

## Bible Characters for Your Weekly Bible Study

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**For week of August 1 - 7, 2011**

**SUBJECT: SPIRIT**

**Spencer, Hilda M., “Spirit is positive,”** Sentinel, Vol. 51 (12 March 1949), p. 454.

--In 1866 Mary Baker Eddy, a lifelong student of the Bible, received a instantaneous healing of an injury pronounced fatal by the physicians.

- While lying on what her friends thought to be her deathbed she called for her Bible and read therein the account of the healing of the man sick of the palsy (Matt 9).

---Catching a glimpse of the underlying spiritual law of God, she was healed.

--Christ Jesus declared (John 4:24), “*God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*”

- The Christian Scientist accepts Spirit as his Principle and abides in the morale of Christian Science.

---He reasons from the standpoint of perfection—perfect God and perfect man.

- Starting with Spirit, Truth, instead of matter, he places himself under God’s law of harmony, and with joy finds that “*Spirit is positive*” and is All-in-all.

**GOLDEN TEXT:** Spirit, not the flesh, gives life (John 6: 63 [to 1<sup>st</sup> .])

RELATED SCRIPTURE: John 1: 14; 3: 6

TIME LINE: April, 29 AD in Galilee; The Year of Opposition and Development (Jesus’ 3<sup>rd</sup> year of ministry)

“John can use ‘flesh’ (and ‘world’) in more than one sense (see 1:14; 3:6). On the one hand, the Johannine Jesus uses ‘flesh’ to insist on the reality of the incarnation (1:14). On the other hand, these words coming so quickly after 6:52-58 show that ‘flesh’ there is not crudely literal, that the Eucharist does not function mechanistically [*the flesh is no help at all*, v.63 ESV]. (People NT Commentary)

**Cheney, Albert M., “The Quickening Spirit,”** Sentinel, Vol. 46 (18 March 1944), p. 441.

--Christ Jesus, the master Christian and best friend of mankind, was the most spiritually-minded man ever to dwell upon earth.

- With genuine humility the Master declared that God, Spirit, Love, accomplished all the great and good works of healing and redemption, which were quickly and abundantly in evidence whenever and wherever those in need sought his loving aid.

--The carnal mind plays no part in the spiritual healing of sin, sickness, or death.

- “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.”

---This positive statement of the Master is clear and definite.

- It is in perfect accord with the declaration of Mary Baker Eddy, to be found in her great book, “The First Church of Christ, Scientist and Miscellany,” where we read (p. 357), “Spirit is infinite;

therefore *Spirit is all*. 'There is no matter' is not only the axiom of true Christian Science, but it is the only basis upon which this Science can be demonstrated."

**SECTION III: Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus** (John 3: 1-8)

RELATED SCRIPTURE: John 7: 50; 19: 39

TIME LINE: The Year of Inauguration (Jesus' 1<sup>st</sup> year of ministry) in Jerusalem, 27 AD. Written c. 80-90 AD.

Perhaps one of the most appealing aspects of the life of Jesus is that of his personal interviews with different individuals from various strata of society and religious backgrounds. "This scene contrasts Nicodemus' earth-bound understanding with Jesus' wide perspective on God and the Spirit." (Oxford Bible Commentary)

"The ministry at Jerusalem, though disappointing was not fruitless." (Dummelow Commentary)  
"Having heard that Jesus knows the motives of the kind of person...who has placed faith in him on the basis of 'signs,' the reader is immediately introduced to such a person...Nicodemus. The dialog becomes an illustration of the discussion between those who apparently share the same identity (both are Jewish teachers/leaders) but do not read the 'signs' in the same way." (Eerdmans Commentary)

"The use of the plural pronouns 'you' and 'we' (3:2, 7b, 11-12), intermingled with the singular 'you' and 'I,' suggests that this dialogue between two individuals represents a conversation between two groups or communities: the Johannine Christians represented by Jesus, and Christians hoping to stay within the synagogue represented by Nicodemus." (Theological Bible Commentary)

"In these opening verses [1-2], Nicodemus is introduced as a man of the Pharisees and a ruler of the Jews." (King James Bible Commentary)

