

## The Gospels in Quadraphonic Stereo

THE BULK OF OUR MATERIAL IS BY

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### Section 2

## From Launch of Ministry up to Mount of Transfiguration

### SECTION 2.1

#### JESUS MAKES HIS FIRST DISCIPLES AND UP TO NICODEMUS

#### JESUS MAKES HIS FIRST DISCIPLES

(Bethany Beyond Jordan, Spring A.D. 27.)

<sup>D</sup> **John I. 35–51.**

**35** Again the next day [John's direct testimony bore fruit on the second day] **John was standing, with two of his disciples** [An audience of two. A small field; but a large harvest]; **36 and he looked** [Gazed intently. The word is used at Mark xiv. 67; Luke xxii. 61 Mark x. 21, 27. John looked searchingly at that face, which, so far as any record shows, he was never to see on earth again. The more intently we look upon Jesus, the more powerfully we proclaim him] **upon Jesus as he walked** [This detail seems to be introduced to show that the Baptist did not stop Jesus and enter into familiar conversation with him. The witness of John was wholly that of an inspired, unbiased prophet, and not that of a friend or a familiar acquaintance], **and said, Behold the Lamb of God!** [John repeats this testimony. He might have chosen another message, but preferred this one. Paul also had but one theme—I. Cor. ii. 2; Gal. vi. 14.] **37 And the two disciples** [Andrew and probably John, the writer of this Gospel. The following are indications that it was John: 1. From this time on he speaks as an eye-witness. 2. We have no other account in his Gospel on his call to discipleship. 3. On seven other occasions in this Gospel he withholds his name—John xiii. 23; xix. 26, 35; xx. 2; xxi. 7, 20, 24] **heard him speak, they followed Jesus.** [Here is the fountainhead of Christianity, for Christianity is following Jesus.] **38 And Jesus turned, and beheld them following, and said unto them, What do you seek?** [They doubtless felt such awe and reverence for the person of Jesus as would make them hesitate to address him. Hence Jesus himself opens the way for conversation with himself.] **And they said unto him, Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Teacher)** [By the way in which John explains Jewish words and customs, it becomes apparent that his Gospel was written for Gentiles as well as for Jews. Some take these explanations as evidence that John's Gospel was written after the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem. They are indeed a slight evidence of this, for it is more expedient to explain a custom which has ceased to exist than one which survives to explain itself], **where are you staying? 39 He said, Come, and you shall see.** [The fitting invitation of him who says: "Seek, and ye shall find."] **They came therefore and saw where he was staying; and they remained with him that day: it was about the tenth hour.** [It being a crisis in his life, John remembered the very hour. If John reckoned time according to the Jewish method, it was about 4 P.M. If according to the Roman method, it was 10 A.M. We are inclined to accept the latter as correct.] **40 One of the two that heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He found first** [before he did anything else] **his own brother Simon** [The word "own" is here coupled with "brother" to show that Simon was not a mere

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<sup>1</sup> McGarvey, J. W. (1999). The four-fold Gospel. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

