

John (Part 5)

Choosing Disciples; Beginning Signs; Expelling Moneychangers

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Given 16-Sep-86; Tape #BS-JO05

Recall in the first eighteen verses of John we were showing there that John was presenting the basis for belief. That is, that Jesus *is* the Christ—He is God. He shows that this Jesus of Nazareth is the one who was the *logos*, He was the Creator, He was the reason behind the creation. I also showed you that this book was written with a Gentile audience in mind, more than the other three books which are part of the gospels.

By the time we got to verse 18, John had provided the basis for belief. In verse 19, he began to present Jesus Christ to us as a man. He goes to the very beginning with the introduction of Jesus by John the Baptist, and we were beginning to come up through to the place where He was meeting the disciples and beginning to select them and add them to His group.

I forgot about something, but was just reminded of the Bible study we had last week—the one in which I digressed and very quickly gave you a number of prophecies which Jesus fulfilled in His first coming. I gave you 35 of them. I believe I told you there were about 60 that He fulfilled during His ministry to the people of Israel there.

Then I gave you some sort of an idea of how difficult it would have been for any human being to fulfill even eight of those prophecies over which he had absolutely no control. In the fulfillment of *some* of those prophecies, Jesus did exercise some control, and in some places you will find that the writers said that He did this *because* of a prophecy, and He wanted to ensure that it was fulfilled. But most of the fulfilling of the prophecy was unforced. By that I mean that He did not make any overt effort to make sure that they were fulfilled. They just occurred because He was the one who fit the prophecies that were made generations and generations ago.

Anybody who tries to undermine your faith by telling you that Jesus of Nazareth was not a real historical character is so far off base—there is no basis for it. The Bible itself shows that Jesus of Nazareth indeed fits the prophecies that were made about Him, and that many of those prophecies were totally beyond His control, and yet those prophecies were fulfilled. So Jesus of Nazareth *is* the Christ. That is the basis for our faith.

In a sense, what I am saying here is that *Who* you believe in is as important as *what* you believe. You can take a Buddhist who may be a very moral person, and he believes in certain principles which are in harmony with what the Bible has to say. But who does he believe in? It makes all the difference in the world, because if he believes in Buddha—Buddha is dead! So what good is his faith? It is going to last until he goes to the grave, but then, as we understand, he is going to have to come up out of the grave, because his belief in a person who is already dead and who is powerless to resurrect him, is going to do him really no good.

So *who* you believe in is just as important as *what* you believe. In fact, it is more important, because *who* you believe in is capable of teaching you *what* you should believe. He is capable of

changing your ideas and your understanding about things because He is a *living* God. He is alive and working. He is putting things into our mind and educating us.

So who we believe in is exceedingly important. We believe in Jesus of Nazareth, who was God in the flesh. That is why John began the book the way that he did—he was providing the basis for belief.

If you think of this in reference to the Greeks, they believed in a multitude of gods. Who they believed in was very similar to a modern-day Buddhist believing in Buddha: it was going to do them absolutely no good. There was nothing there that they can take through the grave that is going to be lasting, that is going to be eternal.

In John 1:19, the man Jesus is being presented to us. John began by showing John the Baptist introducing Him, and then Jesus meeting some of the disciples, choosing them, and telling them to follow Him.

John 1:35-38a Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?"

He did not ask them, "Who are you looking for?" He asked them *what* they were seeking. Did they want a career? Did they want eternal life? Were they looking for grandiose positions? What was it that they were looking for? Some people are just curious. They find it interesting, but they are not really to the place where they are looking to submit their lives to God. They are doing a bit of seeking, but they do not really know what they are looking for yet. Some are religious hobbyists. Some are looking to argue technicalities. In this case here, they could have believed that they were looking for a political commander. You know the Jews had ideas about what the Messiah would be like. They were looking for somebody to liberate them from the Romans.

What do *you* seek? What are you looking for? Are you really looking for God? There are a lot of preconceived ideas that come into the Body of Christ with us from Babylon—preconceived ideas about God. (I am going to give a series on the Ten Commandments, and this is *devastating* to worshiping God in spirit and truth.) We bring in with us so many false ideas about God.

What are you looking for? Are you looking for a god that you have believed in since childhood? Most of us are, and that is why we would never find the true God unless He reveals Himself to us. Our minds are filled with preconceived ideas—things that Mom and Dad taught us, things that Grandma taught us, or aunts and uncles taught us, or the neighborhood taught us. What are you looking for?

John 1:38b They said to Him, "Rabbi" (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), "where are You staying?"

This, too, is interesting, because they did not respond with a normal question. What they certainly were implying was, "We do not have just one question to ask you; we do not want just something off the top of your head. We want to spend some time with you. The questions that we have are going to take time. We need to discuss things with you." So they invited themselves over to His house.

John 1:39c (now it was about the tenth hour).

That seems to indicate, fairly strongly, that one of the two men here was the apostle John—because he knew exactly what time it was. It hardly seems like a thing that would be passed along by just a bystander. It certainly gives an indication that even 70 years later when the apostle John was writing this that the things that occurred, even prior to his actual conversion, were very sharply etched in his mind, and that he could probably recall many, many of the details.

