

# Following Christ Through The Gospels

## Part Eight

The Lord Jesus had shared with His disciples the news of His impending death. Shortly afterwards, they were found in discussion. Was it a theological discussion? Or perhaps, regarding some form of evangelism? No, they were 'rolling their sleeves up' to ascertain who would be the greatest in His Kingdom! (Mt. 18:1) As He had so often done before, He called a child to His side and emphasised the nature of a subject of His realm (Mt. 18:2-6; Mk. 9:36f.; Lk. 9:47f.). He stressed, also, the importance of the child's simplicity and innocence as He then proceeded to narrate the stories of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son to the crowds that were gathering round Him (Lk. 15).

Turning to the disciples He told the parable of the unjust steward, - a story which the nearby Pharisees found particularly distasteful for they understood it to be referring to them (Lk. 16). Jesus then proceeded to relate the parable (story?) of Lazarus and the rich man, - the conclusion of which bore not-a-passing resemblance to the self-righteous Pharisees.

As Jesus travelled to Jerusalem to privately observe the Passover feast He entered into the Temple to teach ((Jn. 7:14ff.). Once again, His teachings were construed as being of the Devil (v.20). However, the people were divided as to His authenticity, - some accepted His Messiahship, others refuted it. Note 7:37 and its comparison to 4:13f.. Note also the mention of Nicodemus (v.50) and the nefarious comments from the Pharisees. The Pharisees were again at hand to judge Him when they brought the adulterous couple to Him (Jn. 8:1-11).

As Jesus presented Himself as "the Light of the world" (Jn. 8:12) He rounded on the Pharisees for their unacceptance of the Old Testament passages referring to Him. Matters were made worse when He stated, "Before Abraham was, *I am*" (Jn. 9:58). Nevertheless, while still in Jerusalem He continued His works of healing. In particular, He healed the blind man at the pool of Siloam (Jn. 9:1-7), and once again, the Pharisees sought to use it as an example to turn the people against Him. Also worthy of note is the fact that if Jesus had stopped to answer the criticism of all His opponents, He would have achieved very little in His ministry! He then referred to Himself as being the Good Shepherd, ... which only served to further confuse and divide some of the Jews. As a consequence some of them reverted to stoning Him, but, in the will of God, they were hindered. Jesus then entered into the countryside of Jordan (Mt. 19:1,2; Mk. 10:1,2; Jn. 10:40).

However, ... the Pharisees followed Him. This time they 'tempted' Him regarding the question of divorce (Mt. 19:1-9; Mk. 10:1-12). How His heart must have warmed, though, when the little children were brought to Him to receive His blessing (Mt. 19:13ff.; Mk. 10:13ff.; Lk. 18:15ff.).

As He, once again, travelled towards Jerusalem, - and in to Bethany in particular, - He was met by the sad news of the illness and subsequent death of His friend, Lazarus (Jn. 11). However, He demonstrated His power when Lazarus was raised from the dead. Nevertheless, the Pharisees were in a state of panic, and they made up their minds to find some way whereby they could put Him to death (Jn 11:47-54). Jesus, along with His disciples, then sought the privacy and the quietness of the wilderness, going to a town called Ephraim.

Later, He was approached by an influential young man who fell at His feet and asked two of the most important questions, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" and "what lack I yet?" Jesus watched that young man reject Him, and how it saddened His heart (Mk. 10:21,22; also Mt. 19:16-22 and Lk. 18:18-24). "How is it possible for *anyone* to be saved, then?" asked the disciples. Jesus replied that only the work of God can accomplish such a transformation (Mt. 19:26; Mk. 10:27; Lk. 18:27). Furthermore, great promises were to follow such as wholly committed their lives to Him (Mt. 19:28-30; Mk. 10:30f.; Lk. 18:28-30).