

# Bethesda - the Sheep Market

by G.W. North

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*Jesus' life and ministry demonstrate the importance of dependence on God, faith, and being born again, and they provide a model for believers to follow in order to fulfill their purpose and bear fruit.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 11:28-30, John 5:1-9, John 5:19, John 5:24, John 5:30, John 5:39-40, John 5:44, John 14:13-14, John 15:5, Romans 8:14-17

**Topics:** "Obedience to God", "Discipleship"

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## Description

G.W. North explores the profound lessons from John 5, particularly the healing at the pool of Bethesda, emphasizing Jesus' obedience to the Father and the significance of His miracles as signs pointing to His divine identity. He illustrates how Jesus, despite the multitude of sick individuals, chose to heal only one man, demonstrating His dependence on the Father's will and the importance of faith in the healing process. North highlights that true discipleship requires a commitment to live in accordance with God's will, renouncing self-will and embracing a life of obedience and humility. The sermon calls believers to recognize their identity as sons of God and to reflect Christ's life in their own, emphasizing the high standards Jesus sets for His followers. Ultimately, North encourages a deeper understanding of Jesus' life and teachings as the foundation for authentic discipleship.

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## Transcript

Perhaps more clearly than in any other passage of scripture this life is revealed in the fifth chapter of John's Gospel. Generally only the opening section of this chapter is at all well-known; the rest of it is certainly less known, possibly altogether unknown to many. This is nothing less than a tragedy because into it John has incorporated some of the most basic principles of Jesus' life as a man on earth and as a disciple of God. Although He was the Son of God, He lived and walked with His Father as any son should live and walk with his father, and especially a son of God with the Father. By utter obedience and loving subservience to His God, the man Jesus lived and walked in complete harmony with His Father. He was the supreme example of a man given over to a calling; He set the pattern of discipleship for every disciple for all time. We must therefore study Him as He is revealed in scripture and discover the principles upon which He built His life. Not that we should become mere devotees of principles, but because we must make sure we do not build on sand but on the rock.

As already said, the best known part of the chapter is the story of the healing of the impotent man -- it is one of the miracles carefully selected by John for inclusion in his Gospel. The Lord performed so many

wonderful works that John supposed and said that if every one of them had been recorded the world would not be able to contain the amount of books that would be written. This may seem a tremendous, even an exaggerated statement, and seeing there are so many wonderful works there must be some significant reason for the fact that he only selects and chooses to write about a few. There is! All the Lord's miraculous works recorded by John are signs, they were all done by the Lord with that intention and John records them for this reason, deliberately omitting many thousands of other works and miracles. These signs were given so that serious-minded people seeking truth could observe them and by them discover reality. For instance the sign which most readily points out to the unprejudiced heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is the giving of sight to the man born blind. By it he, if no-one else, was led out of the darkness of uncertainty to the conviction that the Jesus who gave him sight was the Son of God; the miracle was the sign. The man had seen nothing all his life and then, through the miracle, he saw who Jesus was; the physical miracle was the sign to him.

Each sign from the first to the last is intended by John to be a progressive step in a growing understanding of the person of Christ. He gave them one by one and one upon another in progressive self-revelation, which to the unbiased mind presents irrefutable evidence that Jesus is indeed who He claims to be, the Christ of God. Each sign points out a particular and distinctive truth about Him; the miracle involved was specially wrought with that in mind. Whether or not Christ used the miracle as the starting-point for a discourse, these works are really parabolic texts; certainly in the case of the feeding of the multitudes Christ created the sign and then from it proceeded to teach His truth. What a superb teacher He was; no wonder Nicodemus said 'Rabbi we know thou art a teacher come from God'. This complimentary confession was made and paid to Jesus because of the miracles; to Nicodemus they were clear indications that Jesus was come from God. When a man recognises that he makes a good start, but it is insufficient for salvation. Signs are good and acceptance of them only sensible, but much more than those and that are required of God for regeneration.

