

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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John 1:1-5,9-18 -- The Word Among Us

by Dan Trygg

“In the beginning was-being the Word, and the Word was-being with God, and the Word was-being God. ² He was-being in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ⁴ In Him was-being life, and the life was-being the Light of men. ⁵ The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. ... ⁹ There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every person. ¹⁰ He was-being in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹ He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.... ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His radiance, splendor as of an only-son from a father, full of grace and truth.”

John 1:1-5,9-12,14

Although the author of this gospel never identifies himself directly, there is very little question that it was written by John, the son of Zebedee. Numerous early church sources name him as the author. There was never any serious question as to this, until recent times, when some supposed that another “John the elder” may have been the author. Supposedly this person also lived at Ephesus, where the apostle John lived in the latter part of his life. Most scholars have dismissed this theory as erroneous. **The author of this gospel was certainly very familiar with the customs, language, and sites mentioned in this book.** Historically, Bible scholars have thought John wrote this very late in the first century. However, **there is no reason within the book to think it had not been written before the destruction of Jerusalem, in 70 A.D.** Had John written *after* this time, certainly he would have mentioned this event. We also have the discovery of P52, a papyrus manuscript fragment from Egypt, which has been dated from 100-125 A.D. Because manuscripts were hand-copied, in order for this manuscript to travel to Egypt, it would have had to be written years earlier, and have been a widely distributed text. This argues for an earlier date, rather than a later one.

John seems to have prior knowledge of the other gospel accounts, because he includes very few duplicate stories, and fills in a lot of details left out by the other accounts. **He tells us clearly his purpose in writing in 20:30,31** – “...these things have been written in order that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in His name.” **John makes no apologies for attempting to make a case for Christ.** He very clearly makes direct claims for Jesus’ divinity, and He clearly reports numerous times where Jesus made direct claims for Himself. In fact, **His writing revolves around three significant lines of evidence to support his assertion that Jesus was none other than God in the flesh.** We will develop that in future weeks.

John 1:1-18 is often called the Prologue to the gospel. It definitely takes more of a cosmic, big-picture view of who Jesus is, and what the purpose was for His coming. The language is at once very simple, and yet precise. It is full of poetry and symbolism, yet it is disciplined in its focus and content. The ground John covers in these 18 verses is amazing. He states that the Word existed before creation. He was *with* God, and somehow *was* God. Everything was created by means of Him. Spiritual life was in Him, and this life gave Light to human beings. Darkness tried to obscure this Light, but it could not. God raised up John the Baptist to bear witness to the Light. The Word became human and lived among us. We could see His inner nature shining out of His human body, expressed in the graciousness of His heart toward people and the truth which He spoke. As we come to know Him, we find out more about His Father. In fact, that is why He came: to make His Father known. Those who accept His witness and receive Him as their Master receive the legal right to become God’s children by faith in Him.

That was the overview. Now, let’s look at some of the details. **John introduces us to “the Word”.** He boldly asserts, “in the beginning was-being the Word”. What beginning? The beginning of *this* story? No. It is clear from the next verse that John is talking about the beginning of time, as we know it. **The Word was here before everything else.** The Greek term John used was “logos”. Logos means “word, message, thought, reason, logic”. Before *anything*, came to be, the Thought, Reason and Expression of God existed. **The Thought was existing with God, and this Thought or Word was, in fact, God.** This Thought or Word was existing *with* God in the very beginning. It is interesting how, if we just use the definition “Thought” it is much easier to understand how it could be “with God” and even “be God”, just like our own thoughts are “with us” and really are “us”. I translated the Greek verb form as “it was being” because it implies an ongoing state, with no beginning or end in view. The Word was-being with God, ...and the Word was-being God. John’s simple language is very precise. There are several different Greek words that could be translated as “with”. There is an “along-side of” kind of with, a “together-with” kind of with. Here, the word is sort of a “towards-with”, like almost an extension of, but indivisible from. It is the perfect word to describe the Word’s relationship with God. **The Word is God, but there is more to God than just the**

Word. The Thought is God, but there is more to God than just Thought. Or, your right arm is you, but there is more to you than your right arm. Word pictures and analogies fail to fully capture the relationship, but it is important to see that **there are two unique Realities or Persons that somehow are One Being, yet somehow distinguishable.**

The next progression in John's argument is that "all things came into being through Him". This again is very careful language. The word, "through" signifies "by means of". It refers to *agency*. The NT contains three great Christological passages: John 1, Colossians 1 and Hebrews 1. In all three, the language is consistent. Although these were written by three separate individuals, the Holy Spirit carefully directed them to choose the same language to express that **all things were created by means of Christ**, the eternal Word (cf. Col. 1:16,17; Heb. 1:2). If you think back to the creation story in Genesis, in each case God "said", ...and whatever He *spoke* came into being (1:3,6,9,11,14, 20,24,26). This is acknowledged in Hebrews 11:3 and in II Peter 3:5. **God created everything out of nothing through speaking! All things were created "by means of" the Spoken-Word of God.** One other passage is significant for our consideration. In I Corinthians 8, the apostle Paul is arguing that idols are not real, after all. "There is no God but one", the true Creator-God, citing Isaiah 44:6,8. He goes on to say, "For even if there *are* so-called 'gods', whether in heaven or on earth-- as there are many 'gods' and many 'lords'--⁶ yet for us there is one God, the Father, *out-from* whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, *through* whom are all things, and we *through* Him." Note the distinction: **All things originate from the Father, but are created by means of Christ.**

Now John begins to get poetic. He says that there was "life" in the Word. The word for "life" here is a word that can mean physical life, but more often **this refers to the supernatural life that comes from God.** Clearly that is John's meaning here, because this "life was-being the Light of humanity". John likes to use the images of light and darkness for good and evil, ...or the truth and the lie, ...or the things of God versus the things of the devil (Jn. 3:19-21; I Jn. 1:5; cf. Lk. 1:78). Light also refers to revelation and understanding of the truth (Jn. 8:12; 12:35,36). **The revelatory light of God's Life shines in the darkness, and, though the darkness wants to blot it out, it is unable to do so.** Darkness cannot blot out Light. Light always dissipates darkness. **This true Light (from the Word) enlightens every person, to some degree,** John declares (vs. 9). Even though this Light was-being here, and the world itself had been created by Him, the world did not recognize or acknowledge His presence (vs. 10).

He came to His own, the ones He had made, and they did not receive Him (vs. 11). There is a definite change in focus and emphasis beginning with this last sentence. In verses 9 and 10, John is describing an *ongoing* presence of the Light to give spiritual revelation and awareness of God, accompanied by an *ongoing* condition of spiritual dullness and rejection. The verb in **verse 11 speaks of a definite coming of the Light to "His own" and they "did not receive Him"**. This seems to be a foreshadowing of the events to come in this gospel account. **John is saying that "the Light" actually came! But, when He came, His own created people did not "take Him to themselves", or "accompany Him". He came, but they rejected Him!**

However, some did not reject Him. To the ones who received Him, to them He gave the legal-authority, power and privilege to become children of God. This is the gospel in miniature. If we take this Light, He will make us His people, ...even His family-members! "...to the ones believing unto His name" – **this gift comes to those who trust in God's offer of Life.** Note what follows: "...who were born not out from blood, nor out from the will of the flesh, nor out from the will of man, ...rather out from God they were born." **As if to emphasize the grace/faith foundation of this gospel message, John lists commonly accepted alternatives that people hoped or trusted in. You do not get to be part of God's family by virtue of blood connections.** Your relatives can't help you obtain entrance into God's household, except to tell you the same gospel hope and promise. God has no grandchildren, so the faith history of previous generations means nothing as far as your personal standing with God. Each person comes the same way, by taking the Eternal Word, Creator, Master, as Savior and Light of Revelation for your own soul. If you take Him, by choosing to follow Him and trusting Him, then He will give you the legal right and privilege to become part of His family. Note, that you cannot come by the will of the flesh. **You cannot earn your way by self-effort, or good works, or religious acts of service.** It is only by trusting in the Word. Note, too, that **it is not by the determination of any other person or persons. No one can contrive or create a humanly devised way to become a child of God.** Only God can do this work. Those who take the Word, the Light, the Life have the legal right, authority and privilege to become children of God.

Finally in verse 14, we discover that **the Word actually became flesh and lived among us. We beheld His radiant splendor** (Heb. 1:3), just like one might observe the radiant splendor of a unique son of a father and learn much about his family. **What did we see, as we observed Him?** The things that predominately stood out above all else about the Eternal Word can be summed up in two words: **Grace and Truth. In verse 17, we finally find out that this Eternal Word is Jesus Christ.** Grace and truth came to be through Him. The problem was that no one had ever seen God, so the unique God (the Word) who was "with God", in His very bosom, has come to make Him known.

He wants to do the same with *you*. **God wants you to be bearers of His radiant splendor, so as people observe you they will see what your heavenly Father is like, and be drawn to want to meet Him and become part of the family.**

John 1:6-8,15,19-34 -- The Witness of John the Baptist

“There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came for a witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light.” John 1:6-8

After over 400 years without a prophetic figure in Israel, John the Baptist showed up in the wilderness of Judea with a prophetic message that called Israel back to God. *He was dressed in clothes that would have reminded anyone who knew the Old Testament of the garb of the prophet Elijah* (II Kg. 1:7,8; Mk. 1:6). He was as bold and fearless with the religious leaders of his time as Elijah had been with evil King Ahab and the prophets of Baal (I Kg. 18). *His message was a quotation from the prophet Isaiah, and he seemed to be claiming things that sounded reminiscent of the Messenger that would precede the Lord that the last prophet, Malachi, had prophesied about some four centuries before* (Isa. 40:3-5; Mal. 3:1-3; Lk. 3:4-6,16,17). As would be expected, his fame rapidly spread throughout the land and everyone was curious to hear this strange ascetic preacher in the wilderness. Throngs came to hear him. Soon, all Israel was talking about John and his message. *John the Baptist became one of the most important figures of his time to the Jew.* The stature of John is evident by the fact that every gospel, and the book of the Acts, mentions how he bore witness to Jesus.

We have a thumbnail sketch of John’s ministry in John 1:6-8. In spite of the public stir and powerful impact of his preaching, our author describes John the Baptist as “a man having been sent from God”. **A great deal of the material about the Baptist in this chapter had to deal with his identity.** Right from the beginning, then, the author clearly stated that **he was a human being, whom God chose and sent. His mission was to bear witness of the Light, the Eternal Word.** He was not just a prophet or teacher. He was a *witness*. He came to testify as to what God *showed* him about the Light. **The purpose for this was so that all might believe by means of his testimony.** He himself was not the Light; rather, he came to bear witness concerning the Light. The Light/Eternal Word was coming into the world, but they would not recognize Him. John’s prominence and ensuing testimony would identify Him.

Part of John’s testimony was “This was He of whom I said, **‘The One coming after me has come to be in front of me, because He was existing before me’**” (1:15). The last phrase could also be translated, “because he was being my first”, referring to the “first-place-above-all-others” position that belonged to the Word, the One John was serving. **The author wanted to cause us to ponder again the Eternal, Preeminent nature of the Word.**

Beginning with verse 19, John the Baptist testified in response to questions from certain “Jews” from Jerusalem. *Usually when the phrase “the Jews” occurs in this Gospel, the apostle is referring to the religious leaders.* Since the events take place in Palestine, almost everyone mentioned is physically Jewish, so that term would not be a very helpful way to identify a particular sub-group. *The apostle’s usage may come from the arrogance on the part of these religious leaders, who thought they were better than “common people”.* One of the ways they mentally set themselves apart was that they lived in the region immediately around Jerusalem, Judea. They looked with disdain upon Jews from Galilee or from other parts of the Roman Empire as not being as “pure”. The Greek word for Jew was *Ioudaios*, closely related to the word for Judea, *Ioudaia*. It could be that the apostle John (who was from Galilee) was poking at their *prima donna* attitude, referring to them in a tongue-in-cheek way like they are the “true Jews”, by applying this term only to them. **The religious leaders in Jerusalem wanted to know what John was claiming to be,** because he was becoming very popular, and was therefore a possible threat to the status quo, especially to *their* power and influence. **They sent a delegation of priests and Levites, therefore, to find out what he said about himself.** Note they were “sent from the Pharisees” (vs. 24). These were the religious leaders with whom Jesus would have the most confrontation.

