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What Happened at Bethany, pt. 2

Gelson Villegas

(from "La Sana Doctrina" Oct.-Nov. 2010)

The lesson of John 11 shows us, also, a sad event that happened in Bethany closely linked with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus and, of course, with their Savior. When we say "sad event" we do so from the human viewpoint, because, when we come to the end of the story, every trace of tears has disappeared and death, which had shown its ugly face in a body that had putrefied four days, was seen in a humbling defeat.

John's narrative is very interesting and extremely rich in its teaching and, without doubt, everyone of those participants merits particular attention, the Lord being the stellar figure and, thus, we make first mention of this blessed Person. So that, the circumstance of death in Bethany allows us, at the least, to note four attributes that the Lord is showing in that scene.

First, He shows His sovereignty in not reacting to circumstances based on the sorrowful condition of Lazarus, who first was sick and afterward died. The call (under the form, "*he whom thou lovest*") was urgent, but the Lord "*when he heard . . . He abode two days still in the same place where He was.*" (v. 6). Martha as much as Mary had said to the Lord that, had He been in Bethany, Lazarus wouldn't have died (vss. 21, 32), but the fact is that He, in His sovereignty, didn't intend to be where those appreciated believers wanted Him to be.

In the second place, our Savior is showing His perfect wisdom, His perfect knowledge, and control over the events. In His perfect plan, death wasn't going to exhibit its power, without the shining of the glory of God and of the Son, as we read in verse 4. Thus, no one who is saved should think or say that the things that the Lord permits, or does, are caused by "bad luck." Eternity will show us how perfect was His plan and, especially, in those things in our lives that appeared to be

extremely bitter.

Thirdly, Christ manifests his profound sympathy by means of His presence, His words, and His tears; in this, He shares the same compassionate heart of the Father, of whom it is written, "*In all their afflictions, He was afflicted.*" (Isaiah 63:9).

In the fourth place, it is evident that we meet with His absolute manifestation of supremacy over death. Christ had asked them to take away the stone from the sepulcher, not so that Lazarus could come forth, but surely, so that the terrible reality of death would be seen, and so that none could be in doubt that the raised one was the same that, decomposed and impotent, was lying prisoner in the bonds of death. Thus, before the order "**Lazarus, come forth**" death receded in a humbling defeat. It will be the same "voice of command" that will be heard when the dead in Christ will be resurrected first, according to 1 Thess. 4:16. Therefore, that of Lazarus will appear minuscule in comparison with the thousands of saved ones being resurrected then.

Also, the passage allows us to understand Martha, apparently the older of the two sisters. In the first portion considered (Luke 10:40), we saw that Martha was a woman of action. Equally, in the present passage, this truth is corroborated, for we can see that, while Mary sat still in the house, "*Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him*" (v.20). In the same way, in the next scene in the house of Simon the leper (John 12), we encounter her at the head of the list of the three, and the only thing that it says of her is "*Martha served.*"

But this present story allows us to learn a facet of Martha that otherwise we couldn't obtain, and that is that Martha also was a woman of conviction. In verse 21, she

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expresses the conviction that, if Christ had been present, her brother Lazarus would not have died; in verse 22, she says to the Lord, *"I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee"*; in verse 24, *"I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection of the last day"*; and in verse 27, *"I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."* If we take into account the attitude of Martha, busy and disturbed (on one occasion), and we compare that with the conviction she showed in the scene of death of her brother, it makes us recognize the change and growth of this believer who, along with Lazarus and Mary, developed a special fellowship with their beloved Redeemer.

Here, the passage shows us three commands or imperatives on the part of the Lord. The first command for us to see has to do with the stone that covered the sepulcher and, as we said, the Lord wanted the multitude to contemplate the macabre reality of death as much as the evidence of His victory over it. He could have raised Lazarus without taking away the stone, but, this stone would have been a stone of unbelief. Equally, He could have prayed to the Father in an inaudible voice and would have been heard in the same way (He said, *"Thou hearest me always,"*) but He also declares, *"... but I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me,"* v. 42. This attitude of Christ wasn't an isolated case, for we always note that His public acts didn't have the intention of gaining human applause or to gain worldly prominence. All was directed toward the glory of the One who had sent Him and toward the help of lost sinners. In this are we attempting to follow the steps of the Master?

Following this, the second imperative is in relation to the shroud of death that covered Lazarus. The first commandment doesn't declare to us the intensity of how the Lord pronounced it, but of this one it says that He *"cried with a loud voice."* (v. 43), saying *"Lazarus, come forth."* The force of death doesn't release the prisoner except before a greater power, in the same way that only a stronger one can overcome, tie and take away the arms and property of the strong man armed. This reality will yet be verified (in an infinitely grander scale), when the dead in Christ rise first. In the scene where death has reigned this voice will be heard again and it will be the voice of command, *"voice of the archangel and trump of God,"* as declares 1 Thess. 4:16. In a spiritual sense, as we read in Ephesians 2, He has given us life, even though we *"were dead in trespasses and sins."* The truth is the same when we associate this theme with the preaching of the gospel. If the preaching of the good news allows God to speak, it will be a voice of power that comes to those in this great collective tomb, called the world, now enveloped in the death of sin. Christ said, *"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life,"* which is corroborated by Peter when he declares

farther on, *"Thou hast the words of eternal life,"* (John 6:63, 68).