"While some have thought that Nicodemus' visit at night [v.2] was somehow figurative of the spiritual darkness of his heart (cf. 1:5; 9:4; 11:10; 13:30) or that he decided to come at this time because he could take more time with Jesus and be unhurried in conversation, perhaps the most logical explanation lies in the fact that, as a ruler of the Jews, Nicodemus was afraid of the implications of associating openly in conversation with Jesus." (MacArthur Bible Commentary)

*Jesus answered*, v.3: "Jesus seems to give an abrupt or even rude response to Nicodemus' respectful approach, but John's point is that Jesus is 'from above,' that he and Nicodemus belong to two different worlds (see 2:4), and that Nicodemus (and everyone else) must be born from above before they can grasp Jesus' true identity." (People's NT Commentary)

"A teacher himself, Nicodemus understood the rabbinical method of using figurative language to teach spiritual truth. He was merely picking up Jesus' symbolism [v.4]." (MacArthur Bible Commentary)

"Jesus referred not to literal water here [v.5 *born of water and of the Spirit*], but to the need for 'cleansing' (e.g., Ezek 36:24-27)." (Ibid)

"The nature we inherit from our parents [*that which is born of the flesh*, v.6] is corrupt; the new nature which comes with the new birth is holy and spiritual." (Dummelow Commentary)

"The wind [v.8] (Gr. *Pneuma*) which is the same word used for spirit cannot be seen or explained. The wind can only be heard or observed in relation to its effect." (King James Bible Commentary)

### **Nicodemus**

[Nick oh dee' mus]('conqueror of the people')

#### **(Abbreviated)**

Nicodemus was "a Pharisee and a 'ruler of the Jews,' mentioned only by John." (Baker Encyclopedia) "He was a devout Jew and a member of the Sanhedrin, the governing body of Judaism. He had a Greek name, but at that time this was very common among Jews, even among the faithful Pharisees." (All the People of the Bible) He is first noticed as visiting Jesus by night for the purpose of learning more of his doctrines, which Jesus then unfolded to him, giving prominence to the necessity of being "born again." "Jesus explained to him the nature of the new birth and the love of God for the world, which prompted him to give his only begotten [son] that all who accepted him in faith might have eternal life." (New Westminster Dictionary) "Nicodemus' coming at night suggests his timidity and his trek from the darkness of his own sin and ignorance to the light of Jesus (John 3:2)." (Holman Bible Dictionary) "In Nicodemus a noble candor and a simple love of truth shine out in the midst of hesitation and fear of man." (Peloubet's Bible Dictionary)

"Nicodemus was a wealthy, educated, and powerful man—well respected by his people and a descendant of the patriarch Abraham. He was described by Jesus as "the teacher of Israel," implying he was well trained in Old Testament law and tradition. Jesus told Nicodemus that physical generation was not enough, nor could his descent from the line of Abraham enable him to be saved. Only as a person has a spiritual generation—a birth from above—will he be able to see the kingdom of God." (Who Was Who in the Bible)....

**Howard, Lynn H.**, "[Jesus' answer to Nicodemus](#)," *Sentinel*, Vol. 87 (22 July 1985), p. 1224.

--Often, the Gospels say, crowds followed Jesus.

--Sometimes there were Pharisees in the crowd.

- They were highly educated men, an elite group who taught and interpreted Jewish religious laws.

--Nicodemus, a Pharisee who was also a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish governing council, was impressed by Jesus' works of healing.

- He came by night to visit Jesus.

---By coming privately at night, he probably hoped the other Pharisees wouldn't know he was visiting Jesus and therefore wouldn't condemn his action.

--Jesus was teaching Nicodemus the truth that is the basis of healing—that man's origin is God, infinite Spirit.

--So being "*born again*" is not just a one-time illumination but a daily awakening to what true substance is.

