

LESSON #3 CHAPTER 1:35-2:12
The Word Manifested to the Disciples

Divine Attribute: Glory

Theological concept: Messiah's suffering and glory

Geographical location: Galilee

Chapter Structure

1:35-51 Jesus' first batch of disciples

2:1-12 Jesus' first manifestation of His divine power

Spiritual Principles:

P1 Do not set up territory for your ministry

P2 We are called to draw people to Christ

P3 Suffering before glory is the general principle of Christian service

A. Today's lesson...

After his baptism, the Lord Jesus began his public ministry. In this lesson, we shall see the earthly work of the Messiah on the 3rd, 4th, and 7th day of the first week – the seven days of the new creation, by His divine power, he demonstrated that he is the long-expected Messiah and the glorious Son of God. We shall see: (1) by the testimony of John the Baptist, the first batch of Jesus' disciples emerges; (2) Jesus performed the first miracle at Cana.

(in verses 38, 41, and 42, the writer explained the terms Rabbi, Messiah, and Cephas. This shows that his target readers include Gentiles who were not familiar with the Hebrew terms.)

B. 1:35-51 Jesus' first batch of disciples

1. Day three of the New Creation – John directed his disciples to Jesus vv.35-37

35 The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, 36 and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" 37 The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

Earlier, John has borne witness that Jesus is the Lamb of God (vv.29-34), that he would take away the world's sin, that he would baptize His own with the Holy Spirit, and that he is the Son of God.

So, "the next day" in v.35 refers to the day after John bore witness to Christ. Here, John purposefully pointed his disciples to Christ so that they may follow Jesus. We observe a fundamental difference between John and the religious leaders. When the religious leaders saw that the people were following Jesus, they were jealous and even plotted to kill him. John, on the other hand, did not conceal the special revelation that he received about Jesus, and he did not stop his own disciples from leaving him for Jesus. This is because John was clear about his mission (1:31) and had no personal ambition to set up his territory, protect his influence, or enlarge his team. He knew he was not the Messiah, whom everyone should follow, but the forerunner. Hence, his disciples were not to follow him forever; when Jesus started his public ministry, they must follow Jesus. *"he must increase, but I must decrease"* (3:30)

Dear brothers and sisters, when we serve God, we must guard our hearts against vanity, for vanity leaves a foothold for the devil. Neither should we demand loyalty from our co-workers. These are the fundamental differences between working in the church and working in the world. Always be careful not to lead people to idolise us; whoever does so will surely fail, for we are called not to exalt us but to exalt Christ. Therefore, let us always remember to bring people to Christ, just as John directed his disciples to Jesus. Do not see your ministry as your territory; see every feedback or suggestion as an intrusion or interference. Do not set up territory for your ministry, lest there will be striving for resources, manpower, time...etc. and the church will be torn apart.

P1 Your ministry is not your territory

Reflection: O Lord, I was unhappy when the number of members in my fellowship group was reduced because many were promoted to another group. When I saw another ministry prosper, I was jealous. I've brought vanity into your church and corrupted the purity of your betrothed. Please forgive me and help me fight against vanity!

In John the Baptist, we see a serving spirit right for church leaders, including pastors, elders, and deacons: **do not plan for retirement but be prepared to retire anytime**. This will ensure that leaders will not occupy a serving post that God does not intend for them. Our mind should be set on Christ's: when He wants me to take up a task, I will take it up; when He wants me to step down, I will step down. This should be the mindset for all believers.

While we should love and submit to church leadership, we should not pledge loyalty to any spiritual leader. On the other hand, we ought to respect and take care of elderly servants who have stepped down from their ministries. We are not to neglect their labour in the church in their earlier days.

2. **Andrew followed Jesus vv.38-39**

38 Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "Where are you staying?" 39 He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.

Of course, Jesus knew what they were seeking. Yet he asked them so that they may utter what they desired. And they replied with a question, "*Where are you staying?*" it was not where Jesus lived, but it was Jesus that they wanted to know so that they may be sure of what they were about to do: to forsake everything to follow the Messiah. How can a man truly know another man? The best way is to live with the person for some time.

People idolise celebrities because they only see their commercial image from afar. When two people live together, their weaknesses and bad habits, as well as their religious walk and talk, are brought to light. This is often the first thing that causes disillusion in a marriage; it is also the reason sharing the gospel with one's family is so difficult, and it explains why many grown-up children of Christian families reject Christianity.

