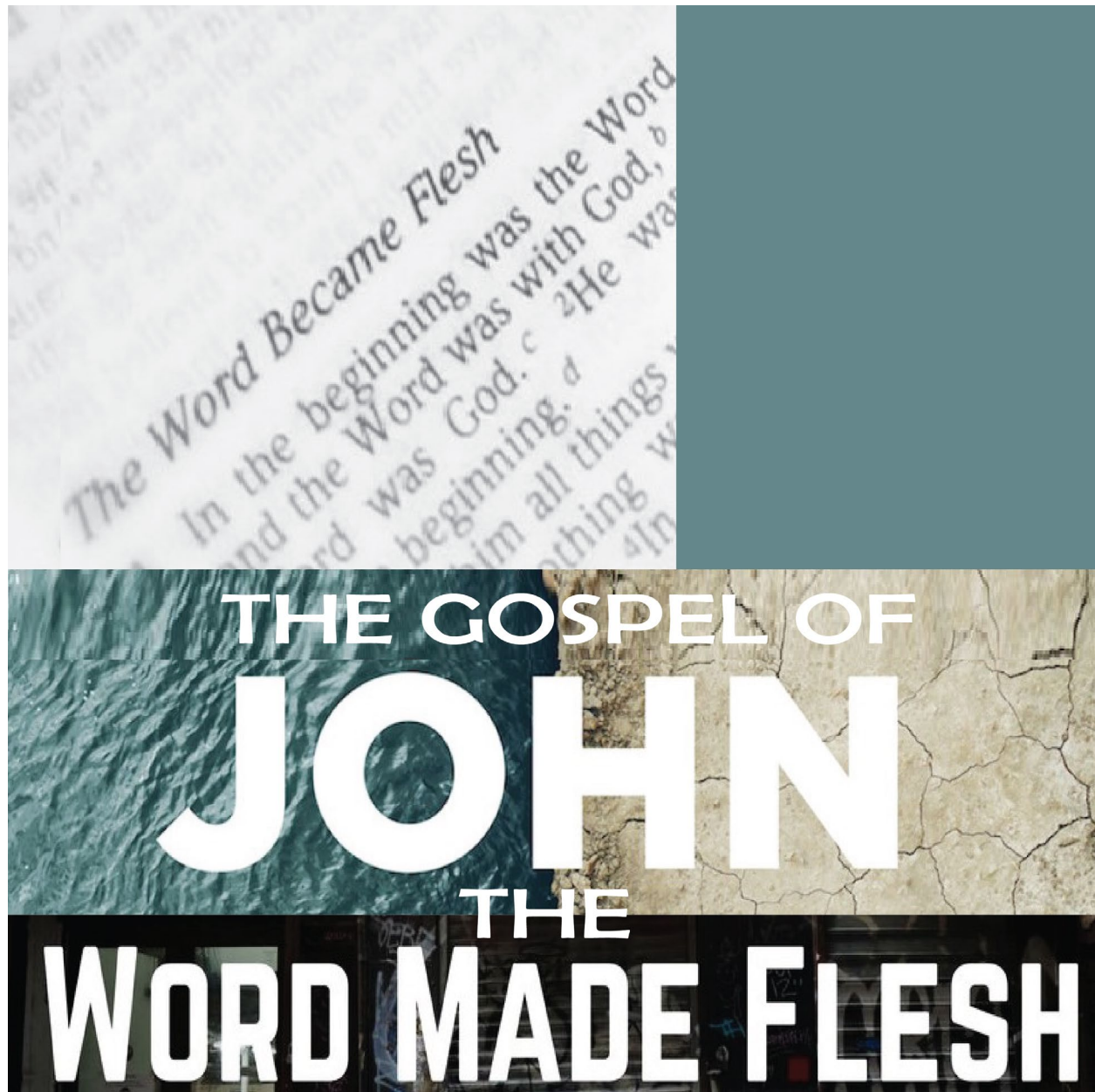




Born of the Spirit

New spiritual life

Lesson Three

John 3:1-16

Background:

God's love saves. The first three Gospels present Jesus Christ in a way that would resonate with a specific audience. The Gospel of Matthew was written for a politically influenced Jewish audience. Mark's Gospel was directed towards orthodox Jews deeply rooted in their traditions and rituals. Luke's Gospel was intended for a non-Jewish, Gentile audience and highlighted the ministry as inclusive and receptive to them.

John's Gospel was written with a universal message transcending beyond Judaism and reveals eternal truth that connects all mankind to the creator.

God's love, the subject of this lesson, could be labeled as the most significant feature of God's divine attributes. In the same manner as all His attributes, God's love is eternal. Because His love is eternal, it will never change, and it will never end.

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

John 3:2- The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

John 3:3- Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

John 3:4- Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

John 3:5- Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God

Lesson Notes:

(John 3:1-5) – Nicodemus was a Pharisee, making him a part of a Jewish religious sect that believed strongly in both the written Torah and the oral commentary (Mishnah) that supported it. The oral commentary provided centuries of respected Rabbinical voices, sharing their Torah interpretations passed down from generation to generation. Jesus was also a part of the Pharisee sect, and it would not be unusual for Nicodemus to speak to or seek Him for counsel.

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Nicodemus acknowledges Jesus's Rabbinic credentials as a respected teacher. He also affirms the miracles performed by Jesus, noting that they are evidence that God is with Him. This affirmation continues to sustain the declaration of John the Baptizer, who made note of the sustaining presence of God's spirit resting upon the Messiah. (John 1:33)

The Rabbi begins the conversation with an answer to a question that Nicodemus never asked. Launching into the topic of eternal life, the Messiah declares that a man must be born again to see the kingdom of God. This dissertation creates two questions that Nicodemus is forced to ask, "How can a man be born again when he is old." This first question is a logical response to a subject a Jew would have never confronted. The declaration to be "born again" is not a term that would have been heard previously within Judaism, although the concept from which it is taken would become very familiar.