You know how Mr. Armstrong was—he could recall details of things that happened 50, 75 years ago, and remember conversations. When he came to Chicago, I was told by a couple of the men who rode around with him—this was in 1984—he was driven around by two of the elders in the area who knew the area very well. So they took him from place to place to place. Everywhere that they would take him, he would describe something that had been on that corner, or this was over there, and this thing was over there. According to the older of the two elders—a man who had grown up and spent all of his time in Chicago—his mind for detail was exceedingly sharp.

Here was John showing this. John was probably pretty close to 100 years old when he was writing this, and he remembered that it was 4 o'clock in the afternoon when this little incident took place.

John 1:40-41 One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ).

The way that verse 41, where it says "he first found his own brother Simon," is worded gives the indication that he went and got Peter before they did anything else. But the Greek seems to indicate that he waited actually until the morning before he went to get Peter. The phrase actually can mean "early in the morning." So it seems as though Andrew and the apostle John spent the evening with Christ, and then after talking with Him they were convinced that He was the Messiah, so then first thing in the morning Andrew went and got his brother and brought this message to him: "We have found the Messiah (which is translated, the Christ)."

I also mentioned something to you at the end of that Bible Study. The Bible does not tell us a great deal about Andrew. But even in not telling us a great deal, there is something there that is worth mentioning in passing. Put yourself in Andrew's position: Andrew was Peter's brother, and Peter's personality is pretty well-etched in the pages of the Bible, because we see more of him

than all the rest of the disciples put together—little thumbnail sketches of him in every one of the gospels; every couple of chapters it says something about Peter.

So here was Andrew. Whether he was older or younger, I do not know. If he was older, then what I am going to tell you is even a little bit—I will not say "more amazing," but it is something to think about and to appreciate about Andrew. That is that he had to live in the shadow of his brother, who was always being singled out by Christ as a leader. Even if this other apostle who was here with Andrew was John, then he also had to play—in a sense—second fiddle to John.

As I told you as we were doing some of the background here, it appears—it is not weak evidence at all; it is pretty strongly implied—that these people were in business together, that their families knew one another. It seems pretty likely that Peter, James, John, and Andrew were all in business together. If they were not in business, they were so closely associated that they were frequently working together with one another. Yet in all of this, the Bible does not give one shred of an inkling of jealousy, or a feeling of inferiority with Andrew.

Of the four, here was Andrew, who you would expect would feel all the time: "Hey, I'm their brother; I am in business with them; I ought to be going along with them." But he was not with them up on the Mount of Transfiguration, or any of the other times. He is never mentioned as being singled out with Peter, James, and John for a little bit of extra special instruction.

What are your feelings about that? Some of us would get very offended at that—if somebody receives recognition and honor, and we feel we are at least as good as they are, and we ought to get some of that recognition as well—"After all, I've done just as much as they did. My hands got dirty, and they smelled like fish too."

But there is no indication of that. This is very interesting because the only insight you get into Andrew, as I mentioned last time, is that he always seems to be Johnny-on-the-spot, and he is bringing somebody to Christ—which is interesting. We will probably mention these as we go along, because a couple of them appeared in the book of John. I mentioned that it was Andrew that brought the young fellow that had the five loaves and the two fishes. Also, we find in another case that there were some Greeks in the area, and they were inquiring about Christ, and it is Andrew who brings them to Christ.

It is just kind of an interesting insight into a man who had apparently the humility necessary to play that kind of a role. If he did not have it at first, at least he worked on it and he was willing to take second place and carry out the responsibility that *was* given to him. It is a very admirable quality.

John 1:42 And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone).

You will notice that every so often John defines his terms. This is another indication that he is writing to a group that may not be familiar with what he is talking about. He defined Rabbi. You would not have to define that for an Aramaic-speaking, Hebrew-speaking, Hebrew-background

people, because they would know immediately what it meant. Now here he is translating "Cephas," which is another Aramaic-Hebrew word—"a stone," which he is defining as being the equivalent of *Petrus*. A chip off the old block.

In verse 41 he defined "Messiah," which is translated "the Anointed." The word "Christ" in Greek means "anointed." He is doing that because these people may not be familiar with the terminology.

Jesus changed Peter's name. I really do not know how important that was. But it seems to be directly connected to the way that Christ looked at him. Notice that that follows right on the heels: "Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, 'You are Simon. . .'" Again, going to the background, I mentioned to you that it is *very* likely that these men knew one another prior to this time—that John and James were Jesus' cousins on His mother's side. Because of the business relationship between the families of James and John and Peter and Andrew (since John was Jesus' cousin) then it is *very* likely—though it is not something we can absolutely prove, but it is very strongly implied—that they knew one another prior to this time.

In order to understand how they did not know He was the Messiah, you have to go back to John the Baptist. John actually had to have it revealed to him by God. John was no different from anyone else. The real God, the real Christ, the real Creator has to be revealed to *everyone*. It is something that is given of God. It is not something that comes to a person naturally, even if you grow up with Him!

