

# **The Life and Teachings of JESUS CHRIST**

by Myer Pearlman

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## **CHAPTER II - THE YEAR OF BEGINNINGS**

It is no wonder that men have been prone to see the workings of Providence in the rise of Christianity. No religion ever had had a lowlier origin, and none seemed less likely to survive. Buddha was a prince by birth; Laotze was a court librarian; Confucius was a scholar and politician; Mohammed became the ruler of a race. But JESUS was a workingman, reared in a hamlet on the frontier of civilization, and the years of His ministry were so brief and obscure that none save a few peasants remembered them.

Even a generation after His death, His name was known only to a scattered handful of people, and these of the most despised of earth. How from such beginnings a movement could grow till it dominated half the world is perhaps inexplicable on rational grounds. No matter how painstakingly one may search the sources, and how ingeniously one may interpret the findings, in the end one must confess that the circumstances surrounding the triumph of Christianity were so complex and involved and subtly linked together as to defy complete analysis. -- Lewis Browne, Jewish author.

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### I. THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

*"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.*

*But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."* (Matthew 3:1-12)

*"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost."* (Mark 1:1-8)

*"Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.*

*Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.*

*And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not; John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable. And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people. But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison." (Luke 3:1-20).*

While JESUS was quietly working in Nazareth, awaiting His summons to His great work, John the Baptist was led by GOD to go forth and begin his work as the forerunner of the Messiah. This work may be briefly described as the promotion of a spiritual awakening in Palestine as a preparation for the work of the Messiah.

John's own words contain illustrations that describe his mission in relation to CHRIST. **"The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."** He was a herald ("voice") proclaiming the approach of the King. John's mission was to introduce to the nation as their Messiah a notable Stranger from Galilee -- JESUS of Nazareth. Since John was honored as a prophet throughout the land, his testimony became a strong confirmation of the claims of CHRIST. **"And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things."** (Matthew 21:23-27)

He was a spiritual road maker whose work was to prepare the way before the Lord. In those days before a king visited a town, engineers would be occupied days ahead of time repairing the roads over which he was to travel. So John, by his preaching of repentance, his denunciation of the wicked and formal, and his comfort of the repentant, prepared the spiritual roads for the Messiah.

Dressed like one of the ancient prophets, John went forth calling upon people to repent, for the kingdom of Heaven was at hand. GOD was about to introduce a new manifestation of His government among men; therefore all who wished to have part in that new order must prepare. They must confess their sins, and publicly acknowledge such confession by the outward sign of being baptized in water. Just as a mother bathes her children before the coming of some distinguished guest, so John the Baptist called upon the people to purify themselves before coming of Israel's King. No one was excepted. Even the scribes and the Pharisees, the spiritual leaders of the people, must humble themselves and repent. It would be vain for them to boast of natural descent from Abraham, or rely on mere outward righteousness -- none of these things would avail for entrance into GOD's kingdom.

Submitting to John's baptism was an act of humiliation, equivalent to coming to the "mourner's bench" of our days. When Gentiles became converts to the Jewish religion, they were immersed in water, called the Mikvah. This was done to all proselytes to Judaism to show that they were cleansed from the defilements of heathenism. By insisting that the penitents be baptized in water, John was placing the Jews on the same level as the heathen, and asserting that in their present condition they were not fit to enter the kingdom of GOD.

His success was instantaneous and widespread. From over all the land came the humble followers of Jehovah who had been praying and waiting for the kingdom, and penitent sinners, among whom were publicans and harlots. But the religious leaders refused to submit to John's baptism, and probably denounced it as "emotionalism" and "fanaticism."

**"And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? . . . For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him"** (Matthew 21:23, 32).

In the plan of GOD, John's ministry was not destined to last very long: **"For John was not yet cast into prison. Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. 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 answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. 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. He must increase, but I must decrease"** (John 3:25-30).

