

Do You Recognize This Man? (Part 6)

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Given 23-Sep-10; Sermon #FT10-02

We moderns envision a strange stereo-type. We could even call it a caricature of a holy person. If a group of men and women were drawn off the street and asked to do a character sketch of a righteous religious figure for a book or movie, it is likely that nine out of ten would describe something similar. It would most likely be a man, probably an older man, somewhat learned, living alone, and perhaps in a remote place like a hermit or recluse.

He would have to be, of course, very spiritual, as only people think of spirituality, perhaps even a bit mysterious along with it. He would be kind, but solemn. He would be abstemious, frugal, non-materialistic, and most likely dirt-poor. He would dress in robes, which might be quite shabby and full of holes, and probably in need of a good washing.

And, of course, you cannot forget this detail that just about everybody would bring it up: he wears a beard.

Now, if we were writing a space adventure, this would be someone like Obe One Kanobe. Does he not fit this caricature? If this was a fantasy story, of course, it would be Gandolph the Gray. He is Merlin of the Arthurian Cycle; Nestor (if you are a classics major and read the Iliad); and of course, there are countless monks and hermits in the old stories that fit this caricature and stereo type.

In fact, in classic literature, there is actually a wise old man archetype. They were like stock characters. So you would throw this wise old man in there to do his role in the story. And, it was always the same kind of role.

He gives the main character sage advice just when he may happen to need it. He presents a talisman or some sort of weapon and guides them along the way, and sometimes even provides a bit of humor because one of the other characteristics of this stock character is that they are often absent minded.

Now, believe it or not, this has a point. Many people picture Jesus Christ in this same fashion. He may not be actually old as they picture the character, but He acts old and has all the traits of this archetypical wise man. He is a mystic, somewhat remote from all of us, and unfathomable. We just cannot understand Him because He is just so far ahead of us regarding wisdom. He imparts pithy sayings to guide us along the way. He

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wanders about the land in a weathered threadbare robe with just a few followers tagging along beside Him. He wears a beard (of course). He owns very little and is poor. He relies on the charitable deeds of other disciples to provide food and shelter while doing His ministry.

He is, as one prominent historian styled Him, "A Mediterranean Jewish peasant." That is not very pleasant to say about one's Messiah; to think of Him as an ordinary peasant with extraordinary wisdom.

But, above all, they think of Jesus Christ as very solemn—often retiring to the wilderness, or mountains, or a boat on a lake—rather than mingle too much with the people, the rabble. And, we know that the gospels say that He did go away frequently to pray and think about things. But the Jews, as the gospels say, accused Him of consorting with tax collectors, harlots, and other sinners. Yet, even so, many people still think of Him as a solitary and unapproachable man—a fish out of water—His heavenly gaze separating Him from ordinary humans. (I cannot remember the actor's name, but one of those who portrayed Him in one of those 1960s autobiography type movies presented Him in that way, always staring off into heaven without the time for anybody else.)

But, the common caricature draws Him as bereft of humor or any kind of enjoyment. He seems to lack a type of "joie de vivre." In fact, He seems more likely to become angry and to pronounce a woe, than to crack a smile or tell a joke. Things were just way too serious for Him to ever do anything that might be considered exciting or fun.

Now, obviously, I am exaggerating for effect, but only for the purposes of illustration. People have their own ideas of what Jesus Christ was like as a man. But it is true that to fill the gaps in their knowledge (and many people, we must admit, do not have good biblical knowledge anymore), they insert the characteristics of this archetype of this wise old man. And before long, the real Jesus becomes unrecognizable. He becomes not the God—the Jesus—of the Bible, but rather something else—from people's imagination, literature, movies, etc. I do this with Moses all the time, as you know. Moses to me, if He does not look like Charlston Heston, I do not know what I am going to do! It will take me probably whole millennia to remember who he is. But I believe we do this to Jesus as well. We think of Him...and we have our own way of looking at Him; and we must be careful that it is actually the way that the Bible presents Him, and not as we make Him out to be in our own minds.