We are going to see very clearly by the time we get to John 7 that even His own brothers and sisters—His own family!—rejected Him. They did not know that He was the Christ. And does it not say in the book of Luke that even Mary "pondered on these things?" She could not put them together quite right either. Even though she was the focal point of a tremendous miracle, she had to think on it.

There are those I know who are not familiar with this principle that would kind of pick at Mr. Armstrong for saying that a person has to be called, and kind of pick at him and get tired of him repeating so frequently that no man can come to the Son except the Spirit of the Father draw him. But that is an important distinction, brethren. The Christian is *called out*. The world does not know God.

I hope that you really appreciate that, because it is so encouraging if you can understand that—you have been hand-picked. God does not make mistakes, and you have been hand-picked to understand this so that you would have the opportunity for the Kingdom of God right now.

It says that "Jesus looked at him." The Greek indicates here "a penetrating gaze." It was not that He just glanced at him, but rather it was something that was concentrated—an intense gaze. What we can see here, when we think about whom this was in reference to—Peter—if there is anybody whose personality in Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John shows glaring flaws it is Peter, simply because he is concentrated on, apart from Christ. Almost everybody else takes second stage to these two characters. So we see a lot more of Peter's flaws than we do the flaws of the other people.

But notice was Jesus did. He renamed him "a stone." He is not "the Rock." Christ is "the Rock;" the church is built on Him. But what He was implying here is characteristics that are similar to Christ's. That is why I said he was a "chip off the old block"—like he was something broken away from the main piece, and yet the characteristics of the main piece are still there. When He looked at the raw material (Peter) and He immediately named him "a stone,"—"chip off the old block"—what He was seeing there were the possibilities, the potentialities.

I will tell you that again, that is so encouraging. It shows you the way God looks at you and me. He is not looking for flaws; He is looking at what He can *build*. He is looking at it positively.

You may have heard of this—I did not hear of it until doing some research for this—but Michelangelo, when asked about this piece of marble he was working with—"What are you doing? What are you making?" said, "I am releasing the angel imprisoned in this rock." Of course, to the person who was looking at it, it did not look like anything but a rough piece of marble. What was he saying? See, he was looking at potentialities. He could envision already what he wanted to make. In his mind, he had a model. "This is what is going to come out of it."

What Christ is showing here is that He looks at us in the same positive way. We get so down on ourselves, and feel so guilty. We feel as though we are so wretched, as though God could not possibly listen to us. He could not possibly listen to our prayers. He must surely be up there, marking down sin after sin after sin. We cannot possibly measure up.

Brethren, He is not looking at it negatively. He is looking at it positively. "I am releasing the *God* in this person." Did not Jesus say, "You are Gods?" (John 10: 34) Sure He did. The potential is there. When we come to understand it, eventually we are *all* going to be chips off the old block. We will be possessors of character, just like our Father.

John 1:43 The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me."

Jesus here is moving north, from Judea into Galilee. If I have my geography correct, He is on the east side of the river Jordan, in what is today Jordanian territory. He came upon Philip. So Philip becomes the fourth of the disciples.

John 1:44-45 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

You will not find Nathaniel mentioned in other places, so he apparently is the Bartholomew of the other three books. It was not uncommon for a person to have two names, and apparently this is the Bartholomew.

John 1:46 And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

A little digression here about Nazareth: the Bible did not prophesy that the Messiah would come out of Nazareth. It only prophesied that it would be from Naphtali of Galilee, and Nazareth was in the land of Naphtali.

Nathanael was suspicious, and perhaps even a little bit contemptuous. That is a little bit misleading (about Nazareth). He was from Cana, and Cana was only about three miles away from Nazareth. I think it is natural to feel that there was a certain amount of competitive feeling toward the other towns. We have the same thing today—"My town is better than your town"-kind of approach. But that phrase has given people the idea that Nazareth was a little backwater hovel.

I want you to think about that for a second. Here was God, rearing the most important human being who ever lived. Is it likely that He would rear Him in a little backwater town, where it would be virtually impossible for Him to receive the kind of education that He was going to need to deal with the people He was going to be called on to deal with?

I think that is not a valid assumption. Indeed, when you begin to do a little bit of research about Nazareth, you find that though it was not Jerusalem, it was also not a little backwater, hick town. It may not have been the cosmopolitan center that Damascus was, but who would want to live in Damascus? God did not want His Son to be reared in that kind of an atmosphere either. It was not Athens. It was not Rome. It was not Jerusalem. What God did, I think, is He picked the best of two worlds. He was not around to be influenced by the atmosphere of Jerusalem, and yet He was not in a backwater town where He was going to act like a hick either.