John knew that his ministry was to be short-lived. One day some of his converts complained that the preacher from Nazareth was eclipsing him. It was then that John described the temporary nature of his mission. In those days there was a person called the **"Friend of the Bridegroom,"** whose office was to arrange the engagement and wedding between two young people. In like manner, said the Baptist, his mission was to bring together the bride (Israel) and the Bridegroom (the Messiah). After that, his work was done. **"He must increase, but I must decrease."** From the very beginning of his ministry John the Baptist took this lowly place, exhorting the people to

look for the coming of another mightier than he, who would baptize them, not with water, but with the HOLY SPIRIT. John could not give the people a spiritual experience; he must leave that to the Messiah.

## II. THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

**"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:13-17).**

**"And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Mark 1:9-11)**

**"Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." (Luke 3:21, 22)**

About six months later, when John's revival was at its height, the Lord JESUS felt the divine summons to go forth to His life work. Leaving Nazareth, He went to the place where John was ministering and requested water baptism at his hands. John, with an instinctive feeling that this was the Holy One who needed no baptism, refused. But JESUS insisted, explaining that it was part of His duty.

\*\*\* NOTE: JESUS and John were cousins, so the identity of JESUS as the promised Messiah was by no means a surprise to him. He was well aware of the prophecies that the angel brought to his father Zacharias and to Mary.

Since JESUS needed no repentance why did He submit to John's baptism? First, as an act of obedience and duty. He submitted to the rite as an act of duty called forth by His identification with the chosen people. He desired to make a public acceptance of the fact that the kingdom of Heaven was at hand, and that He welcomed it. When John refused to baptize Him He said, ". . . **suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.**" (Matthew 3:15) One scholar has expounded these words as follows: "Come now, this is how we should fulfill all our duty toward GOD."

Read the accounts of Ezra's and Daniel's intercession for the Jews.

***"And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments, Which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their***

*abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness. Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever. And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this; Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping? O Lord God of Israel, thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day: behold, we are before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this."* (Ezra 9:10-15)

*"And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:*

*And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.*

*O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him; Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him. And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth. Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice. And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly.*

*O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called*

*by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name."* (Daniel 9:3-19).

These holy men use the pronoun "we" and confess sins which they personally have not committed. And why? In order to identify themselves with the people whom they desired to lead to GOD. For the same reason Messiah, the perfect Israelite, identified Himself with His people **"to redeem them that were under the law."** (Galatians 4:5). **"Now when ALL THE PEOPLE were baptized, it came to pass, that JESUS ALSO being baptized . . ."** (Luke 3:21). JESUS' submission to John's baptism was a foreshadowing of the mystery of the atonement expressed in the words, **"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."** (II Corinthians 5:21).

### III. THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

*"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him"* (Matthew 4:1-11).

*"And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him."* (Mark 1:12, 13)

*"And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered. And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any*

*time thou dash thy foot against a stone. And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season."* (Luke 4:1-13).

Could the Divine One be tempted? Yes. He had a human soul to be tempted and a human body to suffer hunger and weariness. "He had taken the armor of human flesh for battle and not for idleness." He did not face temptation as Son of GOD (for GOD cannot be tempted), but as Son of man, bearing a perfect human nature. He "**was in all points tempted like as we are.**" (Hebrews 4:15).

**"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."** In the account of the temptation we see two invisible agents prepare for a great conflict: the Spirit of GOD leads the way to the place of temptation, the evil spirit tempts. Thus we see that the temptation was in the purpose of GOD. What was the purpose?

First, it was fitting that the CHRIST should begin His ministry with a decisive victory over Satan, whose works He had come to destroy: "**He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil:** (1 John 3:8). His mission was to finally drive Satan from earth as GOD had driven him from Heaven.

Comments S.D. Gordon:

"Here the Spirit proves Himself a keen strategist. He drives hard at the enemy. A decided victory over the chief at the start would demoralize all the forces. It would be decisive of the whole conflict and prophetic of its final outcome. Every demon possessing a man on earth heard of his chief's rout that day, and knew of his own utter defeat in that of his chief. Having gotten the chief devil on the run, JESUS put to flight every sub-devil."

