Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

From the Wilderness to Galilee: Jesus' Judean Ministry
Scripture: Luke 4:14-15
Code: 42-52

It was just a few weeks ago, really, that I was in Scotland. I was in that beautiful city of Edinburgh. I was busy involved in a pastors conference there, along with some of the other men from the church and the seminary. I had a few hours one afternoon, so I walked down from the old hotel where I was staying up by what is called The Royal Mile, near the Edinburgh castle, down to the famous Princes Street. And I walked along Princes street headed for the Scottish National Art Gallery. I was going to spend my few hours looking at the art in this world famous gallery.

I reached the building that was supposed to be the National Art Gallery and I circled the building and had difficulty finding the door in, normally that's not the way it is when you go to something as formidable as an art gallery, it's fairly easily marked. Well maybe I wasn't paying very good attention but I had a little difficulty finding the entrance.

Finally I saw someone headed that way in a rather resolute fashion so I just kind of got behind him and he went to the door and I followed in. It was a rather small door for what was a fairly austere building in sort of a Roman kind of style with great columns and pillars. I went through the small door and to my surprise I found that when I went in the small door and through the little small foyer, I walked into a huge, huge room just completely dominated by this magnificent art hanging everywhere.

The door in no way indicated what was behind it. There were historical paintings. There were portraits by very well-known and famous European painters. There were biblical paintings, many of those. There was a sequence of magnificent paintings of the passion week of Jesus in a special location all to themselves done in the eighteenth century. There were pastoral scenes which I love. There were seascapes. There were paintings of kings and paintings of soldiers and, of course, there were paintings of Jesus. In fact, I was able to spend the next two hours just wandering around there from painting to painting and location to location, occasionally sitting briefly for a few moments to contemplate particularly the paintings of the passion week of Jesus which I found to be so fascinating.

I'm telling you that because the text for this morning is a bit like that door. Open your Bible to the fourth chapter of Luke. Looking at the two verses that are before us is no indication of what we're about to enter upon. Our text is one of those texts that every expositor, in a sense, dreads because you look at the two verses that come next in the text of Luke and you wonder if there's anything there to build a sermon on. The verses are verses 14 and 15 of Luke 4. We have completed the first 13

verses, dealing with the temptation of Christ, His conflict with Satan. We come to verse 14 and it says, "Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit and news about Him spread throughout all the surrounding district and He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all."

Now because this is the Word of God, because it is inspired by the Holy Spirit, because we deal with all of the text, we're going to look at these two verses. But I want to do is to have you look at these two verses as if they were somewhat of a small door, like the door that I went through to enter the Scottish National Art Gallery. They are not very imposing, and neither was the door that went in, but going through the door of these two simple verses this morning is going to offer us some wonderful scenes. We're going to step, as it were, into the gospel art gallery and we're going to be able to see various scenes that are very, very important and some are very, very familiar to any student of the Bible.

Just to kind of get you up to where we are in the narrative text of Luke's gospel as he writes what is essentially the life of Jesus Christ, Jesus has been born and has been living for 30 years in obscurity in the town of Nazareth, the town up in Galilee, a very unimportant town. He has been there with His mother, Mary, and His father, at least His legal father, Joseph, who was a carpenter, and He has been working in His father's business for 30 years. The 30 years have been completed and Jesus has begun to initiate the ministry that He's been waiting for.

He has gone down to the Jordan River, as you know, and there He has asked to be baptized by John the Baptist, not because He's a sinner, in fact John didn't want to baptize Him which attested to His sinlessness. But he did it in order to fulfill all righteousness to do what God asked all His people to do. So Jesus' 30 years of waiting are over, the baptism has been done. Jesus has been identified thereby as the Son of God in whom the Father is well pleased. After that baptism, Jesus then in the first thirteen verses of this chapter recorded went into 40 days in the wilderness, the Judean desert and there in that rough area just from the slopes of the plateau of Jerusalem descending down to the Dead Sea, that very, very dangerous area, He spent 40 days in conflict with the devil and was completely triumphant.

All of that is past. The waiting is past. The baptism is past. The affirmation of the Father is past. The conflict with Satan is past. It is now time for Jesus to step on to the stage of full public ministry. And as we come to verse 14, for the first time Jesus is indicated to have engaged Himself in His ministry. He returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. News about Him spread throughout all the surrounding district. He began teaching in the synagogues and was praised by all.

So finally we get past all the preliminaries, all the credentials...and remember, everything up to now has been to spell out the credentials of the Messiah, whether it's His genealogy, or His conflict with Satan, whether it's the attestation of the Father from heaven, whether it's the descent of the Holy Spirit, whether it's the word of Gabriel the angel, whether it's the testimony of Zacharias, Elizabeth,

John, or Mary, Joseph, Simeon, Anna, all of that that's gone before is to attest that this is indeed the Son of God, the Savior of the world, the promised Messiah.

