

# **BIBLE STUDY**

## **The Life of Jesus Christ**

### **The Apostles**

#### **Study Section 5**



# Jesus Christ: Study 12

## The Apostles

The disciples of Jesus were not selected all at once, but in ones and twos. The first of them were disciples of John the Baptist, who directed them to Jesus. As the disciples continued with Jesus, their knowledge of God's Word greatly increased. They learned from Him that true discipleship requires that a man should put God first in His life. As time progressed, it was necessary to select from among the disciples, twelve men, who would be especially charged with the responsibility of preaching and upholding the truth of the Word. These men were called the Apostles. It is John's Gospel which provides detail regarding the call of the first disciples. (John 1:19-51)

His record would indicate that a change had apparently come over John the Baptist's preaching after the baptism of Jesus. It is reflected in the Baptist's abrupt negatives to a deputation who had been sent from the Pharisees to inquire concerning his identity:

**“Who are you?” - - - “I am not the Christ”.**

**“Are you Elijah?” - - - “I am not”**

**“Are you the Prophet?” - - - “No”.**

John 1:19-21

It would appear that he was now determined to stand back in the shadow of the revealed Messiah, simply identifying himself as:

**“...a voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord...”** John 1: 22,23

Now that Jesus had been made manifest to him, he minimized the importance of his form of baptism, which does not purify, but simply prepared men's hearts for the reception of the Christ. (John 1:26) So the deputation departed. The destiny of Israel depended upon the nation's recognition of the Messiah when He came. The gulf between the Baptist and the leaders was a tragic indication of the coming conflict which was to lead to the death of the Prophet, the rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah, and centuries of suffering for the Jewish race.

It was on the day following this confrontation that Jesus emerged from the same path along which He had disappeared six weeks before. He came fully prepared for the world and its sin, for now following the temptations that Jesus had faced His armour was been tested and approved.

John beheld Jesus. Now he knew Him. The divinely appointed sign at Jesus' baptism left no doubt in John the Baptist's mind, but at that moment of recognition, Jesus had departed into the wilderness. Now once again confronted by the Messiah, John knew that his work of preparation was over. All that remained for him to do was to direct men from himself to their Saviour:

**“...Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!”**

John 1:29

This was his declaration to all those who had followed him to this point that Jesus was the one through whom men would be reconciled to God – the Lamb of God. The sacrifice of an animal, primarily that of a lamb, is a feature throughout scripture associated with the covering and forgiving of sin. For example:

- In Eden, Adam was told that fig leaves could not cover his sin - only coats of skins (i.e. only a divinely provided slain Lamb would be capable of this.) Genesis 3:7, 21.
- Lambs were slain when Israel's first born were delivered from death whilst the first born of Egypt were destroyed. (Exodus 12:12-13)
- Lambs were offered every morning and every evening as daily burnt offerings. (Numbers 28:3-4)

The nations destiny centred in the slain Lamb. To the thoughtful Israelite, aware of his nation's history and ritual, no higher tribute could be paid to a man than calling him “the Lamb of God”.

## **The First Disciples**

The next day John the Baptist was standing with two of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, and probably John, the writer of the Gospel record. The absence of identification in this narrative is characteristic, for John never refers directly to himself, or his brother, or his parents, in the course of his Gospel (e.g. John 13:23; 19:26).

Seeing Jesus, once again John identified Him as the “Lamb of God”. (John 1:35-37) However, Jesus apparently carried on walking, and these two disciples began to follow Him. The last glimpse that John ever had of Jesus was as He walked away that day with two of John’s own disciples moving to overtake him. They followed Him because He was declared to be the “Lamb”. (See also Revelation 14:4) The narrative informs us that Jesus turned and waited for them, asking them “what do you seek?” Their response, in asking where He dwelt, revealed their desire to know more about Him, to share His company, to prolong this time with Him. So Jesus invited them to come and see, so they stayed with Him the whole day.