It is common for full-time ministers to quit serving in the church to work in a seminary or a para-church organisation. This is because the latter are looked at from afar and, thus, it is easier to gain respect from the people they serve. Whereas a pastor lives with his flock and, being watched at a close distance, he is often criticised, as Jesus said, "*A prophet is not without honour except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.*" (Mark 6:4)

Reflection: O Lord! I have been critical of my pastors and church leaders. Many times, I have been disappointed at their weaknesses and disrespectful to them. Please forgive me for short-changing your servants. I will pray for them constantly that, by your grace, they might become strong in their weaknesses. Amen.

Our Lord is not afraid to be watched at a close distance. He invited the two disciples to “*Come and you will see*”. As the One anointed, Jesus does not need to live up to the people's expectation for their Messiah. He lives truthfully and faithfully as a suffering Messiah according to God's plan. His life is full of grace and truth. Jesus still tells us today, “Come, and you will see”. He wants us to come near him so that we may know Him and His way and love him dearly. Dear brothers and sisters, let us not appease the world and be pretentious. When our heart is darkened, there is no light in our life. On the other hand, when we pursue holiness and follow Jesus' way, we will not be afraid to be looked at, even at a close distance.

Reflection: Help me, O Lord, that every word and every act will be like you, emitting the aroma of life wherever I go, that people around me can see you through me. Amen.

It was about 4 pm (the tenth hour from sunrise), so the two disciples stayed with Jesus for a day. One of them is Andrew.

3. **Peter followed Jesus** vv. 40-42

40 One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). 42 He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).

After staying with Jesus for a day, the first thing Andrew wanted to do was to bring his brother Simon to Messiah. Like Andrew, Simon was zealously waiting for the Messiah to come. Jesus saw what was in Simon and was willing to use him mightily as a rock for His church (21:15-23). In later years, Simon Peter performed mighty works in the name of Jesus – in Jerusalem at the first Christian Pentecost and in Caesarea when Gentiles first heard and believed the Gospel. Andrew must have recalled the deep satisfaction that day when he brought his brother and their Master together. No one can foresee, when he brings a man or woman to Jesus, what Jesus will make of that person. Let us take every opportunity to lead souls to Christ without worrying about the outcome, as it is not our responsibility.

P2 We are called to draw people to Christ

4. **Day four of the new creation – Philip followed Jesus** vv. 43-45

43 The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. 45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

This is the 4th day of the week. Jesus decided to leave Judah for Galilee. We do not have sufficient materials to confirm whether Jesus met Philip in Galilee or on the way there. That shows it is not important; what is important is that Philip also followed Jesus. And like Andrew, he immediately looked for his friend Nathanael and brought him to Jesus. This is how the number of Jesus' followers

has increased, even to this day, as one has found another and shared the good news with him or her. Have you done so?

Reflection: Who brought you to Christ? Have you been actively bringing people to see Christ since you become one of His followers?

5. **Nathanael followed Jesus** vv.46-49

46 Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." 47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" 48 Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." 49 Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

Nathanael grew up in Cana of Galilee (21:2). From his words, we know that Nazareth was not a significant town among the towns of Galilee at that time. It is like a small city that has no renowned colleges, seminaries, art schools, or research centres and has not produced any celebrities in the present day. Nonetheless, Nazareth has great historical significance because the eternal Word in the flesh grew up in it. Jesus lives in you and me, and in the same way, our lives become meaningful and purposeful. Therefore as Christians, we ought to seek to live out the significance of our lives, i.e. God's purpose for saving you. Andrew and Philip had done so!

Nathanael did not believe that Nazareth could have nurtured the Messiah. But he did not persist on this prejudice and was willing to do as Philip suggested, "*Come and see* (for yourself)". Because he went, he saw Messiah – the Son of God, the King of Israel, and stayed with Him for three and a half years. Indeed, an honest inquiry is a sovereign cure for prejudice.

Usually, when people offend us in their speech, we will not like to speak with the person. But it is not so with our Lord. He didn't take offence to Nathanael's comment. Instead, he commended him openly, "*Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!*" Let us imitate Jesus' magnanimity and look at the good side of a person first, not the bad side, lest we become miserable Christians.