So, we do not want to lose the real person who has been revealed in scripture to us. And I hope that we have not done that. I hope that these sermons have been helpful to

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you in recognizing this Man—this sermon series on the holy days, "Do You Recognize this Man? (part 6). And as you know, in these sermons, I tried to show the real Jesus and His teachings in contrast to what is commonly assumed, believed, and taught in this evil world. You know, we may have unconsciously picked up things like this over the years.

Today, in part following the theme my dad was talking about in a manner, I am going to concentrate on His lifestyle. And, I am going to contrast His lifestyle with what we have been commanded to do at the Feast of Tabernacles.

Now, this is the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, and this sermon has application to this festival because in this feast, we are allowed to experience a foretaste of prosperity and plenty that pictures the Millennium. Prosperity and plenty (when we come down to it, when we think about it in terms of what we know about Jesus Christ) seem to be the opposite of the life that Christ lead on this earth. He was certainly not wealthy. And He did not have much to His name. Like I have mentioned before, in His ministry, He was supported by contributions from friends, and disciples. He said that He did not even have a place to lay His head.

So, how do we reconcile these two images—the poor Jesus as the world understands Him and the plenteous preview of the Millennium?

Turn to Deuteronomy 16, if you will. These are common scriptures we go to during the Feast of Tabernacles. Often we come to this portion of the Bible when we are talking about giving an offering. But today I am just going to go to verses 13 through 15.

Deuteronomy 16:13-15 "You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, when you have gathered from your threshing floor and from your winepress. And you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant and the Levite, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow, who are within your gates. Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the LOORD your God in the place which the LOORD chooses, because the LOORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you surely rejoice.

As we see here, it is very clear, that the Feast of Tabernacles occurs just after the autumn harvest when all the crops have been gathered in, and having gathered them in, the people either have a great deal to eat, and /or if they have sold the crops, they have a great deal of money on hand. And any craftsman would have kept his money

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throughout the year so that he would have ample money to spend as well.

So, we could say that at this time of the year after the autumn harvest, the people are flush with money. Their pockets are full. And they have all this wealth to spend. As we know, when we come to the Feast, we have most of ten percent of our annual income to spend at the Feast of Tabernacles in eight days or so, plus travel time—one tenth of our income to spend. This can turn a person's head if he is not careful.

Not only that, on top of the fact that we have all this money to spend, we have to project our selves back to that time when just about everybody were farmers; they had just come through a period of very hard work and labor to gather, process, and store the crops. Harvesting is not easy. Nowadays, we get our machines, put the key in, and drive across the fields in his harvester, which is about the only exercise he gets just bobbing up and down across the fields. And it is done for him just about—it is all mechanized. But way back when, they were out in the fields doing everything by hand. And so, they had just come through a period of very heavy exertion. Many of them were tired, and really in need of a break and relaxation. They were ready to get away, have a good time, and enjoy the fruit of their labors. Now, put those two things together—a lot of money in one hand, and an eager desire to live it up in the other. They wanted to do something other than work.

But, God commands us, as we see here, to rejoice! "You shall surely rejoice in this feast." "Because the Lord will bless you in all your produce, in all the work of your hands, so that you shall surely rejoice." What I want from here is that God Himself set this up for them. He gives the blessing in the produce and in the work, and then He sends us on an eight day "vacation" of sorts, an eight day feast, telling us to rejoice. And so, we are set up to make some decisions, set up with a test in the Feast of Tabernacles.

Now, does this sound like the thing that Jesus would do? Here He has just gone through a great deal of work, He has all this money, and He is out there to have a good time, to rejoice and to let off some steam. Does this sound like Jesus Christ? The One we know from the gospels? What would Jesus do in this situation? This is an interesting question is it not? What if Jesus Christ were here with us in this hall as a physical human being, planning on staying here for the whole feast, how would He keep the feast? Would He keep it in His room all the time praying? Would He go off to some forsaken place? I am trying to set up here, what would Jesus do if He were in our situation? A lot of money, having had a very busy summer of work and able for eight days to rejoice at the feast?

Turn back to Deuteronomy 14. This is instruction about second tithe and its proper use,

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primarily. And the answers to my recent questions are right here, because Jesus Christ was the One as the God of the Old Testament who gave these commands. Therefore, He would follow them too.

