**VOLUME 10; CHAPTER 14 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**MANIFESTATIONS OF THE RISEN LORD by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*After these things Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and He manifested Himself on this wise.*

*John 21:1*

OUR SUBJECT IS THE WHOLE OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER of John in the light of this first verse. Whatever there is in the story is qualified by this opening statement, and especially by the word which is twice repeated in the course thereof, a word which is well rendered in the Revised Version, "manifested." The literal meaning of the word is "to shine forth." In this particular verse, moreover, the verb is in the active voice, thus showing that John considered that it was the intention of the Lord to reveal Himself in some special way. Taking this, then, as the keynote, we find the viewpoint for our meditation.

The story is another of the Post Resurrection stories. It would seem to have been added after the conclusion of the narrative in its more systematic form. The verse with which chapter 20 ends formed a natural ending to the scheme of the Gospel. The probability is that the Gospel did end there, and that at some later period, perchance for some very special reason, John added this chapter. I am not going to argue about the writer. I take it for granted that John wrote it. I think the internal evidences are absolutely conclusive that whosoever wrote the first part of the Gospel wrote this also.

In very many ways this chapter is peculiarly beautiful, and its different parts often have been considered in detail. I now propose a quiet meditation while we attempt to see the Lord as in the fresh light of early morning, He is manifested in the whole movement by the sea of Tiberias. In order to do this, we will first consider the succeeding incidents that make up the whole movement, and then notice some facts which here have special manifestation and outshining.

First, then, let us look at the incidents. There are three. First, the Lord is seen directing fishermen in their fishing, then providing breakfast for the toilers, and, finally, dealing with Peter - here, as always, the representative disciple - on the future.

As I thus merely name the three incidents, there is almost a shock of surprise in the mind. Directing fishermen about their fishing, preparing breakfast, and uttering high and wonderful words concerning a spiritual campaign! It seems as though, after mentioning the first two incidents, we have to readjust ourselves to speak of the third. That sense of incongruity is our fault, our failure, and an immediate revelation of one of the marvels and glories of the story. Here our Lord is seen relating these things to each other: a common calling - fishing, a very persistent necessity - breakfast, and some of the most wonderful things He ever said about the whole campaign of His Church. The three follow naturally and regularly and beautifully. There is no real break in the story. The break comes in our mind, because we think we must put some gap between breakfast and spiritual work, that we must put some great gulf between fishing on Saturday and worshiping on Sunday. So we are face to face with one of the values of the story at the very beginning, to which we shall have to come back presently.

Let us, however, look at the Lord. First, we see Him standing on the beach directing fishermen in their fishing. Now, whether these men ought to have been fishing does not matter. I know there are different opinions as to whether Peter, on this occasion, when he said, "I go a fishing," was warranted in doing so. I am very willing to give my personal opinion for what it is worth, and then it can be dismissed. I think he was wrong. Our Lord distinctly told the disciples to wait until they were endued with power from on high. But this must be added: whatever the Lord felt about their going, He did not rebuke them.

These men knew the business of fishing, at least it is certain that three of them did. Peter and the sons of Zebedee, James and John, were fishermen. They knew the Sea of Tiberias well, just when it was likely that the fish would be best taken, where the currents ran, what effect the driving wind would have on the waters, how to cast the net, how to be silent, and how to act. They were fishermen, and yet that night they had failed. I do not say that they were to blame. It was fisherman's luck. They had taken no fish; there was no harvest of the sea that night. There, on the beach, in the gleam of the morning, stood a stranger. They did not know Him. They were only about a hundred yards from the shore at the time. Then Jesus' Voice came across the waters: "Children, have ye aught to eat? " The answer came back clear and sharp, and, perhaps, with a slight tone of disappointment, "No." "Cast your net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find."

Now, whether this was miraculous or not does not matter. Whether our Lord here may have been exercising His sovereignty over all nature; or whether He was merely observing the sea and saw the shoal of fish there does not signify anything. The great value of the story is that He was interested in the men fishing, He directed their operations, and He gave them success. The most obvious thing here is the most important. He Who did this was the Risen Lord of Life and Glory. He was interested in the fisher folk while they were fishing, and directed them in the hour of their failure, so that they became successful.