We can only imagine what stirred their hearts during that time, and the instruction that they received. But, they obviously became very excited about their association with Jesus, and wanted to share their discovery with their loved ones. The two of them went off in search of their brothers, Andrew, seeking his brother Simeon, and John, his brother James. Once again we observe this characteristic of John’s record in not mentioning himself or his family by name. Read carefully, and we find the subtle reference to John’s seeking for James, when he says that Andrew “found his own brother first”. (John 1:41)

The words tumbled out of Andrew as he said to Simon, ‘we have found the Messiah’ and we note that Simon went with him without hesitation. Now Simon was at once made aware that he was in the presence of the Lord, for without any formal introductions, Jesus told Simon that He knew him already: “You are Simon”, (John 1:42). Jesus went on to say that Simon would be called “Cephas” (or Peter) which is translated as a “stone”. The experiences of life, in service to His master, would make their mark upon Simon. His name, like his nature, would change. His eager, impetuous, disposition would eventually be replaced by the rock-like stability that he ultimately displayed in following his calling.

## **Bible Echoes**

Jesus now had four followers, Andrew, Peter, John and James. No matter how limited their education was, Jewish children were taught about the Prophets and Law through the Synagogue as they were being brought up. It is interesting to consider what prophetic Scriptural echoes they might have perceived in regard to Jesus in even the short time that they had heard about Him and known Him. At least six come to mind, which are worth reviewing in our personal studies as we begin a consideration of His ministry. If, as a personal exercise, these echoes are reviewed at this point, they enhance the picture of Jesus that develops as we proceed through the Gospel narrative. Suggested readings are: Isaiah 11:1,2; Isaiah 42:1; Isaiah 53:6; Isaiah

40:1-11; Malachi 3:1; Malachi 4:5. As you read these passages try to relate them to the studies covered so far in this course.

## Further Disciples are Called

Yet another day followed, and Jesus determined to leave Judea and go into Galilee, some 50 or 60 miles to the north. Before He left, Jesus found Philip. We are told, simply, that He said “follow me”. Whatever else occurred, Philip was so enthused that he found his friend Nathanael, proclaiming to him:

**“We have found Him of whom Moses and the Law, and also the Prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, Son of Joseph”.** John 1:45

Although sceptical, Nathanael went with him, accepting Philip’s invitation to “come and see”. However, Nathanael’s doubts were quickly removed because Jesus recognised him and told him exactly what he had been doing when Philip found him. Nathanael’s response was instantaneous:

**“Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel”.** John 1:45-49

But Jesus pressed the point even further, telling Nathanael that he would see even greater things than these, and then added:

**“Truly, truly, I say to you, you shall see the heavens opened, and the Angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man”.** John 1:51

In this statement, Jesus was providing a foreshadowing of the great glory that was to arise out of this simple beginning. Even now, power has been given to Jesus (Matthew 28:18; 1 Peter 3:22), but He is to come as judge, (John 5:27), with God’s Angels (Matthew 25:31), who will assist Him in the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Nathanael was privileged to receive this prophecy and the promise that he would be there in the day of Christ’s glory.

Thus we see the beginnings of the ministry of Christ and the selecting of those who were to become His chosen Apostles, six sincere men, in humble circumstances, with no religious standing, but with an earnest longing for the Messiah. Men who had at last found and been called by their Messiah and Lord.

## The Final Selection of the Twelve

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As Jesus went forward, His words and His works attracted men to Him, and slowly but surely the band of disciples grew, such as when Matthew left his tax booth at Capernaum. (Luke 5:27-29). The final gathering of the twelve Apostles developed slowly over the early period of Jesus' preaching. As we look at the records in Luke, chapter 5, verses 1-11, Matthew 4:18-22, and Mark 1:16-20, we see that some of the earliest disciples had returned for a time to their occupations as Jesus continued His work of preaching and miracles.

