

BIBLE SERIES: **"EXPLORING OUR AWESOME BIBLE"**

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JOHN 4; LUKE 4 SAMARITAN WOMAN; CAPERNAUM AS CHRIST'S CENTER



Jesus' ministry, just as John the Baptist had predicted to his disciples, would continue to grow while John's mission would continue to decrease.

This is clear in chapter 4 of John. We read, "Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples). He left Judea and departed again to Galilee" (John 4:1-2).

First of all, why didn't Jesus personally baptize? Although nothing explicit is said about the reason, a parallel situation sheds light on it when Paul later explained why he did not baptize many people. He asked, "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or where you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name" (1 Cor. 1:13-15). He also later said, "Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet we know Him thus no longer" (2 Cor. 5:16).

The basic problem is that immature Christians could easily look to *who* did the baptizing instead of *with whom* they are making the baptism covenant—with God the Father and Jesus Christ. This is one reason top leaders in the Church don't usually do baptisms, so no one will boast about it. Or imagine being baptized by Jesus Christ Himself. It would be so easy to get a swelled head, so this is a logical reason why Jesus didn't personally do baptisms.

Next, due to His growing popularity, He noticed the increasing jealousy and hostility of the Pharisees and decided to head back to Galilee for it was not yet "His hour" to be arrested. Nevertheless, John's fearless preaching against the sins of Herod Antipas did land him in jail. We read, "Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him concerning Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, also added this, above all, that he shut John up in prison" (Luke 3:18-20).

Unger explains, "Herod Antipas, a son of Herod the Great by a Samaritan woman, Malthace, therefore non-Jewish by birth, was tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (4 B.C.-A.D. 39). He made himself odious to his Jewish subjects by his incestuous marriage to his niece Herodias, former wife of his half-brother Herod

Philip. This wickedness was denounced by John the Baptist and resulted in his beheading" (p. 478).

Consequently, only Jesus Christ's ministry was now active. As He headed toward Galilee, the most direct route was through Samaria, although this was to a Jew "foreign" and "unclean" territory. Unger notes, "Samaria was populated by a mixed people [mostly from Babylon]...when Israel fell in 722 B.C. They used the Pentateuch and worshipped the Lord. Racially and religiously mongrel, they were abhorred by the Jews. Jesus' witness to the woman at the well of Sychar, in the heart of the Plain of Shechem under the shadow of Mt. Ebal, showed His compassionate concern for the lost which transcends all social and religious prejudice" (p. 550).

We read, "So He came to a city in Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour [12:00 noon]. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, 'Give Me a drink. For his disciples had gone away to buy food'" (John 4:5-8).

Being a Samaritan woman, she was shocked that a Jew would even speak to her. He then used the analogy of drinking water with drinking of God's spirit and she asked Him for this water. He revealed to her how much He could know about her and told her to bring her husband. When she said she didn't have one, he answered, "You have well said you have no husband, for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband, in that you spoke truly" (4:17-18).

She then answered, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our father worshipped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father *in spirit and truth*; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship *in spirit and truth*.' The woman said to Him, 'I know that Messiah is coming' (who is called Christ). 'When He comes,

He will tell us all things.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you am He’” (4:19-26).

This is a great revelation--that Christianity would be different in that it would no longer depend on a place for worship, but that it would be more important having God’s spirit and with what intention you worship God than the place itself. As Paul later clarified when he said, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

The Samaritan woman was very impressed and brought others to Him. When His disciples arrived, they were shocked that He had been speaking with a Samaritan woman. Rabbinic teaching stated a man should not speak on the street with any woman, even one’s own wife. But Christ dismissed such traditions of men. When the Samaritans came to hear Him, Jesus saw the potential of conversions and said to His disciples, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!....And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, ‘He told me all that I ever did’” (John 4:34-39). Jesus stayed there for 2 days and many more believed in Him. We thus see He was not a respecter of persons.

When He arrived in Galilee, He was met with skepticism. “For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country” (4:44).

First, He went to Cana, where He had done the first miracle and while He was there, an official of Herod Antipas’ court made the 25 mile journey from Capernaum to plead for his son, who was about to die from an illness. Jesus was momentarily reluctant, since it seemed all they ever wanted from Him were signs and miracles. Yet, the nobleman does not take this reluctance as offensive, and humbly insists Jesus go to heal his son. Jesus is impressed with the man’s insistence and faith, and declares his petition has been granted. As the man returns to Capernaum, his servants mention his son was well. We read, “So the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus said to him, ‘Your son lives.’ And he himself believed, and his whole household. This again is the second sign Jesus did when He had come out of

Judea into Galilee” (4:53-54). Here we see John’s focus of Jesus as the Son of God, who came from heaven with great power to fulfill His Father’s will.