Jesus' commendation on Nathanael can be paraphrased to "one who is all Israel and no Jacob". Jacob is Israel. The name 'Jacob' means 'to grasp' and is traditionally associated with deceit. When Isaac said to Esau, "*Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing*", Esau replied, "*Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times.*" (Ge 27:35-36 NKJV)

When Jacob eventually learned to depend on God, God changed his name to Israel to mark that change in him (Ge 28:10). According to Philo of Alexandria, the Jewish philosopher, there was a popular etymology at that time that explained the name Israel as "the man who sees God". A man who sees God has no deceit.

"Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." (1:48). The shady foliage of the fig tree made it a suitable tree to sit under in the heat of the day. Seeing Jesus' full knowledge of his movements and thoughts, Nathanael realised Jesus was the one whom the scriptures pointed forward. He must have recalled immediately in the Messianic Psalm (Psalm 2) when God said to the King He set on Mount Zion, "*You are my Son, today I have begotten you.*" (Ps 2:6-7) So he proclaimed in exclamation, "*Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!*" (1:48)

6. **A Greater Power and Glory** vv.50-51

Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." 51 And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

Jesus told Nathanael that those who believe in him would see the greater power and glory of God, and he illustrated it with the heavenly ladder that Jacob saw in his dream at Bethel,

"Behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! 13 And behold, the Lord stood above it" (Ge 28:12-13)

This ladder connected earth to heaven and the path for man to go to God. Jesus said that he was the ladder of Jacob, the union between earth and heaven, the only mediator between man and God. He points forward to the great redemption he would accomplish on the cross: reconciliation between God and the human race. The crucifixion is humiliation in the eyes of the Jews and abhorrence in the eyes of the Romans, but it is the supreme manifestation of Christ's glory! By his cross, heaven is thrown wide open, God draws near to man, and man is reconciled to God! The cross of Jesus is our ladder to heaven; it is of greater power and supreme glory! Dear brothers and sisters, God has shown us this great thing through the Holy Book and the Holy Spirit. The question is: do we proclaim Him to be our Saviour, King, and Lord excitedly as Nathanael did?

As to the holy patriarch that wondrous dream was given,
So seems my Saviour's cross to me a ladder up to heaven. *(poem by Elizabeth Cecilia Clephane
"Beneath the Cross of Jesus")*

Reflection: Have mercy on me, O my Saviour! I have seen the greater thing, yet I often forget its power and glory! Please cause me not to forget that my Saviour, my Creator and my God who is crucified for me!

C. 2:1-12 Jesus' first manifestation of His divine power

This record is the first sign (miracle) Jesus performed after he began his public ministry. Under what circumstance did he perform this sign, and for what purpose?

1. 7th day in the new creation – The predicament in the wedding feast in Cana vv. 2:1-3

"On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2 Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. 3 When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.'"

"The third day" is to be counted from the last event mentioned, i.e. the call of Nathanael. It was also the seventh day of the new creation week. Jesus was in Cana. In the first century, a Jewish wedding could last from days to a week. The wine was an important element in all Jewish celebrations. For the wine to run out before the wedding was due to end was a serious blow, particularly damaging to the host's reputation. Verse 5 alludes to Mary's holding some responsibility for the catering. She knew that only a miracle could resolve such a crisis. Since the conception of the Holy Spirit, Mary knew that the child in her was the Son of God (Luke 1:35). Jesus was full of grace and truth since young. Now that he had commenced his Messiah ministry, even though she had not seen him perform a miracle, she knew that as the Son of God, Jesus had the power to resolve any crisis.

2. Jesus and Mary's Dialogue v.4-5

"4 And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.' 5 His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.'"

In both the English and Chinese translations, Jesus' reply sounded rude. But it is not so when spoken in the original Greek language. In verse 4, the term in Greek for "woman" was consonant with the utmost courtesy and hence is best translated to 'woman dear' or 'my lady' here. Our Lord also addressed his mother by this term when he was hung on the cross. (19:26)

Jesus did not address Mary as his mother for a very important reason: it is God's sovereignty to perform miracles. Therefore, if she sought his help now, she must not seek it based on their mother-and-son relationship. He would perform miracles only when he saw fit. Jesus' family does not have the privilege to call upon miracles from him.

