

Esoteric Bible Studies

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THE TEN MOST IMPORTANT STEPS IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST JESUS

I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.—*John*, 14:6.

In the expansion of man's consciousness we find his progress paralleling the ten principal steps in the life of Christ Jesus, for He is a cosmic character, and in the principal events of His life we find the way of attainment for all humanity.

1. The Birth. (*Matt.*, 1:18-25).

The birth of the Christ child symbolizes the awakening of the spiritual consciousness within the neophyte, his beginning to live the life. His having been born in a stable where beasts feed signifies that the work of purification must always begin with the desire nature, the lower bestial emotions. Until this work is accomplished there is no room for Him in the inn, which represents the head.

2. The Flight into Egypt. (*Matt.* 2:13-15).

"Egypt" means darkness. Every neophyte knows that this awakening of the Christ life within himself is but the beginning of his endeavor to set his feet upon the Path. Many are the times that he slips back into the path of the lower nature, into the darkness of Egypt, the material senses.

3. Teaching in the Temple. (*Luke* 2:46-47).

This is a most important step upon the way. It refers to the spiritualizing of the concrete mind. It is only as the love power of the heart illumines the mind that we can speak with authority, that our words become filled with spirit and with life.

4. The Baptism. (*Matt.* 3:13-17).

Baptism in its spiritual meaning is not a mere ceremony of sprinkling or emerging in water. We never really re-

ceive the right of baptism until we recognize the fundamental unity of each with all, the brotherhood of man, and attain the realization that the hurt of one is the hurt of all. A certain modern writer caught this idea when he said, "There can never be a king in Italy while there is a beggar in China." When the real baptism has become a *living factor* in our lives, there is no service so menial but that we may glorify it with love, no deed by another so evil but that it receives our compassion and forgiveness.

5. The Temptation. (*Matt.*, 4:1-11).

This is one of the most subtle experiences upon the Path. The temptation as Christ received it was divided into three parts: temptation for the body, temptation of the mind, and temptation of the Spirit.

"And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered.

"And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."

The first part of the temptation assails the aspirant when he learns the creative power of mind, his ability to draw to himself through this mind power what he desires of material things. The second part of the temptation has to do with the use of the powers of extended consciousness: clairvoyance, reading in the ethers, etc. How do we make use of these powers? Are they used for our own benefit to attract a large following to ourselves? Or quietly and unostentatiously are our spiritual gifts used only to serve those who are in need of spiritual solace? The third part of the temptation was as follows:

"Again the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

“And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.”

Here we have the temptation confronting the Initiate, the one who has gained the Christ power. As we attain to higher spiritual realms of consciousness, the temptations do not cease, they only become more subtle. St. Paul, who has gone this way before us, admonishes us to “pray without ceasing.” Temptation if withstood becomes a stepping-stone to greater attainment.

6. The Garden of Gethsemane. (*Matt.* 26:36).

The experience in the Garden of Gethsemane is one that is essential to our spiritual progress. Suffering of the neophyte is caused by his increasing sensitiveness to the sorrows of others, by the inharmony of world conditions, by his own failures and mistakes, and by the torture of his younger brothers of the animal kingdom. The Garden of Gethsemane must at some time be entered by every earnest aspirant upon the Path. This is well, for it is there that he learns to know the meaning of compassion, tenderness, sympathy, forbearance, and to judge only with loving kindness. In the light of eternity we find sorrow transformed into the fairest jewel in the crown of immortal life.

7. The Mount of Transfiguration. (*Matt.* 17:1-8).

The transfiguration symbolizes the lifting of the consciousness into high spiritual realms. The Master was accompanied to the Mount by Peter, James, and John—Faith, Hope, and Love. (The greatest of these is Love.) John was always nearest the Master. One who successfully meets temptation and passes through the Garden of Gethsemane without bitterness will come to know the glory of the Mount of Transfiguration. The neophyte cannot keep his poise all of the time, however, and so Christ Jesus, the great Way-shower, comes down from the mountain to work with humanity in the valleys below.

8. The Crucifixion. (*Matt.* 27:33-35).

Before reaching great spiritual attainment we must all learn the lesson of renunciation, must learn to say, “Not my will but Thine be done.” Renunciation was the test that was given Abraham when he was asked to sacrifice Isaac. Sometimes it is our best beloved, sometimes material possessions as in the story of the rich young man who came to Christ; but always it is that which we love best and hold most closely to our hearts that we must be willing to renounce. Renunciation of self is the keyword of the Christian neophyte. It is this that makes the Path so narrow, and it is for this reason that “few there be who find it.”

9. The Resurrection. (*Matt.* 28:1-8).

Through resurrection after crucifixion the aspirant awakens to a new realization of life and its value. He no longer wants anything for himself alone. There is no joy for him in that which he cannot share. He lives only to love and to serve others; he has been resurrected into the impersonal life. Therefore we must all learn the lesson of renunciation; we must learn to say, “Not my will but Thine be done.”

10. The Ascension. (*Acts* 1:9-11).

It is now that the aspirant possesses within himself the power to find the Mount of Transfiguration at will. He is a free spirit both in heaven and on earth. That consciousness is his of which St. Paul speaks when he says, “None of these things move me.” No persecution of any kind affects him, for he has found the kingdom of heaven within himself, and so has found it in the world without. He knows that evil is only seeming and that “all things work together for good to them that love the Lord.” This expansion of consciousness is accompanied by certain physiological changes in the body. The neophyte has now attained liberation from his physical vehicle. He too can say, “*Consummatum est* (it is accomplished).”

The neophyte has become the Initiate.