The company that lay around the pool of Bethesda in the sheep-market that day in Jerusalem are variously described as blind, halt, withered, diseased, infirm; the adjective that John uses to describe them collectively is impotent. However their particular need or disease was categorised -- they were all powerless. Also they were all hopefully looking for divine healing through an angel. Only one of them could expect to be healed though, according to local legend it was the first one into the pool when the water was troubled; none of the others could expect it. John does not comment on this belief; he neither confirms it to be true nor dismisses it as superstition, neither does Jesus say anything about it; only the background situation and the people's belief are sketched in. The main reason for the supply of this detail is in itself part of the sign; everybody gathered there was expecting: (1) a miracle to happen; (2) a visit by a heavenly person; (3) only one person to be healed and no-one else. Into this situation came Jesus that momentous day with the intention of using popular belief, turning it to God's glory and forcing people to face truth and make decisions about Him.

Other outstanding things, too important to miss, though not so vital to the main issue, are worthy of notice: Bethesda was a sheep-market having five porches -- the name means 'house of loving-kindness' -- and five is the number of grace. The analogy is so obvious that it would be foolish to ignore it: Bethesda was to be God's house that day, in loving-kindness (or grace) the Good Shepherd was going to move among the flock in blessing; He was looking for faith. He paused by one man who for thirty eight years had been stricken with an infirmity which had left him without strength and made him entirely dependent upon other people for help. Year after year he had come to the pool hoping that one day some strong man would take

pity on him and put him into the waters before anyone else could steal the blessing -- but all to no avail. His cry was, 'I have no man'; he did not know the man who stood and looked at him, but he must have hoped that this stranger was heaven-sent and that at last the helper he needed had come. Jesus said to him. 'Wilt thou be made whole?' He could not say 'yes', his helplessness had bred in him a fatalism built upon thirty eight years of disappointment and disillusionment. But Jesus heard his cry and felt his infirmity. 'Rise, take up thy bed and walk', He said, 'and immediately the man was made whole and took up his bed and walked'. It was the sabbath day; he could hardly have done a worse thing.

Presumably if he had been healed by the angel in the pool it may not have been such a sin to carry his bed home, or perhaps the whole sick company would have been supervised by Pharisees, in which case they would have reminded the fortunate person that he must not carry his bed even though he was healed. But Jesus told him to take up his bed and walk. It was a deliberate move on the Lord's part calculated to stir up the Pharisees to anger and draw attention to Himself and the miracle, and it had the desired effect. It was a sign spoken against, though why men should speak against it is more than any sensible person can fully understand. By it the Lord was showing that the expected heavenly visitation had indeed taken place, that a miracle had happened and a man had been healed -- moreover he was made whole and strong and able to walk. He was a sample of His handiwork and an example of discipleship for all to see. He was also the symbol of an assault upon tradition without power and religion without heart; more than that, he was the living proof that when God decides to give a sign He seldom requires man's faith in order to accomplish it.

It is very important for us to grasp this. It may be contrary to man's beliefs and teachings, but it is nevertheless true and this miracle is an instance of it. The man was not required to believe anything; in fact his words to the Lord reveal despair rather than faith. When the Lord said, 'wilt thou be made whole?' he might as well have said, 'No I won't', for he had no expectation of it, and if faith is anything it is a holy expectation grounded upon reality. The best he had was hope and desire and perhaps a genuine looking toward God. The fact that afterwards he went to the temple suggests that he was a God-fearing person and that probably he had gone there to give thanks to God for his healing, but it is certain that at Bethesda he had no faith, nor was he required to have any, nor was he forced to believe that the man who healed him was the Lord -- he did not even know who he was or that his name was Jesus. The truth is that God was giving a sign and the only faith involved in it was His alone. Quite often the Lord required people to exercise faith as a condition for healing, but when He gives signs, even though they embrace healing for some person, He just does them by His own power for His own purposes -- man's faith is not required. We are required to believe that.

This man's story is included by the Spirit speaking through John so that we may see the expectations of the Lord for His disciples, but good and necessary as it is that by His grace and power we should be made whole and strong and upright, and that we should walk abroad for all to see, it is not enough. The Lord planned a further visit to him to complete the meaning of the sign to the man. So when he went to the temple He also went and found him there. 'Go and sin no more lest a worse thing befall thee', He said to him; that is all. He did not disclose Himself or His name to the man; He just told him not to sin ever again; that was sufficient. The nameless man could then put a name to the person who had healed him and he went away and told the Pharisees that his benefactor was Jesus. It was the sin issue that decided it -- the command to cease sinning could only come from Jesus -- no-one else said such things. From this sign disciples must learn and believe that sin is not allowed by the Lord; it is banned, outlawed. If we are made whole and able to walk we must stop sinning.