relative (as the word “brother” might mean), but it was literally Andrew’s brother] **and said unto him, We have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, Christ).** [“Messiah” is Hebrew, “Christ” is Greek, “Anointed” is English. Jesus is the anointed of God. In finding him, Andrew had made the greatest discovery which it is possible for a man to make.] **42 He brought him unto Jesus.** [Thus Andrew has in a sense the honor of being the first Christian evangelist.] **Jesus looked upon him, and said, you are Simon [this name means “hearing”] the son of John: you shall be called Cephas (which is by interpretation, Peter).** [Cephas is Hebrew, Peter is Greek, stone is English. It means a mass of rock detached from the bed-rock or strata on which the earth rests. The future tense, “you shall be,” indicates that Peter was to win his name. It is given prophetically to describe the stability to which the then weak and vacillating Simon should attain.] **43 The following day he wanted to go forth into Galilee, and found Philip** [In the synoptists, Philip is a mere name in the apostolic list. Through John we gain some acquaintance with him—vi. 5; xii. 21; xiv. 8]: **and Jesus saith unto him, Follow me.** [The Lord’s usual invitation to discipleship—Matt. viii. 22; ix. 9; xix. 21; Mark ii. 14; x. 21; Luke v. 27; ix. 59; John xxi. 19.] **44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida** [Bethsaida of Galilee, on the northwestern shore of the Lake of Galilee. It was a wicked place—Matt. xi. 21], **of the city of Andrew and Peter.** [It appears that Peter afterward removed to Capernaum—Mark i. 29.] **45 Philip found Nathanael** [Nathanael is commonly identified with Bartholomew for the following reasons: 1. The name Bartholomew is only a patronymic, and hence its bearer would be likely to have an additional name. (Compare Matt. xvi. 17; Acts iv. 36.) 2. John never mentions Bartholomew, and the Synoptists never mention Nathanael, though John mentions him among apostles at the beginning and at the close of Christ’s ministry. 3. The Synoptists, in their list of apostles, invariably place Philip next to Bartholomew, and show a tendency to place brothers and friends together. 4. All the other disciples mentioned in this chapter become apostles, and none are so highly commended as Nathanael. 5. Bartholomew is connected with Matthew in the list at Acts i. 13, and the names Matthew and Nathanael both mean the same, and are equal to the Greek name Theodore, which means “gift of God.” But even so the identification is not perfect], **and said unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, wrote** [The whole law is full of symbolism which refers to Christ. The following references may be taken as more specific: Gen. xlix. 10; Num. xxiv. 17–19; Deut. xviii. 15. The passages in the prophets are too numerous to mention. For samples see Isa. vii. 14; ix. 6; lii. 13; liii. 1–12; Ezek. xxxiv. 23–31. In brief, Moses wrote of him as a Prophet, David as Lord, Isaiah as the Son of the virgin and suffering Servant, Jeremiah as the Branch, Ezekiel as the Shepherd, Malachi as the Messenger of the Covenant, Daniel as the Messiah. Christ is the hero and subject-matter of both Testaments—I. Pet. i. 11; John v. 39], **Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.** [Philip knew no better at this time, and John did not change the words of Philip to suit his later knowledge of Christ’s parentage. John has already declared the divine origin of Jesus (ver. 14), thereby agreeing with the detailed account of Matthew and Luke.] **46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?** [Because of their want of culture, their rude dialect, and their contact with Gentiles, the Galileans were lightly esteemed by the inhabitants of Judæa (John vii. 52). But here Nathanael, a Galilean himself, speaks slightly of Nazareth. The guileless Nathanael had no such jealousy, and the persistency with which the enemies of Jesus called him the Nazarene indicates that there was more than a local odium attached to the name Nazareth. Moreover, it was the first city to offer violence to Christ and was ready on one day’s acquaintance with his preaching to put him to death.] **Philip said to him, Come and see.** [So said afterward the woman of Samaria (John iv. 29). Investigation removes prejudice.] **47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and said of him, Behold an Israelite indeed** [An Israelite in spirit as well as in flesh (Rom. ii. 28, 29; ix. 16). Such a character contrasted sharply with the prevalent formalism and hypocrisy of that day], **in whom is no guile!** [Some see in the word guile a reference to Jacob. He was a man full of all subtlety and guile in his early years, but his experience at Peniel (Gen. xxxii. 22–31) changed

his nature and his name, and he became Israel, the spiritual father of all true Israelites.] **48 Nathanael said unto him, How do you know me?** [Nathanael's surprise clearly indicates that the knowledge which Jesus exhibited was miraculous. **Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.** [The fig-tree affords the densest shade in Palestine—a shade where no sunspot can be seen. This fact has made it immemorably a resting-place and a refuge from the fierce Syrian sunlight. Under such a cover Jesus saw Nathanael when he was alone. Such superhuman knowledge wrought faith in Nathanael, as it did afterward in the woman of Samaria.—See *Prov. xv. 3.*] **49 Nathanael answered and said unto him, Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.** [Psalm ii. and *Isa. ix. 6* prophetically announce Jesus as the Son of God. These and other prophecies had just been more clearly announced by the Baptist (*ver. 34*). It is clear, therefore, where Nathanael got his words; but it is not so clear how well he understood them. This is the first recorded uninspired confession of the divinity of Jesus. The expression “King of Israel” probably expressed the hope which Nathanael then entertained that Jesus would restore the ancient Jewish kingdom of David—*Acts i. 6.*] **50 Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto you, I saw you underneath the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these.** [Nathanael regarded the revelation of his character and whereabouts as a great thing, but he was destined to see yet greater miracles. Opportunities improved lead to larger privileges, and for those who believe, the evidences are increased.] **51 And he said unto him, truly, truly** [This word means “in truth.” John twenty-five times represents the Saviour as thus using the double “verily.” Matthew quotes the single “verily” thirty times, Mark fourteen times, and Luke seven times. The word is used to mark the importance of the truth about to be uttered], **I say unto you** [“you” is plural and includes all present as well as Nathanael], **You shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.** [Jesus having referred to Nathanael as a true Israelite, promises to him—and to those like him—a blessing answering to Jacob's vision of the ladder; that is, that the ascent and descent of ministering angels shall be by means of Christ. Jesus calls himself the Son of man upwards of eighty times. The expression is found in all four Gospels, but is there invariably used by Christ himself. Stephen (*Acts vii. 56*) and John (*Rev. i. 13*) also use this title, to indicate that the glorious being whom they saw was like Jesus—like him in his human estate. In this chapter Jesus has been called by others “The Lamb of God,” “the Son of God,” “the Messiah,” and “the King of Israel.” Jesus chooses yet another title, “Son of man,” for himself. The expression may have been suggested by *Dan. vii. 13, 14.*]

## JESUS WORKS HIS FIRST MIRACLE AT CANA IN GALILEE.

<sup>D</sup>John II. 1-11.

