

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series you may learn how to build up the Christian Church. Two teachers will do Bible study together from John 2. We will use “the five steps” method of Bible study. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. You may join our Bible study every week by preparing for the next Bible study. You may also gather a few people around you and use this method of studying the Bible together. Doing Bible study together with a few other Christians is one of the best ways to grow to maturity as a Christian.

(S) **STEP 1. READ**

Let us read John 2:1-25 together. When you are two or more people, take turns to read one verse each until you have completed the reading. Due to shortage of time, please read John 2:1-25 for yourself.

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in John 2:1-25. “Which truth in this passage is important for you?” or “Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?” Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(S) An important truth for me is in John 2:11 about Jesus revealing his glory by a miraculous sign. The “glory” of the Lord Jesus Christ is “*all the divine attributes shining through the veil of his human nature*”. One example of his glory is his grace and truth. In John 1:14-18 John says that “we have seen his glory ... full of grace and truth”. *To see* his glory means *to examine and to reflect on* his divine attributes. Here, his glory is the grace and truth that are manifested in all his works and words. Another example of manifesting his glory is *his miraculous signs*. In John 2:11, Jesus revealed his glory by a miraculous sign. He revealed his divine attributes by turning water into wine at a wedding feast. Here, the glory of Jesus Christ is his perfect moral values, his generosity and his infinite love and power. He revealed his perfect moral values by honouring the institution of marriage. He revealed his divine generosity by supplying abundant wine and thus helping people out of their embarrassment. He also revealed that his infinite love for people is made effective by his equally infinite power. Because Jesus Christ throughout the Old and New Testament was revealing his glory, that is, his divine attributes, I want to discover his glory, look carefully at his glory, study his glory and reflect on the meaning of his glory for my life.

(T) An important truth for me is in John 2:24-25 about Jesus not entrusting himself or his cause to everyone. When the crowds at Jerusalem saw the miraculous signs Jesus was doing, many *trusted* in him (23). However, Jesus did *not entrust* himself to them, because he knew who they were. This means that Jesus did not view all these individuals who believed in him as being true believers. Only Jesus knows all people. Only Jesus knows what is in the heart of all people. Only Jesus knows when a person is genuinely born again. Jesus did not need to listen to the testimony concerning any particular person, because his own penetrating eyes were able to look into the very depths of every person’s heart. In John chapter 1, Jesus did not need anybody to tell him who Simon was, when he saw him for the first time. His own penetrating eyes saw who Simon was. Jesus also did not need anybody to tell him who Nathanael was, when he saw him for the first time. He knew that Nathanael was an Israelite in whom there was nothing false. Thus, in John chapter 2, Jesus knew that the faith of many people in Jerusalem was not a genuine saving faith. With his penetrating all-seeing eyes he read the secrets of people’s hearts. He knew their thoughts, motives and attitudes. And in John chapter 3, Jesus did not need anybody to tell him who Nicodemus was, when he saw him for the first time. These verses are very important to me, because now I realise that Jesus knows everything about me. His penetrating, all-seeing eyes are able to look into my mind, heart and whole life. As with Peter, he knows my weaknesses. As with Nathanael, he knows my sincerity. As with all people, he knows my faith. And as with Nicodemus, he knows the questions of my heart.

(S) **STEP 3. QUESTION**

Let us try to understand all the truths in John 2:1-25 and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. “Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask to the group?” Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1st Question. (2:11). What is the purpose of miracles in the Bible?

(T) John likes to use the word “sign” instead of “miracle”.

One. A sign is a miracle viewed as a proof of divine authority and majesty.

The purpose of the miracle is to lead the attention of the spectator away from the deed itself to the Divine Doer of the miracle. Miracles in the Bible occur especially around the times when new revelation from God occurred.

Thus when God revealed the law to *Moses*, God performed miracles through Moses. He sent ten plagues against his enemies. He caused the water of the Red Sea to recede so that Israel could cross on dry ground. And he made bitter water sweet. Through these miracles, Moses proved that the law was given by God's authority.

When God revealed his reality to Judah and Israel during a time they turned away from God, God performed miracles through the prophets *Elijah and Elisha*. He created food for a poor widow. He sent fire from heaven to devour the sacrifice, the water and even the stones of the altar to prove that idols had no power. He raised children from the dead. And he protected his servants by surrounding them with chariots of fire.