The third commandment we will see had to do with the garments of death that covered the body of Lazarus in the tomb. Of those, the Lord ordered, *"Loose him, and let him go."* The first expression ("loose him") makes us think, by way of application, that every saved one (spiritually resurrected) is liberated from those inherent ties of the past life, which not only are emblems of death, but which also impede the believer from having a useful life for Him who raised him. Also, "let him go," is an indispensable part like an element that authenticates the work of the Lord to resurrect the spiritually dead. It wasn't the will of the Lord that Lazarus remain standing in the tomb, like a statue to be observed by the multitude. He commanded, "let him go," which is to say that he would go to exercise his resurrected role in different scenes, as we sing in some of our hymns and according to Romans 6:4.

(continued)

When we would consider the love of God in Christ, we are as one approaching the ocean: he casts a glance on the surface, but the depths he cannot sound.

R. C. Chapman

Ministers and Servants

Larry Steers

In his greeting to the Philippians, Paul addressed *"all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi with the bishops and deacons"* (Phil. 1:1). Who were the deacons and what was their responsibility?

King James Version

The King James Version has stood the test of time for four hundred years. There is an enduring legacy of poetic beauty to the KJV which makes it very easy to read and to memorize. Many other paraphrases and translations have appeared, gained a degree of acceptance for a short time, and then have faded from the book store shelves.

Having read the biographical data relative to the lives of the translators of the King James Version one is impressed by their outstanding qualifications in both Hebrew and Greek. The accuracy of any translation of the Bible depends not only on the manuscripts available to the translators, but also on the facility which they have in the original languages. Also vital is their ability to translate into English using suitable words to express the thoughts and

intent of these manuscripts.

We hold tenaciously to the concept of the verbal, plenary inspiration of the original scriptures. They are inspired by the Holy Spirit, and comprise the unerring Word of the living God. However, for all of their ability, for which we must give thanks to God, the translators were only men.

Bishop Bancroft, one of the chief translators, expressing no doubt that the edict of King James to the translators laid down the basic rules to be followed. Each of the three groups of translators, those at Westminster, Oxford, and Cambridge, had a form of guiding principles set before them. Note two of these edicts:

1. "the ordinary Bible read in church, commonly called the Bishop's Bible, to be followed, and as little altered as the truth of the original will permit." Hence the Bishop's Bible did have a great influence on the KJV.

2. "The old ecclesiastical words to be kept."

The King made it abundantly clear to the translators that the Episcopal structure of the established Church, and the traditional beliefs about ordained clergy were to be reflected in the new translation.

"Diakonos" Translated

With these requirements of the King in view, we notice the word **Deacon**, found in the King James, and also in other versions. In the KJV, Diakonos is translated "deacon" three times (1Tim. 3:8, 12, and Phil. 1:1). It is apparent, that this translation has introduced a measure of confusion regarding the significance and application of the concept purposed by the Spirit of God as it applies to a New Testament Assembly. Diakonos, found thirty times in the New Testament, identifies a person who is doing a spiritual work for God. While it is translated "deacon" in the three references indicated above, for the other occurrences the translators used "minister" or "servant."

The word "deacon" identified an ecclesiastical position in the established church of the 1600's. However, it does seem the translators realized that they faced a difficulty following the King's edict to use the Bishop's Bible, and to accurately give the sense of diakonos. They fulfilled their instructions in part, and followed the Bishop's use of "deacon" in Philippians 1:1 and 1Timothy 3:12. However, they changed the Bishop's Bible's use of "deacon" in 1Timothy 3:8 to the far more correct word "minister."

It is interesting to note that John Nelson Darby (JND) in his New Translation gives "minister" in all three passages. Also, notice that the English Standard Version (ESV) follows the KJV and keeps the word "deacons." In each of the following references, the KJV uses "minister" for the Greek word diakonos. The apostle Paul describes himself as an able minister of the new testament (2 Cor. 3:6), and "but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God" (2 Cor. 6:4). He challenges the Corinthians, "are they

ministers of Christ? – I am more" (2 Cor. 11:23). Paul states to the Ephesians, and to the Colossians that by the power of Divine grace, he was made a minister (Col. 1:23, Eph. 3:7). He calls Tychicus "a faithful minister" (Eph. 6:21, Col. 4:7) and refers to Epaphras as "a faithful minister of Christ" (Col. 1:7). Timothy is a "minister of God" (1Thess. 3:2) and "a good minister of Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 4:6). He reminds the Corinthians, that these, along with Apollos, were "ministers by whom ye believed" (1 Cor. 3:5). This clearly refers to the heralding forth of the Gospel at Corinth. Phebe (Rom.16:1) is called "a servant (diakonos) of the Church."

Sir Robert Anderson in his book *Types in Hebrews*, states in the footnote on page 139 "there is no scriptural warrant for applying the word deacon" in a special sense to the seven of Acts 6:5, – the duties assigned to them pertained to the eldership, when the church was fully constituted."