**1 And the third day** [From the calling of Philip (*John i. 43*). The days enumerated in John's first two chapters constitute a week, and may perhaps be intended as a contrast to the last week of Christ's ministry (*John xii. 1*). It took two days to journey from the Jordan to Cana] **there was a marriage** [In Palestine the marriage ceremony usually began at twilight. The feast after the marriage was at the home of the bridegroom, and was sometimes prolonged for several days (*Gen. xxix. 27; Judg. xiv. 12*); but in this case it seems likely that poverty limited the wedding feast to one day.] **in Cana of Galilee** [The site of Cana is disputed. From the eighth century a place called Kefr-Kenna (village of Cana), lying a little over three miles northeast of Nazareth, has been regarded as John's Cana of Galilee. In our judgment Kefr-Kenna has the stronger claim. It is situated on a westward slope of a hill, with a copious and unfailing spring adjoining it on the southwest]; **and the mother of Jesus was there** [John never called our Lord's mother by her

name. He assumes that she is known to his readers. This is one of the many points tending to show the supplemental character of John's Gospel. He avoids repeating what is found in the first three Gospels]: **2 and Jesus also was bidden** [being the Creator of woman, and the author of matrimony, it was fitting that the Son of God should grace a marriage feast with his presence], **and his disciples, to the marriage.** [This is the earliest use of the term "disciples" in the ministry of Jesus. His disciples were Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathanael, and probably John and James.] **3 And when the wine failed** [Probably the arrival of Christ and his disciples helped to exhaust the supply. Shortage of provision when guests are invited is considered a sore humiliation the world over], **the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.** [The interest which Mary took in the feast and the way in which she addressed the servants at **verse 5**, suggests that she was a close friend of the bridegroom's family. Though she merely states the unfortunate condition to Jesus, her statement is a covert petition to him that would remedy it, as our Lord's answer shows. She practically requested him to work a miracle, nor is it strange that she should do this. Remembering the many early sayings about him which she had treasured in her heart (**Luke ii. 19, 51**), and doubtless being informed of what had occurred at his baptism, and of the proclamation which John the Baptist had made concerning him, and seeing a group of disciples gathered about him, it was very reasonable for her to expect him to do something which would reveal the high purposes for which he had been born.] **4 And Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with you?** [Jesus did not call her "mother," but "woman," a term of courteous respect, but indicating no spirit of obedience. Says Augustine, "As much as to say thou art not the mother of that in me which works miracles." Moses recognized that parental duties were subordinate to divine (**Deut. xxxiii. 9**); and Jesus emphasized the principles (**Matt. x. 37**). Jesus taught that relationship to him was spiritual, and not fleshly (**Matt. xii. 46-50**), and Paul coveted such relationship (**II. Cor. v. 16, 17**). The expression, "What have I," etc., is used frequently in the Scriptures and invariably indicates a mild rebuke (**Judg. xi. 12; II. Sam. xvi. 10; I. Kings xvii. 18; II. Kings iii. 13; Matt. viii. 29; Mark i. 24; Luke viii. 28**). It means, "leave me to act as I please," and Jesus uses it to assert that he is independent of all human relationships in the exercise of his Messiahship. It corrects two errors taught by the Catholic Church: 1. Catholicism says that our Lord's mother was immaculate, but if this were true she could not have incurred our Lord's rebuke. 2. Catholicism teaches that Mary's intercession is recognized by Christ. But this is the only instance on record of such intercession, and though it was addressed to Christ while in the flesh and was concerning a purely temporal matter, it was promptly rebuked.] **mine hour is not yet come.** [Our Lord's answer indicates that Mary's request had in it more than a desire for the gift of wine. What she principally wanted was to have Jesus manifest himself as Messiah. Now, Jesus gave many secondary, but only one supreme, manifestation of his glory or Messiahship. His miracles were secondary manifestations, but his Passion was the supreme manifestation (**John viii. 28; ii. 18, 19; Matt. xii. 38-40**). Jesus called this supreme sign his "hour" (**John xii. 23, 27; xvii. 1; Matt. xxvi. 45; Luke xxii. 53; see also John vii. 30; viii. 20**).] **5 His mother said unto the servants** [though he had spoken words of rebuke, his mother was neither offended nor discouraged because of them], **Whatever he says unto you, do it.** [She commands unlimited obedience. Though her words are not addressed to us, they will prove of untold profit to us if we obey them.] **6 Now there were six waterpots of stone set there after the Jews' manner of purifying** [The details of the account suggest that John was an eye-witness. The Jews regarded themselves as ceremonially unclean if they did not wash their hands before eating—**Matt. xv. 2; Mark vii. 3, 4**], **containing two or three firkins apiece. 7 Jesus said unto them, Fill the waterpots with water.** [The jars had been partially emptied by the ablutions of the company.] **And they filled them up to the brim.** [This statement serves two purposes. 1. It emphasizes the great quantity. 2. It shows there was no room to add anything whatever to the contents of the jars. As to the quantity, it was between 106 and 162 gallons. As we do not know the number of guests nor the duration of the feast, we can not accurately measure the Lord's