This is a high standard indeed. But what else should we expect from Jesus, of whom it was said that He beareth away the sin of the world, and who said, 'Ye must be born from on high'? The people at Bethesda had expected a visitation from an angel from on high to heal them and they would have expected him to be sinless. Instead they were visited by the very God of heaven, the Man from on high; could we expect Him to be less than sinless in Himself, or that His requirements of men should be less than His own human sinlessness? If He had offered less than that He would have been less than God. By the same token, having freely provided it for us He would not have been honest if He had not required and commanded it of us; every disciple must face up to this. The fact of the matter is that Jesus' expectations of disciples is based upon His own spiritual life. He laid down His life that all the disciples may have it, and it is of this life, His life in us, that He makes all His demands.

He expects nothing but sin and total failure of a man in his first spiritual state, but when by virtue of the indwelling Spirit a man is made a saint, the Lord expects the life of Christ to be manifest; there is not a better section than this in the whole of scripture for revealing what that means. The man Jesus is revealed here in all His glory, largely by His own words, His inward states and the principles from which His life sprang and flowed and found expression in His daily words and works. It all started when the Jews sought to kill Him because He had done His works on the sabbath day; not only that, for the first time He made the claim that God was His Father. When they heard that they said He was claiming to be equal with God. They were right of course. What they did not know was that this man did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped at but on the contrary had humbled Himself to be equal with man. This amazing Man was just speaking truth. He was unique of course; no other man has ever been able to claim equality with God, but although this is so, every one who becomes a disciple of Jesus Christ must become a son of God or else all attempts at discipleship must fail. Even if Jesus Himself were to become re-incarnate and grow up into manhood and go about on earth again calling men to discipleship, we all, as they of old, would fail Him utterly. This is why He told us we must be born again.

Just as Jesus had to be humanly born in order to become a human being and learn to be the Son of man, so we need to be born of God in order to be a divine being and learn to be a true son of God. His discipleship lay in being the Son of God and yet learning to be and act as a son of man; our discipleship lies in being a son of man learning to be a son of God. He was the Son of God being the Son of Man; each one of us is a son of man being a son of God. Every disciple must be clear about this. The name Christian has largely lost its meaning now, so much goes under that name. These days a man can call himself a Christian while living as he pleases in the world and get away with anything; but let men call themselves the sons of God and immediately everything is changed. A man with that confession cannot live to please himself in this world; self-indulgence is recognised and denounced for the sin it is, and self-denial becomes the normal state of life as Jesus said it should.

The regenerate man never claims equality with God -- he has no desire for that; on the contrary he has renounced all pride of position, self-ambition has gone; he knows he must seek nothing for himself, self must be humbled voluntarily. One of the most amazing statements Christ ever made was, 'verily, verily I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of Himself but what he seeth the Father do'. It is a tremendously solemnising realisation that no-one should attempt to do anything except he or she is shown by the Father to do it. Before Jesus attempted to do anything, He waited until He saw the Father do it first; He never initiated anything. This does not mean that He was powerless of Himself to do anything; on the contrary He was all-powerful, so He did not say He could do nothing of Himself. He said He could do nothing of Himself except the Father showed Him, which is different from suggesting that He was useless. It is the

word 'except' which makes everything clear. He used it when talking about the vine, 'As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me'. The branch has to bear fruit of itself; it cannot bear the fruit of another branch, but it must bear its own fruit; it must not only bring it forth, it must also bear what it brings forth -- as Jesus said, 'Your fruit should remain'. He also said 'If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you, so shall ye bring forth much fruit; herein is my Father glorified that ye bring forth much fruit, so shall all men know ye are my disciples'.

There is no fruit-bearing except by abiding and there is no abiding apart from conscious communion, not only Himself but His words also must abide in us, evoking prayer in us along the line of His words spoken in us. Fruit-bearing is the result of prayer based on this communion which begins from the moment we abide in Him in us. Fruit is the expression of this communion. He instigates it. Jesus once said to His disciples, 'I have many things to say unto you but ye cannot bear them now', He knew it would have been fruitless to have said those things to them then; they could not at that time have borne them out into fruit. What He says must bring forth and bear fruit in us in the same way as what His Father said to Him brought forth and bore and still bears fruit in Him. His fruit remains because He abode in and was one with His Father, but He was quick to disclaim originality for any of the works He did, nor did He claim authorship for anything He said. He sought no glory for Himself from any of these, He initiated nothing; that is how He did such mighty works and spoke such glorious things.

