

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW; YOUR KINGDOM COME...ON EARTH – FALL SEMESTER

Week 3 – “After this...”

September 28, 2021

We are following Jesus in the Gospels (Matthew and John) thus far from Bethlehem to Egypt to Nazareth to the Jordan River to Galilee...

John 2:12 - *After this (after the miracle at Cana) He went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; and they did not stay there many days.*

WHY did they not stay there many days?

John 2:13 - *Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*

Because Jesus was born under the law (Gal. 4:4), this was not the first time Jesus journeyed to Jerusalem for Passover (Luke 2:41-44). Passover was one of the three “pilgrim” feasts. God commanded Jewish men from wherever they lived in the known world – to travel to Jerusalem on the feast of Passover, the Feast of Weeks/Shavuot, and the Feast of Tabernacles/Sukkot. WHY? To worship Him...to bring to God an offering...and, to observe God’s mighty plan of redemption graphically displayed during these feasts in Jesus’ day! Jesus, as an observant Jewish man, of course, would travel to Jerusalem every year for all three “pilgrim” feasts...

And, now Jesus is going up to Jerusalem to fulfill Malachi’s prophecy about the Messiah... Mal. 3:1 - *Behold, I send My messenger (John), and he will prepare the way before Me (as the Herald) And the Lord (the Master/Teacher), whom you seek (much Messianic fervor) will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant (Jesus – the Word of God [having a message]), in whom you delight. Behold, He (the Messiah Jesus) is coming, says the LORD (Jehovah) of hosts.*

Jesus entered the Temple complex. In Isa. 56:7 we read what God called the Temple, *My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations*. In the Temple in Jerusalem there were four separate courts: the Court of the Gentiles, the Court of the Women, the Court of Israel (or the Court of Men), and the Court of Priests. The Court of the Gentiles is referred to as “the outer court” in Revelation 11:2. The Court of the Gentiles was the outermost courtyard and the only area of the temple where non-Jews were allowed. As its name implies, the Court of the Gentiles was accessible to Gentiles, foreigners.... It was here that the money changers and those who sold sacrificial animals set up their tables and stalls.

In this area there was a low wall called the Soreg. It stood approx. 5' and it served as a boundary. Beyond this point, entry was permitted only to Jewish people who had not been defiled through exposure to a dead body. At the top of the Soreg, at intervals along the way, notices on stone tablets in Greek and Latin warned Gentiles not to proceed further. If Gentiles did go beyond the Soreg, they risked death. (Eph. 2:14-16 Jesus broke down the middle wall of separation!)

2

What Jesus saw in the Temple sickened Him...John 2:14 - *And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business.* Worship was not occurring in the Court of the Gentiles. The Court of the Gentiles had been turned into the Bazaar of the Sons of Annas with the money changers. Annas was the former High Priest.

At Passover every Jewish male was required to pay a half-shekel tax (two days' wage) in the form of a special Temple coin. The moneychangers were set-up within the Temple courts to exchange the foreign coins into the appropriate coinage. There was an exorbitant price charged for this exchange of the foreign coins – sometimes almost as much as half of the value of the money being exchanged. Furthermore, a sacrifice offered had to be made with an animal without blemish. The children of Israel could purchase an animal within the Temple court. However, if they brought an animal of their own to the Temple, those animals had to be examined by the priests. If the animal was found to be blemished, the worshipper had to purchase an animal from the “Temple herd” at a tremendously inflated price.

God's intent was that the Temple serve as a house of prayer for all people. Why? God's plan of salvation was for all people. God had chosen the Jewish people to serve as witnesses of the one true God to the Gentiles (Isa. 43:10). The Court of the Gentiles in the Temple had become a den of robbers/thieves (Jer. 7:11). What kind of witness was this? And so Jesus...

