

## JESUS, ISRAEL & PROPHECY

### Week 2 – Then Jesus Came From Galilee

Love is a thread/theme that we find throughout Scripture. When is the first time “love” is mentioned in Scripture?

Genesis 22:1-2 – which we looked at last week when we saw the “lamb” introduced. *“Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, ‘Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ Then He said, ‘Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.’”*

It is here that “love” is first mentioned. Gen. 22 tells us of Abraham and Isaac; however, it is the account of a father sacrificing his only son whom he loved. And in this son was wrapped up God’s promise. This is the Gospel!

Romans 5:8 – *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

What about our love for God? May our love abound more and more (Phil. 1:9).

The story continues. . .

. . . “Then Jesus Came From Galilee” – the title of this week’s lesson. A simple but powerful statement.

The Jewish people watched and waited for the Messiah. And God delivered on His promise to send the Redeemer – because God is faithful to His word.

“. . . when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law. . . .”

In that day, Jesus came - He made His entrance into this sin-filled world – being born of a virgin. He entered the world through humble beginnings – being born as a Jew in Bethlehem in Israel.

Thirty years following His birth, Jesus came to the Jordan River. He traveled from His home in Galilee to the Jordan River – a 60+ mile walk! He came to begin His public ministry at age 30 (Luke 3:23). Priests began their ministry in Israel at age 30 (Num. 4:3). So, what does that have to do with Jesus? Jesus came into this world as Prophet, Priest, and King. As Prophet - He is the Word; prophets spoke the word from God. As Priest - He offered Himself as THE sacrifice – the ultimate sacrifice for sin! As King - He will return as the conquering King – “King of Kings” (I Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; Rev. 19:16).

Jesus stepped out of obscurity to be announced to Israel. Obscurity? Jesus stepped out of Nazareth in Galilee. Nazareth was not a place frequented by the prominent Rabbis of that time. That’s important for us to know. Why did the Rabbis not frequent Nazareth?

Actually Nazareth was scorned by Judeans. The Judeans were those from the kingdom of Judah where Jerusalem was located. The Pharisees and the Sadducees primarily resided in Jerusalem which was in Judea. Jerusalem was known as the home (of Rabbinism) – of the Rabbis – of education. Nazareth was far from the Rabbinical world! Far from the world of the religious leaders. Therefore, Galileans were looked down upon by the religious leadership in Jerusalem. In fact, there was a general contempt in Rabbinic circles for all that was Galilean. Among the religious leadership, “Galilean Fool!” was a common expression. Nazareth was looked upon as a habitation of the *Am-ha-arets* – country people who, by Judean standards, were considered uneducated. This is where the Messiah – the Promised One of Israel grew up – and conducted ministry during most of His three years of public ministry at His first coming. Was it a mistake that Jesus lived in Nazareth in Galilee? NO!

Jesus was sending a message to the Jewish people. He located Himself away from Jerusalem – from the center of Rabbinism – far from the Rabbis. The Rabbis had added many manmade “do’s” and “don’t’s” to the Scripture. The Rabbis had focused on the letter of the law – the outward actions. Jesus taught the spirit of the law – the heart behind the law. Jesus taught and demonstrated that obeying the “letter of the law” was and is a matter of physical action – external works. Jesus lambasted the religious leadership for performing charitable deeds for the express purpose of being seen by others. He told them not to sound the trumpet before they engaged in outward deeds! Jesus railed at them for standing on the street corners and praying for the purpose of being seen by men. And, He told them not to make it evident that they were fasting.

Throughout the OT, God required a changed heart – a right heart attitude (Gen. 15:6; Psa. 51; Hab. 2:4; John 3:3ff. . . .) The law couldn’t save because man can’t keep the law. Therefore, the law only condemned. The law did not extend grace! So why did God give the law to the Jewish people? Psalm 19:7 tells us that the law is good – it reflects Who God is – He is holy. God’s standards are perfect. Man is the problem; we’re sinners. The law was given to show us that we can’t keep the law. We need a Savior. Psalm 19:7 also tells us that the law restores the soul. How does the law restore the soul? It highlights our need of Jesus!

