

THE FOURFOLD GOSPEL - THE LIFE OF CHRIST

PART THREE - VISIT TO JERUSALEM FOR PASSOVER

22. Jesus Goes to Jerusalem

a. Cleanses the Temple (Jn. 2:13-25)

- (13) John groups his gospel around six Jewish festivals: four Passovers, one Feast of Tabernacles, and one Feast of Dedication. This is how we arrive at three years for Jesus' ministry.
- (14) Jesus found these businessmen in the court of the Gentiles. They were selling animals for use as sacrifices and had converted the court into a cattle yard. It is estimated that over 200,000 lambs were needed during Passover to fulfill all the sacrifices. The moneychangers exchanged Hebrew currency for foreign coin so that the Jews could pay their Temple tax with "Holy money."
- (15) Jesus probably used bulrushes to fashion the cords of His whip. This weapon was considered more symbolic than violent. Yet, His will could not be resisted. Since they all fled before His face, this is an act of superhuman strength.
- (16) Why did Jesus drive out the sheep and the oxen but ask the dove sellers to remove their property? The answer lies in Christ's object - to cleanse the Temple. He was not there to destroy property. His authority is vested in Him by birth - it is His Father's House. Compare His attitude toward the Temple here to that found in Mt. 23:38. Also note that Jesus purges the Temple again three years later, (Mt. 21:13). The priests were in charge of this marketplace and secular history tells us they cleared a hefty profit.
- (17) Ps. 69:9 came to His disciples' minds as they witnessed this event.
- (18) The one's in authority asked for proof that Jesus had such power. They had just witnessed such a sign and they were blind to it!
- (19) This was Christ's typical answer when pressed for sign. The Jews did not comprehend His words as seen by the following verses. (Mt. 26:61; Mk. 14:58) show how the Jews twisted this prophecy into a false charge against Christ.
- (20) It had been 46 years since Herod the Great began rebuilding the Temple. It was not completely finished until 64 AD. The Jews are actually mocking Jesus here. Three days to do what thousands of workmen could not do in 46 years was a joke to them.
- (21) John interjects his commentary at this point.
- (22) It would take three years before the disciples would understand what Jesus is actually saying. It was then that they believed in the resurrection and Jesus' prophecy concerning it.
- (23) Jesus performed signs and miracles while attending the Passover.
- (24) Jesus was careful not to reveal himself too fully at this time. Man was not quite ready for the full impact of the Messiah. He did not tell them His plans and purposes.
- (25) He knew the time was not right because He could see into their hearts and know they were not sincere believers.

[Three Practical Observations:

- 1) Today men profane the spiritual Temple in a manner similar to that in which the Jews were profaning the physical Temple of Jesus' day. Catholic priests have sold absolutions, extreme unction, burial of the dead, masses, and indulgences. Evangelists go to work for the highest bidder; not necessarily where they are needed the most. Members of congregations decide that bake sales, raffles, bingo, hamburgers, festivals, and shows belong in the church buildings.
- 2) When greed and corruption overtook the Temple, God gave up on it and abandoned it to men. The same can happen with a congregation today.
- 3) The Master still reads the hearts of man, He sees our every thought and motive.]

