing the pearls to those ready for the sight as in withholding them from those who are swinish and unprepared.

"WHAT ARE YOU SEEKING?"

There is peculiar force in this query, and no doubt our Lord used it with the intention of awakening this very thought in these two who first sought his companionship. It is a good question for each one of us to put to himself, and for us to suggest at a proper time to all others who are manifesting any interest in Present Truth. What are we seeking? What are we looking for? We know what the world is seeking – wealth, honor, fame, ease, etc. – and we know that many who turn toward the Lord still have the spirit of the world. They would like to be the Lord's disciples and still have and cultivate and enjoy the hopes and ambitions that are more or less worldly. It is appropriate that we should give heed to the Master's words as though they were addressed to each of us individually, What are *you* seeking? Let us answer our Master in our own hearts and in prayer; and before we make answer, let us consider well that it may be a truthful one, for we might indeed deceive ourselves, but could not deceive him with whom we have to do. It is right that we should seek the Kingdom and that we should know that there is a great honor and glory and dignity associated with it by divine arrangement, and that thus we should "seek for glory, honor and immortality." But in conjunction with this seeking of the Kingdom we should remember our Master's words on another occasion, that we should seek chiefly the Kingdom of God and *his righteousness*.

We are to remember that the Kingdom is not to be reached by an unrighteous path, that injustice, iniquity, lawlessness, self-indulgence, selfishness in any form are paths which lead in other directions. We are to remember that the Master by word and by example indicated to us that to live godly in this present time

would involve us in a measure of persecution, as it did him, and that the servant must not expect to be above his lord in the world's favor. Hence to say we are seeking the Kingdom means that we are taking the path leading thereto – the narrow way of self-denial. It means that we have enlisted under the banner of the Lord, with a full knowledge that our loyalty to him will mean to us opposition from the world, the flesh and the Adversary, as we seek to be good soldiers of the cross and to endure hardness in fighting against sin. It is those who seek the Lord with sincerity, with honesty, without guile and without selfishness, who find him, have fellowship with him and become his true disciples, and eventually will have joint-heirship with him in his Kingdom.

"FIRST FINDETH HIS OWN BROTHER"

One of the two who heard John and followed Jesus was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter – "He findeth first his own brother Simon." The revised version may be understood to imply that both disciples sought their brothers, but that Andrew found his brother first. If, as is supposed, John was the other disciple, we know that he had a brother, James, and that the latter also was brought to the Lord. The particular thought we wish to emphasize here as worthy of special commendation, embodying a proper lesson for us, is the fact that these disciples in beginning the service of the Truth went first to their own brethren. This implies that they had brotherly love in their hearts, as we should properly expect all would have who would be found worthy to be disciples of Jesus. It implies that they had influence with their brethren along religious lines, which probably would not have been true if they had not been recognized by their relatives as men of character and principle. If, therefore, any of the Lord's people should feel impelled to first go to strangers with the good tidings it would be a less favorable sign as respects the esteem in which they are held. However, let them not feel discouraged if they have not this favorable evidence to begin with. Let us remember the

Apostle's assurance that amongst those the Lord is choosing for his disciples there are not many great, noble, influential – that they are mainly the ignoble.

The very fact that the Lord has granted us the privilege of his fellowship is an assurance that there was something in us that he did not despise, and was [R4116 : page 14] willing to take over, that he might mould and fashion it by his truth and grace, and finally present it beautiful and irreprovable before the Father through the glorious change of the First Resurrection. Again, however, let us emphasize the propriety of loving those who are our kin to the extent that we will do all in our power for their assistance. As this is a rule that should prevail amongst brethren it should also be a rule as between husband and wife, parents and children. If a wife should receive the Truth, her first joy should be, if possible, to bring the matter to the attention of her husband. If a husband receive the Truth it should be his first joy and privilege to bring the matter to the attention of his wife, and so between the parents to the children. We confess that we have been surprised at times to find that this course, which seems so natural and so proper, has not always suggested itself to those who have come into the light of Present Truth.

We advise that where a different course has been followed it is time for a change. Let the husband plan for the welfare of the wife and assist her in arranging the home matters, so that she may have time for studying the Truth, attending meetings, etc. Let the wife coming into the Truth give diligent attention to arrange matters most favorably for her husband, that he also may enjoy the blessings, the privileges of study, etc. The old adage, that "Charity begins at home," is as true of religious charity as of other kinds. "Husbands, love your wives" – do all in your power to bless them, especially in their highest spiritual interests, and to bring to them this highest of all joys. "Wives, reverence your husbands" – appreciate them, and desire that they shall have all

of the good things obtainable, and use your best influence for their assistance.

