

John 2:12 – 3:4

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~ Our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God is moving so fast towards Jerusalem with Jesus that it has become difficult to keep pace with Him. I am sure we have all left many things behind attempting to follow His chariot. In our previous report, Jesus turned water into wine - which should have left your head swimming. The spiritual lesson of the wedding in Canaan is axiomatic to discernment in Holy Writ; and it has nothing in the world to do with alcohol. We didn't meet the bride and we didn't see a dress and we never got the name or relationship of the groom, either. No, what we witnessed were six empty waterpots that had been beaten and battered and covered up in the corner. The Lord took these empty, unattractive waterpots, had them filled with water, and then He used them to bring the wine of joy to these wedding guests. That's the way the Lord Jesus Christ can use you and me - when we submit completely and wholly to Him - and that's the only way He can or will use us, by the way. He fills us with the Water of the Word; then He ladles it out to others....

II

12 After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days.

~ This appears to be in the time frame when His hometown would not accept Him or Mary when they returned. They resented Jesus and they wanted to kill Him. They viewed Him as a bastard. So, when He went into the synagogue and taught a sermon from Isaiah, the people went into a stark-raving rage. They certainly would have destroyed Jesus that day if it had been possible. From that moment on, they hated Him even more than they had previously. So, He left and went to Capernaum where He continued His three-year earthly ministry....

13 And the Jews' Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem,

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~ Notice John labels this the “Jew’s Passover.” This is no longer the Lord’s – this is the Jew’s Passover; and it’s nothing in the world but a meaningless religious ritual they went through. I think most of them semi-resented having to go through the motions. The One of which the Passover speaks has now come and Christ, our Passover, is offered for us - but they didn't believe any of that. This is the beginning of His public ministry. That is the note on which it started. I think Jesus had traveled to Jerusalem every year since He was a child. All males were required to go up to Jerusalem three times each year; Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. John has us dialed into the calendar as well as the geography in this Gospel account. This is also the first of two times the Lord Jesus cleanses the temple....

14 And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting:

~ It sounds benign at face value, but what they were doing was making religion cheap. If you came into the temple with foreign money, it wasn't worth anywhere near their currency in exchange. If you were the outsider, you always got the bad end of the deal in a money conversion transaction down at the temple. The money changers were there, actually, for the convenience of the worshippers buying sacrificial animals. That was big business. They changed large denominations into much smaller amounts of money; thereby making religion not only easy, but it only came at a cost - which rendered it of no meaningful value. You cannot pay for your salvation, friends. You have nothing to offer God. Whatever you have, He doesn't want it, doesn't need it and, by the way, it's already His anyways.

Alright, this safari does not over-emphasize money; I think any regular reader will acknowledge that. This expedition is not standing on a social media street corner begging for money; but there's something worse and more intolerable than doing that. Many people treat the cause of Christ so extremely cheaply that a proper, correct and sincere teacher will sometimes be brought to a sheer panic by what he sees; and devastation of faith can occur in some cases. Oh, I realize God provides for this ministry, so all I ever ask from you dear readers is that you pray for this so-called safari.

However, I urge you to flip over and read James chapter two at verse sixteen right now, too; and then get back to this study.

Raising and selling sheep and oxen was not just some simple little living they were making in Israel – I'll grant them that. Raising sacrificial animals required tremendous time and resources. The problem was: this had become a religious racket. It's very easy for a church to slip into apostasy. Starting a religious fraud is easy for any reasonably educated and physically attractive man. This is one reason I do not condone any man who appears on television. I know that's extreme; well, pray about that. It's simple to make religion a very comfortable and easy lifestyle if you don't have the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ to preach. Preach anything outside of THAT Gospel and you will be highly successful; the problem is: you'll not be teaching the Bible properly, correctly and completely. Everything about Christianity is made hyper-comfortable and convenient today. Many are led astray, and I do mean many, many seemingly well-intentioned people. Most self-professing believers – and I do mean most – have an anemic view of God as far as the church is concerned. They absolutely do not realize Who the True and Living God is. They do not know Him; and He does not know them....

15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;

16 And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.

17 And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

18 Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?

19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

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20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?

~ Verse seventeen is Psalm sixty-nine; and that section of Scripture is quoted seventeen times in the New Testament - two more times in this Gospel. Verse nineteen says 'destroy this temple' - and the word is the same word for "untie" – it definitely refers to the human body. By the time we get to verse twenty, the Jews thought Jesus was out of His mind. Herod's Temple had been under construction for forty years and it was still expanding and thriving. Paul said, the holy place today is not a temple made with hands; but the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Well, God says He will raise it up; it's the same word that can mean 'wake up!' Naturally, we are looking now at the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of believers, also. We see the same thing in the waking up of Lazarus from the dead when Jesus raised him. Remember, to Lazarus, Jesus said, "come forth!" Jesus said to the young dead girl, "wake up, little lamb!" That's what it means when it says Jesus spake of the temple of the body. Even the disciples didn't catch this at this time....

21 But he spake of the temple of his body.

22 When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

23 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.