The first question was, “Who are you?” John immediately volunteered that he was *not* the Christ. Many of the people *were* wondering if this is who he was (Lk. 3:15). John readily offered, not even in response to a direct question, that he was *not*. **The word “Christ” (from Gk., *christos*) means “anointed one”.** The Hebrew word, *messiach*, from which we have derived the English word “messiah”, means the same thing. **It was a title, not a name.** We have seen the words “Jesus Christ” together so often that we think of “Christ” as a last name. Jesus would have been known to people as Jesus Bar-Joseph (*bar* = son of), or Jesus of Nazareth (His home town). “Christ” was a title applied to Him later, by those who believed in Him. (Often the Greek is written as “Jesus the Christ”, but most English versions by convention do not translate the word “the”, which unfortunately adds to our confusion.) **What is the significance of this title?** Luke 23:2 tells us plainly that **the Christ is a king** (cf. John 18:33-37; 19:19-22). This began in the OT with the anointing of King Saul and King David by the prophet Samuel. “The Lord’s anointed” was the way David referred to Saul as the God-appointed king (I Samuel 9:16; 10:1; 16:1,12,13; 24:6). The Messiah, or the Christ, was the prophetically

promised king that people expected would reign once again over Israel and deliver them from their oppressors. **The believing Jews of Jesus' day were very much looking for God to send such a deliverer for them.**

Are you Elijah? (vs. 21) -- Elijah was an OT prophet whose story is found in I Kings 17-II Kings 2. The reason that these questioners asked John if he was Elijah was based upon Malachi 4:5,6. **The last two verses of the OT scriptures state that God would send Elijah the prophet before the day of the Lord's judgment.** One curious thing about Elijah that made this more credible is that he never died. He was taken up alive into heaven, so it was not at all inconceivable that he might come back. **Modern day Jews still set a place for Elijah at their tables during the Passover meal.** At a certain point in their evening observance, they will open the door "for Elijah", enacting their continued expectation of his coming. **"I am not."** -- **John flatly denied being Elijah, although there was much about him that was reminiscent of this great prophet.** Many OT prophecies have more than one fulfillment, often one that is partial, then later a more complete fulfillment. When we examine all the evidence about John, we must conclude that his ministry was a foreshadowing of the yet-to-come ministry of Elijah. **He had an Elijah-type of ministry, though he was not actually Elijah Himself** (cf. Malachi 3:1-6; 4:1,2; Luke 1:13-17,76-79; Matt. 11:7-14; 17:1-13). Some think that since the two witnesses of Revelation 11 perform signs reminiscent of Moses and Elijah, that they may be these great figures from the past sent to prophesy against the evil of the world at that time. If so, this would be a more complete fulfillment of Malachi, since it immediately precedes the "great and terrible day of the Lord".

Are you the Prophet? (vs. 22) -- **"The Prophet" they asked about was someone that Moses had spoken of. He said that God would send "a prophet like me from among you"** (Deut. 18:15-19). What would make this prophet different from the other OT men of God was his unique, intimate relationship with Yahweh and the evidence of powerful signs and wonders in His ministry (Num. 12:1-8; Deut. 34:9-12). This later would provide the basis for early church preaching about Jesus (Acts 3:12-26). **And he answered, "No."** -- **John denied being this important figure.**

Who are you...? What do you say about Yourself? (vss. 22,23) -- John's quotation of Isaiah 40:3 is a literal summary of his ministry. **He was "a voice crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord."** Note that he saw his role as preparing the way for the Lord, very similar to the ministry of the "messenger" in Malachi 3:1.

Why are you baptizing (immersing)...? (vs. 25) -- The Greek word for baptism is *baptizō*. It literally means to "dip, immerse, plunge under". It was used to describe the process of washing where hands, pots, or utensils were put *under* water to wash them. It was also used in the dying process, where cloth was *dipped into* dye to become colored by it. There were other words to describe sprinkling or pouring. John was not applying water in these ways. **John the Baptizer was immersing people in the water of the Jordan river as a sign of their repentance.** This action was controversial because generally Jews did not require ritual baptism for cleansing, except in the case of a Gentile convert to Judaism. **In effect, by offering baptism for repentance, John was saying that being born a Jew was not good enough** (cf. Lk. 3:7-9). **If they were to escape the wrath of God, they needed to change the way they thought (repent) about their relationship with Him, and live in a way that indicated their serious desire to live righteously as subjects of their heavenly King.** They needed to start over again, expressing their commitment as new converts would. The Pharisees wanted to know what right John had to invoke such sweeping changes. He did not answer their question. Instead **John insisted that he was preparing the way for Another, One much greater than him** (vss. 26-28). **He is already among them,** John said, and **"...I am not worthy to untie the thong of His sandal"** (1:27), a powerful image of comparative rank and importance.

The very next day, John sees Jesus, and testifies, **"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"** (vs. 29) -- clearly a reference to the idea of substitutionary atonement. **Jesus was to be a sacrificial lamb that would die on behalf of the offenses of others** (Gen. 22:7,8; Ex. 12:3-13; Num. 28:3-10; Isa. 53:4-8). At this time, John repeated this same statement from verse 15, word for word. Generally, when a statement in the Bible is repeated, it is for *emphasis*. On the surface, this is a seemingly odd statement. John knew Jesus. They were actually relatives (Lk. 1,2). John knew that Jesus was six months younger than he was (Lk. 1:31-36). At the time John made the original proclamation of this statement, however, he did not know that Jesus was the One he was speaking of. **That only became apparent when he saw the sign of the Spirit descending as a dove upon Jesus, and remaining upon Him. This was the sign God had instructed John to look for** (vss. 31-33). John was physically six months older than the man Jesus, but Jesus was the Eternal Word made flesh. He existed before all creation, and He was the Preeminent One, who John willingly served and bore witness to. **John had come baptizing in water to make Him known.** His popularity, his message, and now his testimony were all about identifying and pointing out this One who would come after him, the "One baptizing in the Holy Spirit" (vs. 33). **John boldly declared, "I have seen, and I have testified, that This One is the Son of God"** (vs. 34). The term "son of God" was the title for the Messiah, the king of Israel (Psa. 2:1-12). Pre-existent One, Lamb of God, Baptizer in the Holy Spirit, Son of God, King of Israel, ...John had a *lot* to say about Jesus, the One coming after Him. **He would be far greater than John, as "the voice in the wilderness" said.**

John 1:35-51 -- First Steps With Jesus: Relationship and Discipleship

“Do two walk together *unless they have agreed to do so*?”

Amos 3:3

“Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶ and he looked upon Jesus as He walked, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” ³⁷ And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸ And Jesus turned, and beheld them following, and said to them, “What do you seek?” And they said to Him, “Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?” ³⁹ He said to them, “Come, and you will see.” They came therefore and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day...”

John 1:35-39

Matthew, Mark and Luke skipped over a rather long period of time, probably about a year in length, from the time of Jesus’ baptism until the time John the Baptist was taken into custody. Without John’s gospel, we would have some serious misconceptions about things. **How was it that Jesus *found and developed* a band of committed followers to travel with Him, spend time with Him, and to learn from His teachings and example?** They were *given active roles* in Jesus’ ministry work from very early on in His ministry, long before they were chosen to be part of “the Twelve”. **The gospel of John fills in some of the missing details** that help us piece together the flow of events. This offers insight into what these men were going through in their recruitment by Jesus. **This is important**, not just for historical curiosity, but also **as a model of how to train up others to be active disciples of the Lord. These men did not spend years in school classes before being included in ministry situations. They were “apprenticed”**. That is, they *learned by observing* the Master, *receiving instruction* and *asking questions* in real-life scenarios, ...and *then they were asked to do as the Master did, putting into practice* what they had been learning. This process did not take *years*, but just a matter of *months*. It is challenging enough to our way of thinking to see Jesus’ hands-on training with these men, once He had chosen them to be His twelve special trainees (Mk. 3:14; Lk. 6:12-16), but it is even more challenging to see that **He was doing this from the beginning of His relationship with them.**

This is not to say that everyone in the crowds that soon would be following Jesus were set into active ministry roles as the twelve came to be. We are not told *that*, though there are indications that Jesus eventually was doing this same kind of thing with a much larger number than just the twelve apostles (e.g., the 70 from Lk. 10). The point is that **Jesus was very mindful of training others to do as He was doing. He was very purposeful about finding and developing mentoring relationships with those who were responsive to Him.**

Let’s take a closer look at some of the clues in the text that reveal this to us. The events of John 1-4 had to occur in the gap between Matthew 4:11 and 12. Why? Because John the Baptist was still actively ministering in John 1-4, while Matthew begins describing Jesus’ ministry *after* John was imprisoned (4:12). So, **the information in John 1-4 tells us about Jesus’ earliest dealings with some of those who would later become His chosen followers.**

What do we know of those days? What did those first followers of Jesus experience? **What kind of people were they**, and how did that affect their involvement in ministry? **What did Jesus do to deepen and develop His relationship with them? What did they do to deepen and develop their relationship with Him?**

When first introduced to these men, we find they are at “Bethany beyond the Jordan” (Jn. 1:28), a town most scholars believe was in Perea, across the Jordan from Jericho, almost as far south as the Dead Sea. *This was a very long ways from home for any of the men*, including Jesus. It was about 65 miles, as the crow flies, from Nazareth, Jesus’ hometown, and about 75-80 miles from the hometowns of these early disciples. From there, it was another 23 or more miles to Jerusalem, if you went by way of Jericho. **Why were these men there?** Probably, like many Jewish men, they had traveled that way in order to go to one of the three major feasts at Jerusalem. It was not uncommon for Jews from Galilee to cross the Jordan in the north, travel southward on the east side of the river to avoid Samaria, and then cross again here, in the south, and proceed up to Jerusalem from Jericho (a climb of 3800 feet in 23 miles). Of course, all of this travel would be on foot, and the terrain was not easy, but it was an expected part of life for most Jewish men. We find that **Andrew and one other (probably John the son of Zebedee) were followers (disciples) of John the Baptist (1:35,40)**. We do not know what level of involvement that may have entailed. At least, it indicated that they believed his message, and probably hung around to hear him teach, and had been baptized by him. Remember, their homes and livelihoods were many miles to the north. They may have had their families with them, as well. The fact that they tarried here, however, reveals that **they were interested enough in God and His Kingdom to go out of their way, to put their lives on hold, for a few days in order to learn a little more.**

When John the Baptist pointed out Jesus to these two “disciples of him”, they responded by beginning to follow Jesus, ...a complete stranger to them..., to see where He was staying (camping). Jesus noticed them, and asked, “What do you seek?” When they explained that they wanted to know where He was staying, He invited them to remain with Him for the rest of the day, which they did (1:35-39). This incident reveals that **they were people who were willing to take risks, to move out of their comfort zones, to find out more of what God had for them.** They were curious and responsive enough to the teaching and counsel of John to *do* as he directed, ...to want to know more

about Jesus. **Again, they were willing to go out of their way. They were willing to feel awkward**, when confronted by Jesus. And they were *willing to put everything else on hold* to spend time with Him, when He invited them to. **They didn't put it off. They immediately embraced an opportunity to know more of God's will** recommended to them.

Then, they were quick to share with others. Andrew wasted no time telling his brother, Simon Peter, about Jesus, and the next day Jesus sought out their friend, Philip, who also brought another compatriot, Nathanael, to Jesus (Jn. 1:41-49). The fact that all of these men were there indicates that they, too, had been tarrying to hear the Baptist. They all knew each other (the first three even having come from the same hometown, Bethsaida), but, more importantly, **they were like-minded people. They all had a yearning in their hearts for more of God. They were already inclined toward obedience to Him, and were already doing things that indicated their desire for Him. God brought a group of ready, spiritually-hungry people to Jesus to become the core-group of His future apostles.** God had been preparing these men ahead of time. When the opportunity came for more, they were ready to check it out.

Jesus was preparing to head back to Galilee, and **these new acquaintances decided to travel with Him, talking and sharing as they went** (vs. 43). Cana was a small village 8 miles north of Nazareth. Vs. 2 states that Jesus and His new friends had been invited to a wedding there. They attend this wedding feast on their way home, and, **consequently, they were present to see His first miracle**, which created an even deeper belief in Him. Following this, we read in 2:12 that Jesus, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples went down to Capernaum for a few days. This was apparently at the request of Peter and Andrew, who now had a home in that city (Mk. 1:21,29). Observation: **They spent a great deal of time together. Quality time comes from quantity time, and because they were with Jesus, they had the opportunity to see the miracles He did.** On the other hand, those who weren't there did not see or experience what they did. **Because they went out of their way, they were present when God moved.** This demonstrates that fundamental Kingdom principle: "You snooze, you lose" (e.g., Matt. 25:1-13).

Think of what was involved in all this investment of time. It meant time away from work. Now, we know that Peter and Andrew were fishermen. They had their own business, and if they chose to not work, it did not mean the loss of their *jobs*, just the loss of their *earnings*. They also lived at a time when you had to pay for what you have. Buying things on credit was not generally accessible, as it is today. Part of the freedom of that was that if you took time off, you did not have a pile of bills waiting for you. You could work ahead, save up some money, and then go travel to visit people or whatever. When they ran out of money, they could go back fishing. Don't kid yourself, however, **this was a sacrifice. These guys were not rich.** If you had a good day, or a good season, there was extra. If not, you went without. These men had just taken probably two weeks off in order to travel to Bethany to see John, and return via Cana, especially if there had been a feast they had attended. That meant a loss of two weeks' catches.

