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John 2 - Part II, The Money Changers

John 2:12: *After this (the wedding) he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days.* There are recorded, at least 10 different times Jesus visited Capernaum and surrounding area. Chorazin and Bethsaida were villages just north of Capernaum, and all are located on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. Since three of the disciples, Andrew, Peter and Phillip, were born in Bethsaida, likely Jesus, along with his disciples stayed in the homes of their families while teaching and working many miracles of healing, mostly in Capernaum. After much work in the area, Jesus rebuked these cities:

Matthew 11:20-24: *20. Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: 21. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Zidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Zidon at the day of judgment, than for you. 23. And thou, Capernaum, which are exalted unto [the (one) lifted to the] heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. 24. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.*

Capernaum, by interpretation is the village of comfort. Notice the special comment concerning Capernaum: *And thou, Capernaum, heaven, shalt be brought down to hell*: The two words *to hell* are the Greek words *heos* ^(g2193) *hades* ^(g86). The word *heos* is used here as an adverb of continuance, which the primary meaning is *until*. It can be translated as, *(up, un) to; (as) far (as), how long*. The word *hades* is composed of the verb (*eido* ^{g1492}) meaning *to see, to perceive*, prefixed with the Greek *alpha* (a), which reverses the meaning. Capernaum was “lifted up to a heavenly understanding” by the teachings of Christ and they evidently rejected them. Jesus’ pronouncement more accurately rendered is, *the one lifted to heaven, shall be brought down until you can’t see, or until unable to perceive* spiritual things. This is similar to the question of Jesus to Nicodemus when explaining that to enter God’s understanding (kingdom of heaven), one must be born from above (KJ - born again): *If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things* (Jn 3:12; cp Isa 55:7-9)? How many today are dwelling in a place of comfort with their own (earthly) understanding and refuse to consider the true teachings (heavenly things) that heal and cleanse the heart, all because it would put them into an uncomfortable position with regards to church, family and peers?

Matthew 11:25-26: *25. At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord (possessor) of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. 26. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.* Many times when I shared the correct understanding of the Father and Son from the Bible, instead of the person studying for themselves, they would go ask their pastor, and believe what he said. Every person who considers themselves to be followers of Christ need search the scriptures and seek God for understanding. That way if a message is given via any human being, the Spirit will impress your heart as to the truth. Wake up!! Was it not the church leaders in Jesus’ day that caused the majority to reject Christ? Today, is it not the church leadership keeping people in bondage and darkness with their doctrines?

John 2:13-17: 13. *And the Jews' Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14. And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: 15. And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; 16. And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. 17. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up (Ps 69:9).* Passover is a major feast of Israel when people from surrounding nations gather in Israel to observe the feast. It was convenient for them to purchase animals for sacrifice, instead of bringing them. Additionally, Foreign and Roman money had to be converted to the temple shekel (Ex 30:13), required annually by men 20 years and older (Nu 1:3) who were able to go to war, as an atonement for their souls.

Merchandise: When viewed allegorically, these verses are describing a condition of buying and selling. Jewish leaders had made the church literally, a *house of merchandise*. The Greek word for *merchandise* is *emporion* ^(g1712), which in English is *a market*, from where we get our English word *emporium*, a place where wares are sold and traded. Jesus was saying, "Don't make my Father's house a market place." Churches today are selling their spiritual merchandise (animals - symbols for thoughts) and exchanging **their** spiritual riches (money) for yours (cf Pr 14:18, 24). In other words, lay aside your understanding, which may be more accurate, and receive theirs, i.e. whatever a particular church may teach. Religion today has become a multi-billion dollar business of spiritual merchandise. Our instruction is to *Buy the truth, and sell it not; wisdom, and instruction, and understanding* (Pr 23:23 YLT).