bounty. But as twelve basketfuls were left after feeding the five thousand, there was doubtless here a like sufficiency, and the surplus would serve as an acceptable gift to the married couple.] **8 And he said unto them, Draw out now** [the word “now” seems to indicate the turning-point when the water became wine], **and bear unto the ruler of the feast.** [According to the custom of that age, one of the guests was usually chosen to preside over such festivities, and he was called the ruler. Our modern toastmaster is probably a relic of this ancient custom.] **And they bore it. 9 And when the ruler of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants that had drawn the water knew), the ruler of the feast called the bridegroom, 10 and said unto him, Every man at the beginning sets out** [when the taste is sharpest, and most critical] **the good wine** [the adjective “good” refers rather to flavor than to strength]; **and when men have drunk freely** [The ruler was no disciple of Jesus, and he speaks in the merry spirit of the world. He gives his own experience as to the habits of feasts, and his words give no indication that those present indulged to excess], **then that which is inferior. You have kept the good wine until now.** [It is part of Christ’s system to reserve the best until the last. Sin’s first cup is always the sweetest, but with God that which follows is ever superior to that which has preceded it. As to the bearing of this miracle upon the question of temperance, the New Testament elsewhere clearly condemns the immoderate use of wine, and as these condemnations proceed from Christ we may rightly conceive of him, as in this instance, doing nothing contrary thereto.] **11 This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory** [This was the beginning or first of the miracles, and John’s statement brands as false all the Catholic traditions which tell of miracles performed by Christ in his childhood. We should note also that it was a sign. The value of the miracle was in what it signified, not in what it wrought. It manifested the glory of Christ, part of which glory is his power to change the worse into the better, the simpler into the richer. It is the glory of Christ that he can transform sinners into his own likeness—I. John iii. 2; I. Cor. xv. 42–44; Phil. iii. 20, 21]; **and his disciples believed on him.** [In this chapter John as a disciple three times gives us a disciple’s point of view as to Christ’s miracles; here, and at **verse 17** and at **verse 22**. They implanted faith in those whose hearts were right before God (**John v. 38**). The miracles of Christ created widespread excitement. There had been none of a notorious nature since Daniel had been cast to the lions, and had read the writing on Belshazzar’s wall some five hundred and eighty years before.]

## JESUS’ FIRST RESIDENCE AT CAPERNAUM.

### <sup>D</sup> John II. 12.

**12 After this he went down to Capernaum** [The site of Capernaum is generally conceded to be marked by the ruins now called Tel-Hum. Jesus is said to have gone “down” because Cana is among the hills, and Capernaum was by the Lake of Galilee, about six hundred feet below sea level], **he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples** [There is much dispute as to what the New Testament writers mean by the phrase the “brethren of the Lord.” This phrase, found in any other than a Jewish book, would be taken to mean either the full or half brothers of Jesus, and it has probably that meaning here. The Catholic Church, contending for the perpetual virginity of our Lord’s mother, has argued that his brethren were either the sons of Joseph by a former marriage, or that they were sons of Alpheus (also called Clopas) and a sister of our Lord’s mother, who, like her, was also called Mary (**John xix. 25**). This latter view is based upon the fact that two of the sons of Alpheus bear the same names as those borne by two of our Lord’s brethren, which is far more conclusive, since the names James and Judas were extremely common. Moreover, we learn from **John vii. 5**, that the Lord’s brethren did not believe on him, and harmonists place the time of this unbelief late in our Lord’s ministry, when the sons of

