

THE FUTURE OUTLOOK

J. F. JOHNSON Editor & Publisher
 MISS EMMA P. JOHNSON News Reporter
 L. A. WISE Staff Photographer

Make all checks payable to and mail to:

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LBJ--A Sign Of Greatness

A house divided, shall fall. Rome fell! France fell! Why? Because of greed, jealousy, selfishness, hatred, and suspicion. The few rich kept the many poor in hunger and slavery. America has now reached that status and President Lyndon B. Johnson saw the writing on the wall. He saw dissension; he saw race and ethnic division; he saw politics using America for its own greed and pocket-book. President Johnson became President because of the assassination of President John Kennedy. But dating back before the inheritance of the Presidency was a basketball of troubles that L. B. J. had nothing to do with. The war in Vietnam was not of his making and the difficulties arising from this tragic born of another regime was pushed in his lap and he did the best he could with a situation that was impossible. No one person in the entire world could resolve this war that was taking its toll in young lives and untold suffering and billions of dollars down the drain. So everyone, dove and hawk, looked for a scapegoat and L. B. J. was their pigeon. With great courage he withstood criticism, persecution, vilification, insults by Democrats and Republicans alike. If it had involved only him, he could have taken all of the vilification, but no, President Johnson put America first and himself and politics last. He didn't take the easy way out; it took guts. That's what it takes to be a real man. L. B. J. — all the way, showed himself to be a man tall in the saddle.

L. B. J. didn't make the ghettos and slums; he inherited them, but he did more on the fight against slums and ghettos than the last ten Presidents. President Johnson has been the greatest leader and President that America has known, where segregation, discrimination and injustices against the Black man were concerned. More black men have been hired in key positions during L. B. J.'s tenure than the last five Presidents combined.

President Johnson, a positive action President, The Great Society for Black and White alike against slums, better education, more jobs created, equal opportunity programs, fight for open housing in spite of the tremendous real estate, Senate and Congressional leaders lobby against his program. The Civil Rights program against terrorism, lynchings, and bombings. Many great things could be attributed to President Johnson—too numerous to be mentioned. It took a noble gesture on not only a peace effort, but his declining to run for the Presidency that really proved to the many skeptics and scoffers and all of America that we had a real President at the helm.

It takes at this time a personal prognostication, a personal look into the future and so state, that all Americans will see the little and small stature of other candidates for the Presidency, who would try to stand and fill L. B. J.'s shoes and after comparing, realize their mistakes of the blows below the belt and then you will see the snowball, you will see a great clamoring, a movement, if you pledge a National Draft, A Popular Draft of L. B. J. all the way, for President and Peace in Vietnam in 1968. As of this writing, Monday and Tuesday April 1st and 2nd of this article. The following day, Wednesday, April 3rd, an announcement came over the radio, stating that Hanoi would be ready for peace talks, therefore the Peace in Vietnam in the 1968 Prophecy is now in the making and look forward to a National Popular draft of Johnson also Prophecied to take place at this writing.

The Trouble Shooter
—by Ricardo Raffles

Poet's Corner

I shall have peace, when I go home."
 "When I go home may quiet reign
 And nothing will I say or do —
 To cause regret or needless pain
 In those I love when I go home.
 When I go home, my glory Crown
 When heaven's host to Him bow down,
 Will be that Christ is there enthroned;

This Week's Sunday School Lesson

JESUS ACCEPTS THE CROSS What Is Our Concern?

The story of a person's growth from infancy to adulthood is marked by the manner in which he meets and handles the threats to his life.

A hungry baby does not know why he cries. He knows only that he is uncomfortable. His crying stops when his hunger is satisfied with food. A child grabs a playmate's toy. The one whose toy is taken strikes back. Something that is his has been taken, and somehow this loss threatens him.

A little later in life the individual's struggle to have his own needs met and to defend what is his may express itself in less physical forms, as in a desire to excel in studies, to win in games, to be better than his fellows. Somehow this striving is bound up with an inner urge to prove something about himself, to safeguard himself against threats to his very being.

Finally we come to a realization that the skills we gain in dealing with these day-to-day threats will not ultimately protect us against death. To be a human being is to face the threat of death. How do we deal with this threat?

The issue of this session is this: How can we learn to meet these threats in the light of our Christian faith?

Before You Read the Scripture

For the background of our study we need to examine John 18 and 19. These chapters carry John's account of the events in Jesus' life from the end of the Last Supper through his trial, crucifixion, and burial.

To more fully understand John's record of these events, we need to compare his account with the reports of the same period in the other Gospels: Matthew 26:36 through 27:66; Mark 14:32 through 15:47; Luke 22:39 through 23:56.

