



CALVARY

“Cross” or “Crossroad”

This is the junction where God meets man to deliver the opportunity to experience a redeemed and reconciled life.

LESSON 7

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CALVARY – *The Intersection of Divine Intent and Human Will*

We have been studying the “life changing” decisions made by the man Jesus, and they all serve as examples to the rest of us that we too must:

- **Chose** – Make choices that are in total alignment with the will of God
- **Withdraw** – Learn to take time to isolate ourselves from distracting interference
- **Pray** – There is an urgency for a constancy in dialoguing with the Father seeking His will
- **Obey** – All our decisions must be in line with God’s will, which is elucidated in His Word.

This final lesson deals with **Jesus’** willingness and commitment to tell others what He decided – even when it was unpopular

Just watching How Jesus’ decision process evolves and leading to declaration is very interesting

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John 4:1-4 Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John ² (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), ³ He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. ⁴ But He needed to go through Samaria.

When reading the above passage, we may get the impression that this is merely a casual reference to another brief visit to Galilee, such as Jesus had recently made.

Or we may think that possibly there was some "unfinished business" in Galilee that needed Jesus' attention.

Actually, we are here reading about a series of decisions on the part of Jesus, decisions which not only altered the course of His ministry, but also in all probability prolonged His activity for nearly two years.

➤ He decided not to engage the Pharisees this early in His ministry for His time had not yet come for His demise

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- He decided not to baptize disciples Himself, but deputized others to labor with Him
- He decided to leave Judea, but did not just roam – He had a destination in mind Galilee
- He decided to take a detour and go through Samaria (*he must needs go*)
- Further in the narrative, He chose the opportune moment for a providential appointment with a woman who had a problem with relationship maintenance
- He chose to defy social norms and publicly engage the woman to change her life

Because of all these decisions, we now have the record of some important occurrences, some outstanding teaching, and also some very practical lessons which are just as applicable today as they were at the time of Jesus' ministry.

- So let us look carefully at the situation here presented.

Until this time Jesus had been conducting a **teaching ministry** in and around Jerusalem; and in all probability He taught regularly in the Temple courts, as did other teachers in those days.

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From time to time some of Jesus' listeners would ask for baptism; and a baptismal service would be arranged, with the actual baptism taking place in one of the Jordan's tributaries, a little distance outside Jerusalem.

These ceremonies would be similar to those held by John the Baptizer, who was still conducting his ministry.

As it appears that the popularity of Jesus' teaching was increasing, so why, then, did He decide to leave this rapidly developing ministry, and depart into Galilee?

- Clearly, this was no "snap decision," arising out of some trivial incident.
- There must have been some deep-seated causes for Jesus' action; and it is possible for us to trace some of these causes.

(1) Scripture indicates that by this time the ministries of Jesus and the Baptizer had become competitive; and such was contrary to the wishes of Jesus and the Baptizer (3:30 – *He must increase*).

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- Furthermore, this competition was engendering controversy and ill-feeling; and Jesus had no desire that His followers should spend time quibbling over details.
- (2) We should recall that shortly after this time John the Baptist was arrested, imprisoned, and put to death.
- John's political activities and denunciations aroused Herod's anger, and the Baptist's ministry was brought to an untimely end.
 - Perhaps, recognizing the danger to His ministry and calling, He moved its' base into a region beyond the jurisdiction of Herod
 - This should not be regarded as an indication that Jesus feared Herod, or any activity of Herod.
 - Jesus was far removed from the fear of death -- "No man taketh it [my life] away from me, I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:18)
 - It is well to note that after completing His Galilean activities, Jesus returned to Jerusalem to face graver dangers than those arising from the displeasure of Herod.

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(3) Something which must have concerned Jesus deeply is indicated in the visit of Nicodemus (John 3:1-21).

- Rereading this story, as it applies to our present discussion, we recognize that when Jesus was teaching in Jerusalem He was dealing mainly with people who were deeply entrenched in the old, traditional religious beliefs.
- The religious leaders in Jerusalem were quite satisfied with the teaching and interpretation they already had.
- While some of them acted in a patronizing manner toward this new Teacher, they had no intention of accepting the teaching He was presenting.
- Nicodemus' coming to Jesus "by night" indicated clearly the general attitude of the religious leaders.
- Jesus therefore decided to move to a more promising area, which, while not exactly virgin soil, might prove more open and receptive to His teachings.

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So, there may have been several reasons why Jesus "left Judea and departed again into Galilee."

But it will be noted that all these had to do with what might be termed external conditions on which He had to make decisions about.

During His earthly sojourn, although He made decisions and acted out in humanity, Jesus was always conscious of the fact that He was God.

- John 8:58 He told the Jews, "Before Abraham came into being, I am."
- The book of Exodus tells us that the name of God is I Am (3:14).
- When Jesus said, "Before Abraham came into being, I am," the Jews picked up stones to throw at Him because they knew He was saying that He was God.
- Jesus as the great I Am is the eternal, ever-existing God.
- He made nine profound "I Am" statements about Himself in the Gospel of John
 - (1) **"I am the bread of life"** (John 6:35, 41, 48, 51)
 - As bread sustains physical life, so Christ offers and sustains spiritual life.

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(2) “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12)

- To a world lost in darkness, Christ offers Himself as a guide.

(3) “I am the door of the sheep” (John 10:7,9)

- Jesus protects His followers as shepherds protect their flocks from predators.

(4) “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25)

- Death is not the final word for those in Christ.