Functions of "Diakonos"

Diakonos describes those who are raised up, and gifted by the Holy Spirit to serve in a spiritual capacity in fellowship with a New Testament Assembly. So often, this concept is relegated to material matters. It is evident from the use of the word as indicated above, that they are servants who minister the Word of God for the edification of the saints, and preach the Gospel for the salvation of sinners.

For this vital work the Holy Spirit has given essential qualifications in 1Tim. 3:8-13 which must be adhered to (verse 8). We embark on a dangerous path if we lower scriptural requirements. They touch the servant's personal life, verse 8, his spiritual exercise in verses 9 to 10, and his domestic responsibilities in verses 11 to 13.

In verse 8 the servant must be "grave." There is a sense of dignity and seriousness which commands the respect of others. He would be one who graces the public platform in a careful, reverent, and dignified manner, which commends the Lord he serves as an ambassador. He is not "double tongued," making a statement to one person, but giving a different view to someone else, or saying one thing but meaning something else.

The Spirit of God solemnly demands in verse 8 "not given to much wine." The sense of this statement is "not giving assent to wine." In our day, social drinking has become an issue. This is intended to lower inhibitions, loosen actions, and increase unguarded conversation, all of which is a violation of careful, reverent deportment, and self control. Paul reminded the Ephesians in Eph. 5:18, "be not drunk with wine." Mr Vine in his *Dictionary of New Testament Words* tells us that the word "drunk" is an inceptive verb. An inceptive verb emphasizes the commencement of an act. The sense is "don't take the first

drink.” Those who study alcoholism suggest strongly that the alcoholic is made on his first drink. They indicate that fifteen percent of those who do take that first taste will become an alcoholic. This individual may not be stumbling down the street inebriated, but is a person so addicted that he cannot live without his drink. This should be sobering to any who might contemplate taking any form of alcoholic beverage. Some may jump quickly on the word “much” in 1Tim. 5:8 but Paul could not write “any” since he gave allowance for medicinal purposes. Today we have doctors and medical prescriptions. Also, as well, the cup at the Lord’s Supper should contain wine.

The servant is “*not greedy of filthy lucre.*” This could be rendered “base gain” or “money getting.” He has not adopted methods bordering on dishonesty.

He must hold “*the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience*” (verse 9). “Mystery” does not mean mysterious, or a puzzle which requires evidence and clues to solve. It means truth which cannot be apprehended by the natural man, but is made known by Divine revelation to those who are enlightened by the Holy Spirit. This implies scriptural truth which can be understood, and not knowledge withheld. It embraces the body of truth, the faith. “Sundideeis” (translated “conscience”) is a compound word (sun = with, plus oida = to know) and therefore implies co- knowledge, or the witness borne to one’s conduct by their conscience. Conscience apprehends the will of God which is designed by the Creator to govern our lives along with the Word of God. It distinguishes what is morally acceptable from the sinful, commending the good and condemning the evil. A pure conscience is a cleansed conscience (Heb. 10:22), void of offence (Acts 24:16).

For a brother to engage in this great work there must be a proving time (verse 10). This corresponds to “*not a novice*” in verse 6. A new convert would not be given a Sunday School class or be put quickly on the Gospel platform, or thrust quickly into any aspect of the Lord’s work. The duration of this period of probation may vary with different individuals. However, time is required that they might be “found blameless,” that is, unimpeachable, accused of nothing that would be a detriment to their personal testimony or that would negatively affect the assembly. Why is this so vital? A poor testimony would stumble sinners, grieve the Saints and dishonor the Lord.

In verse 11, most would translate it as “*women in like manner.*” There is no possessive pronoun in this statement so “their” must be omitted. In Romans 16:1, Phebe is called “*a servant (diakonos) of the church.*” “Grave” indicates that it is with a serious sense of dignity. She is not a slanderer, one who falsely accuses others. As one who is sober, she conducts herself with aura of stateliness. This sister is “*faithful in all things.*” She is faithful to her God,

to the Word of God, to her husband, and to the assembly. This sister, moving in the fear of God, with commendable attire would be an example for younger sisters to emulate.

While various expositors look at verse 12 “*the husbands of one wife*” differently, it should be clearly stated that he has eyes for his wife only.

“Rule” in verse 12 means to go before with care and diligence. He is an example to his children as he presides over his house. No one can save their children but every father must live a godly life before their them.

Diakonos implies a servant whose service is in the spiritual realm. Every brother who stands with the Word of God in his hand to preach the Gospel must have the qualifications of 1Tim. 4:8 to 12. The same is required of one who ministers spiritual truth to believers. So often we relegate this to material matters and lose the tremendous significance of the contextual meaning of **Diakonos**.

“Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin, and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen; such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven on Earth.”

John Wesley

The Ministry of Women

In all work for God we have to be careful that we are guided by His Word. The desire for a certain work is not a sufficient warrant for undertaking it, however praise-worthy the work may be. God may commend our desire, but “nevertheless” of a divine command, as in David’s case, may stand in the way of its accomplishment. “*Thou didst well that it was in thine heart; nevertheless thou shalt not build the house*” (1 Kings 8:18-19). The willingness of the heart is fully accepted, but it may not be in accordance with the will of God. Many a sister in the Lord looks around and sees the deep need of souls, and longs to meet that need, but fails to consider the divine line of women’s service. For the sake of such we seek help of God to pen these few words.