In the next incident Jesus is seen providing breakfast for the toilers. When these men found their way to land, they saw a fire of coals there. I would like to use a more literal translation, They saw a fire of coals laid. In that word laid there is the simple significance that the fire had been carefully prepared; it was built, it was laid. Moreover, fish was laid thereon, and bread was provided.

Now, again, whether in all this there was anything supernatural or miraculous, to use our very imperfect words, I care nothing. Here is the fact. Jesus is seen on the seashore building a fire and preparing food for hungry fishermen. The Risen Lord of Life and Glory, Whose persistent mission had been to ransom a race and establish the Kingdom of God is seen on the seashore, while men are absent fishing. What is He doing? Getting breakfast ready for them! One man on that boat knew Him, and said to his companion, "It is the Lord." Immediately that splendid man, that impulsive man, the friend, girt his outer garment about him and flung himself into the sea and reached the shore. At last they all arrived. None of them durst ask this stranger who He was. They were afraid. Then Jesus came nearer and invited them to sit down and eat, and waited on them. That is the second picture. Jesus was manifesting Himself; He was shining forth on these men. A mystic glory had enveloped His Person in consequence of His Resurrection which seemed apt to remove them from Him and Him from them. Here He was seen understanding their hunger, sympathizing with their necessity, serving; and in the Hands that built the fire and placed the fish thereon were wound prints! It is a picture of the world's Redeemer getting breakfast ready for cold, tired fishermen.

There is yet another scene, equally familiar and equally wonderful. Finally, Jesus is seen here dealing with Peter on the future - dealing with him, as I have already hinted and will now again remark, as a representative man. All the way through Peter is the representative disciple; he is more intensely human than is any other man; he is a man in whom all the elemental qualities of humanity are discovered - intellectual, emotional, and volitional. When the breakfast was ended, Jesus began to deal with this man, and to challenge him three times in order to utter to him a threefold commission, which covers the whole of the Church's campaign to the end of the Age. It is not sufficient only to declare what has been declared, that at this point our Lord handed to Peter the Crozier - that is, the Staff of Office of the Pastor of the flock when the flock is folded. In other words, He was not thinking only of the Church when He spoke of "My sheep" and "My lambs." He was thinking of the race.

Now, whereas I am perfectly sure there is a close connection between the threefold denial uttered in the presence of a fire the enemies of Jesus had built and this threefold confession made in the presence of a fire that Jesus had built - I do not think that our Lord was especially concerned with that matter. He had had a private interview with Peter before this, since His Resurrection, in which the whole business of Peter's deflection had been once and forever settled. Our Lord does not go back on such settlements. That is the mistake we too often make. When He forgives He blots out. It was in view of a larger commission that a threefold confession was necessary, because of the threefold character of the work it included.

What is the first thing our Lord wants to say to the Church through Peter? "Feed My lambs." In the view of Christ all the lambs are already included in the flock, and the business of the Church is to feed them. The second phase of the great commission is, "Shepherd My sheep," that is, gather them, guard them, guide them. When speaking of His own work, Jesus said, "I am the Good Shepherd." The Good Shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep. The Good Shepherd layeth down His life that He may take it again. The Good Shepherd entereth into conflict with the wolf, and when the wolf can be destroyed only by the Shepherd's dying, then the Shepherd dies to destroy the wolf. All that was surely in His mind when he said, "Shepherd My sheep." Finally, He said: "Feed My sheep." In these commands we have the whole commission. In order that Peter may be able to do it, in order that the Church may be able to do it, there is one supreme necessity, which is revealed in the challenge: "Lovest thou Me?"

In the next place, the Lord proceeded to deal with Peter about his personal pathway of service. He told Peter what lay ahead of him in the consummation of his earthly service:

When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not.

With all reverence, if I may change the wording, this is what Jesus said to him: In the days of thy young manhood thou hast made thine own choices, and thine own decisions; even in the days of thy fellowship with Me thou hast asserted thy will, protesting against My Cross, that yoke under which I serve. But now thou must walk My way, and the culmination of that walk shall be that thou wilt, at last, suffer apparent defeat. The Cross waits for thee actually. But Follow Me.