"WE HAVE FOUND THE MESSIAH"

With this message they greeted their brethren, and, as explained in the text, the Hebrew word Messiah corresponded to the Greek word Christ. They knew that for long centuries Messiah had been promised, and that their whole nation, through varying vicissitudes, had been looking, hoping, praying for his coming and for the blessings which he would bring to their nation as their king, delivering them from all evil and exalting them with the power of God to be the light of the world, and thus through them shedding blessings upon all nations. The afternoon spent by these two with Jesus had convinced them that the words of John the Baptist were correct, that Jesus was "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

It is not explained how Peter received the message, but judging him from his subsequent course of conduct, we must assume that he came with haste to see, to know, to judge for himself on the subject. The nature of the evidence given him by Jesus is not related, but he believed, became a disciple, received a new name – an added name. He was Simon Bar-Jona, or Simon, son of Jonah; now, henceforth, he would be more particularly known as a disciple by the name of Simon Peter, that is, Simon, a stone. Thus early did Jesus indicate his knowledge of the man, recognizing him as one of the living stones for the glorious Temple of the future, as this Apostle himself afterward explained. – I Pet. 2:4,5. [R4117 : page 14]

"GO FORTH INTO GALILEE"

On the day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and en route found Philip, whom he personally invited to become his

follower, and then speedily Philip found Nathanael, known also in the Scriptures as Bartholomew.

This finding of the disciples is described to have been at Bethabara, where Jesus was making his home, and which by the revisers is called Bethany – thus giving the suggestion that our Lord was acquainted with the family of Lazarus and Martha and Mary before he began his ministry, and that it was to this point that the disciples followed him from the fords of the Jordan, where John had been baptizing. Evidently our Lord tarried in the vicinity of John's mission for a time, there to find some of the most earnest ones whom John's preaching had gathered together.

It will be noticed that the disciples here mentioned all came from Galilee, John and James, Andrew and Simon Peter, Philip and Nathanael. (Judas alone was a Judean.) What were these men doing so far away from their homes? We can only suppose that they were amongst the masses who heard of John and his preaching, and who were so deeply interested in the coming Messiah that they came what was considered in those days a considerable journey, leaving their business that they might hear what John had to say, and join with him as his disciples in helping to prepare the way for Messiah. How the Lord does use one ministration of the Truth to prepare our hearts for a later and fuller illustration of it! This corroborates the statement of our Lord's prayer to the effect that these disciples were true, God-fearing consecrated men before they came to Jesus. In the prayer Jesus says, "Thine they were and thou gavest them to me." (John 17:6.) A lesson to us in this is that if we are faithful and zealous to every portion of truth that comes to us, according as we receive and act upon this we will be prepared for another. Had these men not had the spirit of consecration they never would have left their affairs to join with John in his ministry, and then they might not have been so well prepared to be the honored apostles of Jesus.

"WHENCE KNOWEST THOU ME?"

The story of the call of Nathanael is a specially interesting one. Our imaginations have little difficulty in filling in the items omitted by the narrative. Philip himself had come within the charmed circle of our Lord's influence, and had realized that it was a blessed privilege to become his disciple and that he must be indeed the long-looked-for Messiah. Full of this confidence he looked for his friend Nathanael, whom he recognized as being of one mind and heart with himself in the desire to serve the Lord and to be ready for Messiah's Kingdom. Finding him his salutation was, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write – Jesus of Nazareth, [adopted] son of Joseph." Nathanael was apparently a man of keen intellectual power. He felt that his friend Philip had accepted something too hastily, and that he was being deceived by a pretender, and his prompt objection was, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" As though he had said, "That is a mean city of itself; no great people of any reputation would ever come from thence; no prophecies, so far as we know, make any reference to that city. What you tell me of your Messiah rather tends to prejudice my mind against him."

And so it is today with some of the Lord's true followers who are expecting the second coming of the Lord as the great King of glory. When we tell them that we have found the truth on this subject and that the Law and the prophets all corroborate the fact that we are now living in the harvest time, in the *parousia* of the Son of man, they are disposed to sneer at our zeal and enthusiasm and to bid us be very careful lest we be deceived. They ask, Whence comes the message of the *parousia*? and when they are told that it is not from the great, the wise, the mighty of this present time, not from the Doctors of Divinity, but from humble sources that the message reaches them, they ask, [R4117 : page 15] "What could you expect from such a source?" intimating that

rather we should look to the Scribes and Pharisees and Doctors of the Law today.

Let us answer such doubting brethren as Philip answered Nathanael, "Come and see!" Investigate, test the matter by the Word of God. Apparently Nathanael would not go with Philip. The latter may have gone his own way dejectedly, because one whom he esteemed to be a true servant of God was apparently unwilling to hearken and to investigate. But Nathanael had his own reasons for not at once complying with the invitation. He felt that the matter was one of great importance; that it affected not only his own interests but the interests of his friends and of the Lord's cause in general. He must be cautious. He had already heard of Jesus, and had been considering and praying about this very subject before Philip came to him; he had asked to be kept from delusions and snares – that his judgment might be guided of the Lord, that he might not be deceived by a pretender. He would follow a little later, and, free from all prejudice, would endeavor to judge of the merits or demerits of the case, relying upon the Lord's blessing, which he had sought.