In examining Scripture on this subject, as on all others, it will be seen that the precepts and the examples recorded in the Bible are strikingly in harmony. A comprehensive view enables us better to understand details. We would therefore

call attention to the relative position of the woman and the man in the creation, in the fall, in the family, and in the church; and we shall find principles that will clearly indicate what God's lines for His handmaidens are, and as these can never be violated without loss, they will serve as landmarks to guide obedient hearts, constraining them to leave in the Lord's hands many things that love to Him might lead them to undertake; for "to obey" is ever "better than sacrifice." But before going further, we would impress this point, that woman's service is in nowise of a lower character than man's; nay, rather, it is higher, and more personal in reference to the Lord. Woman nursed the infant Savior; she washed His feet; she anointed His person; she spread the table and ministered to His need. In such things woman stands alone, not only in reference to the Lord Himself, but in regards to the church and the world, and man makes sorry work of it when he intrudes on the line marked out for the woman. Let us, then, very briefly consider woman's position:

1. **In Creation.**—Paul's words in 1 Cor. 11:2-16 call for special attention. He there says that woman was made for the man, as a helper; not as one to go before, but to follow; not to rule, but to obey; for the man is the head, and the woman dishonors her head (i.e. the man) when she steps into his place. The woman's veil of covering is the token of this; not her head, but that of the man is seen. So, again, in 1 Timothy 2:13, we are told that "*Adam was first formed, then Eve*"; and the moral significance of this priority in creation is pointed out by the apostle; viz, that the woman is not to occupy a place of authority either as ruler or teacher.

2. **In the Fall.**—Here we see the woman taking a sorrowful lead, for it was she who was deceived by Satan and fell into transgression. Satan's assailing Eve was doubtless because he knew she might be more easily deceived than Adam, and that from her creation she was more liable to be influenced from without than the man. She was to be dependent on him, and hence her unfitness to occupy man's place. The tender feelings and emotions are more deeply implanted in the woman, and by them she is, speaking generally, apt to be influenced; the man being led more by his judgment. Though through the fall both are liable to err, the woman is the more easily beguiled, and is therefore not fitted to govern.

3. **In the Family.**—The woman's sphere is specially the house. In 1 Timothy 5:14 she is called to "*guide the house,*" or to "rule the household" (R. V.), and there is a special commendation of women as "keepers at home," or as the R. V. beautifully gives it, "workers at home." It is also well to ponder the characteristics given of the aged Christian women who are "*well reported of for good works*"—caring for children, lodging strangers, washing the saints' feet, relieving the afflicted. Again, if we turn to the family life in the Old Testament, Proverbs 31:10-31 gives us a beautiful picture of woman's home industry,

virtue, and benevolence; and the result is that her husband is known in the gates. He sits there, not she; but she helps him to be there. May Christian wives ponder this in its bearing on the church of God.

4. **In the Church.**—God's principles in creation and in redemption are in harmony, and that which is out of place in the one is out of place in the other; for God rules in both. Nature teaches what is becoming in the church. It is true that in Christ there is "*neither male nor female, neither bond nor free*"; and in resurrection there will be neither one nor the other. But as long as distinctions by creation continue, and as long as social distinctions exist, so long have we to remember them and to act accordingly. In 1 Corinthians 11 and 14, the will of God as to woman's place in the church is very marked. Silence is enjoined upon her in the church, for it would be a shame for her to speak, as it would be a shame to be shorn or shaven; she is not even to ask questions. The general conclusions, then, from the foregoing Scriptures with reference to woman's ministry are:—that God has not assigned to her the place of prominence; that her position is not that of a leader, but of a helper; that her sphere of service is in the house and not in the assembly; that her work is private in character rather than public.

Yet, as we have said, woman's service, though more hidden than man's, is a very honored one, and affords scope for all her energies, and its importance and influence cannot well be over-estimated. We would remind our readers, in reference to 1 Cor. 11, that it is from verse 17 the Apostle begins to speak of the assembly—"when ye come together," or, as in the next verse, "*when ye come together to assemble.*" This seems to show that the earlier verses in chap. 11 refer, not (specifically, *edit.*) to the assembly, but to that more private sphere which we have sought to indicate as legitimately belonging to Christian women. Within that sphere there is very much to be done, both in these lands and in far-off ones. Greatly do brethren laboring among the heathen feel the need of sisters' help, as they have usually to leave work among women altogether untouched.

Sometimes it fails to Christian women to begin a work among the heathen, or even here, and they soon feel the need of brethren's help. If they do not patiently wait till God supplies this, they are tempted to overstep the line that He has assigned to them, and virtually, though not nominally, to assume responsibilities which make simple obedience to God's Word impossible. If once the line is overstepped, the temptation to occupy the man's place increases; they become unfitted for their blessed service among their own sex, and their example misleads others. The necessary result of this must be confusion and sorrow.

May we all lay to heart God's truth in this matter, and may He give us understanding in all things.