As Peter heard Him say this he remembered that the Lord had gone to the Cross, but that the Cross had not been the end. Jesus was alive from among the dead. Peter understood there and then that if he himself must go by that restricted, pressing, agonizing way of the Cross, it was a way that led out into life and fulness of victory.

Then all the glory and the beauty of the story once again seems to switch back, almost with vulgarity, to the commonplace. When Jesus said: Follow Me, evidently He began to walk away, and Peter, literally following Him, turned round and saw John. Then he asked Jesus: What shall this man do? Will he die, too? Will he suffer? With swift suddenness Christ definitely and sharply rebuked Peter. What is that to thee? Follow thou Me. If, again without irreverence, I may translate into the language of today, this is what Jesus said: "Mind your own business! Follow thou Me! "

In this simple looking at the story, as it seems to me, there is almost all we need of help and encouragement. Yet let us pass to the second and the last line of consideration, and notice some of the facts that are revealed as we look at the manifesting of the Lord in this page of incidents.

What first impresses me as I watch Jesus is the sanctification of all life, and the cancellation of many false human terms. Let us remember Who this One is, and where He stands; that He is the Son of God and the Son of Man; that He stands on the other side of the forces of sin and sorrow and death against humanity. As I watch Him I know that all life is sanctified. I know that fishing is sanctified, and not merely as a figure of speech concerning spiritual work, but as an actual occupation for every day in the week. That would appeal to us more strongly if we were fisher folk. And yet why? We shall destroy the beauty of it if we think only of fishing boats. I will try to make the lesson superlative by saying that Jesus Christ would never have said to me, I will make you a fisher of men. He knows perfectly well that I am no fisherman. He did come to me one day, when I sat at a desk with boys around me teaching, and He said: Follow Me, and I will make you a teacher of men. I went after Him on the line of my capacity. Suppose He had not called me to this work as I sat at the desk. Then that work would have been as sacred as is this. Or suppose He has not called you to give up your office in the city, but to stay there. Then your office is a holy place, if you are a holy man. Suppose you are called on every day of the week to work at the carpenter's bench, to superintend the building of houses, to place brick on brick therein! It is all sacred. The Lord is watching you when you are fishing, watching you as you write your letters, watching as you build your house, as you do your work. Then all life becomes sacred. If we could but realize this, then we would go back to a week radiant with light and glory. Ah, yes, that particular work that is so very commonplace, hidden away in some quarter in London, up some back stairs - that work and that office would be radiant with glory if you remembered that the Lord is watching, that all life has become beautiful since you stood on the seashore and watched Jesus taking an interest in fishermen.

Yes, all life is sacred, and here I want to speak with reverence. I say this, not in pleasantry, but with real reverence. The greatest work that is done in London on any given day is that done, not in the office, but in the home. The place of drudgery, the place of the commonplace, of monotony, is the home. You men, think of the commonplace of having to get breakfast ready in the morning. My sisters, I speak to you with reverence. You who preside over our homes and our households - and not only those of you who preside, but also those who serve therein - when tomorrow morning you are up betimes, laying a fire, preparing a breakfast, remember that the Lord of Glory built a fire and cooked a breakfast. This is a wonderful sanctification of life; this is an illuminating glory that transfigures the commonplace and makes it the special. Let us cancel the word, "secular," or at least some of our uses of it. There is nothing secular. Our Lord transmuted the commonplace, base metal, and made it the fine gold of the sanctuary of God, when He prepared that breakfast and waited upon those hungry men.

He has sanctified human life in its larger outlooks also by the fact that when He looked out with those wonderful Eyes of His, He saw humanity, and He said, "My sheep." Oh, but you say, surely He meant His people! Yes, but who are His people? We must interpret our Lord's word here by our Lord's thought and teaching elsewhere. In a superlatively revealing passage, at the dividing of the ways, when Jesus was about to send these men out for the first time, Matthew has told us how our Lord went through all the villages and cities teaching, beholding the multitudes, and was moved with compassion for them. Why? They were as sheep with- out a shepherd. Here, then, in the simple words, "My sheep," "My lambs," He includes all humanity - the bruised, the degraded, and the vicious.

Then on each He setteth,

His own secret sign.

That secret sign is not merely on the brow of the saints worshiping; that secret sign of a love ineffable and a passion unfathomable is on the brow of every man and woman and child. Our Lord sanctified humanity when He spoke of the multitudes as "My sheep" and "My lambs." He sanctified all human life. Let us never again think contemptuously of any human being.