John 2:15-16 - *...made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. ¹⁶ And He said to those who sold doves, 'Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!'* Soon there would be no need for sacrificing animal Passover lambs. Jesus came to die...Jesus would be the ultimate sacrifice for sin. But, Jesus hadn't died as yet. In this passage, at this time in Jesus' earthly ministry, I'm understanding that Jesus, Who is holy, exhibited righteous anger over the corrupt Temple practices.

Are we focused on the holiness of God? How are we worshipping God?

Do you think the ruling body over Israel, the Sanhedrin, might have noticed Jesus cleansing the Temple? The Great Sanhedrin was the supreme court of ancient Israel, made up of 70 men and the high priest. They were the ones to whom all questions of law

were addressed. The Sanhedrin was comprised of members from both the Sadducees and the Pharisees.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews. As a ruler, Nicodemus was part of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was the ruling body in Israel.

The religious body investigated those who might be attracting a following...those who might be claiming to be the Messiah!

When John the Immerser began baptizing at the Jordan, the Pharisees and Sadducees appeared at the river to question John as to who he was.... (Matt. 3:7; John 1:19-27). And, following the cleansing of the Temple, Jesus was under the scrutiny of the religious leadership (John 2:18-25).

3

While Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Passover – having already drawn much attention, Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin came to Jesus (John 3). Nicodemus came to Jesus at night under the cloak of darkness. It seems that Nicodemus did not come to Jesus in an official capacity. Nicodemus had personal questions about this One he called “Rabbi”! (“Rabbi” – was a title of great respect that the Jewish people used for their religious teachers who interpreted the law to them.)

Make observations in the spaces between the verses:

John 3:1-12 - *There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews*

² This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” ³ Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” ⁴ Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” ⁵ Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water (physical birth) and the Spirit (born of the Holy Spirit), he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes (You don’t know everything about the wind, Nicodemus, but you see its effects). So is everyone who is born of the Spirit” ⁹ Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?” ¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? (Nicodemus – you don’t know your own

Scripture?? The New Covenant is noted in Dt. 30:6; Jer. 31:31-34; Eze. 36:25-27)

¹¹ Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. ¹² If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

As a Pharisee, Nicodemus was a Rabbi. Rabbinic Judaism believed that “All Israel has a share in the world to come.” This quote is NOT from Scripture. It is from Rabbinic teaching. The afterlife is assured to those who are Jewish. Rabbinic Judaism also taught, “Abraham sits at the gates of Gehenna (hell) to save any Israelite consigned thereto.”

Rabbis taught that those who were born Jewish qualified for entrance into the Kingdom!

4

How did Jesus respond to Nicodemus? John 3:3 - *Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

Observations:

Questions:

How did Nicodemus respond?

John 3:4 - *How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?*

Observations:

Questions:

What was confusing to Nicodemus was how it was possible for a man to be born again when he had reached the age of a senior citizen. Nicodemus seemed to understand something about being born again. He understood phases of physical rebirth during the cycle of life. He was confused; how was being born again possible, as Nicodemus understood it, when he, Nicodemus, was old.

In Rabbinic Judaism there were six different ways of being born again.

- When a Jewish boy became of age

- When a man married
- When a man became a Rabbi
- When a man became the head of a Rabbinical school.

According to Rabbinical Judaism, in Nicodemus' status, he was born again according to his human achievements. Jesus told Nicodemus that being born physically as a Jewish person was NOT going to give him entrance into the Kingdom of God. One must be born physically (by water) and spiritually (by the Spirit).

Jesus then told Nicodemus...

John 3:13-15 - *No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. ¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.* Being born from above, by the Holy Spirit of God originates from God!

Moses' serpent in Numbers 21 was made of bronze which represents the fire of judgment. A bronze serpent speaks of SIN JUDGED. In the same way, Jesus, Who knew no sin became sin for us on the cross (II Cor. 5:21). Jesus took upon Himself our poison/sin. A bronze serpent is a picture of sin judged and dealt with. This is a foreshadowing Nicodemus should've known.

Num. 21:4-9 – the people were delivered/saved by looking to the bronze serpent – the serpent judged – the sin judged. Might the people have thought that was foolish?

