

John 1:38-39 (Daniel R. Macy) 167988

The Christian Shepherd: 2001, "Master, Where Dwellest Thou?" (1:38-39)

John 1:38-39

John stands with two of his disciples. Someone captivates his attention; an Object fills his soul. He exclaims, "Behold the Lamb of God!" (John 1:36).

How does John's delight affect his two disciples? As a magnet exerts its irresistible force on nails that are near it, so these two are attracted to this blessed One and they follow Him.

Is that a problem for John? Is he jealous when some of his disciples leave him to follow Jesus? Not in the least. His whole mission is to point souls to Christ. The priests and Levites ask him, "What sayest thou of thyself?" and he answers, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord" (John 1:22-23). "He must increase, but I must decrease" (ch. 3:30). John is content to be nothing so that this One, of whom he speaks and to whom he points others, receives all the glory.

When Jesus sees them following Him, He asks them, "What seek ye?" (ch. 1:38). He tests the depth of their reality in leaving their former leader to follow Him.

Their answer is most beautiful. They say to Him, "Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest Thou?" (vs. 38). They address Him as the One supremely worthy to teach them. From now on, they will follow Him.

"Come and See"

How does the Lord reply to their question? Simply three words: "Come and see" (vs. 39). When Ananias is given instructions to visit the young believer Saul, he is told the name of the street in Damascus where Saul is staying (Acts 9:11). Cornelius sees in a vision the command to send for Peter, and he's told the town, the owner of the guest house, his occupation, and a description of the location of the house (Acts 10:56). Why doesn't the Lord Jesus give a similar identification? Why does He only respond with "Come and see"?

First, He desires companionship, and that can only be enjoyed by following close to Him. Second, He is the leader, and He desires that His disciples—His followers—stay in constant dependence on Him so that direction for every step comes from Him alone. And third, He wants to teach us that where He dwells—where He abides—is not a question of a physical address, but rather He wants to teach us moral principles that may characterize His people of any age, so that they—we too—might experience the joy of His presence.

What is the response with these two who were formerly John's disciples? They go and see where He dwells, and they "abode with Him that day" (vs. 39). Those five words—"Behold the Lamb of God!"—are all it takes to completely fix their attention on the Lord Jesus, and their feet eagerly follow Him so that they can be with Him.

"It was about the tenth hour" (vs. 39). The number "ten" in the Scriptures pictures man in his responsibility before God. Here, the reference to the tenth hour—and the implication that they stayed from that point on to the end of the day—suggests that we must come to the realization that man in responsibility has completely failed and that the only place of peace and rest for our souls is found in the Man Christ Jesus.

Let us, then, follow Him, through His Word, and seek to learn something of the moral characteristics of that place where He dwells.

The Majesty of His Person

"Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isa. 57:15).

"Our Lord Jesus Christ: which in His times He shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting" (1 Tim. 6:14-16).

We are going to find, as we trace the footsteps of this blessed Man, that He is accessible and intimate. He shares the secrets and feelings of His heart with those who abide with Him. He graciously and tenderly sympathizes with their cares, sorrows and needs.

But we must never forget the majesty of His Person. He is God and man in one inscrutable Person. He is "the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:8). He is "over all, God blessed forever" (Rom. 9:5). "Who being the brightness of His [God's] glory, and the express image of His person" (Heb. 1:3). He inhabits eternity, and His "name is Holy" (Isa. 57:15). As God, this glorious Person alone possesses—in Himself—immortality and dwells in unapproachable light (1 Tim. 6:16).

Worship and Reverence

This holy One deserves our worship and our reverence. The Apostle John was rebuked for attempting to worship an angel and was told that worship belongs only to God (Rev. 22:8-9), but numerous individuals prostrated themselves before the Son of God when He was on earth. Their worship was always accepted. Surely our first thought, when we are conscious of being in the presence of this blessed Person, ought to be to render honor and worship from the overflow of our hearts for the majesty of who He is.

It well becomes us to follow, in spirit, the instruction given to Moses when he was in God's presence: "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Ex. 3:5). Joshua, too, was told to take the same, low place (Josh. 5:15). Isaiah calls it the "contrite and humble spirit" (ch. 57:15). It is a heart that is not occupied with itself at all, but "Christ is everything" (Col. 3:11 JND). On the mount of transfiguration, after Peter's suggestion was corrected by the voice out of the cloud, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him," the disciples "fell on their face, . . . and when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only" (Matt. 17:5-8).

Companionship

Look what He then tells us: "I dwell . . . with him" (Isa. 57:15). He longs for companionship and He vouchsafes it to those who acknowledge the deity of His Person and take their proper place before Him. In eternity He will surround Himself with children—those who are "made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13)—and He wants us to experience and enjoy the blessing of nearness to Himself right now and all the way home.

He also promises "to revive the spirit . . . to revive the heart." What sympathy and comfort we find in the presence of this One. Mary and Martha send for Him when their brother Lazarus is sick, and they take refuge at His side after he dies (John 11). When Peter's mother-in-law is sick, "they tell Him of her" (Mark 1:30). Not only does He heal sickness and even raise the dead, but He also lifts the fainting heart and boosts the drooping spirit, like the two disappointed, downcast disciples who were going away from Jerusalem toward Emmaus. "They said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke 24:32).

What a Saviour! "To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever" (Jude 25). "Awaiting the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13 JND).

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