

PALOMINO VALLEY BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

December 3, 2023

Faith Or Saving Faith?

John 2:23-25

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Today

After our Thanksgiving message two weeks ago, followed by Elder Brian's message from *Colossians*, we now return to our study of the *gospel of John*, and this morning we will complete *chapter 2*.

We will look at the last three verses in chapter two, three verses that are crucial in our relationship with Jesus Christ. As we study these three verses, they may generate some uneasiness, and if they do, that is a good thing, because it is fruitful to use Scripture to examine ourselves and our relationship with Jesus Christ from time-to-time.

Our last study ended with Jesus leaving Capernaum and going up to Jerusalem.

Now, Passover was soon to begin, so Jesus went to Jerusalem, and that is where we will begin today.

Jerusalem lies about 85 miles from Capernaum, so Jesus' journey to celebrate the Passover would have taken Him a good 4 days by walking. Remember, Jesus' first stop in Jerusalem was at the temple where He observed the money changers and sellers of animals doing business inside the temple.

This upset Him because the temple was intended to be a house of prayer for all people's, not a place of profit for business people, and what made it even worse is that the Pharisees, Sadducees, and priests approved of this activity since they profited from it also.

So Jesus made a whip out of cords, and drove the money changers and sellers of animals out of the temple, turning over their tables. This made Him unpopular with both the religious crowd and the business people, and His authority was questioned.

Let's read together our text for today:

John 2:23-25 Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing.

Vs. 24 But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men.

Vs. 25 and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

Jesus has arrived in Jerusalem from Capernaum where He stayed a few days with His mother, His brothers, and His disciples, after leaving the wedding celebration at Cana where He turned water into wine; the first sign, or miracle, to prove who He really was.

It was the time of Passover, a time for the Jewish people to remember and celebrate that miraculous event when God saved all the firstborn Jews in Egypt from death.

The tenth plague was about to fall on Egypt and its stubborn Pharaoh because he refused to release God's people from slavery after nine previous plagues. So the LORD had instructed Moses and Aaron to inform all the people to paint the blood of a sacrificial lamb on the lintel and doorposts of their homes and stay inside that night.

All the firstborn of the Egyptians, including Pharaoh's firstborn son, and all the firstborn cattle, were about to die.

Exodus 12:23-27 *"For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to smite you.*

Vs. 24 *"And you shall observe this event as an ordinance for you and your children forever.*

Vs. 25 *"When you enter the land which the LORD will give you, as He has promised, you shall observe this rite.*

Vs. 26 *"And when your children say to you, 'What does this rite mean to you?'*

Vs. 27 *you shall say, 'It is a Passover sacrifice to the LORD who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but spared our homes.' "* And the people bowed low and worshiped.

That night, at midnight, all the firstborn in Egypt, including the cattle, were struck dead by God's angel of death, and Pharaoh released all the Israelites. Then a Passover Ordinance was established:

Exodus 12:42 *It is a night to be observed for the LORD for having brought them out from the land of Egypt. This night is for the LORD, to be observed by all the sons of Israel throughout their generations.*

As a side note, Exodus was written about 1466 B.C. and the Israelites were headed for the promised land, the land God promised to Abraham, but, because of their disobedience, they spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness before arriving.

Therefore, the Israelites were given, and have occupied, much of God's promised land, which happens to be far larger than present day Israel, for about 3400 years---long before the Palestinians, so called, set foot on it.

The problem we see presently in all the protesting demonstrations against Israel lies in the fact that all these protesters are ignorant about the knowledge of God and His history with Israel, and God's promises and relationship to the Jewish people.

Even if some of them know Israel's history, they refuse to accept it, along with their disbelief in God and His Christ.

However, Biblical prophecy is 100% accurate, and Israel will, at the end of the age, at the return of Jesus Christ, be fully restored, and its remnant saved as they come to faith in Him.