The words "born again" are constructed from two Greek words, "Gennao" (procreate, produce) and "Anonthen" (from the first, top, or beginning). When translated, the expression means "to return, i.e., to the first." This is the premise of repentance, a message that Jews have heard for nearly four thousand years. The words Jesus used are distinct, but the message is the same as those of the prophets who came before Him. God calls mankind to return to his original place, status, beginning, and the first breath that gave him life.

Nicodemus was confused because he only heard the literal conditions, so he asked, "How can he enter the second time into his mother's womb"? The Pharisees were trying to understand the physical function of this new term "born again." He struggled to apply the known limits of human birth to what Jesus was saying about spiritual birth. Nicodemus focused on re-creating his human form as the Rabbi tried to show him God's desire to give birth to a new nature inside his human form.

Understanding the explanation to Nicodemus' question about re-entering the womb begins with knowing Jesus was not offering an answer that applied to the laws of physics. He was defining a spiritual truth without any association with the physical body.

The Rabbi further explained that a man must be "born" of water, a symbolic reference to the water cleansing ritual (Baptism) that represents repentance. He also said that man must be born of the spirit, which refers to the breath (pneuma) of life that comes from God to awaken man's soul, the God nature inside man. (II Cor. 5:17, Eph. 2:15,4:24)

Note: Water rituals were a great symbol of repentance and restoration. The ceremonial waters purged and consecrated a person or utensils for temple service. Once washed, the person or item is considered separate for a particular use. Following the washing ritual of a priest or king, they would be anointed with oil as a sign that they were ready to serve and take their place in the temple. Similarly, the repentant is anointed and infilled by God's spirit to take their place in their relationship with Him and walk in the newness of life.

Access or entry into eternity requires the birth or creation of a new nature. Flesh and blood will not succeed in the eternal realm; only the regenerated soul will find success. (Ezk. 18:4, Matt. 10:28, James 5:20). The writings of the Apostle Paul affirm that the flesh cannot inherit or take part in the offerings of the eternal realm. (I Corinthians 15:50)

John 3:6- That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

John 3:7- Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

John 3:8- The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.

Lesson Notes:

(John 3:6-8) – The Rabbi separates the two realms for Nicodemus, sorting the flesh from the spirit. Everything born of flesh acts and responds to the demands of the flesh. Suppose something is born of the spirit, and the same will act and react to the spirit's demands. The un-repentant continues to practice and live under the influence of the flesh because that is the character of its nature. The repentant will practice and live as the spirit influences them because of the new nature awakened inside of them. New birth provides a new set of values that cannot be altered or changed. The nature of God will crave spiritual things. The new birth experience gives access to “new” Life and the ability to create “new” aspirations that will override the drive to live life to satisfy our flesh.

No individual can control their initial birth or the genetic makeup that shapes their physical characteristics and mental tendencies. However, being born again provides a fresh start and the opportunity to choose the elements that will shape and impact one's life. While the flesh may pose challenges that hinder the pace of personal development, it does not have the power to prevent the growth process. Rebirth offers access to a new life that can resist the patterns of life that lead to death and destruction.

The physical nature has pre-sets that limit ability and growth beyond a certain height, generally with little control to increase or reduce weight. Spiritual growth has no limits, and there are no pre-set boundaries to what God's plan for each life can accomplish. The second birth eliminates the power of the flesh to limit man's spiritual destiny. The new man is empowered to grow at an accelerated rate, going beyond the limitations of our flesh.

Jesus warned Nicodemus not to marvel over this spiritual truth, trying to force it to fit into the boundaries of conventional knowledge. Instead, he should embrace the truth without visible evidence in the same manner he accepts other truths in nature that he cannot physically see or comprehend. He is reminded that the wind is a force of nature that man believes but cannot see.

The sound of the wind is heard, but its origin is unknown. The results of the wind's impact are specific and viewable, but its path is unpredictable.

A comparison is made to everyone born of the spirit, awakened to life by the wind of God's breath, who does not have the ability to explain where the new life direction came from or where it is taking them but simply trusts the direction enough to follow. The new life that comes through the new birth is without limitations.

We are not limited to the destinations predicted by the flesh. Without restriction, the wind of God breathes new directions into our lives without our ability to comprehend its origin or ultimate destination. Despite all obstacles, the wind propels us to our destiny, which God has planned.

John 3:9- Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

John 3:10- Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

John 3:11- Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

Lesson Notes:

(John 3:9-11) – Nicodemus continued to question the truth about what he heard. He had never heard the concept of repentance explained in this way with direct personal reward or penalty. Israel was accustomed to national repentance and judgment, with a single figure becoming the petitioner on behalf of the nation. The model Jesus presented made repentance personal, with each man owning disobedience and committing to spiritual renewal. God loves everyone, but personal repentance and acknowledgment are required, not just public celebration.

Nicodemus had to re-evaluate his status as a Master Pharisee. He failed to understand a fundamental spiritual truth. A “master” Pharisee would be qualified to teach others truth relevant to the basic principles of the Jewish faith, yet Nicodemus understood nothing about the principles of eternal life. The Rabbi, as a true “master” teacher, revealed truth fundamental to the Jewish faith. Nicodemus knows his Pharisee brethren will essentially reject the premise of personal salvation and repentance. Nicodemus will be an outcast among the other Pharisees if he subscribes to this truth.

To know the truth, he must choose to trust the messenger. Nicodemus must wage his confidence in religious rhetoric against the messenger from God. Man does not have access to see and comprehend heaven without God. The Son of God (God actively present on Earth) is the only witness who can testify about the truth mankind does not know or has never seen. The truth that the Son of God has presented about personal salvation and accountability must be accepted based on the credibility of its messenger.

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John 3:12- If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you *of* heavenly things?

John 3:13- And no man hath ascended to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, *even* the Son of man which is in heaven.