Luke 5, verse 1, sets the scene for us. Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret preaching to a multitude that was pressing in around Him. Simon and Andrew, James and John, were working close to the lake shore, within hearing of Jesus. They had fished all day, but had caught nothing. They were occupied in washing and mending their nets. To escape the press of the crowd, Jesus boarded Simon's boat and requested him to move off the shore a bit so that He could teach the people from the ship. When He had finished speaking, He instructed Simon to move the boat out into deeper water, and again set down the nets. The result was a miraculous catch of fish, which astonished the four disciples, and left Simon Peter overcome with a sense of unworthiness.

Jesus demonstrated to them that from that time forward they were to become fishers of men, sharing in His work of spreading the Good News from God. The lesson that they were taught deeply impressed them. It should not be lost upon us. It is so easy to think that God is well pleased with us as we do our daily work, when, all the time, we stand idle in sharing the wonder of God's Word with others.

As time passed, more and more people, men and women, joined themselves to Jesus as He went about preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, working among them by miracles and signs. With time passing, the need arose to make plans for the future. If the work in which Jesus was engaged was not to die out, others would have to be especially taught and charged to keep it alive.

These men were to be the Apostles. An Apostle is "one sent", or a "messenger", whereas a disciple is "one taught" or "a learner". The task facing Jesus was to take from among His disciples, twelve Apostles - one for each of the Tribes of Israel. It was a difficult task, and the whole of the night before, He spent alone in prayer upon the mountain. Even the Son of God did not make difficult decisions without seeking the blessing of His Father. We also should endeavour to make our decisions subject to God's will and not merely based upon our own desires.

Luke, chapter 6, verses 12 to 16, gives a concise account of this selection. When it was day, Jesus descended from the mountain, and called to Him the disciples and from them He selected twelve Apostles.

## **Bible Echo and a Foreshadow**

Joshua, a type of Christ, had taken 12 stones out of the river Jordan as a token that the people of Israel were now dedicated to the task of turning the land of promise into a Kingdom of God. After they had crossed over, he replaced the stones with twelve new stones set in the middle of the Jordan, at the place where the feet of the Priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant were standing. (Joshua 4:1-9)

Now, the greater Joshua, Jesus, had chosen His twelve, the first being Peter (a stone). These twelve, who also came new born out of a Jordan baptism, were to become the foundation stones of a new Jerusalem. (Foreshadow - Revelation 21:14)

## **The Twelve Apostles**

By comparing the lists of names given in Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; and Acts 1:13, with Luke 6:14-16, it may be seen that they are grouped in 3 lots of 4 each. Some things that may be noted from these lists of names deserve special mention:

- 1. Simon Peter always appears first, and Judas Iscariot last.**
- 2. Bartholomew appears to be the name given to Nathanael.**
- 3. One Apostle appears with 3 names, “Lebbaeus,” “Thaddeus,” and “Jude of James.” He was probably called “Lebbaeus” and “Thaddeus” by Matthew and Mark to distinguish him from the other Jude, (i.e. Judas), among the twelve, and Luke gains the same objective by adding “of James.”**
- 4. The term “Kananite” in “Simon the Kananite” does not mean “Canaanite.” It comes from a Hebrew word “Kineah” meaning zeal, and describes the same person as “Simon Zelotes” (i.e. Simon the Zealot).**
- 5. Eleven of the twelve came from Galilee. Only Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor, coming from Judah. Iscariot is “Ish Kerioth,” meaning man of Kerioth, i.e. in the southern border of Judah. (Joshua 15:25)**

## Growth in Christ

An Apostle may be different from a disciple, but he never stops learning. The difference between him and a disciple is in the charge committed to him. When Jesus selected His Apostles, He went with them to a level spot on the hill, where they and the rest of the disciples sat around Him - the multitudes who had come to hear Him and to be healed also being present and listening - and He delivered to them the instruction known as The Sermon on the Mount, which will be considered in later sections.