Now we come to verses 14 and 15 and He engages in His ministry. Now what these verses describe is His Galilean ministry. Verse 14, "He returned to Galilee." There were a number of phases in the ministry of Jesus. Really there were only two places where He could minister essentially. One is in the north which is generally the area of Galilee. The other in the south which is the area known as Judea. And those were the two areas in which Jesus conducted His ministry.

Here Luke moves immediately to Jesus' ministry in Galilee. The Galilean ministry of Jesus lasted about a year and a half, give or take a few weeks or months. And starting right there in verse 14 and going all the way through the fiftieth verse of the ninth chapter of Luke's gospel, that entire section focuses on His Galilean ministry. In Luke 9:51 Jesus sets His face to go to Jerusalem, which is in the south, and embarks there on a Judean ministry, a ministry in the southern part of the land of Israel.

So the Galilean ministry lasts for about a year and a half before Jesus makes a final move to the south. If you look at chapter 8 verse 1 it tells us the nature of His Galilean ministry. "He began going about from one city and village to another proclaiming and preaching the Kingdom of God. And the Twelve were with Him." So that is the nature of the Galilean ministry.

Now historians tell us there were about 240 towns and villages in the area known as the Galilee, the northern part of Israel. For a year and a half Jesus traversed those 240 towns and villages, along with His disciples and some other women who are noted there in the eighth chapter as well in what is the Galilean ministry. And when you come, as I said, to chapter 9 verse 51, the scene shifts to the south.

So Luke moves right from Christ's temptation to His long ministry in Galilee. And, frankly, Jesus blanketed Galilee in that year and a half. And that wouldn't be hard to do. Galilee is not a large area. You can walk around it. It's not a significantly large area. And He could have touched all the little places and the larger places there in that period of time. Some scholars have suggested, interestingly, that in Acts 1:8 Jesus said to His disciples that when the Spirit comes upon you, you're going to receive power and you're going to be witnesses of Me in Jerusalem, in Judea area, in Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth. And He never referred to Galilee at all and some have suggested that maybe that was because He did such a thorough job Himself. May be a stretch, but it's certainly a thought.

As we consider Luke's account, now again Luke jumps immediately to the Galilee ministry and Jesus is basically ministering in Galilee in a continually similar pattern. And that pattern is given to us right here in these two verses. It is in the power of the Spirit, it is teaching in the synagogue. I mean, that is essentially it. That was the nature of His ministry. He was a teacher. He was a preacher. And the

place that He would typically go to teach and preach was in a synagogue and He ministered fully in the power of the Spirit. The response was, "News about Him spread throughout all the surrounding district," and it was a positive reaction so that "He was praised by all." That was how the initial response to the Galilean ministry went.

So we're given these two verses really to define sort of the substance of the nature or the pattern of Jesus' ministry. Now remember, we're still looking at this door here, it's a relatively small door. I noticed on the door when I entered the Scottish National Art Gallery it had some minimal decoration and I guess you could say these two verses give us a minimal decoration, just a few things that we can know.]

We find the place of His ministry. Galilee. We find the power of His ministry. The Holy Spirit. We find the popularity of His ministry. Spreading throughout all the surrounding district. We find the priority of His ministry. Teaching in the synagogues. And we find the praise of His ministry, as people responded to Him. That's what's on the door. And that just gives us a definition of the ministry of Jesus.

But there are some things behind this door. As often as the case when you do expository preaching, you look at a text and it opens up things before you. And this is exactly what we're going to experience this morning.

But let's, first of all, just take the place, Galilee, in verse 14, "And Jesus returned to Galilee." That comes as a rather benign statement, a very simple, straightforward statement. But effectively that statement opens the door for us. It allows us to step in to what is going to be a room full of magnificent scenes because with this statement Luke is referring to the full Galilean ministry, which, as I said, is described from here to chapter 9 verse 50. I also want to add, Matthew describes the Galilean ministry. Mark describes the Galilean ministry, and so does Luke. So Matthew, Mark and Luke give great space and detail to the Galilean ministry.

Now it appears as you read this, obviously, that the Galilean ministry begins immediately after the temptation, because that's the way it flows in the text. But you learn something when you study the gospels. You have four of them, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and they combine to give us the full picture. Luke by the design of the Spirit of God jumps immediately from the temptation of Jesus to His Galilean ministry. That's what Luke did. But that is not exactly what happened historically. In fact, there was a rather lengthy ministry before He ever began His Galilean ministry. Listen, He had a ministry of a year that has to fit between verse 13 and 14 here. Okay? And I'm just going to give you sort of what they call a synoptic or the synopsis of these things, bringing them together.