b. **Discourses with Nicodemus (Jn. 3:1-21)**

- (1) Nicodemus appears three times in John's Gospel: here, 7:51 and 19:38. We know he was a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews, that is, a member of the Sanhedrin. Verse 10 leads us to believe he was a doctor of the Law.
- (2) Nicodemus probably did not want it known that he was visiting Jesus, therefore he came at night. When Nicodemus says "we," he means himself and the rest of the Sanhedrin. The signs and miracles that Jesus did marked him as "one from God," a prophet.
- (3) "Verily, verily" is an expression that occurs 24 times in John's Gospel. It is used to give emphasis to an unusually solemn and weighty declaration. Jesus preaches the "new birth" to Nicodemus. This is shocking to Nicodemus because why would one of God's chosen, a Jew, a Pharisee, a son of Abraham, need to be reborn?
- (4) His prejudices keep him from seeing the true meaning of Jesus' words. This "new birth" seemed like an impossible requirement to Nicodemus.
- (5) Jesus further explains the new birth: it is a birth by water and the Spirit. This means by baptism and an inward change. For more on "water and the Spirit" see Mt. 28:19; Acts 2:38; Acts 19:1-7; Titus 3:5.
- (6) The flesh gives birth to flesh, but the spiritual gives birth to the spiritual.
- (7) None are exempt; all must be born again.
- (8) The word translated "wind" would be more appropriately translated "Spirit." It is the Greek word *pneuma*, and is identical to the last word in the verse. The teaching then is this; we are born of the Spirit by hearing the voice of the Spirit. Some commentators disagree with this interpretation. However, they reach much the same conclusion but believe the first part of the passage refers to the wind of nature and is comparing it to the working of the "wind of God."
- (9) Nicodemus is dumbstruck by this teaching; he cannot comprehend it.
- (10) Jesus puts Nicodemus in his place. If he is a doctor of the Law, why doesn't he understand this fundamental principle of God's Kingdom? The OT had foreshadowed such changes in passages such as: Deut. 10:16; 1 Sam. 10:9; 16:13; Ps. 51:10; Ezek. 18:31; 36:26,27; Jer. 4:4.
- (11) Jesus changes to the plural to encompass all of those who have testified of Him, past, present, and future and to condemn those who have rejected Him in those same time frames.
- (12) Since Nicodemus could not understand the earthy things concerning the Kingdom, he would not understand the unknown things of heaven.
- (13) Here Jesus testifies concerning His pre-existence.
- (14,15) Reference to Num. 29:4-9. Those who had faith to look upon the brazen serpent lived. In our day we must look upon Christ on the cross and believe. The implication is clear, in Moses' day those who refused to look upon the serpent were lost, in the last days those who reject Christ will be lost.
- (16) Five lessons can be learned from this verse. 1) God is love, 2) God loves the world, He does not hate it, 3) This love is unbounded to the extent He would give up His Son for it, 4) Christ came to prevent perishing, not to cause it, and 5) God's grace is unlimited, even unto the salvation of souls. Encompassed in these five lessons are five more lessons concerning the love of God. 1) Its magnitude-giving His Son, 2) Its reach - to the entire sinful world, 3) Its impartiality - to all equally, Mt. 5:45; Rev. 22:17, 4) Its benefits - eternal life, and 5) Its limitations - for believers only.
- (17) Christ came first to save, then to judge. While we live, Jesus is our advocate, not our prosecutor.
- (18) Belief in Jesus as the Savior is mandatory for salvation. Faith leads to obedience, which puts us in favor with God. The unbeliever condemns himself.
- (19,20) Christ is the true light, but men prefer darkness, because light exposes their evil. Night hides the deeds committed by evildoers. Man rejects this light because it plainly condemns the evil they love.

- (21) Truth can be lived; through this life of truth comes salvation. This man is willing for his deeds to be revealed, because there is no shame in them.

[Five Practical Observations:

- 1) You won't be able to sneak into the Kingdom of Heaven.
- 2) Your earthly birth or station in life means nothing.
- 3) You must be reborn, of water and the Spirit.
- 4) We receive the Spirit by listening to His voice through His inspired (God-breathed) teachers.
- 5) Belief in Jesus leads to this Spiritual rebirth through a truthful and obedient acceptance of Christ and the things He would have us to do.]