We read next of a Passover, and Jesus and His disciples went up to Jerusalem (2:13). On this trip, they not only *witnessed* His bold cleansing of the Temple, but also *saw* many of the miraculous signs which He was doing. In 3:22, on yet another trip from Galilee into Jerusalem, Jesus was *spending time with His disciples* and *baptizing*. More people began to come to Jesus than were going to John (vs. 26), so His popularity was increasing and the crowds following Him were becoming quite large. In a brief aside in 4:2, John shares with us that **Jesus was not doing the baptizing, rather His disciples were.** What! No seminary?! No ordination?! No. **They were just helping out, doing what Jesus was asking of them. It was about the Kingdom of God, not them.**

Now, let me remind you that all of this had taken place *before* John was thrown into prison (Matt. 4:12). These disciples that we have been introduced to had *not yet* even been formally recognized as a group of apostles, or anything of that nature. Matt. 4:19 had *not yet* occurred. He had *not yet* walked by on the seashore and called these men to follow Him. Yet, here we see them **already following Him. At their own personal expense, they were devoting themselves to Him, travelling all over the countryside, listening to Him, asking Him questions, observing what He did, and helping out wherever they could. He, on His part, willingly met with them, took time for them, instructed them, and included them in His work. All of this quantity time was an investment into their lives.** In the end, **the commitment to share time**, ...to *invest* time and energy..., with the accompanying *sacrifice* necessary to make that time available, **was the key ingredient both for being a successful discipler, as well as an outstanding disciple.** Someone has said that "80% of life is showing up". If you are *not present*, you will *not see*, you will *not hear*, you will *not experience God*. **If you don't "go out of the way" for God, you will not find Him**, ...because *that* is where He is, *not* in the paths you normally go down. **If you want God, ...if you want what He has for you..., you have to travel with Him. You have to go where He is, ...do what is acceptable to Him.** If you persist in being offensive to Him, He will withdraw. **You can't expect to have God on your terms. It doesn't work that way. You must adjust to Him.**

John 2:1-12 -- The First Sign – Water Into Wine

“This first of the signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.”

John 2:11

“Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with *miracles and wonders and signs* which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know...”

Acts 2:22

John prefers to use the word “sign” to describe the miraculous works of Jesus. As in English, a sign is that which points to, or indicates, something else. It is a *mark, or signal*. Sometimes it refers to that by which something is known or distinguished. In John’s writing, it is part of the evidence which he assembles that is meant to point to, or signify to us, that Jesus is the Christ of God. This is how these miraculous works were understood by the early church. John lists seven such miracle accounts as “signs” pointing to Jesus’ identity.

There are three Greek words for miracles: (1.) sign (*sēmeion*); (2.) wonder (*teras*); and, (3.) powerful-act (*dunamis*). (Of the 77 times the Greek word *sēmeion* occurs in the NT, 57 times it is used of miraculous signs, 17 times in John. -- Matt. 12:38,39 (3x); 16:1,4 (3x); 24:24; Mk 8:11, 2(2x); 13:22; Lk. 11:16, 29 (3x); 23:8; Jn 2:11,18,23; 3:2; 4:48,54; 6:2,14,26,30; 7:31; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18,37; 20:30; Act 2:19, 22,43; 4:16,22,30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36; 8:6,13; 14:3; 15:12; Rom. 15:19; I Cor. 1:22; II Cor. 12:12; II Thess. 2:9; Heb. 2:4; Rev. 13:13,14; 16:14; 19:20. The Greek word for “wonder” [*teras*] occurs 16 times, every time in conjunction with *sēmeion*, i.e., “signs and wonders” – Matt 24:24; Mk. 13:23; Jn. 4:48; Acts 2:19,22,43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36; 14:3; 15:12; Rom. 15:19; II Cor. 12:12; II Thess. 2:9; Heb. 2:4. The Greek word for “miracle” or “powerful-act” (*dunamis*) occurs 119 times in the NT, but only 25 times is it used of a miracle – Matt. 7:22; 11:20,21,23; 13:54,58; 14:2; Mk. 6:2,5,14; 9:39; Lk. 10:13; 19:37; Acts 2:22; 8:13; 19:11 Rom. 15:19; I Cor. 12:10,28,29; II Cor. 12:12; Gal.3:5; II Thess. 2:9; Heb. 2:4.) In Acts 2:22, in Peter’s message explaining the coming of the Holy Spirit, all three of these words occur in one verse to indicate how we could know that Jesus was sent by God: “Men, Israelites, hear these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man having been clearly attested from God unto y’all by miracles (*dunamis*) and by wonders (*teras*) and by signs (*sēmeion*) which God did through Him in your midst...” All three words occur in II Cor. 12:12, II Thess. 2:9 and Hebrews 2:4, as well.

The word “miracle” has come to be so overused that it has become almost meaningless. It is helpful to make some distinctions when talking about the miraculous, and attempting to convey what John meant by the word “sign”. (1.) **Providence** -- *This is the normal way in which God has ordered the world to operate.* There is no definite evidence of supernatural intervention. There are regular principles observed in nature and everyday life which all people experience. (2.) **Special Providence** -- *God uses natural means to provide for special needs.* His intervention is seen with the eye of faith by the timing involved, the unusual or unexpected avenue of provision, or the uncanny way in which exactly what was needed was provided. The unbeliever would say that it was “coincidence”. (3.) **Supernatural Intervention or Miracle** – *God’s intervention to meet a need, or to make a provision, which goes above, beyond, or outside of natural means.* In such a case, there are definite physical results produced that cannot honestly be explained by natural causes. Here God’s intervention is seen not only by the *timing*, but also by the *means* used to provide. The unbeliever *cannot deny* that *something* has happened. It either is without explanation, or they see that God must have intervened miraculously. It cannot honestly be explained away as a coincidence.

Let’s take a look at the account. **There was a wedding in Cana of Galilee. The name “Cana” means “reedy”.** (Our English word, “cane” is from this root.) The site has been located about 8 miles due north of Nazareth. There are still reeds in the area. **The fact that John mentions that “the mother of Jesus was there” seems to indicate that she was somehow connected to the family hosting the wedding. She may have been related.** If Nazareth was where she grew up, it would not be surprising if a family member, maybe a sister, was living in nearby Cana. (Note that the text does not indicate that she was *invited*, ...just that she was “*being there*”.) **This would explain also why Jesus was invited.** He would have been a nephew, maybe a cousin to the bride or groom. As I mentioned last week, the new friends Jesus met in His trip to the south, probably travelled together northward with Jesus’ family in a caravan. **It would have been natural for the family to extend an invitation to Jesus’ fellow travelers as well.** It was on the way home, and it allowed them to spend more time with Jesus, so they stopped in for the festivities. We find out later that Nathanael was from Cana (21:2), as well, so there was more than just this one connection to this town. **Weddings usually took place on Wednesday afternoons, and were usually large celebrations where many were invited.** Feasting would not uncommonly last for up to a week. There was a strong sense of obligation to “pull out the red carpet” and provide abundantly in regards to the hospitality at such an occasion. **To run out of wine was a great embarrassment to the host. Mary’s knowledge of this development probably indicates that she was involved in the preparations and serving of the food.** It was not public knowledge yet, for the steward of the feast did not even know of this fact (vs. 9).

When the wine ran out, “the mother of Jesus said to Him, ‘They have no wine.’” Again, this seems to support that she was more than just a guest. She must have been either a close friend or relative, to be in the inner

circle, and to take initiative to find a solution. This is an interesting interchange between Mary and Jesus. **Mary obviously expects that Jesus can and will do something about the problem.**

“Woman, what do I have to do with you? My hour has not yet come.” -- This almost sounds disrespectful in our English translations. It is not meant to be so. It is merely a Jewish idiomatic expression, literally: “What to Me and to you, woman?” **Note that Jesus did not refer to her as His mother.** He simply calls her “woman” (cf. 19:25-27). **It was important to make the point that He was no longer under her authority.** His baptism and consecration to His ministry precluded past relationships. Later, He would teach that lesson to others, as well (Lk. 9:57-62; Matt. 10:37-39; 12:46-50). **The thrust of what Jesus was saying is that it was not His responsibility, nor did it seem time to get involved in alleviating this problem by a miracle.**

“Whatever He says to you, do it.” -- **Two observations: first, Mary was evidently expecting Him to do something miraculous,** preparing the servants to respond to what may appear to be a strange request from Him; and second, **Mary would not take “no” for an answer.** I believe that *she* was being led by God to ask this of Jesus, ... and that Jesus Himself did not really know that He was to do this, until Mary came to Him with her request. This seems to me to be the significance of the recording of this incident. Incidents like this challenge our perception of the incarnation. What does it mean that Jesus was both fully-God and fully-man (Phil. 2:7; Col. 1:19; Heb. 2:17), ...or that He “emptied Himself” to become human? (We need to *observe*.) Note Mary’s confidence. **She did not pressure or argue with Jesus.** She knew His heart. **She confidently expected an answer, and prepared to receive it.**

There are numerous times in the New Testament where God goes out of His way to spotlight the involvement of women in Jesus’ life and ministry, and in the early church. In a culture that was as patriarchal as was first century Judaism, there was absolutely nothing to be gained by this. In fact, some would have been scandalized by, or would have ridiculed, the way in which Jesus and the early church lifted up women as equals. **The rivalry that began as the curse of sin resulted in the oppression and degradation of women in society. God clearly honored womankind so as to correct this evil mindset.** Yes, Woman “helped” to introduce sin into the world (Genesis 3:1-7; I Timothy 2:14), but clearly Man was held responsible in God’s sight for the fall that resulted from *his* action, not that of the Woman (Romans 5:12-19; I Timothy 2:14). Men have blamed womankind (Wrongfully so! The man was responsible for his *own* choices.) throughout the eons for the fall (Genesis 3:11,12). **God, in His infinite love and wisdom chose to lift women up by including them in all aspects of the unfolding of the plan of salvation and its spread throughout the world.** The mention of four women in Jesus’ genealogy (Matthew 1:3,5,6); His choice to bring the Savior into the world as the “seed of the woman” (Gen. 3:15; Gal. 4:4), i.e., birth from a virgin apart from the agency of any male human parentage was not only a Divine miracle, but also a representative participation of womankind in the unfolding of the events surrounding redemption. **When Paul wrote that women will be saved through “the childbearing” in I Timothy 2:15** (This is the literal translation of the Greek, not “the bearing of children”, as some translations have rendered it.), he was not saying that women needed to bear children to be saved (Woe to those who are barren, or unmarried!), but **he was referring to the representative participation of womankind in the redemptive plan to bring the “Child”, ...the seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent..., into the world.** They will be saved through faith *in Him!* The women who followed Jesus and supported His ministry (Lk. 8:1-3); the woman, Mary of Bethany, who sat at His feet to listen to Him teach (Lk. 10:38-39 -- This was the relationship of a disciple to his rabbi -- unheard of for a woman in Jewish society!); the women who were the first eyewitnesses of Jesus after His resurrection (Matthew 28:1-10); Mary and other women who were among the first recipients of the Holy Spirit in the upper room at Pentecost (Acts 1:14; 2:17,18); and many other examples show how **God chose to specifically and visibly include women in the events having to do with the life, death, resurrection and proclamation of Jesus Christ.** This interchange in John 2 between Mary and Jesus is, I believe, another example in which God used a woman in this way. I believe **God was using Mary to set up and initiate the first of Jesus’ miraculous signs.**

As to the magnitude of the miracle, there were six stone waterpots, each containing 20 or 30 gallons (vs. 6). What Jesus did was not some little dribble in a test tube, **it was between 120 to 180 gallons of water!**

The response of the overseeing steward of the catering, demonstrates that **this was no cheap parlor trick** (vss. 8-10). **This was genuine wine, and of an excellent flavor and quality** (a headwaiter would know good wine).

Verse 11 says, “This beginning/first of the signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee...” is a bit curious. **It does not definitively state that this is the first sign that Jesus ever did anywhere, ...or merely the first one John records.** It does seem, however, that by the introduction of the events in 1:35 and 43 by the phrase, “on the next day”, and by the introduction of this incident by “on the third day” (vs. 1), John is stating that this is the first sign that Jesus did that His disciples witnessed. In fact, they were almost the *only ones* who knew what happened! Through it, He manifested His glory *to them*. **This seems to be the essence of the sign, a glimpse of the supernatural power of God.** Changing the water into wine clearly demonstrated *that*. **As a result, His disciples believed in Him. They got the message.**

John 2:13-25 -- The First Passover -- Cleansing the Temple

“He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. ¹⁵ And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; ¹⁶ and to those who were selling the doves He said, ‘Take these things away; stop making My Father’s house a place of business.’ ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written, ‘Zeal for your house will consume Me.’ ¹⁸ The Jews therefore answered and said to Him, ‘What sign do You show to us, seeing that You do these things?’ ¹⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ ²⁰ The Jews therefore said, ‘It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?’ ²¹ But He was speaking of the temple of His body. ²² When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken.”