Deuteronomy 14:22-27 "You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. And you shall eat before the LOORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LOORD your God always. But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, or if the place where the LOORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, when the LOORD your God has blessed you, then you shall exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the LOORD your God chooses. And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the LOORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household. You shall not forsake the Levite who is within your gates, for he has no part nor inheritance with you.

We could actually say that this adds to what we just saw in the previous scriptures (Deuteronomy 16). As mentioned, God tells us to set aside ten percent of our income each year so that we would have enough to travel to the feast site, and as some would see it, live it up for a while.

Every year, my wife, Beth, does a bit of spreadsheet for us to figure out how much we have for various days, and for various things. And every time she tells me how much we have to spend each day, I think, "Wow! That is a lot of money! I do not think we will be able to spend that much!" Usually we do, though. We end up figuring out how to spend that much. It is quite easy, too. But, when you see it in numbers, it seems like a lot of money. And it is.

You do occasionally get those avaricious thoughts in your head, I will not deny that, but you must put them down and not give in to the temptation.

Now it specifically mentions having money to travel, and to buy the best food, wine, and strong drink (should we desire that) as we can afford, so that we will, as it says here, "certainly rejoice." So, in one place He tells us, "We shall surely rejoice," and in the other place He says that, "We will certainly rejoice." I think that He wants us to have a good time during the feast. He wants us to be happy. He wants us to have a little

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something different from our normal work a day drudgery labor that we do. But He wants the feast to be something special—a time of rejoicing.

The use of the second tithe as we call it, the festival tithe, is not exclusively for food and drink, but I should mention that the overall principle is that we spend the money at the feast for use of things at the feast. So if you want to buy something and you have a question about whether you should, or should not, remember this principle, and keep it in the forefront of your mind. We spend the money at the feast, for the use of things at the feast. That is not always the case. Sometimes we could buy something at the feast, and it gives further use later on. But, normally, we should think in terms of for the feast, at the feast—to surely rejoice here. With ten percent of our income, we can find all sorts of things to consume with this money.

But notice here in Deuteronomy 14 that God tempers this use of the money in at least two ways. The first is found in verse 23 where He says that the use of our festival tithe for all these good things should teach us the fear of the Lord. Now, this takes up the basic principle another notch. It is not just money that we use at the feast for things at the feast, but the use of our money should increase our reverence for and obedience to God.

It is interesting that God wants us to use our money so that we learn to fear Him more. It is obviously full of implications about becoming more like Him and Christ.

So, this means that God should be at the back of our minds as we use this money. Are we using it properly? Are we using it in a way that will bring honor to Him? Are we using it in a way in which we are making a good witness for Him?

Now, the second element is found in verse 27, talking about not forgetting the Levite. Levite, here, is a catch word for all those people who are needy, not just those in service of the temple, tabernacle, or ministry. I think that the ministry in this case is not like the Levites were back in those days in being able to support themselves. But, during that time the Levites had no inheritance in the land. And so the tribes had to support the Levites. And so, as is often the case with human nature, people tend to forget those people who really need to be supported. And so, He uses the Levite as this symbol of those who really are in need.

But, God reminds us here in verse 27 that despite being flush with money and being able to have whatever we desire, we need to keep those less fortunate in mind. So, this is the second thing that tempers the use of our money. The use of our money should not be confined solely to satisfying ourselves. We are to look around, see where there is a

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need, and fill it up. This is what God does. God has everything. He has all wealth all the time. And He is constantly searching to find out those who have needs and fill them up. He is the God of all Providence, is He not? He provides for those who have needs, and even those who think they do not have needs. He owns everything—all the beasts on a thousand hills. So, we have to become like God in that way.

In these difficult economic times, we have to remember, too, that there are people here who are coming to the feast this year with a lot less money than they have had in former times. So, if you do look around, there are people who need the help. They will not have a sign saying, "I will work for food," but there are people here who are stretching it to make it through the feast. So, taking them out to eat, or slipping them a little cash, or offering to pay for a tank of gas, or whatever you think in your creative mind to do for them, maybe for a day, or part of the feast week would be a good thing because you would be following the instructions in verse 27, keeping the less fortunate in mind.