23. Tarries and Baptizes in Judea (Jn. 3:22)

- (22) Shortly after the Passover Jesus left Jerusalem and entered the more rural areas of Judea. We know the disciples performed the physical act of baptism, after Jesus taught (see 4:1,2). Among the disciples gathered by Jesus in Judea were Mary, Martha, Lazarus, Simeon, and Judas Iscariot. The baptism being administered at this time was John's baptism, that is a baptism unto repentance. Why could it not be the baptism administered in the church today? (Jn. 7:39; Mt. 28:19; Rom. 6:3)

24. John's Testimony (Jn. 3:23-36)

- (23) Aenon is located northeast of Samaria, not far from the Jordan; the name Aenon signifies "springs." John was baptizing at this location because of the presence of much water. If John was baptizing concurrently with Christ's disciples they must have been administering the same baptism.
- (24) John would be cast into prison shortly after this incident. The significance is that Jesus began His ministry before John's ended. This can only be seen from John's account, it is not indicated in the Synoptic Gospels.
- (25) The context shows that this dispute was somehow caused by knowledge of Jesus' work. The best manuscripts read "a Jew."
- (26) From the preceding dispute John's disciples become jealous of Jesus and quickly complain to John. Why would they be jealous?
- (27) John is indicating here that as a man he can only receive what he has been given. The implication (as we shall see in the next few verses) is that Jesus as the Son of God can take what He chooses.
- (28) John reminds his followers that he is not the Christ, therefore Jesus is only fulfilling the very prophecies that John had made concerning Him.
- (29) The bride is the church, the groom is Christ, and the best man is John. Instead of being envious of Christ, John rejoices. In these times it was part of the best man's duties to see to the wedding preparations.
- (30) Christ will increase because of prophecy, Divine Law, and His very nature. John will decrease in popularity, power and disciples.
- (31) Many commentators feel that the rest of this chapter contains the reflections of the Apostle John. The point to be taken here is very clear: the heavenly outweighs the earthly.
- (32) See Jn. 3:11. Already some are rejecting Christ's testimony including these disciples of John.
- (33,34) Accepting Christ is accepting God. Jesus was in constant touch with the Spirit, receiving continual input; others on earth that received the Spirit received it with measure.
- (35) Jesus asserts this same point in Mt. 28:18.
- (36) In this verse "believeth" contrasts to "obeyeth not." (NASV) The Scriptures never count mental assent as faith unless it is accompanied by obedience (Rom. 1:5).

[Two Practical Observations

1. If Jesus the Divine Being felt it necessary to obey, preach, and practice the baptism of John while it was in force, how much more ought we to obey, preach, and practice the baptism of Jesus Christ today?
2. The true servant of God is not looking for earthly honor. Perhaps we overemphasize the preacher rather than the message preached, thus causing some preachers to be jealous of their following.]

25. John's Imprisonment (Lk. 3:19,20) [Mt. 14:3-5; Mk. 6:17-20]

(19,20) Herodias was the wife of Philip, granddaughter of Herod the Great, daughter of Aristobulus and a niece of Herod Antipas (and Philip). Because Philip had been disinherited, Herodias deserted him and married his brother who had divorced his wife to make room for Herodias. This is not the only evil thing that Antipas had done and John rebuked him for all these wicked things. Herod imprisoned John for this rebuke. The end result can be seen by looking ahead to Matthew 14 and Mark 6, which we will cover later in our study. However, in conjunction with this reading see Mt. 4:12 and Mk. 1:14 which brings us to our next point.

26. Christ Departs for Galilee (Jn. 4:1-4) [Mt. 4:12; Mk. 1:14]

- (1) The Pharisees were noting the increasing influence of Jesus. This gave Jesus three reasons for leaving Judea: 1) to avoid conflict with the jealous disciples of John, 2) to prevent a premature conflict with the Pharisees, and 3) the imprisonment of the Baptist.
- (2) This is the verse that shows that Jesus did not administer the baptism himself. Remember that when it comes to water baptism, it is the act of faith of the one being baptized that is important, not who does the baptizing.
- (3) As well as needing to leave Judea, Christ also needed to go to Galilee. His work in Galilee so far surpassed his work in Judea that Galilee became known as the place of his ministry's beginning (Lk. 23:5).
- (4) Samaria was between Judea and Galilee. Because of their hatred of the Samaritans many Jews would circumvent Samaria on their travels. Jesus on the other hand chose to pass directly through.