Lesson Notes:

(John 3:12-13)– If Nicodemus could not believe in how the natural elements function, it would be even more difficult for him to hear and believe in the revelations of spiritual truth from heaven. Man does not have access to heaven to bring down revelations and truth. Only the Son, who has come from heaven to earth, can truly represent the God of heaven and speak His truth.

John 3:14- And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

John 3:15- That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

John 3:16- For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Lesson Notes:

(John 3:14-16)– The identity and mission of God's son will soon be affirmed. The world will see Him exalted as savior on a cross like the Hebrews witnessed the serpent raised up on the staff of Moses. Jesus refers to an iconic story known among Jews about the deliverance of their ancestors in their journey to the Promised Land. When the Hebrews complained about the lack of water and bread in the desert, God sent a plague of venomous snakes to punish them. The people repented for their ungratefulness, and God instructed Moses to make an image of a fiery serpent and attach it to a staff. The people were told to look at the picture and believe in their deliverance.

God used an image of the very consequence He sent to punish them to become the icon of their salvation. The son of God would become sin, the very consequence of man's misdeeds, and men would be required to fasten their eyes upon "the man that was made sin" in the hope of salvation and deliverance. (Num. 21:9)

The people bitten by the serpents set their sightlines on the raised image of the serpent and they were healed. Whosoever sets their sightline upon Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, will not perish but have eternal life. "God loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten son to die on a raised staff for the sins of all humanity. Those who choose to believe in Him and look upon Him will not perish but have everlasting life."

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John 3:17- For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

John 3:18- He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

John 3:19- And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

John 3:20- For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

John 3:21- But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

Lesson Notes:

(John 3:17) – God created man with the expectation that he would obey his creator. After hundreds of generations of disobedient generations, the creator comes face to face with His creation. Instead of employing His right to condemn and destroy humanity, the Son of God (God actively present on Earth) entered a sinful world to save man.

(John 3:18) – The single condition to access God’s generous gesture is to “believe in Him.” The ability of man to believe in His creator guarantees the escape from condemnation. The equation of condemnation is already settled for those who choose not to believe. Condemnation results from knowing the truth about the Creator and intentionally choosing not to believe in Him. All of the human population is guilty of sin and disobedience however only those that refuse to believe in the creator will be condemned.

(John 3:19-20) – The path of condemnation is shown by the fact that light came into the world to guide people out of darkness. However, people choose to remain in darkness because they love the deeds of darkness more than the freedom offered by the light. The love for darkness creates a hatred for the light due to the fear of the truth that the light will reveal and the reproof that will demand leaving the dark path.

(John 3:21) – The person that seeks the truth will be drawn to light, walking away from darkness revealing the misdeeds that in are in opposition to God and the path that leads to life.

John 3:22- After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.

John 3:23- And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.

John 3:24- For John was not yet cast into prison.

John 3:25- Then there arose a question between *some* of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.

John 3:26- And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all *men* come to him.

John 3:27- John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

Lesson Notes:

(John 3:22-23) – Jesus and the disciples He chose to follow Him journeyed to Judea into the nearby area where John had established his ministry alongside his disciples. Both ministry groups were baptizing Jews who made confessions to return to the roots of their faith. Judea was a natural selection for baptism because of the large available water stream.

(John 3:24-25) – The timestamp for this convergence was before John was cast into prison, and a question arose among John's disciples and the Jews following him concerning the purification ritual of water baptism.

(John 3:26) – The query centered upon the newly introduced Messiah baptizing Jews in the same manner as John. The constituents of John were confused about which Rabbi they should follow.

(John 3:27) John's explanation to his disciples highlighted the goal and outcome of water baptism. A man can receive nothing, including the purification symbolized by water baptism unless it is granted by God in heaven. For Jews returning to their faith, water baptism was a sign of their repentance on earth. The baptismal water did not purge their sins of disobedience; instead, they must trust God in heaven to forgive them and provide them with a clean slate to walk in the newness of life.

John 3:28- Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.

John 3:29- He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

Lesson Notes:

(John 3:28) – John reminded his followers that he is not the Christ as was sent to bear witness of the Messiah, preparing the way for Him.

(John 3:29) – He used a metaphor to illustrate the role and relationship between himself and the Messiah. The man who has the bride is naturally the bridegroom th

e friend of the bridegroom stands nearby and is privy to the intimate words and expressions the bridegroom speaks as he waits for the bride. The friend has great joy in knowing the love and the plans in store for the bride but is never confused about the identity of the bridegroom or his role as the friend.

John the Baptist is the friend and cousin of the Messiah. He had the privilege of hearing the Messiah's intimate words of truth regarding His mission to receive and embrace His future bride, the Church.

John 3:30- He must increase, but I *must* decrease.

John 3:31- He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.

John 3:32- And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.

John 3:33- He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.

John 3:34- For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure *unto him*.

John 3:35- The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

John 3:36- He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Lesson Notes:

(John 3:30) – John understood and never stepped beyond his boundaries as the forerunner to prepare the way for the Messiah. As the friend, he knew his role in the relationship required him to decrease as the bridegroom-Messiah increased. The role of the friend was to prepare the way for the entry of someone greater who would arrive on the scene.

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(John 3:31) – The bridegroom and Son of God (God actively present on Earth) comes from above with jurisdiction over everything. Man's world on earth is subject to the heavenly world with God as its head. Earth can speak only of earthly things, the Son of God (God actively present on Earth) that comes from heaven speaks and commands words that are eternal.

(John 3:32-33) – No man from earth has seen or heard the things declared by the Son of God (God is actively present on Earth); He alone can testify to them. Those who hear and receive His testimony become the seal (witness) that God is faithful.

(John 3:34-35) – The Son of God (God actively present on Earth) and Messiah, sent to speak for God, possess power and spirit without measure. The Father loves the Son; they are equal and one. Without measure, the Father has given power for all things into the hands of the Son.

(John 3:36) – The man who believes in the Son will have everlasting life. Any man who believes not in the Son will not see everlasting life. For all that do not think so the wrath of God will remain their final reward.