Another thing that it does, not only are we helping them, we are showing that we are living the Godly way that God is teaching us to do. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong kept telling us years ago that God's way is the way of give. And we need to remember that frequently.

Please turn to Nehemiah 8. This will be slightly out of context because this takes place on the Day of Trumpets, but in principle it works for the Feast of Tabernacles as well.

Nehemiah 8:9-10 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn nor weep." For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law. Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared [see Deuteronomy 14:27 above]; for this day is holy to our LORD. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

So He is telling them on this holy day, you are supposed to rejoice! You are supposed to be happy. You are supposed to have a good time.

Nehemiah 8:11-12 So the Levites quieted all the people, saying, "Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved." And all the people went their way to eat and drink, to send portions and rejoice greatly, because they understood the words that were declared to them.

They understood the preaching and the intent that they were to have a good time and follow all the commands of God. These things had not been preached to them for many years, these exiles coming back from Babylon. It may have been as much as 70 years since they heard them taught. And they found joy after their grieving in God's providence for them. So they remembered that God is responsible for their providence and so should we.

So, the instruction is that we should eat and drink those things that we would not normally have access to throughout the year, but remember to help those in need. This is not a time of sorrow, but a time of joy. In many ways, it is a time when we can forget what has been going with us, and things in the world, taking a respite from all that for one week, because He has greatly blessed us even if we are going through some bad times. We still have a lot in this country. Even the poor of the U.S. are not really poor.

We have a good support system throughout the year, but here, we should have an even better support system while we are together throughout the week.

Now the question is, how does this compare to the lifestyle of Jesus Christ our Savior (these eight days of feasting, of having all the good, drinking all the sweet as it says in Nehemiah 8). How does this compare to His lifestyle? Would He participate with us in eating and drinking and enjoying the fellowship and the sights and sounds of the feast? Of course He would. But, He would do it properly. It would all be done within the bounds of honoring His Father, of pleasing Him. As already quoted this feast, He does all things that pleases His Father.

Now we have to remember also that He was the One who gave us these commands in the first place, so He would certainly participate in these things with us. He was the One that gave the command for the thank offering and the feast offerings. And in many respects, that offering was a big party, because the offering went partly to God, partly to the priest, but also to the offerer to who got a lot back. They shared that with family and friends, and they all rejoiced before God, and with God. So, we have an example of that, here, and an opportunity to give thanks for this up to God.

So, He would have nothing against us having an enjoyable physical feast, as long as we do not allow our enjoyment to slip over the edge into sin. There is always that line that we have to be aware of. And what I mean by this, that we do not allow ourselves to slip over into sin, that when He tells us that we can eat, it does not mean that we should become gluttons. Eating is wonderful and necessary, but there is a certain point where it slips over the line into overindulgence. He says that we can drink, but that does not mean to become drunken. We should drink only to the point where it makes us happy,

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without getting us to the point of dancing on the tables. And rejoice does not mean carouse. Usually carousing ends in grief, rather than in joy. So we have to remember that God wants us to have a wonderful time at His feast, but He wants us to stay within the hedges of His law and instructions. Maybe better put, we need to stay within the hedges of the character of Jesus Christ. Eat, drink, and be merry, but do it like Jesus Christ would.

Most people in the world say, "That is impossible! This is oxymoronic! Jesus Christ would not eat, drink, and be merry, because He is the archetypical old wise man. Such folks do not have fun."

Now, how does this accord with His life as He lived it among the Jews in the first century AD? It actually harmonizes quite well, because Jesus was not the stuffed shirt that many people think He was. He was serious. In fact, the gospels never give an example of Him laughing, or telling a joke, or any other of those sorts of things. In fact, the Bible, in terms of Isaiah 53 and the gospels, present Him as One who is grieved, sorrowful, injured, rejected, and very serious. But, there are little hints and clues that was not the entire picture of Him. I am not saying that He was also running around hazing freshmen. That is not at all what I am saying. I am saying that His major focus was on His ministry and pleasing His Father. That was always on His mind. He was here to do what He was sent to do.

But, He also was able to rejoice. He was able to fit them both in. So I want to show that side of Him today. He was not a party hound. But He was not above attending banquets, or even parties, lifting a glass of fine wine, and making sure that the guests at feasts were enjoying themselves.