(WIS Aug 1942)

Miriam

Hugh Thorpe

Miriam is found fourteen times in the Scriptures. Her name is not mentioned once in the New Testament. The first mention is in Exodus 15:20, the last in Micah 6:4, where God reminds His ancient people of their deliverance out of the land of Egypt and adds: *"I sent before thee Moses, Aaron and Miriam."* These three persons had a prominent part in the exodus of the children of Israel from the land of bondage. Accordingly, each had an influence with the people. The prominent places must be filled, and it is God who fits one for these places; but to seek such for ourselves, when God has not fitted us, will only end in confusion and sorrow to ourselves and others. However, on the other hand, it is well to be exercised and to humbly seek to fill the place which God has appointed us and not to shrink from responsibility.

The first glimpse we get of Miriam, although not mentioned by name, is in Exodus 2:4, where we find her standing afar off by the river's brink. Here she is a wise and dutiful daughter and loving sister, and God uses her in preserving the life of Moses. The tactful manner in which Miriam addresses the princess gave the godly mother once more the joy of embracing her precious child who was destined to become a great man of God.

The next mention of honor for Miriam is found in Exodus 15:20 where she is called a prophetess—an inspired woman. Many things had intervened since the mention of her devotion to Moses. She still seems to retain her love for and loyalty to her illustrious brother who was once the babe in the ark of bulrushes. Miriam in simple words was "in fellowship with Moses in the work of the Lord" (What a great help a godly mother, wife or sister can be, and what an encouragement a sister in the Lord can be in the assembly of the saints!)

In the last scripture mentioned we find Miriam with timbrel in hand, *"and all the women went out after her"* while she exhorted them to sing praises unto God for His marvelous salvation. What an influence she was for God at this time, and encouragement also to her brother and leader. He had much to contend with, and to discourage, as all will have who seek to go before the Lord's people. As Moses beheld the company of women led by his sister Miriam and heard their song of praise to God, he would be cheered and have reason to thank God for her.

Moses had need of this cheer, for it was not long after this when they reached Marah where the people murmured against Moses, who *"cried unto the Lord."* Moses took his task as one given him by God. This helped him to continue. One could almost wish that the history of Miriam ended at Exodus 15:20-21, but God has a true record of our lives and *"all scripture is given by*

inspiration of God and is profitable," i.e. helpful, advantageous.

In the history of Miriam we have sin and failure as well as virtues given to us. The next mention of Miriam is in Numbers 12:1. She is now recorded as interfering in family matters, and it is just here where many sorrows begin. We might enlarge upon this, as we begin to meditate on the various turns to which such unwise procedures lead. Miriam is now joined by Aaron in speaking against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married. It will be noticed that Miriam's name comes first in the incident which would indicate she was the one prime mover. By looking at the verse which follows perhaps we may see that the secret of all this was envy. Moses had a position they did not have. God honored him above Miriam and Aaron. Pride is in evidence. *"Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath He not also spoken by us?"* What emphasis was seemingly laid on that little word us. How often have evil surmisings and misunderstandings worked upon the mind until the destroyer of peace amongst the Lord's people has managed to make fancies appear as facts. However, Moses did not quarrel with Miriam or Aaron, but we read *"the Lord heard it"* Num. 12:2. What a safeguard this would be to us if we remembered that the Lord is listening. This will keep us from saying hurtful things in self justification, and will also defeat the design of Satan—who is our common foe. Moses seems to have committed himself to God in this matter.

Miriam and Aaron might have looked upon this interference about Moses' family matters as trivial, and their claim to a place of importance amongst the tribes as their "just rights" but God looked upon it differently. Their sin was greater because of the responsible position they had amongst the people. God quickly intervenes and makes known His disapproval and wrath at their conduct regarding His servant Moses. We read in Numbers 12:4, *"And the Lord spake suddenly unto Moses and unto Aaron and unto Miriam, come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out."* The word suddenly means instantly. What a solemn time as God again calls Aaron and Miriam by themselves. God now deals with the matter, and He is the One *"who is perfect in knowledge"* (Job 36:4). What a commendation God first gives of His servant Moses' faithfulness, and of His purpose to still commune with him in the future. Next those scathing words were spoken by God which would make the guilty brother and sister tremble. *"Wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses"* (Num. 12:8). After this God's judgment follows. Miriam became leprous—white as snow. (I have seen leprosy in its various forms and it is a sad sight to behold those so afflicted, and such a sad expression is seen on

their faces also, as they reflect how the dread disease has brought isolation to them.) We read that Aaron looked upon Miriam. What a comprehensive look, followed by confession of sin! It is sad when God finds it needful to lay His hand in judgment upon us ere sin is confessed. Moses now pleads with God on Miriam's behalf. This reveals the beautiful spirit of Moses. He was not revengeful. God heard His prayer and healed Miriam. However, she was shut out from the camp seven days. God gave her time to think over her sin, and all the people knew of this humiliation for they journeyed not until she was brought in again. This shows us how our sins hinder the progress of others also.

The next mention of Miriam is the record of her death "*And the people abode in Kadesh and Miriam died there and was buried there*" (Num. 20:1). We have thus no mention of any of her deeds after the record of God's judgment upon her until this record of her death. It is a solemn thought to ponder over, as we think how one act in life may make us a "castaway"—that is disapproved by God for future service. (1 Cor. 9:27).