Disciples ignore this principle of divine life and ministry to their own cost and dreadful loss. He is a brave man who claims God as his Father and then refuses to do anything except his Father shows him; there are very few men of this calibre around in these days. There is much talk of authority abroad in the land -- men who would be disciples are being taught to do what pastors and preachers and elders tell them; few are being told to do anything God says, except it first be spoken to them by an apostle or a prophet or a pastor or a teacher or an elder -- so greatly is the Holy Spirit being demeaned by many who claim to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Disciples need disciplining from others occasionally, but not by infringement upon their liberties in Christ. Every man of God is free in God and bound by Him to hold the Head directly, not by proxy or through a chain of other men. Men are in bondage to other men only when they forfeit their right to liberty by ceasing to be dependent entirely on God, as Jesus was. Such dependence as this creates interdependence of the correct order among His disciples and usurps no man's independent rights to see and hear from God for himself directly.

This is not uniquely possible with us as it was with Jesus, but that need not prevent us from learning from Him. His marvellous deportment of Himself at Bethesda's pool is a perfect lesson of this dependence, interdependence and independence. It is also the most convincing proof of His humble claim that He could do nothing but what the Father showed Him to do. The question may often have been asked, why did He only heal one man of the many hundreds who gathered that day with hope of healing? There were times when Jesus went to a city and healed all who had need of healing. Why should He withhold healing from multitudes in one place and freely give it to others somewhere else? The short answer is, because that is what His Father showed Him to do. At the sheep-market His Father showed Him to heal only one, therefore He restrained Himself from healing any more. He did not lose compassion for the multitudes, nor did He indulge in favouritism, but walked in obedience to His heavenly vision and opened ear. If He had indulged Himself in a display of power then and sought to establish a reputation for Himself in men's estimation, He would have become proud and disobedient and utterly independent with the wrong kind of independence.

He depended upon His Father's wisdom and knowledge and guidance, He did not look to His own gifts or trust His own heart or seek to fulfil His own desires; therefore His Father knew He could depend upon Him and in this mutual trust of each other interdependence was born. Father depended upon Him, He knew that Father had given everything into His hands and likewise He depended upon His Father. He had given everything into the Father's hands. This is what made Him say, 'My Father is greater than all and no-one is able to pluck them (the sheep -- remember Bethesda was the sheep-market) out of my Father's hand; I and my Father are one'. He was in His Father's hand, He had consciously placed Himself there; it was the only place of eternal safety and man on earth as He was He felt secure; He needed to, because He had to act entirely independently of everybody else. This kind of correct, vigorous independence was strongly advocated by Mary to the servants, 'whatsoever He saith unto you do it'. It was tantamount to a recommendation to change lordship. Those servants were neither hers nor Jesus'; they were the servants of the household and of some other person, but she told them to act independently of other men's orders. Doing so they were instrumental in turning water into wine under Jesus' power and sovereignty. Independence of others enables us to act entirely in dependence upon God and to enjoy the fellowship of independence with all those who do the same.

This kind of independence is not the result of pride, neither is it the arrogance bred of self-opinion; rightly practised it will always bring a sense of lowliness, that healthy kind of nothingness which assures the heart of greater things to come. Here it is in Christ's own words, 'the Father loveth the Son and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth and He will show Him greater works than these'. Jesus knew He was only at the beginning of things, that what He had seen was as nothing to be compared with what He would see. He perfectly understood that growth in stature and development of works go hand in hand and must take place in Him throughout all His human life. That is the way of God for all His children and for this reason He has included these things in scripture that we, reading them, should refuse to accept any other standard of life and conduct than that set by our Lord Jesus. He lived it out perfectly and uniquely for over thirty years and people like John, who knew Him intimately for three or so years, at the end of his life set it down in writing for eager hearts to read and for living souls to assimilate.