"What does this have to do with me?" is better understood as "Why trouble me with that?" Since Jesus entered his public ministry, everything, including family ties, must be subordinated to the Messianic work his Father had given him. Even though Mary's motive was commendable, the kind of action she wanted him to perform was not in keeping with his messianic vocation and perhaps smacked too much of the turning of stones into loaves of bread. The four Gospel books show clearly that Jesus' divine power is not to be used for himself nor to bloat about his divine sonship. The appointed time to manifest the glory of Christ is when Jesus is lifted. That was why Jesus said, *"My hour has not yet come"* or "The hour for me to manifest my glory has not yet come."

Even so, Jesus did grant Mary her implied request. Yet God would not contradict himself. So Jesus performed a miracle in a way that manifested in anticipation of the full glory of the Messianic Kingdom. Even though Mary did not know what Jesus would do, she knew the situation was saved when it had been committed to him. Confidently she informed the servants to do as Jesus asked, no matter how ridiculous it may seem.

3. *Jesus manifested the glory of Messiah v.6-12*

6 Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. 7 Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. 8 And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it. 9 When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom 10 and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now." 11 This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

12 After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.

The six stone jars were not used to contain drinking water but purification water in the various Jewish rites. Now Jesus told the servants to fill them up with water, and the water turned into the best wine of the week! The jars must be filled up to the brim. It signifies that the ceremonial observances of the Jewish law had run their full course, for Christ, the fulfilment of the law, has come into the world. Nothing of the old order shall remain to be accomplished. A new order will be inaugurated. The wine symbolises the new order of things, and the water in the jars symbolises the old order of things. The new order will bring about abundant material and spiritual satisfaction. All things will be renewed, better, and more beautiful than the old as much as wine surpasses water. (For example, new worship 'in spirit and truth surpasses the old')

It was common practice to serve the best wine at the beginning of the feast. The Bible did not record the bridegroom's response or whether he investigated the matter. This is because the purpose of recording this incident has been achieved. Seeing the anticipated glory, his disciples

believed in him (2:11). But as Jesus said, "My hour has not yet come," this miracle was not publicly acknowledged (1:9).

4. The lessons on prayer

Firstly, we can learn from Mary to bring the problem to Jesus even when we have no solution. Trust in His grace and power to deliver.

Secondly, as Mary trusted Jesus and told the servants to do as he said, likewise let us learn to commit our problems to Jesus, accept His solution, and do just what he tells us to do.

Thirdly, guard against wrong motives in us, i.e. asking God to gratify our fleshly desire, such as to make us rich; or shifting our responsibilities to God, such as asking God to grant us good results while we do not work diligently.

Fourthly, We can tell God what we need (Php 4:6). But for everything you ask, think about how God can be glorified. This is an exercise of godliness. You will see that many of your wants are unnecessary, and the direction of your prayer will be changed. Your sight will move from 'self' to 'His Kingdom', from temporal to eternal. Your heart will be satisfied, at peace, and your prayers answered!

D. Closing

Even though the disciples saw the anticipated glory of the Kingdom, they did not know that the manifestation of this glory shall reach its pinnacle on the cross. Even though the Lord told them three times that *"the son of man is about to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day."* they did not listen.

Christ has to suffer before he is glorified. This is the redemption order that God the Father has decreed, and it has been revealed to us throughout the bible. In the Old Testament, Isaiah 52:13-53:12, the Messiah was prophesized as a suffering servant. This order is also in the New Testament Hebrews 2:10,