Jesus In Jerusalem

So we find this Jewish young man, Jesus, in Jerusalem to observe the Passover ordinance. And, while He is there, He performs more signs (miracles) during the nine or ten days of Passover.

In **verse 23**, John informs us that *during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing.*

Let's examine this part of the verse for a moment. Jesus is not in the temple at this time.

He is out in the streets of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was packed with people, mostly Jewish, from all the known parts of the world during Passover, and Jesus would have been seen by many. He may have gone into some of the homes of the Jews while He was engaged in celebrating the feast.

John does not say what signs Jesus performed, only that He did them, and many people saw the miracles and they believed in His name.

If we stopped reading at this verse, we would be thinking, "This is great!" "Many people saw Jesus' miracles and believed in Him, and they were saved!"

Then, in **verse 24**, John states something troubling: *But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men.*

Has someone ever said to you, "I like your shirt, or, I like your blouse, but..." Even worse, "You're my best friend, but..." Or, "I love you, but..."

That word, "but", tells us there is something wrong. Full acceptance of your appearance, or full acceptance of you as a friend is missing. What might be the problem?

The word, *entrusting*, is the same Greek word as *believed* used in *verse 23*, *pisteuo*, meaning to have faith in. We find, then, that many people believed in His name, but Jesus did not believe in them!

There is a level of faith that falls short of an embracing faith. Now, let's read *verses 24 and 25* together: **Vs. 24** *But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men.*

Vs. 25 and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

The faith of the people who saw Jesus' signs and believed in His name was a superficial faith; a faith that believed He was capable of doing certain things that others could not do. Jesus appealed to them, they believed intellectually that Jesus could do them some earthly good.

They could say He was a prophet, or their Messiah, or a healer; someone who could do something for them. But there was a problem that only Jesus could discern. As a people, we look at the outside of a person; their appearance.

We listen to their speech; their words. We watch their behavior; how they treat us and others, and we make judgments based on those things.

However, Jesus is not a mere person, but God come to us in the flesh; both God and man, and He sees into the darkest corner of every heart. He not only listens to us, but He knows our most secret thoughts.

Only God knows the true condition of our heart. **1 Samuel 16:7b** *“for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”*

Jesus knows us more intimately than any human could ever know us, and He knew those people who saw His signs and believed did not have a changed heart; a heart of humility that recognized its sinful ways and sought God's forgiveness, a repentant heart; a heart that took Him into their life, embracing and obeying Him and willing to serve Him.

There was no question in Jesus' mind about those who saw Him working His signs, or miracles, believed in His name, but their hearts were not given to Him, therefore He did not entrust Himself to them.

He knew that those people would follow Him for food and healing, working miracles in their lives, but when the storms of life came; when difficult times came, when the pain of hunger and illness came, when financial difficulties came, or when persecution and rejection came upon them, they would leave Him because their hearts were not with Him; their hearts were still attached to the world and its temptations and pleasures.

Proverbs warns us: **Proverbs 21:2** *Every man's way is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the hearts.*

The questions for everyone who claims they believe in Jesus are, “Do I have an intellectual faith, or a saving faith?”

“I believe in Jesus, but do I trust Jesus?” “Am I willing to follow Him and obey His commandments?” “And, does He trust me?”

Turn back for a moment to **John 1:12** *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.*

The word *Received*, in this sense, means to embrace and follow His instructions. This is the level of faith that goes beyond an intellectual faith; a faith that requires commitment, understanding, and willingness to follow and serve the One in whom your faith rests.

Many people have knowledge of Him. They know about His virgin birth, they know about His miracles, they know about His crucifixion and His resurrection, they have faith in His name, but they have not embraced Him and given their heart to Him.

The Pharisee, Nicodemus, in *John 3*, is an example of those who did not have a saving faith. He admitted Jesus was a teacher *come from God* because of the signs He did. He had faith in Jesus' name, but not a saving faith.

Nicodemus could not understand the necessity of recognizing who Jesus really is; God incarnate. The omniscient Jesus knew his heart.