**Smith, Annie B.**, "[Not the flesh, but the Spirit](#)," *Journal*, Vol. 89 (April 1971), p. 171.

--One Bible account of the experience of Christ Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane records him saying, "...*Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.*"

- Referring to this experience, Mrs. Eddy writes, "*When the human element in him struggled with the divine, our great Teacher said: 'Not my will, but Thine, be done!' — that is, Let not the flesh, but the Spirit, be represented in me.*"

--During a time of extreme mental anguish I found myself crying, both silently and audibly, "Oh, my God, no!

- Not this! Why me? Why this?

---Oh, dear God, let this cup pass!"

• I was not distressed merely by the thought of having to face a particularly trying situation but by the thought of "*this cup*" in particular.

---It seemed at the moment the worst possible thing that could confront me, and I was inwardly struggling and pleading, "Give me something else to meet—anything—but please, '*remove this cup.*'"

--To establish the conscious awareness of the spiritual fact that it is "not the flesh, but the Spirit" which is represented in man—which forever identifies him and sustains his only real being—let us, in the words of a loved hymn, "*Be glad, give thanks, rejoice.*"

**SECTION IV: Jesus gives Old Testament examples to contrast and chastise the people's unbelief**  
(Luke 4: 14, 16-19, 21, 22, 24-26, 28-32)

RELATED SCRIPTURE: I Kings 17: 8-24; II Kings 5; Isa 58: 6; Isa 61: 1, 2

PARALLEL GOSPELS: Matt 4: 12; Mark 1: 14,15; Luke 4: 14,15; John 4: 3

TIME LINE: At the crossover of the Year of Inauguration in the synagogue at Nazareth to the Year of Popularity in Capernaum. Written c. 60-61 AD.

"From Judea...Mark along with Matthew and Luke, passes directly from the temptation to the beginning of the Galilean ministry [Mark 1:14], skipping Jesus' intervening ministry in Judea...." (MacArthur Bible Commentary) However, "John recorded a fairly extensive ministry in Jerusalem and Judea (John 2:12-4:1). Because of this, news of Him quickly spread [Luke v.14]." (Ibid)

"Luke pictures Jesus attending ("as was his custom") the synagogue ([Luke] 4:16) and reading scripture: "The Spirit...has anointed me to bring good news to the poor" (...quoting Isa 61:1-2)." (Eerdmans Commentary)

"Jesus' pronouncement is a fulfillment of prophecy." (Ibid) His references to the Old Testament prophets, using the Greek names of the New Testament, illustrate this fulfillment.

"The text Luke pictures Jesus as reading [*the Spirit of the Lord is upon me*, Luke 4:18] is a combination of Isa. 61:1-2 and 58:6, omitting Isaiah's announcement of the coming day of vengeance. The reading is from the Septuagint version (the LXX), the Greek translation used in Luke's church, which differs from the Hebrew text of Isaiah translated in our English Bibles." (People's NT Commentary)

"This [Luke v.28 *filled with wrath*] is Luke's first mention of hostile opposition to Christ's ministry. What seems to have sparked the Nazarenes' fury was Christ's suggestion that divine grace might be withheld from them, yet extended to Gentiles." (MacArthur Bible Commentary)

*Came down to Capernaum*, Luke v.31: Jesus never returns to Nazareth after [Luke] 4:30, but makes Capernaum the center of his Galilean ministry, though Capernaum also finally failed to respond (Luke 10:15)." (People's NT Commentary)

*His word was with power*, Luke v.32: Jesus "does not establish the truth of his teaching by quoting the Bible, tradition, or other authorities such as the rabbis, but speaks directly as the anointed prophet of God who is also God's [son]." (Ibid)

Esaias....Elias/Isaiah...Elijah/Prophets

“Jesus in the synagogue on the sabbath day, uses an OT passage [v. 17] to explain both himself and the nature of the salvation that God is bringing through him. The passage is actually a composite one, taken from the LXX version of Isa. 61:1-2 into which is fitted a clause, ‘to let the oppressed go free,’ from Isa. 58:6. Luke’s Jesus presents himself as the fulfillment of Isaiah’s Spirit-filled prophetic figure who proclaimed God’s eschatological redemption.” (Oxford Bible Commentary)