The well at Sychar

the Samaritan Jews

Background:

Adeliberate decision was made to leave Jerusalem and Judea and travel to the province of Galilee. The Pharisees were tracking the ministry of John the Baptizer and Jesus-Messiah; they became aware that the disciples of the latter baptized more repentant Jews than John. The growing infamy of Jesus-Messiah threatened Jewish religious leaders, and that threat influenced their decision to journey north to their homestead in Galilee.

The flourishing dominant culture established major roadways in early civilization. When one culture faded away, the roadways they established became highways used by succeeding cultures. There were three highways to make travel across the expanse of Palestine possible. The “Way of the Sea,” a roadway along the coastline of the Mediterranean Sea, was a corridor constructed by early travelers from Africa connecting Libya (North Africa) to Northern Palestine. The other perimeter roadway was called “The Kings Highway,” primarily a merchant trade route east of Judea and the Dead Sea, also connecting Northern Africa to the land of Palestine. The interior highway was known among Jews as “The Way of the Patriarchs.” The well-traveled roadway stretched north to south across the interior of Palestine, marking the journey of Abraham and his sons en route to the Promise Land.

In contrast to highways, interior paths were generally established naturally as healthy people chose to continue to beat down the same path while traveling on foot. The Hebrew word for path, “derekh” [da-rakh] indicates the results of crushing the dirt under foot to carve out a way to travel. The same word to expresses a custom in Hebrew, meaning a mannerism created by repetitive practice. Interior paths through-out Palestine were created by repetitive use, indirectly establishing travel norms that became common practice. There were interior pathways within the Palestine provinces, including paths that connected adjacent provinces. Judea and Galilee are connected by Samaria. The roadway through the Samaritan province was the shortest and most direct route between Judea and Galilee. Traveling an average of 5 miles a day would take a traveler taking the direct route to reach Galilee in 3 to 4 days. The fierce hostility between non-Samaritan Jews (Judean-Galilean Jews) and Samaritan-Jews caused Judean or Galilean travelers to take a longer route intentionally. Over time, Judean-Galilean travelers repeating the excursion to avoid travel through Samaria created an interior pathway alongside the Jordan River,. When they approached the Samaritan province, they ventured into the Jezreel Mountain valley (east of Samaria). The custom-created by-pass added 10-15 miles and up to three days to the journey to avoid contact with Samaritans.

Jesus-Messiah did not go out of His way to travel through Samaria; He intentionally traveled through Samaria to create an encounter with a shunned segment of the Jewish-Hebrew family.

Pastor Note: The absence of a conversation about His departure from the norm to travel through Samaria infers that the disciple did not intend to use the roadway turning east into the Jezreel Valley.

THE Way of the Sea: (Via Maris)

is the modern day name of this ancient trade route, dating from the early Bronze Age, *linking Egypt with the northern empires of Syria, Anatolia and Mesopotamia — modern day Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Israel, Turkey and Syria.* In Latin, Via Maris means "way of the sea."



Lesson Four

John 4:1-54

John 4:1- When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and **baptized more disciples** than John,

John 4:2- (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)

John 4:3- He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee.

John 4:4- And he must needs go through Samaria.

Lesson Notes:

(John 4:1-2) – The Pharisees become aware that the disciples of Jesus have numerically surpassed the baptisms of John the Baptist. Each baptism signified Jews reconciling to their faith and being less influenced by temple religious leaders. The competition between the temple leaders and the Baptizer was already under scrutiny and precipitated the investigation of his wilderness ministry. [John 1:19] In a short amount of time, the influence of the Messiah's ministry has eclipsed John the Baptist, turning the attention of the Jewish religious leaders towards the newest threat. To escape the developing conflict with the Pharisees, the Messiah, and His disciples travel north to Galilee, returning to the familiar surroundings of their homestead.

(John 4:3-4) – Galilee is about 20 miles due north from Judea (Jerusalem). Traveling an average of 5 miles a day on foot, the journey north through Samaria would take three to four days or about 22 hours. Samaria is the border province between Judea and Galilee, creating a conflict for the adversarial cultures when traveling outside their native environment. A long-standing division between the two sects of Hebrew-Jewish families has existed for hundreds of years, dating back to when Israel was divided into two house kingdoms. Ten of the twelve tribes were established as the northern tribal kingdom, and two tribes became the southern. [I Kings 11:31] Samaritans are descendants of the ten tribes that settled in Northern Palestine under Jeroboam, their first King. The King established Tirzah as the first capital city. [I Kings 14:17, *15:33] In later years, under King Ahab, Samaria replaced Tirzah as the capital of the Northern tribes.

Among the great offenses disrupting the relationship between the north and south tribal kingdoms were the altars built by King Jeroboam in the city of Bethel and Dan to supplant the designated place of worship in Jerusalem. Bethel was a celebrated landmark because Abraham built an altar there during his first journey in the land of Canaan. [Genesis 12:8, 28:19] The landmark helped validate the northern sons of Jacob-Israel practicing their faith outside the temple city. King Jeroboam built a second altar further north in Dan and added golden calves as gods to both altars for a feast celebration he created in the eighth month of the year competing with the appointed times (moadims) given to them by God. [I Kings 12:25-33]

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The practice of profane worship, duplicating their faith rituals in a place not selected by God, [Moriah: II Chron. 3;1] opened the doorway to tolerate more egregious forms of idolatry.

All the Kings that governed the northern Hebrew tribes offered sacrifices and tributes to false gods for generations. Generations after Jeroboam, King Omri purchased the hill of Samaria in Shemer [I Kings 16:23-24], and his son Ahab moved the capital city to Samaria. [I Kings 16:29] Ahab built an altar to Baal in the new capital city.

The southern Hebrew tribes (Judah) considered the Samaritans the greatest violators of traditional rituals established in their shared faith. They were spiritually regarded as unclean and profane and noted as outcasts with the intent of avoiding all possible contact. Understanding the history between the two cultures explains why the disciples, like other non-Samaritan Jews, chose a path to return to Galilee that skirts traveling through Samaria. With different intentions, Jesus-Messiah selects the path through Samaria to engage the outcast.

