

## GOSPEL OF THE MESSIAH

Message 15

Text: John

Date: 5/30/2014

INTRO: In the last two messages we have observed the life of Christ in the first days of His ministry. In today's message we are in about day 12 of His ministry. There were a few days from when He left Bethabara, where John was baptizing, until He got to Cana. I believe He was in Cana for likely as long as 8 days. Jewish weddings would go from a few to seven days in length, and gathering that they ran out of wine, and because of the amount of wine He made, I conclude it would have been a seven day feast. And so, our last message in the Gospels we gave consideration to Jesus' first miracle, or sign. It was a sign that He was, and is truly the Messiah.

If that is so, we now follow Christ from Cana to Capernaum. Capernaum will be like Jesus' home town from here on until He is crucified. From Capernaum He went on to Jerusalem. Jesus' mother and brothers have come with Him from Cana to Capernaum. They spend several quiet days there. So look at John 2:12 (read).

So, we go to verse 13 (read). Jesus makes eight recorded trips to Jerusalem in His life time. But there may have been unrecorded trips there as well. His first trip to Jerusalem was for His naming and circumcision. His second recorded trip was when He was 12 years old. This may well have been His bar mitzvah, when He officially became a man. You will remember how His parents left for Nazareth a day's journey before they discovered He was missing. And it says that He went back with them and was subject to them as His parents. That subjection may have lasted until He called His mother 'woman' in our previous message. He has now just turned 30 years of age, and His ministry is now about 2 weeks old. And now, once more He makes a trip to Jerusalem, but now as having taken on the official office of the Messiah of Israel. So this is His first trip to the capital of Israel after His ministry has begun, and we are about to see the Messiah at work.

Now, before we look at the rest of this chapter, let me make one more introductory point. Notice in verse 13 that the reason Jesus, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples go to Jerusalem at this time is that the Passover

is close at hand. Three times in the year, at the three main festivals, all Jewish males were required to be present at Jerusalem. Passover is one of those. And I have mentioned to you several times that I believe Jesus ministered for just over two, not over three years. It could have been more, but it could not have been less than two years. The way scholars determine the duration of His ministry is by counting how many Passovers are recorded in the Gospels. I won't tell you more now, just keep that in mind for the future.

So, having introduced this section of John 2:12-25 by reading verses 12-13, we are now ready to look at what happened in Jerusalem. I have called this third main point in the Gospel story, 'The Authentication Of The Messiah To The World'. And the third point in that section I have called, "His knowledge of the future." Only the Messiah could have known what we find that Jesus knew here. To that we want to now give our attention in the rest of this chapter.

### 3. His knowledge of the future (Jn. 2:12-25)

#### -The Cleansing of the temple

Let us begin by looking at the cleansing of the temple in John 2. John has already given to us some very important events in the life of Christ not recorded in the synoptics and here is another. John does not give us information about the trip to Jerusalem or where they stayed night, or any other events that took place. He just goes to the next event which he sees important for us to know. And just as we saw that Jesus qualified to be the Messiah by turning 120 gallons of water into the best grape juice you can get, we see here once more that He is the Messiah from His knowledge of the future.

As we begin this point, let me give a little background information that will help put life into the event described by John the Apostle in verses 12-25. I gleaned much of this from Alfred Edersheim. You see, we are close to the Passover. And before the three major feasts of Israel, preparations would have begun about a month before. Since Passover is Nisan 14,

preparations would have begun in the month of Adar. All bridges and roads would have been repaired for the pilgrims. And they would travel on these repaired roads to Jerusalem to serve in the temple. The priests, and the four groups of the Levites; those that served the priests, the musicians, gatekeepers, officers and judges all would have traveled to Jerusalem, along with all the other Jewish men, many with their families. So you can picture the roads busy with travelers on foot and by donkey. Many would choose this feast of the three to bring their tithes to Jerusalem. Money changers, of whom much might be said, would open their stalls in every town from the 15th Adar until the 25th.