Before He began His official Galilean ministry, Jesus had a ministry for up to a year in Judea and some have called it the first Judean ministry. And I want you to understand that. The Galilean

ministry began about December of the year 27 and it continued a few months into the year 29. But before He even began this formal and long Galilean ministry, there was a year or up to a year, maybe not a full year, of ministry that Jesus engaged in.

In fact, Matthew 4:12 and Mark 1:14 tell us Jesus didn't even go back to Galilee to begin His Galilean ministry until John the Baptist was imprisoned. Now Luke did refer to the fact that John as in prison back in chapter 3 verses 19 and 20, but not in chronological sequence. So while Luke jumps from the temptation to the Galilean ministry, there is much that happened in between.

You say, "Well where do we find out about that?" The answer is John records it for us. John gives us what happened in that up-to-a-year before He actually began His Galilean ministry.

Now normally I might not go into all that John says, but I'm compelled to do it because to understand that that ministry that John writes about that Luke omits because it is fully discussed in John, to understand that is to understand the nature of Jesus' preaching and the nature of His ministry. And it's very, very important. The main events of that interval are recorded for us in John 1, so let's turn to John 1. This is going to be more like a sort of a lecture than it is a sermon this morning, but I want you to follow along. And I'm going to do something that I find almost contrary to my being to do, that is cover large amounts of Scripture in a brief time. This is almost impossible as well as distasteful to me and I'm going to make a running effort at this and only God knows whether we shall succeed.

But I do want you to understand what happened in that year because it really is important to understanding the foundation of Jesus' ministry and the response of the people to His ministry. What He did in that year or up to a year, maybe not a full year, really establishes His patterns. It is a critical contribution to our knowledge of Jesus Christ and His ministry.

When we come to chapter 1 and verse 29, "The next day, he...being John...saw Jesus coming to him and said, 'Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.'"

Now in chronology, this happens after the temptation. Some time has passed. Jesus has been baptized, perhaps a few days after that He entered into the wilderness and there for 40 days. And then, of course, after that the angels came and ministered to Him. So it could be a couple of months have gone by. And now He is back at the Jordan River. John is still carrying on his ministry, remember the ministry of John and Jesus overlapped until John was imprisoned. As John continued to call the people to repentance and point them to the Messiah who was actually beginning His ministry, John is still there pointing to the Messiah who is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And John goes into a further description of Jesus as the one whom he saw the Spirit descend upon in verse 32 and so forth, the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit in verse 34, I have seen and bore witness that this is the Son of God. So John is continuing to give testimony to Jesus as the Son of God while Jesus is starting now to begin His ministry.

Verse 37, we are reminded here that two disciple...verse 35, "The next day John was standing with two of his disciples, looked upon Jesus as He walked and said, 'Behold the Lamb of God.'" You can see that John said that very often, that was his title for Jesus, apparently almost every time he saw Him he called Him that. "And two disciples of John heard Him speak and they follow Jesus and Jesus turned and beheld them following and said to them, 'What do you seek?' And they said to Him, 'Rabbi,' which translated means teacher, 'where are You staying?' And He said to them, 'Come and you will see.' They came therefore and saw where He was staying, they stayed with Him that day. It was about the tenth hour." Tenth hour by Jewish calendar would be six o'clock,,,or four o'clock in the afternoon, I should say, late in the day. "One of the two that heard John speak and followed Him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother, Simon, and said to him, 'We've found the Messiah.' He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, 'You are Simon the son of John, you shall be called Cephas.'" So He's beginning now to collect His disciples. This is sort of an unofficial group of followers, not the official followers of Jesus, but sort of the unofficial. They later became official. The actual affirmation of their apostleship comes at a later time.

But simply on the testimony of John the Baptist, these men began to follow Jesus. So Jesus is beginning His ministry. John has identified Him. John is telling others that they need to follow Jesus, they're doing it. So here comes Andrew and here comes Peter and here comes, later on in this text as we shall see, Philip and then comes Nathanael and Jesus begins to collect the men around Him who will be what we know as the apostles.

Now they all knew that John the Baptist was a prophet. Everybody knew that John the Baptist was a prophet and they knew therefore that when he pointed to Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah, that he was in fact telling the truth.

Now at this point in the gospel of John, John focuses on Jesus Christ in very clear ways. This is what I want you to see because it's very foundational. John, first of all, introduces us to His person...to His person. We learn from the text of John about the man Jesus, person of Jesus. Quite interesting.

Back in verse 42 of chapter 1 it is indicated here that Jesus looked at Simon, just looked at him and said, "You are Simon." How did He know that? Not only are you Simon, but you're the son of John, or Jonas, as it's sometimes translated. How did He know that? He knew that because He knew everything.

