

THE FOURFOLD GOSPEL - THE LIFE OF CHRIST

PART TWO - ANNOUNCEMENT AND INTRODUCTION OF THE LORD'S PUBLIC MINISTRY

15. The Forerunner's Work (Lk. 3:1-18) [Mt. 3:1-12; Mk. 1:1-8]

- (1) According to all reliable historians the date for the beginning of John's ministry would have been around 29 AD. Pontius Pilate became the Roman governor in 25 or 26 AD. Herod Antipas was tetrarch of Galilee. It was Antipas that had John beheaded and mocked Christ. Philip was tetrarch in northeast Palestine and Lysanias was tetrarch of the area northwest of Damascus.
- (2) Why were there two high priests when Jewish Law declared that there would be only one? Annas, the rightful High Priest had been deposed by the Romans. Caiphas, his son-in-law, was fulfilling the actual duties of High Priest. Many Jews still looked to Annas despite the presence of Caiphas. With this historical information in place, the time of John's public ministry is fixed.
- (3) John began his teaching in the Jordan valley. His message was to repent and be baptized as a condition of forgiveness.
- (4) John's ministry was a direct fulfillment of OT prophecy (Isa. 40:3-5; 52:10). This passage defines forerunner and shows that the message is more important than the messenger.
- (5) "To make way for the King," was part of John's message. The road was to be prepared so that the way for the King would be straight and smooth.
- (6) The King's entrance would be so remarkable that all could see salvation by his very coming.
- (7) The multitudes included many of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Mt. 3:7). Referring to them as children of vipers was extremely strong language. This labeled them as deceitful, malignant and holding to false doctrine. They needed to be warned of the wrath of God. This wrath would come on all that would reject the kingdom of heaven. The coming of the Messiah was predicted to bring troublesome times (Isa. 60:12; 63:1; Mal. 3:1; 4:5).
- (8) John demands works of repentance. Abraham cannot protect them. How did the Jews think that he would?
- (9) The tree that would not produce these fruits was ready to be cut down. The worthless trees would then be burned. Because many were expecting a temporal King, John spent much of his time trying to awaken his listener's spiritual thinking.
- (10) Compare to the Pentecost crowd of Acts 2. John's preaching had awakened some to the fact that something must be done.
- (11) Give to the poor, do not be selfish. Look to your brother's physical necessities.
- (12) The tax collectors were often unscrupulous men who would collect more taxes than what were due, keeping the excess for themselves.
- (13) John demanded that they do their work honestly, not that they must give up tax collecting.
- (14) These were Jewish soldiers. They were prone to take what they wanted either by physical force or through bribery. John teaches them to be content with their wages.
- (15) The people wondered whether or not John was the Christ.
- (16) John denies this speculation. John compares his "water only" baptism to that of the true Messiah. In all aspects, the Christ would be mightier than John would, but there would be none greater than John (Mt. 11:9-11). The household servant that had the task of removing the guest's shoes was the least of the servants. The baptism administered by Christ would be of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 16:7; Acts 1:5; 11:16). The baptism of fire is Hell (see v. 17).
- (17) Using the example of the threshing floor, John explains how Christ will separate the good from the worthless, then destroy the worthless.
- (18) These are just a few examples of the teachings of John the Baptist

[Peculiarities of Matthew and Mark: The Kingdom at hand, Mt. 3:2; "Send my messenger," Mk. 1:4; and clothing and food, Mt. 3:4; Mk. 1:6.]

16. The Baptism of Jesus (Mt. 3:13-17) [Mk. 1:9-11, Lk. 3:21,22]

- (13) The departure of Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan is the first steps of His public career.
- (14) John's objection was based on his knowledge of Jesus as the Christ.
- (15) Jesus recognizes John's feelings, but asks him to do it anyway. Why did Jesus need to be baptized? Unto repentance? Hardly! He had to fulfill all righteousness; that is, baptism was and is an act of obedience.
- (16) Jesus was immersed; therefore He had to come up out of the water. Was the Holy Spirit visible to others (Jn. 1:33,34)? The voice was probably also heard by all present.
- (17) The voice presented two thoughts: 1) Jesus was God's Son and 2) God was pleased.

[Neither Mark nor Luke adds anything of significance to Matthew's account.]