John 2:14-22

The gospel of John offers some unique perspectives that the other gospel writers do not include. The account that John gives helps to clarify and correct some impressions that we would have if the only information we had was from the first three gospels. **This passage includes two examples of this:**

First, a reading of the other gospels gives the impression that Jesus’ ministry may have lasted only one year. **John tells us that there were four Passovers** (2:13; 5:1 [literally, “the feast”, which many commentators see as a reference to Passover, *the* most significant feast]; 6:4; 11:55). **By this, we know that Jesus’ ministry was over three years in duration.**

The second example of John’s unique contribution is that **he alone mentions *this* cleansing of the temple that occurred at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry.** The others mention a similar episode that happened at the *end* of His life, on the eve of the final Passover week. Some think that John was merely describing the same event, but a careful examination of the other gospels reveals that there were different motivations and issues involved. Many scholars believe that John, who was obviously aware of the other gospel accounts, was once again adding what he felt to be a significant part of the story that had not previously been told. (Compare this with Mk 11:15-18. What is different between the two incidents?) **Jesus cleansed the temple twice: Once at the beginning of His ministry, and once at the end.**

Vs. 13 tells us that “the Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.” **The feast of Passover was instituted by God in Exodus 11-13. It was to commemorate the deliverance of Israel out of slavery in Egypt.** God had already confronted Pharaoh and the Egyptian people with nine plagues, each designed to reveal the powerlessness of the Egyptian pantheon of gods before Yahweh of Israel. Pharaoh continued to stubbornly resist the warnings of God through Moses and Aaron, God’s appointed spokesmen. In this final plague, which would secure their release, **Yahweh intended to slay all the first-born of humankind and animals in the land of Egypt, because the Egyptian king refused to release God’s “first-born”, Israel** (Ex. 4:21-23; 11:4-7). The people of Egypt thought that the Pharaoh himself was divine. This plague would take Pharaoh’s first-born son as well, thus **it would establish once and for all the powerlessness of the king of Egypt before Yahweh, the God of Israel.** After warning the Egyptians, Moses was instructed to make preparations which would not only bring about their protection from this plague, but would also prepare them to leave in haste when the Egyptian king finally gave in before Yahweh. **Part of the preparations included slaying an unblemished lamb, and sprinkling or daubing its blood on the two door posts and over the top of the doorway to their houses. As Yahweh passed through the land at midnight, He would see the blood on the doorway and would “pass over” that house** (hence, the name “Passover” – Ex. 12:23). All inside would be safe from the plague. However, any first-born found out in the street, or in a house *without* this marking of blood would *not* be passed over. They would die from the plague. “And Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no home where there was not someone dead. Then he called for Moses and Aaron at night and said, ‘Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the sons of Israel; and go, worship Yahweh..., and go, and bless me also’” (Ex. 12:31,32). **This was the birthday of the nation Israel, and was to be commemorated throughout their generations** (Ex. 12:42). The reason that Jesus went up to Jerusalem was that **Old Testament law required that all Jewish males were to up to Jerusalem for three religious feasts each year:** the Passover (Unleavened Bread); Pentecost (Harvest); and the Feast of Booths (Ingathering). Cf. Ex. 23:14-17.

John records that **when Jesus came into the temple, He found “those who were selling oxen, sheep and doves”** (vs. 14). This practice undoubtedly began as a service to those traveling from a distance. **Having a ready source of priestly-inspected animals available to purchase for sacrifices was a benefit to pilgrims. Human greed and corruption had entered in over the years, however.** By Jesus’ time, the price of these animals had become highly inflated. Furthermore, crooked priests often would disqualify perfectly acceptable animals brought to the temple from family farms. This forced worshipers to purchase the temple animals, which were often *visibly inferior* in quality. **It was an abuse of spiritual authority for the sake of money.** The fact that these booths for selling animals had made their way into the actual temple courts is an indication of the partnership of the priesthood in this regard. **Those allowed to market their animals in the temple enjoyed a virtual monopoly, supported and protected by corrupt and greedy priests.**

Jesus also found *moneychangers*, sitting at their tables. Who were these “moneychangers”, and why were they there? The Law required every man in Israel to pay a yearly “temple tax”, for the upkeep of the temple (cf. Ex. 30:11-16; Matt. 17:24-27). This amounted to one half of a *shekel*, or two days’ wages, and was usually paid just before or at the Passover. This, and all other offerings in the temple, were supposed to be paid *in* Hebrew *shekels*, due to ecclesiastical tradition and to avoid “pagan currency”. Moreover to use *shekels* outside of the temple courts was illegal, under Roman rule. **The moneychangers were on hand to exchange foreign currency into the acceptable temple coinage, and to make change, if necessary, for those who desired to make other purchases in the temple.** Again, this probably began as a convenience to foreigners, but had often become corrupted due to the ease of manipulating exchange rates, or of charging large fees for a service that was only available in the temple courts. **The practice of tyrannical and manipulative charges of temple moneychangers is well-documented in secular literature of that time.**

In addition to the *injustice* the worshiper would have to endure in order to make an offering to God was the reality of the marketplace environment that resulted from these activities. This was not some Western supermarket, where shoppers pick out their merchandise and then pay at the check-out counter. **This was modeled after the Middle-Eastern market, or bazaar, ...where there were individual vendors of goods and services, who were calling out to prospective customers, haggling over prices, sometimes arguing with dissatisfied patrons.** Added to this din was the *bleating* of sheep and goats, the *lowing* of cattle, and the *calling* of the birds that were for sale. Certainly the noise and bustle which was invading the temple courts, would have made worship more difficult. **Things were so bad, ...so out of control and out of perspective..., that Jesus felt that there was a need to take drastic action.**

Jesus responded to the abuse, corruption and chaos He found, “...making a scourge of cords, He cast out all” (vs. 15). **First, He made or fashioned a whip of ropes.** The word for ropes is the same as is used in Acts 27:32 for the ropes that held the skiff to the ship. These were not just light cords, nor was the whip only a prop. It was a real whip, capable of inflicting pain and commanding respect. **The fact that Jesus stood there and took the time to make it indicates that His action was not just explosively impulsive. It may have seemed drastic, but it was definitely deliberate and calculated.** *He drove out all ...He poured out the coins ...and overturned the tables....* There can be no question that this was a scene of noise and violence. How else could Jesus have cleared the temple court so quickly? **We must remember, too, that Jesus was a carpenter by trade,** which in those days meant the heavy work of constructing houses from stones and large beams, and using hand planes, saws, hammers, and chisels (there were no power tools!). **A man who worked a job like this must have been a well-muscled, physically intimidating individual** (in spite of the impressions that some traditional art works may tend to give us about Jesus’ appearance), **especially when wielding a whip, yelling, and moving quickly and unpredictably. No one attempted to resist Him,** physically at least. Marcus Dods, in *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, describes well what it must have been like: “It was a scene of violence: the traders trying to protect their property, cattle rushing hither and thither, men shouting and cursing, the moneychangers trying to hold their tables as Jesus went from one to another upsetting them. It was indeed so violent a scene that the disciples felt somewhat scandalized until they remembered, then and there, not afterwards, that it was written: ‘Zeal for Thy house will consume Me’” (Psalms 69:9).

What was He crying out, as He drove them out? **“Take these things away. Stop making my Father’s house a house of merchandise!”** This is the cause Jesus gave for His action (vs. 16). (*Different* from the reason in Mark 11:15-18.)

The Jewish leaders demanded an explanation for Jesus’ action, ...an outward, miraculous sign to indicate by what authority He did this. Like so many politicians of our day, they couldn’t bring themselves to just own up to the truth of His objection. It is interesting, however, that **they did not arrest Him** when He did not answer them as they had indicated. What did He say in response? *“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up”*. As was often the case with the religious leaders, **Jesus did not give them the kind of answer they expected. He spoke in a parable to them, but in actuality His resurrection would truly be the best sign to demonstrate His authority** (Vss. 19-22).

The “Jews” mention that it took 46 years to build the temple (vs. 20). Herod the Great began this project in the 18th year of his reign (ca. 20 B.C.). **This gives us a fixed point for the beginning of Jesus’ ministry -- about 26-27 A.D.** This coincides with a prophecy in Daniel, that the Messiah would show up 483 years after a command to rebuild Jerusalem. From the time that the Persian King, Artaxerxes, commissioned Ezra’s return (457 B.C.), until 26 A.D. was 483 years. It is also the year that Luke documents as the beginning of Jesus’ ministry (Dan. 9:24-26; Ezr. 7:8; Lk. 3:1).

Though many “believed” in Jesus, upon witnessing the miracles He was doing (mentioned, but not recounted by John), **He knew better than to trust in the fickleness of human popularity** (Vss. 23-25). **This is one of a number of times where John mentioned that people “believed in” Jesus, but their faith was not dependable.** On the one hand, John is writing to bring us *to faith* in Christ (20:30,31), ...and John says that “believing in Jesus” is what brings us to new birth (1:12), ...yet, intellectual faith does not seem to be enough. There must be an *ongoing pursuit of Christ* (8:31). **People will fail us, but God is always trustworthy. Jesus entrusted Himself to God (I Pet. 2:23), but not to people.**

John 3:1-8 -- Jesus' Teaching of Spiritual Biogenesis

“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again (from-above), he is not able to see the kingdom of God.’⁴ Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?’⁵ Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.’⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.’⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘‘You must be born again.’’⁸ The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.’” John 3:3-8

We are introduced to Nicodemus in 3:1. We are told that **he was a Pharisee, and a “ruler” of the Jews.** The Pharisees were a religious party within Judaism. They typically were middle-class merchants or tradesmen who had “separated” themselves unto God (“Pharisee” meant “separated one”). They were deeply devoted to the scriptures and rabbinic traditions of Judaism, and were especially dedicated to keeping their lifestyles consistent with those teachings. At a time when other Jews were adopting some of the practices of the Greek/Roman culture, they were “preservationists”, strongly resistant to compromise or the incorporation of any artwork, architectural design, customs or entertainments that reflected the larger “heathen culture”. They were focused on maintaining ritual purity and religious practices. They were opposed to mingling with gentiles, or “sinners”, lest they be “defiled” by the impurity of their lives. Pharisees were very popular among the people, and were seen as serious followers of God. **Their base of popularity and power was in the synagogues,** which were also focused on preserving tradition and culture. The other major religious party was **the Sadducees.** They were from the aristocrats, the nobility and priestly families. They tended to be more open to compromise in lifestyle, and were willing to curry favor with the Romans. They did not believe in angels, demons or the afterlife. **Their power base was centered in the temple.** The national ruling body of the Jews was the **Sanhedrin,** which was composed of Sadducees, scribes, elders and Pharisees. As a “ruler of the Jews”, Nicodemus would have been a member of this group. In vs. 10, **Jesus calls him “the teacher of Israel”, so he must have been a preeminent Rabbi** in his own right. (Nicodemus appears again in Jn. 7:48-51, and in 19:38-40.)

Note that Nicodemus did not come to Jesus in a public setting. He came under the cover of darkness for a private interview. Evidently, he did not wish to be seen conversing with Jesus. Nicodemus begins the dialogue with a greeting of respect, **“Rabbi, we have seen that You have come from God as a teacher”** (vs. 2). We are not given any more specific information as to who the “we” might be, but **there were probably others among the Pharisees and rulers who were open to consider Jesus in this light.** His words and actions had not alienated them, yet, and **the evidence of God's presence in Jesus' life and ministry was very difficult to simply dismiss.** “...for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him”. The import of the miraculous signs was convincing to Nicodemus. The fact that he refers to them in the plural is another indication that Jesus was performing *many more miracles* than those John chooses to record for us in this book (e.g., Jn. 20:30,31; 21:25).

Jesus quickly changes the direction of the conversation. “Truly, truly, I say to you...” -- Literally, “Amēn, amēn, I say to you...”. **The word, amēn, is not a Greek word, at all. It is actually transliterated from the Hebrew, and means “truly”, or “may it be so”.** This particular phrase was a Hebrew idiom used to point out a serious, solemn or very weighty saying. **When used to introduce a statement it served as a way of saying, “Listen up, now, this is important.”** This occurs in the gospel of John twenty-five times, and is unique to his record (1:51; 3:3,5,11; 5:19,24,25; 6:26,32,47,53; 8:34,51,58; 10:1,7; 12:24; 13:16,20,21,38; 14:12; 16:20,23; 21:18). **Twenty-five times in this gospel, Jesus says, “Listen up, now, this is important...”.** **Don't you want to see what *He* thought was so important?** He continued, “...unless one is born again, he is not able to see the kingdom of God...” -- A more primitive translation might be, “If ever anyone might not be born/begotten from above/again...” **The first observation is that this begetting or birthing happens to the person, i.e., it is not done by them.** They are the passive recipients of this change. **Secondly, the Greek word anōthen can mean “from above, from a higher place” or “again”.** The definition must be determined by the context. (Cf. 3:31 – *Here*, the context strongly suggests that it mean “from above”.) **Third, Nicodemus *misinterpreted* what Jesus had said as meaning “a second time”** (vs. 4). It is obvious from the following explanation that Jesus gave that He had the *former meaning* in mind. **Fourth, without birth from above, one is spiritually blind,** i.e., “...he cannot *see* the kingdom of God” -- Literally, “he is not *able* to see...”. **The awareness and discernment of the reign of God must follow the impartation of life “from above”.** It is like one's faculties of spiritual perception are “turned off”, “tuned out”, or non-existent until this inner change occurs. (This is in agreement with what the apostle Paul wrote in I Corinthians 2:14 and II Corinthians 4:3,4.)