Please turn to John 10. Here I wish to pull out a principle. This passage is talking about Him being the Good Shepherd, and He adds this little bit:

John 10:10 "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they [His disciples] may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

This is the principle: "I have come that they may have life (eternal life), and that they may have it more abundantly." It was not just the fact that He wanted His disciples to live forever, but He wanted it to mean something to them, that it would be abundant.

So, He wants His disciples to follow His teachings and have enviable full lives. They will

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have lives worth living.

What does He specifically mean by, "Live more abundantly?"

The Greek word used in this passage to describe the kind of life He wants us to live is "perisson." It means not just abundant, but super-abundant! Superfluous! Over flowing! Over and above! A quantity to be so abundant as to be considerably more than what one would expect or anticipate. So if you were expecting \$20 an hour, well, He wants you to have a life worth 25, 30, or 50 dollars an hour.

Maybe you were expecting a plumber to come to your home to make some repairs to your sink. In terms of what Jesus is teaching here, this plumber would come in and replace all your plastic pipes with copper for the price of unclogging one sink! Now that is super abundant. And He would not charge you for overtime either.

In short, Jesus wants us to have a life far better than we could ever envision or imagine. It is reminiscent of what Paul says when quoting Isaiah in I Corinthians 2:9, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard..." All those things that God wants to give us. And we have not even imagined it. The life He wants us to have is beyond what we expect. Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:20 that God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think. The same idea of life more abundant certainly applies here.

Now we know that this abundant life will be fully accomplished in the Millennium, and the eternity beyond all that, once we are resurrected as spirit beings. That is really when we will have the most life—super abundance of life.

But there is an element of the present here that Jesus came not only to give us this super abundant life in the future, but He came also to give us a higher quality of life even now. He wants our human lives to be abundant. How many times in the Old Testament does He talk about, and we sing the hymn regarding our wives being a fruitful vine, and our children like olive sprouts around our table? It is found in Psalms 127, and 128.

He wants us to have happy marriages and successful children, to be happy in our jobs, and to do those things we want to do, and to see the things that we want to see. He wants us to have excess so that we can give to others. He wants us to have all those things. But of course, these things do not trump us being spiritual, us being like His Son, us doing what He wants us to do. He wants us to have those things as well.

So, He is not against having much. He is not against His people even being wealthy.

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Look at Abraham or David. Those men were extremely wealthy. They could have whatever they wanted. But, they were also extremely faithful and righteous men. And they were able to use that wealth in a good way. I cannot think of any time when God calls them down for using their wealth wrongly. It is not in the Bible. They were able to handle it because they were righteous men. They understood what God wanted. And, they used their resources properly. And so can we!

Now, we cannot deny that God blesses us physically. Most of us do have jobs. Most of us have money and a lot of goods. Many of us have fairly good health for many years. God gives us many opportunities to do things that maybe we never thought we could do.

To put it bluntly, the Christian life, when you look at it from above, seeing it in its fullness, is generally not monastic, destitute, ascetic, grievous, or severe. It is actually a very good life. And God wants the Christian life for us to be joyful and abundant, although there are times, and it seems quite often, that God puts us to the test with privation, grief, and sacrifice. But we must learn to do both. Sometimes, all the goods, health, wealth, and job are a test in itself. But God is working with us, and He is doing everything to bring us into His kingdom. And part of what He wants us to experience is what we have every year at the Feast of Tabernacles, in which He gives us wealth—ten percent of our income to spend in about eight days. He wants us to be like Abraham and use it wisely.

I should mention here the idea that Jesus' life was marked by sorrow, rejection, contention, opposition, and finally by reviling, scourging, crucifixion, and death. That is the other side of the coin. We always have to remember that it is not just one thing or the other, but it is often both. So we have to balance these things. Even so, we see in the gospels that little clues are dropped that He did not let those things—even as bad as they are—reviling, scourging, crucifixion, and death—none of us would like to go through them, not even the least of them. We get our feelings hurt quite easily. He did not let those things get Him down, certainly not for long.

