

COMMENTARY ON JOHN

LESSON NUMBER 27

John 2:23 **“Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did. ²⁴ But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men, ²⁵ And needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man.”**John 2:23-25)

HE KNEW WHAT WAS IN MAN

INTRODUCTION

Wherever Jesus went, He became the prominent Person – whether in the synagogue, by the seaside, on a mountain, or in the Temple. This was because He IS the prominent Person! What is more, if He is present, He will not remain in the background. A professed Christian environment where Jesus is not prominent is, to say the very least, not the best place to be. There are countless individuals who have regularly met in professed Christian assemblies that remain abysmally ignorant of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is true that this can be because of obstinance and hard heartedness. However, when the condition continues on, something is fundamentally wrong. When Israel was found in perpetual hardness, the condition was traced to false teachers, prophets, and priests (Isa 43:27; Jer 2:26; 32:32-33). The same was true at Corinth (1 Cor 11:4), Galatia (Gal 4:17), and the ones to whom Jude addressed his letter (Jude 1:4). In all of these places, the Lord Jesus was pushed into the background, and He simply will not work in that circumstance. Our text will confirm that where Jesus is found, He will work like no other person can work. He was always about His Father’s business. He once said, *“I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work”* (John 9:4). Again, *“My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work”* (John 4:34). When He was warned that Herod might kill Him He said, *“Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected”* (Luke 13:32). This was the consistent manner of Jesus, and those who traveled with Him quickly learned this was His manner. How perilous the times are in which we live. Professing “Christians” have grown accustomed to Christless environments – where Jesus is really not known for doing anything. All of this is owing to *“the spirit of slumber”* (Rom 11:8), which means the *“table”* from which they eat has been *“made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompense unto them”* (Rom 11:9).

MANY BELIEVED IN HIS NAME

John 2:23 **“Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did.”**

WHEN HE WAS IN JERUSALEM. Prior to the time He went to Jerusalem to die, there are not many references to Him being there. Mark mentions that “Jesus entered into

Jerusalem, and into the Temple" (Mk 11:11). He also mentioned Jesus teaching in the Temple (Mk 12:35). He delivered the Olivet discourse after being in the Temple (Mk 13:1-3). But even those occasions were close to the time of the Triumphal Entry, which was shortly before His betrayal. The times He observed the Passover, He was also in Jerusalem (John 2:13; 6:4). Our text is during one of those times.

MANY BELIEVED IN HIS NAME. Other versions read, *"believed on His name,"*^{ASV} *"came to have faith in His name,"*^{BBE} *"trusted in His name"*^{CSB} *"believed in Him,"*^{GWN} *"began to trust in Him,"*^{NLT} *"were convinced that He was indeed the Messiah,"*^{LIVING} *"became believers in Him,"*^{WEYMOUTH} *"trusted in Him as the Christ,"*^{WILLIAMS} *"put their faith in Jesus,"*^{CEV} *"came to believe in Him,"*^{GOODSPEED} *"believed into His name,"*^{LITV} *"entrusted their lives to Him,"*^{MESSAGE} and *"believed in His name [identified themselves with His party]."*
AMPLIFIED

What does it mean to "believe in His Name?" The name of the Savior, or what He would be called, is mentioned several times in Scripture: *"Immanuel"* (Isa 7:14), *"His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace"* (Isa 9:6), *"the Holy One of Israel"* (Isa 47:4), *"the Lord our Righteousness"* (Jer 23:6), *"the Branch"* (Zech 3:8; 6:12), *"Jesus"* (Matt 1:21), *"the Word of God"* (Rev 19:13). These were not mere titles, but declarations of whom He really was. The Jews, being aware of the Word of God, believed this was the One prophesied by Scripture. They knew He was no ordinary man. Apparently, however, this was not believing *"to the saving of the soul"* (Heb 10:39). We know this is the case, because the Lord did not *"commit Himself to them"* (John 2:24).

For want of a better way to say it, this was a kind of intellectual believing. The people did not deny this was the Christ, like the scribes and Pharisees did. There is a kind of believing that is only surface, and has no discerning depth to it. Such people know Jesus is no ordinary Man, and that He does not do ordinary things. Yet, they imagine they can use Jesus for the fulfillment of their own desires. They do not associate Jesus with the purpose of God, or with an agenda that is higher than their own.

WHEN THEY SAW THE MIRACLES WHICH HE DID. The compassionate Jesus could not refrain from working miracles among those attending the Passover. There is no itemization of these miracles, as with other similar reports:—i.e. *"Great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all"* (Matt 12:15); *"Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick"* (Matt 14:14); *"And great multitudes came unto Him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and He healed them"* (Matt 15:30); *"And great multitudes followed Him; and He healed them there"* (Matt 19:2).

There had never been such a prodigious miracle worker. Jesus did more miracles in a single day than Elijah and Elisha did in their lifetime. These people knew from prophesy that the Messiah would open the eyes of the blind, unstop the ears of the deaf, cause the lame to leap, and the mouth of the dumb to sing (Isa 29:18; 35:5-6).