What you find is, if you look at some of the maps of the Holy Land that are purported to be of that time, that Nazareth was just a hop-skip-and-a-jump off the two main trading routes that ran between Damascus and Egypt. If you look on your maps in the back [of your Bible] you will find that the Via Maris, which came up out of Egypt and followed the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, it came up to Megiddo, and then at Megiddo it joined a road coming down from Tyre and Sidon-Phoenecia area, it was joined there, and then it went directly east through the valley of Jezreel, and went over to the Sea of Galilee, and on its way through the valley of Jezreel is when it passed very close—within a couple of miles—of Nazareth. Then it cut north, and went alongside the Sea of Galilee, and then it joined the King's Highway, which is on the east side of the Jordan River.

That Via Maris was the main north-south trading route that came from both Babylon and Damascus and went on into Egypt. It was really just like living beside what we would consider today like I-5, or I-405—one of the main trading routes running between metropolitan areas. As such, you can see that He could very easily come into contact with all the traders—the caravans and everything that was running north and south on those roads. Nazareth was not noted as being a great cosmopolitan center, but it was not a backwater town either.

I think you can understand that God took infinite care of where His Son was going to be reared. He took infinite care about the family that He was going to be reared by. You know that, understanding what was riding on the life and the development of this Child, it was exceedingly important that He put Him where He could have the best of two worlds. I am sure that that is what occurred.

John 1:46 And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

Philip did not argue with him. He did not say, "This is what it says in Micah 3:9. You've just got to believe this." He said, "Find out for yourself. Go look." That is a good approach. "Come and find out for yourself."

John 1:47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!"

That was a compliment. It was not derogatory in any way. If Jesus Christ ever says to you, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile," you can smile because we Israelites have been known for our guile ever since our father Jacob. If there was ever anybody with much more guile than Jacob, it is not revealed in the Bible. He was a tricky person—deceptive. He used deceitful ways to get his way. We have become very practiced in that. It seems as though it is something we are good at. It is almost something that must come through the genes. But every once in a while, somebody was born who did not have any guile. What it means here is that Nathaniel was honest, upfront, forthright—he was not trying to deceive people. It is an unusual characteristic.

John 1:48 Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

I want you to just reflect on what we have come through here. First of all, John proposed that this was a Man in whom we can believe. Now he is presenting Him. Do you see the circumstances in which he is presenting Him? First of all we find Him being announced. Nobody knew Him, but He is being announced. So He is being presented to the public by a herald who goes before Him—John the Baptist.

We see Him being approached by people who apparently knew Him before, but He is being revealed to them as being someone different from the one who they grew up with. In each case we find being displayed an unusual prescience—in other words, a Being who is able to see right through people in the sense that He sees things that are in the heart. So He immediately renames a person. Now we come to another person, and He just says, "Come, and follow me." Then we come to another person, and He is presented to us as somebody who knew this person before the other person knew Him. He knew things about his life that the other person thought were private. That would be interesting to be around such a person.

If I were around a person like that, I would really mind my Ps and Qs, and I would *always* be afraid because I know that I would be guilty of something that surely He could see. It would be hard to live next to somebody like that, would it not? It sort of gives you some insight, does it not, as to why those people wanted to do away with Him. He made them feel *guilty*—and it was

only because He was so righteous.

John 1:47-49 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

It did not take much to convince him, did it? Nathaniel was just immediately captivated. That would turn your head, would it not? That would be stunning for someone to come up to you and tell you something that you thought nobody else knew.

John 1:50-51 Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

This of course is referring to that dream that Jacob had when he was fleeing for his life (Genesis 28:12-17). He was trying to get away from Esau, and he had this dream of the angels ascending and descending from heaven on a ladder. When he woke up he said, "God is in this place," and so he named the place "Bethel"—the "house of God." Jesus was referring to that.

There was a point—a purpose—behind that dream. For Jacob's sake, the purpose was to reassure him that God had not abandoned him—that God was with him—and despite the circumstances of his life (that is, he was fleeing for his life, and he was going away from his family, away from his roots, becoming a pilgrim), God was showing that there was going to be communication. There was going to be fellowship between him and God, represented by heaven and earth.

Jesus, in referring to this, is telling Nathaniel that he is going to witness a fellowship and a communion between heaven and earth to a degree that had never been witnessed before by men. "If you think that dream of Jacob's was something, wait until you see communion between my Father and I." So it was quite a lesson that He left with Nathaniel.

John is still presenting this unusual Personality that he has already established is somebody with insight that enables Him to see into peoples' hearts and minds in a way that nobody has ever been able to see, and also a Being who has communication with heaven to a degree that no other person ever had.

John 2:1-12 On the third day [Remember I told you, it appears very strongly that all of these things from verse 19 over to the end of chapter 2 verse 11 all took place in the same week—a seven day period.] there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee [Cana was that little

town about 3-3 ½ miles from Nazareth], and the mother of Jesus was there. Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." And they filled them up to the brim. And He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast." And they took it. When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. And he said to him, "Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!" This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him. After this He went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; and they did not stay there many days.

Cana of Galilee is designated here because there were two Canas, and the other was in the land of Asher. But this one here was in Galilee, so it is given to distinguish the one from the other.