Again, the Lord JESUS was anointed with the HOLY SPIRIT for a spiritual ministry to break Satan's hold over men. His work was to bind the strong man and spoil his house. (Matthew 12:29). Satan was dismayed, for he saw his kingdom shaking. If he could only persuade CHRIST to shift His ministry from the plane of the spiritual to the natural, then he would be safe. If he could only tempt Him to leave the spiritual platform for a political one, then His failure and ruin were certain.

This last thought suggests another purpose for CHRIST's temptation, connected with the political situation of His time. The popular conception of the Messiah had been colored by the Jews' natural hopes. Chafing under Roman rule, they were looking for a Messiah who should lead their armies against the hated foreigner.

Basil Matthews makes the following statements:

"It has been said that the Jewish nation in JESUS' time was tingling with the most vehement nationalism the world has ever seen, and that nationalism was in conflict with the greatest imperialism the world has ever known; that in the hundred years beginning in 63 B.C. when Pompey slew 12,000 Jews at the sack of Jerusalem and ending with JESUS' death, fully 200,000



Jews were slain by the Romans in putting down nationalistic revolts.

Therefore our Lord had to decide what kind of Messiah He would be. Should He be a popular Messiah or a rejected Messiah? Should He preach peace with GOD or war with Rome? Should He triumph by the sword or by the cross? Should He use worldly means or spiritual means? Should He be led by the Spirit of GOD or by the spirit of the age? Should He compromise with the nation or be separate from it? Should He use His power for Himself and in a sensational way, or should He use it exclusively for the relief of suffering humanity? These were the questions that our Lord settled in the wilderness in the face of Satanic suggestion.

### **JESUS IS TEMPTED TO USE HIS POWER SELFISHLY**

Uplifted in prayer and meditation, JESUS was without food for forty days. He began to feel the pinch of hunger. The Tempter chose this moment of weakness to appeal to a strong physical appetite. His purpose was to cause JESUS to satisfy His appetite in a manner unworthy of Him. Said Satan in effect, How foolish for you, the Son of GOD, to starve when you have the power to help yourself. You must look out for yourself in this world and save yourself as much suffering and inconvenience as possible.

CHRIST never worked one miracle for Himself; always for others. "**He saved others, himself he cannot save,**" sneered the rulers. They were right. CHRIST came to save others, not Himself. This was the rule of His life.

"**It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.**" The truth contained in the verse He quoted is as follows: As Son of GOD He must maintain perfect trust in His Father. As long as He is in GOD's will, He will be kept alive, whether or not any food is in sight. He has GOD's promise to that effect. As Son of Man He must share the burdens of His brethren. He cannot provide Himself a way of escape from temptation and suffering not open to them, for that would be to reverse the purpose for which He came into the world. He has come to bear men's burdens; should He begin by repudiating them? Satan said, "**If thou be the Son of God.**" JESUS answered, "**Man shall not live . . .**" He had come to take His place as a MAN for man.

### **JESUS IS TEMPTED TO FANATICISM**

Realizing his inability to trip One so completely the master of His bodily appetites, the devil tried another line of attack. Taking Him to the pinnacle of the temple, the Tempter as much as said, If you are the Son of GOD, you have a right to test His power. Throw yourself from the pinnacle of the temple. GOD is obligated to protect you, for it is written, "**He shall give his angels charge over thee.**" How the crowd will marvel! The leaders will fall at your feet, for they are looking for a sign from Heaven: "**The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven.**" (Matthew 16:1). Besides, you will stand in well with the priesthood by adding prestige to the temple and its ministry.

JESUS was tempted to ask GOD to work a miracle to save Him from a peril that could be avoided by natural means. He was tempted to take risks that are unlawful on the pretense that He

was living up to His faith.

**"It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."** Satan quoted Scriptures with the wrong motive -- to destroy JESUS; and also in the wrong way, without mentioning the condition attached to the fulfillment of the promise. He also failed to quote the verse following: **"For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."** (Psalm 91:11,12) JESUS corrected the quotation by adding another. By wrenching one verse from its context, we may prove almost anything; but Scripture MUST be compared with Scripture. The promise mentioned by Satan is for those who are in the path of duty. If GOD had commanded JESUS to leap from the pinnacle, then His act would have been in faith; but since GOD had not asked Him to do so, it would have been presumption.

