

THE STORY

CHAPTER 23

Summary of Chapter:

The Chapter begins with John the Baptist, who lived in the wilderness, proclaiming that the Kingdom of God was near. People came to John confessing their sins and John baptised them in the Jordan River.

Jesus came from Galilee and was also baptised by John after which he was led into the wilderness where for forty days he was tempted by Satan.

John continued to proclaim that everything God promised rested on this man, Jesus. John was questioned by the Jewish religious leaders of the day as to who he was referring, because he had come out of obscurity and suddenly declared Jesus to be the Messiah. He referred them to the scriptures and said that he was the voice from the wilderness that Isaiah spoke of. John also pointed his followers to Jesus as the Lamb of God and encouraged his followers to become followers of Jesus.

Andrew was one of John's followers who followed Jesus and he also told his brother Simon, who Jesus later named Peter, that he had found the Messiah and he brought Simon to Jesus. Jesus called Philip to follow him and later Jesus' followers found Nathanael and told him that they had found the one Moses wrote about in the law and who the prophets spoke about. Nathanael, after questioning them about Jesus' home town, met Jesus who remarkably told him what he was doing earlier in the day and Nathanael suddenly declared that Jesus was the Son of God.

From there Jesus went onto begin his public ministry and perform his first miracle by changing water into wine at a wedding in Cana in Galilee and by doing this he revealed his glory as the Son of God. Although he was fully human, he was fully God.

Soon after Jesus' public ministry began, he went to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover feast and because it was the religious capital of God's people, he proclaimed who he was. Many believed, but many did not and thought that he was a trouble maker and a fraud. One inquisitive religious leader, Nicodemus, found Jesus during the night to question him, and Jesus summarized his mission by talking about how no one can see the Kingdom of God unless they are born again.

These kind of claims did not make Jesus popular with the religious leaders of the Jewish people and so Jesus spent much of his time with the ordinary people of the day. One such person was a lady from Samaria. Samaria was a place where Israelites had intermarried with foreigners and so their children were not completely Jews. The opposition from the Jewish people to Samaritans was so segregated that the Samaritans erected their own place of worship outside of Jerusalem. The Jews would avoid travelling through or having anything to with Samaria or Samaritans.

But Jesus on his way to Galilee, broke the mould and travelled through Samaria and had an encounter with this Samaritan woman who was drawing water from a well. It was during this encounter that he spoke about living water that he had to offer that would satisfy thirst forever. It was water that would become a spring of water welling up to eternal life. Jesus also spoke about things she was guilty of and she realised who he was and she left him to call others from her town to come and see and hear from the Saviour of the world. They saw and heard him and believed what he said and after encouraging him, he stayed in Samaria proclaiming the kingdom of God for two days before leaving for Galilee.

After arriving in Capernaum, Jesus taught in the synagogues and he performed many miraculous signs like driving out demons, healing the sick, healing those with leprosy and those who had been paralyzed. He spoke and spent time with sinners and the epitome of sinners of the day, tax collectors, all because he said that he came, not to call the righteous, but sinners.

All the while Jesus taught very differently from the traditional Rabbi's and religious leaders and he seemed to disregard the many customary laws. He put people first before the law and befriended them. All this made the religious leaders dislike him even more and they began to find a way to get rid of Jesus.

Jesus appointed twelve men to help him preach and teach about the kingdom of God and he gave them power and authority to drive out demons. After this Jesus went from town to town preaching the good news with his twelve followers and some women who were supporting Jesus ministry through their own means.

John the Baptist found himself in prison because he was opposed to what Herod Antipas had done. Herod Antipas had taken his brother's wife as his own and this was in direct violation of Jewish law. In prison, John sent some of his followers to ask Jesus if he was truly the Messiah, and Jesus replied by telling John's followers to tell John that miraculous signs spoken of in the Old Testament to identify the Messiah, were being done. After which, Jesus told the people that John was the one spoken of in the scriptures as the one who would prepare the way for the Saviour - himself.