Remember, this is a region in which the people were sitting in darkness (Matt 4:16). Until John the Baptist, there was no known prophet who had walked among them. Their leaders were a generation of vipers (Matt 3:7) – whitewashed sepulchers, full of dead men's bones (Matt 23:27). Suddenly, here was a burst of heavenly light that exposed the darkness, revealed the impotence of Satan, and wrought changes people had never seen before. They could not deny the greatness and effectiveness of the miracles Jesus did.

They were actually blinded to the reason for His appearance.

When Jesus fed the five thousand, those who “had seen the miracle” said, *“This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world”* (John 6:14). However, what they said was not deep enough. What they had seen was not thorough enough. In fact, their vision was blurred, for Jesus detected they were going to *“take Him by force, to make Him a king.”* He therefore *“departed again into a mountain Himself alone”* (John 6:14-15). They saw the Messiah as someone who could rectify their situation, and do it in the manner they thought best. In fact, they thought much like the people of our day think – within the context of their exceedingly small world. What is even more significant is this, many preachers and teachers are presenting a Jesus that focuses upon national, social, domestic, and personal difficulties. That Jesus can address such matters is not in question. That He came to do so, is emphatically denied. If Jesus were walking in the flesh among us today, there are some people who would want Him to be the president of the United States. See, it is possible to believe in Jesus, but not *“to the saving of the soul.”* There is a surface kind of believing that can actually be changed to the chant, *“Crucify Him!”*

HE DID NOT COMMIT HIMSELF TO THEM

²⁴ *“But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men. . .”*

JESUS DID NOT COMMIT HIMSELF UNTO THEM. Other versions read, *“on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them,”* ^{NASB} *“would not entrust Himself to them,”* ^{NIV} *“did not have faith in them,”* ^{BBE} and *“did not put self into their hands,”* ^{TNT}

The word “commit,” or “entrust,” comes from a word [pisteuo] meaning, “TO THINK TO BE TRUE; TO BE PERSUADED OF; TO CREDIT, PLACE CONFIDENCE IN,” ^{THAYER} “AS PRIMARILY AN INTELLECTUAL EVALUATION BELIEVE; (A) WITH WHAT ONE IS CONVINCED OF, ADDED AS AN OBJECT BELIEVE (IN), BE CONVINCED OF,” ^{FRIBERG} “TO BELIEVE SOMETHING TO BE TRUE AND, HENCE, WORTHY OF BEING TRUSTED,” ^{LOUW-NIDA} AND “BELIEVE, BELIEVE IN, BE CONVINCED OF, GIVE CREDENCE TO.” ^{GINGRICH}

Here is a perspective of Jesus that is not often observed. There are personalities who see Him in valid ways, yet Jesus will not admit them into intimacy with Himself, or allow them to speak of Him.

- The demons are an example of this. It is written, *“And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And He rebuking them **suffered them not to speak: for they knew that He was Christ**”* (Luke 4:41). They were not admitted into the group called *“disciples”* – even though they knew who Jesus was.
- Again, Jesus told ten lepers whom He healed, *“Tell no man”* (Matt 8:4; Lk 5:14). Again, He charged His own disciples *“that they should tell no man that He was Jesus the Christ”* (Matt 16:20; Mk 8:30; Lk 9:21).
- Again, when He healed a man who was deaf and had an impediment of speech, *“He charged them that they should tell no man”* (Mk 7:36).
- After Peter, James, and John had been with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration, had witnessed His transfiguration, and heard God speak out of heaven, Jesus *“charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead”* (Mark 9:9).
- After raising Jairus’ daughter from the dead, Jesus charged her parents *“that they should tell no man what was done”* (Lk 8:56).

Those who are novices, and lack understanding, are said to be *“weak in faith”* (Rom 14:1). Such was the case with those who saw the miracles of Jesus and believed on Him. There was a sense in which their faith came by seeing, not hearing (Rom 10:17). Faith

based upon what you have seen or personally experienced is not mature faith. There is a sense in which Jesus will divulge Himself to you only when you have begun to grasp the significance of *"the word of the Gospel"* (Acts 15:7) – *"the record God has given of His Son"* (1 John 5:10-11). That word is not simplistic. It speaks of the removal of sin, the satisfaction of God, the justification of sinners, sanctification, an eternal inheritance, illumination, and a whole lot more. The more perception you have of these things, the more Jesus will teach you. The less you have of them, the less He will divulge Himself to you. You do not give lengthy explanations and weighty responsibilities to infants, and neither does the Lord.

There is breadth, length, depth, and height to be comprehended, and it is intended for *"all saints"* (Eph 3:18). Until that comprehension takes place to some degree, even the believer cannot be entrusted with much truth. They do not know how to handle the Word of God correctly (2 Tim 2:15), and are too easily confused. This circumstance is certainly not intended to discourage those with minimal understanding. Rather, it is intended to encourage growing *"in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"* (2 Pet 3:18). This involves moving beyond the surface of things to a place where the implications, or interrelationships, of the truth are more clearly seen—i.e. how truth is integrated. This is when sound conclusions can be reached about Scripture, and various statements can be blended in the mind for proper spiritual advantage.