When Jesus came as Immanuel – God in the flesh – He taught the spirit of the law which requires a changed heart! The spirit of the law – goes beyond “thou shalt not murder” to “don’t hate.” The spirit of the law goes beyond “don’t commit adultery;” the spirit of the law tells us not to look upon another with lust in your heart!

Why is Nazareth so significant as the town where Jesus lived? The OT prophesied that the Messiah would have a lowly birth.

Isa. 11:1 – “*There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.*” (ESV – “from the stump of Jesse.”)

When Jesus was born, there was nothing royal about the Davidic dynasty. The royal authority of the house of David had been dormant for 600 years when Jesus came to

this earth. When Babylon took the southern kingdom of Judah captive – when the Jews were carried away into exile in Babylon (three deportations between 605 BC and 586 BC), the Davidic dynasty appeared to be destroyed. However, from Isaiah 11 we see that life remained in the stump and roots of the Davidic line. That life was to manifest itself in new growth in the Messiah – the Rod and Branch of Jesse. Jesse was King David’s father. In Jesus’ genealogy in Matthew 1, kings are noted. In Matt. 1:11, Jeconiah is the last in David’s line that we see as a king. A curse was placed on him (Jer. 22:30). He was not a successful king; he only reigned for three months before he surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar’s army. Therefore, none of Jeconiah’s descendants would sit on the throne. So, Shealtiel, Zerubbabel (vv. 12ff) . . . not kings – down to Joseph. YET the line of David was the kingly line. Jesus came in that dormant time. Jesus came as a Branch coming from an apparently dead stump. BUT God can bring forth life. God is a God of restoration! In that stump – there is the hope of growth – of life. That was God’s message through Jesus as the BRANCH! In Isaiah 11:1, we see this Branch (Messianic title for Jesus) not named after David – but after his father, Jesse, who was much less famous than King David. This is still another reference to Jesus’ lowly entrance into this world.

Nazareth sat in a slight depression high in the mountains overlooking the Jezreel Valley. This made it a perfect place for a garrison of Roman soldiers to keep watch over the region. They had their own observation tower. A group of soldiers in a tiny town – can lead to trouble. Consequently, the Jews of Nazareth gained a nasty reputation for immorality. Gabriel came to Mary in Nazareth and told her that the Holy Spirit would come upon her and she, as a virgin, would conceive in her womb and bring forth a son – Immanuel – God with us – the Messiah. Mary would carry a child out of wedlock. How do you think that was received in Nazareth? When the disciple Nathaniel heard that Jesus grew up in Nazareth, he said, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46) That was how Nazareth was known! In fact, some connected “Nazareth” with a word which meant *germ* – something despised! Despised! May this give us a greater understanding of what Jesus gave up for us! He willingly gave up His glory in heaven (NEVER giving up His deity), took on flesh, and came to earth to be HATED, to be despised and rejected – because of God’s great love for us! Nazareth – *nazara* in Hebrew which means to guard, to watch. The root word for *nazara* – the root word for Nazareth - is *nezer* which means Branch – Messianic title (Jer. 23:5-6; Isa. 4:2; Isa. 6:12-13; Isa. 11:1; Zech. 3:8; Zech. 6:12-13).

We have in Isaiah 11:1 the picture of a tree which has been cut down, leaving only a seemingly dead stump. BUT, a single shoot remains growing low, near to the ground, eventually bearing fruit. Jesus is the Branch – One Who would bear fruit. And we are the fruit!