John 4:5- Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

John 4:6- Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with *his* journey, sat thus on the well: *and* it was about the sixth hour.

John 4:7- There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.

John 4:8- (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)

Lesson Notes:

(John 4:5) – Arriving in the city of Sychar, a prominent geographical marker, the well of Jacob-Israel located near the burial ground where the bones of Joseph were laid to rest. (Joshua 24:32) The well location is physical evidence of the heritage between Samaritans-Jews and non-Samaritan Jews dating back to their shared lineage in the house of Jacob-Israel.

(John 4:6) – The sixth hour, the time that Jesus-Messiah arrives at the well, is a mid-day prayer for all Jews (“Mincha”), and it coincides with the second lamb offering of the day, known as the “Tamid.” The offering rituals are against the backdrop of the conversation between the Messiah and the Samaritan. Morning and Evening prayers symbolize required sacrificial offerings physically performed in the temple by the priest. The sacrifices in those offerings are generally the petition necessary for sins committed against God or other people. They allow a remnant of the sacrificed animal to be set aside for the priest. (Leviticus 2:1-3)

The “mincha” offering is viewed as a free-will offering, not related to a specific misdeed of a person, making the noonday prayer symbolic of the suppliant’s desire to grow closer to God. The restrictions of bringing particular types of offerings are removed to allow a person who does not have the standard animal or bird to sacrifice to present a meal or flour offering instead. No portion of the “mincha” offering is set aside for the priest, demonstrating that the offering belongs wholly to God.

At the sixth hour, the lamb for the “Tamid” (see notes) offering is also prepared. The assigned priest must give the selected lamb water from a sacred golden cup and tie it to the altar to await its demise in the evening sacrifice ritual.

(John 4:7) – A Samaritan woman arrives at the well after the Messiah. The woman’s presence at the well at the sixth hour is unsurprising because Samaritans are not known to follow customary Jewish rituals like their rivals who lived outside Samaria. The presence of a non-Samaritan Jew in Sychar would alone be startling, but to have a Rabbinic present at the well in Samaria during mid-day prayer was inexplicable.

The woman is greeted with a request, which adds to the strangeness of the encounter. Hearing the Rabbinic ask her to drink him water violated all expectations. Fulfilling this request would be a cultural taboo, a Rabbi accepting water from a person labeled as unclean.

Considering the parallel backdrop to preparing the “Tamid” lamb, the request is unusual, specifically with the Rabbi representing the lamb that will be sacrificed. Serving water to the lamb in the golden cup was a duty of a specially selected Levite in the temple.

Daily tasks were assigned to those who worked in the temple, and each Levite had to be washed and cleaned to participate in the daily rituals. The Rabbinic asking the Samaritan to present Him with drink symbolically broke all the expected cultural and religious norms.

(John 4:8) – The text clarifies that the Messiah is traveling alone, noting that the disciples have gone to buy meat. For the moment, no one could witness this unlikely encounter of the clean associating with the unclean.

John 4:9- Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

John 4:10- Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

John 4:11- The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?

John 4:12- Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?

Lesson Notes:

(John 4:9)—The woman's response quickly clarifies her recognition that one of them is out of place. The woman answers His question with one of her own, raising concern about the difference in their social structure. She further remarks on the truth they both accept, “the Jews have no dealings with Samaritans,” making it clear that people like him created the separation between their ancestors.

(John 4:10)—The Messiah does not challenge her perception of him or those like him. He knows His presence at the well sets Him apart from all others. He challenges her bias, which prevents her from seeing the gift of God standing before her, which is the same mistake made by the Jews who live outside of Samaria. She does not know his identity, but certainly, she cannot assign him to the nature of all other Jews she has encountered.

Jesus Messiah proposed that if the woman looked beyond his physical appearance and asked him to give her a drink, He would have given her living water. He would have responded to her far beyond expectation.

(John 4:11)—Her perception is still dull, as noted by her corrective rebuttal, announcing that he has nothing to use to draw water from such a deep well. Still confused, the woman questions the origin of the living water offered her.

(John 4:12)—The Samaritan intently mocks the assumed elite social status of Jews outside of her homestead. She reminds the Rabbi that Samaritans have used and have held possession of Jacob's well for generations. The Samaritan Jews named Jacob their father, just like the non-Samaritan Jews. She questions what type of water He could give her that would be more valuable to her than the well-spring Jacob provided Samaritan families and their cattle for generations.

John 4:13- Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

John 4:14- But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

Lesson Notes:

(John 4:13) – The explanation given to her is simple but astounding. Without question, Jacobs' well has been significant, serving generations and their livestock, providing them with the essential natural resources needed for survival. The cistern has been reliable, never failing to produce for hundreds of years. Yet, it is limited to satisfying only the immediate need, requiring the recipient to return indefinitely to be re-filled.

(John 4:14) – The woman hears that this offering of water will permanently satisfy her thirst for life. The Galilean who shared her heritage tells her the water would become a well inside her, a cistern filled with everlasting life, a well that will last forever. Drinking this water would end the need for satisfaction from any other source.

John 4:15- The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

Lesson Notes:

(John 4:15) – With anticipation, the woman of Sychar asked for the water, emphasizing her desire to eliminate the need to return to Jacobs well. Adding that qualifier to her request suggests that she believed the gift of eternal life would end the need for natural water. On the contrary, the gift of life would satisfy the core needs inside of the woman, diminishing the drive to satisfy the raw cravings of the flesh. Water and other natural elements will remain a required staple for human survival, but water, bread, or other material resources alone will not satisfy the whole needs of man. Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. [Matt. 4:4]

John 4:16- Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

John 4:17- The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband:

John 4:18- For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.

Lesson Notes:

The woman is told to call her husband before she receives the water gift. The assumption that the woman was married likely resulted in the manner in which she was dressed.