When God sent his Son, *Jesus Christ*, to the earth, he performed the greatest amount of miracles as well as the greatest miracles. He healed the sick. He set the demon-possessed free. He restored the handicapped, blind and deaf people. He raised the dead. He fed the hungry crowds. And he calmed the storm. But the greatest miracles in the Bible were that Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit, that he was raised from the dead and that he ascended into heaven to rule over the universe. The greatest miracles we see today are that Jesus Christ has never stopped saving millions of people from sin and eternal judgement, that he has set them free from sin and demons that make them slaves, and that he has transformed their lives into becoming citizens of the kingdom of God!

When God established his Church everywhere through the work and writings of *the apostles*, he performed many miracles especially through the apostles. They too healed the sick. They set the demon-possessed free. They restored the handicapped and the blind and raised the dead. But even more important, God used them to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth, to transform the lives of many, to establish the first churches among the Jews, the Samaritans and the Gentiles, and to write the last books of the Bible.

(S) Two. A sign is a work of power in the physical realm that illustrates a principle that is operative in the spiritual realm.

The purpose of a miracle is to show that whatever takes place in the sphere of creation points away from itself to the sphere of redemption. Here are some examples.

In John chapter 6, the multiplication of the loaves of bread is a sign (6:14). It intends to fix the attention on Jesus Christ as "the Bread of Life", who gives eternal life to those who believe.

In John chapter 9, the opening of the eyes of the man who was born blind is a sign (9:16). It intends to show people that Jesus is "the Light of the world", who gives spiritual light to people who believe.

In John chapter 11, the raising of Lazarus from the dead is a sign (11:47; 12:18). It intends to centre on the fact that Jesus is "the Resurrection and the Life", who gives those who believe a new spiritual life now and will transform their lowly bodies to be like his glorious body at the resurrection (Phil 3:21). Only the context will show if a sign has this second deeper meaning or not. In every case, *a sign* always points away from itself to the One who performed it! Here in John chapter 2, the turning of water into wine is called the first of Jesus' miraculous signs. It intends to show that Jesus Christ has come into the world to fulfil and terminate the old order of the Old Testament and to replace it by the new order of the New Testament. Jesus Christ came to replace the old order of worship through ceremonies with the new order of worship "in spirit and truth". He came to replace traditional mourning with joy. He came to replace the ordinary water with extraordinary wine. The new order surpasses the old order as much as wine surpasses water!

(T) Three. A sign is done, not to create faith, but to strengthen faith.

The original Greek in John 20:30-31 does not say, "That you may *begin* to believe", but "that you may *continue* to believe"! The purpose of the miracles as signs is not *to create* faith, but *to strengthen* true, saving faith! Only the Holy Spirit *creates* faith and the miracles and the teachings connected to these miracles *strengthen* faith. The apostle John wrote the Gospel of John in order to strengthen the faith of the believers in the face of their enemies and false teachers.

2nd Question. (2:14-17) Why does Jesus cleanse the temple?

(S) One. The Jewish Passover festival needed animals to offer and money to pay the temple tax.

During the seven day Passover festival many animals were offered in sacrifice to the Lord (Num 28:16-25). Because all Jews were required to celebrate the Passover Festival at Jerusalem, they came from very far away. They had to buy their animals to sacrifice in Jerusalem. A wicked ruler of the Sanhedrin, called Annas, wanted to make a profit out of this situation. Therefore he gave permission to the vendors and money-changers to use a part of the temple, called the court of the Gentiles for their business. Of course, the dealers in cattle and sheep would be tempted to charge exorbitant prices for their animals and exploit the worshippers. Also the money-changers used this court of the temple to do

business. According to Exodus 30:13, every male worshipper had to pay the annual temple tribute of half a shekel. Therefore, Jews who lived in other countries had to exchange their money for Jewish coins. Naturally, the money-changers would charge an extra fee for every exchange-transaction. Here too, there were abundant opportunities for deception and abuse. So when Jesus came to the temple, he found in the court of the Gentiles people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. Thus, the temple, which was intended to be a place where people could pray and worship, had been turned into a marketplace where people were being robbed!

(T) Two. Jesus cleansed the temple as the Son of God.

Jesus called the temple “his Father’s house” (Lk 2:49). By cleansing the temple, he exercised his authority or right as the Father’s only-begotten Son to keep his Father’s house holy and to restore it to its purpose as a house of worship!

(S) Three. Jesus cleansed the temple as the Messiah.