At His first coming, Jesus proclaimed, “Here I am – coming from lowly beginnings. Just as my home town has been despised – I will also be despised and rejected.” Isaiah 53 prophesied that the Messiah would be DESPISED and rejected. Jesus grew up in Nazareth – spent 30 years in Nazareth. He was known as “Jesus of Nazareth” (John 1:45). Nazareth was an obscure, immoral, germ of a place. From God’s perspective – it

had to be. Nazareth speaks to what Jesus gave up for us. He gave up His glory in heaven – for us. Jesus NEVER gave up His deity. Jesus is eternally God! Perhaps you are going through a “it had to be” time in your life? You might be going through less than desirable circumstances. Remember - Jesus gave up His glory for you and for me – out of love. We need to focus on God’s perspective!

Jesus is the friend of sinners. As the One Who would be despised and rejected by men – He ministered to those who were despised and rejected – those from Nazareth in the Galilee. God’s grace reaches down to the lowest of the low.

Another reason why it was so essential that the Messiah reside in Galilee: prophecy. “It had to be” because God decreed it – it was prophesied! It had to be fulfilled! Jesus had to walk among this area to fulfill Isaiah 9:1-2 - *Nevertheless the gloom will not be upon her who is distressed, As when at first He lightly esteemed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward more heavily oppressed her, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, in Galilee of the Gentiles.*<sup>2</sup> *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.*” Who is that light? Jesus!

More than 700 years before Jesus’ birth, Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would settle in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali. Capernaum is in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. Capernaum was Jesus’ base of operation in Galilee (Matt. 4:13).

Galilee was the frontier in the northern portion of Israel between the Holy Land and the “external world” – all the other lands! It was the buffer. In fact, the northern tribes were directly in the path of all the invaders of Israel from the north.

In the Assyrian invasion of 722 BC, the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali were the first ones to be carried off into exile – to Assyria. Some of the Jews were left behind in the land of Israel. The ones left behind intermarried with the Assyrians. Thus, these people were neither fully Hebrews nor fully Gentiles. Galilee became known as “Galilee of the Gentiles.”

Another reason for the name “Galilee of the Gentiles” - one of the most important trade routes in the Middle East was situated near the Sea of Galilee (“Via Maris”). Traders came along this route from Gentile nations. How OF GOD is that? The Jews were to be God’s witnesses to the Gentiles and they, for the most part, were not (i.e. Jonah). So God brought the Gentile merchants and traders through Israel.

When the Jewish people as a nation, a people group, continued NOT to witness to the Gentiles, and as they continued to worship idols, what did God do? He used the Assyrians to take the Northern Kingdom into captivity – bringing them to Gentile Assyria in 722 BC. And He used the Babylonians to take the Southern Kingdom into captivity – bringing them to Gentile Babylon in three deportations between 605 BC and 586 BC. They remained in Babylon for 70 years (Jer. 25:11; II Chron. 36:20-21).

Daniel was a faithful Jew who was taken to Babylon. Results: I believe King Nebuchadnezzar, a Gentile man, came to faith in the God of Israel (Daniel 4 – Nebuchadnezzar’s pride, humiliation, praise of God). We see the Magi who were under

Daniel's supervision. Daniel shared the promise of the Messiah w/ the Magi and the Magi traveled to Jerusalem to find the King of the Jews! God used the Jewish people as His witnesses in spite of themselves. Does He use us in spite of us?

Jesus' living and ministering in the Galilee of the Gentiles was so in keeping with God's plan. It was God's plan that both Jews and Gentiles come to know Him through the Messiah.

Isa. 49:6 – *“Indeed He says, ‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.’”*

God promised the Jewish people when He made the covenant with Abraham that all the families of the earth would be blessed through them – through Abraham's descendants. The Messiah would come through the Jewish line and offer salvation to both Jews and Gentiles!

Do we see part of the big picture of God's plan – part of the story - just in seeing the “why” of Galilee and Nazareth? Do we now understand why Jesus spent His youth and the first part of His earthly ministry in Nazareth in Galilee of the Gentiles?

He would be despised and rejected.

He would make a statement against the Jewish religious leadership by living away from them.

He would be living closer to the Gentiles because, while He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 15:24), and He was sent to restore Israel – He would be a light to the nations!