Later on in this same section it said in verse 47, "Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, being brought by Philip, and He said of him, 'Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile.'" How did Jesus know that this was a pure man? How did Jesus know this man had no deceit? How did Jesus know this man had integrity?

"Nathanael said to Him," in verse 48, "'How do You know me?' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Before Philip called you when you were under the fig tree I saw you.'" Wait a minute, this is supernatural. How does He know who this man is that He called Simon? How does He know his father's name is John? And why does He change his name to Cephas which means "rock"? Because He knows who he is because He knows everything. How does He know Nathanael is a man with no guile? How did He see Nathanael sitting under a fig tree before Philip ever brought him? That's because of His omniscience.

The first element of the person of Jesus Christ that John introduces to us is His omniscience. He is God. He is deity. He possesses divine attributes, one of which is omniscience. And, of course, Nathanael understood. Verse 49, "Nathanael answered Him, 'Rabbi, You are the Son of God, You are the King of Israel.' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these.'" It's as if He said if you were wowed by omniscience, wait till you see omnipotence. That's nothing compared to what you're going to see. And what he saw, the dead raised, the blind given sight, the deaf were able to hear, and the lame were able to walk. Jesus created food out of His command, walked on water, you know the rest. But John wants us to see the Son of God and so He introduces us to Him as God, possessing omniscience.

Secondly, He possessed transcendence. Jesus was human but He was not just human. And His transcendence is indicated in verse 51 in a quite interesting passage. "And He said to him," still talking to Nathanael who was indicating his belief, of course, Jesus says you're going to see greater things than these. "Truly, truly I say to you, you shall see the heavens open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

Wow, what He is saying is you're about to experience what it's like to be with someone who is transcendent. The point is this, that I am going to give you access to heaven, that through Me heaven is going to come down and earth is going to go up. I am going...I am the mediator between God and man, that's essentially what He's saying without taking the time to go into all the details. You're going to see heaven open wide, just like sort of parallel to Jacob's ladder, you remember, by which he could go up and come down. Jesus says, "I am the ladder, I am transcendent, I transcend this world, I open heaven and on Me angels come and go." This is not just another man, "I am the one who has opened heaven to man. I am the one who has the Son of Man brought down the righteousness, brought down glory, brought down salvation and will lift up sinners to the very throne of God. I am the one who literally has broken open the veil, as it were, and given sinners access to the Holy of Holies. I am the one who brings God and man together." He's transcendent. Free access to the Father, open angelic ministry is now available and the angels, according to Hebrews 1:14 are sent for the ministry that they have toward the saints.

Heaven is opened. Heaven is near to us. Heaven is as accessible to us as a prayer, isn't it? In fact, it's even more accessible than that when you realize heaven is open and God has come down and dwells in us. God is ours and we are His, that's why I love that hymn, "I am His and He is mine." The holy angels are His, the holy angels are ours. The ladder from earth to heaven is the Son of Man and He gives us access and communion and fellowship. This is transcendence.

So John is telling us that this Son of God is both omniscient and transcendent. Thirdly, omnipotent. John wants us to know about the power that He bears which is the power of God. And so in chapter 2 he tells the story, a wonderful account of a wedding. And I want you to notice this. "The third day there was a wedding in Cana." Third day after Jesus' meeting with Nathanael, Philip, Simon and Andrew. Third day, Jesus was back in Galilee. Now listen carefully to what I say. After His temptation, apparently Jesus did go back to Galilee briefly. He went back there. He met these disciples and attended a wedding. That is not what Luke is talking about in chapter 14, or in chapter 4 verse 14. In chapter 4 verse 14 Luke is writing about when Jesus went back to Galilee and was going through Galilee teaching in the synagogues. He didn't do that on this first brief visit. He left the area of the devastation, the area of the temptation, went north into Galilee, just briefly enough to have this encounter with the disciples, briefly enough to attend a wedding, generally lasts about a week long, then He went back down to Jerusalem where He remained for that greater period of time until John the Baptist was imprisoned and He then went to Galilee to begin His official ministry in Galilee. This was a very brief and temporary visit to attend a wedding.

It was important though because it was at the wedding that Jesus did His first miracle. The first miracle of His entire life, and I think it's very important for us to recognize that this was His first miracle. Verse 11, "This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee." So if anybody tells you that He was doing miracles as a little boy or in the 30 years of His obscure ministry in Galilee, it is not so.

Here's the miracle. "The third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, third day after meeting with the disciples, the mother of Jesus was there." Weddings were seven-day events and, you know, they didn't consummate until the seventh day when the friend of the bridegroom handed the bride over to the groom and everybody left and they consummated the marriage. But it was a week-long feast. The family of Jesus must have known these people.