Alpheus were not only believers, but some of them even apostles. Our Lord's brethren are mentioned nine times in the New Testament, and a study of these references will give us some light. Three of them, viz.: **John vii. 3, 5, 10; I. Cor. ix. 5; Gal. i. 19**, are rather noncommittal. The other six (**Matt. xii. 46; xiii. 55; Mark iii. 32; vi. 3; Luke viii. 19, 20; John ii. 12**) speak of his brethren in connection with his mother, and strongly indicate that Jesus was the first-born son of Mary, and that she had at least four other sons, besides daughters. These brethren of Jesus are constantly represented as attending his mother, without a hint that they were not her children.]; **and there they did not stay there many days.** [Because the Passover was at hand, and he went up to Jerusalem. This notice of the brief sojourn of Jesus at Capernaum throws light on several things: 1. It shows where Jesus spent most of his time between his baptism and the first Passover. 2. It helps to explain how the nobleman, who afterwards sought him at Cana, became acquainted with him. 3. It prepares us to look for his first visit to Nazareth at a later period. 4. It also explains why Jesus sought Capernaum as his place of residence after leaving Nazareth. Moreover, it shows that the natural ties of kindred were not immediately snapped by Christ. Until he went up to the first Passover, he abode with his mother and his brethren.]

### **JESUS ATTENDS THE FIRST PASSOVER OF HIS MINISTRY.**

(Jerusalem, April 9, A.D. 27.)

(Time: One Year.)

**Subdivision A. Jesus Cleanses the Temple.**

**<sup>D</sup> John II. 13-25.**

**<sup>d</sup>13 And the Passover of the Jews was at hand** [We get our information as to the length of our Lord's ministry from John's Gospel. He groups his narrative around six Jewish festivals: 1, He here mentions the first Passover; 2, another feast, which we take to have been also a Passover (**v. 1**); 3, another Passover (**vi. 4**); 4, the feast of tabernacles (**vii. 2**); 5, dedication (**x. 22**); 6, Passover (**xi. 55**). This gives the entire length of our Lord's ministry as three years and a fraction], **and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.** [It was fitting that he should enter upon his full ministry in this city, as it was still the center of what was recognized as a heaven-revealed worship. The fitness of Jerusalem for such beginnings was afterwards recognized in the preaching of the gospel of the New or Christian dispensation—**Acts i. 8.**] **14 And he found in the temple** [Our English word "temple" includes two Greek words; namely, 1. The *naos*, or sanctuary—the small structure which contained the holy and most holy places, and which answered to the tabernacle used in the wilderness. 2. The *heiron*, or entire court space which surrounded the *naos*, and which included some nineteen acres. The *heiron* was divided into four courts, and as one entered toward the *naos* from the east, he passed successively through them, as follows: 1, Court of the Gentiles; 2, of the women; 3, of Israel; 4, of the priests. It was in this outer or Gentiles' court that the markets described in this section were held] **Those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting** [This market in the temple was for the convenience of the people, and the nearness of the Passover increased its size. Oxen and doves were constantly needed for sacrificial purposes, and as each family which ate the Passover required a lamb, they would be in the market in great abundance. Josephus tells us it required about two hundred thousand lambs for the Passover feast]: **15 and he made a scourge of cords, and cast all** [The rest of the verse shows that "all" does not refer to men, but to sheep and oxen. The scourge was used in driving them out] **out of the temple, both the sheep and the oxen; and he poured out the changers' money, and overthrew their tables** [The Jews were each required to pay, for the support of the temple service, one half-shekel annually (**Ex. xxx. 13; Matt. xvii. 24**). These money-changers sat at small tables, on which their coins were piled and counted]; **16 and to them that sold the doves he said, Take these things away** [As the doves were in cages of wicker-work,