As you make this comparison, you will discover that although John follows in the main the pattern of events as related in the earlier Gospels, his account does vary at a number of points. Among these variations are the day on which the Last Supper occurred and, therefore, the day of the trial; the time Jesus went to the cross; the presence of the women at the cross (including Jesus' mother); and the omission of any reference to help from Simon of Cyrene in the bearing of the cross. You will find others.

Jesus' Attitude

One important difference between John's account and that of the other Gospels is that, for John, Jesus' inner struggle had already taken place. He knew the cross was coming. He knew it was the will of his Father, and he spoke of joy instead of inner conflict. As evidence of this, notice that John omits Jesus' struggle in Gethsemane. According to the other Gospels, Jesus prayed to be spared the cup. He recoiled from the threat of the cross.

Who Was Responsible?

A second basic difference to be noted in John's account is that John lays more responsibility for Jesus' death upon the Jews than do the other Gospel writers. He even indicates that Pilate turned Jesus over to the Jews to crucify.

What are we to make of John's concern to place responsibility for the Crucifixion upon the Jews? We need to remember that by the time this Gospel was written, the separation of the Christian movement from Judaism was almost complete. John's account of the Crucifixion simply reflects this break between the two faiths and the antagonisms that accompanied it.

The fact that John placed responsibility for the Crucifixion upon the Jews does raise the question as to how much influence this Gospel account may have had on the bitter conflict that developed between Christians and Jews. Perhaps at this point we need to look closely to the first three Gospels for a corrective. These Gospels point the finger of blame not at the Jews but at certain leaders of the Jews.

What the Scripture Says

The Scripture for today is John 18 and 19. Selected verses are printed below.

John 19:17-30

17 So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha. 18 There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. 19 Pilate also wrote a title and put it on the cross; it read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." 20 Many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. 21 The chief priests of the Jews then said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" 22 Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

23 When the soldiers had crucified Jesus they took his garments and made four parts, one for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was without seam, woven from top to bottom; 24 so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfil the scripture,

"They parted my garments among them,
and for my clothing they cast lots."

25 So the soldiers did this. But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" 27 Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

28 After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfil the scripture), "I thirst." 29 A bowl full of vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and help it to his mouth. 30 When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished"; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Memory Selection: I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.

—John 12:32

How We Understand The Scripture

The words of our printed

Scripture are so familiar that there is always danger we will fail to hear what they have to say to us. To help offset this danger, let us examine closely five brief details from John's account of the Crucifixion.

Carrying His Own Cross

Jesus carried his own cross. John, as we mentioned, does not report that Jesus stumbled under its weight and had to have the help of a passer-by. But whether or not he had help in getting it to Golgotha, certainly Jesus endured alone the agony of being lifted up on the cross. He faced the responsibility of the cross and accepted it.

A Crucified King

Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." The Jewish authorities asked that it be changed to read, in effect, "He claimed to be King of the Jews." But Pilate insisted that the sign said just what he wanted it to say.

Probably John, even with the perspective that followed sixty years of amazing growth by the Christian movement, could not fully comprehend the irony of this contemptuous gesture. What was intended as a clever evaluation of a people's hope for freedom turned out to be history's greatest misjudgment of the significance of an event.

Jesus' Concern for His Mother

Only John reports that Jesus' mother was among those at the cross and that Jesus gave his mother into the care of "the disciple whom he loved." Since this disciple, whether John or another, is regarded as being either the author of this Gospel or the author's source of information, we can recognize how this incident was preserved.

But our author may well have had another purpose for his use of this incident. Perhaps it was another bit of evidence to contradict the heresy that Christ's human life was only an appearance. What better contradiction than to report that his flesh-and-blood mother was present at the crucifixion of her son!

However, we might better simply let the account speak to us in our humanity. Jesus on the cross, suffering physically and mentally, could think of the need of his mother.

Jesus' Real Humanity

John, alone of the Gospel writers, reports that Jesus said on the cross, "I thirst." Matthew and Mark report that before he was crucified, he was offered drugged wine. This he did not take. But all four Gospels speak of his being offered vinegar while he hung on the cross.

Jesus' thirst was a physical thirst. It came in spite of Jesus' sure knowledge that he had accomplished all he had been sent by the Father to do, that what was happening to him was the result of his doing the will of him who sent him.

Again this incident is evidence of Jesus' genuine humanity. The Crucifixion was not of a God play-acting at being human. If Jesus was truly God, he also was truly man.

"It Is Finished"

John reports that when Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished," and bowed his head and gave up his spirit. Luke gives a deeper dimension

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