## LESSONS FOR US

There is tremendous encouragement for each one of us as we consider the record of Christ's gathering of His early followers. We note that as soon as they became interested in following Him, He turned to them, prepared to offer them guidance and instruction, inviting them to go with Him. We, today, are invited to seek Him and learn of Him through the Gospel Word, in the full confidence of knowing that an eager desire to learn of His truth will be rewarded with understanding.

We should also take note of the record regarding the eagerness with which these early followers desired to share the wondrous blessing of Jesus with their friends and those around them.

**“Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened”.** Matthew 7: 7,8

## Test Yourself

- 1) Describe how the first four disciples were called and what their reactions were.
- 2) What did Philip tell Nathanael and what was Nathanael response when he met Jesus?
- 3) What did Jesus do when he was trying to decide who the 12 Apostles were to be and what lessons can we learn and apply to for ourselves

# Jesus Christ: Study 13

## Transformation

In reviewing the final selection of the twelve Apostles, we moved forward in time through Christ's ministry. In this section, we go back to the days immediately following the calling of His first six disciples. Jesus and His disciples left Bethabara, where John the Baptist was, and went to Cana of Galilee, where He performed His first miracle. This was on the third day following the call of Nathanael. Following His visit to Cana, He went down to Capernaum with His family and disciples, staying there for a few days (John 2:12).

Following this He went to Jerusalem to observe the Passover for what was to be the effective commencement of His public ministry. There, He cleansed the Temple, and performed many miracles, which led to the visit of Nicodemus. In this section of the study, we consider these events and their meaning. Only John records this particular period and series of events. (John 2: 1-25; 3:1-21)

John, throughout his Gospel never refers to the miracles of Jesus by any other word than "sign." He only records eight such signs in his entire Gospel and all of them contain special meaning if we look into the symbolism of them. All eight could almost be looked upon as acted parables. In this manner, he refers to Christ's first miracle as a sign at the wedding feast in Cana.

### Water into Wine

While in Cana, Jesus and His disciples were invited to a wedding. His mother, Mary, was also there. Her concern about the fact that they ran out of wine would suggest that she was probably a relative of the family involved in the wedding. In those days, in the land of Israel, it was customary for the marriage feast to last for some days. Hospitality was extended on a lavish scale. To fail in this regard was considered to be a disgrace. As John describes it, when this situation arose, Mary went to Jesus saying to Him: "they have no wine." (2:1-3)

We find here a reminder of the second wilderness temptation over again, involving the use of the power of the Holy Spirit to create some sensation which would attract attention and present Him with an eager audience of listeners.

Jesus' response would appear to be a refusal to comply with her request: "woman...my hour has not yet come." She nevertheless instructed the servants to follow His directions.

It was necessary for Jesus to remind her that His Father was directing His course of life. From John's further narrative, we can deduce that Jesus knew that it was in Jerusalem that He would make His first public impact. This would be a foreshadowing of His final hour in Jerusalem when He would be crucified. It also foreshadowed the time when Jesus will return once again to Jerusalem in glory at the end of the age to assume His throne and to establish His Father's Kingdom.

Jesus does not refuse Mary's request, but He makes it clear that His actions will always be independent of the slightest human attempt to influence them. They will be the Holy submission of a Son to His Father. On that day in Cana, however, the crisis would be averted and the feast would proceed joyfully, not because of the pleading of a woman, or the honour of a bridegroom, but to manifest the glory of the Son. (2:11)

We should note in passing, that there is no harshness in addressing His mother as "woman." It was often used in expressions of courtesy and respect, and in tenderness. Indeed, Jesus would use it again when He looked down upon His mother, in caring concern, from the cross.

