

The Red-Letter Words of Yeshua ~ Part 5

Yeshua's Driving Merchants from the Temple

¹³ *It was almost time for the festival of Pesach in Y'hudah, so Yeshua went up to Yerushalayim.* ¹⁴ *In the Temple grounds, He found those who were selling cattle, sheep, and pigeons and others who were sitting at tables exchanging money.* ¹⁵ *He made a whip from cords and drove them all out of the Temple grounds, the sheep, and cattle as well. He knocked over the moneychangers' tables, scattering their coins;* ¹⁶ *and to the pigeon-sellers, he said, "**Get these things out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market?**"* ¹⁷ *(His talmidim later recalled that the Tanakh says, "Zeal for your house will devour me."¹)* ¹⁸ *So the Judeans confronted him by asking him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove you have the right to do all this?"* ¹⁹ *Yeshua answered them, "**Destroy this temple, and in three days, I will raise it up again.**"* ²⁰ *The Judeans said, "It took 46 years to build this Temple, and you're going to raise it in three days?"* ²¹ *But the "temple" He had spoken of was His body.*

But the "Temple" He had spoken of was His body. Yeshua often spoke obliquely to those He knew lacked faith (for another example, see v. 25 below). At **Mattityahu** 13:10–17, He answered at length the question of His talmidim, "*Why do you speak to them in parables?*" Like **Nechemyah**, he did not waste time in futile conversations with closed-minded people (Nehemiah 2:19–20, 6:2–3).

²² *Therefore, when He was raised from the dead, His talmidim remembered that He had said this, and they trusted in the Tanakh and in what Yeshua had said.*

At the end of Yeshua's ministry, when He overturned the moneychangers' tables a second time (Mattityahu 21:12), the talmidim recalled Yeshua's quoting Psalm 69, "*Zeal for your house will devour me*" (above, v. 17). This shows that **Yochanan's Gospel** attributes to the later overturning of tables in the Temple a significant immediate-causative role in Yeshua's being brought to trial and death.

²³ *Now, while Yeshua was in Yerushalayim at the Pesach festival, there were many people who "believed in His name" when they saw the miracles He performed.*

There were many people who "believed in his name" but not in Him (vv. 24–25). His miracles excited them, but they were not ready to acknowledge their sin and repent. In contrast, **Nakdimon** (3:1ff.) was a sincere seeker, and eventually, he came to genuine faith.

²⁴ *But He did not commit Himself to them, for He knew what people are like - ²⁵ that is, He didn't need anyone to inform Him about a person because He knew what was in the person's heart. ~* Yochanan 2:13-25

He Has an Encounter with Nakdimon

¹ *There was a man among the P'rushim, named Nakdimon, who was a ruler of the Judeans.* ² *This man came to Yeshua by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know it is from God that you have come as a teacher; for no one can do these miracles you perform unless God is with him."* ³ *"Yes, indeed," Yeshua answered him, "**I tell you that unless a person is born again from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.**"*

Yeshua neither criticizes **Nakdimon** for fearing to seek Him openly nor praises his insight in perceiving that Yeshua has come **from God**. Instead, He deals with him at his point of need, which is to be **born again from above**.

¹ Psalm 69:10(9).

⁴ Nakdimon said to Him, "How can a grown man be 'born'? Can he go back into his mother's womb and be born a second time?"⁵ Yeshua answered, "Yes, indeed, I tell you that unless a person is born from water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.

Born from water and the Spirit. Water immersion is connected with a ritual cleansing of the body (see above, 1:26–34, and Matt. 3:1–17). The **Ruach** gives power for turning from sin and living a holy life; both suggests aspects of purification. This is why ***born from water*** does not mean ordinary human birth; moreover, since everyone is "*born from water*" in that sense, it would be silly for **Yeshua** to make a condition out of it with the word ***unless***.

⁶ What is born from the flesh is flesh, and what is born from the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Stop being amazed at my telling you that you must be born again from above! ⁸ The wind blows where it wants to, and you hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it's going. That's how it is with everyone who has been born from the Spirit."

The wind blows. There is a wordplay here since both the **Greek** word "*pneuma*" and the **Hebrew** word "*ruach*" may mean either "wind" or "spirit," depending on context.

⁹ Nakdimon replied, "How can this happen?"¹⁰ Yeshua answered him, "You hold the office of teacher in Isra'el, and you don't know this?

You hold the office of teacher in Isra'el, literally, "*You are the teacher of Isra'el.*" The use of the definite article implies that **Nakdimon's** position was uniquely important, although it is difficult to reconstruct precisely what it was.

¹¹ Yes, indeed! I tell you that what we speak about, we know, and what we give evidence of, we have seen, but you people don't accept our evidence! ¹² If you people don't believe me when I tell you about the things of the world, how will you believe me when I tell you about the things of heaven? ¹³ No one has gone up into heaven; there is only the one who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man.

It is sometimes asserted that **Yeshua** never claimed to be more than an ordinary human being. But here, He affirms His heavenly origin, and indeed, throughout **Yochanan's Gospel**, He presents Himself as divine as well as human, both in function and in essence. ***We speak ... we give evidence.*** **Yeshua** is associating Himself with other witnesses: **Yochanan the Immerser** (1:7, 32–34), **Yesa'yahu** (12:41), **Avraham** (8:56), **Moshe** (5:46), and the writers and subjects of the **Tanakh** (5:39).

¹⁴ Just as Moshe lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up; ¹⁵ so that everyone who trusts in him may have eternal life. ~ Yochanan 3:1-15

Just as the **Isra'eli** were saved from the plague of serpents when they gazed on the brass **serpent** raised by **Moshe** (Numbers 21:6–9), so all people are saved from eternal death, torment, and separation from **God** by gazing with spiritual eyes on the person of the **Messiah Yeshua** ***lifted up*** in death on the execution-stake.

Our next post will examine **For God So Loved the World**.