

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian Church,  
10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS  
LESSON 5  
THE LIFE OF CHRIST**

**INTRODUCTION**

The life of John the Baptist is an example for all and especially for those who serve in the church. Our Lord Jesus Christ praised him as the greatest of all the Old Testament prophets. When John's work was almost completed, he gave a final unequivocal testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. Shortly after, he was imprisoned by Herod Antipas (21 BC – 39 AD).

The Lord Jesus Christ was forced to depart from Judaea for Galilee. He took the direct route passing through Samaria. In those days, a Jew would not take this direct route to Galilee. On the way, Jesus met with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well in Sychar. His conversation with her is instructive in the work of evangelism.

**OUTLINE**

1. The Judaeen Ministry of Jesus Christ (John 3:22-24)
2. The Humility & Imprisonment of John the Baptist (John 3:25-36; Luke 3:18-20)

3. The Samaritan Ministry of Jesus Christ (John 4:1-42)

**COMMENTARY**

**The Judaeen Ministry of  
Jesus Christ**

After the cleansing of the Temple and the meeting with Nicodemus, Jesus and His disciples went to Judaea. There, Jesus' disciples (not Jesus Himself) started baptizing the people (John 4:2).<sup>1</sup> Concurrently, John was baptizing and preaching repentance at Aenon (meaning: "places of springs") near to Salim (meaning: "peace"). John did not see Jesus' ministry as rivalling his own. When the Jews tried to provoke him, John conducted himself admirably.

**The Humility & Imprisonment of John  
the Baptist**

One could ask what was the motive of the Jews in pointing to John that "he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him" (John 3:26). "He" was none other than Jesus Christ. Crowds which had first attended John's preaching had deserted him and were flocking to Jesus. The question raised by the Jews may seem innocent on the surface. But it was a malicious enquiry meant to provoke jealousy in John – Wasn't John preaching and baptizing there before Jesus Christ? Was Jesus not baptized by John? But now the

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<sup>1</sup> John 4:2 (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)

people who had attended his ministry were flocking to Jesus. These Jews were seeking to make John envious.

John's conduct is a testimony of his humility and greatness. First, he said (John 3:27), "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven" John acknowledged and submitted to the sovereignty of God. God gives gifts to every man severally as He wills. Secondly, John reminded the Jews that he was not the Christ but that he was sent before Him (John 3:28). He likened his ministry to the friend of the bridegroom who rejoices greatly when he hears the bridegroom is coming and is united with his bride (John 3: 29). The friend of the bridegroom plays an important role in a Jewish wedding. He arranges the wedding; sends out the invitations and presides at the wedding feast. In addition, it is his duty to bring the bride and the groom together. He has to guard the bridal chamber and allow only the groom to enter. When that happens, he rejoices that he has fulfilled his assignment (Ian Barclay, *Discovering John's Gospel*, 63). The analogy is clear. The bride is the invisible Church, and the bridegroom is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. The bride belonged to Christ and not to John. Therefore it was right that many people who previously attended his preaching now flocked to Jesus.

John insisted that Jesus Christ must increase in authority and popularity but he must decrease (John 3:30).

Moreover, John pointed out that Jesus Christ who came from God is above all whereas he was of the earth (John 3:31). God the Father who loved His Son had filled Him with His Spirit fully, without measure and had given all things into His hand (John 3:34,35). And anyone who believes on the Son has everlasting life, and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God is upon him. John was but a servant of God, but Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world (John 3:36).

John clearly understood his calling and role, and continued in his ministry of preaching and baptism unto repentance. He was not at all perturbed or envious of what was reported to him by the Jews. In fact he rejoiced to know that it happened. In his preaching, John reproved Herod the tetrarch (Herod Antipas) for his sin of adultery, as he had divorced his Nabataean wife to marry Herodias, who was formerly the wife of Philip, his half brother. When Herodias learnt of John's public rebuke, she instigated her husband to imprison him. As a subject of the king who had sinned publicly, John spoke out in love hoping that the king would repent of his sin.

### **The Samaritan Ministry of Jesus Christ**

When Jesus knew that the Pharisees had heard that He made and baptized more disciples than John, He left Judaea and moved His ministry to Galilee (John 4:1-3; Matthew 4:12).

Jesus knew the evil intent of the Pharisees. They would sow seeds of misunderstanding, conflict and envy between His disciples and John's disciples. Jesus Christ's intent in preaching and baptizing in Judaea was not to bring confusion and detract people away from John but rather to enhance and approve John's ministry.

Enroute to Galilee, Jesus took the direct road through Samaria. The normal way taken by the Jews was to avoid going through Samaria for the Jews had a deep prejudice against the Samaritans. They would go east and cross Jordan into Perea and travel north, and then turn west into Galilee after they had passed Samaria. Jesus took this direct route so as to avoid meeting the soldiers who were arresting John in Judaea near the Jordan River, and also to escape the sinister watch of the Pharisees who were hostile to Him.