Jesus instructs the servants to fill the six stone water pots with water. They then draw some out and take it to the head waiter, who after tasting some proclaims it to be the finest of wine. Only the servants and Mary would have been aware of this miracle of transformation, and yet John, in concluding this account, states that with the manifestation of His glory, His disciples believed in Him. (John 2:11)

One might ask how they could appreciate the miracle and have it confirm their belief in Jesus, unless they witnessed it? The Greek word for "servants" answers this difficulty, because it is not necessarily a word normally used for servants in the domestic sense. This same Greek word is used in later New Testament writings in reference to those who serve or minister in the Church. (e.g. Romans 13:4; Phil. 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8, 12; Romans 16:1) It is quite probable that Jesus' six disciples were the "servants" who filled the pots with water.

There are several significant points about this incident and the manner in which John records it, which help us to seek out and understand the full meaning from this simple narrative as recorded in 2:1-11:

- 1. This wedding occurred on the third day - the creation day on which the earth appeared out of the water and first gave forth its fruit (Genesis 1:9-13). In a sense, it was a demonstration of God's power to bring life from the dead (compare 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 15:4).**
- 2. There were six water pots, and six is a number symbolic of man, who was created on the sixth day. (Gen. 1:26-31). Add to this, they were "stone water pots," that is they were earth products, intended to represent human beings. (compare 2 Timothy 2:20; 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 4:7)**
- 3. The water pots were used by the Jews for purification purposes, which had to do with cleansing the outside man, but could not cleanse him within, that is, morally. (Compare Mark 7:3, 4, 15, 20-23; Matthew 23:25-28)**
- 4. The miracle served to manifest Jesus' glory, where glory has the meaning of "standing" or "reputation," that is, what a man stands for.**

From the perspective of Jesus external things were relatively unimportant. He was more concerned with the change, or transformation, that must take place within men and women. Not so much how they wish to appear to others, but what they are within themselves. By association with Jesus and by following His Word individuals would be transformed from within by a change of heart and character.

Finally, in this first sign from Jesus, we find both an echo, and a foreshadow. On the sixth day, the day in which man was created, God gave Adam his bride. (Remember that six is representative of man) It is quite fitting, and is certainly an echo, that the first miracle of Jesus was performed on a wedding day and that it involved six earthenware pots and six disciples. Christ, will be the ultimate bridegroom, receiving His bride (the Church).

Utilizing the symbols of water, earthenware pots, and the number six, He caused a transformation manifesting, through water, a change within these vessels. The change into wine represents the fruit of the spirit as well as of the vine. Jesus said:

*“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-dresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it that it may bear more fruit.”  
John 15:1, 2*

In this, too, can be seen a foreshadowing of the final Passover meal with His Apostles. Referring to the wine during that Passover supper, He said:

*“...this cup which is poured out for you, is the new covenant in my blood.” Luke 22:20*

In this first miracle or sign, we see a foreshadow of the great and coming day of the Lord, when Jesus is the bridegroom, who will be presented with His bride, the Church. The members of that Church will have been transformed through His blood, and will become bright and clean in righteousness:

*“Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready. And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And He said to me, write, blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And He said to me, these are the true words of God.” Revelation 19:7-9*

## The Cleansing of the Temple

In the second chapter, John records that it was a very purposeful Jesus who went to Jerusalem (2:12-25). He knew that the Temple was being sadly misused by those who were greedy for gain, and who were in league with a corrupt priesthood. (compare Micah 3:11,12; Isaiah 10:1-4) Some centuries before, the prophet Malachi had acted as a herald to Nehemiah, at a time when Israel needed purifying and deep inward purging. The people of that time were careful in performing their religious exercises, but lacking true faith in God, all of their efforts related to an outward cleansing. In these human vessels there was no inward transformation.

When Jesus came to the Temple, it was evident He had in mind a special mission, for the record says that He “**found**” in the Temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves as well as money changers seated at their tables. The advent of Christ meant a purge. It could not have been otherwise. Wherever self-interest and fleshly

ambitions direct men's lives, the coming of Christ will mean a sweeping away of everything which opposes God's way.

In Jesus' time greed and injustice of those responsible for the worship of God prevailed over the activities in the Temple. It was necessary for the people to bring offerings and it was convenient that they should be readily available. It was important that the Temple levies should be required in the form of a standard half-shekel coin in view of the thousands of Jews who came from all parts of the Empire.