Cana is a little village just outside of Nazareth. You can easily walk there. It's very close. And so, no doubt, there was familiarity with the people in this family and the family of Jesus was invited to be guests.

So, they went to the wedding, Jesus also being invited and His disciples along with Him. They were people from that same area and perhaps knew the family also.

The wine gave out, which is not good because that's embarrassing for the host. "And the mother of Jesus said to Him, 'They have no wine.'" Now she knew who He was. She doesn't go beyond just saying "they have no wine," she brings the problem to His attention. One could speculate that He was the greatest problem-solver any mother ever had in her house. Growing up He would have understood every problem perfectly and known the solution to everything. And in this case it would be very natural for her now in His adulthood to say they have a problem and we're very confident that You can solve it.

So she says, "They have no wine." Jesus said to her, and this is quite interesting, "Woman, what do I have to do with you?" Boy, that was a sting. Jesus had to say it because Mary had to know it that there was no longer this mother/child relationship, there was no longer this mother/son relationship. He had now gone through His baptism. He had now been set apart for His ministry. That which was anticipated when He said at the age of twelve "I have to be in My Father's house, doing My Father's business" had now come to full fruition and Mary laid no claims on Him whatsoever because He was now fully under the control of the sovereign God His Father, and the power of the Holy Spirit. Mary didn't play into that and she needed to know that from now on she had to see Him fully not as her son, but as her Savior. This is not a term of unkindness, but it is a term of distance. He is separating her by saying, "Woman, what do I have to do with you, my hour has not yet come?" I am on a divine timetable, I am under the sovereign control of God, My Father.

But she knew His heart. "She said to the servant, 'Whatever He says to you, do it.'" Now I don't know that she knew what He would do, but as I said, He would have been the greatest problem solver anybody ever knew. "Now there were six stone water pots set there for the Jewish custom of purification containing 20 or 30 gallons each." These would be stone because stone doesn't absorb the liquid like clay does, so they would be able to store water in those things and water storage obviously was very important. This does indicate there was some large number of people in this family. It may have been a well-to-do family to have that much water stored there, 20 or 30 gallons times six.

"Jesus said to them, 'Fill the water pots with water,' and they filled them up to the brim." They did what Mary told them to do, she said do whatever He tells you. "And He said, 'Draw some out and take it to the head waiter," and they took it to him. And when the head waiter tasted the water which had become wine." Now that's rather incidental, isn't it? I mean, wouldn't you have expected Jesus got up on the building and put His arms out and thunder and lightning came and He said, "WINE". No, there's absolutely no fanfare. This diminish His power at all, this didn't take some great exerted effort. He didn't grandstand. Just put the water in there and when they dipped it out, took it to the head waiter, it wasn't water, it was wine. He just created wine without a vine, without grapes, without ground, without sun He created wine. This is omnipotence at its rudimentary level. This is the power to create. This is not the power to move creation or adjust creation or control creation, this is the

power to create something out of nothing. This is God's creative power.

"The head waiter tasted the water that had become wine, didn't know where it came from, but the servants who had drawn the water knew. The head waiter called the bridegroom and said to him, 'Every man serves the good wine first, and when men have drunk freely then that which is poorer. You have kept the good wine until now.'" Obviously this was the best thing he had ever tasted in his entire life because this was wine that bypassed the curse. This was...this was wine created by God. He said, "I've never tasted anything like this. Usually, you know, you drink the other stuff and then when you're feeling like you can enjoy anything you get the bad stuff, you know."

Why does John tell this story? He tells the story because this is at the heart and soul of the character of Jesus. He is...He is omniscient. He knows the person's life that He's never met. He sees people that aren't visible to the naked eye. He is...He is also transcendent. He opens the way to heaven. And He is omnipotent to the point where He can create out of nothing.

And then when you come to chapter 2 verse 12, He leaves Galilee. He goes from Nazareth which is a little bit north and west of the Sea of Galilee, down a little south and east to the lake edge, to the Lake of Chinnereth, or the Sea of Galilee to the town of Capernaum. It says in verse 12 He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and His brothers, disciples and just stayed a few days.

So this is a very brief visit. A few days with the disciples, three days later a wedding that lasts a week. A few days at Capernaum. I mean, in total maybe three weeks and He's on His way, verse 13, the Passover is at hand and so He's down to Jerusalem. It says "went up" because it's up in terms of elevation, it's down in terms of direction, north from south. But they always refer to it as up in the Bible because Jerusalem is on a plateau.

