

Retired Members Corner



THE HOUR

(A THOUGHT FOR EASTER)

The first recorded reference to the hour in John's gospel is when Mary asks Jesus to remedy the lack of wine at the marriage feast in Cana. "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come". What does this mean? I think we will find that whenever Jesus performs a miracle He intends it to be, not just a miracle, but also a sign. A sign that He can forgive sin, a sign of the new birth, a sign of His death and resurrection - each miracle had a deeper significance than the miracle itself. In John 2 v 4 Jesus appears to be saying that He is not yet at the stage when He is ready to show His power by a sign.

As we read through John's gospel we see the hour coming nearer during the three years that Jesus ministered. John 7 v 30 records that in the second of His three visits to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Tabernacles some "sought to take Him but no man laid hands on Him because His hour was not yet come". Jesus was under divine protection; He could call on twelve legions of angels (72,000) in an emergency (Matt 26 v 53). Again, in John 8 v 20, Jesus speaks in the Temple, to the annoyance of the Pharisees, but "no man laid hands on Him for His hour was not yet come". It was only by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God that man would be permitted to lay hands on Him (Acts 2 v 23).

Jesus comes back to Jerusalem for the last Passover, in John 12. In all His ministry Jesus obeyed the Law of Moses. One of the requirements was that all males should keep the three feasts of the year - Passover, Pentecost and the Tabernacles - in the Temple. He knows this is His final Passover. In v 23 Jesus answered those about Him, including some Greeks, saying, "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified". Then in v 24 He speaks of His death. He continues, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour".

The Hour; the pivotal moment in His Story. The Hour when the Lamb of God would take away the sin of the world (John 1 v 29). When Jesus was born it was midday at midnight (Luke 2 v 9) but when He died it was midnight at midday (Matt 27 v 45). Now we progress to the last supper.

After the meal is over and Jesus is about to enter Gethsemane, we are privileged to eavesdrop on the most remarkable conversation in the whole Bible: Jesus, the Son, talking to God, the Father. John 17 has been likened to the reader being in the Holy of Holies. Jesus, lifting His eyes to Heaven, says, "Father, the hour is now come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee". This is the hour for which Jesus had come into the world. Before He departs He prays for those He will leave behind - His disciples who will become His apostles (v 6-17).

Then He prays for us: you and me, those that believe on Him through the word of the apostles (v 20-23). Even today He continues to intercede with the Father on our behalf; He is our advocate (1 John 2 v 1). He prays that we all may be one. I like to think that in the CSCU we are all one. We belong to a variety of denominations, but we are all believers and all one in Christ when we come together for prayer and praise.

Having been retired almost 27 years, the thought occurs to me that the final hour in my life must surely be close at hand. Paul could say that the time of his departure was at hand. He had fought a good fight, finished the course and kept the faith (2 Tim 4 v 6-7). I truly hope that that will be my testimony in my dying hour. How about you, dear reader? Are you still witnessing to those around you who don't know Jesus? Are you still obeying the Lord's Great Commission? The CSCU Mission Statement at the front of this magazine doesn't cease when you retire from the Civil Service. There is no retirement from God's service. When you pray, ask the Lord to give you one soul, ask Him for the privilege of leading someone to Christ today. He will not disappoint you, but you will have to venture out of your comfort zone, you will have to be equipped with the whole armour of God (Eph 6 v 11).

You will have to make sure you are "ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3 v 15). Leading a soul to Christ brings threefold rejoicing - to the one whose name is newly recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life, to yourself and to the angels in Heaven. May you have this experience today.