In fact it says in Hebrews 12 that for the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross despising the shame. Oh yeah! He felt the scourging, and the crucifixion, and He feared death. But, He saw joy beyond it all. And so it gave Him the strength to do what He needed to do. He was a perfectly balanced human, just as He is a perfectly balanced God. He understands the human frame. That is one of the reasons why He came down, so that He could explain to His Father when we need a Mediator and Advocate. This really is hard for a human being. But He can also say, "This guy needs a bit of joy. Let us give Him X, Y, or Z to pick up his spirit."

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So, He had a mental attitude and faith that was quite fearless, something that we should try to have ourselves.

So, let us take a look in the time remaining at a few gospel accounts of Jesus enjoying good food, wine, and fellowship, so as to see that side of Him, too.

First of all, let us recall that the gospels are full of parables and stories. And it is really quite amazing when you go through them all at how many of them have to do with eating, drinking, and feasting! What were those ten virgins waiting for? The Bridegroom to come so that they could partake of a wedding and wedding feast. They were waiting to have a good time. Think of all the parables in Matthew 13, how many of them had to do with sowing crops so one could eat? There are other ones where the king makes ready for the marriage supper for his son, and he tells his servant to call these people to make ready to come to it. This is another banquet being talked about there. It is a common motif in scripture to talk about these things—food, drink, and feasting—and having joy. And it suggests that Jesus and His audience were quite familiar with these activities, that they happened as often as they could happen, because life back then was not like it is today. They did not bring their entertainments into their homes, but rather they had to go out into their community to have these banquets and feasts. They enjoyed themselves at these things. I mean...even the Passover! What is the Passover? It is a meal. It is a common meal shared between ourselves and God. And what do we do in the Passover service? We come in, we have our feet washed (which is exactly what would happen at a dinner party in that time and age), then we sit down, eat, and drink. The Passover is a meal.

So, God is not against us having these fine things in our lives.

Turn to Luke 5, and notice one of the early "parties" Jesus went to. The context is the calling of Matthew, also known as Levi.

Luke 5:27-39 After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he left all, rose up, and followed Him. Then Levi gave Him a great feast (of thanksgiving) in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. And their scribes and the Pharisees (noticed Him, and what He was doing) complained against His disciples, saying, "Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." Then they said to Him, "Why do the

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disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise those of the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink?" And He said to them, "Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them; then they will fast in those days." Then He spoke a parable to them: "No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, 'The old is better.'"

Notice that Matthew (or Levi) gives Jesus a great feast. And notice also that Jesus did not stop Him from doing that. He does not make any excuses like, "Oh no! I could not do that! I have to go home and have unleavened bread and water. That is my regimen. God does not allow Me to do anything more than that." Rather, He goes to it. It is in His honor (by the way). Do you think He would just politely sample the fare so that He would not offend Levi? I do not think so. Remember, we see the scribes and Pharisees pointing fingers saying, "Look! You are disciples are eating and drinking! And you are too! You are consorting with winebibbers, and gluttons, and tax collectors and other sinners!" They certainly thought that He and His disciples overindulged. And the reason I went through the parable of the wine and the wineskins is because Jesus used something that everyone would have been familiar with. Everybody knew about wineskins old and new; wine old and new; they knew what they would do, and what would happen when they were combined. Everybody knew that the old wine was better. So, it was a teaching vehicle that everybody had in common, so He used it.

So, here we have an example very early on, showing that He was not above going to a dinner banquet where there were a lot of people. This was a big party. Matthew was very wealthy. Tax collectors in those days were known as the ones who pinched everyone of their own pennies, while taking all of yours. But here, Levi shows a different side of himself, and gives this great feast of thanksgiving that Jesus had called him to be one of His disciples.

Please turn to Matthew 11. Here Jesus points out the difference between Himself and John the Baptist. The Pharisees expected Jesus to be more like John, but that was not so. John the Baptist was the ascetic. But Jesus was not.

Matthew 11:18-19 "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say,

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'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children."

