

A Study of the Christ

Text

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
The 1st disciples				1:35-51
The 1st miracle - Water to wine				2:1-12
The 1st temple cleansing				2:13-25
Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night				3:1-21
Disciples baptize many in Judea				3:22-24
Disciples ask John about Jesus				3:25-36

Overriding Principles

- As Jesus begins His public ministry, we immediately see that He is to be well connected with people—all kinds of people.
- He has come to “seek and to save that which was lost” (Lk. 19:10).

Main Point

- Nathanael said to him, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see: (Jn. 1:46).
- God’s most powerful revelation of Himself is in the Christ (Jn. 14:7-9).

Secondary Points of History, Culture, Words, and Grammar

- Jesus is God’s sacrificial lamb (**Jn. 1:36**; cf. 1:29; Ex. 12:1-13; Isa. 53:6-7; Acts 8:32; I Pet. 1:19; Rev. 5:6, 6, 8, 12-13; 6:1; Gen. 22:8).
- John’s ministry begins to wane as two of his disciples follow Jesus (**Jn. 1:37**; cf. Jn. 3:30).
- To see in Jesus our only hope of salvation is to want to share our great discovery with others (**Jn. 1:41, 45**; cf. Matt. 13:44-46; II Cor. 4:13).
- Nathanael is probably the disciple known in the Synoptics as Bartholomew (**Jn. 1:45**; Matt. 10:3).
- The *best* thing we can do evangelistically is to help people see Jesus (**Jn. 1:46**).
- Jesus is both the *Son of God* and the *Son of Man*—He is both God and man (**Jn. 1:49, 51**; cf. Job 9:30-35).

- The water to wine miracle at Cana is often obscured by debate about whether or not the wine was fermented. The Greek word, οἶνος, can mean either fermented or unfermented grape juice (cf. Matt. 9:17). The question about the nature of the wine can surely be answered by looking to Proverbs 23:29-35 and I Peter 4:3. Jesus would not have encouraged an alcoholic drinking party. The remarks of the waiter in John 1:10 do not take away from the conclusion that the wine was unfermented. First, there are many quotes from ancient writers that speak of the superiority of non-intoxicating wine (unfermented or with the alcohol filtered out) see McGuiggan's *The Bible, the Saint and the Liquor Industry*. Additionally, the Greek word μεθύω, translated, "drunk freely," in the NASB or "well drunk" in the KJV, can carry the meaning of "filled or sated", rather than "drunk," see I Corinthians 11:21 where being filled with food and drink in contrast to those who were empty is clearly the meaning in context (**Jn. 2:6-10**).
- The main teaching of the Cana miracle centers on two concerns. The first is the most obvious, the power Jesus had to do what could not be done without power from God. The second is more subtle, but more telling—with the working of the first miracle, Jesus began walking on the road that lead to the cross—note the use of the word "hour" by Jesus, v.4; cf. Jn. 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20 (**Jn. 2:1-11**).
- Jesus response to His mother, "Woman, what have I to do with you," has somewhat of an edge to it. He shows a distance between His ultimate concerns and her concerns as a wedding hostess (**Jn. 2:4**).
- John will use the word "sign," σημεῖον: a signal, to develop the presentation of his Gospel. In the signs Jesus performs, John is more concerned with what they point to or signify beyond themselves; the Synoptic writers prefer "miracle" from δυνάμις: an act of power (**Jn. 2:11**; 2:23; 3:2; 4:54; 6:2,14, 26, 30; 7:31; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18, 37; 20:30).
- John finds the Passover to be the most noteworthy of the Jewish feasts in relationship to Jesus' ministry. Jesus' is the true Passover lamb (**Jn. 2:13**; 6:4; 11:55; and 5:3 in some manuscripts; cf. Jn. 1:29, 36; 19:31-37).
- The Jews had taken away the Court of the Gentiles to make merchandise. They had developed a very profitable money changing operation to allow Jews to use coinage that did not bear the "unclean" marks of Caesar. Additionally, they just happened to have unblemished lambs on hand in case their inspections found fault with those brought by the worshippers. When money becomes more important

than the worship of the Father, Jesus is very displeased. It is interesting that Jesus begins and ends His ministry in Jerusalem by cleansing the temple at the time of Passover (**Jn. 2:14-16**; Matt. 12-16; Mk. 11:15-18; Lk. 19:45-47).