Isa. 45:22 - *Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth!*

5

We have the tendency to do a hundred things to earn our salvation. We need to earn our salvation??? Doesn't that smack of pride? God tells us to only trust in Him – to look upon Him and His love for us in dying for us.

John 3:14-15 – *even so must the Son of Man be lifted up ¹⁵ that whoever believes in (trusts in; surrenders to) Him should not perish but have eternal life.*

John 3:16-18 - *For God so loved the world that **He gave** (God PROVIDED the way to Him!) His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (everyone will live forever – into eternity. The person who has placed their trust in Jesus along and received forgiveness of sin will live eternally with GOD. People who don't receive forgiveness through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross will live*

eternally – APART from God!!! APART from God’s grace and mercy) ¹⁷ *For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world* (man is already condemned because of sin! We’re born sinners), *but that the world through Him might be saved.* ¹⁸ *“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

The offer has inherent consequences for those who refuse to believe!

John 3:19 - *After these things* (after Jesus’ time with Nicodemus) *Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea* (into the rural area of Judea near the Jordan), *and there He remained with them* (His disciples) *and baptized.* Jesus’ disciples baptized; Jesus did not (John 4:2).

John 3:25-26 – John continued to baptize. However, a bit of a rift began to develop. *Then there arose a dispute between some of John’s disciples and the Jews about purification.* ²⁶ *And they came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, He (Jesus) who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him (to Jesus)!”* Jesus attracted a following!

John 3:27-30 - Regarding Jesus, John told his own disciples, *A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.* ²⁸ *You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’* ²⁹ *He who has the bride* (those who are redeemed [Jer. 16; Jer. 33]) *is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom* (John), *who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.* ³⁰ *He must increase, but I must decrease.*

John 4:1-2 – *Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John* ² *(though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples).*

This was not yet the time for Jesus to come head-to-head with the religious leadership in Jerusalem. WHY? It wasn’t yet time for Him to go to the cross!!

John 4:3 - *He left Judea and departed again to Galilee.*

Was Jesus going into hiding? NO! And, Jesus was not going to remain incognito in Galilee. The question we need to ask is, “WHY did Jesus go to Galilee?”

6

John 4:4 - *But He needed to go through Samaria.* WHY? The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. WHY?

The Samaritans were half-Jew/half-Gentile and were despised by the Jews. The Samaritan race came about when the ten tribes were carried away into captivity to Assyria. The King of Assyria sent his own people to inhabit Samaria (2 Kings 17:24;

Ezra 4:2-11). These foreigners intermarried with the Israelite population that was still in and around Samaria. The Samaritans embraced a religion that was a mixture of Judaism and idolatry (II Kings 17:26-28).

Why did Jesus need to go through Samaria NOW? A divine appointment.

With a Samaritan?

During Jesus' divine appointment with the Samaritan woman at the well, the woman was amazed that Jesus would have any interaction with her.

John 4:9-10 - *How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman? For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.* ¹⁰ *Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.* (John 4:9-10).

The woman told Jesus, *I know that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things."*

²⁶ *Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."*

Jesus PROCLAIMED Himself as the Messiah in John 4:26!

Jesus broke down the barriers between the Jews and the Samaritans, preaching the gospel of peace to the Samaritans (John 4:6-26), and the apostles later followed His example (Acts 8:25)!

Questions:

SO? What was new?

Is the background regarding the accounts helpful?

What was difficult to grasp in this lesson?

How did Jesus' cleansing of the temple impact you?

What did you learn about the Rabbinic view of being born again? How is it much different from religions that teach salvation comes through good works?

Suggested Homework:

Reread Week 3 along with the Scripture references.

Make observations; jot down questions.

Determine which questions you'll begin to research.

Begin to find answers in the Scripture for those questions.

What action will you take based on how the lesson impacted you?

Share with at least one person what you've been learning.

Read Week 4's handout when you receive it.