### **JESUS IS TEMPTED TO COMPROMISE**

CHRIST had stood firm in the realms of filial trust and submission. Satan now attempted to pervert the desire for world dominion which had been promised to CHRIST. He could not touch Him as a Son; he would spoil Him as a King. Satan said in effect: Behold those powerful kingdoms with their glory and wealth; they can be yours without hardship or suffering. Why should we be enemies? Let us work together. Of course, you will meet me half way and use some of my methods. You should not antagonize people by too difficult conditions of entrance into the kingdom: **"Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? . . . From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him"** (John 6:60, 66); be compassionate on human nature and adapt yourself to their infirmities. Be spiritual of course, but not too spiritual. Give them the kind of king they want, and the world will be yours: **"When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone. . . . Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled"** (John 6:15, 26). The means are not so important after all; the end will justify the means.

This temptation included a suggestion that JESUS wage war to deliver His people -- a method that would have appealed to multitudes of fanatically patriotic Jews. About three miles from Nazareth was the town of Sepphoris, headquarters of the Zealots, Palestine's fierce Nationalist Party. When JESUS was about twelve years of age, Judas the Galilean unfurled the flag of revolt, raised the war cry, "No king but Jehovah," and gathered 10,000 youths under his banner. The revolt was quickly crushed by the Romans. From Nazareth, JESUS saw the rebellious city go up in flames; He may have seen thousands of young Jews in chains, some destined for the cross, others for captivity.

JESUS knew that this was not GOD's way of establishing the kingdom. What He once said to Peter was His message for all Jews -- **"All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."** Tempted to take this short cut to power, He decided to be a Saviour and not a destroyer. **"For the Son of man is come not to destroy men's lives, but to save them"** (Luke 9:56). Consider this in light of John 10:8, 10, in which JESUS contrasts Himself with false Messiahs: **"All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. . . . The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might**

**have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."**

To this temptation JESUS answered, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy GOD, and him only shalt thou serve." Every compromise with the standards of righteousness is, in essence, a worshipping of Satan.

"**And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee.**" He left the wilderness with the determination to do GOD's will, even though it was to lead to the cross.

#### **IV. THE FIRST DISCIPLES**

*"Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!"*

*And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.*

*The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." (John 1:35-51)*

John the Baptist never forgot that his mission was to point men to the Messiah. One day when he saw CHRIST passing, he said to two of his converts, "**Behold the Lamb of God.**" The two disciples, Andrew and John, heard these words, and followed CHRIST. Andrew then led his brother Peter to the Messiah, and John probably brought his brother James. Later CHRIST called Philip, who led Nathanael to the CHRIST. Some time afterward the Lord JESUS gave a special call to the first four -- Peter, Andrew, James, and John.

We may note stages in the history of the apostles fellowship with CHRIST: at first they were simple believers in Him and occasional companions on special occasions; in the second stage they were commanded to leave their occupations and give their entire time to the ministry;

finally, twelve of them were called to be apostles, the future leaders of the church.

John's Gospel is a compilation of testimonies, miracles and discourses pointing to the Deity of CHRIST. He tells of CHRIST's first meeting with these men to assure us that from the beginning they were impressed with the divine quality of His personality.

John was probably the only man who lost a crowd because the people believed what he preached.

The first day of JESUS' public ministry - men sought Him -- The second day - He became the Seeker.

## V. THE FIRST MIRACLE

*"And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.*

*Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him."* (John 2:1-11)

A short time later the Lord was present at a marriage feast in Cana. This incident reveals the sociable disposition of the Lord; He was no solitary hermit working out His own salvation, but lived among men, in order to save and bless them, and sanctify with His presence their home life and social gatherings. In the midst of the festivities the wine failed, and there was not enough to go round. The Lord then turned six large vessels of water into wine, and thus prevented what would have been a disgrace to the master of the feast and a marring of the joy of the occasion. The main purpose for the recording of this incident was to show that this first manifestation of the Lord's miraculous power confirmed the faith of His disciples in His divine mission.