~ And verse twenty-two is three years later, which is interesting to me. Anyways, this brings us to His first public act recorded as He goes up to Jerusalem. I think we should read straight through the first part of the next chapter as we meet a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a.k.a. to our Spiritual Safari: Little Nikki. It seems wonderful that many believe on Jesus - but here's the problem: it's not wonderful because this isn't saving faith. This is

cheap, emotional, beneficiary belief. They were merely nodding in agreement when they saw the miracles that He did. They may have believed in Him, but He sure didn't believe in them. This is not genuine, saving faith. This is a disastrous danger amongst people who say they believe in Christ. What does Jesus really mean to you? Do you rest upon the facts of the Gospel to trust God? Many people want to call Him Lord, but they do not know Him as their Savior. These people saw Him perform miracles, so they were interested, and they believed. They had no choice but to believe - because they were looking right at Him. They may have been claiming Christ, but the Lord Jesus wasn't claiming them! This is something that should be an absolute alarm bell to believers today. Jesus knows all men and God knows all the bad things that are in the human heart – your heart – my heart – friend....

24 But Jesus did not believe in them, because he knew all men,

25 And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.



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

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.

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.

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?

~ The Lord Jesus didn't commit Himself under the mob of the multitude. That great company may have believed but this is the only man that comes

to Him, and it's done at night; as in, under cover of the darkness. Well, Jesus does commit Himself to this man, Nikki. Read from verse twenty-four of chapter two through to verse four of chapter three without the chapter break. This is one place the break is truly unfortunate. Nikki is singled out from the mob. Friends, the Lord Jesus knows who is genuine and who is not.

So, to get fully acquainted with Nikki, because he has been so elusive in our other Gospels, let's look at four things that are said about him. First, Nikki was a man amongst the Pharisees. The Pharisees were the outstanding ranks of society in Israel at this time. They believed in the inspiration of the Old Testament; they believed in the coming of a Messiah; they believed in miracles, and they believed in the resurrection.

Further, old man Nicodemus wore three masks, and this reflects modern man in a crystal-clear way. Nicodemus was a man of the Pharisees when he met with the assembly. When he was in their midst, he was one of them. I think his guard would have been down at those meetings. Nicodemus, walking down the street with his prayer shawl and phylacteries, would have been one to get out of the way of. Here comes an outstanding man and religious ruler amongst the people.

But when he turned that corner and went into his house at the end of the day, he was just plain little old Nikki, you know. Many men live like that, friends. We can see before us now comes the businessman who is an officer in the corporation. People move out of his way in the hall, and they approach him with kid gloves. They really do not know this man. His office buddies think they do but they don't know him at all.

We follow this man as he leaves the office after dealing with several people, and he meets the boys for lunch. The minute he sits down at that table he is a different person altogether. They aren't calling him mister so and so now – he's just plain little Nikki, too. Here we see him with a whole new attitude and in an entirely new relationship. Well, they ask about business and how it's going; you know, they indirectly ask how much

money you're making? Business, somehow, always happens to be great in this context and in this conversational setting.

Later that afternoon he heads on home. He sees the family looming in the headlights as he walks through the door and a million things are happening around the house as he drops in his favorite chair. Now, we see yet another completely different man. Wife welcomes him home to an atmosphere of dejection and stress. This man has no masks he can wear now because they will see through it. He's no longer the respected high-power businessman or the man at the club – he's just plain old ordinary Nikki again. The wife comes in and asks about business – of course, now he says it's rotten! She's very cold but he knows all her suicides are fakes. This is a terrible, awful, frightful picture to come home to, my friend.

Nicodemus came to the Lord Jesus wearing a mask. Nikki came and said, "Rabbi, we know...." The "we" was the Pharisees, and that's the mask he tried to stay behind. Nicodemus gives Jesus a genuine compliment here, too, in verse two. This Nikki is no hypocrite, by any means. The Pharisee's had all discussed this privately and they knew Jesus was a proper teacher Who had been sent by God. The problem was: they just didn't like those facts - so, they rejected Him.

Now, I believe that Nicodemus came to talk about the Kingdom of God because the Pharisees wanted to establish it in Israel at that time, you will recall. They wanted to throw off the yoke of Rome and that was their only objective. The Pharisees had no way of doing it; but here comes Jesus with these multitudes following Him and, quite frankly, they want to get with Him! These people want to hitch their rickety little wagon to His Star! At first, Nikki comes in a condescending manner without even knowing it. Nicodemus had to acknowledge the miracles that he had seen himself. Nobody doubted the miracles in that day. It takes a modern theologian two thousand years removed from Israel to deny the miracles.

Notice that Jesus almost interrupts Nikki when Nicodemus asks about the Kingdom of God and Jesus tells him he can't even SEE that Kingdom unless he is born again. Nicodemus is religious to his fingertips. I think that makes

real the importance of Jesus saying he must be born again! We see Nicodemus can't think of anything except the physical birth. That statement makes Nicodemus immediately drop the mask of condescension. Well, Jesus was talking about a spiritual re-birth, of course, but Nikki is spiritually dead, having not been yet born again, and having no spiritual capacity whatsoever – so Nikki has no idea what Jesus is talking about. Well, we're just going to leave it at that in this safari report. In the next leg of our expedition, we'll examine exactly what it means to be born again of water and of the spirit ~

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