27. Christ in Samaria (Jn. 4:5-42)

- (5) Who were the Samaritans and why were they despised by the Jews? During the Assyrian captivity the Assyrian king sent foreigners into the territory to occupy it; the Samaritans are their descendants. Their religion was a mixture of Judaism and paganism mainly influenced by the teaching of Manasseh. It was he who set up Mt. Gerizim as a convenient place of worship. The Samaritans accepted only the five books of Moses as scripture. The town of Sychar was the location of Joseph's tomb.
- (6) Jacob's well is not mentioned in the OT, but its existence is proven by this passage of inspired scripture. It was noon and Jesus was tired. This indicates the human side of Christ.
- (7) She was a Samaritan woman of the city of Sychar.
- (8) Jesus initiates the conversation by asking for a drink of water. It was the custom of the day to never refuse a drink of water to anyone, even an enemy. If the disciples had been present they probably would have bartered for use of her pitcher and rope.
- (9) The woman is not refusing the Lord's request, but only expressing astonishment that a Jew would ask a favor of a Samaritan. Though social dealings were restricted we can see from verse 8 that trade was allowed.

- (10) Christ is the gift of God. If the Samaritan woman would have known Him as the Messiah, she might have understood His sayings. "Living Water" literally means running or spring-fed water. In Jn. 7:37-39 the actions of the Holy Spirit are referred to as "living water."
- (11) The woman takes Jesus' words literally and answers as if the feat He spoke of was impossible. The word "Sir" is the same as "Lord."
- (12) The Samaritans claimed descent from Jacob through Joseph. Could Jesus be greater than Jacob, the giver of the well?
- (13) Water must be replenished in the body; this is natural.
- (14) The water Jesus offered however, transcended nature; it would permanently defeat thirst. This water would eventually bring forth eternal life.
- (15) The woman does not fully understand Jesus, but she does believe that the water will permanently quench her thirst and keep her from having to return to the well.
- (16) To make the woman aware of her need for this living water; Jesus brings up a portion of her life that is less than acceptable in God's sight.
- (17) She has a man, but he is not her husband.
- (18) The divorce laws of the times were such that a husband could put away his wife for things as trivial as burning his dinner. Some of these divorces must have been her fault.
- (19) Jesus' knowledge of the intimate details of her past cause her to realize that He is a prophet. This is her confession of the truth of Jesus' previous statements.
- (20) The woman now turns the attention away from her sinful life and toward a great controversy between the Samaritans and the Jews. The ancestors of the Samaritans believed that it was lawful to worship at Mt. Gerizim, while the Jews held that Jerusalem was the only place of sacred worship. Note: What your ancestors do or do not do has nothing to do with what God would have you to do. [See McGarvey p. 147 as to the religious significance of this mountain.]
- (21) In His answer, Jesus implies that no earthly tabernacle is holy in and of itself. 1 Tim. 2:8 gives the criteria for a place of worship.
- (22) How is salvation of the Jews? The seed of David brought forth Jesus. The Samaritans rejected David and all of the Jewish prophets. Remember, even though the Jews of Jesus' day were far from the truth, there was nothing wrong with their religion, only how they chose to practice it.
- (23) The time has come when God demands a spiritual, not ritual form of worship. These are the worshippers that God seeks.
- (24) God is Spirit. He is **not** 1) material (as pagans would have their gods), 2) an abstract force (as some agnostics urge), or 3) a blind impersonal power. God is 1) free from limitations of space and time and 2) He is beyond the need of a temple, sacrifice, etc. The worship man offers to God must correspond to the nature of God.
- (25) The woman knows that the Messiah will make her able to understand these things. Notice that her conception of the Messiah as a Teacher is more correct than that of the Jews who were looking for a world-conqueror.
- (26) This is the first recorded declaration of Jesus as the Messiah. It would be two more years before Peter would make his confession.

[Eight Practical Lessons

- 1- We should seize every opportunity to preach the gospel.
- 2- Objects in nature can be used as examples in spiritual lessons.
- 3- Earthly food is not permanent in satisfying our wants.
- 4- We must be thirsty (conscience of our sins) before we realize our need for the "living water."
- 5- God does not guarantee our earthly father's customs.
- 6- God is Spirit.
- 7- Formalized rituals, holy places, symbols, signs, etc. insult God, they do not worship Him.