Weddings at this time were not the simple affairs that our weddings are today. Our ceremony lasts about 8-10 minutes, and then we have a reception that lasts for several hours, and we may have some music and dancing, and some things to eat, but then it is over and everybody goes home. But their weddings took a great deal of time. From what I have been able to discover, couples stayed at home and they were treated royally, as though they were a king and a queen, like their word was law. Whatever their desire was during that week, it was the friend of the bridegroom's responsibility to make sure that it was carried out—something that was certainly within reason.

In a town like Cana, it is highly likely that the entire community would be invited. It meant that people were coming and going constantly. They would come and spend a little bit of time, have something to eat, and then they would leave and go about their business, and probably the next day, or the next day, or the next day they would come back again and join the feast. So it was kind of an on-running production.

The next question is, who was getting married? It does not say who the person was, but there are some indications. First of all, the strongest indication is that it was somebody close to Mary because she seems to have some sort of authority—she was the one who told the servants to do whatever Jesus said. Ordinarily that would be a responsibility that would be left to somebody who was in charge of the proceedings.

Mary seems to have some kind of authority there, because she was the one who apparently was

turned to—to whom the appeal was made—"Hey, we are running out of wine." She went to Jesus, and then turned and gave the order. It gives you an indication, then, that it was likely somebody who was close to Mary's family—indeed, it may have been family. It was probably not Jesus' family. That does not seem to be the indication, because it was in Cana and their family was from Nazareth. But it is possible that maybe it was even the apostle John. He seems to be the strongest possibility, because everything fits. He knows all the details again—he knows exactly what was going on—and Mary was his aunt. Mary's sister, Salome, was his mother, so there is a possibility. It is no hard and fast thing. But it does give a little bit of insight.

This triggers another thought. Where was Joseph? He is not mentioned. As a matter of fact, he is not mentioned as being alive after Luke 2. It appears that he died.

When did he die? That is something to consider. The reason we need to consider it is because of Jesus. He was the oldest son. Therefore the responsibility for the family fell upon Him. Is it likely that Jesus would be left by His Father (I am not talking about Joseph here; I am talking about God) to be in a situation where He was responsible for a family before He would have been able to bear the responsibility of caring for a family? That is something that we can only shrug our shoulders at and say, "We do not know." But it seems likely to me that Joseph probably passed from the scene after Jesus was in young adulthood, and able to take over the family responsibilities.

This is fairly important, and the reason it is fairly important is because it thrusts Jesus into the responsibility of caring for a family. Then He became the breadwinner. He became the one who ran the family business. He became the one who had to do the contracting with people for whatever structure it was that was to be built. He became the one who had to deal with employees. He became the one who had to deal with the collection of bills. He became the one who had to go out and maybe dump people who were not paying their bills. He had to be the one who comforted and consoled His mother. He had to become a father to His younger brothers and sisters. See, He became elder-brother/father.

You see the kind of position that this put Him in? It put Him into a circumstance where He could learn things that otherwise He would have never learned by experience. He came to know what it was like to be a father, a surrogate husband, somebody more than just an elder brother. He came to understand what it was like to be responsible for a family, and for running a business, and for making contracts, living up to contracts, training employees, being a quality control expert and checking up on their work, and everything that is connected with business and with family.

We have a God—we have an Elder Brother; we have a High Priest—who is able to deal with us in every circumstance, because in principle He has gone through it Himself. A very interesting situation.

Mary became aware of this budding calamity, so she asked Jesus to do something about it. His response in verse 4 gives the indication of some kind of a mild rebuke. He says, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me?" Is it disrespectful that He said that? One thing that the story does not reveal when it is written is the tone in which it was said. It could have been said with a great deal of vehemence. "Woman, *what does that have to do with Me!?*"—kind of snottily.

Then again He could have said, shrugging His shoulders, "Woman, what does that have to do with Me?"—more in the sense of just a general question, like, "This is not *My* party. . ."

Whatever it was—and I think it was undoubtedly the second—she did not take it as though He were saying "No," because immediately she turned, and with full confidence said to the people, "Do whatever He says." What I am telling you here is that the translation from the Greek into the English really does not give the proper sense. I can give you some alternate readings, and actually they are paraphrases. It is kind of awkward, apparently, to translate this into English. Here are a couple of alternates:

I am paraphrasing this, in the sense that He said, "What have I to do with that?" But what it means is, "Never mind; do not be worried; I will take care of it." That seems to be the approach. "Do not be overly concerned—I will take care of it." He went on to say, "My hour has not yet come." It is as though He is saying, "I have to wait for the right opportunity." Well, He must have decided that it was the right opportunity to do something.

There is also something else interesting here, and it almost connects with verse 12, which looks very innocent. But if it is so innocent, why is it there? We are supposed to live by every word of God. Why does it say that "He went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; and they did not stay there many days"? We know that later in the book His disciples were not with Him. We know that Mary did not understand either.

Remember that Christ is beginning His ministry. Up until now He had been "Joseph's son" and "Mary's son." He was just the carpenter, the contractor from Nazareth. He is moving to center stage now, and the ministry is just about to begin, and the way that He addressed her seems to indicate that He is indicating to her, "We are now going to begin a change of relationship. Until now, I have been your son. What does *your* concern have to do with Me?"