Another mention of Miriam is found in Deut. 24:9 which brings her sin once more before us. "*Remember what the Lord did unto Miriam by the way, after that ye were come forth out of Egypt.*" Miriam in her lifetime praised God for deliverance and encouraged others to do likewise, yet she felt severely the rod of God later because of her sin. May we be content to do the work God has allotted and fitted us for, and let us not be discouraged because our place may not be as prominent as others. Let us remember if we cannot all be great we can all be godly. This is pleasing unto God.

(WIS 1923)

What is His Name? Jehovah-rohi

Joel Portman

As with all other names of Jehovah, this presentation of our God is specifically directed toward meeting the needs of His beloved people. Often we learn that the unsaved are depicted as sheep that go astray without a shepherd (Isa. 53:6) and we learn in Matt. 9:36 that our blessed Lord yearned over the people, being moved with compassion, "*because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.*" They had shepherds (John 9 in contrast to Himself in ch. 10), but they failed to care for and tend the Lord's sheep, as seen exemplified in John 9. The Lord comes as the true shepherd with the ability and the desire to fulfill all the needs of His people as sheep in the true sense of the word.

The meaning of the word translated "shepherd" is "to tend a flock," to feed, guard, care for, befriend as a companion, and rule with tenderness those who are put under his care. We find the first mention of the Lord as shepherd to his people in Gen. 48:15, where Jacob, in blessing Joseph's sons, invoked the name of the God "*which fed me all my life long unto this day.*" The word "fed" is the same word as "shepherded," as Jacob recognized that it was the compassionate hand of his God that had intervened so graciously in his long life. "The God who has been tried and proved by the old who are going to their rest, will show Himself as gracious to the young who are rising up to take their places. Jacob's Shepherd, who has been tending and leading and feeding him so long, will do just the same for the lambs of His flock. . . . The translation "who hath fed me" is too meager. We need to say, "who hath shepherded me," . . . It is a beautiful metaphor, which comes with an exquisite pathos and profound significance from the lips of a dying shepherd." (James Strahan, *Hebrew Ideals in Genesis*).

Its first reference to the nation of Israel is found in Num. 27:15-17, where Moses, upon being told by God that he would not enter the land, implores the LORD to "*set a man over the congregation which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd.*" This realization of the needs of God's people gripped his heart and he desired one to lead and care for the people after his decease. "One who has so long endeavoured to lead, and found it so difficult, whose heart and soul and strength have been devoted to make Israel Jehovah's people, can relax his hold of things without dismay only if he is sure that God will Himself choose and endow the successor. What aimless wandering there would be if the new leader proved incompetent, wanting wisdom or grace! How far about

There is something wrong when the vessel robs the treasure of its glory, when the casket attracts more attention than the jewel which it bears. There is a very perverse emphasis when the picture takes second place to the frame, and when the ware which is used at a feast becomes a substitute for the meal. There is something deadly in Christian service when the excellency of the power is of us and not of God. Such excellency is of a very fleeting kind, and it will speedily wither as the green herb and pass into oblivion.

Jowett

might Israel's way yet be, in another sense than the compassing of Edom! Before the Friend of Israel Moses pours out his prayer for a shepherd fit to lead the flock." (R. A. Watson, *Expositor's Bible*). This is, or should be, the fervent desire of all who function in local assemblies in this capacity, not only to fulfill that work as the Lord would have them, but also to see a continuation of shepherd care toward the saints of a local assembly.

Often the LORD is referred to as the Shepherd of Israel nationally. References are too numerous to consider entirely but the reader may look at Ps. 53:1, 79:13, 80:1, Isa. 40:11, Mic. 7:14, Ezek. 34. What He was to the nation in that sense, our Lord also is toward His people individually, and what saint is there who has not experienced the reality of the presence and provision of our heavenly Shepherd?

It is clear from Ezek. 34 that the Lord was sadly disappointed with the performance of those who were intended to function as shepherds of His people. In view of their failure, He promises to set them aside in judgment and to personally fulfill that needed function. In doing so, He sets before us what a genuine Shepherd should be and what they should do for God's people. There always seems to be a great lack of such shepherds who have a sacrificial love and care for the saints, and truly blessed is the assembly where such an one is functioning as the Lord enables him.

Psalm 23

David had a shepherd's heart and with love, yearned to guide and care for them, which he did so ably during his reign as king over Israel. Yet, he also recognized his need for the LORD as his own shepherd, and when he looked back on his life with all its dangers and difficulties, he clearly recognized the LORD's shepherd care. He was perfectly suited to write these words that have comforted many a heart of the saints in Ps. 23:1, "*the LORD is my shepherd.*" Literally, though some question whether "is" should or shouldn't be included, he was attributing this title to his LORD, "*the LORD my shepherd.*" "Perhaps it was written in the latter years of Israel's great Shepherd King, the forerunner and type of that Great Shepherd of the sheep, David's greater Son." (Nathan Stone, *Names of God*). David had known the need of the sheep for the shepherd's care, as he had risked his own life to defend the sheep under his care (1 Sam. 17:34-37). Whenever it was written, it expresses the genuine longing of every child of God (and perhaps that of every person, even unknowingly) to experience the sustaining and supplying care of the the Lord as our Shepherd.