Arrangements were, therefore, made for the sale of animals and the exchange of foreign currency from which the Levites and high priestly families found a source of immense profit. Establishing a monopoly had imposed more and more abuses upon the people who came to worship.

Those who did not purchase their sacrifices in the Temple courts were not immune from the avarice of the Priests because they had to submit them to the inspection of qualified examiners who were authorized to charge for examining each animal. These examiners could increase their revenues by receiving bribes when they found real or imaginary faults in the animals submitted to them.

At every turn, the devout Jew was made to pay for his piety, and the Sadducean priesthood richly profited from the proceeds. It was bad enough that those greedy of gain should be in the Temple at all. What was worse was that their market had been set up in the Court of the Gentiles, the only part of the Temple to which a Gentile seeking to know God was allowed to enter. But no Gentile could find God in this raucous, babble of voices. This was a grievous thing in the eyes of Jesus, Who was set forth from the outset as "a light to lighten the Gentiles." (Compare Luke 2:32; Isaiah 42:6; 49:6) It was a crime that Israel, "a kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:6), and, therefore, God's light-bearer, should withhold the light from the stumbling Gentile.

These desecrations, mingling with the noise of literally hundreds of animals, driven through the seething mass of worshippers, must have made up a scene of pandemonium.

It was a very purposeful Jesus, therefore, who came to the Temple on this occasion. His scourge of small cords, His voice of authority and His commanding presence, were enough to send the animals and their owners scurrying. He flung tables aside, scattering piles of money. There were also large quantities of birds. These, the poor people's offerings, were, of course, in baskets and cages. Owners were bidden to

take them away. In His righteous indignation at this flagrant abuse of the sanctity of the Temple and the laws of sacrifice, Jesus declared His position as the Son of God:

*“...stop making My Father’s house a house of merchandise.”  
John 2:16*

He was asserting His God-given authority in His Father’s house.

The Law of Moses commanded all Israelites that at Passover “...there shall be no leaven found in your houses...” (Exodus 12:19). This is an instruction, which, in every generation, has been generalized and symbolized among the Jews to mean the removal of all forms of dirt and corruption. So, always, just before Passover, Jews everywhere spring cleaned their houses. This custom continues to this day among many Orthodox Jews. Before the Passover celebration begins, after a formal search of the house (foreshadowing the fulfilment of Zephaniah 1:12), one small heap of dust, deliberately left, is swept up and thrown out, and then the feast begins.

At this time, then, what the Jews were doing in their own homes, Jesus proceeded to do in His Father’s house, the Temple. Within this framework, we see an added significance in the use of the word, “found,” by John. (John 2:14)

## **Bible Echo and Fulfillment**

In this abrupt and dramatic appearance in the Temple, effectively announcing the formal beginning of Jesus’ public ministry in Jerusalem, we find an echo and fulfilment from Malachi, and an echo and foreshadowing relating to one of the Psalms.

Any Jew present that day in the Temple, who was familiar with the Scriptures, should have recognized the sign that was taking place before them. John the Baptist was certainly a well known public figure, who had openly proclaimed his position as the herald and had announced the arrival of the Messiah. Could anyone who witnessed that scene that day, and who was looking for fulfilment regarding the coming of the Messiah, have not seen the fulfilment of Malachi 3:1:

*“Behold, I am going to send my messenger and He will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His Temple...”*

And in the overturning of the tables, and in the scattering of the money, further echo from Malachi emerges:

*“...He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness.” Malachi 3:3*

In Jesus’ anger over these conditions in the house of God, an echo from Psalm 69 is unmistakable:

*“For zeal for Thy house has consumed Me...”Psalm 69:9*

In this same Psalm 69, we see also significance in Jesus driving the animals for sacrifice out of the Temple. Without these, what offering could the people of Israel bring? The answer is in Psalm 69, which presents David as a figure of Christ foreshadowing the sacrifice of Jesus. Attention is drawn in particular to verse 29:

*“But I am afflicted and in pain; may Thy salvation, oh God, set me securely on high.”*

Jesus was to be the ultimate sacrifice. From that day in the Temple forward, Jesus was as good as crucified. The Chief Priests would see to that. Following these events in the Temple, Jesus performed many signs in Jerusalem and many believed in His name (John 2:23).