they could not be driven out; hence Jesus called upon their owners to remove them. Though Jesus cleansed the house, he wrought no waste of property. The sheep and oxen were safe outside the temple, the scattered money could be gathered from the stone pavement, and the doves were not set free from their cages]; **make not my Father's house a house of merchandise.** [Jesus bases his peculiar authority over the temple on his peculiar relationship to Him for whom the temple was built. As a Son, he purged the temple of his Father. In the beginning of his ministry he contested their right to thus appropriate his Father's house to their uses, but in the end of his ministry he spoke of the temple as "your house" (Matt. xxiii. 38), thereby indicating that the people had taken unto themselves that which truly belonged to God, even as the wicked husbandmen appropriated the vineyard (Luke xx. 14, 15). The rebuke of Jesus was addressed to the priests, for the market belonged to them, and the money-changers were their agents. Edersheim says that this traffic alone cleared the priests about three hundred thousand dollars a year. Religion should not be mixed with traffic, for traffic tends toward sin. Phariseeism is its fruit—a wish to carry on profitable business, even with God. On this occasion Jesus objected to the use of the temple for trade without criticizing the nature of the trade. When he purged the temple three years later, he branded the traders as robbers—Matt. xxi. 13.] **17 His disciples remembered that it was written [Ps. lxxix. 9], Zeal for [loving concern for] your house shall eat me up. 18 The Jews therefore answered and said unto him, What sign do you show us, seeing that you do these things?** [The Jews felt that only a divinely commissioned person could thus interfere with the ordering of God's house. They therefore called upon Jesus to give them a sign as an evidence that he possessed such divine commission. The manner in which he had cleansed the house of its traffickers was of itself a sign, if they had only had eyes to see it. Jesus could not have thus cleansed the temple unaided had he been a mere man. The power which he showed in the temple was much like that which he manifested in Gethsemane—John xviii. 6.] **19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.** [John here records this saying, and Matthew (ch. xxvi. 61) and Mark (xiv. 58) tells us how at the trial it was twisted into a charge against Christ; thus the Evangelists supplement each other. For the temple in this sentence uses the word "*naos*," or sanctuary, the structure which was peculiarly the seat of God's presence. The sanctuary was a figure or symbol of the body of Christ, and the words of Jesus were a covert prediction that as they were desecrating the symbol so would they destroy his body, which it symbolized. They revered the Spirit of God neither as it dwelt in the sanctuary nor as it dwelt in the body of Christ. The body of Jesus was a temple (Col. ii. 9), and Christians and the church are also temples (I. Cor. iii. 16, 17; vi. 19; II. Cor. v. 1; II. Pet. i. 13). God's temples can not be permanently destroyed. They are "raised up."] **20 The Jews therefore said, Forty and six years was this temple in building** [The temple which then stood upon Mt. Moriah was the third structure which had occupied that site. The first temple, built by Solomon (B.C. 1012–1005), was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. The second temple, built by Zerubbabel and Jeshua (B.C. 520), had been torn down and rebuilt by Herod the Great, but in such a manner as not to interfere with the temple service. The sanctuary was completed in one year and a half, while the courts required eight years. Josephus says eighteen thousand workmen were employed in its erection. Additional outbuildings and other work had been carried on from that time, and the whole was not completed until A.D. 64], **and will you raise it up in three days?** [To put before him the difficulty of what he apparently proposed to do, they merely mention one item—time. They say nothing of the army of workmen, nothing of a variety and cost of material, nothing of the skill required in the process of construction. How impossible seemed his offer! Yet by no means so impossible as that real offer which they misunderstood. A man might rear a temple in three days, but, apart from Christ Jesus, self-resurrection is unknown to history.] **21 But he spoke of the temple of his body** [John differs from the other three Evangelists, in that he frequently comments upon the facts which he records. Both history and commentary are inspired.] **22**

**When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he said this** [It was three years before they understood this saying. Thus truth often lies dormant for years before it springs up in the heart and bears fruit—I. Cor. xv. 58; Eccles. xi. 1]; **and they believed the scripture** [several passages foretell the resurrection—Ps. xvi. 9, 10; lxxviii. 18], **and the word which Jesus had said.** [They believed that Jesus had meant to predict that the Jews would kill him, and that he would rise again on the third day.] **23 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast** [the seven days' feast of unleavened bread—Lev. xxiii. 5, 6], **many believed on his name, beholding his signs which he did.** [We have no description of the miracles wrought at this time. See John iv. 45; xx. 30.] **24 But Jesus did not trust himself unto them, for that he knew all men** [The word here translated “trust” is the same as that translated “believe” in the preceding verse. They trusted him, but he did not trust them, for he knew them. He did not tell them anything of his plans and purposes, and the conversation with Nicodemus which follows is a sample of this reticence], **25 and because he needed not that any one should bear witness concerning man; for he himself knew what was in man.** [John gives us many examples of this supernatural knowledge which Jesus possessed. See i. 42, 47, 48; iii. 3; iv. 29; vi. 61, 64; xi. 4, 14; xiii. 11; xxi. 17. This chapter itself gives us a faithful picture of “what was in man.” We find in it temple, profaners, money-makers, sign-seekers, opposers of reform, false and weak professors of faith, etc., but none to whom Jesus could trust himself.]

## **JESUS ATTENDS THE FIRST PASSOVER OF HIS MINISTRY.**

(Jerusalem, April 9, A.D. 27.)