Should the objection be raised that three years' observation by a man who was obviously a devotee is ground for laying claim to writing a life of Jesus Christ, the directions Jesus gave John at the cross should be taken into account. From that time onward Mary became his mother and John took her to his own home. This may be because Joseph's children, her other sons, were anti-Christ and hostile to the disciples; Jesus wished His mother to be cared for by loving, loyal John and no longer exposed to harsh, cruel hearts. There may be other reasons too, but whatever they may have been makes no difference now; the point for us to notice is that this being so, who better than John had opportunity to find out all about the Lord from His conception to His death and resurrection? Mary knew Jesus for thirty years before John even attempted to write his Gospel. With such a source and such a researcher, both of whom loved Him and were filled with the Spirit of truth, there surely could not have been a better team found anywhere to compile a life of Christ. The amazing thing about it all is that John did not write any of the intimate details of Jesus' birth. His investigations convinced him that Jesus was the original Word, God's everlasting statement and final instructions to men, and that is where all begins and ends; hence the force and reliability of his Gospel.

John loved to remember and record such words as 'I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear I judge: and my judgement is just because I seek not mine own will but the will of Him that sent me'. Not only did Jesus see what He was shown, He also heard what He was told. He had the Father's complete

confidence. He saw and heard men and events and was therefore as able as any to form opinions and give judgements, but above and through all He saw and heard His Father. This of itself might be thought to be sufficient ground for claiming His judgements to be true, but He did not rely upon that. He knew that it requires more than that to guarantee correct human judgements, and He stated what it was: 'I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father'. A disciple is a man who has given up all desire to have his own way and seek his own will. He has a will, but discipleship is not a life of self-discovery by assertion of the will. It is a life of seeking Father's will in all. To be a saint of God requires the renunciation of self-will; if we do not seek the will of him who sent us we shall not do the works of Him who sent us. In fact unless we do His will he has not sent us.

Perhaps what is more important than this is the fact that unless a man is broken from self-will he cannot but seek it, even though he professes to be seeking God's. This means his judgements are worthless; they cannot be just. If a man bears witness of (from) himself his witness is not true, he must bear witness from God in order to speak truth and he cannot do that unless he hears from God. Judgements made in the affairs of men in relationship to the kingdom of God are not worth the breath by which they are spoken if these basic things are ignored. This was so true of Jesus that Father committed all judgement to Him, and we should honour Him so much that we should take Him as our example; He is the Word of God to us about life, every aspect of it.

Let us learn of Him in the matter of men's testimony. We need to do so, for we do so like people to speak well of us. These days we do not speak of testimony but of testimonials, reports, references or recommendations. All these ideas and meanings are included in what the Lord here says when referring to John Baptist, 'ye sent unto John and he bare witness unto the truth, but I receive not testimony from man'. It is so natural to desire the good opinions of others; nobody wishes to be ill-spoken of by another. All that John ever said about Jesus was good and true, it was not flattery but sincere testimony to His superiority and to deity. The Jews' actions seem to prove that they did not receive it, but whatever their opinions about Himself or John, the Lord did not receive his testimony. Such a strong stand as this may at first seem strange. After all everything John said about Him was true; why should it not be received? Jesus did not say it should not be received by man, He said He did not receive it, which is a totally different thing. It should have been received by men -- that is why it was given -- but it was not given for Jesus. It was given for the sake of men; He did not need it, neither should any son of God..

Complimentary testimonials or commendations can be destructive of spiritual life; none knew better than Jesus. It is nice to have complimentary things said about you, but if we are not careful these can become the bread of a life that is not the life of God in a man. Jesus refused them, they gender to pride. We may think that compliment is better than criticism and much to be preferred, but better criticism than compliment, for pride cannot feed on it. However, the disciple of Christ must learn to receive neither, though they both be given, and for the same reason that the Lord refused them, namely this: He did not need men's testimonies. He knew in Himself who He was and He lived in unbroken communion with the Father who showed Him all the things He needed to know. There were four that bore witness of Him -- the Father, the scriptures of truth, the works He did and the Holy Spirit, whose shape He and John Baptist had seen at Jordan. These were the sources of His confidence; they were all the witness He needed, and in measure every disciple must have them also; without them no man can possibly be a disciple of Christ.