The Jews had contempt for the Samaritans because they were a mixed race — part Jewish part Gentiles. In 722 BC when the Assyrians conquered northern Israel, the invaders took away the intellectuals and left the poor and unskilled Jews in Israel. The Assyrians then brought in people from the neighbouring regions to settle in Israel. In the course of time, these people intermarried with the local Jews and a new mixed generation of people, called the Samaritans, emerged. In 586 BC when the Jews in the southern kingdom, Judah, were taken captive by the Babylonians, the Jews who were left

behind kept themselves separate from intermarrying other races. When the captive Jews returned to Jerusalem in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, they refused the help of the Samaritans to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and the Temple. This resulted in an enmity between the two peoples up to the time of Jesus.

Jesus ignored the deep prejudice of the Jews and took the Samaritan route. Jesus broke all the rules of the tradition of the Jews. On reaching the city of Sychar in Samaria, Jesus came to Jacob's well and there He rested. It was noon time. Jesus was tired after the long journey from Judaea. He sat on the well while His disciples went to buy bread. Jesus' weariness was evidence of His humanity. While resting at the well, a Samaritan woman came to the well to draw water. Jesus asked her for a drink of water and what ensued was a masterly demonstration of how personal evangelism should be done.

The Samaritan woman's response was one of surprise and resentment — Jesus being a Jew and a man should not be asking her, a woman and a Samaritan for a drink, for the Jews had no dealings with Samaritans (John 4:9). Jesus replied gently that He was able to give her the gift of "living water" (John 4:10). The woman's reply showed that she did not understand what Jesus meant by "living water". She thought that Jesus was still talking about the well. Then she remarked that Jesus could not be more superior than Jacob who gave them the well from which they had been

drawing water for many generations (John 4:11-12). Jesus did not argue with her, but carried on by explaining to her what He meant by the “living water” which He was able to give (John 4:13-14). This stirred her interest and without hesitation, she asked for the gift of the “living water” (John 4:15).

At this juncture when the woman was beginning to open her heart, Jesus told her to “go” and call her husband, and then to “come” back (John 4:16). Such a request by Jesus required the woman to solemnly search her heart. Jesus was leading her to confess her sins and come back to Him as a repentant sinner to receive the gift of the “living water”. Jesus indirectly revealed His deity to the woman by telling her that if she knew who was speaking to her, she would ask Him for water and He would give her living water. When the Samaritan woman answered that she had no husband, Jesus replied that she had answered correctly because she had five husbands and the present man who was with her was not her husband (John 4:16-18). Jesus knew everything about the woman — her heart, her life, her thoughts — for He is God!

The Samaritan woman was seeing some light. She perceived that Jesus was a prophet. A prophet is God’s spokesman. The Samaritan woman now recognized that here was a man through whom God was speaking. Suddenly she changed the subject and tried to avoid the moral issue. She talked about the contention between the Jews and the

Samaritans. She introduced the controversy about the place where God should be worshipped. The Samaritans believed that God should be worshipped in Mount Gerizim, whereas the Jews declared that it should be in Jerusalem. Jesus again avoided a debate on the subject. Jesus stayed on course and focused on the spiritual issue. Jesus answered her that worshipping God was not a matter of the place. Jesus commented that her worship of God was flawed because she did not know whom she worshipped. Jesus knew that the Samaritans only accepted as Scripture the first five books of Moses (The Law). It is an incomplete revelation of God. But the Jews, of whom Jesus was a part, knew the God whom they worshipped because they had the fuller revelation (The Law, the Writings and the Prophets). Jesus then taught her that God is a Spirit, and God seeks those who worship Him “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:20-24). To worship God “in spirit” means to worship God spiritually in contrast to merely going through the motions of outward forms and rituals, which pertain to the flesh. To worship “in truth” is to worship truly, sincerely and in accordance to the revelation in His Word. Hence, the two are not two different kinds of worship but two aspects of the same worship. The woman’s spiritual doubts had been answered by Jesus. Now that her spiritual understanding had been quickened, she said that she believed that the Messiah called Christ, would come and when He did, He would tell

the Samaritans everything. Jesus then told her that He was the Messiah, the Christ (John 4:25, 26). At this point, Jesus' disciples came back and they were surprised to find Jesus talking with the Samaritan woman, but none of them asked Him why.