John 2:18-22: 18. *Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign show you unto us, seeing that you do these things? 19. Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. 20. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? 21. But he spake of the temple of his body. 22. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.*

Scourge: (verse 15, whip/lash) What sign show you unto us: Implying, "by whose authority are you doing this? You are acting like a prophet, give us a sign or a miracle as proof." The Jews took Jesus' answer in the most literal sense. Neither did the disciples understand until after Jesus' resurrection. Jesus made a *scourge of small cords* when he drove out the money changers. Here is some interesting text: **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12:** 9. *Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor. 10. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falls; for he hath not another to help him up. 11. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? 12. And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.* When Jesus sent out the disciples to preach, he sent them by twos. Looking at the scourge of cords inwardly, we can see the components of a threefold cord in verse 22: 1) experience (resurrection); 2) the written word; and 3) words Jesus speaks to the conscience. We go through the experience, we see it in scripture, and Jesus explains how to understand it. Put these together, and they are not easily broken. Is it possible, however, to misinterpret an experience? Absolutely! What I have seen for the most part, comes from the misunderstanding of scriptural concepts. A few of the major ones are doctrines of the Trinity, Rapture, Immortality of the Soul, Satan, Tongues, and even grace and faith.

John 2:23-25: 23. *Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. 24. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, 25. And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.* It is the writings of John that gives us the approximate length of the ministry of Jesus. This is the first Passover he attended, and it was during the third Passover that He was crucified.

The word (*semeion* ^{g4592}) rendered as *miracle* is properly *an indication, or sign*. KJ put *miracle* 23 of 77 appearances. The signs Jesus did were to heal the sick, open the eyes of the blind, make the lame to walk and raise the dead. How many literal miracles have you witnessed and how many spiritual healing have you seen? Did any of these change your heart? Herod hoped to see Jesus work a miracle (Lk 23:8), but he never put forth any effort to seek Jesus. Had he seen one do you think that he would have believed? It is receiving the understanding of what is in your heart that shows what needs to change. A big part of that is how we have been taught to perceive God.

Jesus told the multitude that followed him to Capernaum, *Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves* (Jn 6:26 RSV). In their situation, what is missing from the three fold cord? They experienced five loaves of literal bread being multiplied for enough to feed over 5000 people and still have 12 baskets of left overs (Jn 6:5-13). But did they find scripture (bread - Lv 24:5-9; Jn 6:51) pertaining to that experience and did they ask Jesus the meaning of the sign? Is this not the way to validate what has happened to you? The understanding of spiritual concepts received into the heart is what changes people. Intellectually, the people knew that something supernatural had happened, but in the end most believed the doctrines of man over what Jesus taught. Many things in the Bible are written in a generic form so that they can apply to many, although their walk in life may differ from others. Some incidents can be complicated and require studying many scriptures (i.e. Godhead). However, no one is going to see it unless they have actually gone through the experience, they consider it and then the Spirit explains it to them.

Jesus did not commit himself unto them... for he knew what was in man: When I joined a Church, in all sincerity, I was committing myself to Christ, and I believe that the majority start their walk with a sincere heart. After many years of study and having discovered that I was taught much error, I came to realize that I was actually baptized into the beliefs of the Church, i.e. what the leaders of that church believed about the cross, and not what the Bible teaches. Jesus committed himself to his heavenly Father, when he could have easily become head of the earthly Church. Where is your commitment today? Are you doing independent studies to verify, or nullify, what you have been taught? Jesus is our example in all things, and we should seek His understanding as how to conduct our lives and to grow in his grace and knowledge (2Pt 3:18), and into the stature and fullness of Christ (Eph 4:13).

Proverbs 31: 10-11, 18: *10. Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. 11. The heart of her husband (Christ) doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.18. She perceives that her merchandise is good: her candle goes not out by night.* (all verses, 10 - 31, should be read). A woman is a symbol, outwardly for a church (2Cor 11:2; Jer 6:2), and inwardly as the mind-set of individuals of the church (cp Gal 4:22-27 with Rv 17:18; 21:2 & Pr 25:28). The opposite of the bride of Christ is the woman with mystery stamped in her mind (Rv 17:5). This is the mind-set of mankind who walk in men's understanding.

Here are some verses from another Bible version: *10. A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. 11. Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value.18. She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night* (NIV). Merchandise and trading are from same Hebrew word. A virtuous woman (mind-set) will only change her understanding for that which comes from God, and not man. Amen.