

## WHAT JESUS THOUGHT ABOUT HIMSELF

In the early ministry of Jesus, he says, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" - or in my Father's house? Jesus never felt more at home than in the Temple. He gives full evidence of the fact that he believes that he had a great work to do for God. His was a complete dedication to a superlative task.

When Nicodemus called him rabbi or teacher, Jesus accepted this term with complete naturalness. Later, in teaching, he revealed the authority which expressed even more specific than the authority which the prophets claimed when he said, "It hath been said, ....., but I say unto you." Why this remarkable faith in himself? Does he not claim to be the establisher of the divine kingdom, and does he not demand faith in himself as its founder? Jesus says later, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Later he says, "My word shall not pass away" - implying a permanence and finality regarding his teachings.

When talking to the disciples concerning Mary of Bethany, he says, "Whosoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." Jesus was not only a teacher; he was also a servant. The whole tenor of his teaching places service as the great motivating drive for Christians. Christ's disciples are to be inspired by the service motive. Listen to him: "Whosoever would be great among you shall be your minister, and whosoever of you would be the chiefest, shall be the servant of all." Christ's challenge to service was based on his own example. "For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life as a ransom for many." But as Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, he gave a practical demonstration of the type of lowly service which he delighted to give.

Teacher and servant but also messiah! Such was Jesus' consciousness of himself. Undoubtedly Jesus considered himself to be the messiah. He was conscious of a relation to God as his father that was completely unique. He recognized a messianic dignity and mission. Jesus filled the messianic office with a ethical and universal as well as apocalyptic content. Jesus' messianic consciousness was the central fact of his life. He said, "Believe in God; believe also in me." These words should have been of utmost arrogance apart from the whole messianic concept taught by the Old Testament and believed in implicitly and passionately by all first-Christian Jews.

Jesus put new meaning in the word messiah of an ethical and spiritual nature. The messianic consciousness of Jesus included the practical matter of redemption. Jesus rightly placed redemption at the heart of his new ministry. "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." This redemptive note reaches its climax in the post-resurrection appearances. Jesus came to establish a new covenant. This had been promised many years before by the prophet Jeremiah. This new covenant that Jesus came to establish is one with individuals. Redemption and forgiveness of sin through the death of Christ was the heart of early Christian preaching. New Testament theology is "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." The New Testament teaches that this redemption was an outgrowth of Christ's voluntary sacrifice of himself on Calvary and that it produces forgiveness. As the messiah, Jesus felt that he had come to usher in the messianic age. Jesus went on to quote Isaiah and to imply that there was an entirely new day and an entirely new era that he was ushering in. He said, "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see; the blind receive their sight; the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed; the deaf hear the dead are raised up; the poor have the gospel preached to them." This was Jesus' text for the messianic age which he considered he had already inaugurated. There was to be a new vision; the blind receive their sight. Four-fifths of this passage is concerned with physical benefits. Jesus' healing constituted his credentials in the eyes of the people.

In the messianic age there is to be activity. "The lame walk." On more than one occasion Jesus made it possible for the once-lame to leap for joy. There is likewise to be new health in this messianic age. "The lepers are cleansed." In this glorious age of faith in the messiah, there are to be new words - "The deaf hear." In the proceeding chapters we shall see something of these wonderful words of life that issued from him.

The supreme gift that Jesus came to bring to men was that of new life. "The dead are raised up." His whole message and ministry was built around the concept of the new life wherein dwelleth righteousness. Finally Jesus said to the disciples of John, "And the poor have the gospel preached to them." The wealthy and the powerful could always have the truth. Jesus is saying that his message is for all classes and for all ages. He had come to usher in the messianic day. "Tell John the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached to them, for the desire of all ages is at hand, Son of Man, son of David, Son of God."