Custom in that day would require married women to wear a head covering to shun unwanted advances from men. The woman of Samaria might have worn a head covering but admits that she is not presently married.

(John 4:17-18) – Her admission that she has no husband is confirmed, and the Messiah further discloses that she is living, unmarried with a man and that there were five previous husbands.

Accepting the truth about personal status and condition is essential before taking the first drink of the water of life. Transparent truth reveals the real needs and desires within men. When full and satisfied, no one looks for water. When a person owns the truth about their emptiness and thirst for true life, the dry and empty soul will be driven to the spiritual fountain of life.

John 4:19- The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

John 4:20- Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

John 4:21- Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

John 4:22- Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

John 4:23- But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

John 4:24- God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth.

Lesson Notes:

(John 4:19) – Immediately after the woman is transparent and clear about herself, she perceives the truth about the Galilean. She perceives that he is a prophet, something she could not see through the eyes of her prejudice and dishonesty about herself.

(John 4:20)—She authors a new conversation, pivoting the encounter to discuss worship. Perhaps revealing concerns that have troubled her for years trying to practice her religion, she speaks directly to the conflict that has divided their two communities, the place of worship.

For hundreds of years, Samaritans have celebrated the Mount of Gerizim because of its proximity to Shechem, Abraham's first landing place and the first Capital city of the nomadic tribes of Israel. [Gen. 12:6, Joshua 24:1] The Samaritans also believed that Mount Gerizim was the site of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, as opposed to Mount Moriah. Some excerpts of Rabbinical text support the Samaritan position, as Torah writing sustains the argument for non-Samaritan Jews.

History reveals further that Samaritans believed Moses' last instructions required them to worship on the mountain of blessing, Mt. Gerizim. [Deut. 27:11-12]. The mountain is 25 miles south of the capital city. Samaritans believe it was on Mt. Gerizim that Abraham attempted to offer his son as a sacrifice to God, the same place Moses declared the blessings upon Israel.

The woman of Sychar poses her concerns to understand which practice passed on by their forefathers is correct.

(John 4:21) – As a prophet, Jesus-Messiah reveals that a season (hour) is coming when neither mountain will be the focus of the “*place*” to worship. There is a long history of worship predicated on physical space and place. Mountains and stones were used to establish shrines and memorials for man’s encounter with God. The same practice was true for the worship of false gods. The Messiah reveals a transition that will remove the focus of where to worship and move attention to *how to worship*.

(John 4:22) – The first correction for the Samaritan is to understand who to worship. After the Assyrian captivity of the Northern Hebrew tribes in B.C. 720-22, the Assyrian King replaced the Jews living in Samaria with foreigners from Babylon and other heathen nations. Lions slaughtered the new residents, and complaints reached the King, explaining that the land was cursed by the newcomers who did not know the God of the Hebrews. Priests who once lived in the land returned to teach the people about the Hebrew God. The people chose not to subscribe to God’s commandments, choosing instead to build altars to idol gods. [II Kings 17:24-29]

Idol worship was passed on through generations of their descendants. The Samaritans were known for idolatry and compromising the assigned place for worship. Many of their descendants became a people without instruction, unaware of the identity of the true God of Abraham.

(John 4:23) – The season (hour) is coming when true worshippers, those who know who to worship, are not focused on where to worship. Christian History is filled with societies fighting and shedding blood over physical places of worship. The true God desires all men to shed the desires of the flesh as vehemently and give their lives to God instead of taking life from others.

God does not live in temples constructed by men. Men build temples to house God in a fixed place, a symbol of man controlling God through the religious practices attached to their control. God is not enhanced by cathedrals erected to gain His glory or the man-made mountains created to ascend into His presence. God is seeking true worshippers, people who know their God. The true worshipper comes before God in spirit and truth, removing the barrier of physical place. Worship in spirit transcends location and place. Worship, in truth, removes the celebration of man-made monuments.

The first place of worship in scripture was open space, a stone altar set amid God’s work, surrounded by a world created by Him. All who passed by could reflect on honoring the Creator in the presence of His handiwork. The stone altars were memorials left behind for descendants to become aware of their ancestors’ faith. The stones were never intended to be honored or celebrated or to become the foundations to erect great monuments; they were reminders and memorials to the God of creation.

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The tabernacle of Moses [Ex. 25:8-9] would become the first enclosed shrine, but it was not a permanent structure. The traveling tent reminded God's people that the creator could not be constrained to a fixed location. The temple of Solomon was the first fixed structure that God allowed His people to erect. The permanent house in Jerusalem, built upon Mt. Moriah, [IIChr. 3:1] the place where Abraham was prepared to offer his son was symbolic of God's people ending the trek of wandering in the wilderness while learning to know God. They were becoming a people affirmed and settled because they knew their God.

When Solomon finished the temple construction, he petitioned heaven with terms for God to keep his eyes upon the physical house day and night, relying on God's covenant to put His name there. [IIChr. 6:6,*20] When God answers, He requires Solomon to adjust his focus from the house he built to seeking His face.

Nothing was more important to God than to seek His face on Mt. Moriah or any other location. Solomon charged with God's declaration: "If my people who are called by my name shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven..." [IIChron 7:14] The focus is not on place but on seeking and knowing God.

(John 4:24)–God is a "spirit"; he is not a place or a building. His native form is "Spirit". In the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, the distinction between flesh and spirit was established. Man naturally gravitates towards the flesh (physical realm) because it is familiar to him. In Christ, God has chosen to present Himself in a form familiar to man. Taking the form of flesh did not diminish the nature of God inside the flesh body. The physical body was not subject to sin, provided a residence for God's nature, and, although not subject to sin, was limited, perishable, and subject to human frailty, including hunger, pain, and sorrow.