**Subdivision B.** Jesus Talks with Nicodemus.

**<sup>D</sup> John III. 1-21.**

**<sup>d</sup>1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.**

[Nicodemus is mentioned only by John. His character is marked by a prudence amounting almost to timidity. At John vii. 50-52 he defends Jesus, but without committing himself as in any way interested in him: at John xix. 38, 39 he brought spices for the body of Jesus, but only after Joseph of Arimathea had secured the body. Nicodemus was a ruler, or a member of the Sanhedrin]: **2 the same came unto him by night** [Thus avoiding the hostility of his colleagues, and also obtaining a more personal and uninterrupted interview with Jesus. That his coming by night revealed his character is shown by the fact that John repeats the expression when describing him at ch. xix. 39. But, in justice, it should be said that it appears that Nicodemus was the only one of his order who came at all during our Lord's life], **and said to him, Rabbi, we** [Nicodemus uses the plural, to avoid committing himself too much. Nicodemus would assert nothing but that which was commonly admitted by many. We learn from John xii. 42, 43 that late in the ministry of Christ, when hostility towards him was most bitter, many of the rulers still believed in him. No doubt, then, when Nicodemus said “we” he used the word advisedly and conscientiously] **know that you are a teacher that has come from God** [The rulers knew that Jesus was not the product of any of the rabbinical schools, and his miracles marked him as a prophet and distinguished him from all who were guided merely by reason, no matter how learned]; **for no one can do these signs that you do** [John ii. 25], **except God be with him.** [These words show the effect of Christ's miracles. Miracles arrest attention and challenge investigation, and prove that he who works them is from God—Acts x. 38.] **3 Jesus answered** [Not the words, but the thoughts of Nicodemus. The answers of Jesus often look rather to the thoughts of the questioner than to the form of the question. Nicodemus came seeking to know something about the kingdom of God, and Jesus opened at once upon the subject] **and said unto him, Truly, truly, I say unto you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.** [The word translated

“again” may also mean “from above,” and some commentators seek to so translate it here “anew,” for Nicodemus understood it to mean a *second* birth. As to the import of the passage, Luther’s words are pertinent: “My doctrine is not of doing, and of leaving undone, but of being and becoming; so that it is not a new work to be done, but the being new created—not the living otherwise, but the being new-born.” To “see” the kingdom means to possess or enjoy it—Ps. xvi. 10; xc. 15; John viii. 51; Luke ii. 26.] **4 Nicodemus said unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?** [Knowing that a man can not be literally born a second time, Nicodemus states to Jesus the literal import of his words, hoping thereby to draw from him an explanation of this new, strange metaphor which he was using. So far as he did grasp the meaning of Jesus, Nicodemus saw himself barred forever from the kingdom by an impossible requirement.] **5 Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say unto you, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.** [Water and Spirit are joined at Matt. xxviii. 19; Acts ii. 38; xix. 1–7; Tit. iii. 5.] **6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.** [Jesus here draws the distinction between fleshly birth and spiritual birth. He did this to prepare Nicodemus to understand that it is the *spirit* and not the flesh which undergoes the change called the new birth. Regeneration is no slight, superficial change, but a radical one, and one which we can not work for ourselves.] **7 Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born again.** [Jesus here plainly declares that none are exempt from this gospel requirement. Man must obtain more than his fleshly nature if he would inherit eternal life.] **8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the voice of it, but you do not know where it comes, and where it goes: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.** [In this sentence we have the word *pneuma* translated by the two words “wind” and “spirit.”] **9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? 10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not understand these things?** [The Jewish teachers or doctors of the law made very arrogant claims to knowledge, but it often happens that the professedly learned are remarkably unacquainted with the first principles of their religion. It was so with the Jewish teachers (Matt. xv. 14). Nicodemus should have understood that such a change as Jesus was speaking of would be necessary, for, 1. It was foreshadowed in the Old Testament (Deut. x. 16; I. Sam. x. 9; xvi. 13; Ps. li. 10; Ezek. xviii. 31; Jer. iv. 4). 2. John the Baptist suggested the need of some such change when he attacked the Jewish trust in their descent from Abraham.] **11 Truly, truly, I say unto you, We [a rhetorical plural—Mark iv. 30] speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen.** [his words were not founded upon reasonings, speculations, and guesses, but were the plain testimony of an eye-witness, who was able to see and had seen things which to us are invisible]; **and you receive not our witness.** [Ye teachers of Israel, who, above all men, should receive our guidance, are the very last to follow us. As the Jewish rulers would not receive Christ’s testimony, let us not be surprised if many of our day refuse to listen to the gospel which we preach.] **12 If I have told you earthly things and you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you heavenly things?** [Jesus here divides religious phenomena into two divisions—earthly and heavenly. The earthly phenomena are those which have their sphere in this world. In this sense regeneration is an earthly thing; for though it has a heavenly origin, its manifestations are among the daily sights and experiences of our earthly life. Religion has also its heavenly phenomena, such as the ordering of God’s celestial household; the experiences of those who pass into the divine presence; the propitiation, or the changes wrought in the attitude of God toward man by the sacrifice of Christ; the powers and limitations of Christ’s priestly intercession, etc. These things have their sphere far removed from earth, and transcended the comprehension of Nicodemus. Now, if Nicodemus would not believe Jesus when he told him of things which he himself partially knew, how would he believe when Jesus spoke of that which was utterly unknown to him?] **13 And no one has ascended into heaven, but he that came down out of heaven, even the Son of man, who is in heaven.** [Nicodemus is here informed that Christ alone