At age 30, Jesus traveled from Galilee to the Jordan River – a 60+ mile walk! He came to begin His public ministry. Jesus stepped out of obscurity to be announced to Israel.

CONSIDER: Jesus waited 30 years in Nazareth performing simple duties at home – simple duties at the carpenter's shop – knowing all the time that He was God incarnate – God in the flesh; knowing all the time that there was a lost world. Knowing that there were those who were waiting and watching for Him. Thirty years – living within God's plan of redemption – waiting for the right time. And – it was NOW!

Matthew 3:13 – *“Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him.”* “Then Jesus came. . .” - “came” speaks of the arrival of an official to take a public role. Jesus stepped out of obscurity, and He stepped into the public's eye to declare the very reason for which He came, and that was to identify Himself with sinners. He Who had no sin, took His place among those who had no righteousness. He who was without sin went down to the Jordan River – to be immersed - into a baptism that was only for sinners. John's baptism was a baptism of repentance, and Jesus, in submitting to this baptism was saying loudly and clearly, “I take My place with sinners.” He who knew no sin identified with sinners. His ministry began that way. How fitting. He didn't come just

to teach. He didn't come just to set an example. He didn't come to establish Himself as a role model. He didn't come to be a moralist. He didn't come to be a revolutionary. He came to identify with sinners. At His death He was numbered with the transgressors – Jesus died on the cross flanked by two thieves. And there, in His baptism, He identified with sinners. Even in His birth, He identified with sinners. He was the Child of Mary – Mary was a sinner. Jesus came to die!

Jesus' immersion into the waters by John was a symbol of His death. I believe it was a symbol of His dying as He went down into that water, and His immersion was a symbol of His rising as He came out. His baptism looked forward to His death and His resurrection. What a proclamation He made at the beginning of His ministry. He came to die!

*Matt. 3:16-17 - When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'*

As Jesus came up out of the water, the text tells us that the heavens were open to Him.

Why do we have the Spirit appearing? Firstly – here we have the anointing of Jesus by the Holy Spirit. *Messiah* in Hebrew means anointed. *Christ* in the Greek means anointed. The Jewish people were looking for the Messiah – the Anointed One. It was part of the STORY – that the Messiah would be Anointed. Messiah means Anointed! Psalm 2 talks about THE Anointed of God Who is the Messiah – Who is the Son of God – Who is God!

The Spirit appearing is a fulfillment of prophecy.

*Isa. 61:1-2 - "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn."*

The Spirit anointed God the Son for service. In Acts 10:38, Luke states "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit."

The Spirit descended like a dove. Why a dove? (This is the only time the Spirit is ever seen in Scripture as a dove) Of what significance was a dove to a Jewish person? Consider sacrifice with me. We've got to think Jewishly when we read the Gospels. God gave the Jewish people the sacrificial system. Animals without blemish were the sin-bearers in Israel. Innocent animals were sacrificed morning and evening to atone/to cover sin – UNTIL the Anointed One would come and sacrifice Himself as the ultimate sacrifice – the ultimate sin-bearer. Re: the dove and sacrifice - the dove was the most common sacrificial animal. Bulls were for the rich. Lambs were for the upper middle class. A dove was the sin offering for almost everybody, the common folks. The Spirit of God descended in a form that speaks to God's GRACE – God opening the way to all

people – to the lowest of the low. The dove – as a sin offering - descending at Jesus’ baptism - is also a reminder of the necessity that there **MUST** be a sacrifice for sin. Jesus, in His baptism – His identification with sinful man – was anointed not only for ministry but also for His death. He was anointed to be **THE** sacrifice.

There was one other part to His commissioning – the beginning of His public ministry - the Word of the Father. Matthew 3:17 - "*And lo, a voice from Heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'*"

God was saying, I accept My Son as the sacrifice.