Beside this fourfold testimony and allied to it there is something else we all must be made aware of: the disciple must not receive honour from men. He may not covet this world's honours nor should he receive them if they are offered him, though they be thrust upon him he should reject them. A man should seek the

honour that comes from God alone and not attempt to deceive himself and others by calling men's honours God's honours. We must remember that, though Christ was popular for a while, when His message and claims were finally understood He was despised and rejected of men, cast out and crucified; He is our example, and this is why He said we must take up the cross daily and follow Him. He made the cross on which He finalised His life the symbol of discipleship for all our life; there is nothing contradictory in this because, although in the nature of things He could not hang on the cross until the end, He bore the cross without flinching all His days.

We all ought to be praising God for such straight sayings as these, for they are as the essence of life. We may think this approach to human life most exacting and the standard far too high, but the Lord's very words make it all plain, 'I know that ye have not the love of God in you'. That is a terrible indictment and we cannot fail to see the implication of it: people seek honour from men because they have not the love of God in them. The inference is that the God and Father of Jesus does not love worldly, fleshly honour, so for that reason Jesus never sought it. That love in a man that makes him love this world's honours and favours is not the love of God, neither can a man seek worldly honours in any field and claim thereby he is loving God. He may profess that by it he is showing his love toward God, but as long as this word of Christ stands his profession is in vain. All such things are of self-love, God is brought no honour by them, neither is He seeking any honour from them.

All true disciples need to take these things to heart, for there is much erroneous teaching being propagated these days under the pretext of kingdom truth and related themes which is in flat contradiction to this word of Christ. These errors are presented as sound Biblical truths, but anything not based upon all Christ's words and personal example is not sound. One good test to apply to all such doctrines is whether they are taught in a futurist context or appositely based upon old covenant concepts. We are living in the 'now' of God, Christ is the Word and that Word was made flesh and that manifestation is the law of life. John understood that perfectly: 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us .... The life was manifested and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us'. Jesus was that life, He is the manifestation, incarnation, demonstration, example and ensample of it; either we confess that Jesus Christ is now come in the flesh or we do not. If we do, then we must demonstrate that fact for all to see and hear and handle; He never sought or received honour from any man, but only from God.

From the very beginning of His ministry to the very end He displayed total disinterest in praise and honour from men for anything. When the governor of the feast in Cana of Galilee praised and congratulated the bridegroom for the superb wine he served last, the Lord let him have the glory for it. He sought no honour or glory that day or any other day. He came to this earth as the servant of God, He only did what He was told; somehow He felt He did not deserve any thanks. On another occasion the multitude wanted to make Him king of the nation and when He refused to be persuaded they even went as far as to try and force Him to take the throne, but He would have none of it. He had no ambitions in that direction whatever; earthly positions and the possessions that went with them He despised and called His disciples away from them for they have no part in the kingdom of God. When the Holy Spirit came He also led the church to give away, sell, leave possessions and share what they had, and all this in the light of the Lord's return. All other practice contrary to that binds people to this world.

The amount of one person's commitment to another or to a cause is often measurable by the degree of anonymity he is prepared to accept in order that the other person or cause may be exalted or propagated as the case may be. John is an outstanding example of this, calling himself 'the disciple whom Jesus loved', rather than using his own name. He learned and published the secret of the Lord and it is sublime; here it is -- 'I am come in my Father's name'. All disciples must learn this heavenly secret, God expects us so to live Christ's life that we should bear His name, that is be and live in it, and only come or go in it. That is how it was with Jesus; He could not be His Father's Son and God's servant in His own name. He bore the name of Jesus, it was given Him and it was His; it was a common enough name for boys in His day. He was Jesus of Nazareth, but there may have been other boys called Jesus in Nazareth as well; there would almost certainly have been a Jesus of Capernaum and a Jesus of Bethany and perhaps a Jesus of every other village and town in Palestine also, just as there would have been plenty of Johns and Jameses and Marys and Marthas.