17. The Temptation of Jesus (Lk. 4:1-13) [Mt. 4:1-11; Mk. 1:12,13]

- (1) Jesus had received the Holy Spirit at His baptism. The Spirit led Him to the place where He would be tried by the Devil.
- (2) Jesus was subjected to forty days of temptations. It seems that the full forces of these temptations were applied as the forty days neared their end.
- (3) The Devil was tempting Jesus to prove that He was the Son of God and satisfy His hunger.
- (4) Jesus quotes Deut 8:3. Jesus is not saying bread is worthless, only that spiritual matters take precedence. Why would it have been a sin for Jesus to turn the stone into bread? Then He would be obeying Satan and not His Father.
- (5) A supernatural occurrence allowed Jesus to view all the Kingdoms of the earth simultaneously. These kingdoms were promised to Jesus if He would bow down (worship) to Satan (v.7).
- (6) The temptation was to obtain glory and power on the earth. The sin would have been in acknowledging the Devil as supreme and sovereign.
- (7) See comments on verse 5.
- (8) Here Jesus quotes Deut. 6:13. It would be a sin to recognize as supreme and worthy of worship anyone besides the Father in Heaven.
- (9) The final scene is at the Temple in Jerusalem. The devil once again calls on Jesus to exert His powers.
- (10,11) Now Satan tries to counter Jesus' use of scripture by quoting some himself (Ps. 91:11,12).
- (12) Testing God would mean that faith was lacking. There is nothing wrong with the Devil's quotation, however it does not apply to Jesus knowingly subjecting Himself to danger. The sin would be putting oneself in unnecessary danger to test God and obeying Satan rather than God.
- (13) Heb. 4:15. The devil tried all types of temptations but Jesus succumbed to none of them. The three categories of sin demonstrated in these verses are 1) bodily appetites, 2) earthly ambitions, and 3) intellectual curiosity. The lesson of James 4:7 is learned by the example of our Lord.

[Pertinent differences between the three records include:

- 1) The third temptation listed by Matthew is the second one listed by Luke.
- 2) Matthew has "stones and loaves" while Luke has "stone and loaf."
- 3) Matthew quotes Deut. 8:3 more fully.
- 4) Luke quotes Ps. 91:11,12 more fully.
- 5) Matthew quotes Jesus as saying, "get thee hence Satan."

- 6) Mark and Matthew have the angels ministering to Jesus, Mk. 1:13; Mt. 4:11]

18. John's Testimony (Jn. 1:19-34)

- (19) Notice that John the Apostle has left out much of what we have already studied in the other Gospels. The rulers among the Jews (the Sanhedrin) sent priests and Levites to inquire of John the Baptist.
- (20) John denies being the Christ. In the latter half of the first century a cult will emerge claiming that John was the Christ.
- (21) If John was not Christ, then some thought he was Elijah returning in the flesh. Mal. 4:5 caused the Jews to expect the return of Elijah. John was not a physical manifestation of Elijah, but he was certainly a spiritual one. "That prophet" refers to Deut. 18:15, but this will later be shown to be Jesus (Acts 3:22; 7:37).
- (22) Since they could not guess his office they asked him to state it plainly for them.
- (23) John answers by quoting Isa. 40:3. Compare to Mt. 3:3, Mk. 1:2, and Lk. 3:4.
- (24) The messengers were Pharisees, which applies to the next question. Why? Because of their concerns with the external rites of Judaism.
- (25) If John was not the Messiah, what authority did he have to institute a new rite (baptism)?
- (26) Some translators read the word "with" here as "in." John chooses to answer indirectly. Christ was now on earth, in Judea.
- (27) John counted himself unworthy to even remove Jesus' shoes (Mt. 3:11), a job usually reserved for the lowliest of servants. What then is John's answer? His authority to baptize is based on the coming of Christ.
- (28) The exact location of Bethabara is unknown, but it was probably located on the east bank of the Jordan between the Dead Sea and Galilee.
- (29) It had been about forty days since Jesus was baptized, when appears again in John's company. Referring to Christ as "the Lamb," John was alluding to the sacrificial nature of Jesus' impending death. Jesus' sacrifice was for all mankind (Heb. 10:4-14; 1 Pet. 1:19).
- (30) Even though John preceded Christ, he is in subjection to Him because of Christ's pre-existence.
- (31) John did not know with certainty that Jesus was the Christ until God pointed Him out. By baptizing Jesus, John found out the truth about His Messiahship.
- (32) The descent of the Spirit served two purposes for John: 1) it identified the Christ and 2) it was God's anointing of Jesus. What would be the significance of Christ's anointment taking place at His baptism?
- (33) The Lord had instructed John so that he would recognize the Messiah. When did Jesus baptize with the Holy Spirit? Only after His ascension (Acts 2:1-4; 10).
- (34) John stands as an eye and ear witness of the Messiahship of Jesus. He saw the Spirit descend and he heard the voice of the Lord declare the Sonship of Jesus.