“Jesus defends his ministry to outsiders by offering two Old Testament stories [only one of which is included in this week’s Lesson-Sermon]....Elijah [v. 26] (I Kings 17: 8-14)...took God’s favor to non-Jews. That [this story was] in their own Scriptures and quite familiar perhaps accounts in part for the intensity of their hostility.” (Interpretation series)

**“a woman [of Zarephath] that was a widow”**

“Both the widow of Zarephath (1 Kin. 17:8-24) and Naaman the Syrian (2 Kin. 5) were Gentiles. Both lived during times of widespread unbelief in Israel. Jesus’ point was that God bypassed all the widows and lepers in Israel, yet showed grace to two Gentiles. [vv.25-27]” (MacArthur Bible Commentary)

**Brown, Mrs. Clara Armitage** (CSB), **“The Power of Invincible Spirit,”** *Sentinel*, Vol. 46 (23 December 1944), p. 2051.

--In “Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures,” Mary Baker Eddy says (p. 473), “*God is everywhere, and nothing apart from Him is present or has power.*”

- This power, then, is everywhere because God is everywhere.

---Power is absolute because God is absolute, and this absolute power, emanating from infinite good, must be unvaryingly good.

--This power is eternally in action to enforce God’s law.

- It is the power Jesus understood and used in his ministry.

--The power of Spirit is intelligent, vital, invincible, and without cessation.

- It is always present, always ready.

---Because it is omnipotent, it knows no struggle, no resistance or counteraction.

**Exo, Arnold H.** (CSB and Lecturer), **“The Prophet and His Prophecy,”** *Sentinel*, Vol. 57 (5 March 1955), p. 397.

--A true prophet is one of mankind’s greatest benefactors.

- He not only discerns the spiritual facts of being, but by means of his spiritual discernment he overcomes the material lies of existence, such as sickness, sin, and limitation. On page 593 of the Christian Science textbook, “Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures,” Mary Baker Eddy defines “prophet” as, “A spiritual seer; disappearance of material sense before the conscious facts of spiritual Truth.”

--The true prophet in any age spiritually glimpses the absolute supremacy and perfection of God and the consequent perfection, security, and peaceful nature of every one of God’s ideas.

--He who scientifically foretells Truth is unfailingly rewarded with the prompt forthcoming of Truth.

- In this coincidence of the perception of Truth and its resultant healing the inseparable oneness of the prophet and his prophecy is demonstrated.

**Heywood, Miss Evelyn F.** (CSB, Lecturer, and Associate Editor), “**The Spiritual Seer.**” EDITORIAL, *Sentinel*, Vol. 42 (24 August 1940), p. 1034.

--On page 593 of “Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures” Mary Baker Eddy thus defines the “*prophet*”: “A *spiritual seer; disappearance of material sense before the conscious facts of spiritual Truth.*”

--To those assembled in the synagogue at Nazareth, the Master said, “*This day is the scripture fulfilled in your ears.*”

- The seers of the Old Testament had seen a far-off immunity from ill, a future Saviour; they had predicted good while accepting its present incompleteness and imperfection.

---They had looked to events rather than to the clarity of their own spiritual vision, the consecration of their individual lives, for final deliverance.

--The prophets of the Old Testament were as confident of the coming of evil with its attendant wrath and vengeance as they were of the final deliverance of God’s people.

- They brought comfort, but also terror, to the people who in piety or mere superstition were swayed this way and that, as optimism and hope alternated with pessimism and despair.

### **SECTION V: Jesus heals the demon-possessed man** (Luke 4: 33-36)

RELATED SCRIPTURE: Luke 2: 22-24

PARALLEL GOSPEL: Mark 1: 23-28

TIME LINE: The Year of Popularity and Fundamental Principles (Jesus’ 2<sup>nd</sup> year of ministry), April-May 28 AD in Capernaum.