And so He goes there, and what is John going to tell us about when He gets there? Verse 14, "He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves and money changes seated. He made a scourge of cords and drove them out of the temple with the sheep and the oxen, He poured out the coins of the money changers, overturned their tables. To those who were selling the doves, He said, 'Take these things away, stop making My Father's house a house of merchandise.'" And here John introduces to another attribute, the attribute of holiness, of holiness.

Here is righteous indignation. It is burning indignation. Jesus reacted. The Lord of love...yes. The Lord of grace...yes. But the God of holiness...yes. And He will not talk about grace and He will not talk about love until He has shattered the complacency of sin and irreverence.

So the first thing He does, the first thing He does really in His public ministry when He arrives at Jerusalem, the first thing He does is step right into the temple and attack their irreverence and attack their sin. This is the antithesis of the seeker-friendly mentality. Jesus goes in there in a rage of holy

indignation. The destruction eventually led to His murder because He was tampering with the...it was sort of a Jerusalem mafioso made up of the family of the high priest. They were running the temple operation and making a fortune in there. When anybody came down to sacrifice an animal, all they had to do was say, "Now the animal is not good enough, the animal has a flaw here, a flaw there, and he doesn't qualify for sacrifice, you have to use one of our animals," and charge triple the price. When they exchanged the money, they would only allow them to give certain money, certain coins that didn't have Caesar's imprint or things like that in their offerings, and so in the exchange they would charge exorbitant exchange rates and they were bilking the people and it was a very successful business.

Well, that's why there were money changers and that's why there were sellers of oxen. Jesus comes in and just devastates the temple business and calls it what it is, a den of thieves. This initiates the hostility of the Jewish leaders that ultimately ends in Jesus being murdered. That's the part of the story that I point out in the book on The Murder of Jesus. The gentle Jesus, yes, but not when holiness is the issue. He makes an unmistakable claim to deity, "My Father's house," this would have rattled their cages like you can't believe. They never heard anybody claim that God is "My Father," in a personal expression like that. And if they knew the Bible they would know that this is a direct fulfillment of Psalm 69:9 where the prophetic Psalm says, "The zeal for Your house has eaten me up and the reproaches that fall on You are fallen on me," Psalm 69:9. That was speaking of the Messiah who would see the desecration of the house of God and passionately seek to change it.

In verse 18 Jesus says, "The Jews said to Him, 'What sign do You show to us seeing that You do these things?'" Who do You think You are? What's going on here? "Jesus answered and said to them, 'Destroy this temple, in three days I'll raise it up.'" Here's the next attribute, eternality. He says, "I am eternal. I cannot ultimately die. I will conquer death." He is the very living God. In fact, you could even say, "Life is an attribute of God." Life, indomitable life.

So we see His omniscience. We see His transcendence. We see His holiness. We see His life. And, of course, they didn't know what He was talking about. They were talking about whether He was going to destroy the temple and then later they used that against Him that He was going to somehow destroy the temple literally. He was talking, of course, about the temple of His own body. And in verse 22 when He was raised from the dead, the disciples had remembered that He had said this and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

And then in verse 23 when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover during the feast, many believed in His name, beholding His signs which He was doing. More miracles. "But Jesus on His part was not entrusting Himself to them for He knew all men and because He didn't need anyone to bear witness concerning man because He Himself knew what was in man." You know, this is another attribute of deity and I know this is an obscure word but I want to use it. It is a very interesting word, you may not have used it yourself, perspicacity. Have you heard that word? No? Perspicacity is the word and the

word simply means to see things exactly the way they are. When you say someone has perspicacity, now try that around this week because it will really impress your friends, but you need the definition because they're going to ask you. What it means...what it means is someone's ability to see things the exact way that they really exist and that is a characteristic of God. God is never deceived. He is never wrong in an assessment. God has perfect discernment, right? Jesus demonstrates that perspicacity, absolute accurate assessment of reality. And, of course, it is linked to omniscience, but here it comes in a little bit different way. Omniscience is this sort of general knowledge of everything. Perspicacity is understanding every single issue as to its genuine reality.

Jesus is not dazzled by this apparent success as people are saying they believe in Him because He has a knowledge of every individual and knows the shallowness and the false faith that is so characteristic. So John is showing us, here's Jesus just beginning His ministry, comes out of the temptation, goes up, starts to assemble His disciples. We begin to see that John presents elements of His life, these are the portraits hanging in the art gallery, if you will. Here's a picture of His omniscience and here's a picture of His transcendence and here's a picture of His omnipotence. And here's a picture of His holiness as He's cleansing the temple. And then here's a picture of His life as He says, you can take away My life but I'm going to take it right back again. Here's a picture of His perspicacity, or His accuracy in assessing everything. And this is another portrait to hang in the gallery.