The Jews did not know their own Bible! According to Psalm 69:9, a thousand years BC, king David prophesied that “the zeal for the Lord’s house would *consume* him”. The cleansing of the temple would in some way contribute to *the death* of Jesus. Malachi 3:1-3 says that the Lord would suddenly come to his temple. He would be like a refiner’s fire ... and he would purify the people of the tribe of Levi! Thus, the Old Testament already proves that the Messiah has the right to cleanse the temple! When Jesus cleansed the temple, the disciples remembered that these prophecies were written about the Messiah in the Old Testament. Thus, Jesus Christ used force to cleanse the temple, because he had the authority of the Father’s only-begotten Son and of the Messiah to do this!

3rd Question. (2:18-22) What is the meaning of destroying the temple and raising it again in three days?

(T) Jesus said, “Break down this temple and I will raise it again in three days”. This was a kind of a riddle, because the words have a double meaning. The word *temple* may refer to the temple built of stones standing in Jerusalem, or it may refer to the temple of Jesus’ body. And the word *break down* may refer to the tearing down of the temple building, or it may refer to the destruction of Jesus’ body. And the word *raise up* may refer to the reconstruction of the temple building, or it may refer to the resurrection of Jesus’ body!

The meaning of the entire saying of Jesus is the following. “Even though you, Jews, are breaking down the temple of my body, nevertheless, in three days I will be resurrected! And even though as a result of murdering me you also break down your own temple of stone and the entire system of religious practices connected with it, nevertheless, as a result of my resurrection, I will establish a new temple with a new cult, namely, the Christian Church with its worship of God the Father in spirit and in truth.”

The *type* or *illustration* and the *antitype* or *fulfilment* cannot be separated in the Bible. The type or illustration is Israel’s temple and was regarded as the place in which God dwelt. The antitype or fulfilment is Christ’s body, which is in a far superior sense the dwelling-place of God! Therefore, if anyone destroys the second, Christ’s body, he also pulls down the first, the Jerusalem temple with its cult! Thus, when Jesus Christ was crucified, the temple building and its entire cult ceased to have any more meaning. When Jesus died on the cross, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (Mt 27:51). Moreover, the terrible crime of crucifying Jesus resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem together with its temple building. The book of Hebrews teaches clearly the once for all time replacement of the temple and its whole cult by Jesus Christ and his fulfilled work of salvation!

In exactly the same way, the resurrection of the body of Jesus Christ implies the establishment of the new temple, another temple, which according to Mark 14:58 is a temple not made by man. In the New Testament, according to 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 2 Corinthians 6:16 and Ephesians 2:21-22, the body of believers or the Christian Church is clearly taught to be *the temple of God, the temple which is not made by man*.

However, the Jews failed to see the fulfilment, which is Jesus Christ, in the illustration, which is the temple. They only saw the literal temple of stone, which took 46 years to construct. If they had studied the Scriptures with a believing heart, they would have known that the temple of Jerusalem, together with its furniture and its ceremonies, was only a type (illustration), destined for destruction. In the Greek Old Testament in Psalm 40:6-7 (Heb 10:5-7) is written, “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but *a body* you have prepared for me. Burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require. Then I said, ‘Here am I, I have come ...desiring to do your will’”. Even the disciples of Jesus failed to see that *the temple* of which Jesus was speaking was the temple of his body. Only after Jesus was crucified and the curtain of *the temple* was torn from top to bottom and he was resurrected on the third day after he was crucified, did they understand the spiritual meaning of the words of Jesus!

4th Question. What are other examples from the Bible where the physical symbolises the spiritual?

(S) The Jews failed again and again to discern that *the physical symbolises the spiritual*. Again and again they made unwarranted, crassly literal interpretations of the words of Jesus, which had spiritual meaning. For example, the following are some examples just from the Gospel of John. In John 3, *to be born again* is spiritual. In John 4, *the water*

Jesus gives is the Holy Spirit. In John 6, *the eating of the flesh of Jesus* means receiving Jesus by faith. And in John 8, *death* means eternal separation from the presence and loving care of God.

(T) **STEP 4. APPLY**

After brainstorming with one another and recording a list of *possible applications*, consider which possible application God wants you to turn into a *personal application*.

(S) **STEP 5. PRAY**

Let us take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught us in John 2:1-25.

Dear Father in heaven, help me to see the glory of Jesus in the Bible. Help me, every time when I read or study the Bible, to see what I may learn more about Jesus Christ.

(T) Dear Father in heaven, I dedicate myself to be an example in how I believe, in how I worship you and in how I live my life. I dedicate my house and all I possess to your service. May my house and life become an invitation for non-Christians to get to know you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

(S) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Prepare next week's Bible study. Use "the five steps" method to prepare John 3:1-36.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on www.dota.net.

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".