Nicodemus asks, “How can a man be born when he is old?” (vs. 4)– The question is sound. **“He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born” -- Obviously not.** Clearly, Nicodemus heard the word anōthen as meaning “again”, so Jesus' statement sounded absurd to him. **What is Jesus getting at?**

Jesus responds, “Truly, truly, I say to you... (Again, the precursor to a solemn declaration of truth!) unless one is born of water *and* Spirit...” (There is no “the” in the Greek). There has been much debate over these words throughout the centuries. If we put aside any theological preconceptions, and approach the passage from the point of view of an everyday, common-sense first-century listener, the meaning becomes quite clear. **Being “born out from water” is a clear reference to the natural process of physical birth. The womb is literally a bag of waters out from which a baby emerges at birth.** These people were very familiar with this phenomenon. Animals giving birth was also a natural part of everyday life which they observed. The gush of waters from the womb was one of the first sure signs that the process of birth was underway. The baby, or calf or lamb, came out all wet, and would need to be dried off. **Being “born out from water” was a very natural and descriptive way of referring to the *normal*/birth experience. The *unusual addition* that Jesus made, “...and Spirit...” would have caught Nicodemus’ attention.** It is also what Jesus *expanded on* in the verses to follow. **Jesus was referring to an entirely different *kind* of birth experience. “...he is not able to enter into the kingdom of God.” -- Not only is it impossible to *discern*, or *see*, the kingdom of God, but entrance into it is not possible apart from this other kind of birth.**

The concept of “the kingdom of God” is a primary theme of the synoptic gospels. The idea occurs 101 times. The message Jesus and His disciples were preaching was called the “gospel of the kingdom” (Matt. 9:35). **By contrast, this passage in John 3 is the *only time* Jesus teaches about the kingdom of God in this gospel** (vss. 3,5). John prefers to talk about eternal life (The Greek word “eternal” is *aiōnion* = “age-type”, an adjective derived from the word for “age”, *aiōn*). **The thrust of the message about the kingdom of God is that it presents the larger picture of our relationship to God in terms of a much bigger enterprise, the entire scope of His reign as King.** We are clearly His subjects, ...among a *host* of subjects. **Believing upon the name of Jesus is tantamount to offering our allegiance to Him as our King.** The picture painted in the other gospels also presents the kingdom of God as infiltrating and reclaiming subjects from the kingdom of this world, ...an evil kingdom of force, domination, and oppression which has held humankind in bondage. **The message of Jesus and the early disciples was that the kingdom of God has come to set us free from the dominion of darkness** (Mk. 1:15; Matt. 9:35; 12:28; Lk. 9:1-6; 10:1-20; Col. 1:13). **John’s preference for the phrase, eternal life, ...or “age-type life”, as I will describe it..., seems to emphasize more of *the quality of life* that comes with being a citizen of the kingdom of God.** It is more *personal*, less cosmic to our ears, in a sense, though it does refer to an age, ...the kingdom of God that is *here now* but is also *yet to come*. **Age-type life is the spilling over of the power and vitality of the Age to Come into this present evil age in the lives of those who have believed in Jesus** (Gal. 1:4).

In vs. 6, Jesus clearly presents the kingdom principle of spiritual biogenesis, i.e., spiritual life can *only* come from spiritual life. In the history of science, people used to think that life came *by itself* from non-living materials. Maggots would suddenly appear on meat that had been lying out for a time. Mice would be found within a pile of old rags, within a short period of time. We now know that maggots came from the eggs of flies that had landed on the meat. Mice did *not* magically appear in the rags, rather they were attracted to nest in a comfortable environment which they discovered in their endless foraging for food. This was not at all apparent to the casual observer in earlier days, however. Joseph Lister and Louis Pasteur conclusively demonstrated that **biological life can only come from other living things.** They disproved the popular theory of spontaneous generation. **This biological principle has a parallel in the area of spiritual birth.** Jesus put it this way, “The (thing) having been begotten out from the flesh is flesh...” -- **What is from natural origin, or from self-effort, can only produce what is of like nature, i.e., natural, ...not supernatural or spiritual.** Hence, physical birth, or any earthly effort, cannot produce spiritual life. “...and the (thing) having been begotten out from the Spirit is spirit.” -- **The Spirit must produce a spiritual birth.**

The logical conclusion of Jesus’ statement becomes quite apparent: “Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above’” (vs. 7). There is an interesting distinction in the Greek between the two parts of this verse. The first time the word “you” occurs it is in the singular form, i.e., He is speaking to Nicodemus. In the second half of the verse, the word “you” is plural, meaning that “y’all (i.e., all people) must be born from above” (Gr. - *anōthen*). This has the effect of universalizing the statement. Also the word translated as “must” is quite strong in Greek. It means “it is necessary” or “it is bound”. A more literal translation of this phrase would be, “It is necessary y’all to be born/begotten from above/again.” **Why is it necessary? Because spiritual life comes *only* from the Spirit of God!**

Finally, Jesus makes another important comparison to establish that there is something *unpredictable* or *mysterious* about the ones who have been born from above (vs. 8). As you observe the effects of the wind/spirit, but don’t know where it is coming from or going to, *in this same manner*, or, *like this* is everyone having been begotten/born out from the Spirit. In other words, **you may not be able to see the spiritual birth taking place, but you *can* see the *effect* in a person’s life.** “...so is everyone who is born of the Spirit” – **They will be changed!**

John 3:9-21 -- How Can New Birth Come To Be?

“Nicodemus answered and said to Him, ‘How can these things be?’¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not understand these things?’¹⁴ ...as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;¹⁵ that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life.¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” John 3:9,10,14-16

Jesus had just explained to Nicodemus that to perceive or enter the Kingdom of God, a person must be born from above. ***In addition to natural physical birth, "out from water", one must also be born "out from" the Spirit.*** All that flesh is capable of producing is flesh. It is not capable of producing spiritual life. Spiritual life must be infused or injected into us from the outside from a greater source of spiritual life. Much like seed from a living plant must be deposited in otherwise lifeless ground in order for plants to grow up, so our souls are spiritually lifeless and undiscerning apart from this influx of life from outside ourselves.

Nicodemus' response to Jesus was, “How can these things be?” (vs. 9) His response is not a rejection or dismissal of what Jesus had said. He was sincerely attempting to grasp how a spiritual birth might come to pass.

Jesus seems to softly chide Nicodemus, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not understand these things?” This question recognizes his stature as a teacher and student of the Bible. This is actually a lead-in for the Bible study Jesus is going to initiate in the next few verses.

Jesus begins verse 11 with, “*Truly, truly, I say to you...*” Again, this is a way to draw solemn attention to what He is about to say. “*...we speak that which we know, and what we have seen we bear witness to...*”. Jesus is saying that His teachings are *not* simply from the study of the Scriptures, but *also* from His own observations and personal experiences. **He presents Himself as an eyewitness in a courtroom.** Jesus' use of the word “we” is interesting. Who else is testifying with Jesus? Other people who have tried to testify to these people? “*... and you do not receive our witness.*” The word for “you” is plural, so Jesus is referring to the larger group of religious leaders of which Nicodemus is a representative. **This is a good warning for us. There have been many occasions when theorists and academicians have rejected the observable activity of God, because it did not fit with their “studied opinion”.** If they will not believe Jesus when He refers to things that have an obvious earthly parallel in their experience, **how will they believe if He tells them about heavenly things that have no reference point in their personal experience?** Again, this is a practical question, applicable to us. ***It comes down to the reliability of our source.***

Who could possibly tell any of us about “heavenly things”? No one has ever gone there, right? “*...no one has ascended into heaven...*” (3:12). [This remark reminds us that prior to Christ's death and resurrection those who were the righteous dead did *not* go to heaven upon their passing. Rather, they went to Hades (Greek) or Sheol (Hebrew), “the grave” or “the nether world”, as did the unrighteous who died. There, the two groups were clearly separated and had very different experiences. The righteous dead were gathered in a place of rest and peace, referred to as Abraham's bosom, while the unrighteous dead were in torment (Lk. 16:19-31). Since the time of Christ's victory, those who die in Jesus will immediately “be with Christ” (Phil. 1:20-23; II Cor. 5:1-9), who has taken the righteous with Him to heaven (Eph. 4:8-10). This new arrangement is possible because now the payment for sins has been made, whereas before it was only promised (cf. Rom. 3:24-26).] “*...except He who descended from heaven, the Son of Man...*”(vs. 13). The Greek is a little more specific, “except the one coming down (at a point in time) out from the heaven”. **In the argument here, Jesus is alluding to the fact that He is the One who came down from heaven. Therefore He is uniquely qualified as a witness to tell us what we could not otherwise know.**

The “Son of Man” is a significant title from the Old Testament. It is by far the most favorite way that Jesus chose to refer to Himself. In fact, it is almost exclusively His title for Himself. Only Stephen, when he is being stoned to death (Acts 7:56), and the apostle John, describing what he sees in the visions in Revelation (1:1:13; 14:14) employ this title for Jesus. All the other 84 occurrences in the New Testament are upon Jesus' lips in reference to Himself. This is already the second time it is recorded upon Jesus' lips in this gospel (cf. 1:51). **The special advantage that this title offered to Jesus was that it could be interpreted in two very different ways. Thus, He could make some very definite claims, and still remain somewhat obscure or detached from them.** It kept people from pinning Him down too easily. They had to listen more to *what* He was saying about this Son of Man in order to really understand what He was getting at. **Other titles, such as “Christ”, “Son of David”, etc., presented problems to Jesus, in that the people had some very specific preconceived ideas of what they meant.** If Jesus were to openly call Himself by one of these other titles, the common people would tend to suppose that He was going to be a political Messiah, a warrior-king who would conquer the Romans and liberate Israel. This would have plummeted Him into direct conflict with the Roman authorities, and would probably have precipitated an earlier death, before His training of the twelve had opportunity to be completed. (1.) **Part of the background for this title came from the book of Ezekiel, where it was used in reference to the prophet** (almost 90 times in the book). **The thrust of the title from this perspective was in His identity as a true human being.** He is “a man”. (2.) **The other place that the title occurred in the Old Testament was**

from the book of Daniel. Here the title takes on a very **powerful, supernatural imagery**. According to Daniel's vision, "One like the Son of Man" will come before God, and will be given dominion, glory, and an everlasting kingdom, one which extends over every nation (Dan. 7:13,14). Another key image from Daniel's vision is that **this Son of Man will come on the clouds of heaven. This word picture could not help but be called to mind by Jesus' words here in Jn. 3:13, "the (One) coming down out from heaven, the Son of Man"**.

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness" (vs. 14). The word for "as" here has the nuance of "according as", meaning it is a comparison of the way in which Moses lifted up the serpent. **According to the Old Testament account from Numbers 21:4-9, the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people in judgment for their sin.** Many were dying from their poisonous bites, so the people came to Moses, admitting their sin and asking for him to intercede on their behalf. **In response to God's direction, Moses made a bronze serpent and set it upon a standard, or pole, so that if ever anyone was bitten, he might "look upon it, and he shall live". "...even so must the Son of Man be lifted up..."** Literally, "in this same manner it is necessary for the Son of Man to be lifted up". "in order that the one believing in Him may have eternal life" (vs. 15). ("Eternal life" is literally "age-type life" the "quality of life that belongs to the Kingdom of God". This is first time this phrase actually occurs in the gospel.) **In answer to Nicodemus' question, "How can these things things be?", Jesus cites the miraculous healing that came to those who heard of the provision of God (in the bronze serpent) and looked in hope and faith at this symbol upon the pole for salvation from the serpent's venomous sting.** In similar fashion, God will make provision by "lifting up" the Son of Man in order that the one who trusts in *this* promise of deliverance might look in faith to Him and receive life of the quality of the coming Kingdom of God. **In other words, it would only happen by a gracious, miraculous work of God in the lives of those who put their trust in this Son of Man. Those who hear of God's provision, and trust in Him, will be saved.**

"For God so loved the world..." (vs. 16). Literally, the Greek says, "For in this manner God loved the world, with the result that He gave His only Son in order that the one believing in Him might not perish, but he might have age-type life." **God loved everybody enough that He was willing to put His unique Son forward in the likeness of the "snake on the pole" in order that the one believing on Him could escape destruction, lostness, self-ruin and death, and instead might receive, have, and presently-possess life from the age to come.** Many sermons have been preached on this one verse, because there are so many layers and levels of possibility presented here. We have heard this verse in terms of eternal death and destruction, but it is much more. **Ruination and self-destruction of our selves come to those who are narrowly focused on self-fulfillment,** and the attainment of the pleasures and riches of this world (Lk. 9:24,25). **Only by being willing to release ourselves into God's care and live for Jesus will we truly find the life God created us for.** Are you willing to "believe in Him"? The word for "believe" means to "trust in". Are you willing to trust Him enough to *do as He says*? Notice that the verse describes an *ongoing* trust, not a *momentary* decision.