#### **“a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil”**

Demons, in the Old Testament, were usually believed to be gods. In the New Testament, they were called “an evil or unclean spirit” believed to be the cause of the illness, insanity, or disaster. “Demon-possession was prevalent in [Jesus’] time, and on numerous occasions [he cast them out]. In the synagogue at Nazareth one such demon spoke to [Jesus] from out of his human captive’s body.” (King James Bible Commentary)

This story is told both in Mark and Luke. In Mark it is called “a demoniac healed in the synagogue at Capernaum” (**modern Tabgha, Israel**), and in Luke it is called “demoniac healed in the synagogue.” Mark omits the contrast between Jesus’ teaching and that of the scribes. “Luke here seems to be following Mark who begins his story of Jesus’ ministry with a quick survey of what has been called ‘a typical day.’ Mark has described the temptation of Jesus in terms of a battle with Satan and this ‘typical day’ presents him as throwing back the power of the demonic world (Mark 1:21 — 2:12)” (Oxford Bible Commentary)

Capernaum, a prosperous fishing village, “lay on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, and was the center of much of Jesus’ activity. The foundation of an ancient synagogue has been excavated, perhaps on the site of the one visited by Jesus.” (HarperCollins Bible Commentary) “The narrator informs us that Jesus was teaching on the Sabbath. With the other Synoptic Gospels, Luke mentions Jesus’ authority, but our author twice emphasizes that his *word* was with power ([Luke] 4:32,36). . . .” (Eerdmans Bible Commentary)

“A striking point in this miracle is the testimony of the demon to Christ’s Messiahship, which, however, he refused to accept.” (Dummelow Commentary) The demon seeks to gain power over Jesus or at least to neutralize Jesus’ advantage by the ancient practice of pronouncing an opponent’s name. If the possession was real, the demon’s confession of Christ as “*the Holy One of God*” was probably



extorted by fear. If the possession was not real, but imagined by the insane man, the confession was probably due to the man's instinctive sense that a person with supernatural powers was present, ready to heal him. The battle lines are drawn, the man convulses, and the demon is exorcised.

*Spirit of an unclean devil*, Luke 4:33: Over against the Holy Spirit that empowers Jesus' ministry are the unholy spirits of the demonic world. Unclean does not refer to being dirty or unsanitary but to religious purity. Luke pictures the power of evil that invades and dominates human life in personal terms but shows that Jesus has power to deliver from it." (People's NT Commentary)

The crowds are impressed [Luke, v.36] but do not understand. Earlier in this chapter, Jesus' hometown folk did understand his claim and rejected it." (Ibid)

**Oertel, Ernest E., "Our response to 'Let us alone,'" Journal, Vol. 75 (April 1957), p. 191.**

--"Let us alone" was the cry of desperation directed at Christ Jesus when he encountered in the synagogue at Capernaum the man with the "*spirit of an unclean devil*" (Luke 4: 33).

- This pleas of error did not impress Jesus; he was not deterred in his healing mission by it. He knew that he must heal completely, that he must destroy both the effect and the cause of the error, permitting no vestige of it to remain.

--The power to tread on serpents and scorpions, the evils of mortal mind, is unquestionably available to each one of us.

- If we realize the power back of demonstration does not come from personal effort or human ingenuity, but accompanies the spiritual idea, the victory of good over evil will be proved conclusively, and error will be destroyed through Christ.

--Our response to error's "*Let us alone*" is continued and unwavering effort in the strength of Spirit until error is no more and an added victory rests of the side of invincible Truth.

**Eriksen, Clifford Kapps, "'The power of the Word'," Sentinel, Vol. 98 (5 February 1996), p. 17.**

--Early in his career, Christ Jesus astounded the people in his local synagogue when he read the prophetic words from the book of Isaiah about the promised Messiah and then declared that the day of fulfillment for that prophecy was at hand.

- Later, in Capernaum, his listeners "*were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power*"..., and he gave evidence of that power in accomplishing healing works.

--Listening for God's voice may not always seem easy.

- The physical senses are so insistent that they are the only reliable source of information as they shout their message of pain and suffering and limitation. But the Word of God contradicts these false arguments, touches the human heart through spiritual sense, dispels misconceptions of intelligence in matter, and reveals spiritual reality as the only actuality.

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\*The weekly Bible Lessons are made up of selections from the King James Version of the Bible and the Christian Science textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science.

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