

# Looking unto Jesus

## 7. The example of our Lord

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**T**HROUGHOUT the Scriptures the Lord Jesus Christ is depicted as the supreme and perfect example of obedience and holiness. What is more, his life is presented as one which we should follow, for Peter said, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, *that ye should follow his steps*" (1 Pet. 2:21). This is the Scriptural injunction: to imitate to the best of our abilities the perfect life of Christ.

Moreover, the Scriptures are clear that life was a real and arduous learning experience for Jesus. Though the Master was the Son of God and perfectly obedient in all things, even unto his death on the cross, he likewise had to learn, develop and spiritually mature in order that he might please his heavenly Father. Indeed, Jesus, too, had to go "through much tribulation" (Acts 14:22) before the Lord God could grant him eternal life. On this point the writer to the Hebrews declares: "though he [Jesus] were a Son, yet *learned he obedience* by the things which he suffered" (5:8). The Lord Jesus had to go through the experience of obeying his Father's will, each and every day of his mortal life; and through this learning, the writer says, he was "made perfect" and "became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec" (vv. 9,10). It was through his perfect obedience, throughout his life, that he was 'perfected' in heaven and made a High Priest after the eternal order.

Thus the obedience of Christ to his Father's will is an example for the disciple's emulation. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus", who "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:5,8). The Lord's obedience was free and voluntary, not forced and obligatory. The psalmist captures the spirit of his loyal, yet joyful, obedience with these Messianic words in the first person: "Then said I, Lo, I come . . . I delight to do Thy will, O my God" (40:7,8). This was the true sentiment of our Lord many years later. Jesus did not hesitate once in the execution of his Father's will; his attitude was always one of "not my will, but Thine, be done" (Lk. 22:42). And the Lord Jesus knew that the giving of his perfect life in total obedience, even

unto death on the cross, was the will of his God, for he said, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life" (Jno. 10:17).

Our Lord and Master did not commit his life in perfect obedience for his own glory; instead, everything was for the glory of God. Jesus made his position very clear when he said to his Father in prayer, "I have *glorified Thee* on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do" (17:4). In none of this did the Lord Jesus desire to earn the honour of men or the adulation of the crowd, but rather that his Father was glorified by the life that he lived; for he said, "Father, glorify *Thy name*" (12:28).

This needs to be the emphasis of our discipleship. We too need to live our lives so that God's Name is glorified in all that we do. This attitude was seen vividly in the humility and meekness of the Lord Jesus, for he said of himself, "learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Mt. 11:29). He lowered and subjugated himself by taking on the form of a servant, for "the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (20:28).

As we know, a wonderful prospect awaits all those who faithfully try to emulate Christ in their lives. And observe how, for the Lord Jesus, the cross preceded the crown; humiliation before exaltation, and mortality in advance of immortality. This is the same for all faithful followers of Christ. They have been called to a life of opposition and difficulty; for some, hatred and persecution. But they continue regardless, with the eternal hope that a better life has been promised.

Indeed, the Apostle Paul had this attitude, as he confidently declared: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). And he similarly exhorted his beloved Timothy: "if we be dead with him [Christ], we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. 2:11,12). Thus Jesus' life, as the firstfruits of those that sleep, is a pattern of holiness for us. If we follow his example, then, through God's good grace, we will make up the great harvest of good things to come.