It was just strong enough not to indicate irritation, but to indicate, "I will choose to do what I will choose to do"—without making it embarrassing and without offending her or turning her off. He spoke with just enough authority for her to recognize that He was in charge, but just enough submissiveness for her to understand, "I am not going to refuse your request." So then He went on and did it.

As my Bible here indicates, these water pots held 20-30 gallons apiece. So He made somewhere between 120 and 180 *gallons* of wine. The whole town could have gotten tanked on that! They would have had a good party from then on!

Really, again, that may seem like it was far too much—that Jesus overdid it—unless you know the background that the whole town was invited. In such a case, it was more than enough, but it was not superabundant. He was generous, but it was not so much that they were throwing wine down in the street.

Again, John translates something: "according to the manner of purification." A Jew would know what those water pots were for. But a Greek, not understanding, needed to have it explained to him that the water was there so those people could wash their feet, and also so that they could wash their hands—see, "after the manner of purification."

The "master of the feast" was the person who occupied the position that is today occupied by

the "best man." He was kind of the person who watched after the bridegroom/bride, and made sure that their wishes were carried out. So he undoubtedly made the arrangements for the catering, as we would call it today, and for the service of the food, for the wedding ceremony itself—he took care of those necessary things so that the bridegroom and the bride could be occupied in the things that they needed to take care of.

John 2:11 This beginning of signs. . .

Here we have the first miracle, or sign. Remember, John is still presenting Jesus in such a way so that we can get a good understanding of whom this Man is that we are called upon to believe in. So he picked these circumstances out so that we could get insight into Him.

1) Where did the first sign take place? I am not talking about the town or the city. I am talking about the event. It took place at the humble wedding of a couple of young people from Cana of Galilee. It did not take place in Jerusalem. It did not take place at the Temple. It did not take place before huge crowds of people, assembled to listen to Him preach.

There is a valuable lesson here—something that is very encouraging. God is showing you that He is concerned, and He wants to be involved in the tiniest details of life, no matter where it takes place. God is not a God of great occasions *only*. He is a God of the most mundane things. He wants you to understand that He wants to be involved in your job. He wants to be involved in your family. He wants to be involved in your childrearing. He wants to be involved in the books that you read, the things that you study. He wants to be involved in every aspect of your life—and He is willing to work *miracles* in those areas.

What is His aim? That might be a second thing that we might notice here. His aim, just on the surface right here—what was it to do? It was just to save a couple of simple people from embarrassment—so that they would not be embarrassed that they ran out of wine at their wedding. Again, that can be very encouraging.

God wants to be involved in the little things of your life. He is not a God just of great occasions. He is not always dividing the Red Sea. Those things are put there so that we can understand that He is willing to do those things if need be, but *this* is put here to help you can understand that He wants to be involved in even the tiniest aspects of your life.

The next thing you need to know—this just adds to it—is: where did it happen? The first "where" was at a wedding feast. The second "where" is that it took place at a humble home in a small town, and it was there that God manifested His glory. You put all of these things together, and you get a picture of a God who is interested in the little person, and the little occasions of life, wherever He is needed.

The next thing: look how much wine He made! That is there, again, to teach you that He is generous in character. That is the way that He is going to deal. He wants you to expect Him to be generous in character. He is not a sniveling shylock that is trying to extract from you every last ounce of money and obedience. On the other hand, He wants to be generous in giving to us, so He sets the example. He made plenty of wine for those people to drink.

Another thing—all kinds of lessons here—is that He met a genuine *need* to keep these people

from being embarrassed. It did not have to be a great occasion. There was a need there, and He took care of it—and He was generous in His response.

There is even more here. If we were to put a title on this section, it would be that God is showing us that His way of life—His response to us, and His dealings with us—are intensely practical. Our worship of Him is not reserved for a cathedral. It is not reserved for the Sabbath only. But God is a God who wants to be involved in all of the practical aspects of life—everything.

There are some in the world who see this, and they take it to an extreme. One of these is the pastor of the Marble Collegiate Church, Norman Vincent Peale. In one of the books that he wrote about developing a relationship with God, he said he had God catch taxis for him! I am sure that God would bring a taxi for us—again, if there were a genuine need. Maybe because He is so generous, He would bring three or four of them, and give us our pick. I do not know.

But the way that he—Norman Vincent Peale—approached it was rather flippant. God wants us to be familiar with Him, and confident that He will respond to us, but on the other hand, there has to be respect with it as well. The respect—the right kind of fear, coupled with this understanding that God is intensely practical, and He wants to be involved in all of the aspects of our life—ought to teach us that He *can* be relied upon in these kinds of situations.

All of this leads up to "and His disciples believed in Him" (John 2:11). This whole occasion is here for us to build confidence in Him in every aspect of life. Again, it is not something that is reserved for just special occasions.

John 2:11 . . . and manifested His glory . . .

"Manifest" means "bring to light; to make known (what God is like)." The sign made known what God is like.