It is interesting that Jesus put that tag in there. "Wisdom is justified by her children." Essentially what Jesus is saying is that you cannot please these kinds of folks. If you do one thing, they condemn you for it. But if you do the opposite sort of thing, they will denounce you for that too. So, which is better? Being condemned, or denounced? They are going to be critical no matter, and will find fault. And so you just go ahead and do what you should be doing. And that is why He put that tag on the end. "Wisdom is justified by her children." The right wise way of living will be justified, and shown to be right by the fruits thereof—the children.

So then, wait until you see the end result of My way of life, and then you will see that this way of life is the right and wise way of life. All you have to do is have a little patience to see it through long term.

They had gone so far as to call John the Baptist an ascetic, and claim he had a demon. And then they call Jesus a hedon, a glutton, and a winebibber; condemning Him for that. And then they had to throw in the tax collectors and other sinners, too, because that would make it all the worse in their minds.

But Jesus was not a respecter of persons, while they were. In a way, here, Jesus is saying, "Who has the more sin? Me? Or you folks doing all this condemning and judging, and respecting persons?"

We see in this pharisaic exaggeration of His actions that Jesus was known throughout Galilee and Judea for partaking of good food, wine, and mingling with the people. He like to fellowship. He like to participate with other people. He liked to talk with other people.

Just like we like those things.

Turn to John 2. This is perhaps the best known example of these things. This is Jesus first recorded miracle.

John 2:1-10 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus

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said to Him, "They have no wine." Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it."

Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." And they filled them up to the brim. And He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast." And they took it. When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. And he said to him, "Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!"

Jesus, first of all, goes to a wedding feast. A wedding feast where there would be dozens of guests. Usually, wedding feasts were communal events. Cana of Galilee was not a large city, but it was not a village of only two or three families either. So there could have been maybe 100 people or more there. Jesus' miracle includes 180 gallons of wine.

But, He seemed to have no qualms about making this much more wine for this feast.

Now, if He made that much wine, and He made it of the very best quality, then do you think that He would refuse a glass of it Himself? That would not make any sense.

He drank wine. I have a hard time with people who I suppose are former Baptists or whatever who really think that one should not drink wine. That the Bible is against wine, and that Jesus did not drink wine either. He drank grape juice.

That is what they say. I guess it never comes to mind that they did not have the same sort of ability that we have to preserve things like grape juice. I mean we can put it in a vacuum sealed bottle, and have it pasteurized so that it can last a while as juice. Then we add other preservatives in it, and then store it in artificial cold storage (a refrigerator) where it can stay cold for extended periods of time. They had none of these things back then. When they had grape juice, they only had grape juice for about two or three days. And if they had a nice cold stream, or a cool cave, they could maybe stretch it out for a week. But that is as long as it could last until natural processes took over to convert it into wine and vinegar.

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So the best way to preserve grape juice is to make wine on purpose, under some control of the vintner.

Then you have early stuff, which is used before it is very mature, is called new wine. And the remainder which is allowed to mature is old wine. That is why Jesus talked about the new wine and the old wine. Everybody drank wine back then, when it was available.

So I do not understand this idea some folks have that Jesus did not drink wine, and that the church should not either.

Now, if you are alcoholic, and have a problem drinking wine, then you should not drink it. If you cannot hold it, do not drink it. Have some character and just say no. Other people have similar problems with other things. I have a son who cannot tolerate onions, so he has to have bland food. But He likes onions, and for him, it causes itchy skin; so he decided it is something he should not eat. And if a nine year old boy can do that, why can we not do the same thing with alcohol, or whatever we should control, and live without it? This is what one must do if one has a problem with alcohol.

But, Jesus did not have the problem. He could drink alcohol, because He knew His limits. He was not going to displease His Father by overdrinking. And so, he did not over do it.

Our Savior surely partook of a nice glass of wine with dinner now and then, but He never consumed to excess. Do you remember what it says there in Matthew 26:29? He is so looking forward to doing this with us! I can tell by reading between the lines that He will enjoy this, and always have enjoyed drinking wine with His disciples. And so He makes this promise:

Matthew 26:29 "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

Do you really think that is going to be only grape juice? It is going to be the best wine that ever was! He is stockpiling it away right now, because He wants to share that wine with us in His kingdom. He made wine. He made the grape to do what it does so that it can become wine for our enjoyment.

