



Weekly Bible Study Resources

Excerpts from *The Great Physician* For study related to the Bible Lesson January 20 - 26, 2014

Introductory Note – *The Great Physician, Vols 1 & 2* were written by Vinton Dearing, a Christian Scientist, who was Professor of English at UCLA where he taught the English Bible as Literature for forty years. The book is a composite translation of the four Gospels, organized by event rather than book, and includes a commentary. Because of the composite nature of the translation and commentary, the excerpts below may cover more topics than the citation in the Lesson. These excerpts have been compiled by Doug McCormick. A paperback book with both volumes in one binding is available for purchase at vintondearing.com.

SECTION III – B12 (Luke 18:9-14)

PRAYER

Luke 18:1-14.

Continuing with Luke. “He was speaking a parable to them about the necessity for them to pray always and not to get tired, saying, ‘There was a certain judge in a certain city who didn’t fear God and didn’t respect man.

“And there was a widow in that city, and she was coming to him, saying, ‘Maintain my right against my opponent [as an advocate or as her choice on the three-judge panel that would try the case; each party chose one of the three].”

“And he wouldn’t for a while, but afterward he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or respect man, yet because this widow gives me trouble, I’ll maintain her right, so that she won’t, by her eternal coming, give me a black eye.’ [Righteous men had been enjoined by Isaiah to help those in need.]¹⁶²

“And the Lord said, ‘Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And God will surely maintain the right of His chosen, who call to Him day and night, and be patient with them [no matter how many problems they bring Him], won’t He? I say to you that He’ll maintain their right in a hurry.’”¹⁶³

This is, of course, one of Jesus’ humorous parables. His following words, however, are serious and prophetic. “Nevertheless, when the Son of man will come, will he then find trust on earth?” He did not underestimate the difficulties Christianity would encounter.

“And he said this [next] parable to some who had confidence in themselves that they were law-abiding, and despised the rest. ‘Two men went up [Mt. Zion] into the temple precincts to pray, the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and was praying these [words] to himself: ‘God, I thank You that I’m not like the rest of the people, greedy persons, scofflaws, adulterers, or even like this publican. I fast twice a week [Mondays and Thursdays], I give tithes of all I get.’”¹⁶⁴

“But the publican, standing far off, refused even to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was striking his breast, saying, ‘God, accept propitiation for me a sinner.’”¹⁶⁵

“I say to you this [man] rather than the other went down to his house having been recognized [by

God] as righteous, because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

If Jesus had made the Pharisee say, “I thank You that I was not created a woman,” he would also have objected that the Law of Moses did not give a man more opportunities for holiness than a woman, I believe.¹⁶⁶

Footnotes

162. Isaiah 1:17, 58:6-7. Derrett’s interpretation of the parable as referring to an “administrative” rather than a “customary” court seems unnecessary (*Studies in the New Testament*, I, 32-47).
163. One might also suppose that the words I have translated “be patient with them” mean “even if they are slow to appeal,” that is, that God gives the wicked every chance to repent. Such an understanding fits the parable of the barren fig tree (Luke 13:6-9). Others believe the words should be translated “delay long over them [those who are praying]”; see BAGD, s.v. *makrothumeō*, 3).
164. Fasting on Monday and Thursday: Ta’anith, 10a (I, 4), 15b (II, 1). Tithes: Deuteronomy 14:22-23 and the tractates Demai, Ma’aseroth and Ma’aser Sheni.
165. What the publican’s propitiation might have been we shall see when we come to Jesus’ encounter with the publican Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10).
166. “I thank you”: now part of the morning prayer for men but perhaps not in Jesus’ time; see *The Complete Art Scroll Siddur*, trans. Nosson Scherman, n.p., Mesorah Publications, n.d., p. 19. I accept the idea that the prayer expresses gratitude for having the opportunity to fulfill more commandments than a woman can because there are more laws for men to observe than for women.

SECTION IV – B16 (John 10:23...38)

JESUS’ WORDS PROVOKE ANOTHER ATTEMPT ON HIS LIFE

John 10:22-42.

According to John, Jesus had gone to Jerusalem at Hanukkah time before he crossed the Jordan. Hanukkah is an eight-day festival instituted by the Hasmoneans to commemorate their capture and rededication of the temple in Jerusalem after it had been desecrated. It comes in December.¹⁰⁰

“Then the Dedication happened in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple precincts in Solomon’s colonnade [on the east side of the temple area. The retaining wall on that side of the area was thought to have been built by Solomon.]¹⁰¹

“So the Jews [Judeans] encircled him and were saying to him, ‘How long do you hold our soul [in suspense]? If you’re the Messiah, say [so] to us publicly.’