I mentioned the word sign. I mentioned to you before that this is one of the key words in the book of John. It is the way that he uses the word that is important. There are three words that are used in the Greek New Testament that are sometimes translated "miracle." You are familiar at least somewhat with one of these; it is *dunamis*. This is the word from which we get our English word dynamite, and it means "power." But occasionally it is translated in the King James Version as "miracle."

A second one, which is the one that is most frequently translated into the word "miracle," is *teras*. That word means "miracle." It means something that is wonderful; it is astonishing. It can even be applied to something that is nothing more than a magician's trick. It is not something that is confined to God. But in the Bible, most of the time when the word "miracle" occurs, it is the Greek word *teras*, and it means something that is astounding—a wonderful thing.

But John never uses that word, which is very interesting. He uses the word *semeion*. This word means "sign," but it is translated in the King James as "miracle." This word *semeion* can be translated "miracle," but the way it is used, it always has a moral connotation to it. That is the way that John uses it.

John 2:11 This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and

manifested His glory. . .

What does a sign do? It points to something. It says, "Go this way." Or a sign describes something. It says, "Jones and Son, Haberdashery." It is giving an indication of something. That is the way John always used miracles. They indicated something of the character, or nature, of God.

Do you see why he chose this miracle to open up the book? He is presenting the mind, the character, the personality of God. He is showing you what God is always like—not just occasionally like. He always wants to relieve peoples' burdens. He always wants to save people from embarrassment. He always wants to deal generously with people. He always wants to be involved in peoples' lives so that He can help to make their lives better—to increase the quality.

He is willing to deal with people in the humblest situation. He does not have to deal with us in a cathedral. He can deal with us in our home (although the cathedral has its part, on the Sabbath). But He wants us to know that He is intensely involved in our lives in other places as well.

What this miracle does is it reveals the nature of God. Again, this can be so encouraging if you will take the lesson from there and apply it to your life, and know that you can count on God to be involved with your life. So you start every day with prayer, and you are in prayer with Him throughout the day, from time-to-time as situations arise, and you are counseling with Him in prayer, asking Him for guidance and direction, and you can expect Him to deal generously with you. He will always do it at just the right time. That is the hard part. We are not always patient.

Verse 12 is the kind of verse that one would say, "It does not have to be there." It is sort of like "4 o'clock in the afternoon" (John 1: 39). Who needs to know what time it was? But we are supposed to live by every word of God.

Why does it say that after this, He went down to Capernaum (and it names the people that He went with)? It says that they did not stay there many days. I really feel that verses 11 and 12 are related, and that Capernaum became the basis of His operations. That is where He had His "home." His family was from Nazareth, and the indications are that it was from this time on that the family just kind of abandoned Him. They separated themselves from Him.

You can see a little bit more of this revealed in Luke 4, how when He came into His own town, and He read in the synagogue, they tried to stone Him. I am sure the family was beginning to believe by this time that they had somebody who had gone off His rocker, and that He was a strange one indeed. They did not want their reputation to be soiled by this person who was preaching things that were different from what they learned to believe from the rabbis from the time that they had grown up.

They were beginning to feel the heat of His righteousness. They were beginning to feel the anger of their neighbors, and relations were beginning to become very strained between Him and the family. Why do you think that He would say a little bit later to His disciples that "your enemies are going to be those of your own household" (Matthew 10: 36)? Because He had experienced it. I think verse 12 is there to give you a little indication that this was the

separating point. When He returned from Judea and Jerusalem, and came into Galilee, this was the beginning of the end—until He was crucified.

John 2:13-16 Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. When He had 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. And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!"

This Jesus does not fit the ideal of many people. Their Jesus would never get angry. He would never turn over tables. He would never show a great deal of energy about doing something that would cause calamity. But He did!

There were some people that Jesus did not make peace with. He never made peace with the scribes and the Pharisees. It was not because He did not want it, but because they rejected every opportunity that He gave them to make peace with Him. So you find in Matthew 23 a very scathing denunciation of those people and their attitudes. "You hypocrites!" "You bunch of snakes!" He called them. "You whited sepulchers!"

He was not gentle in His dealing with them at all, and I am sure His eyes, when He was talking to those people, were blazing with fire. If there was anybody who could stare anybody down, I am sure it was Him! I am sure that when this happened, He was as incensed as a person could be without doing any violence to individuals. It does not say that He whipped the *people*. But I tell you, that scene there must have been *wild*.

Try to get a little bit of a picture. This took place in the court of the Gentiles. The court of the Gentiles was the perimeter of the temple area. It was surrounded by a number of colonnades along the outside edge. On the inside, in the court of the Gentiles—which was as far in to the interior that the Gentiles were permitted to go—was a milling, bazaar-like area with cattle and sheep milling around, doves in cages, goats. Besides that, there were all of these tables with the money changers.

The money changing was a necessary operation. That of and by itself was not what He was incensed about. The reason it was a necessary operation was that there was, in that cosmopolitan area (which, I told you before, was an area where the main trade routes were going through) money from many, many nations in circulation. So just as today there had to be a place like a bank where money could be changed into the local denominations that were necessary for doing business.