can teach concerning heavenly things. Jesus can so teach, for he did not begin on earth and ascend to heaven, but he came from heaven to earth, and returned thence (afterwards) to heaven. Jesus speaks of himself as being present in heaven, because his divine nature was in constant communication and presence with heaven.] **14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; 15 that whoever believes in him should have eternal life.** [Jesus here indicates the prophetic character of the Old Testament. The extent of Christ's endorsement of the Old Testament becomes apparent when we consider on how many occasions he revealed himself under the same symbolism which the Old Testament used to reveal him. At *John ii. 19* he revealed his resurrection under the symbolism of the destroyed and restored temple. At *Matt. xii. 40* the same event is revealed under the symbolism of Jonah and the whale. And here his crucifixion is likewise partially veiled and partially disclosed under a symbolic reference to the brazen serpent. The account of the brazen serpent will be found at *Num. xxi. 4-9*. The lesson of the brazen serpent will be found in its main points of resemblance to the crucifixion of Christ. When the people were bitten by fiery serpents, something made to resemble a serpent was hung upon a pole, and the people who looked to it in faith through it healing and life. Such is the epitome of Christ's gospel. When the world was perishing because of sin, Jesus, made to resemble sin (*Rom. viii. 3; II. Cor. v. 21*) was hung upon the cross, that those who look unto him in faith (*Isa. xlv. 22*) may find life through him—I. *John v. 11-13*.] **16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.** [Luther calls this verse "the Bible in miniature." It is a lesson as to God's love: 1. Its magnitude—he gave his only begotten Son. 2. Its reach—he gave it to a sinful world (*Rom. v. 8*). 3. Its impartiality—he gives it to whomsoever; that is, to all alike (*Matt. v. 45; Rev. xxii. 17*). 4. Its beneficial richness—it blesses with life eternal. 5. Its limitations—it is nowhere said that God so loves that he will save unbelievers. Love is the mutual and binding grace between God and man; it may almost be said that in Christ it made God human and man divine. John uses the word "eternal" seventeen times in his Gospel and six times in his first Epistle. He always applies it to life. The synoptists use it eight times, applying it to life, and also to fire, punishment, damnation, and habitation.] **17 For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him.** [Christ's first mission to the world was for salvation rather than for judgment. His second mission will be for judgment, but a judgment-hour wherein he will be able to save those who have accepted the means of grace which he established by his first coming. But the first coming of Christ incidentally involved judgment (*John ix. 39*), and John the Baptist emphasized the judgment of Christ. This judgment, however, was not the principal object of Christ's coming, but was an inevitable result of it. Jesus here speaks of it as a self-executed judgment. It was a necessary result of the revealed presence of Christ (*Luke ii. 35*). That Christ is at present a Saviour, and not a judge, is a truth which needs to be emphasized.] **18 He that believes on him is not judged; he that believes not has been judged already, because he has not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God.** [The name "Jesus" means Saviour; to disbelieve this name is to reject Christ as Saviour. *Verses 14 and 15* require belief in Jesus as the Son of man. This verse requires belief in him as the Son of God. Belief in this dual nature of Jesus is essential to salvation. Unbelief is the world's crowning sin; and belief is, humanly speaking, the source of its justification. The verse teaches that God's judgments are in a state of perpetually present enactment. The believer is saved now (*Acts xiii. 39*), and the unbeliever rests already under that condemnation which he fears the Son of God may some day pronounce against him.] **19 And this is the judgment, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil. 20 For every one that does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his works should be reprov'd. 21 But he that does the truth comes to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God.** [These verses show that when God judges a man by his faith, the judgment is not arbitrary and irrational. Men *believe*

according to the secret aspirations and desires of their nature. Christ, as the example and model of life, shines out as the light of the world; those who approve and love such a life are drawn to him and constrained to believe in him. Spiritually, they abide in his presence, that they may compare their lives with his, and that they may be assured that their works are wrought under the renewing and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, who is sent of Christ. But one whose desires are evil shrinks from Christ, and struggles to disbelieve in him: he seeks to know as little of Christ as possible, because such knowledge exposes the wickedness and depravity of his own sinful nature.]