“Jesus answered them, ‘I said [so] to you and you don’t trust [me]. The works that I do in my Father’s name [because I am His], these testify about me. But you don’t trust [me] because you’re not from my sheep. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. And I give them eternal life, and they’ll never die, and no one will seize them from my hand. My Father, who’s given [them] to me, is greater than all [others], and no one can seize [them] from my Father’s hand. I and my Father are [at] one.’”¹⁰² He was prayerfully affirming that Christianity was ineradicable and that God would guard his followers from temptation.

“The Jews again took up stones to stone him.

“Jesus responded to them, ‘I showed you many good works [that came] from my Father. For which work of these do you stone me? [Are you defaming God’s work?]

“The Jews answered him, ‘We don’t stonify you about a good work but about a [different] defamation,’ that is, ‘because you, being a man, make yourself a god.’

“Jesus answered them, ‘Hasn’t it been written in your Law [and Prophets and Psalms], “I said, ‘You are gods’”? If it said those [men were] gods to whom the word of God came, and the scripture can’t be broken, do you say to him whom the Father made holy and sent into the world, “You defame [God],” because I said, “I’m the Son of God”? If I don’t do my Father’s works, don’t trust me. But if I do [them] and if you [still] don’t trust me, trust the works, so that you’ll know and recognize that the Father [is] in me [I reflect Him] and I [am] in the Father [He embraces me].¹⁰³

“So they were seeking again to arrest him, and he went out of their hands.

“And he went off again across the Jordan to the place where John was baptizing at first, and remained there. [Since we do not know where John did his baptizing, we cannot tell exactly where Jesus was.] And many came to him and were saying, ‘Even though John made no sign [as a proof of his teaching], still everything whatsoever John said about this [man] was true.’ And many trusted in him there.”

Thus Jesus proved to himself a third time in this year that God protected him.

Footnotes

100. See I Maccabees 4:36-59.

101. Solomon’s colonnade: Josephus, *Antiq.*, 15.11.3 [XV, 398]; *War*, 5.5.1 [V, 184-185].

102. “[At] one”: The word “one” is in the neuter gender. Trinitarian Christians sometimes insist nevertheless that it means “one in essence” here rather than “one in quality.”

103. Jesus elsewhere referred to “The Law and the Prophets and the Psalms” (Luke 24:44); his quotation here is Psalm 82:6.

SECTION IV – B17 (John 14:12)

These verses are part of a much larger passage, on which Dearing makes extensive commentary in his book. Please see the book or contact me (dougmcoco@gmail.com) for the excerpt if you are interested.

SECTION V – B18 (John 8:32)

A CONTROVERSY OVER FATHERHOOD

John 8:12-59.

On the first night of the feast of Tabernacles large golden lamp stands in the court of the women in the temple precincts were lighted and illuminated the whole city. In addition, men with torches danced and sang before the lamp stands, to the music of the temple band. Gamaliel’s son Simeon, Hillel’s great-grandson, used to juggle several torches. Many readers have felt that Jesus had that ceremony in mind as he continued his preaching.

“So again Jesus spoke to them [his listeners], saying, ‘I’m the light of the world. He who follows me certainly won’t walk in the dark but will have the light of life.’

“So the Pharisees said to him, ‘You testify about yourself. Your testimony isn’t true [is either false or invalid because it is uncorroborated and so would not be accepted in a court of law].⁴⁵

“Jesus said to them in reply, ‘[First,] even though I testify about myself, my testimony is true, because I know where I came from and where I’m going. [As John says later, Jesus knew he came from God and went to God.] But you don’t know where I come from or where I’m going.⁴⁶

“**[Second,] you judge [me] according to the flesh [that is, by human standards], but I judge no one [that way]. And if [that is, when] I judge, my judgment is true, for I’m not alone, but I and the Father who sent me [agree, as if we were two of the three judges in a civil trial; I always see things the way God does].**

“**And [third], in your Law it’s been written that the [concurrent] testimony of two people is true. I’m [one] who testifies about myself, and the Father who sent me testifies about me.’ [Jesus’ works and the prophecies about him in the Bible constituted his Father’s testimony about him, but his listeners did not understand him.]**

“So they were saying to him, ‘Where’s your father? **[Produce him, if he is to testify about you.]**”⁴⁷

“Jesus answered, ‘You don’t know either me or my Father. If you knew me you’d know my Father too.’