Jesus gave abundant evidence of His authority to those who had eyes to see, and while the great majority of the people living in and around the city were too greatly dominated by the priests to acknowledge Him, a few precious friendships were probably formed in those early days. Many believed because they saw His works, but it was a superficial acknowledgment of His power, and that is never the best reason for following Christ. Jesus, who knew all men, did not “entrust Himself to them,” (John 2:24). He knew that their allegiance had its source in wonder, not in belief, and He acted towards them accordingly. Jesus would soon prepare to leave Jerusalem.

## Nicodemus

Before He did so, however, an eminent Pharisee, Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to see Him secretly. The Sanhedrin had three leading members: Its president, called the teacher of the law; a vice-president, called the father of the house of the

law; and a second vice-president, called the wise one. It might be inferred from the words of Jesus during this discourse with Nicodemus, that this night visitor filled the first of these offices:

*“...Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not understand these things?” John 3:10*

If this is the case, it would have caused a great sensation in Jerusalem, if it became known that such an important and influential religious teacher had chosen to consult this new Prophet from Galilee. Nicodemus immediately acknowledged Jesus as a teacher and that God must be with Him in order for Him to accomplish the miracles He was performing. Jesus replied to Nicodemus that God must be with everyone who has a desire to be saved:

*“...Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.” John 3:5*

Jesus then goes on to tell him that “no one has ascended into heaven.” Jesus then predicts His own crucifixion, “the Son of Man must be lifted up,” (Echo of Moses and the serpent raised on a pole, Numbers 21:9). Only through the change, represented in the baptism, and belief in Jesus, could man have eternal life. (John 3:13-15) Nicodemus obviously came to realize this message ultimately and did believe because he was personally involved with those attending Jesus body following the crucifixion (John 19:39).

## A Summary

If we consider these three events recorded by John, the miracle at Cana, Jesus appearance in the Temple, and the visit by Nicodemus, we see an overall theme presented and discover the reason that John included them in his record in this manner. We see the necessity for recognising the need for repentance followed by a change in nature through conversion into Christ. This is symbolized by cleansing through baptism, and through the gracious Spirit of God, into the birth, death and resurrection of Christ. This is a fundamental principle of the good news of God’s Word presented throughout the New Testament, and it the principle is all signified by John at the beginning of his Gospel.

Shortly after this, Jesus departed from Jerusalem into Judea, where He spent time with His disciples. John describes how they and John the Baptist were conducting

baptisms during that period. The Gospel writer confirms the Baptist's acknowledgment of Christ's position and his own necessary decline. (John 3:22-36)

## LESSONS FOR US

In these very early days in His ministry, Jesus showed to us the basic elements required that we might find salvation in Him. We must recognize the need for personal change. We are all sinners; we all need to repent and understand that we can only be changed through Him. Through Jesus we can be cleansed of the results of our sinfulness. But we cannot do it ourselves. It is dependent upon God's grace and our participation in Christ's sacrifice. In order to partake in this, we must desire to forsake our sinful ways, to be reborn spiritually. In our repentance, we symbolically share in His life, death and resurrection through the waters of baptism and the Spirit of God.

*“Therefore, we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; For He who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,” Romans 6: 4-8*

## Test Yourself

1. What was the significance of the miracle performed by Jesus of turning water into wine at the marriage feast?
2. Why did Jesus drive out those changing money and selling animals in the Temple?
3. What was the overall significance of these three events of the miracle, the cleansing of the Temple and the visit by Nicodemus as recorded by John?