I told you it was a very obscure door, but when you go in this is what you see. So those are the things John tells us about His person. Then John wants to tell us about His proclamation, His message. Look at chapter 3 and I wish we had time to go into this, we don't. Some people think the third chapter of John is the greatest chapter in the Bible. You know why, don't you? John 3:16, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life." Well, the third chapter of John, and we won't go into it in detail, gives us the message of Jesus. We step, as it were, into another room inside the gallery that John provides for us. And the message of Jesus comes into play.

The first ten verses, Jesus has a conversation with a man named Nicodemus and we learn about regeneration. We learn about what it means to be born again. And by the way, people today need to go back to this and find out what it really means. I read an article yesterday that says about...well, four out of five Americans call themselves Christians. A third of the people who call themselves "born again" Christians, a third of them believe also in reincarnation. Those are not compatible beliefs. And they also believe in astrology. So a third of "born-again" Christians believe in astrology and reincarnation. The people who say they're born again might be calling the psychic hot line as much as they would be reading the Bible. The terms are lost. You need to go back and find out what regeneration really is.

So John gives us the message of Jesus and the message is simply this, "Nicodemus, you're THE teacher in Israel, you know more than anybody else in Israel, you are t he smartest man. You're the Pharisee of Pharisees. You know all the law of God. You've got it all sorted out." And Nicodemus might have expected Jesus to say, "You know, you're so far down the line, Nicodemus, you just need to add this little deal and you'll be there, my friend." And Jesus said, "You know what you need to do, Nicodemus, you need to forget everything you know, all of it completely, the whole works-righteousness system, go all the way back to the beginning and be born all over again cause the whole thing is useless."

That was an absolutely shocking statement. I mean, Nicodemus as THE teacher in Israel, as the definite article would indicate, would have assumed that he was so far along the line, you just need to add a few things to enter the Kingdom. Jesus said...forget it all, you have to be born all over again. You've got to die literally to everything you now believe and hold dear, your whole works-righteousness Pharisaic system you've got to put in the dumpster, as it were, go back and start all over again. And Nicodemus, speaking to Jesus in these analogical terms and metaphorical terms acknowledges, "I think I'm too old to do that." Well, he wasn't because later on, you'll remember, he provided the tomb to bury Jesus in. And he later became a disciple of Jesus.

So the message of the King, the message of the Messiah is regeneration. You have to go all the way back to the beginning. you can take all that existed in Pharisaic Judaism and throw it away. You don't need to add something to it. You don't need to tweak it here or there, dump it and go start all over again. Paul says, Philippians 3, "Everything being born an Israelite, tribe of Benjamin, Hebrew of the Hebrews, zealous for the law, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, the whole thing, all my life all these years, when I saw Christ I saw it all as dung," right? Dung, garbage.

What a blow to Nicodemus that was. You've got to go all the way back and be born all over again. You need a new heart. You need to have the stony heart taken out of you and you need a heart of flesh put in you. You need the Holy Spirit planted in you. And Jesus talks to him in the terms of Ezekiel 36 with which he was familiar.

So in divine majesty with one glorious stroke in the first ten verses of this chapter, Jesus brushed aside all sinners' refuge in religion, traditionalism, formalism, ceremonialism, legalism, ritualism, ecclesiasticism. He literally wiped it all out and pointed the barbed arrow of spiritual truth at the vital point of need, and that is that the heart had to be totally transformed. Jesus had great respect for the law. He had too much respect for the law to let any sinner think he could keep it so that he could please God.

So the great truth of Christ literally shatters into bits the system of religion in Israel. Like the destructive lightning from the clouds, all the forms and formulas and dogmas and legalistic requirements and ecclesiastical rituals that are placed between the souls of men and God were

splintered by what Jesus said. And He went to the root of the problem with Nicodemus and everybody else no matter how religious they were, you're a sinner and you're unforgiven and you need to fall on your face and admit your sinfulness and be born all over again. You need to be regenerated. No more laws, no more rules, no more services, sacrifices, prayers, candles, etc., you need a new heart. So He talked about regeneration in the first ten verses.

Then from verse 11 to 21 He talked about salvation, that God so loved the world that He sent His Son to be the Savior. And He discusses salvation. The first part about regeneration demonstrates the need and the inability of religion to save. The second part demonstrates the appropriation. Now that you know the need, how do you appropriate salvation and the key theme of verses 11 to 21 is to believe...to believe...to believe...to believe. It's repeated again and again and again.

Then you can see the same thing even further down in this third chapter. We won't take the time to look at the detail. But go to the last verse of the third chapter. "He who believes in the Son has eternal life." That's it, he who believes in the Son has eternal life. "He who doesn't obey the Son...and belief obviously encompasses a response to obedience...will not see life but the wrath of God abides on him." That sums it up. You either believe and you're saved, you have eternal life or you don't believe and you're not and you have eternal wrath. That's it.