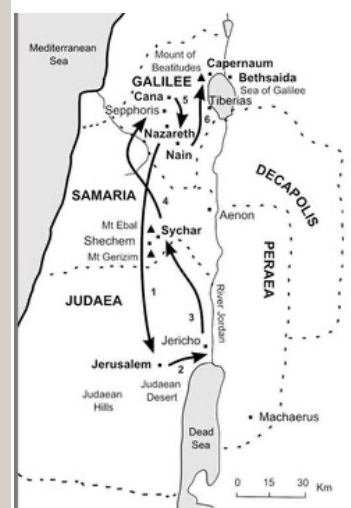
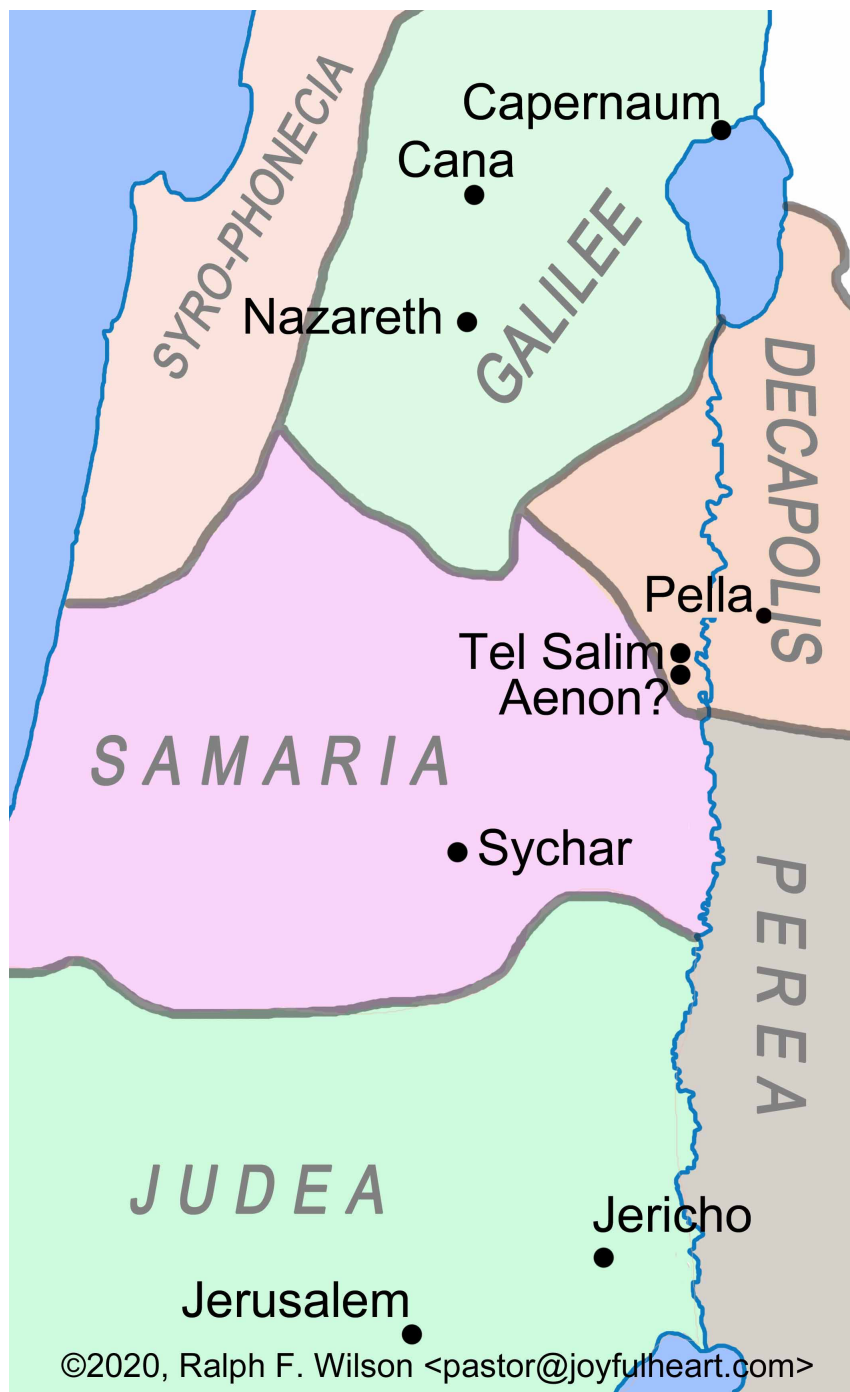
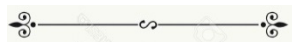
"For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering."

Such is also the order of redemption God predetermined for Christ's disciples. One by one, they carried their cross and followed the footsteps of Jesus in persecution,

"In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1Peter 1:6-7)

Not only the disciples in the first century but also those in the Dark Ages and throughout the church's history. Dear brothers and sisters, Suffering before glory is the general principle of Christian service for every generation. Today, though you and I have not faced political and religious persecution, Satan, our adversary, does not spare us. All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted in various forms (2Ti 3:12). Do not be disheartened when you suffer for serving Christ, especially in the church. Because our suffering is but a little while, after which the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will personally restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. You will share in His praise and glory and honour at the full revelation of our King Jesus Christ!

P3 Suffering before glory is the general principle of Christian service





The Wedding Feast at Cana, a huge oil painting on canvas (6.77 m × 9.94 m) by Paolo Veronese, Italian artist, in 1563, kept in Louvre Museum