Nevertheless Jesus of Nazareth was unique, for John was not John of Capernaum, neither was Peter known as Peter of Capernaum; John was of Zebedee and Peter was of Jona, their fathers whom everybody knew; but Jesus was not Jesus of the Joseph everybody knew, He was Jesus of Nazareth. So, although He bore the name in common with many others, it was different; His Father named Him but He could not be called the Son of His Father as others could be called the son of their father, so He was called Jesus of Nazareth. He was the son of an unknown father. He became known to the majority as one of Joseph's children and was popularly thought of as that. There were those who questioned that however, and rather than accept His deity, maliciously taunted Him with such sayings as 'we were not born of fornication', plainly implying that He was. At another time they said, 'say we not well that thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil?' allowing the inference that Mary had committed fornication with an unknown Samaritan and that Jesus was the child of that union. But both Mary and Joseph bore all the misinterpretations and lies and unbelief of Jewry unprotestingly and Jesus lived on in His Father's name unperturbed; He had to fulfil His name because it was His Father's name for Him.

Jehovah, the God and Father of the nation of Israel, was also the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who of all people was the Israelite indeed. Jesus once said of Nathaniel that he was an Israelite indeed, but like Peter, his brother apostle, he was of an earthly father; this man became a disciple and followed Jesus of Nazareth for many years because he recognised Him as the Israelite indeed and he actually called Him the king of Israel; He was. This recognition and confession reveals one of the great mistakes Pilate made about Him when he wrote the title he gave Him in the accusation he placed above His head on the cross, 'This is Jesus of Nazareth the king of the Jews'. Pilate was quite wrong; to have been correct he should have written, 'This is Jesus of Nazareth the king of Israel', but then any title written by a man as a superscription about Jesus would be totally inadequate, revealing more by omission than by inclusion. 'Join all the glorious names of wisdom, love and power that mortals ever knew, that angels ever bore, all are too mean to tell His worth, too mean to set my Saviour forth' Yet the simple name Jesus declares it all, for it was all included in the person of the Man who bore it.

By definition Jesus means 'Jehovah's Saviour'; it is an adaptation of the Hebrew name 'Joshua', more properly Jehoshua, Jehovah's Saviour. The fact that Jehovah was Israel's Saviour had been kept before the minds of Israel since they had been formed a nation. That particular name of God. was introduced to them by Him through Moses when He redeemed them from Egypt and entered into covenant with them at Sinai; Jehovah is the covenant-making, covenant-keeping God. Isaiah was especially strong on the name and in his prophecy wrote much about God's redemption and salvation; so much so that at times, by

some, his book is called 'the Gospel according to Isaiah', because it is replete with prophetic references to the birth and life and death of Israel's Servant Saviour, Jehovah. Nobody at that time thought that Jehovah would beget a Son on earth and call Him 'Jehovah's Saviour', or that He would bear His Father's name with reference to and special emphasis upon redemption and salvation, but it was all written in the book. Just before His birth an angel brought this particular name of God from Jehovah the Father to both Mary and Joseph that they should give it to Jehovah the Son in a modified form, 'Thou shalt call His name Jesus'; they did and He became known among men as Jesus of Nazareth.

It was His Father's name, He had inherited it and Jesus knew this; He knew what honour He had received when He received that most excellent name from God. The Father had life in Himself and He had given to the human Son to have life in Himself and the Father did so in order that all men should honour the Son as they honoured the Father. He committed all things into the hands of the Son without reservation and He, knowing the name He bore and the responsibility that was placed upon Him thereby, sought only to live in His Father's name. As He said, He came in His Father's name; by that He meant that He had come and was living among men as Jehovah, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father', He said, 'I and my Father are one'. When He said that men said He blasphemed; He knew He was telling the truth, 'I am the truth', He told them, but they did not believe Him. When men come in their own name their fellow-creatures accept them, but when they come in another's name they have to be accepted for and as that other person. Men would not receive Jesus as Jehovah but despised and rejected Him, therefore He was always a man of sorrows, for by rejecting Him they rejected God.

When a man decides to be a disciple of Christ he has to bear all this in mind, for as surely as no man can live auto himself, neither can any disciple live as of himself. He cannot live in his own name, nor can he promote himself or seek his own glory, but must live in this world in Jesus' name. Whatever the consequences of that may be, he must not think harshly or accuse anyone if his selflessness is abused. The true follower of Christ understands the reason why men reject him and he brings no accusations against them for it; he knows they do not understand him any more than the Jews understood Jesus Christ. A disciple's glory lies in contentment to be like his Lord, to walk as a son with a father as Jesus did. To achieve this is sufficient, for it is discipleship, son-ship and sainthood and perfection indeed.

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