He **"manifested forth his glory (divine character); and his disciples believed on him."**

Writes Charles Fiske:

We must live close enough to CHRIST and long enough with Him to know Him for what He is. Living with Him, we find that His earthly life was a supernatural creative element within the old world of sin and death, and therefore a miraculous intervention upon the natural development of history and life.

## THE FIRST CLASH WITH THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS

*"And the Jews? passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: 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; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body. 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." (John 2:13-22)*

While attending the passover at Jerusalem, the Lord noticed that the temple, the house of His Father, was being profaned by the presence of merchants and money changers, who were turning the holy place into a market place. Fired by holy zeal, He drove them from the temple. When asked by the priests for a sign of His authority, He uttered the words that were later used against Him in His trial -- **"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."**

As the place of the divine indwelling, His body was a true temple, greater indeed, than the literal temple in Jerusalem: **"But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple"** (Matthew 12:6). To kill Him would be to destroy GOD's true temple.

## INTERVIEW WITH A JEWISH SCHOLAR

**"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. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man"** (John 2:23-25)

*"There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: 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. 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. 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?"*

*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. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 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 every one that is born of the Spirit.*

*Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of*

*heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 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. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (John 3:1-21).*

Many Jews ask: "If JESUS was the Messiah, why is it that our leaders and scholars did not accept Him?" The answer is suggested in the account of CHRIST's conversation with Nicodemus, from which we learn that CHRIST made an impression on some of the educated people and leaders of Jerusalem, as well as upon the unlettered people of Galilee. Nicodemus' use of the pronoun "we" leads us to the conclusion that he came as a representative of a group of thoughtful leaders who were ready to consider the claims of JESUS, whose preaching and miracles, in their estimation, marked Him as a divinely sent teacher. But why did not these rulers take their stand openly for Him? Because they feared, John tells us, **"lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God"** (John 12:42, 43).

A few weeks after CHRIST's departure from this world, not only thousands of the common people believed on Him, but also a group of priests: **"And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith"** (Acts 6:7) and a number of the Pharisees, of which party Nicodemus could have been a member: "But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses" (Acts 15:5).

This incident reveals also two misconceptions of Jewish scholars of the day in relation to the Messiah and the kingdom. They imagined that it was possible to join His kingdom, as one joins a cause; but JESUS taught Nicodemus that men must be born into GOD's kingdom. They thought that the Messiah must from the first be lifted up -- exalted -- like an earthly monarch; but the Lord taught that the Messiah, the Son of Man, must be lifted up, like the serpent in the wilderness, in order to bring healing to those dying from the sting of sin.

## **VIII. THE AWAKENING OF SAMARIA**

*"And he must needs go through Samaria. 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. 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. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) 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. 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. 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? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: 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. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.*

*The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. 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. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.*

*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? The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto him. In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. 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. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.*

*And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. And many more believed because of his own word; 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" (John 4:4-42).*

JESUS left Jerusalem because His miracles were attracting the wrong kind of people -- sensation mongers and curiosity seekers: "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. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man"** (John 2:23-25).

Also because the Pharisees had fomented a quarrel between His disciples and those of John the Baptist. Therefore He left for Galilee. He could not proclaim His Messiahship to a people who did not understand the nature of His ministry. On His way He passed through Samaria, where He had the memorable conversation with the Samaritan woman, that resulted in her conversion, and the turning of an entire city to GOD.

His conversation with this woman is a fine illustration of His spiritual program. He overcomes the barriers of nationality and social conventions, shows the woman her need, and tells of the living water that satisfies the soul. In response to her eager petition for the water, He reveals Himself to her as Messiah and she becomes the witness to her people.

When the woman left the presence of CHRIST to enter into her city, she became like Philip who said to Nathaniel, "**We have found Him**". She said, "**Come see a man that told me all things -- Is this not the Christ?**" JESUS did not have to say to this woman, "**Ye must be born again,**" -- she knew it.

**SO ENDS THE FIRST YEAR OF JESUS' PUBLIC MINISTRY.**

~ end of chapter 2 ~

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