It says in Judges 9:13 that wine cheers the heart of God and man. Wine is fine. Just know your limits. Liquor is quicker! Indeed, know your limits. It does say that we can

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have strong drink. Just understand—stay within the hedges.

Turn to Mark 14. This one has not to do with wine or food, but rather the use of money.

Mark 14:3-9 And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, "Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they criticized her sharply. But Jesus said, "Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her."

Obviously, this passage has lessons beyond the one appropriate to today's sermon. But it is very interesting, I think. First, He was at a dinner, having food and wine with Simon the Leper, a very well known Pharisee. If you go through the accounts, you can find that there was quite a crowd here. This was another one of those occasions where a man of wealth and prominence invited a lot of people into His house to have dinner with Jesus. Probably to increase his own status, on the one hand, but also maybe to pick His mind about certain things. But, poor old Simon got the short end of the stick on that if you should read the other accounts of this.

You can believe that this was not a meal of flat bread and lentils. This was a meal of the very finest food that could be procured in Judea at the time. If you go back, and check out who this Simon was in history, you will find that there are pretty good hints that he was a quite wealthy prominent person in Jerusalem. It is interesting, by the way, that if you do all the genealogies and such, I saw a paper recently that Simon the Leper may have been the grandfather of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

Now, notice that those who were indignant about this matter, mostly Judas, were shocked and offended by the cost of the oil used to anoint His feet. They considered it a wasteful use of money that could have been used charitably.

Most of the time we would think that would be a good argument, would you not? "Why not the cut rate stuff, and give away the savings? Why did you not spend your money

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more wisely? Why spend it on the oil at all, and give it to the need one down the street?"

But notice that Jesus had a far higher opinion of the event than they had. He says here that it was an anointing for His burial. It reveals the overflowing gratitude of this woman for Christ's forgiveness of her sins. So much so, He said that it would be a memorial to her till the end of time, this deed of hers.

Now notice, too, what she did was an extravagance. It was a lot of money. Three hundred denari is most of a year's working man's wages. A denari for a day was typical then.

And she poured this year's wages upon His head! And, wasted this on Him. I am sure that oil of spikenard was used only a little here and there, not the whole thing cracked open and poured over His head.

It was an extravagance. But it was for the best cause.

I can see Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, having read something like this, and understanding the principle of it, and seeing that nothing was too expensive to be used on the Ambassador College Auditorium. Do you remember what that building was dedicated to? "To The Honor And Glory Of The Great God."

And so to Him, to spend 300 denari was nothing if it was going to be used to honor God. And what was this woman doing? Honoring God. She used her 300 denari to honor Jesus Christ.

So, in reality, even though we might think of what we did as an extravagance, it was not at all. She should have given even more, because of what this deed was and who it was for.

Now, this is a good lesson for the feast. We have a similar opportunity to spend large sums of money. What is critical is how we spend it. Will we spend it wisely? Or will we spend it stupidly? Even an extravagant expenditure—what we would normally consider to be an extravagant expenditure, is not out of bounds if it is truly for a good cause or reason. And to start with, a non-selfish reason!

We do not have to spend a year's salary, but at the feast we do have the funds to do something really special for someone else, even to the point of extravagant!

So, taking a widow out for a lavish meal, is not out of the question. Nor would buying a

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nice coat, dress, or suit for someone who cannot afford it. Those things are big expenses, but we may have the money to do something like that for someone.

God wants us to think about the use of our funds here at the feast, and spend them properly. And even an extravagant expenditure is not out of the question.

But remember what He said in Deuteronomy 14 and 16. We spend the money so that we learn to fear the Lord and help those in need. And we have the money to do that now.

Let us conclude in Revelation 19. Not only did Jesus attend a lot of banquets and dinner parties during His human life, He is waiting to have one with us too in just a few short years.

Revelation 19:6-9 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."

We have been invited to the greatest feast of all time in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. I think that we have seen that Jesus was not, and is not a bearded, threadbare, ascetic loner. As we have seen, He loved good food and wine, and relished good fellowship, and some of the finer things in life. We can do that at the feast as well, as we have been commanded to do, and do so looking forward to this wonderful banquet with Him.

Have a Wonderful Feast of Tabernacles everyone!