The law required that every Jew was to pay a Temple tax. That Temple tax, I believe, was half a shekel a year. It could only be paid in a certain form of currency. We will just call it, for the sake of clarity, the Temple shekel. Any Jew doing a pilgrimage—remember it mentioned that it was a Passover—and coming into Jerusalem from Rome, from other parts of Asia Minor, from

Babylon or wherever they happened to be, to keep the Passover, were undoubtedly carrying with them Babylonian money, Roman money, Greek money, Phrygian money, Galatian money, and whatever. They had to pay their temple tax, so they would go to the bank—the bank was the money changers. That was a necessary operation.

What should have been done was that the money exchanged for the going rate of the currency change, much the same way we do today: you get so many dollars for a pound, and so many marks for a dollar, and so forth. The law stipulated that there was to be a small charge for the making of that currency exchange. What happened was that they found a way to make more money than they should have—and it was *pile* of money. I kid you not.

I will just give you an idea. Let us say that the amount of the Temple tax was 4 cents. I am taking 4 cents for a couple of reasons. One is that it represented the amount of money that an ordinary working man would earn in one day. That is what the Temple tax was equal to: about one day's wages for a man. This money was to be used for the purchase of sheep and goats and whatever they needed for the operation of the Temple.

What they did was this: suppose you gave him a coin that was worth 2 shekels. This Temple tax was worth one quarter of that. Right off the top, they charged you 1 cent for the transaction. So now they have already got you to one quarter of a day's wages, just to exchange one coin for another. In addition to that, they charged the person a small amount for every coin that they had to give them in change. In the case of the Temple tax here, and the two-shekel piece, what that amounted to was another 3 cents.

Do you see what they were charging those people? They were charging them one day's wage for the Temple tax—which went to the Temple—then the money changers collected another whole day's wages for themselves. So you see, they were making money equal to the amount of the Temple tax itself for themselves. This is just one example, and of course it varied from person to person. But that is what incensed Him: the exorbitant extortion that was going on.

There was one other thing. He mentions the sheep and the goats, but we are not told here about the extortion. Matthew does tell about the extortion that was going on. What happened here was this: A poor Jew coming in from some other part of the country to keep the Passover would bring his lamb with him. Each lamb, according to the law, had to be without blemish. So the priesthood had established quality control experts who were there to inspect the lambs that were brought in. (Not just lambs; I am using lambs because it was Passover. They did the same thing with sheep, goats, bullocks, and turtledoves. Most of the poor people would offer turtledoves because they were the cheapest thing.)

But the guy brings in his lamb. You could be sure that the lamb was going to be rejected—they were going to find an imperfection on it if they had to look until sunset, if you get my meaning. Then, if the person wanted to make a sacrifice, he was *forced* to buy the lamb from them. Then, again according to the history that we are able to read, the chances are very great that their prices was up to 70 times higher than the person could buy a lamb on the open market.

That just incensed Christ to no end. That is why He did what He did. It is not so much the fact that that thing just happened to be there. Maybe that was bad enough in itself. But it was the cruel extorting that was going on that He was incensed with.

Understand that this was going on within what we would call "the church." It was brother extorting this from brother. When He saw this—and He undoubtedly knew it was going on before, but He was taking this occasion to make an issue out of it—He just saw red, and He started turning everything over. Can you imagine sheep and goats running every which direction, tables overturning, men running to catch their money which was rolling? Can you imagine Jews down on their hands and knees, going all over the place, trying to pick up their money and trying to get out of the way, all at the same time? It was *wild*. "Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!"

They were not supposed to be selling things there, or extorting things from people.

John 2:17 Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up."

You can see the anger there.

There is one more thing I wanted to get here, and that is that you will notice what seems to be a difference between John's account of this and the other three accounts. The difference is that John places this at the beginning of His ministry, and the others place it at the end. In order to reconcile them—because the scriptures do not contradict one another—the answer has to be that it happened twice. It happened at the beginning of Christ's ministry and it happened at the end of His ministry. The one provided the opening shot that He fired at the orthodoxy of His day. The other one was the closing shot.

From this time on, they *knew*—I mean the Jews, and especially the priests, the scribes, and the Pharisees—that He was a force to be reckoned with. That is what started the ball rolling toward His crucifixion. When He did it the second time, that was the straw that broke the camel's back. You can see that immediately:

John 2:18-20 So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?" ["What is your authority for coming in here and turning over the tables?"] Jesus answered and said to them [Notice, He did not answer their question, which is interesting. He always answers it obliquely—He goes off at an angle.], "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"

There is a pattern established here. Again, John is presenting. He is showing the way Jesus approaches questions. He almost invariably approaches a question with another question. Or He will say something that they do not understand. So they immediately took a physical approach to His response, because they immediately latched onto the idea of Herod's temple that was there.

Verse 21 is an afterthought. It is a conclusion that the disciples arrived at many years later:

John 2:21 -22 But He was speaking of the temple of His body.
Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered
that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the
word which Jesus had said.