Many would be bringing sheep and doves to sell to those who sold these at the temple in Jerusalem to travelers who could not bring their sacrifices but would rather buy them there. The temple would be a hub of activity long before the feast. Inspections of sacrificial animals that would be sold to the travelers would have to be completed. Some of these, when they came before the priests for examination would not allowed. Those who examined the sacrifices for blemishes had been trained and they charged certain fees as well. There is no doubt that a lot of bad business was conducted on such feast days. Jewish men from other countries might have been relieved of a lot of extra money.

Money changers would have their stalls set up at the temple. Eedersheim says, and I quote, "... besides strictly Palestinian silver and especially copper coins, Persian, Tyrian, Syrian, Egyptian, Grecian, and Roman money circulated in the country" end quote. And so after the 25th Adar the money changers all moved shop to Jerusalem, to the temple to gain as much as possible from this lucrative business. To pay the right temple tax many had to change their money and for all of this there was a charge. Eedersheim thinks that all the money for thank offerings, meat offerings and drink offerings etc... all went through the hands of the money changers. You see, religious services would make

a lot of money for those who could take advantage of it, and the Jews were not behind anybody in this. Every proselyte and every Jewish man would bring his temple tax which had to be paid. And you can imagine with all the haggling over prices for the various sacrificial offerings and the value of certain money, and bleating of sheep and lowing of oxen that it was a noisy place.

To top that off, the local priests of the line of Aaron, who had Annas as their High Priest, took the profit from all this. The other priestly families did not share in that gain. The High Priest's office became one that garnered a lot of wealth. Eedersheim says that Josephus and the Rabbis paint a very dim picture of the priests and the High Priest. Josephus called Annas "a hoarder of money."

It is into such an environment that the newly baptized Messiah, along with His mother, brothers and newly gained disciples, make their way into the city of Jerusalem. But Jesus makes His way to the temple, where His parents found Him when He was 12 years old. So, let us read verse 14 (read).

Here is the Messiah. He is Creator of heaven and earth. He is the One who instructed David on how the temple was to be built and what sacrifices were appropriate and so on. And now He personally visits this place. I ask you, what is the proper response for One who is to return the people of Israel to God? How should He have responded to this situation? Should He have dialogued? Should He have gone to the religious leaders and tried to persuade them to change their ways? Should He have sought out Annas, the High Priest, after all he was in authority over all of this? What would have been the right response? If we did not have the next verses we would probably argue until kingdom come and still would not have agreed. But I can tell you what the right thing would have been for Him to do. I can tell you exactly how He should have responded, and I am certain of being 100% right. Look at verses 15 and 16 (read).

You see, what Jesus should have done is, He should have sat down and made a whip of cords, and He should have driven them all out of the temple, along with sheep and oxen. And He should have turned over the money changers tables and just let them know exactly how outrageous their religiosity was. That is what He should have done, right? Right!

You see, there was another day when Jesus spoke to the religious leaders. Do you know how He addressed them? Let me reduce it to how He began several of those addresses. He said, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Woe to you blind guides! Fools and blind! Blind guides! Blind Pharisee! Serpents! Brood of vipers. How can you escape the damnation of hell!?"

Let me be quick to add that not all situations required a response like this. At the wedding at Cana He graciously made a lot of pure sweet grape juice for the occasion. But when the occasion called for it He did what this passage tells us He did. I ask you, the Jesus you see in this passage, is He your Lord? Or is it the Jesus who only smiles and who always unconditionally loves and only does nice things?

Another day Jesus was in a synagogue and there was man with a withered hand. And the Jews were all just waiting to see if He would have the audacity to heal the man on the Sabbath. Go with me to Mark 3 (read 1-6). Verse 5 says, "And when He had looked around at them with anger..." I ask you, is this the Jesus you know? I stress this point because of our over emphasis in the church today on the Jesus who just loves and loves and loves.

Before we leave this subject, let me just mention that as I understand the Gospels, Jesus cleansed the temple three times. Some would hold that it was only twice and that is possible, but I believe it was three times. The first time was at the first Passover that Jesus attended after His ministry began, here I John 2. The second and third time are at the last Passover He attended,

just before He was crucified.