When Jesus told him he must be born again, Nicodemus could not understand. He was still spiritually blind, unregenerated. He saw Jesus' signs, believed they were from God, but did not understand what they stood for. He loved what Jesus could do, but he failed to see the Lordship of the Savior.

We Have The Same Situation Today

Between the years 2020 and 2022 we had a pandemic sweep across America, as well as the entire world. Millions died, and another pandemic may follow this winter.

But there is another type of pandemic, or at least an epidemic; a spiritual epidemic. I have read various statistics and polls about Christianity. Some say 80% of Americans believe in Jesus Christ.

Others say 30% to 40% not only claim to believe in Jesus, but they have been born again. How is it then, that statistics published by Outreach Magazine in April 2018 state that less than 20%, actually 17.7% of Americans regularly attend church?

At the same time, football and soccer stadiums fill up, and Hollywood actors, entertainers and sports heroes are idolized.

As humans we prioritize things, don't we? Both the unsaved and the saved, we all prioritize life. Those things which are most important to us we give our attention to first. We make choices according to what is most important to us, and those things which are of little importance are set aside, to be dealt with when there is nothing better to do.

As a nation, America is demonstrating to God, the One who established our nation, our Creator and provider of all things, that He is of little importance in our lives.

The very One who loves us enough to come into this world in the form of a man to die for us, to shed His blood in full payment of the penalty for our sins is the same One who is set aside so we, as a nation, can pursue all the pleasures of Satan's domain, a world in which the love of money, entertainment, lust, thirst for power, and all desires of the flesh take priority over God and His Christ.

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the One who, through our saving faith, forgives us and changed our path of life from a final destiny in a fiery hell to an eternal life in His Kingdom of joy and peace is the very One who is only honored, worshiped, and obeyed by less than 20% of our nation's people!

Jesus taught about obedience. ***John 14:21, 23-24***

Vs. 21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."

Vs. 23 "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him."

Vs. 24 "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me."

Where is the obedience of the 80% of what the polls call Christians in America? Where is the obedience of the churches that promote transgenderism, homosexuality and lesbianism—the churches that never teach on sin and God's judgment, and repentance of sins, and the necessity of being born again?

How many churches excuse their agendas and doctrine by saying, "Jesus loves everyone, no matter how they live, and we do to!" And they attempt to prove it by hiring homosexual and lesbian preachers and bishops.

These are some of the many reasons why this nation has fallen under God's judgment. We see it in our present administration. We see it in the ungodly and oppressive legislation proposed in Congress.

We see it on our economy. We see it in the growing rash of illnesses across the nation, and in the pandemic we suffered for two years.

How many people rationalize their sins, saying, "God made me this way, and He's OK with me." Or, "God doesn't see or care about what I am doing."

Or, and I have heard this before: "Well, I believe in Jesus Christ, so that's enough, isn't it?"

Our text this morning teaches differently. Jesus knows the heart of every person. He knows all the secrets hidden in the heart, and there will be no misleading Him when He returns.

Some of the scariest words in the New Testament are found where Jesus is speaking during His sermon on the mount:

Matthew 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.

Vs. 22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'"

Vs. 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

Conclusion

Every professing Christian needs to examine their heart from time-to-time. What is the condition of my faith? Have I fully embraced Jesus Christ as both my Lord and Savior? Am I obeying His teachings and commands, or am I still in love with the world?

Jesus knows every last detail of your heart. Open up to Him, allow Him to lead you.

Ask our Lord Jesus to reveal to you any area of your life that falls short of following Him. Pray. Seek His help and direction. By all means, read the Scriptures; read His words.

Both the Old and New Testaments reveal God's nature, His character, and His will for your life. Make a commitment to God our Father to cooperate with Him in transforming you, as a believer in Jesus Christ, to the image of His Son.

Pray for those who are still lost in spiritual darkness.

Let us pray--

Worship

Benediction: ***Romans 12:2*** *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Amen!*