With Jesus in the Jordan, and the Spirit descending upon Him, and the Father calling out from heaven, we see the Tri-unity of God. God the Father’s words at Jesus’ baptism are directly from the Hebrew Scriptures. “This is My beloved Son” is a direct quote from Psalm 2:7. In Whom I am well pleased” is a direct quote from Isaiah 42:1 - “*Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.*” At His Second Coming, Jesus will rule over a kingdom in which justice prevails throughout the world. The Millennial Kingdom is not for Israel alone. All the nations of the world will experience the righteousness and justice of the Messiah King! In Isaiah 42, God the Father described His presentation of the Messiah as the Servant to Israel **AND** to the Gentiles.

Did Israel hear those words from God the Father at Jesus’ baptism? Israel was and is a nation that is spiritually blinded - as a **NATION** - to God’s glory; and they are deafened to God’s truth (Isa. 6). Remember, however, individual Jewish people have come to faith in Jesus. **AND** - remember, through the **NATION’S** rejection of Jesus as their Messiah – salvation has come to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:11) – so that we would provoke them to jealousy!

Within Judaism, Rabbis spoke of a “voice” from heaven – “bath-qol” – which means “daughter voice” - which spoke of Divine communication. We find information regarding this Rabbinic teaching in extrabiblical sources. There’s no chapter and verse from Scripture to support this. History, however, documents this belief among the Rabbis. When God did not send any prophets to Israel for 430 years - after the prophet Malachi, among the Rabbis there was an inordinate desire for special communication from God! God was setting the stage for Jesus’ first coming. John was the first prophet following Malachi – following the 430 years of silence from God. John proclaimed the Messiah! And at Jesus’ baptism, God spoke, “This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased.” Did the Rabbis hear? There’s absolutely no indication in Scripture that they heard. In fact, most of the Rabbis disregarded Jesus! Most rejected Him. **BUT** we know of some who came to faith in Jesus – Nicodemus. Others: John 12:42; John 19:38; Acts 6:7; Acts 18:18; Acts 15:5.

Jesus is King but His throne, at His first coming, is going to be a cross. He is King, but He laid His life down to be a sin offering. At His first public act, Jesus identifies with sinners and His baptism pictures His death. By being anointed with the Holy Spirit, He

begins His ministry that will lead to His sacrifice. And, by God the Father's words, He is accepted as the worthy sacrifice. What an announcement to the world!

Here is the Creator of the universe giving up His glory to identify with mankind and die in our place. What should be our response? Francis Chan in *Crazy Love* states, "God is calling us to a passionate love relationship with Him. When you are wildly in love with someone – it changes everything!" We can each individually adjust our life – how we live daily in His presence - how we relate to Him – knowing that He is God and we are NOT. Or we can stay the same!!!!

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- Where are we going in moving forward? What will we discuss as we learn more about our beautiful Savior?
- Why did John the Immerser's baptism draw all Jerusalem, Judea, and those from around the Jordan River? Was John's baptism unique? John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. God had called Israel as a nation to repent!
- Jesus, as a Rabbi, as a teacher, called disciples. Was calling disciples typical in Jesus' day? We'll talk about discipleship in Jesus' day.
- Why did Jesus perform miracles? The Rabbis taught that there were three miracles that could only be performed by the Messiah. What were those miracles?
- Jesus' first miracle was at a wedding? Do we realize how significant this is?
- And Jesus cleansed the Temple in Jerusalem – the first cleansing – John 2. Why would the Temple need cleansing?
- He drove out the money changers who were charging exorbitant prices for the Temple animals – for sacrifice – in the Court of the Gentiles. So?
- Did Jesus minister to Gentiles?
- Did Jesus tell of His second coming?

TO BE CONTINUED. . . .

#### Questions:

Any V8 moments? Share one or two.

What was the significance of Jesus' baptism?

Share themes you've observed in your reading of Scripture. Have you followed those themes through the Bible? If so – what is the message of the specific themes?

How does falling in love with Jesus look?

#### Suggested Homework:

Write down questions you have regarding prophecy – and turn it in during class on 9/24.

Begin a journal of the themes you encounter in Scripture. Ask questions about those themes.

Read week 3's handout when you receive it.