[Four misconceptions of the Messiah corrected by the teaching of John.

- 1. The spiritual excellence of the Messiah would be supreme, He would not be a normal man in this respect.
- 2. The Jews expected Christ to be lesser or equal to Moses, David and the prophets.
- 3. The Jews were looking for an earthly liberator.
- 4. The Jews were looking for the son of David to be a human Messiah, not a Son of God.]

19. Jesus Calls Some Disciples (Jn. 1:35-51)

- (35) This is the third day since the Jews had come to see John. We learn from verse 40 that one of the two disciples was Andrew. Most scholars believe the other disciple was the Apostle John.
- (36) Here John points out Jesus as the Lamb of God. Remember, in the OT a lamb was a common sacrifice, namely a sin offering (Lev. 4:32).
- (37) The two disciples followed Jesus. Why? Curiosity - a desire to know more concerning this so-called "Lamb of God." There are three reasons that the second disciple is thought to be the Apostle John: 1) From this point forward he speaks as an eyewitness, 2) we have no account in this Gospel of his call to discipleship, and 3) on several occasions he withholds his name (Jn. 13:23-26; 19:26,35; 21:7,20,24).
- (38) Notice how Jesus begins the conversation with these men. Rabbi is the lowest of the three degrees of Jewish teacher. They ask where he lives so that they might come and hear what he has to say.
- (39) The tenth hour is about 4 PM, if reckoning by the Jewish method or 10 AM if using the Roman method.
- (40) Notice the emphasis already placed on Peter. Andrew becomes one of the "twelve."
- (41) The spread of good tidings begins at home. A lesson we all need to apply. Andrew goes to find Peter to tell him first. The good news is that the "Anointed One" had been found.
- (42) Cephas is the Hebrew word for "stone" and corresponds to the Greek name Peter. This passage is a prophecy of how Peter would grow from a weak, vacillating individual to the strongest of the twelve.
- (43) Now it is the fourth day since John's conference with the Jews. This Philip is not "The Evangelist," but Philip the Apostle. John gives us the most insight into Philip (6:5; 12:21; 14:8). "Follow me" is the Lord's usual invitation to discipleship.
- (44) Bethsaida was located on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. Mt. 11:21 shows it to be a wicked place. It was also the home of Andrew and Peter.
- (45) Most scholars agree that Nathanael is Bartholomew, one of the twelve. As soon as Philip becomes a disciple he sets about to bring others to Christ. Philip tries to convince Nathanael that he has found the one prophesied by Moses and the prophets. Philip refers to Christ as the Son of Joseph, but this is more identification than a statement of parentage.
- (46) All of Judea despised Galilee and all of Galilee despised Nazareth. It would be hard for Jews not versed in the OT to believe that the Messiah would not come out of Jerusalem. The answer to the skeptic is to bring him to Jesus and let Him prove that He is the Christ. "Investigation removes prejudice."
- (47) Jesus refers to Nathanael as "an Israelite indeed." That is, he is an Israelite in spirit as well as in flesh. He was a true Israelite, without hypocrisy, sincerely worshiping God.
- (48) Nathanael is surprised to hear himself spoken of as if Jesus knows him. Jesus reads Nathanael's heart and related to him an experience that no one could have known about without either being there or via a miracle.
- (49) Nathanael believes! He makes the first recorded (uninspired) confession of the divinity of Jesus Christ. Nathanael probably did not understand the full impact of his confession.
- (50) Nathanael was destined to see greater miracles by following Jesus. There is growth in grace and knowledge for all faithful disciples, not just for the Apostles.
- (51) Nathanael would see that Jesus was the mediator between heaven and earth. Christ calls Himself "Son of Man" about 80 times. Stephen and John also use the term to describe Christ as they saw Him in visions. The expression may have come from Dan. 7:13,14. The phrases expresses the universal humanity and humility of our Lord.