(5) “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11, 14)

- Jesus is committed to caring and watching over those who are His.

(6) “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” (John 14:6)

- Jesus is the source of all truth and knowledge about God.

(7) “I am the true vine” (John 15:1, 5)

- By attached ourselves to Christ, we enable His life to flow in and through us.

Thereby, we cannot help but bear fruit that will honor the Father.

(8) “I am in eternal being and fellowship with the Father”

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- Again, this statement is in the context of Pharisaic contention
- He told them in John 7:33 that His days with them were numbered and He would return to the One Who sent Him
- **Ye shall seek me** -- Not as now, for disputation or violence, but for help.
- **The He says where I am** – or will be is in absolute, eternal being and fellowship with the Father.
- *I am (egō eimi)* is the formula of the divine existence, and thus carries a hint of the essential nature of Jesus and prepares the way for “ye cannot come”
- The phrase carries a hint of the essential nature of Jesus, and thus prepares the way for *ye cannot come*
- The difference in character will make it essentially impossible for them to go where He is going or have the fellowship with the Father that He has
- (9) “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58)**
 - This statement was more profound than the others as He made improbable claims

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(a) In it He claimed He existed before Abraham – before Israel became a nation

□ The wording literally indicates “Abraham was *brought into being*”; the other, but “*I exist*” and “*have always existed*”

□ Abraham’s existence was under the conditions of time, thus temporary

□ But Jesus’ being was from eternity thus a timeless existence

(b) He took the Holy name that God revealed to Moses in the burning bush

○ The declarations caused the people to pick up stones to throw at Jesus, but he escaped because His time was not yet come (John 7:6)

○ Moreover, the declaration led to what is arguably the saddest verse in scripture:

○ John 8:59b “...but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple...”

□ **Some would argue Judges 2:10** When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them *who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel.*

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□ Others might say **1 Kings 11:4** For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as *was* the heart of his father David.

□ But I still John 8:59b “...but Jesus hid Himself and ***went out of the temple...***”

○ Jesus’ departure from the temple is portrayed as *Ichabod*: the glory had departed (Ezk. 10-11)

○ The departure of God’s presence on account of Israel’s sin was a common theme in later Jewish texts.

Jesus declared that Jehovah was His “Father” (John 17:1), and He was not ashamed to call Himself the Son of God (Matt. 16:16).

- No religious leader has ever dared to call himself God.
- Neither Mohammed, Confucius nor Socrates ever claimed to be God.
- But Jesus repeatedly proclaimed Himself to be God.
- He was put to death because He claimed that He was the Son of God (Matt. 26:63-66).
- A person who claims to be God is either a lunatic, a liar, or God.

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- Christ cannot be a lunatic, for His words display wisdom and soberness and have been the foundation of all Western civilization.
- He is not a liar, for no liar would be willing to sacrifice his own life for his lie.
- The only possibility left is that He is the very God.
- This moves anyone from simply considering the high moral standard of Jesus without acknowledging His God-ness (Divinity)

Jesus indeed is our example in all manner of decision making and then He showed us how to stand on what you are saying with confidence.

- **Matt. 16:23-26** But He turned and said to Peter, "**Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.**" ²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, "**If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.**" ²⁵ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but **whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.** ²⁶ For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or **what will a man give in exchange for his soul?**

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- **But he turned, and said—in the hearing of the rest** – Jesus expressly rebukes Peter for possibly saying what they also felt – *‘You are more mindful of the things of men than you are of the things of God’*
- **Get thee Behind Me Satan** – indicates a satanic influence in the disciples move to deter Him from the Divine intent for Him to suffer for the sake of mankind
- This is reminiscent of Paul’s actions in Acts 28:5 when He shook off the Serpent coiling around Him, and “felt no harm”
- Jesus’ statement elevates the tension that exists when even we are under heavenly influence to speak truth, there is always the potential to become mouthpieces of hell
- It is at those moments we become stumbling-blocks to the way of the cross
- **Jesus had no problem declaring actions which are contrary to the will of God**
 - ☐ We must be careful not to be carried away by human views of the manner God is setting up His Kingdom, which may be contrary to how we feel

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- **V 24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples** -- Jesus then turns His rebuke of Peter into a warning for all the disciples
- **V 24 If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me**
 1. **Come after me** – denotes the state and profession one makes in commitment to the purpose and will of the leader
 2. **Deny himself** – I.e., let him surrender to God his will, affections, body, and soul.
 3. **Take up his cross** – Means not seeking one's own happiness as the supreme object, but be willing to renounce all – even laying down his *life* if required
 4. **Follow me** – carrying out one's duty in a manner accordant to their profession; walking in lockstep with the leader

The man Jesus openly announced His impending suffering and death – a plight He had intimated in various symbols in John 2:19, 3:14, 6:51, and Matt. 9:15 and 12:40–41.

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But now He spoke of it openly (Mark 8:32) and His declarations were shocking to the disciples, especially Peter, who repeated Satan's temptation of Matt. 4:8–10 by trying to detour Christ from the cross.

- Satan was obviously using Peter to be a stumbling block in Christ's path of obedience.
- Jesus would caution Peter again of Satan's desire to hinder Christ's work (Luke 22:31).

Jesus declared to all of us that bearing the cross will involve dying to self, sharing Christ's reproach, and crucifying the world and the flesh as we follow Him in obedience.

- May we all capture that suffering and glory always go together (1 Pet. 4:12–19; 5:1, 10)

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