1. *What purpose did Jesus' Baptism and temptation serve?*

Jesus baptism served as an opportunity, first of all for God to declare that Jesus was His Son, whom he was well pleased with to the people. It also served as an illustration of what Jesus had come to do, and that was to die and be raised up again to new life. And lastly, Jesus' baptism served as an example to all who would follow him, of what must happen to them spiritually (die to self and be raised to new way of living) and what they should do to testify to what has happened in their lives.

Jesus temptation serves to remind us that Jesus was tempted in every way and therefore can identify with how we are tempted and the struggle of overcoming temptation. The temptation of Jesus also teaches us how we are to overcome

temptation in our lives. And lastly the temptation of Jesus shows us that Jesus was the sinless son of God who possessed the power to defeat Satan.

2. *How would you sum up the main message that Jesus had for the people?*

I think Mark sums it up well in his gospel by recording for us the very words of Jesus himself, "Repent and believe in the good news" (Mark 1:15). In other words, turn from your rebellious ways against God and turn in faith to God's message that His saviour has come to provide forgiveness from God for your rebellion and to credit to you a righteousness that enables you to enjoy a personal relationship with God.

3. *Why did so many people have a deep hatred for Jesus?*

I think those who had a deep hatred for Jesus were mainly the religious leaders of the Jews. They hated Jesus because he was making claims, which they thought were dishonouring to their God, and threatening to their leadership authority over the Jewish people.

Jesus, besides claiming to be God himself which the religious leaders thought was blasphemy, proclaimed a message which called on people to turn from their wicked ways and turn to God, and this not through a religious system or a religious law, but simple through trusting in what God had done for them. It seemed to these religious leaders that Jesus was teaching the very opposite of what they believed to be God's way and along with his signs and wonders, the people of God were increasingly turning to Jesus instead of remaining with the old Jewish ways.

4. *Jesus said that we must be "born again" to enter the kingdom of God. What does it mean to be born again?*

"New birth" or "being born again" is an act of God whereby through the work of the Holy Spirit our hearts are transformed, from being a heart that is against God, to a heart that submits and beats for God. The theologians call this regeneration; a rebellious heart towards God is regenerated into a heart that loves to please God through the work of God.

Exactly how this happens is a mystery to us, but we know that somehow, we who were spiritually dead because of our rebellion against God (Eph2:1), are suddenly made alive spiritually to what God desires for us by God and we begin responding to what God desires from us in a way that pleases Him.

God promised he would do this (cause us to be born again) many years before Jesus came through the prophet Ezekiel. Ezek:36-26-27 "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone

and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.”

5. *What kind of people did Jesus typically reach out to? What kind of people did he oppose? Why?*

The kind of people Jesus typically reached out to, were those considered to be outsiders, people suspected of not being pure and righteous, people most religious leaders did not want anything to do with. Jesus opposed those who thought they were right with God through their own efforts of right living, like the religious leaders. Those that thought obedience to God’s law set them apart from others as being in right standing with God.

He opposed these religious leaders and reached out to the outcasts because he came to provide a righteousness that God demanded of all people. Jesus came to give all people the only way in which they would not face the just penalty from God because of their rebellious ways. The religious leaders did not accept Jesus’ way for they thought they were righteous already, whereas the outsider more readily accepted the free gift from God of salvation from the penalty of their sin and accepted a righteousness that would enable them to have a relationship with God.

6. *Jesus stated that “whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” What do you think this statement means?*

Jesus was explaining to the woman by the well, the difference between the physical water that Jacob gave them by providing the well and the spiritual water that He would give her. The water that Jesus was offering her was in reference to the salvation that he offers, salvation is like living water. Without water we would surely die, without water there can only be barrenness and unfruitfulness. The Salvation, the living water that Jesus offers, will quench the thirsty soul forever and it will bring life and fruitfulness to whoever drinks it. Whoever drinks of the water of salvation that Jesus offers, will be satisfied spiritually for eternity and will never thirst again.