[Four Practical Lessons

1. Jesus is the sacrificial Lamb of God.
2. We should tell the honest doubter to come and see.
3. We should apply the examples of Andrew and Philip in our own lives. We should be striving to save our friends and family.
4. God's ways are not man's ways. God chose shepherds to deliver Israel and begin the line of Kings. Now the Messiah comes from humble beginnings, the humblest town in the humblest province of Palestine.]

20. First Miracle at Cana (Jn. 2:1-11)

- (1) This event took place on the seventh day of the week that began with the Pharisee's visit to John. Marriages usually took place on Wednesday (virgins) or Thursday (widows). The exact location of Cana is not known. Note that John never calls Mary by name.
- (2) Who was invited to the wedding with Jesus? Andrew, John, Peter, Philip, Nathaneal (and possibly James the brother of John).
- (3) They ran out of wine at the wedding feast, which according to Oriental custom would bring disgrace upon the bridegroom. Some commentators speculate that the arrival of Christ and His disciples contributed to the shortage. If so it would account for Mary's appeal to Christ to rectify the situation. It is not unreasonable that Mary already had faith in the power entrusted to her Son.
- (4) "Woman" was a title of courteous respect. Jesus is informing Mary that she is not the "mother" of the powers within Him. Some commentators see this as a mild rebuke. Mary may have had ulterior motives for having Jesus perform a miracle. That is, the miracle may have been more important to her than the wine. This miracle would allow her to boast, "My Son the Messiah!" A miracle however, is only a secondary sign of His Messiahship; His death on the cross stands as the supreme sign and this "time" was not yet come.
- (5) Mary's actions show that 1) Mary must have been a relative of the bridegroom to take authority over the servants and 2) that she understood that Jesus would help the situation.
- (6) Jews ceremonially washed before and after meals, these pots held the water to be used for that purpose.
- (7) Since the feast had begun, some water had already been used from the vessels. This would be between 120 and 180 gallons of water.
- (8) The ruler of the feast was usually a guest chosen as master of ceremonies for the day. When the water was removed from the pots, it was wine.
- (9) When the ruler (governor) tasted the wine he immediately beckoned the bridegroom.
- (10) This is not the teaching of Jesus Christ but an example of the custom of the day. The good wine was to be served first when it could be distinguished, the poor wine was saved until last when taste did not matter. Note: The strongest wine of Palestine had only a fractional alcoholic content and does not even compare to the weakest wine sold today. Compare the Devil with Christ: good first, bad last versus bad first, good last.
- (11) What is a miracle? When a higher power employs, modifies, or suspends the laws of nature. What about the Catholic traditions of the childhood miracles of Jesus? If this was His first miracle then there were no miracles before this. What is the value of a miracle? The value of a miracle is more in what it signified than in its results. The sign had its impact on the disciples - they believed.

[Five Practical Observations:

1. Christ's presence at a marriage shows its importance.
2. Christ was not an ascetic (stoic), since He engaged in the festivities of a marriage and even contributed to them.
3. Moses first plague - water to blood. Christ's first miracle - water to wine.
4. The world hands out the best first, so the end of the feast is less enjoyable. With Christ the appetite grows with the food it feeds upon!
5. Do not participate in the things of this world if you would not take Jesus with you as a guest.]

21. Visit To Capernaum (Jn. 2:12)

12. Capernaum was on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and therefore "down" from Cana, a town in the hill country. We understand who His mother and disciples were, but who were "His brethren?" (Mt. 12:46; Mk. 3:32; Lk. 8:19; Mt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3; Jn. 2:12; Jn. 7:3; Acts 1:14; 1 Cor. 9:5; Gal. 1:19) These verses lead us to believe that Jesus was the first-born son of Mary who then went on to have other sons as well as daughters. OBJECTIONS: 1) The perpetual virginity of Mary. 2) Why did Jesus commit the care of His mother to the care of John, if she had other sons? 3) These "brethren" were really His cousins, the sons of Alphaeus as can be seen by the names James and Jude. AFFIRMATIONS: 1) If these were not Mary's children, why were they pictured as attending her? 2) There are no passages of scripture that lead us to believe they are not Jesus' brothers and sisters. 3) The names James and Jude were extremely common. Also, His brethren indicated their unbelief at a time when the sons of Alphaeus were apostles. They did not remain in Capernaum long because the Passover was approaching and Jesus wished to spend it in Jerusalem.