The Samaritan woman on hearing Jesus' messianic claim, immediately went off leaving her waterpot behind indicating that she would be back again. She went to the city and witnessed to the people that she had met a man who was the Christ, and bade them to come to see Him for themselves. They came with her to Jesus (John 4:28-30). Meanwhile, while the woman was away, the disciples asked Jesus to eat. They had travelled a long way and were tired and hungry. But Jesus was not interested at that moment. He was excited about the conversion of the Samaritan woman. He told His disciples to "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest" (John 4:35). Jesus encouraged His disciples that the sowers and reapers would receive "wages" that are eternal. Sowing and reaping are two distinct and complementary work of saving souls.

Many of the Samaritans of the city came, saw, and heard Jesus for themselves and believed. They invited Jesus to stay on and Jesus stayed in the city for two days. Many more believed. Those who believed testified to the Samaritan woman that they believed not because of what she had told them, but

because of what they had heard from Jesus themselves.

## SUMMARY

John is presented to us as a faithful and true servant of God. He knew his gifts, his calling and his role. He was humble and gave all glory to God. His final testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ truly exemplifies his real greatness. He rejected outright the attempt by the Jews to make him envious of Jesus Christ. He desired only the glory of Jesus Christ and not his own. Very often, a servant of the Lord is envious at the greater success enjoyed by another. Satan capitalizes on the weaknesses of men and causes them to have this unhealthy and spiritually immature attitude. Let us recognize that every perfect gift comes from God who gives to whoever He wills. Those of us who are recipients should humbly accept and see ourselves as fellow servants of the Lord, complementing one another in advancing the kingdom of God. Paul pointed this out to the Corinthian church which was plagued with divisiveness among themselves (1 Corinthians 3:5-9): *Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man*

*shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.* There is no justification for fellow Christian workers in a church to be envious of one another when one enjoys more "success" than the other. Give God the glory. God must increase and we decrease!

Jesus broke all human traditions in order to reach out to the Samaritan woman. Our Lord sets the example for all His disciples to follow. The people to whom we are reaching with the gospel should not be confined to those who are lovable and well-liked but also those who are socially prejudiced and despised. Jesus in reaching out to the Samaritan woman opened Himself to criticism and censure by others. But He overcame them for the salvation of a soul is precious in His sight. He too gave His life for these people.

His encounter with the Samaritan woman teaches how ordinary daily life situations can be turned into opportunities for teaching and spreading gospel truths to others. He taught his disciples that missionary work is a combined effort. Some sow the seeds of truth while others reap. The sower should not be discouraged when he does not see the fruit of his labour. The one who reaps should recognize and appreciate that without the sower, there would be no harvest. Remember always that it is God alone who gives

the increase. Salvation is of the LORD, not man.

Finally, the Samaritan woman is praiseworthy. She had been taught the Scriptures concerning the coming of the Messiah. She was an intelligent woman who made very quick responses to Jesus' words. She was honest about her sin. When she was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, she did not waste any time to tell others of the good news. She overcame the fact that she was not a chaste woman and that people might not listen to her. What was important to her was that her fellow people should know the wonderful good news. She exemplifies one who is a true believer of Christ.

### **PRACTICAL VALUE**

We should read and re-read the account of Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman and learn well the principles of personal evangelism. Each day, we can seize the opportunity to turn our meetings with other people into exciting spiritual encounters.

Like John the Baptist, we must learn to stand together with others in advancing the kingdom of God, even though others might enjoy more success than we do. We should remove all feelings of jealousy and unhealthy rivalry for we all serve the same God. His honour and glory is our paramount desire. AMEN

## DAILY READING & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Daily Readings

**MONDAY:** John 3:22-36; 2 Corinthians 5:20; Galatians 6:9<sup>2</sup>

**TUESDAY:** Luke 3:18-20; John 4:1-3; Matthew 4:12; Mark 1:14<sup>3</sup>

**WEDNESDAY:** John 4:4-26; Genesis 33:18, 19<sup>4</sup>

**THURSDAY:** John 4:27-38

**FRIDAY:** John 4:39-42

### Discussion Questions

1. What is the rare quality of John the Baptist so lacking today? What can we learn from him?

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<sup>2</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

Galatians 6:9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 4:12 Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;

Mark 1:14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 33:18 And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which *is* in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padanaram; and pitched his tent before the city. 19 And he bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for an hundred pieces of money.

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2. What do you think were the objections of the Jews who raised the question to John? (John 3:26).

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3. In what ways did John express that Jesus' ministry was superior to his own?

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4. Why was John imprisoned? What lesson can we learn from it?

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5. Why did Jesus leave Judea for Galilee?

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6. What are the evidences that Jesus was as human as we are?

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7. Why was the Samaritan worship of God inevitably flawed?

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8. What example did Jesus show and teach about being a spiritual "harvester"?

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9. The Jews were prejudiced against the Samaritans but Jesus brought the gospel to them anyway. What does this teach us?

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10. What principles of evangelism are illustrated by the response of the Samaritans to the woman and to Jesus?

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11. What do you learn about being a witness from the Samaritan woman?

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