God's purpose in sending His Son is more clearly stated in the following verses. **God did not send Jesus to bring judgment, but to offer a means of salvation, hope, rescue and life** (vs. 17). *He wants the world to be saved* by means of Jesus. **The one believing in Him is not judged, because he has received God's offer of help, ...but the one not believing or trusting in Jesus has been judged already** (vs. 18). To return to the word picture of the snake-bitten person in the wilderness, if he or she chooses to disregard God's offer of salvation, his or her fate is sealed. *Death will come because of the poison of the snakebite,* not because they did not look at the bronze serpent on the pole. **God is not "being a meany" if they refuse to get help.** God has been gracious and kind to offer a way to be healed. If they reject God's offer, the cause was *their sin,* the snakebite, and *their resistance* toward God's grace. The same is true for those who reject Christ. The real problem is not judgment *for* disbelief, but the effect and *consequences of sin* in the heart, as explained in the next couple of verses.

The real problem is that, even though the light has come into the world, people have loved darkness rather than the light (vs. 19). **Why? Because their deeds were evil, and everyone practicing evil hates the light, and does not come to it, lest their deeds be exposed.** At some level, they know that what they are doing is wrong, and they avoid being shown up for what they are. They don't want to stop doing what they are doing, or be accountable for their actions. They hate to be corrected or made responsible for their own sense of morality. As a result, **they tend to dislike and avoid situations or people who make them take a good look at themselves and their actions** (vs. 20). It is interesting that **the light doesn't really change the situation, it just makes visible what is already true.**

By contrast, **the one who consistently lives out the truth, ...who is real, genuine, and unhypocritical in the actions of his or her life, will willingly come again and again to the light** (vs. 21). These people have got everything out of the shadows, and therefore have nothing to hide. They have confidence to "come out into the light". **Instead of hiding from the truth and attempting to ignore their responsibility to God, they desire to give glory to Him by letting others clearly see that it has been His activity in their lives that is behind their actions.**

John 3:22-36 -- Further Testimony From John the Baptist

“John answered and said, ‘A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven.’²⁸ You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, “‘I am not the Christ,’” but, “‘I have been sent ahead of Him.’”²⁹ He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. So this joy of mine has been made full.³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease.³¹ He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.³² What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony.³³ He who has received His witness has set his seal to this, that God is true.³⁴ For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure.³⁵ The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand.³⁶ He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

John 3:27-36

Jesus and His disciples had left Jerusalem, where they had observed the Passover and met with Nicodemus. They were camping in the Judean countryside, where Jesus was spending time with His followers and was baptizing people who were coming to hear Him teach. His method and message were very similar to John the Baptist’s, “Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand” (Matt. 5:17). He added the emphasis, “the time *has been fulfilled*” (Mk. 1:14,15), which added an even greater sense of urgency. We also know that, unlike John, Jesus was performing miraculous signs (Jn. 10:41). The author refers to them, even though he chooses not to recount them (2:23; 3:2). Not surprisingly, He began to become very popular, and people began to go out to hear Him.

Meanwhile, John the Baptist was preaching and baptizing “in Aenon near Salim”. The location is uncertain. What we know is that it was west of the Jordan, about 20 miles south of the Sea of Galilee. It was very close to the northeastern border of Samaria, in the area called the Decapolis (“ten cities” – a league of Greek cities, independent of Galilee, where Herod ruled). One of the main roads from Jerusalem back to Galilee went east of Jerusalem, and then went down into the Jordan valley, and followed that northward. The other main road went north from Jerusalem through the Samaritan highlands to Shechem, where it split into two directions. One branch continued north to Nazareth, and the other descended into the Jordan valley to the northeast, and on to the Sea of Galilee. John the Baptist was strategically located near where this “upper road” descended into the valley and converged with the “lower road” from Jerusalem. The most densely populated area of Galilee was near the Sea of Galilee, so John placed himself to intersect with the vast majority of northward-bound pilgrims returning from the feast. Aenon was an Aramaic word for “spring”. There was much water available, so John was located there, where he could immerse those who were dedicating themselves afresh to God. The text says, “they were coming and were being baptized (immersed)”. Both verbs describe continuous, ongoing activity. John was still very much a significant attraction in Israel.

“John had not yet been thrown into prison” (vs. 24). *This verse provides a very important historical benchmark for determining the overlap of Jesus’ and John’s ministries.* The other gospel writers give the impression that Jesus’ ministry did not really get off the ground until *after* John was imprisoned (Matt. 4:12; Mk. 1:14; Lk. 3:18-23). John the apostle clarifies this misunderstanding by recording this incident. From this gospel we learn that Jesus was already very busy in His ministry. He had already been gathering some disciples, and had gained the attention of both the general populace and the religious leaders by the signs that He performed, and by His other activities. The Baptist would soon be imprisoned for criticizing Herod’s illegal marriage to his brother’s wife (Matt. 14:3,4; Mk. 6:17,18; Lk. 3:19,20), though at this point *both* he and Jesus are openly ministering in the land. **We can confidently say that everything in John 1-4 took place between Matthew 4:11 and 12.**

From this statement, we get into the meat of this account, recorded by John. Apparently, there had been a discussion between some of John’s disciples and one of the Jews about purification. We have no idea what was said, except that **the report came out that Jesus’ ministry was beginning to eclipse John’s.** It is interesting that when his disciples reported this concern to John, they acknowledge that he had “borne witness” to Jesus, yet **they were jealous that His ministry was becoming larger than John’s.** In their devotion to John, *they missed the important thrust of his testimony*, “He who comes after me has a higher rank than I” and “I am unworthy to untie His sandals” (1:15,27), ...or that he himself (John) had been sent by God “in order that He might be made known to Israel” (1:31).

John’s response to their concerns? **“A person is not able to receive even one thing, if it has not been given to him from heaven.”** John is saying that Jesus’ popularity is something that *God* has given to Him. Conversely, John knows that he can’t righteously *make* something happen that is not within God’s permission. Paul says something similar in I Corinthians 3:5-7. There, people were showing favoritism, loyalty, or even rivalry on behalf of one leader versus another. Paul says, **“Who are we? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. One planted, another watered, but it was God who was causing the growth.”** The point is that God

is the One who decides the extent or popularity of someone's ministry, ...or their success in business, ...or their station in life. **"It is God who decides: He puts one down, and lifts up another"** (Psa. 74:8).

John reminded them of his own testimony. He had said all along that "I am *not* the Christ", ...rather, "I have been sent ahead of Him" (3:28). Then he used an illustration, **"I am like the best man, the friend of the bridegroom."** It was customary for the friend of the bridegroom to bring the bride to the groom, and to stand by to listen to the vows as they were spoken. "It is *my great pleasure* to participate in the wedding, and it is *my joy* to hear my friend exchange vows with his beloved." **"And so this joy of mine has been made full."** -- As it was fitting for the best man to rejoice at the joy of his friend, so it is fitting that John would rejoice at the exaltation and popularity of the One whose way he came to prepare. **"It is necessary for That One to increase, but me to become less important"** (vs. 30).

Whether the next few verses are a continuation of the Baptist's words, or are from the author, there is no way to tell. The argument reflects some of the thoughts from verses 11-13 above, namely, that **Jesus' origin is "from above", and therefore He is uniquely qualified as a witness, to testify to us of "heavenly things"**. They also fit the Baptist's argument, however, in that he had testified as to the greatness of the "One coming after" him. He says, "the One coming from-above (Gk. – anōthen) He is over-and-above all". He is greater than *all* others, so, of course, He will increase, and I will decrease. (Note that this is good contextual support that anōthen earlier in verses 3,7 of this same chapter should have been understood as "from above", not "again".) Beyond that, however, John draws a distinction between someone who originates from the earth ("out-from the earth"), and the One coming out-from heaven. **Someone whose origin is out-from the earth is out-from the earth and speaks out-from the earth.** In other words, his entire nature, experience and perception would be from a natural, earthly perspective. **But, someone "coming out-from heaven" can testify of what He has seen and heard there.** His background and experiences uniquely qualify Him to speak of "heavenly realities". **By comparison, this also disqualifies everyone else who would claim to understand heavenly realities, because they do not have first-hand experience. They would have to rely on mere speculation, or some other secondary source. Jesus is a far superior witness of heavenly truth, because He has been there!** "...but no one receives His testimony..." **Even the best source of information is of little benefit to those who do not accept it.**

Most people were *not* responding to what Jesus had to say. **However, the one receiving His testimony affirms that God is true.** If anyone will recognize the truthfulness of what Jesus has to say, he is identifying with and declaring that Jesus *is* teaching the words that *come from God*. Those who are accepting and taking what was Jesus' message have at some point "stamped" with their personal approval or endorsement that God is for real, and trustworthy. "For whom God sent, that person speaks the personal-directives of God." The Greek for "word" here is a form of rhēma, referring more to spoken words than just the ideas, i.e., the utterances of God, not just the content. The significance of it here would be the idea of more personal communication from God to Jesus, which then qualifies Him to more accurately convey God's heart to us. **When a person comes in his own strength or ability, his message may be generally accurate. But, when the living God sends someone as His mouthpiece, He will put His specific message into the mouth of His spokesperson, and he or she will be able to deliver a personal message that is timely and powerful.** "...for He gives the Spirit without measure..." Technically, "Spirit" could be either the subject or the direct object. He is either the Giver, or the thing-given. The Spirit could give without measure to Jesus (thus qualifying Him as a source of information from God); or that God gives the Spirit without measure to Jesus (again, to show His qualifications); or God gives the Spirit without measure (a general statement regarding God's desire to freely and abundantly offer His Spirit to all), or it could mean that Jesus gives the Spirit without measure (i.e., freely to men). **The point is that when God sends someone, He will give Him both the message and the spiritual power to fulfill His purpose.**

"The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand" (vs. 35). The kind of love mentioned here is *agapaō*, the benevolent set of the will toward honoring, valuing and bringing about good for the one being loved. One reason for this is given in Philippians 2:5-11. **It is the Father's purpose to magnify Jesus**, and to sum up all things into Him (Eph. 1:10). Part of this is to give to Him all that the Father has (John restates this claim in 13:3, and Jesus says it of Himself in 5:19-30 and Matthew 11:27; 28:18.). This is definitely a statement of Christ's deity. "The one believing in the Son has age-type life; but the one stubbornly-resisting the Son will not see life, rather the wrath of God remains upon him" (vs. 36). **God is looking for those who will trust in His Son. Trusting implies aligning your life with His in obedience, just as to stubbornly-resist Him is to walk in disobedience.** It is important to see that **transforming age-type life can be ours now, or we remain under wrath.** It is like those bit by the serpents in the wilderness, earlier in the chapter. They would die because of the serpent's venom, not because they did not look at the bronze serpent on the pole. But, that was the provision of God on their behalf. In the same way, **we are all under wrath for our sin. Our own sin is what condemns us. Jesus is our hope, but we must choose to lay hold of Him by committing ourselves to Him by faith.** Inaction means death. We must choose Him.

John 4:1-9 -- A Little Background on Samaria

“When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John ² (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were), ³ He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee. ⁴ And He had to pass through Samaria. ⁵ So He came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; ⁶ and Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. ⁷ There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, ‘Give Me a drink.’ ⁸ For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. ⁹ The Samaritan woman therefore said to Him, ‘How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?’ (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)”

John 4:1-9

“And the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon and from Cuthah and from Avva and from Hamath and Sephar-vaim, and settled them in the cities of Samaria in place of the sons of Israel. So they possessed Samaria and lived in its cities. ²⁵ And it came about at the beginning... that they did not fear Yahweh... ²⁸ So one of the priests whom they had carried away into exile from Samaria came and lived at Bethel, and taught them how they should fear Yahweh.” 2 Kings 17:24,25,28

We see from the first verse that Jesus was already aware of the danger of arousing the jealousy of the Pharisees. If John's ministry drew their criticism, now Jesus' larger and growing popularity would certainly make Him a target (cf. Jn. 1:19-28; Matt. 11:7-19; 21:23-45). He had ruffled the feathers of the priests by cleansing the temple (2:13f). Most of them were Sadducees. Together, Pharisees and Sadducees were the religious leaders in power.

We learn from the second verse that **Jesus was not doing the baptizing, but His followers were. Four possible reasons why Jesus chose not to baptize people:** (a.) **He was too busy teaching and healing.** The demand for His healing ministry was incredibly intense (Mk. 1:32-45; 3:7-12,20). The logistics of dealing with these large crowds may have demanded that He share this aspect of ministry with His followers. Not only would it have been virtually impossible to personally baptize each one, it would have been physically exhausting. (b.) **It was an important way of making a clear distinction between Himself and John.** Jesus was *not* simply One who picked up on John's message and style and struck out on His own. He had no intention of being summarized in people's mind as “another Baptist”. Jesus did not ignore or reject John's work, however. By continuing to include baptism as a significant part of His preaching and ministry, Jesus identified with and built upon the pioneering work of John the Baptist. By *not* personally baptizing anyone, however, He demonstrated that His ministry style and message were different than John's. (c.) **He desired to involve His followers in “hands-on” ministry from the beginning, because His vision was to *train disciples to carry on after He was gone.*** Not only was this good, practical experience, it also would have promoted a sense of “ownership” among those who were doing the baptizing. They would have more closely identified with Jesus and His work. (d.) **It may even have been to avoid the unhealthy “one-up” comparisons that the disciples later argued about** (e.g., Matt. 18:1-5; 20:20-28; Mk. 9:33-37; Lk. 22:24-27; cf. I Cor. 1:10-17). To say, “I was baptized by Jesus Himself”, as a basis of spiritual authority could easily be avoided by simply *not* personally baptizing *anyone*.