So, look now at verse 17. The Online Bible says that this word zeal speaks of, and I quote, "excitement of mind, ardour, fervour of spirit." Could I ask you this morning, are you fervent in spirit for the things of the Lord? Do you stand up for the truth or that which is right?

-The request for a sign

But we go on to a slightly different subject in verse 18 (read). Well, the Jews now request a sign. In a way it is surprising that they did not try to throw Him out. But, on the other hand, they have been caught with their hand in the cookie jar. They are guilty of wrongdoing. Jesus spoke with such authority that they must have wondered where He was from, or whether He might be a prophet of God. So they dare not throw Him out, yet, nor can they let this go without some challenge. So, they want a sign of His authority. Nobody, but nobody, would dare do something like this to the religious establishment of the day unless he had some authority. So they said, "What sign do You show us, since You do these things?"

So Jesus said something like this, "A sign, it is that you want? Well, let Me give you a sign. Here it is, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'" So, look at the Jews response in verse 20 (read). So let me point out some important words in our text. Look at 2:14, "And He found in the temple..." The word for temple here is *hieron*. Then look at verse 15, "...He drove them all out of the temple..." Again the word is *hieron*. But look at verse 19 where Jesus said, "Destroy this temple..." The word now is *naos*. And in verse 20, when they said, "It has taken 46 years to build this temple" the word they used was *naos*. It was not actually the *naos* that was 46 years in building, it was the *hieros*. If there was one thing Herod was good at, it was building. And Herod, seeking the favor of the Jews, had been rebuilding and beautifying the temple for some 46 years, and it was not yet completed.

So, consider now verses 21-22 (read). You see, at this first event which is very obviously against the established religion of the day, Jesus knows that if He does what is right; if He does the truth, they will do away with Him. In this section where we have evidence given to us that Jesus was the Messiah, I have called this point evidence from His knowledge of the future.

L.E. Maxwell lamented that many leaders live too long. When you do the truth, when you do what is right; not only the world will hate you, the religious people will hate you. That is very clear from the life of Christ. The religious world will rise up against you as well. And even here, Jesus realizes that such actions as He has here done will end in His premature death.

And yet He knows that though His actions will bring about His premature death, yet in the end truth will triumph over evil. You see, you can kill people, but in the end you cannot overcome truth. The Muslim world is killing off Christians because they are a threat to their religion. But their religion is not the truth and in the end, they will lose. All those who fight the truth will learn in the end that the truth alone is strong. And so we sing that great hymn, "Once To Every Man And Nation." It goes like this:

Once to every man and nation  
Comes the moment to decide,  
In the strife of truth with falsehood,  
For the good or evil side;  
Some great cause, some great decision,  
Off'ring each the bloom or blight,  
And the choice goes by forever  
'Twixt that darkness and that light.

Then to side with truth is noble,  
When we share her wretched crust,  
Ere her cause bring fame and profit,  
And 'tis prosp'rous to be just;  
Then it is the brave man chooses  
While the coward stands aside,  
Till the multitude make virtue  
Of the faith they had denied.

Though the cause of evil prosper,  
Yet the truth alone is strong;

Though her portion be the scaffold,  
And upon the throne be wrong,  
Yet that scaffold sways the future,  
And, behind the dim unknown,  
Standeth God within the shadow,  
Keeping watch above His own.

Now in this passage Jesus speaks of the naos part of the temple. That is the part that took the place of the movable tabernacle they carried through the wilderness to Canaan. I have done some study on the naos part of the temple. And what I have learned would take us a long time to consider; and I am sure I know but a small part of it. In this naos part of the temple lies the secret to the makeup of man; body soul and spirit. Herein lies a huge teaching of the temple in heaven, of which the one on earth was but a replica. Our bodies can be likened to the physical part of the naos. Let me just very briefly give evidence for that in 1 Corinthians 3 (read 16-17). The words for temple used there are naos. Look also at 6:19 (read).

Well, back to John 2. Just two years later, at this same time, Jesus was apprehended and they were seeking witnesses so that they would have ground to put Him to death. For that, turn to Mark 14 (read 55-59). But when they had crucified Him that day, three days later He fulfilled that which He said here. So we go back to John 2 and verse 22 (read). They did not now believe it, but after He was risen from the dead, then they believed it.