The emphasis on God becoming man is not on the man but the God inside the man. In the same manner, the focus of worship cannot be upon place but on what happens inside of the place. Isaiah's encounter with God in the temple illustrates the train of God absorbing all of the space inside the temple, dismissing the emphasis on the décor or glory of the structure. All of the attention is directed upon the presence of God. The word "train" used in Isaiah 6:1 in Hebrew means skirt or "hem" connecting the Old Testament experience of the over-flowing presence of God in the temple to the virtue flowing from the hem of the body garment of Jesus-Messiah. (Matthew 14:36)

The emphasis on place to define worship is the natural reflex of religion, in many ways, becomes a symbol of the worshipper's faith. In many ways, the physical exterior of a religious house becomes a symbol of the worshipper's faith, with sometimes replacing personal faith with physical faith in a structure or system of religion. In response to a

disciple admiring the physical beauty and structure of the temple Jesus-Messiah warned that the stones were not invincible from future peril. (Mark 13:2)

Apart from all the other disciples, Peter, James, and John were allowed to see the inner nature of Jesus the man. Apostle Peter's religious reflex spoke out and declared a need to build three tabernacles to capture the moment. Religion always seeks to control and contain God's work, building walls that hinder a relationship with God.

A radiant light cloud hung over the three disciples to guide them in experiencing the light brought into the world by the Messiah.

John 4:25- The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.

John 4:26- Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am *he*.

John 4:27- And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?

Lesson Notes:

(John 4:25)– The Samaritan woman was well versed on the subject on Messiah, she affirms her claim acknowledging her awareness that he will come as the one called “Christ”, the anointed one.

(John 4:26)– She was, however, unaware that she was engaging the Messiah, as the reveal is made to her. Living outside of Jerusalem, the woman or other Samaritans would not know of the ministry of Jesus-Messiah in Judea and Galilee. John the Baptist did not venture into their country to introduce Him. The absence of a witness to inform the Samaritans about His presence explains why He chose to travel through Sychar.

(John 4:27)– The disciples arrive at the well. Neither party is startled to see the other, making it apparent that this was a planned rendezvous. The disciples are curious about the engagement between their Rabbi and the unclean woman; however, they do not voice their concerns. John offers in this annotation, perhaps his unspoken thoughts, as he writes that no man asks: “what He was seeking from her and why He engaged her in conversation.”. The answer to the unspoken query is left for personal contemplation.

John 4:28- The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,

John 4:29- Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?

John 4:30- Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.

Lesson Notes:

(John 4:28-29) – The disciples are witnesses only to the outcome of the encounter. They witness the Samaritan woman leaving her water pot to return to her homestead. Returning home, the woman shared her encounter with men she was acquainted with in her city, inviting them to journey to Sychar and see the man she believes is the Christ.

(John 4:30) – The adulterous woman who lured men into sin uses her skills to lead them to drink the water of life. John the Baptist was raised to call people familiar to him out of the city to the wilderness to repent and prepare for the coming Messiah. The woman of Samaria becomes the prophetic voice calling people familiar to her out of the town to Jacob's well to see the Messiah.

John 4:31- In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat.

John 4:32- But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.

John 4:33- Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him *ought* to eat?

John 4:34- Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

John 4:35- Say not ye, There are yet four months, and *then* cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

John 4:36- And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

John 4:37- And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.

John 4:38- I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.

Lesson Notes:

(John 4:31-34)– The disciples insist that their Rabbi partake in a meal while they wait for the woman to return. The teacher rejects the meal and uses the moment as an object lesson to teach them about meat, His appetite to do God's will, and His appetite to do God's will. The hunger to complete God's assignment should be greater than any other desire or ambition. He expressed that He has meat unknown to them, meaning an appetite already satisfied. They were perplexed by his reply and interpreted his response to mean that someone else had provided him a meal, perhaps the woman from Samaria.

(John 4:35)– The Teacher develops an illustration, using their present time of the year, in contrast to God's time allotted to complete their spiritual assignment. In those days, seasons and time could be compared to agriculture cycles. There are three prominent cycles: one for sowing, another for watering (cultivating)-waiting, and a final season to harvest. The Teacher indicates that they were four months away from the next harvest, which means, according to the agriculture clock, they were in a cultivating-wait season. From the Rabbi's point of view, the agricultural clock also influenced the disciples' attitude to God's assignment. The disciples were untouched by the urgency to share the gospel with Samaritans or other people groups outside of their culture.

They were relaxed and comfortable waiting for possible results in their shared ministry with the Messiah. To them, the potential harvest, if any, was far away into the future and did not require their immediate attention. To change their attitude, their Teacher admonishes them to re-set their spiritual timing, commanding them not to say the harvest is four months away. He instructs them to open their eyes and become spiritually aware of the "white" fields ready to harvest.

In real-time, the Jews recently celebrated Passover on the 14th of Nisan, which is March-April; the Jews recently celebrated Passover on the 14th of Nisan, which is March-April, on the Gregorian calendar. (John 2:13). The next harvest could be either the wheat harvest in late spring (May) or the early wine harvest that occurs in the summer (June-July). Waiting for either of these harvests would not create warranted urgency in the agriculture community. The spring and summer harvests are generally expected to yield well. If, for any reason, the harvest yielded less than expectations, there was hope for some recovery in wine harvest at the end of the year.

In the teaching illustration, the disciples are challenged to accelerate their timeline and picture the fields as "white" when the hoarfrost settles upon the vegetation ready for harvest. A "white" harvest is the final or end-of-year harvest. Their Teacher wants them to react to their mission as if they are facing the latter harvest and get out into the fields with haste, responding with urgency, as if it is the last opportunity for the gospel to be shared.

(John 4:36-38) – The lesson continues summarizing the benefits earned by sowers and reapers. The vineyard has two responsibilities: some are assigned to sow and others to reap. Those assigned to sow seeds are not assigned to reap. Reapers will gather fruit they have not sown, entering a vineyard, ripe, finished, and ready to harvest. The Sower will toil and cultivate a field without the satisfaction of seeing the completed work. Trusting the seeds of labor will ripen, survive adversities, and become a fruitful harvest. It does matter at what part of the spectrum someone begins, either as a sower or reaper; the reward is the same for both assignments to receive the fruit of eternal life equally. (Proverb 11:30)

The sower and reaper work together to fulfill the work of the Kingdom, compelling others to come and follow the way of truth.