8- There are only four instances in the Gospels of Jesus teaching outsiders 1) the Samaritan woman, 2) the Roman centurion, 3) the Canaanite woman, and 4) the Greeks at Jerusalem.]

- (27) Not only did Jews avoid talking to Samaritans; they would not talk to any woman, including their wives and children, out of doors. This is what caused the disciples to be surprised. Even though they did not understand what was going on, they respected and revered Jesus to the point that they did not interrupt.
- (28) The woman's taste of living water made her forget her need for physical water.
- (29) She was excited to share the good news concerning Jesus Christ. The things Christ had told her outlined her entire adult life; her conscience filled in the blanks. Notice the way she tactfully asserted Jesus as the Christ in the interrogative form. She wanted them to see for themselves. Verse 9- She calls Him "Jew." Verse 11- She calls Him "Sir." Verse 19- She calls Him "Prophet." Verse 29- She calls "Him Christ!"
- (30) The curiosity of the townspeople was touched; they immediately went out to the well to see the man.
- (31) While the woman was gone the disciples encouraged Jesus to eat.
- (32) This is not supernatural, even today when our emotions are deeply stirred we can ignore the needs of the body for a time.
- (33) The disciples are as ignorant as the Samaritan woman when it comes to distinguishing spiritual things from temporal things!
- (34) "Meat" as used in the scripture can refer to any kind of food, not just flesh. Jesus explains that doing the will of God is food for Him. What is food? 1) Enjoyment, 2) something you long for when hungry, and 3) something that would refresh and strengthen.
- (35) Literally, it was four months until harvest time. However, in a spiritual sense the time was ripe at this moment. The spiritual field would be the approaching Samaritans. From this passage we can determine the time of the year as mid-December.
- (36) As the earthly reaper receives a reward for his work, so will the spiritual reaper. When the crop comes in both the sower and the reaper rejoice. Can we make a practical application of this?
- (37) Perhaps an analogy to what Jesus is saying would be bringing a neighbor to services; having them hear a sermon, and having them answer the gospel call.
- (38) The disciples would be reaping on ground prepared by others. Who? John and Christ had prepared the people in Judea; the disciples had done the baptizing for Jesus.
- (39) The witness of the Samaritan woman caused many to believe. It is ironic that the Jews rejected the word of the prophets, but the Samaritans accepted the word of an adulteress.
- (40) It was a strange occurrence for a Jew to be invited into a Samaritan village. It was stranger still for the Jew to accept! The far-reaching effects of Christ's visit can be seen in Acts 8:5-8.
- (41) Miracles were not needed for these God-fearing Samaritans; they were honestly searching for the true Messiah, and knew they had found Him.
- (42) Notice that the Samaritans do not claim Jesus for themselves, but instead proclaim Him the Savior of the world.

[Seven Practical Observations

1. The work of God strengthens and refreshes as food.
2. Harvest time is a season of rejoicing.
3. The harvest is plenty but the laborers are few.
4. Even though Jesus is tired, he is not too tired to speak the good news.
5. Christianity breaks down the wall of racial prejudice.
6. Christianity elevates woman to equality with man.
7. Christianity lifts up the degraded and sinful and gives them an opportunity to repent.]

28. On to Galilee (Jn. 4:43-45) [Lk. 4:14,15]

- (43) Jesus remained two days at Sychar, then departed.
- (44) The other three records of this statement (Mt. 13:57; Mk. 6:4; Lk. 4:24) refer to Jesus' rejection in Nazareth. Those passages will be examined in a later lesson.
- (45) Though He was rejected in His hometown the rest of Galilee accepted Him. Compare the reception of the Galileans to the rejection of the priests, rulers and Levites. It is not surprising that 11 of the 12 original Apostles were from Galilee. Which Apostle was not from Galilee? Where was he from?