

Connect the Jots

Shriveled Sheep

Part 10 – September 21, 2014



We're connecting the jots to what Jesus said at the showdown in the synagogue, when He healed the man with the shriveled hand, and it'll give us an incredibly clear picture of God's heart. So, **how obsessed are you with God's Word on a scale of one to ten?**

Three? Two? One? Zero? **How obsessed are you with knowing God's will? Understanding His heart? Or, hearing His voice? Well, whatever your Bible number was, it goes for all these.**

Your obsession with these can't be higher than your obsession with their source.

And, **why isn't righteousness more appealing?** Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible; and it shows the level of joy Jesus found in God's Word. He was definitely a ten-plus.

I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word. ... Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law. I am a stranger on earth; do not hide your commands from me. My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times. – Psalm 119:14-20 NIV



That's seven abbreviated verses out of 176! And Jesus' every word and every action was influenced by His wealth of scripture. **With just a few words in the showdown, He connects to an incredibly comprehensive scope of God's story ... for he who has ears.**

He said to them, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." – Matthew 12:11-12 NIV

Why? There's work to be done on the Sabbath.

So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews **[the religious leaders, the bad shepherds, who were leading God's people astray]** persecuted him. Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." – John 5:16-17 NIV

Doing what? Saving His sheep! Isaiah (53:6) says, "We all, like sheep, have gone astray". Astray from where? The Garden. When? *On the Sabbath!*



We were created on day six; **God rested on day seven, the Great Sabbath that was never to end.** All was complete. **Our Father could enjoy His children forever, and we could enjoy Him.**

We were warned not to eat from the poisonous tree of death; but, we *did*. And, **God had every right to destroy us. But, He *didn't*.**



Instead, our loving Dad went back to work, which brings us to **Jot #1: the Good Shepherd.**

King David did some very bad things. But, God says he was a man after God's own heart. Why? How are their hearts so alike?

David was a *good shepherd*. So was God.

For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: "I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them ... I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, **[Where? In green pastures. Home.]** declares the Sovereign Lord. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. ... I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, **[i.e. Beloved]** and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. **[Seems the beloved Servant is God himself]** I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. – Ezekiel 34:11-24 NIV *condensed*

King David was never a prince; he was only a king. But, **he prophesied that His Lord would sit at the right hand of his God.** (Ps 110:1) And, *about this da'vid Prince of Peace, David wrote ...*

The Lord is **my** shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. – Psalm 23 NIV

And there it is. Home. You've fallen through the ice of a mucky ditch. Alone. Night. Piercing wind. Sleet. You're bloody. Already going numb. Stay outside, you're as good as dead. You hobble along, losing speed. Your childhood home. Door's locked. You've lost your keys. You pound. Can't feel your fist. You cry out. Your dad opens the door.



Once you're in, you can begin to strip off the cold, wet, mucky clothes, and slip into a nice warm bath, and begin to heal from the wounds and undo the harm that happens outside Dad's home. But, it's not nearly as pleasant as it sounds. **At first. Ever put really cold hands under warm water? Stings. Needles. Same thing when we put our pride and sin under His authority.** *This* is why righteousness isn't so appealing. You want to put your hands back in the cold to numb the pain.



But, **you know better than to refreeze your fingers. So, we embrace the painful process of bringing life back into cold, stiff, shriveled, hands. Same thing with obedience.** But then it begins to feel good. You want it warmer. Hot. *Hotter.*

The same heat that brought pain now brings pleasure. Same with righteousness. Going back out in the cold just loses its appeal.



That's the restoration that takes place inside. Inside your heart, inside your mind, inside your soul. Inside your Dad's house. But, **we must become *accustom* to obedience.**

Sin freezes our receptors for the warmth of righteousness, and intensifies 'em for the cold pleasures of instant gratification.

And, this brings us to **Jot #2: The pit.** We find **two images used repeatedly in scripture to describe our fall from grace: the pit and the withered limb.** Ezekiel tells about our fall with his parable of the proud cedar in Lebanon.

... no tree in the *garden of God* could match its beauty. I made it beautiful with *abundant branches*, the envy of all the trees of *Eden* in the *garden of God*. ... and because it was proud of its height, I handed it over to the ruler of the nations, for him to deal with according to its wickedness. I cast it aside, and the most ruthless of foreign nations cut it down and left it. Its boughs fell on the mountains and in all the valleys; its *branches lay broken* ... No other trees so well-watered are ever to reach such a height; they are all destined for death, for the earth below, among mortal men, with those who go down to the pit. ... Because of it I clothed *Lebanon* [i.e. *whiteness*] with gloom, and all the trees of the field withered away. [Yet, one day "*all the trees of the field will clap their hands*" (Isaiah 55:12), after their withered limbs are restored] ... I brought it down to the grave with those who go down to the pit. Then all the trees of *Eden*, the choicest and best of *Lebanon*, all the trees that were well-watered, were consoled in the earth below. – Ezekiel 31:8-9, 11-12, 14-16 NIV



Who came to console the broken branches? The One who came down into the pit. The One who came to restore the humbled, withered, limbs.

[The One who said] "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers ..." – John 15:5-6a NIV

There's a righteousness granted to us to get us inside. But once we're inside, there's a righteousness expected of us, a cooperation in our ongoing restoration. Here's one scripture that speaks of both types.

... by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. – Hebrews 10:14 NIV



Which brings us to **Jot #3: The Tree of Life**. Remember when Jesus said “Stretch out your hand.” to the man with the shriveled hand? (Mat 12:11) Let’s go back to when we first went astray.

Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” **[in his withered condition]** ... He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life. – Genesis 3:22, 24 NAS



Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father **[“No one comes home”]** except through me.” – John 14:6 NIV

He’s done all He can to stretch out *His* hand to *us*.

And this leads us to **Jot #4: God’s Right Hand**, symbolic of His power and authority.

Then he said to the man **[with the shriveled right hand]**, “Stretch out your hand.” So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. – Matthew 12:11-13 NIV

The other what? The other hand of this *man*? His *left* hand? Or, the *other Right Hand* in the room? The One reaching out to restore the shriveled limbs into His own, complete, image? (The primary meaning of the word is, “another”.) **So, why was Jesus seated at God’s right hand side? It’s a riddle. Think now. Where else would you expect to find God’s own Right Hand?**

The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous: “The Lord’s right hand has done mighty things! The Lord’s right hand is lifted high; the Lord’s right hand has done mighty things!” I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the Lord has done. – Psalm 118:14-17 NIV

And about those who got in his way. Well, like I said last week, the showdown was a fight He was waiting for ... for over 500 years.

Then the Lord said to me, “Take again the equipment of a foolish shepherd. For I am going to raise up a shepherd over the land who will not care for the lost, or seek the young, or heal the injured, or feed the healthy, but will eat the meat of the choice sheep, tearing off their hoofs. “Woe to the worthless shepherd, who deserts the flock! May the sword strike his arm and his right eye! May his arm be completely withered, his right eye totally blinded!” – Zechariah 11:15-17 NIV

He heals the shriveled and withers the proud. We must swallow our pride, crucify our flesh, carry our cross, and go to those who hold offense and ask for forgiveness. And that’s just for starters.

So, how obsessed are you with God’s will, God’s heart, God’s voice, God’s Word, God’s Son, and *your* righteousness? Let’s walk away with a renewed sense of God’s mercy, a renewed passion for His Word, and a renewed resolve to press through.