

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

### Ch. 2

**M**any believe all spiritual roads lead to the same place. However, Christianity claims not to be an **optional** route to God; its Founder claims it is **the** Truth! The late Chuck Colson argued that *every* worldview must answer this question: "How does it explain **Creation**, the **Fall** and **Redemption**?"

**Creation** deals with origins. Are we evolutionary accidents? The **Fall** tackles evil and suffering. **Redemption** is about the remedy for evil, suffering and sin.

New Age thinking – basically, Eastern religion -- says there's no *personal* God who created and loves us; there's only an underlying "universal spirit." It blames evil and suffering not on human sin but on our failure to realize that we're all just part of God. It calls not for redemption but enlightenment. "Just meditate to get in touch with the divine in you." Doesn't it take more faith to believe that we are divine than it does to believe in a personal, sovereign God who designed and created the universe and each of us?

### **In our most recent episode .....**

John, the lone survivor of Jesus' twelve disciples, is nearing the end of his life. Moving to Ephesus from Jerusalem where he had co-led the early Christian movement, he writes the fourth book of the New Testament, the Gospel of John. It's an intimate narrative about this God/Man Jesus Christ of Nazareth, His mentor and dearest Friend some sixty years earlier.

His purpose for writing: "Jesus provided far more God-revealing signs than are written down in this book. These are written down so you will believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and in the act of believing, have real and eternal life...." (20:30-31)

John opens by describing Jesus as "the Word," the only Son of the living God who came to earth to be born in a barn, to grow up in a carpenter's home, to at age 30 announce that He is the Son of God, then to teach and validate His message by performing miracles, to be named Public Enemy #1 by the religious establishment which convinces Palestine's Roman occupation forces that He's a threat to them. His own disciple, Judas Iscariot, betrays Him, fingering Him for the Roman soldiers who drag Him through an awful night of trials with crowds chanting, "Crucify Him!" And they did. On a rocky crag

outside Jerusalem He's hung between two thieves on a wooden cross that's been called the Hinge of History. There He takes on Himself the sins of all mankind once and for all, purchasing our forgiveness with His own life. Three days later He comes back to life, sealing the victory that can be ours over death and sin, not by working to earn it, or by joining a certain church, but by agreeing with God, by faith, that we're all sinners who need the pardon that Jesus paid for in full.

We meet another John, John the Baptist, sent by God to introduce Jesus as the Jews' Messiah whom their prophets had been promising for centuries. He baptizes Jesus, and God's voice splits the skies at that moment, saying, "This is my Son; I'm pleased with Him!"

## Miracle #1

Walking 70 miles in two days from near Jerusalem, Jesus shows up in Cana near the Sea of Galilee in northern Israel where He did most of His miracles and teaching. They arrive during a Middle Eastern wedding. Let's read John 2:1-11.

### DISCUSS:

Jesus' mother Mary is here, in a starring role, because it may have been the wedding of one of Jesus' younger brothers or sisters.

Unable to email ahead, Jesus and His road-weary Dirty Half-Dozen show up -- six unexpected, thirsty guests who help drain the wine supply pronto, prompting Mary to inform Jesus, "They have no wine." Jesus responds, "Dear woman, why do you involve Me?" He rebukes her respectfully, indicating she really doesn't "get" why He was on earth.

Jesus knew. He'd go to the cross and die for you and me to pay the penalty for my sins and yours, opening the door for each of us to, by faith, be personally connected to God forever. Little did Mary know, but her implied request would trigger Christ's first step toward Golgotha.

Jesus quietly says to the caterers, "Fill the jars with water." Jesus had only to *will* this. The process that requires months, water, vines, grapes, sun and fermentation takes only long enough to fill six ceremonial pots with 180 gallons of clean water.

This was no biggie for Jesus. He'd hung the stars, so it's nothin' to splash water into a pot and transform it into Pinot Noir! With His complete control over all creation, the

Master Vintner easily produces vino at its peak, having the appearance, bouquet and elegance of fine, vintage wine. Jesus had created Adam as a full-grown, fully-functional man, not a helpless infant. So how tough would it be for Him to create the universe, making it *look* billions of years old already when it was new!? (**John 1:3; Hebrews 11:3**) Jesus had demonstrated what happens when He becomes part of life's ordinary situations.

## **DISCUSS:**

### **Jesus Does His Impression of a "Reno Raid."**

Now let's read John 2:12-25.

Having celebrated Passover each year since He was twelve, this would be His first as the announced Messiah. All across Palestine Jewish families were meticulously spring housecleaning, tossing out yeast or any ingredient used for fermentation. This purification was required by the Torah, their holy book. But when Jesus arrives at the temple, the Jews' holiest place, He was grieved and enraged by the corruption there.

Jewish worshippers had to bring oxen, sheep and doves to the temple to be sacrificed. Each animal or fowl was to be without blemish. This was tempting for entrepreneurial priests who had little trouble spotting imperfections. So they'd simply disqualify these critters and demand that the faithful purchase "perfect" sacrifices from merchants inside the temple! Ironically, a cut of each deal went to the temple treasury.

Each Jewish male had to cough up a half-shekel temple tax, payable not in Roman or Greek coins but with a "special temple coin." Human ATM's were happily shelling out temple coins for a "modest" commish of up to 50%. Jesus was ticked, and gathered some cords used to tie up the animals, then fashioned a whip and drove the extortionists right out of the building. As David had prophesied (**Psalm 69**), the Messiah had an all-consuming zeal for preserving the dignity of where the Jews worship God.

But wait -- I thought God *LOVES* sinners. When we come to Christ, He accepts us just the way we are, yet He won't leave us *unchanged*. He begins removing whatever's defiling us because the Bible says the bodies of Christ's followers are God's temple where His Holy Spirit lives. So, He'll patiently, lovingly, intentionally begin cleaning up....or give us the option to start dumping the garbage littering our lives. What do you need Jesus to clear out of your life?

The stunned Jewish leaders greeted Jesus, saying, "Who do You think You are? Prove your authority by showing us a miracle!" Jesus counters, "OK, tear down this temple, and I'll rebuild it three days later." He was speaking of His body which would be crucified, then raised from the dead on the third day. Paul writes, "If Christ was not raised, then all our preaching is useless, and you're still under condemnation for your sins. In that case, all who've died believing in Christ have perished! And if we have hope in Christ only for *this* life, we're the most miserable people in the world. But the fact is that Christ *has* been raised from the dead." (I Corinthians 15:17-20)

Three years later, after Christ rises from that garden tomb, the disciples recall this confrontation. Then they *truly* believe both Jesus and the Scriptures.

**DISCUSS: What sign will it take for you and me to believe?**

Jesus performs other miracles at this Passover while Jews from all over the world had converged on the holy city. His amazing feats convinced many that He was their Messiah. But He's no dummy. He knows you and me inside and out (Psalm 139). Still, He went to the cross to die for you, so that all your sin could be forever forgiven, so that you can spend life-after-death eternally in God's presence instead of in the default option the Bible calls "hell" and "the lake of fire."

If you've never acknowledged that you're a sinner, and that you want Jesus to take up residence in your life, today's the opportunity that may not reappear.

His Deal  
www.HisDeal.org  
george@HisDeal.org  
Copyright © 2019. George Toles. All Rights Reserved.