“He spoke these sayings in the treasury **[area]** when teaching in the temple precincts. And no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

“So he said to them again, ‘I’m going away, and you’ll seek me, and you’ll die in your sins. You can’t come where I’m going away to.’

“So the Jews **[Judeans]** were saying, ‘He won’t kill himself, will he? Because he says, “You can’t come where I’m going away to.”’

“And he was saying to them, ‘You’re from among those below, I’m from among those above. You’re from this world, I’m not from this world. So I said to you that you’ll die in your sins, for if you won’t trust that I’m **[from among those above and am not from this world]** you’ll die in your sins.’ **[I believe that “so” here is not just a connective but means “therefore.”]**

“So they were saying to him, ‘Who are you?’

“Jesus said to them, “**[I’m]** just what I said at the beginning. I’ve many **[things]** to speak about you and to judge, but He who sent me is true, and I heard directly from Him these **[things that]** I speak to the world.”⁴⁸

“They did not know that **[he meant]** the Father **[in what]** he was saying to them **[about the One who had sent him].**

“So Jesus said to them, ‘When you’ll lift up the Son of man, then you’ll understand that I’m **[from among those above and am not from this world]**, and I do nothing on my own but I speak these **[things]** just as the Father taught me. And He who sent me is with me. He didn’t leave me alone, because I always do the **[things]** that are pleasing to Him.”’

This is the second occurrence in John’s Gospel of the theme of Jesus’ being lifted up, and presumably it is to be understood in the light of the first, where Jesus said he must be lifted up in the same way that Moses had lifted up the brass serpent in the wilderness to cure his people of snake bites, a lifting up, as he said then, so that everyone who trusts the Son has eternal life.⁴⁹

Continuing with John. “As he spoke these **[things]** many trusted in him.

“So Jesus was saying to the Jews **[Judeans]** who had trusted in him, ‘If you’ll remain in my word **[that his Father had taught him, neither adding to it nor subtracting from it, refusing to take a half-way position, to mix and mingle good and evil]**, you’re truly my students, and you’ll know the truth and the truth will free you **[from slavery].**”’

He then discovered, to use Luke’s words elsewhere, that “the devil had removed the word from their hearts so that they would not believe and be saved.” The seed had fallen beside the road. More precisely, his listeners rebelled at having to follow his teachings fully and exactly, with no adjustments to fit or fit in their former beliefs and no “improvements” of their own. Jesus had once more to face down opposition and he did so vigorously.⁵⁰

Continuing with John. “**[His listeners]** answered him, ‘We’re descendants of Abraham **[that is, righteous people]**, and have never been slaves to anyone. How do you say, “You’ll become freedmen?”’⁵¹

The Jews had not had national independence for almost a hundred years, and slavery was institutionalized in their society, governed by the Law of Moses. Jesus therefore accepted the words of his opponents as referring to mental slavery and replied in kind.

Continuing with John. “Jesus answered them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you that everyone who sins is a slave of sin. But [even if] the slave doesn’t remain in the house [of sin] forever [because his term of slavery expires, he may well be enslaved again, whereas] the Son remains [in the house of God] forever [is always conscious of God’s ever-presence]. So if the Son will free you [from slavery and receive you into God’s house], you’ll really be freedmen [not subject to new slavery].⁵²

“I know that you’re descendants of Abraham [in the surface meaning of the phrase], but you seek to kill me because my word has no place in you. I speak what I’ve seen with [my] Father. So you too do what you heard from [your] father.’⁵³

“They said to him in reply, ‘Our father [ancestor] is Abraham.’

“Jesus says to them, ‘If you were descendants of Abraham [in the full implication of the phrase] you’d be doing the works of Abraham, but now you seek to kill me, a man who’s spoken the truth to you that I heard from God. Abraham didn’t do this. You do the works of your father.’

“So they said to him [recognizing that he was using “father” with a special meaning], ‘We haven’t been born out of fornication. We have one Father, God.’ [They were using a metaphor introduced into the prophetic vocabulary by Hosea, as we have said, in which the nation of Israel, having worshipped other gods, is represented as an adulteress and the Israelites as illegitimate children.]

“Jesus said to them, ‘If God was your Father, you’d have been loving me, for I came out from God and am here [as His representative], for I haven’t come on my own, but He sent me. Why don’t you know my speech? Because you can’t hear my word. [Because you seek to kill me] you’re from your father the devil, and you intend to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and wasn’t standing in the truth because there’s no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, [what] he speaks [he takes] from among his own [offspring], because he’s a liar, and its father. [Evil is its own father, a lie asserting that it is true, nothing claiming to be something.] But because I speak the truth you don’t trust in me.