Again I look, and I see Jesus manifested here, not only as the Sanctifier of all life. He is also manifested in His Sovereignty. It is seen in that first incident in the direction of the fishermen, in the fact that He told them where to fling the net. Whether His sovereign will impressed the strange harvest of the sea, or whether it did not, He knew how to direct the fishermen, and in the act I observe the easy grace and equal beauty of a Sovereign Lord and Master. I hear the strong authoritative note of His Sovereignty also in the tender terms by which He described humanity: "My sheep, My lambs!" when I put the emphasis on the possessive, "My sheep, My lambs!" Our Lord had entered into conflict with the wolf, and had destroyed the wolf; and now He claimed authority over the sheep among whom the wolf had ravened. It was the tone of His sovereignty.

I find that evidence of supreme sovereignty, moreover, in the test He imposed on those who will serve Him, revealing as it does the one and only fitness necessary for spiritual ministry: "Lovest thou Me?" Observe the superlativeness of this, for, said Jesus in effect to this man, If you love Me, then you are fit for this high and holy office to which I appoint you. He made Himself the spiritual Master of the affection, claiming that in love to Him there was transforming and transmuting power, enabling a man to do the most glorious work of the centuries.

Yet once again His sovereignty is revealed in this narrative in the fact that He taught Peter that the one and only business of His followers is to follow. Peter, there is the Via Dolorosa that thou must tread, there is the girding and the binding and the veritable cross. Follow Me! Yes, Peter, and here is this man John; but you do not need to know My arrangements for him. It is not necessary for you to know them. Follow Me! That is the Voice of supreme sovereignty.

Once again, and finally, as I look at these incidents, I see Our Lord's devotion to His own, His devotion to their physical necessities, and His devotion to whatever their spiritual obligation required. I see His devotion to His own in their suffering. I see His devotion to them in their weakness, in that He will make no peace with their folly, but will sharply rebuke it in order that they may realize the fulness of their fellowship with Him, and consequently with the Father.

As I close, I go back to the beginning of the chapter, to the things that immediately follow my text. For just a moment I want to look at the men. Who are these men round about our Lord? I see, first, Simon Peter, the impulsive, the great human; then Thomas, the magnificent, the skeptic - which simply means the man who looks hard, the man who by now was not only trustful, but trustworthy, having heard His Lord's words to him when they met on that eighth day after the resurrection. Then there is Nathanael, the man who was guileless, the man who would never have made a politician, the man who was so guileless that he admitted it. Observe that! Jesus said to him when he saw him: Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael said: "How knewest Thou me?" By now he had seen the angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man. James and John Boanerges were also there, the men who asked to sit on Jesus' right hand and on His left, and were admitted to the sacramental preparation of cup and baptism that they might do it. And who else? Two others. Thank God for these representatives of the anonymous multitude. No! no! not Andrew and Philip. Many an expositor has tried to prove to me that they were Andrew and Philip. Nothing of the kind. If it had been so, they would have been named. They were not of the twelve. They were two men of the outside crowd, of the anonymous multitude, the multitude which create the dynamic, in the force of which the named and prominent men go forward. I am perfectly honest in saying this. How could I preach except for the unnamed souls that pray for me? Two others! I like that group of men. That impulsive, hot, magnificent Peter; that critical, cautious, splendid, trustworthy Thomas; that guileless Nathanael; those Sons of Thunders, and two others. To these Jesus manifested Himself.

Jesus is the Lord of Life and Glory. He will be interested in the daily callings of His people to the end of time; He will sanctify all household duties so that they flash with the splendor of service heavenly; He will direct our spiritual campaign, and comfort us in all our sufferings. Think of the effect of these manifestations on subsequent days of fruitless toil. By His action we know that He overrules our failures, and makes them the processes of His successes. Think of what it meant afterwards to these men in days of weariness and hunger, when they were shepherding the sheep and feeding the lambs. Think of what it meant afterwards to these men when they had to confront death. Think of what it meant afterwards to these men in those days when they would be tempted to fussiness about other people.

I am not proposing to allow any man to take from me this twenty-first chapter of John. For thus He manifested Himself!