Presented to us in this heart-warming Psalm is the truth of

1. What the Shepherd is. He is a real Person
2. What He provides. All that we need
3. What He purposes. Dwell forever

The key to the vastness of His provision for His own is found in the expression, "*I shall not want.*" This seems to summarize the entirety of the joyful confidence of David. As A. C. Gaebelein (*The Annotated Bible*) has expressed it, "I shall not want. . ."

Rest—for He makes me to lie down in green pastures.

Drink—for He leadeth me beside the still waters.

Forgiveness—for He restoreth my soul.

Guidance—for He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness.

Companionship—for Thou art with me.

Comfort—for Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me.

Food—for Thou preparest a table before me.

Victory—in the presence of mine enemies.

Joy—Thou anointest my head with oil.

Overrunning joy—for my cup runneth over.

Everything in time—for goodness and mercy shall follow me.

Everything in eternity—for I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

The *Companion Bible Notes* states that there are seven of these (titles of Jehovah), "experimentally referred to in Ps. 23, inasmuch as Jehovah, the "Good," "Great," and "Chief Shepherd," is engaged, in all the perfection of His attributes, on behalf of His people. –

In verse 1, we have Jehovah-jireh, (Jehovah will see, or provide.)

In verse 2, we have Jehovah-shalom, (Jehovah our peace)

In verse 3, we have Jehovah-ropheka, (Jehovah that heals) and Jehovah-tzidkenu (Jehovah our righteousness)

In verse 4, we have Jehovah-shammah, (Jehovah is there)

In verse 5, we have Jehovah-nissi (Jehovah my banner) and Jehovah-McKaddish (Jehovah who sanctifies)."

Examples of Shepherds

Five shepherds stand out in the Old Testament as examples of the LORD as our Shepherd. Abel kept sheep and suffered death at the hands of his brother (Gen. 4:2). Jacob watered the sheep (Gen. 29:10), guarded the sheep (Gen. 31:38-40) and suffered affliction along with them. Joseph fed his father's sheep (Gen. 37:2) and suffered from his shepherd brothers. Moses kept (guarded and tended) the flock (Ex. 3:1) and learned lessons that enabled him to care for Israel in all the desert experiences involving their rebellion, disobedience, and complaining. David (1 Sam. 16:11) was charged by his father with the care of the sheep and defended them from the lion and the bear (1 Sam. 17:34-36). Five shepherds that exemplify the kind of care that our Lord capably and tenderly ministers to His people,

a number that seems to be linked with grace on God's part. And how needful we are of that grace that supplies, defends and cares for us in every circumstance of life! One more shepherd stands out in the Old Testament, and that is the "foolish shepherd" of Zech. 11:15, the careless shepherd, (v. 16) and idol shepherd (v.17). It is fitting that he is the sixth and surely anticipates the evil man who will rise to cause ruin and death to the nation! So that the seventh shepherd of Scripture is our blessed Lord, and He is the perfect and genuine Shepherd in every sense of the word.

The Lord Jesus as Shepherd

We readily see and appreciate that the Bible presents our blessed Lord in three aspects as the Shepherd. First of all, He is the **Good Shepherd** in Psalm 22 and John 10. As the Good Shepherd, He stands in contrast to all other shepherds, for only HE gave His life for the sheep. Others, such as David, risked their lives to save the sheep, but only He actually gave His life sacrificially, of His own voluntary will ("*I lay down my life for the sheep*" Jn. 10:11, 15, 17, 18). That act of voluntary sacrifice for the sheep is seen clearly in Ps. 22, as that psalm expressing the deepest pathos of our Savior depicts the price He paid to purchase and deliver those who are seen in the subsequent psalms. Such a price paid demands the recognition that we have been "*bought with a price*" and are therefore not our own (1 Cor. 6:19-20). The eternal and present applications of this great truth are vital to every soul.

He is also presented as the **Chief Shepherd**, who "tends with sweet unwearied care the flock for which He bled," (John East, *Believer's Hymn Book*). This aspect is seen in Ps. 23 as well as many other portions of the New Testament. Thankfully, we know that He will never fail in His constant care and complete provision for every need of His blood-bought people!

We see our Lord also as the **Great Shepherd** who is coming in glory to reward all His people and especially those who have functioned as "under-shepherds" in assemblies. Notice Heb. 13:20 and 1 Pet. 5:2-3 along with Ps. 24. He is coming to the air for saints of this dispensation, and following that event will be the assessment of lives and service rendered to Him at the Judgment Seat of Christ. But He is also coming with relation to Israel and will vanquish their foes and deliver them, setting up that great millennial kingdom. He will then be recognized and appreciated, as Jehovah never was in their past experience, and His name will be magnified through the whole earth.

With deepest gratitude, every believer in Christ can say with David, "**The LORD is MY Shepherd.**" Many use the words of this psalm who have never known Him, but those who have trusted Him have entered into a lasting relationship with Him as their own Shepherd, and the many experiences of life have proven the reality of that promised

presence with the anticipation that when traveling days are done, "***I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.***"

The story of our Lord's dealings with the Samaritan woman is in some way full of surprises. In His approach to her, He made no reference whatever to her sin. He offered her nothing, but asked for a gift from her. To her He uttered the profoundest things that ever fell from His lips on the subject of worship. This is in itself a revelation of His perfect knowledge of the human soul. . . how under the most apparently contradictory circumstances it has inherently a consciousness of spiritual realities.