“Who of you convicts me of sin? If I speak truly, why don’t you trust me? He who’s from God hears God’s statements. You don’t hear for this reason, because you’re not from God.”

In his words about the devil Jesus put his foot upon latent evil and falsehood, the source of their visible forms. Practitioners of spiritual healing regard this as one of his primary examples of spiritual practice.

In the moral realm, acceptance of the devil’s lies results eventually in total depravity, moral idiocy. If the sinner is to reject his sin, which always masquerades as something to be desired, he must first recognize its true nature. In this process of discovery a person who does not give power or reality to sin can help the sinner unmask the lie behind which the sin is hiding, as we see Jesus doing here. In other words, the sinner must face up to his sin as if it were real before it can be proved unreal, canceled, destroyed. Then, living by Jesus’ word or rules brings experience of God’s truth, and the truth frees from further slavery to the lies. The lies and their false evidence then disappear, and the freedman recognizes that he not only will be saved but is saved.⁵⁴

In addition, those who have experience with spiritual healing will see Jesus’ words here as not merely a statement of truth but what might be called protective work. By denying the existence and power of the devil and affirming his own spiritual nature, eternal Sonship and commission from God, Jesus was protecting himself and thereby his message from harm, as we now see.

Continuing with John. “The Jews said to him in reply, ‘Don’t we say well that you’re a Samaritan [that is, have debased our religion] and have [are possessed by] a demon [and are raving]?’

“Jesus answered, ‘I don’t have a demon but honor my Father, and you dishonor me. But I don’t seek

my glory. There's [One] who is seeking [it] and judging [between us]. Truly, truly I say to you, if anyone will guard my word he won't see death forever."

Jesus' record of healing life-threatening sickness and restoring the dead to life by methods he taught to his students shows that he was speaking literally here, not just of death in sin. Yet he did not mean that life in the earthly body would be eternal, as he showed by his exit from the physical universe. The truth of his assertion awaits full demonstration.

"So the Jews said to him, 'Now we've proof that you've a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets, and you say, "If anyone will guard my word he won't taste death forever." You aren't greater than our ancestor Abraham, are you? He died and the prophets died. What do you make yourself?'⁵⁵

"Jesus answered, 'If I'll glorify myself, my glory's nothing. It's my Father who glorifies me, who you say is your God, and you haven't known Him, but I know Him. And if I'll say that I don't know Him I'll be a liar like you, but I know Him and I guard His word. Abraham your ancestor rejoiced to see my day, and he saw and was glad.'

"So the Jews said to him, 'You're not yet fifty years old, and you've seen Abraham?'

"Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly I say to you, I exist [always in my spiritual being, and therefore existed] before Abraham was born.'⁵⁶

"So they picked up stones to throw on him. [Stoning, as we have seen, was carried out by dropping heavy stones on the condemned person.] But Jesus was hidden [by God] and went out of the temple precincts, and going through the midst of them [as he had when a similar crowd had set on him in Nazareth] he went out, and so he passed by."⁵⁷

The last part of the preceding sentence, "and going through the midst of them he went out, and so he passed by," is not found in either of the fourth-century manuscripts Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, the earliest complete manuscripts of John that we have, or in the two papyrus manuscripts that have this part of John and are a good century earlier. The words "going through the midst of them and so he passed by" are found in the fifth-century manuscript Alexandrinus and most others and hence appear in the King James Version. The version I have translated occurs in a correction in Sinaiticus made in the sixth or seventh century; a subsequent corrector deleted the words "he went out and so he passed by." Because the two papyri and Sinaiticus and Vaticanus end the sentence with the words "out of the temple precincts," because the words "going through the midst of them" are in Luke's account of the incident at Nazareth and so might have been transferred into John from there by a scribe, and finally because some scholars can see no reason why a scribe should have stopped at "out of the temple precincts" if the sentence ran on in the manuscript he was copying from, the Bible Societies' Greek text stops there also. The most obvious reason why some manuscripts break off at "out of the temple" is that someone's eye skipped from the following "and" to the same word at the beginning of the next sentence (to which we have not come), "And passing by." And the most obvious reason that the words "going through the midst of them" are in both Luke and John is that Jesus made his escape in the same way both times and so the same words would tend to suggest themselves to the two authors. We must remember that, as I said in discussing the passage in Luke, we have modern instances of the same kind of escape by those whose understanding of God's protecting power was like Jesus'.