By the way, how did John remember all of these events so clearly? There are three main reasons:

1. John was in most cases a direct eyewitness of the events. Although at the time, he didn’t fully understand what Jesus was saying or doing, later, it all became clear, as he mentioned in his first epistle, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life. The life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ; and these things we write to you that your joy may be full” (1 John 1:1-4).

2. John could remember because, upon receiving God’s spirit, it would “bring to your remembrance *all* things that I have said to you” (John 14:26).

3. Finally, by the way people remembered the sayings. Unlike today, people in those days did not have easy access to notebooks to remember things, but had to use their mental ability much more than now. Rabbis would say, ‘The ideal student is the one who memorizes everything without forgetting a single letter.’ It was common then for disciples to repeat or recite the master’s sayings until they had memorized every single word and could retain them for a very long time before they were written down.

From Cana, Jesus went to His hometown, Nazareth. At this time, some of his disciples went back to their homes and to their jobs, since they weren’t yet “full time” disciples and had to provide for their families.

We read, “Then Jesus returned to the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. And He taught in the synagogues, being glorified by all. So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read” (Luke 4:14-16).

Harper’s Commentary mentions, ‘As Luke has repeatedly made clear, Jesus is no rebel; he lives and works within his tradition. He regularly attends the synagogue and participates as all male members were

permitted to do, by reading Scripture and commenting. He follows the regular practice: stand to read, sit to comment. The passage read, Isaiah 61:1-2, is his choice. The closing line alludes to the joyful restoration of persons and property in the year of Jubilee. Jesus offers one comment but it summarizes who He is and what He is doing. He understands Himself as having received God's spirit and fulfilling prophecy. The response is mixed: admiration, wondering, doubt."

It is important to note Jesus stopped reading as He came to the words, "the day of vengeance of our God." This was, of course, because He would only fulfill the first part of that prophecy, and only carry out the second part at His glorious return.

Then, things took a turn for the worse. They began to question His authority to say such things and claim to be the Messiah. After all, He was "Joseph's son," (Luke 4:22), the Boy they had seen grow up in their home town. So Jesus reproached them for their lack of faith, saying, "You will surely say this proverb to me, physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country." So all they wanted were signs and miracles.

He then reminded them how a prophet is not recognized in his own home town and how Elijah healed the son of the widow of Zarephath, a Phoenician town, and how Elisha healed Naaman, a Syrian, because there was such little faith in Israel. The leaders of the synagogue were enraged and took him to a cliff to kill him, but he slipped by them and fled to Capernaum. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* mentions, "Luke no doubt describes a miraculous escape from the angry crowd. This pattern is seen throughout the rest of Jesus' ministry. Jesus went to the Jews; they rejected Him; He told of Gentile participation in the kingdom; some Jews wanted to kill Him. But he was not killed until the proper time, when He chose to die (Luke 23:46).

So He rejected Nazareth as a base for His ministry and headed toward Capernaum. Actually, it had already been prophesied that He would set up His center of operations in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, and He chose Capernaum (which means, Village of Nahum). We read, "And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'The land of Zebulun and the land of

Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death, Light has dawned'" (Is. 9:1-2).

In Capernaum, as was His custom, He continued keeping the Sabbath and going to the synagogue. Once, at the synagogue was a man with a demon, who said, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are--the Holy One of God!" But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be quiet, and come out of him!' And when the demon had thrown him in their midst, it came out of him and did not hurt him.' Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, 'What a word this is. For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.' And the report about Him went out into every place in the surrounding region" (Lk. 4:34-37). So the demon world feared Jesus.

We now begin the main ministry of Christ, which takes place in the surrounding areas of Capernaum. *MacMillan's Bible Atlas* mentions, "Apart from several journeys, Jesus' entire activity before his final departure for Jerusalem was concentrated around the Sea of Galilee. The first apostles were fishermen; sometimes Jesus taught standing in boats, with the crowds listening on the shore. The Sermon on the Mount was delivered according to the tradition near Capernaum, the site is said to be located on the height just behind Capernaum. Only occasionally did Jesus upbraid the cities that refused to repent ('Woe to you Chorazin, woe to you Bethsaida. Capernaum shall be brought down to Hades.' Mt. 11:21-23).

"On the Sea of Galilee there are frequent storms. During one such storm, Jesus slept while sailing across to the Gadarenes and upon his awakening the sea was suddenly becalmed....Other events ...pertaining to the Sea of Galilee and its surrounding are the Multiplication of Loaves and Fishes at a lonely spot near the town of Bethsaida; the story of Jesus' walking on the water; and Peter's attempt to follow his example." (p. 231). Next time read Luke 5.