So John in this early portrait of Jesus gives us the man and the message. And then he also gives us the mission, or the purpose in chapter 4, and this is a very long chapter so we're not going to go through 54 verses in two minutes. Suffice it to say, this chapter has one intent and the intent is to show the mission of Jesus to reach the world because it's a story about Jesus bringing the gospel to what kind of woman? A Samaritan woman who had how many husbands? Five and who was living with a man who wasn't her husband. This is a classic outcast.

First of all, she's a woman and in ancient Judaism that was...that was barely above an animal. Secondly, she is a Samaritan, the most hated and despised of all people on the planet by the Jews because they were half breeds, they were the product of Jews who desecrated their birthright by inner marrying with Gentiles and creating a half-breed race. A Gentile couldn't help that he was a Gentile, but a Jew could marry a Jew and perpetuate the race. And to not do that, to marry a Gentile in ancient Judaism, was the worst of all things. Nobody would even go through Samaria. Whenever they went through the south, Judea, to Galilee in the north, they went all around the area of Samaria because they didn't want any Samaritan dirt on their feet, they were such a cursed people. So it's a woman and it's a woman who is a Samaritan. Beyond that, it's a woman who is woman who is an evil, wicked, sinful woman sexually. She's had five husbands and she's living in adultery at the present time.

She must have had a lot of other problems to have shed that many men. If you can chase away five in a modest amount of years, you've got some kind of problem. So this woman, who knows where

her problems began and ended. And the whole point that Jesus is trying to say here is here we are at the very beginning. I mean, He hasn't even come to Jerusalem in the sense that He's actually had a formal ministry in Jerusalem. He's...He's just gone down there, wiped out the temple, had a conversation with Nicodemus and now He's on His way back up toward the north and going through Samaria and what does He do? He immediately says, "I have come for the outcasts. I have come for the people that nobody wants. I've come for the despised. I've come for the wicked and the sinful, the grossly wicked, the grossly sinful." And He presents Himself to this Samaritan woman and she believes and she is saved and then she becomes a witness to the people in her town. That's really the key to understanding the mission or the purpose of Jesus. He came to be the Savior of the world, not just the Savior of Israel.

Verse 39 of chapter 4, we'll wrap it up at that point. "And from that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified." Now we've got a whole bunch of Samaritans being converted here. "He told me all the things that I have done." Again it was His omniscience that struck her. "So when the Samaritans came to Him, they were asking Him to stay with them. He stayed there two days, many more believed because of His Word." He stayed and preached.

So the first real revival, the first real group of people that came to the knowledge of the Messiah weren't even Jews. And this demonstrates the mission and the purpose of the Messiah to the world. And they were saying to the woman in verse 42, "It's no longer because of what you say that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this one is indeed the Savior of...what?...the world." Not just Israel, the world.

And then verse 43, "After the two days, He went forth from there into Galilee." Verse 45, "When He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him...now listen to this...having seen all the things He did in Jerusalem at the feast, they themselves also went to the feast. He came therefore again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine." This is where He begins to inaugurate His Galilean ministry.

Now the reason I wanted to take you through that is because now you understand why His fame spread abroad. Now you understand why when He came to Galilee for His official ministry to begin, John was by now imprisoned, and Jesus comes to Galilee and He finds when He gets to Galilee, the Galileans are receiving Him. Why? Because they were down at the Passover when they saw Him do what He did. They were at the feast. And they also were very aware of the wedding at Cana. And He went right back to Cana where He made water wine. And there was a certain royal official there whose son was sick. And you know the story. He heals that child and this cements their confidence. Verse 54, "This is the second sign that Jesus performed when He had come out of Judea into Galilee."

So now you can go back and we'll close. Look at Luke 4, just to close and you'll understand a little more of what was behind these simple statements here. "And Jesus returned to Galilee." We just covered what He was doing before this happened. "And He came back in the power of the Spirit." We know that was true because the Spirit was on Him at all times without measure, that is without limitation, "And the news about Him spread throughout all the surrounding district." We know that because of John 4:43, the Word had spread all over the place because when Passover happened, all the people were down in Jerusalem, two million of them, for the Passover, the great majority of them, so the Word was spreading everywhere. "And it was then in that kind of popular environment that He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all."

The word "news" is pheme from which the English word "fame" comes. His fame was starting to go everywhere and His priority was to teach. And so He began as Josephus tells us through those 240 towns and villages. And then Luke immediately tells us how the tide turns and that's for next time.

Father, we thank you, this morning, that we can relive history, the most wonderful history of all, the story, the true story, the reality of our blessed Lord, Jesus Christ. Thank You for what You've taught us today, of His majesty. We pray in His name. Amen.

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