So I have named this passage as giving proof that He was the Messiah by His knowledge of the future. Who could have prophesied His own death and resurrection but the Messiah?

The Passover feast is eight days in length. The record of the event we have just looked at happened on one of those days but there was more. This feast begins with the Passover on the 14th of Nisan. On the 15th day was the feast of unleavened bread. It was also a special Sabbath. No matter on which day of the week it occurred it was a special Sabbath. And then on the seventh

day, no matter of which day of the week that was, it was a special Sabbath as well. And all the days from the Passover until the last Sabbath were the feast of Passover.

So, with that, look at verse 23 (read). The Jews had asked for a sign so that they would know He had the authority to do what He did in the temple. He did not perform a sign to prove His authority but told them, in an interesting way, about His death, burial and resurrection. But after this, we find from verse 23, that He did other signs. We have no record of those signs. Now this word for signs is translated in the KJV as 'miracles'. That is the same word used for the event when Jesus turned the water into grape juice. Let me mention here as well, that John will tell us in the last verse of this book that Jesus did many other things which he did not record. He says that if they were all recorded, he supposes the whole world could not contain the books. Now I think that is what is called an hyperbole, an exaggeration with the purpose of telling us that there were many other things Jesus did which are not recorded.

Now notice that it says that many believed in His name. It seems to me that means they believed that He was the Messiah. But this does not seem to be a saving faith because, note what verses 24-25 say (read).

This passage says that Jesus did not commit Himself to those people because He knew all men. Yet among those men are some, like Nathanael, of whom Jesus said there was no guile in him. These men are rare.

Let me briefly share with you what I have learned of mankind. When I was a young believer, I immediately sensed a call to work among the Mennonite people among whom I had grown up. I saw how we had become steeped in tradition and had let the true faith drop. I learned from the Catechism that somewhere in the past we had had the truth and had clearly taught it. And I enjoyed our people. I was burdened for them. I

thought that if someone would just clearly explain the truth to them, they would want the truth and would gladly receive it.

It took me a long, long time to learn some very hard truths. I found that my own people were no different from all other people. We have no greater interest in the truth than any other people. And yet, as among all other people, there are some, praise God there are some. That was true among the Jews in Jerusalem as will see this in the next message. But there are not many, and that is why Scripture says few will be saved. Most people do not really want the truth. They want the truth as long as it steps on somebody else's toes, but once it hits their own, they lose interest in truth.

And probably the most disappointing truth I have learned is from my own heart. I want the truth. I have very carefully sought the truth. But in the midst of that, I have found that my own heart is very deceptive. I have come to learn that in me, that is in my flesh, nothing good dwells. I can identify with these words of A.W. Tozer who said, "I am not a good man. I am a - well you'd have to use slang to describe me. By nature I came that way and when I saw it in my boys I didn't blame them. I paddled them, but I didn't blame them. I can't go to God and say, 'God, I didn't do what that fellow did.' I've done everything either actuality or in thought that could have been done. The devil himself couldn't have thought of anything that I haven't thought of in my life-time."

I have come to experience just a little of what Jesus said when He said, "Blessed are those who mourn." I have not mourned over anything more than my own heart. I can understand what it means when Jesus did not commit Himself to them because He knew what was in man. My greatest amazement is in the fact that when we learn how we really are inside and we mourn about that, then we become those whom God can use for His kingdom.

CONCL: And so we conclude for this morning. In the book of

John we have now seen His first miracle and His first confrontation with the religious Jew of His day. You can imagine if Jesus came on the scene today and the first time He goes to church He did something like this. What kind of criticisms do you think would be labeled against Him? What would we think of His tact? Would we not expect him to dialogue with the religious leaders and try to politely and tactfully get them on board? Would we not expect him to find the areas of agreement they might have first and then build on those?

I think we would view something like this as a bull in a china shop. And we must ask ourselves, did He do the right thing by walking in there with a whip? What kind of talk do you think buzzed around in Jerusalem that day, and likely throughout the days of that Passover? How do you think Jesus was viewed by the Jews after this first day in Jerusalem? You may wish to ponder that question.