- The concerns of the Father could not be dispassionately overlooked by Jesus (**Jn. 2:17**).
- We get some indication of the year of the first cleansing of the temple as the Jews point out that the refurbishing of the temple had been going on for forty-six years. The project began in 20/19 BC, thus making the year about AD 26/27 (**Jn. 2:20**).
- Jesus is the true fulfillment of the temple as He was, in the most absolute sense, *God with us* (**Jn. 2:19**; cf. Jn. 1:1, 14; Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:21-23).
- Jesus, like the Father, does not deal primarily in outward appearances, but in matters of the heart (**Jn. 2:24-25**; I Sam. 16:7).
- Miraculous manifestations got attention among the people and among the religious establishment. Nicodemus, a leader among the Pharisees, came to check Jesus out. His coming by night is especially mentioned, undoubtedly indicating that he did not want to be seen with Jesus until He passed the muster of the Jewish leaders (**Jn. 2:23; 3:1-2**; cf. Jn. 7:50; 19:39).
- The pride of Nicodemus came between Jesus and access to his heart. When Jesus tells him that he, a notable Rabbi (v. 10), must undergo a fundamental change if he is to be saved, he balks and gives a silly response. Nicodemus was accustomed to telling, not to being told (**Jn. 3:1-9**; cf. Rom. 2:17-24).
- The word "again" in *born again* comes from *ανωθεν*, which more properly means "from above," which would refer to being born spiritually by God's grace. The word could also be used to mean born *again*. Jesus almost surely refers to the former, while Nicodemus decides to be evasive by injecting the absurd idea of entering again into his mother's womb. Spiritual rebirth, as Jews saw it, was for Gentiles, not for them. When we do not like to go where God directs us, we can become ridiculous (**Jn. 3:1-9**).
- I believe Jesus is referring to either the water of John's baptism or to Jewish ceremonial washings in His comments to Nicodemus, since he was expected to know what Jesus meant (cf. v. 10-12). I favor the latter since, in the Jewish context of Jesus' day, ceremony was often given in place of the heart. The heart or spirit must be engaged in a life of service to God. As a Pharisee, Nicodemus

would have relied heavily on the outward things and neglected spiritual concerns (Matt. 23:1-39). Whether or not I am correct on this one, people today must be baptized by the authority of Christ or they cannot be saved (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-4). And in Christian conversion, the water of baptism is a necessity (Acts 8:36; Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5; I Pet. 3:21; Acts 22:16; I Cor. 6:11).

- Jesus attempts to turn Nicodemus to spiritual things by using an analogy between how the spirit works and how the wind works (the Greek word for *spirit* and *wind* are the same, πνευμα. As the wind is invisible, but its work is visible, so the invisible work of the spirit on the heart is visible in the changed actions of a converted person (**Jn. 3:8**).
- Jesus refers to the nature of His atoning death by referencing Moses' lifting up the bronze serpent in the wilderness (**Jn. 3:14**; Num. 21:9; cf. Jn. 8:28; 12:34).
- It is a very costly thing for God to love us. It should be noted that belief requires a response. Almost everybody believes that (cf. Rom. 10:9-10; Lk. 24:47; Jas 2:14-26; Mk. 16:16). The only real question is, "What is required?" The giving of Jesus gives believers a "right" to be saved that "should not" be refused (**Jn. 3:16**; cf. Jn. 1:12).
- The phrase "only begotten" links Jesus to Abraham's son of promise, Isaac, who was a type of Christ (**Jn. 3:16-18**; Gen. 22:1-12; Heb. 11:17-19).
- God is *far more* desirous of salvation than of condemnation (**Jn. 3:17**; I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9).
- Evil hates light. It exposes it for what it is, removing its disguise to reveal its ugliness (**Jn. 3:19-21**; cf. Matt. 7:15; Eph. 5:11-12).
- Note that John chose where he baptized because "much" water was required. A testimony to immersion (**Jn. 3:23**; cf. Acts 8:38-39; Rom. 6:3-4).
- John the Baptizer shows his greatness by willingly stepping back from a very popular ministry to clear the way for Jesus (**Jn. 26-30**; cf. Matt. 11:7-11).
- It is interesting to note that inspiration links belief with obedience (**Jn. 3:36**).

Relationship to the Church

- God will not accept outward correction without inward conversion any more than He will accept that genuine inner conversion does not show its fruit in obedience.

- Jesus will still be very upset if the nature of true worship and service to the Father is obscured by selfish men and women.
- Passion is an indispensable manifestation of devotion to God.
- Standing up for what is right will be opposed by those who seek to do according to their own will rather than God's.
- Shallow faith requires a show.
- It still remains easier to deal with the sins of others than with our own sins.
- True greatness steps back to allow Jesus to be on center stage.
- We bring others to what we appreciate the most.
- Jesus is His own best marketer.

Who is Jesus?

- He is the One with the courage to do what is right, because it is right, no excuses, for God's sake.
- He is the One who tells the heart what it needs to hear, not what it prefers.
- He is the One who works hard to bring salvation to everyone as an individual.
- For reasons I cannot begin to understand, He died that I might live.