It is important to note that Jesus had not yet identified the men who later became His twelve apostles. That did not take place until some time later (Mk. 3:13-19; Lk. 6:12-16), certainly not until after the Baptist had been taken into custody by Herod (Matt. 4:12,13; Mk. 1:14; Lk. 4:14-31). The significance of this observation in this context is to see that **Jesus was allowing common followers to do the baptizing.** There were no “special followers”, no “holy orders” or “clergy”, among the followers of Jesus. **He was employing the “laity” of His day to do this “rite” of baptism.** I think that this is an important realization, because I believe that it has been to our loss that this act has been removed from the responsibilities of the average believer and come to be reserved only for “the religious professional”. It is just one more way in which the everyday Christian gets the message that s/he really is not a significant player in the work of the kingdom of God, or in his/her involvement as a spiritual support person in the lives of others.

The next couple of verses tell us the reason for the following unusual story. Samaria was directly north of Judea, Galilee was north of that. **To directly go from Judea to Galilee, Jesus would have to go through Samaria.**

Sychar (vs. 5) was a village near Shechem, ...or possibly a variant name for Shechem. There is evidence of a ruined village, occupied in NT times, that was only ¼ mile from the well, and which had no springs of its own. This seems to best fit the NT description. The patriarch, Jacob, had purchased a piece of land from Hamor, the father of Shechem, and built shelters there. (The story of Jacob's dealings with them, and the tragedy that took place, are recorded in Genesis 33:18-34:31.) When Jacob was on his death bed, he gave an extra portion to Joseph as an inheritance (The Hebrew for the word “portion” is *shechem*, meaning literally “shoulder”, as in a “ridge” of land. -- Gen. 48:21,22). John mentions that “Jacob's well was there” (vs. 6). No specific OT reference indicates that Jacob dug a well here. As a sojourner and outsider, it would have been expedient to avoid hostility with his neighbors by having his own water source instead of watering his flocks at the wells or springs of the Shechemites (cf. Gen. 21:22-31; 26:18-22). The well is about one mile east of the site of ancient Shechem, right at the foot of Mt. Gerizim. **Jacob's well lay directly in the fork where the main road from Jerusalem splits, ...one portion to the northeast and the other continuing due north.**

Jesus was weary and thirsty from His journey. This is a good example of the Lord's humanity. He experienced the fatigue of physical exertion (cf. Heb. 2:17,18; 4:14-16). He and the disciples arrived there at "the sixth hour". That would be noon, the hot part of the day. Normally, no one would be at the well during the heat of the day. Nevertheless, "There came a woman of Samaria to draw water." *This* was a strange thing, ...a woman coming to the well *at this moment*. (Evening was the common time of the day to get water -- Genesis 24:11.) Jesus responded to the unusual circumstance, seeing in it the probable provision of His Father, in some fashion or another. "Give Me a drink" (vs. 7).

The woman responded, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" **Jesus had crossed two, possibly three, social barriers in addressing this woman: First, she was Samaritan**, and as John points out in the latter half of this verse, the Jews had no dealings with Samaritans. **Secondly, she was a woman**, and it was considered somewhat brash or ostentatious to speak to a woman who was not an acquaintance or family friend. **Finally, because she had come to the well at this time of day, she may have been a woman of questionable character** coming during "off hours" to avoid public harassment. **For Jesus the rabbi to speak to such a woman would have been to risk "defilement"** in the minds of some people. The Pharisees, for example, customarily avoided any contact with the "sinners", the common people, lest they be sullied by them. How different is Jesus' behavior toward this less-than-righteous woman of Samaria! (It could be also that she was attempting to discern if He was thinking of propositioning her as a prostitute. Her mention of His Jewish heritage and her Samaritan background may have been to say, in effect, "Hey, what's *really* going on here? Jews don't normally talk with us Samaritans. What do You *really* want?")

John adds the comment, "Jews have no dealings with Samaritans". Why? There were really two issues behind this attitude, a historical racial difference and a current religious difference.

The origin of the Samaritan people is found recorded in II Kg. 17. As a result of the sins of the northern kingdom of Israel, **Yahweh removed the Israelites, deporting them to other countries far away (721 B.C.). In their place, the Assyrians brought people from other countries to populate the region of Samaria.** At first, they did not worship Yahweh, but He sent lions among them, which killed numerous people. They asked the Assyrian king to send them Israelite priests to teach them "the custom of the god of the land", so that He would afflict them no longer. Consequently, they learned "how they should fear Yahweh", but they also continued to worship the gods of their own countries. We know, however, that there still were Jews dwelling in this northern territory (II Chron. 30:1-12; II Kg. 23:15-25; II Chron. 35:18). **Evidently, the influence of the Jews of this northern region was relatively strong, for the Samaritan peoples came to accept a faith that was fairly similar to Judaism. Originally, they were not accepted by the Jews primarily because of their mixed national backgrounds and because of the danger of religious compromise** that had historically occurred when Israel had mixed with "the people of the land" (cf. Ez. 9,10; Neh. 13:1-9).

When the Jews returned after the Babylonian exile (537 B.C.), the "people of the land" expressed a desire to assist in the reconstruction of the temple, saying, "Let us build with you, for we, like you, seek your God; and we have been sacrificing to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us up here (Ez. 4:1-5)." Whether or not they were sincere in their stated intention, **they were rebuffed by the leaders of the Jewish refugees. From that point, they attempted to oppose the building of the temple**, discouraging and frightening the workers, and using political and legal channels to halt the work. When ultimately *that* failed, **it seems that in reaction to the temple in Jerusalem the "inhabitants of the land" decided to build their own temple at Mt. Gerizim, and the Samaritan religion was formalized.** This temple was later destroyed by John Hyrcanus, the nephew of Judas Maccabeus, who became the Jewish High Priest and head of state in 135 B.C. He crushed the Samaritan opposition to the Jewish state, capturing and razing the city of Samaria (ca. 107 B.C.). **Though politically defeated, the old hostilities remained. There was considerable basis for bitterness on both sides.** Eventually, all of Palestine was conquered by the Romans in 63 B.C. They initiated the reconstruction of the city of Samaria, but later Herod the Great greatly adorned it, spending more than ten years on its reconstruction. Herod's love for this city once again brought trade, influence, and prestige to the Samaritan peoples. Upon his death, his kingdom was portioned out into four "tetrarchies", Judea, Galilee, the Decapolis, and Samaria. At the time of Jesus' ministry, Samaria was under the jurisdiction of Pontius Pilate, as was Judea. **The continued animosity of the Jews toward Samaritans was evident in the early months of the revolt against Rome, when the Jewish insurrectionists attacked and sacked the city in 66 A.D.**

In many ways the Samaritan faith was similar to Judaism. They accepted the Pentateuch, the five books written by Moses, as their Bible. Samaritans were despised, but at least they observed the dietary and cleanliness laws of the Torah, so they weren't as disgusting as gentiles, in the mind of the Jews. **The major point of disagreement with the Jews was that they taught that the central place of worship, "the place in which Yahweh your God shall choose for His name to dwell" (Deut. 12:10,11), was supposed to be Shechem, not Jerusalem.** The rejection of most of the remainder of the Old Testament seems to have been motivated by the emphasis upon the Jerusalem temple and upon the prophetic importance of Israel in bringing the salvation of God.

John 4:3-42 -- Jesus' Conversation With A Samaritan Woman

“...an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” ²⁵ The woman said to Him, ‘I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us.’ ²⁶ Jesus said to her, ‘I AM, ...the One speaking with you.’

John 4:23-26

This incident shows how **Jesus was able to recognize spiritual opportunity, and skillfully turned a small incident into a protracted ministry encounter** that stretched out for several days. **It also contains a vivid example of the persuasive power of personal testimony.** Beyond the surface story, however, Jesus had an awareness about spiritual work that is very important for us to grasp. His example shows us what to focus on in our ministry efforts.

Jesus and His disciples were traveling from Judea to Galilee. Coming to Jacob's well at Sychar, Jesus was weary from the journey. His disciples went to the village to purchase some food. After they left, **a Samaritan woman came to draw water.** This was the heat of the day, *an unusual time* to be doing this, ...*but very timely for Jesus' need...*, so He asked her for a drink. Her response was less than friendly, pointing immediately to their differences. Instead of taking offense, however, **Jesus used their common concern to draw her into a spiritual discussion.**

Her first question, “How is it that you, being a Jew, ask me for a drink, since I am a Samaritan woman?” (vs. 9) **had been designed to check Him,** to challenge His motives and to accentuate their differences. Note that **He did not answer her, but instead initiated an entirely new direction for their conversation.** “*If you knew... you would have asked...*” -- **The Lord raises her curiosity by suggesting that she is the one who is missing out on something** more valuable and desirable than what she had to offer. What was He was suggesting? Something was the “gift of God”, ...and this stranger was apparently claiming to be someone special, ... and was claiming that He could give her “living water” (vs. 10). (In common speech, “living water” was used for *moving* water, like from a spring or river.)

Jesus' comment engaged her interest. She scoffed, “*You have no means to draw water from the well, where would you get 'living water'?*” (vs. 11). He then said **He could offer her water that would not only alleviate her thirst, but could even keep her from being thirsty again.** The water He would give her would become a well-spring or fountain inside of her, bubbling up unto eternal life (vs. 13,14). (This latter comment was in stark contrast to the well by which He was sitting. Jacob's well was only a cistern, a pit where rainwater collected, and the water level was often 100 feet below the surface. A bucket was kept by the well, but in order to get water, you needed a very long rope. Typically, the “well” would only last until May, when it dried up until the autumn rains.) **That was enough for the woman. She was definitely interested.** “*Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty again, nor come all the way here to draw water*” (vs. 15). Clearly, she was not grasping the spiritual line of thought Jesus was attempting to lead her toward. She was only hearing and understanding the surface meaning of His words, totally missing the deeper implications of what He was hinting at, ...namely, that He could give her something that would *satisfy the longing of her soul!*

“*Go, call your husband, and come here*” (vs. 16). **To break through the spiritual blindness, Jesus directly addressed the most obvious area of brokenness and pain in her life,** ...her problem with relationships. Her response was honest, but she downplayed what was really going on. “*I have no husband.*” Jesus commended her for honesty but also, **through a word of knowledge (cf. I Cor. 12:8), He underlined how this was a very problematic area of her life.** She had had been with *five* other men, and the man she was now with was not her husband. **This unexplainable insight convinced her that God was with Jesus. She thought that He was a prophet** (vs. 19).

“*...you say that in Jerusalem is the place it is necessary to worship*” (vs. 20). **To divert the discussion away, she brought up the religious disagreement between Jews and Samaritans, which Jesus brushed away.** “*God is Spirit*” (vs. 24). Note the statement regarding God's nature. He is not physical, but non-material, nor limited to one place. Consequently, **it is not so important where we worship God, so much as how we worship Him.** What is necessary is that we worship Him (submit to, and offer our willingness to serve, Him) in the inner being and in truth (honesty, integrity).

“*I know that Messiah is coming... when that One comes, He will declare all things to us*” (vs. 25). – **The woman is ready to table the discussion. She appeals to the coming Messiah, thinking to put Jesus off by appealing to a final umpire that they would both respect.** She believed that the Messiah's coming was not at all in the immediate future. “*I who speak to you am He*” (vs. 26). **The Greek actually says, “I AM, ...the One speaking with you.” This is the first of seven “I am absolute's” in the gospel of John.** (Cf. 4:26; 6:20; 8:24,28,58; 13:19; 18:5-9 -- Each “I am absolute” is spoken in an unusual context, or makes an unusual claim. In each case, Jesus says “I am”. This is an intentional reference back to Exodus 3:14, where Moses asked God regarding His name. God said, “I AM who I AM. Tell them I AM has sent me.” In the Greek Septuagint translation of the OT, this phrase for “I am” was “Egō eimi”, ...*the exact same wording Jesus used* in each of these passages! Since the first person singular ending is part of the verb, the use of the pronoun, *egō*, is for emphasis, “**I am.**” *You would only use the pronoun to strongly draw attention to yourself as the speaker.* Unfortunately, most of these passages are not translated well in English. The editors have chosen to add the pronoun, “He”, to the phrase in most of these contexts, “I am He. [In the NASB, you can recognize

this, because the “He” is in italics.] Only 8:58 is translated without modification.) **This was a very strong and direct claim to be the very Messiah she had been talking about.** When the woman heard *this*, she left everything by the well and ran into the town to tell everyone she knew about Him, and to invite them to “come and see” and “could this be the Christ?”