It is true that Jesus will not break a bruised reed or quench a smoking flax (Matt 12:20) – but will not divulge Himself to them. Neither, however, will He open up lofty views of the truth to such a person, for that would be one of the very things that **would** *"break"* the bruised reed, and *"quench"* the smoking flax. All of this, of course, is the exclusive ministry of Jesus. Men are called to participate in this ministry only to the degree that they have Christ's view of the situation.

HE KNEW ALL MEN. Other versions read, *"He knew what was in man,"* ^{NASB} *"what was in everyone,"* ^{NRSV} *"had knowledge of them all,"* ^{BBE} *"knew what people are like,"* ^{CJB} *"He understood people,"* ^{GWN} *"He knew human nature,"* ^{NLT} *"No one needed to tell Him how changeable human nature is."* ^{LIVING}

One of the traits of those with surface views, and a childish understanding, is that they are *"tossed to and fro"* (Eph 4:14). Jesus knew it would not be very long until these very people would be calling for Him to be crucified.

HE KNEW WHAT WAS IN MAN

²⁵ ***"And needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man."***

We must keep before us that the circumstance that introduced this inspired commentary was, *"many believed in His Name, when they saw the miracles which He did"* (John 2:23). For many, it would have been sufficient to merely announce this situation, and call for God to be praised. That is how religious men often respond to such things. However, that is not the response of those who are filled with the Spirit. On the day of Pentecost, when, under the conviction of sin, a multitude of people cried out, *"What shall we do?"* Peter responded, saying, *"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call"* (Acts 2:38-39). For many, that is sufficient, and rarely is any more said to such people. But that was not sufficient for Peter. By the Spirit, he had come to also know *"what was in man."* Therefore, before those people were baptized, it is

written, *"And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation"* (Acts 2:40). It is not often that we hear such words today, but they are sorely needed. A similar word to those in Christ is, *"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God"* (Heb 3:12). Another word is, *"Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded"* (James 4:8)

AND NEEDED NOT THAT ANY SHOULD TESTIFY OF MAN. When it comes to the capacity of men, there is a lot of unwarranted naivete in the churches. It was not so with Jesus. He did not require an explanation for why people said or did things. In our time, there are a lot of explanations for why people come short of what they are expected to be in Christ. Anytime an observation is made concerning what men are expected to be in Christ Jesus, it seems that someone rises to give an explanation for deficiency in that area – an explanation that seeks to modify the abrasiveness of not being what Jesus and the apostles said believers are: *"light"* (Matt 5:14), *"salt"* (Matt 5:13), *"dead, and life is hid with Christ in God"* (Col 3:3), *"the children of light"* (1 Thess 5:5), *"a peculiar people"* (1 Pet 2:9), and those who have *"overcome"* false teachers (1 John 4:4).

Unlike those of our day, Jesus did not need anyone to *"testify of man,"* and of his seemingly noble ambitions. Other versions read, *"near witness of man,"*^{NASB} *"tell him about human nature,"*^{CEB} *"inform him about a person,"*^{CJB} *"never needed evidence about anyone,"*^{NJB} and *"tell him what mankind is really like."*^{NLT}

In other words, there were sound reasons why Jesus did not entrust Himself to those who believed on Him because of the miracles they had seen. Like God Himself, Jesus did nothing He did *"without cause"* (Ezek 14:23).

HE KNEW WHAT WAS IN MAN. There was something in those people that disqualified them from receiving a personal divulgence of who Jesus was, and what He was doing. Jesus did not require someone to step forward and tell Him something about those people that He did not know already.

For example, God said to Israel, *"Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you"* (Jer 5:25). Again, the Psalmist affirmed, *"He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground; a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein"* (Psa 107:33-34).

Here is the testimony of a man who knew this truth, even though he lived hundreds of years before Jesus walked among men: *"O LORD, Thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, Thou knowest it altogether"* (Psa 139:1-4).

And what was the response of David to this awareness? *"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"* (Psa 139:24). Again the Psalmist wrote, *"Show me Thy ways, O LORD; teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me: for Thou art the God of my salvation; on Thee do I wait all the day"* (Psa 25:4-5). To such an one, the Lord will commit Himself, entrust Himself, revealing His Person and purpose. However, those who believed in Jesus because they saw His miracles were not that kind of people. That is precisely why Jesus did not commit Himself to them.

While this is a sensitive area, and care must be taken not to intrude into unlawful areas, I feel constrained to say a few more words about this matter. If ever you sense you

are having difficulty comprehending something that is declared pivotal and vital, there is a reason for that failure. It is not my prerogative to attempt to identify that reason. That is the responsibility of the person who requires illumination. Seek the Lord, and find the reason why The Lord is not entrusting Himself to you. Do not be content to remain in a state of juvenileness. Seek to rid yourself of everything that inhibits spiritual growth.