

Text: Jn 3.22-36; Mt 4.12; Mk 1.14; Lk 4.14; Jn 4.1-4

Our actual verse count will be a little lower this week, because the next event on the agenda after tonight's passages is the record of the woman at the well, which is quite lengthy. However, I don't want to break it up, so we will be either shorter tonight... or have more detail!

Review: We saw the introduction of Jesus to about half of his future full-time disciples, then we saw Jesus go to Jerusalem for the first Passover of his ministry. This Passover is the occasion that launches his public ministry.

- Cleansing of the temple
- Many miracles
- Meeting with Nicodemus

The passages we will look at tonight are responses to these early days of ministry. I've called the message:

Response to a Shooting Star

The arrival of Jesus in the public eye was a shocking phenomenon. John the Baptist was a voice crying in the wilderness, people had to go to him to hear him. His following built gradually.

Jesus was a *shooting star*. He exploded onto the scene in Jerusalem, disrupting the normal life of the temple, performing sensational miracles, being publicly available. He went to where the people were.

The passages that follow chronologically are responses to that initial assault on the public consciousness.

I. Response of John the Baptist (22-30)

A. The situation of John's testimony (22-24)

1. "After these things" – refers back to the "Jerusalem events" outlined above
2. Jesus moves into the Judean countryside, probably towards Jericho, by the Jordan
3. John is situated in Aenon, near Salim, about half-way between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea, in Galilee, under Herod's jurisdiction
4. John is busy with his ministry, still not imprisoned by Herod

B. A discussion with John's disciples raises the question of Jesus (25-26)

1. They were arguing with "a Jew" about purification (25)
 - a. The term "Jews" in John is always negative, referring to the ruling class in opposition to Jesus
 - b. The term "purification" refers to Jewish rites and the context implies the Jew was challenging John's practices
 - c. Perhaps the name of Jesus came up in the conversation
2. John's disciples approach John with their questions (26)
 - a. They are fully aware of John's proclamations concerning Jesus (see John 1.29, 36)
 - b. They are aware that Jesus has begun a similar ministry and many are coming to him
 - c. The implication is that they are concerned about "encroachment" as if Jesus might be invading John's turf

C. John's majestic evaluation of Jesus' ministry (27-30)

1. The source of his own ministry: from heaven (27)
2. A reminder of his whole message (28)
 - a. I am not the Christ
 - b. I am sent ahead of the Christ
 - c. [Implication: Jesus is the Christ]
3. His attitude towards the newcomer: the full joy of the "friend of the bridegroom" (29)
4. His evaluation of his own role going forward: "my job is finished" (30)

We have to say that John's attitude ought to be the attitude of all Christ-followers. Jesus is All. He is Everything. Our own desires and ambitions have to be secondary to his will, his mission, his work.

II. Response of John the apostle (31-36)

- A. I think the voice changes again here and we have, not John the Baptist, but John the apostle

1. The words sound like the teachings of Jesus
2. No doubt John is echoing/paraphrasing sayings of Jesus as he himself reflects on who Jesus is and his own evaluations of him (from his aged vantage point, writing in AD 80ish)

B. The place of Christ: above all (31)

1. He comes from above
2. John is of the earth
3. He who comes from above is above all

C. The word of Christ is the word of God (32-33)

1. Jesus spoke what he had seen and heard from the Father; consequently, what he says is absolute truth [a theme that will come up again in this gospel]
2. No one receives his testimony – the majority response to God’s truth
3. Those who do receive Christ’s testimony have solemnly affirmed the truth of God through Christ (33)

D. The fulness of the Spirit in Christ (34)

1. Christ speaks the word of God
2. Confirmed by the giving of the Spirit to him “without measure” (as seen in the many miracles)

E. The Father’s evaluation of the Son (35-36)

1. The Father has bestowed on the Son his love and his authority (35)
2. The Father has decreed that the Son is the critical revelation that must be received in order to have life
 - a. Those who believe live
 - b. Those who refuse to believe remain under wrath

All of these words seem like echoes of things we will read elsewhere in John’s gospel. We can’t stress this evaluation enough. Our Lord is the one who is above all, you cannot ignore him or dismiss him, he is the one that must be believed.

III. Response of Jesus (Mt 4.12; Mk 1.14; Lk 4.14; Jn 4.1-4)

After this Judean ministry, Jesus returns to Galilee. The verses that we will look at are “transition verses,” not containing much information, but preparing us for what is to come.

A. Synoptic gospels (an anticipation of our study in two weeks)

1. Matthew

Matthew 4.12 Now when Jesus heard that John had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee;

- Detail – John has been arrested by Herod, tetrarch of Galilee
- Jesus moves into the same territory, not to defy Herod, to take advantage of John’s absence, but to continue his own ministry “in the mouth of the lion” so to speak

2. Mark

Mark 1.14 Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God,

- Detail – “preaching the gospel of God”
- John’s preaching stressed repentance and the kingdom
- Jesus no doubt continued on these same themes, some of which we see in the Sermon on the Mount and other messages

3. Luke

Luke 4.14 And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district.

- Detail – the “power of the Spirit” and the “spreading news”
- Jesus is under submission to the Spirit in all things, including his movements
- Jesus is empowered by the Spirit, which contributes to...
- The “news” about him, causing all Galilee to be stirred

All of these actually prepare us for our study in a couple of weeks’ time; because there is a “parenthesis” that John is going to tell us about...

B. John's gospel (an anticipation of our study next week) (John 4.1-4)

1. Another motive for Jesus move: the Pharisees and their antagonism (1-2)
 - a. They see Jesus as a rival to John, their knowledge would lead to questioning
 - b. Tom Constable: "He wanted to avoid unnecessary premature conflict with them."
2. Jesus traveled from Judea to Galilee... with a necessary detour: Samaria (3-4)
 - a. Jews normally traveled on the east side of Jordan to avoid Samaria
 - b. Jesus deliberately traveled through Samaria

And this sets us up for next week. Everything Jesus did was unconventional. He moved and acted with purpose, knowing who would receive him and who would not.

We need to become so full of Christ that we can respond daily in accord with him, that we might be more useful in his kingdom.