I should not have gone into so much detail about these few words if I did not see a special significance in the sequence, "and going through the midst of them he went out of the temple precincts and so passed by. And passing by he saw a man blind from birth," whom he then healed. The fuller text makes clear that Jesus was completely unshaken by the attack on himself and immediately ready to carry on with his healing work. It was as though the attack had never occurred, and those familiar with spiritual healing will say that Jesus knew it had never occurred in any real sense. Because he maintained his unbroken Sonship with God

and his love for his enemies, neither he nor his work suffered. And if we will never forget that we and everyone else are the loving children of the same Father we can never be stampeded either.

The same considerations explain what his students were doing when Jesus came under attack. Having read his sermons now, we know that they were supporting him by their fervent, effective, prayers, just as he was protecting them from harm. I like to think that the more robust among them were praying with joy, mentally cheering on their “meek and bold defender.” When he left the temple precincts, I feel they rejoined him.

Footnotes

45. Two witnesses required: Numbers 35:30, Deuteronomy 17:6, 19:15.

46. Jesus came from God: John 13:3.

47. “Father”: uncapitalized in NEB, capitalized in KJV, RSV and others. The meaning shifts accordingly. In a criminal trial, a father would not have been allowed to corroborate the witness of a son (Sanhedrin, 27b [III, 4]; the discussion here seems to be carried on in terms of civil trials but there was a general principle that civil and criminal trials were to have the same rules, with specific exceptions — see Sanhedrin, 32a [IV, 1]). In any case, Jesus’ Father had provided confirming evidence, not mere concurrent opinion.

48. The words I have translated “[I’m] just what I said at the beginning” are literally *tên archên ho ti kai lalô humin*, “the beginning what also I speak to you.” In the text currently published by the Bible Societies the sentence is punctuated as a question. It is not necessary to read the sentence as a question, or to read *ho ti* (“what”) as two words rather than one (*hoti* means “that,” “why,” or “because,” depending on the context). The oldest manuscripts have neither punctuation nor spaces between the words.

The words *tên archên* (“the beginning”) are in the accusative case, which may be used for extent of time, that is, “from the beginning.” Thus the King James translation, which is essentially the same as mine, is, “Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning” (John 8:25). A looser rendering also seems defensible to me: “I speak to you just as always.”

But some grammarians (e.g., Turner in Moulton, III, 49) say the meaning of *tên archên* here is “at all,” and that *ho ti* should be *hoti*. Accordingly, some translators (e.g., NEB) render the whole sentence “Why should I speak to you at all?” BAGD, s.v. *archê*, 1.b. [at end], points to an alternate possibility (again reading *hoti*), “To begin with, why do I as much as speak to you?” This last is also the interpretation in Robertson and Davis, par. 342(k), p. 222. My own sense of Jesus’ nature makes me think he would be more patient with his listeners than “why should I speak to you” suggests. The New English Bible also indicates that there is room to doubt its translation, giving “What I have told you all along” as an alternate.

“Directly from him” is *par’ autou* again.

49. See John 3:14-15.

50. See Luke 8:12.

51. For some contrasts in the Talmud between “disciples of Abraham our father” and “disciples of the wicked Balaam” see Aboth, V, 25.

52. My insertions depend partly on the Hebrew laws of slavery (see p. 112).

53. “Has no place in you” might be translated “makes no headway among you” (James Moffatt’s translation of the New Testament).

“Seen with (*para*) [my] Father . . . heard from (*para*) [your] father”: the word needs to be differently translated, but retains the sense of direct communication, I believe. Jesus’ reply to these “descendants of Abraham” was not much different than John the Baptist’s words to them (see Matthew 3:9 = Luke 3:8).

54. See Eddy, *Science and Health*, pp. 39-40, 327-328.

55. “We’ve proof”: literally “we have known.”

56. "I exist before Abraham was born": "I exist" translates *eimi*, which can also mean "I am," and "was born" translates *genesthai*, which can also mean "was." Therefore, some Christians suppose Jesus meant, "before Abraham, was I AM," or, more paraphrastically, "Before Abraham was born, the 'I am' existed, and I am he" (The Translator's New Testament). But God's name in what was in Jesus' day the standard Greek translation of Exodus 3:14 is not *eimi*, "I AM," but *ho ōn*, "He who is." It appears in Revelation 1:8, *kurios ho theos, ho ōn kai ho ēn kai ho erchomenos*, "[the] Lord God, He who is and who was and who comes," which might be translated, "the I AM and the I WAS and the I WILL BE."
57. "Hidden [by God]": although the verb is passive, BAGD prefers to translate it as a reflexive, "hid himself" (s.v. *kruptō*, 1.c.).

Please contact me (dougmcoco@gmail.com) if you have any questions or comments.