How glad we would be if all our dear friends who give evidence, so far as we are able to judge, of being true, loyal servants of the Lord, were to take the course that Nathanael took to seek the Lord and his protection and guidance, and then to investigate, proving all things by the Word of God! And while we may be sure that though some may not as promptly take this course as did Nathanael, all who are of the truly overcoming class will ultimately take it and ultimately be guided, that they may indeed come in contact with Present Truth and realize the *parousia* of our Lord and his work of harvesting the Church and gathering the ripe grains into the garner preparatory to their shining forth with him in the glory of the Kingdom for the blessing of all the families of the earth. – Matt. 13:43.

BLESSED ARE YOUR EYES AND EARS

As we notice in this lesson the reception that our Lord gave Nathanael, we are forced to contrast it with the very different reception he gave to some of the Scribes and Pharisees and Doctors of the Law when they approached him in a caviling spirit. To these he spoke in parables and dark sayings which he did not expect them to appreciate or to understand, but to such as Nathanael our Lord was most gracious, because knowing the hearts of all he could wisely discriminate. We may not exercise such a liberty because such a knowledge is not ours; it is for us to be patient and courteous to all, and to do our best to assist all to an understanding of the Truth, whether they shall hear or whether they shall forbear – convinced, however, that only the Israelites indeed will hear effectually, will receive the call and be profited thereby to the attainment of the prize.

Before Nathanael had quite reached Jesus and those who were with him, the Master said, in his hearing, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile." A wonderful tribute this! No wonder Nathanael was fit to be of the Little Flock and one of the apostles! No wonder Philip wrestled with him, praying him to come and see. His honesty of heart made him worthy of the blessings of which the mass of his nation were not then worthy. As we read in John 1:11,12, Jesus "came unto his own and his own received him not; but to as many as received him to them gave he liberty [privilege] to become the sons of God." And he helped those who were in the right attitude of heart to receive him; he assisted their faith and encouraged their confidence, saying to one, as we remember, "Be not faithless, but believing." – John 20:27.

But Nathanael, although he realized that he was an honest, true Israelite, seeking for whatever God had to give to his faithful, was not satisfied with this testimony – such an expression might

be given by another in flattery. He would cross-question the Lord, and he said, "Whence knowest thou me?" You have made a statement; what is your authority for it? I do not know that we have ever met before. Jesus replied, "When thou wast under the fig-tree, before Philip called thee, I saw thee." Ah, well did Nathanael remember how he had crept under the low-spreading boughs of the fig-tree and how he had prayed to the heavenly Father for wisdom and for the proper evidences on the subject of concern. Here he had the very answer to his prayer. The one who could know about that prayer and could thus answer it and reveal himself must indeed be superhuman – all that he claimed, the Messiah. Nathanael's faith operated quickly, and he responded, "Rabbi [Master], thou art the Son of God: thou art the King of Israel."

And is not our Lord's dealing practically the same today? Is it not true that those who now in faith and prayer seek for enlightenment respecting the times and the seasons and the features of the divine plan, and information respecting the harvest work – is it not true that these are specially helped of the Lord? that the Truth is made specially clear before their minds? whereas others coming to the subject through idle curiosity perhaps, or with a half faith fear a coming trouble and are desirous of knowing how to escape it, are left comparatively in darkness? Let us who have discerned these beautiful traits and qualities in the class of disciples whom the Lord chose at his first advent, see to it that we cultivate similar characteristics, and that we expend our special energies to bring the Truth to the attention of others who give evidence of meekness and faith and loyalty to God.

"THOU SHALT SEE GREATER THINGS"

As soon as Nathanael had confessed his faith our Lord assured him that what he had already come to appreciate was insignificant in proportion to the still **[R4118 : page 15]** greater

things which as his disciple he would gradually come to know and to understand. And is not this true with us today? The joy, the confidence, the hopes which filled our hearts at the beginning, as we came to recognize the Lord and to have a clearer understanding of the divine plan – have these not continually been added to by the Lord, so that what we first saw and enjoyed seems but small in comparison with the riches of grace and loving kindness and tender mercies revealed to our eyes of understanding. As our mental vision widens we behold lengths and breadths and depths and heights of the love of God surpassing all of our expectations. – Eph. 3:18,19.

And by faith we can see Jesus as the antitypical Jacob's ladder, as our Lord intimated to Nathanael. As Jacob in his vision saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven and communications carried on thereby, so we, in the light of the divine plan now unfolding, see that our Lord Jesus and the Church associated with him constitute the ladder of communication between God and the world of mankind, which, during the Millennial Age, will serve as the channel of favor by which all the families of the earth shall be blessed – by which the glory and blessing of the Lord shall be brought down to earth, even as now the Elect, firstfruits of his human creatures, are being gathered from amongst men, that they may ascend to God as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ their Lord by means of the glorious change which shall come to them in the First Resurrection, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

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