

Ask What You Wish Me to Give You

Day 1

If you haven't read the preface to this book entitled "Don't Read This Book!" or if you've deliberately decided to skip it, I'd like to encourage you to go back before you read any further. You'll find some interesting observations on how *God in Sandals* came together, plus a list of suggestions on how to get the most out of it. Why not just take a moment to read it now?

When you've read the preface, then read today's text. Which of God's qualities are revealed by the offer he made to Solomon in verse 5? What was Solomon's burden? How was his prayer affected by the responsibility that weighed him down? How did the Lord respond to his request?

The Lord's appearance to Solomon at Gibeon is one of the most precious moments in the history of God's people. The offer made to the king shows, first, the risks that God is willing to take in His relationships with His children—He was basically allowing Solomon to choose whatever he wanted. This freedom is one of the greatest gifts the Lord has given humanity.

Solomon's response, which pleased the Lord exceedingly, gives us a glimpse of the extraordinary potential of a life completely centered on the kingdom of the Lord. Solomon could clearly have chosen any of the things the Lord subsequently mentioned—long life, riches, the lives of his enemies—but the only thing on his heart was to please God by responsibly carrying out the task with which he had been entrusted. When somebody is entirely absorbed by the things of the Lord, all that the world has to offer becomes less than worthless.

Now, I'd like to invite you to carry out a short exercise based on Solomon's story. Imagine for a moment that God appears in person and gives you the same offer He gave Solomon: "Ask what you wish Me to give you." This is an offer Jesus also made to some of the people He met during His three years of public ministry. How would you respond? Take time to think about it. Think about the implications of this offer and the deepest desires of your heart. What would you ask of the Lord? Turn whatever comes to your mind into prayer.

Now I invite you to take an additional step in this exercise. Imagine that this meeting between you and the Lord takes place, but that the roles are reversed. Instead of the Lord asking you, you say, "Lord, what would You like me to do for You?" How do you think He would answer? Would you be willing to do what He asks? I am sure that as you progress in the challenge of walking through the Gospels with Jesus, you will find the answer to some of these questions. May God, in His goodness, give you courage to respond well to the challenges He sets before you!

Beyond Time

Day 2

Read this week's text, and then focus your attention on verse 1. In your opinion, why did John choose to open his Gospel with this message?

It is good and appropriate that our adventure with Jesus should begin at this point: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

The apostle's declaration echoes the Genesis creation account, which also assumes origins outside our planet's history: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” This “beginning” referred to by both authors lies outside the parameters we use to measure the passing of time—it is hidden within eternity itself.

John doesn't expect to enter into the mystery of this phrase; he simply affirms that the Word was always in existence because the Word is God Himself. His declaration helps us realize what humanity's correct posture before the Lord has been from the very beginning. He is the origin of all things, including our own personal history. Over and over again, as we walk with Him through this section of Scripture, we will come back to this truth. Each scene we witness will inevitably lead us to the Person of God. Man is, and always will be, the one who responds to divine initiative, a secondary player in a story much bigger and more profound than the fleeting tale of our brief time on this planet.

The beloved disciple's pronouncement also places the Messiah's earthly pilgrimage within this eternal framework. Jesus' presence in this world, limited to a short thirty-three years, is part of a plan born in the heart of God Himself and, as such, is part of eternity.

It is so good, therefore, to start out on this adventure with an attitude of worship, full of wonder that we are able to be in contact with the Eternal. We can exclaim, like the psalmist: “Oh, LORD, . . . when I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; what is man, that You take thought of him? And the son of man, that You care for him?” (8:1, 3–4).

Maintaining this attitude throughout the year will be one of the most important factors in helping us enter into the depths of the Person of Christ. We do not approach Him in order to analyze, explain and pick Him to pieces. Rather, we approach Him so that we can experience the irresistible charm of His Person.

“Lord, You are the incarnation of all our longings, the manifestation of our boldest dreams. In approaching Your Person, we do no more than respond to Your initiative. We come with open hearts, willing to let You lead us wherever You wish. Produce in us the experiences You desire. We do not ask that You explain what You do, but that You keep us close to You. To be with You, Lord, is all that our hearts desire.”