John 4:39- And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.

John 4:40- So when the Samaritans came unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days.

John 4:41- And many more believed because of his word;

John 4:42- And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard *him* ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

Lesson Notes:

(John 4:39-40) – The validation of the excursion through Samaria is realized in the life-changing testimony of the Samaritan woman, who influenced many people in her community to find faith in the Messiah. The affirming response from the Samaritans makes it clear that they are not opposed to hearing the truth.

The men of Samaria persuaded Jesus the Messiah to delay His journey to Galilee and stay with them for two more days. This invitation was highly unusual as it was not common for a non-Samaritan Rabbi to be invited into the interior of a culturally forbidden place. However, Jesus accepted the invitation and traveled deeper into Samaria with the men who had returned to Jacob's well with the woman.

(John 4:41-42) – More Samaritans are added to the faith after hearing the teachings of Jesus-Messiah. The new converts have come to the faith resulting from their encounter, not because of the woman's testimony. The community of Samaritans acknowledges that a non-Samaritan Rabbi from Galilee is the Christ and Savior of the world.

Note: This excursion is captured only in John's Gospel, further representing his intent to speak to a universal audience. The absence in the other Gospel, especially those writing to a Jewish audience, further expresses the dissent between the two cultures.

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John 4:43-Now after two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee.

John 4:44- For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country.

John 4:45- Then when he was come into Galilee, the Galilaeans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast.

Lesson Notes:

(John 4:43-44) – Jesus and the disciples finally continue their journey to Galilee after the multi-day excursion through Samaria. As they turn northward, the son of God reflects upon a hard truth, knowing that a prophet is not received with honor in his own country. Returning to Galilee after receiving such a generous reception from the most foreign and adversarial neighbor to people like Him will make it less palatable to tolerate rejection from His family tribe.

(John 4:45) – Unexpectedly, the Rabbi and His disciples are well received. Many of the Galileans that have returned from the feast in Jerusalem ahead of them and undoubtedly have shared with others the miracles they witnessed while attending the feast. These miracles are not detailed in John's Gospel but are only noted as taking place during the Passover feast. [John 2:23]

The miracles are the apparent attraction and influence upon the non-Samaritan Jews in the beginning of the ministry in Cana and Galilee. [John 2:11] When the Messiah turned over the temple tables during Passover, He was asked to perform a miracle to signify His claimed authority. [John 2:18] In contrast, the Samaritan Jews appear drawn to the truth that Jesus-Messiah is teaching without performing miracles.

John 4:46- So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.

John 4:47- When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.

John 4:48- Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.

John 4:49- The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

Lesson Notes:

(John 4:46)—Jesus-Messiah returns to Cana, the place of His first miracle. Word spreads of His arrival, including to a nobleman from Capernaum, located in the far-northern region of Galilee. An excursion between the two cities, traveling on foot five miles a day, would take two to three days. The nobleman was a person of status (nobleman: “royal, regal”) and wealth, having servants to attend to his needs.

(John 4:47-48)—Making the journey to see the Galilean healer was a significant gesture by this man, stepping well outside his culture and normative behavior. His son’s illness notably drove the decision to leave the comforts of his status. The illness of his son is severe, at the point of death. It was likely that the man of means had exhausted all other options in search of a cure for his son. His appeal to the Messiah of the Jews was biased by desperation, trusting what he heard about the wine miracle in Cana.

The Messiah senses such is the case. He admonishes the miracle chaser for his interest only in signs and wonders to condition his belief.

(John 4:49)—The father brushes off the rebuke and urgently demands that the Healer make haste, “come down ‘ere my child dies,” meaning depart immediately before his son dies. The father has a single interest: preventing death from taking his son. The nobleman shows great confidence in the ability of the Healer.

John 4:50- Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.

John 4:51- And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told *him*, saying, Thy son liveth.

John 4:52- Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.

John 4:53- So the father knew that *it was* at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.

John 4:54- This *is* again the second miracle *that* Jesus did, when he came out of Judaea and into Galilee.

Lesson Notes:

(John 4:50-51)—The son of God does not ignore the need of the nobleman, but he refuses his request to depart and go with him to Capernaum urgently. The Healer informs the father that his son is healed and tells the father to return home. Without hesitation, the nobleman takes confidence in the word the Messiah speaks. The foreigner does not challenge his words or identity and does not try to understand his authority. He makes his departure in complete confidence that the words spoken to him are valid.

As he travels northward to return home, his servants intercept him before arriving in Capernaum. They were en route to notify the father that he would not need the assistance of the Galilean because his son was alive and no longer plagued with death.

(John 4:52)–The father, looking for confirmation, asked his servants to tell him when his son began to improve. The servants tell the father that the fever had left the seventh hour a day earlier.

(John 4:53)–The father knew that his sons' improved condition corresponded to when the Healer spoke to him. When the father asked the Messiah to journey to Capernaum to heal his son, he did not calculate the risk. He did not consider that the time it would take to travel would put his son in greater jeopardy because he was already at the point of death. Jesus refused to travel with the father, not out of disrespect, but because He understood the greater need; the dying son needed healing.

The journey to Capernaum would have delayed the immediate healing that was required. The Messiah spoke to the core need instead of the conditions presented to him by the Father. God does not respond to the required terms and standards of man. God directs His full attention to what men need even when they are unaware of it.

The nobleman and his entire household proclaimed their faith in the Messiah because of the miracle that restored his son's life. This example is similar to the faith demonstrated by the Samaritans after hearing the testimony of the woman from Sychar. In both illustrations, people outside Jesus's native family and culture accepted Him as the son of God while He was rejected by His own.

(John 4:54)–This was the second miracle in Galilee, complimenting the same province where the miracles began.