Christ appealed to her kindness. He then appealed to her curiosity. He then appealed to her feverishness and then appealed to her sin. He then appealed to her sense of God. He finally fastened upon her the hope of the Messiah.

G. Campbell Morgan (*Crises of the Christ*)

Gathered to His Name

"And to Whom shall we Go?"

Franklin Ferguson

Some, who in former days rejoiced in the precious truth of being "gathered to the Lord's name," now affirm that to declare it, in a particular sense, is to say we have a monopoly of this precious name, and is highly sectarian in spirit. For our own part and we believe many of our readers are with us—we see no good reason for discontinuing the use of the expression objected to. Certainly we gather to that worthy name alone, in the true, particular apostolic sense, having left association with religious bodies bearing human names, and where, more or less, the people are governed by rules and regulations of man's device, thus making the Word of God not strictly *the sole authority* in everything.

In the days of the apostles, when the Church of God had just been formed and multitudes were being saved and added to the Lord, what answer would be given to the question, To whose name do you gather? Truly and simply the reply would be, We are gathered to the Lord's name. "*As a hen doth gather her brood under her wings*" (Luke 13: 34), so the Lord gathered them to Himself. They belonged to none but Him, and at His call they had forsaken all—"the Jews' religion" (Gal. 1:13) and the world. This truth is just the same for all time. But how soon did the enemy of souls mar the lovely simplicity of "Jesus only," and introduce other

names and gathering centers! They had not “so learned Christ”; and Satan gained a victory, the evil results of which are with us to this day.

In the early part of last century many of the Lord’s people were led to see from His Word the simple and scriptural way of gathering, as at the beginning. They gathered to His name. To them the truth was most expressive, for the worthiness of Christ had led them to leave all, that they might be gathered around Him only. They had the Word of His grace, unfolded by the Holy Spirit, as their sole guide and authority. When questioned as to their ecclesiastical, position, they had only one answer, viz., “Gathered to the Lord’s name,” and in no party spirit was it affirmed. We, too, would rejoice in this precious knowledge that the truth of God’s Word “sanctifies,” that is, “sets apart” His people for Himself (John 17: 17) ; so that with no thought of exclusiveness or sectarian spirit would we also affirm, “We are gathered to the Lord’s name.” We cannot avoid being separated from many dear children of God for the simple reason that they prefer to stay where we cannot longer be. “*Gather My saints together unto Me*” (Psalm 50:5) ever has and ever will be the Lord’s will, and ever should it be our will too.

Not Knowing the Truth

There are, alas, many Christians found among saints gathered to the Lord’s name who have a very shallow conception of the reason for where they are, and we are afraid that in some instances there is no apprehension of it at all! At the time they were saved and received into the fellowship of the assembly there was little or no exercise of heart as to the truth of their position. Their parents were connected with the assembly, and they, as a matter of course, attended until God revealed Christ to them as their Savior and they took their place with His saints. Most likely the step cost them nothing. Others are among us because they like our way of meeting, or perhaps are drawn to some who minister the Word, or because they were saved at the gospel meeting. But if the question is put as to what Scriptural reasons have they for being in the assembly, how few can give a satisfactory answer! Though this may be the case, we are, however, thankful to God to see them all in the assembly, and may they be happy in the Lord and in the fellowship of His people; but we earnestly would like to see an apprehension of the truth which gathers us to His name.

There is the need for clear ministry of the Word bearing upon our position, equally with the truths affecting our condition as saints. And such teaching is plainly before us in the Word, and can be so presented as not to foster in the heart a feeling of self-complacency that regards itself in the spirit of “we are the people!” Nay, rather will the thought of the worthiness of Christ beget in the heart a devotion which surrenders all names and parties for Him, and a humility of mind at the thought of the great grace of God in leading us into His truth.

Leaving the Way

There is a thing which saddens our heart greatly, and that is when we see one who has companied with us turn aside and join some religious denomination, adding another name to the peerless one by which we are called. At a time in our Lord’s public ministry when many of His professed disciples could no longer endure His teaching and “*walked no more with Him,*” turning to the twelve who had been with Him all along, He said, “*Will ye also go away?*” The appeal was most pathetic, and very deeply touched their hearts. Peter answering for the rest, with a devotion that could not be questioned, replied, “*Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (John 6:67-68). This is very fine, and worthy of our earnest consideration in this day when many forsake the right path. Will the most honored name in Christendom make up for that worthy One to whom we are gathered? Indeed, No! Is the memory so short that some are forgetting how they fervently sang

Now none but Christ can satisfy,
None other name for me;
There’s love and life and lasting joy,
Lord Jesus, found in Thee!

Should trouble arise in an assembly, how readily some fall a prey to the temptation to leave and seek fellowship elsewhere. To such we may well say, “*To whom will ye go?*”

WIS June 1943

*Think it not strange, then, pilgrim, neither
faint,
Much less indulge in murmuring and
complaint,
If what you meet with in your heavenly
road
Is hard to bear; since all is planned by
God,
His child to train in wisdom’s holy ways,
And form a chosen vessel for His praise.
Now we are slow those ways to understand;
But let us bow beneath His mighty hand,
Sure that His wisdom over all presides,
His power controls, and love unerring
guides.*

J. G. Deck