About this time, **the disciples returned with the lunch they had purchased. When they offered some to Jesus, He declined to eat, saying, “I have food to eat that you do not recognize”** (vs. 32). This was confusing to them, so He explained, “*My food is the do the will of Him who sent Me, and to complete His work.* Don’t you say, ‘It is yet four months, and the harvest comes?’ *Look, I say to you, lift up your eyes and see that the fields are white (ripe) for harvest!*” In other words, **something was happening that He could see, but they were totally unaware of.** They were *preoccupied with their own affairs*, their own hunger and comfort. Consequently, they were *not in tune with their surroundings.* **They did not see what was taking place around them. Their field of vision was limited to themselves.** It was because that was where their priorities *truly were*, in actuality. **Jesus’ priorities were to do the Father’s will, and to fulfill His working.** *That really was* the most important thing to Him. **Consequently, He was more attuned to the opportunities and activities around Him.** He was looking for what the Father was doing, so that He could act in accordance with what the Father was causing (Jn. 5:19).

What was He talking about? **What was happening that they were unaware of?** Why would Jesus choose *not* to eat, right then? **When they looked up, they saw a crowd of people coming down the hill from the town!** Why would people be coming out to the well *now*? *What was going on?*

These villagers had come out of their houses to see what the woman who had been with Jesus at the well was so excited about. She normally kept to herself, and avoided public attention. What would be so important that *she* would go door to door in the heat of the day, saying, “Come and see, come and see!”? **Her enthusiasm and excitement had motivated them to see for themselves what she had been talking about. The change in her behavior, her excitement and her persistent invitation rallied the entire village to come and investigate what had happened.** *Why was she so animated?* She probably assumed that He would eat and then move on from their village. She wanted to roust people from their houses to meet Him *before the opportunity was gone!* The truth is that **such opportunities are often temporary. We must respond to what God is doing now. We may not get another chance.** “Behold, *now* is the acceptable time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation” (II Cor. 6:2).

“*One sows and another reaps... I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored*” (Vss. 37,38). As the people were coming down the hill, **Jesus expressed a couple of other important lessons from this incident.** The first is that though there are set periods of time required for natural crops to develop before they can be harvested (e.g., four months), **we must be ready and watchful for spiritual harvesting at all times.** Why is that? Because *others* may have done the work of sowing the seed of the gospel. In this circumstance, it was the woman who was busy sowing the seeds that were beginning to quickly bear fruit. Jesus specifically told *the disciples*, “I sent *you* to harvest what *you* have not labored for. *Others* have labored, and you have entered into *their* labor.” **Some sow; others reap. These are two very different, but necessary, functions.** Without someone to sow the seed, there would be no harvest to reap. This is very clear from Jesus’ parables of the Kingdom (Matt. 13:1-23; Mk. 4:26-29). **The word must be preached, if there is to be a harvest** (Rom. 10:14). Also, **no one will benefit if someone does not bring in the crop.** Some of us will invest in the lives of people repeatedly and faithfully, and may not see all the results of those spiritual investments. *Others* may come through those who are especially appointed by God to do the work of harvesting. *If the goal is to get people to come to Christ, then whether we happen to be the ones to directly benefit, or not, we will rejoice if they do respond to the gospel and follow Jesus.* In this case, *both* the sower and the reaper will rejoice together. **Whether we are sowers or reapers, we must do our part in order for the Kingdom of God to advance.**

“...*many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified*” (vs. 39). **The excited, personal testimony of the woman was very effective.** People could *see the change* in her life, and *accepted her testimony* regarding what had happened. They, too, came to ask themselves the same question that she had, “Could this be the Christ?” Based upon *her* testimony about His supernatural knowledge, they concluded that He, indeed, *was* the long-awaited Messiah. “...*they were asking Him to stay with them...*” **They came to Jesus, and wanted to hear and see more, so He agreed to remain for two more days.** “*Many more believed because of His word...*” They went on to tell the woman that they had come to believe through her testimony, but now they were convinced from their own experiences, ...*what they themselves* had heard Jesus say and do. This is where we want everyone we lead to Christ to grow into, personal experiences with Jesus. **We don’t want people to be dependent upon us for their knowledge of God. We want them to develop their own relationship with Jesus.**

This story gives us an important glimpse into the content of Jesus’ teaching. He was not talking about Judaism, or keeping certain customs or religious duties. **His teaching centered on who He was and why He came.** From what He *said*, and what He *did*, these Samaritans concluded that He was the Savior of all people (vs. 42b).

John 4:46-54 -- A Second Sign – Healing From A Distance

“And there was a royal official whose son was sick at Capernaum. ⁴⁷ When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and was imploring Him to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death. ⁴⁸ So Jesus said to him, ‘Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe.’ ⁴⁹ The royal official said to Him, ‘Sir, come down before my child dies.’ ⁵⁰ Jesus said to him, ‘Go; your son lives.’ The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started off. ⁵¹ And as he was now going down, *his* slaves met him, saying that his son was living. ⁵² So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better. They said therefore to him, ‘Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.’ ⁵³ So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said to him, ‘Your son lives’; and he himself believed, and his whole household. ⁵⁴ This is again a second sign that Jesus performed, when He had come out of Judea into Galilee.”

John 4:46-54

John offers a second sign for our consideration (vs. 54). We have been plainly told that Jesus had been doing *numerous* signs (2:23; 3:1; 4:41). Thus, John’s reference to this being a second sign cannot refer to this incident being the second miracle that Jesus *ever* did, ...nor even the second miracle performed on His return to Galilee. It means that of all the *many miracles* that Jesus did (20:30,31), this is a second example that John offers for our consideration.

In our previous study, Jesus had been asked to stay for a few days with the Samaritans (cf. vs. 40). After remaining with them for two days, He and His disciples once again took up their journey to Galilee (cf. vs. 43).

Almost as an aside, John recalls a statement that Jesus had spoken, “A prophet is without honor in His own fatherland” (vs. 44). The Greek indicates it was something He said at a point in time in the past. Occasions where Jesus said these words are recorded for us in Matthew 13:53-58; Mark 6:1-6; and in Luke 4:24. In these passages, the people of Jesus’ home town took offense at His words and miracles, saying, in effect, “Who does He think He is? This is just the carpenter’s son!” **They remembered Him as the boy who had grown up in their streets, ...and would not accept words of correction or challenge from Him.** Instead, they saw His bold statements as impertinent. **Offended and angry, their hearts were closed to Him and His message.** As a result, “He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands upon a few sick people and healed them. And He wondered at their unbelief” (Mk. 6:5,6).

Incidentally, we are not told directly the sequence of events, though there are some interesting parallels to note. In all four gospels, these incidents precede the feeding of the 5,000. Matthew, Mark, & Luke record this statement as occurring *after* John the Baptist had been arrested, and *shortly before* his death (Matt. 14; Mk. 6:14-29; Lk. 9:7-9). In John’s record the Baptist was still quite active even as recently as the beginning of this chapter. Matthew and Mark *begin* their record of Jesus’ ministry after John’s arrest (Matt. 4:12; Mk. 1:14). Putting all of this together, it would seem that John the Baptist either recently had been, or will very soon be, arrested by Herod. Therefore, *we are about at the starting point that the other gospels begin their records of Jesus’ ministry.* If this is accurate, then **the examples from the synoptic gospels had not as yet occurred.** Therefore, Jesus’ statement that “a prophet is without honor in his own country” must have been based upon *other* past experiences with His family, friends, and neighbors.

This is an important principle, which many of us will face in our own experience. Often the ones who are most difficult to convince are family members and friends from our childhood. People who *knew us* in our past often tend to *continue to think of us in whatever role we had at that time in our lives.* Not only do they tend to disbelieve and minimize the significance of our heart change, **they often do what Jesus’ acquaintances from His early life did, ...they become offended at us.** They may think we are phony, or that we are judging them, or that we are suddenly thinking we are better than them, ...*when those are not at all our thoughts, attitudes or motives.* This can be very confusing and frustrating for us, as we try to share what God has been doing in our lives. **When God chooses to repeat a teaching or event in the scriptures, it is usually especially important.** This principle is repeated in all four gospels, *...and it was Jesus’ own experience!* We should not be surprised, then, when it may happen to us.

It is interesting that this was apparently upon Jesus’ heart as He prepares to return to Galilee, ...even more curious that John would have mentioned this utterance here, since there really is nothing in the context which he provides which would indicate that Jesus was not being received with honor. As we put the facts together, **we find a common experience that Jesus had throughout His ministry: On the one hand, people were very excited and curious about the signs which He did, many even going out of their way to see and hear Him. On the other hand, there were also many who were offended by Him,** often because of jealousy or because His teachings and actions confronted their own shallowness or shook up their preconceived notions. **The signs, while definitely getting people’s attention, did not necessarily cure the ills or break down the prejudices of the hearts of those who witnessed them, or heard of them.**

There was no indication that the Galilean Jews were rejecting Him in John’s account, ...at least not *yet.* On the contrary, they seemed to welcome Him. **While in Jerusalem for the feast, many had heard Jesus preach, and had seen the miracles He did. Therefore, they were excited that He was returning to Galilee.**

“He came to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine” (vs. 46; Cf. 2:1-11). As we had mentioned before, the fact that both He and His mother had been at the wedding feast there probably meant that He had relatives in this town, and it was also the home town of Nathanael (21:2). *“There was a certain royal official, whose son was sick at Capernaum.”* The word for “royal official” basically means “of the king”, and could refer to an official of the king or possibly someone of royal blood, or even one of the king’s close friends. Here it is probably someone connected to Herod the tetrarch of Galilee. Chuza (Lk. 8:3) or Manaen (Acts 13:1) are two examples.

News traveled abroad quickly concerning Jesus’ whereabouts, a testimony to the impact He was already having. When the royal official *heard where He was, he went to Him*. Cana is located due north of Nazareth. It is about 18 miles from Capernaum, but it is about 3,450 feet higher in elevation. It would have been a strenuous hike to try to cover in one day. **He must have been quite desperate to leave his son at this time, knowing that he would be gone at least two days.** He obviously had a hope in Jesus’ ability to heal that went beyond mere curiosity. **When he found Jesus, the text says that “he was asking Him to come down and heal his son”** (vs. 47). The Greek verb indicates continual action. **He did not get an immediate positive response from Jesus.** He was urging or begging Him to come down and to heal his son. The Greek word structure places the emphasis on the asking or begging by using a purpose clause: *“he was imploring Him in order that He might come down and He might heal his son”*. The reason for the father’s urgency? His ailing son was “at the point of death”!

Jesus addressed His response to the man, but seemed to be lumping him together with the entire unbelieving populace (vs. 48). The statement in Greek is very strong, “If ever y’all might not see signs and wonders, not never (for emphasis) might y’all believe.” **On first blush, this seems to be a rejection of the man’s request, or at least an impatient response of resistance.** Looking a little closer, however, there are some important observations to make. **First, this statement could be simply a statement of truth.** The signs were given to direct people to faith in Messiah Jesus. **Secondly, Jesus is looking for a different kind of faith than just the belief that He could do miracles.** From His comment, it is quite clear that doing miracles was not enough. **The miracles were not ends in themselves.** It was not enough to dazzle people with a floor show of supernatural wonderments. **The issue was about believing in, trusting in, or giving allegiance to Jesus as Messiah-king sent from God.** Thirdly, isn’t it interesting that in this very countryside where He would soon be facing their rejection and unbelief, ...where He would even soon be *marveling* at their unbelief and would be unable to do miracles there (Mk. 6:5,6)..., that **He chose not to come blazing in with a dramatic show of miraculous power to awe and impress His relatives and countrymen?** Finally, it seems evident from the following context that **He is setting the royal official up for a challenge to his own faith.** By making His statement generic, Jesus points out a flaw or weakness in the faith of the multitude, but He is not making a judgment on the man *himself*. **The official is free to choose to be different than what has been the normal reaction of the crowds.**

When the father renews his plea again, restating the urgency of the situation, **Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your son lives.”** Jesus grants him *the purpose* for which he came, but *refuses his request*, which was to come with him. Of course, **the official had no visible evidence to suggest that anything had occurred at all.** Jesus’ words, “Unless you see..., you will not believe...”, take on a new meaning. If he insists that Jesus comes with him, he is admitting that he doesn’t trust or believe Him. *The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he started off.* As is often the case, **faith is evidenced by action** (cf. Hebrews 11).

When the man met his servants on the way, they reported that his son was doing better (vss. 51-53). Upon comparing times, **the official realized that his son’s improvement coincided with Jesus’ pronouncement to him. As a result, he and his household believed.** It is interesting to note that John’s recording of the man’s faith implies that this level or kind of faith was *different* than that which the official had possessed when he trusted Jesus’ word and started on his way back home. **Before, he believed Jesus could do something, then, after his interchange with Jesus, he trusted that Jesus would do something. Now, he trusts in Jesus Himself,** and evidently became a committed follower of His. **His loyalty and allegiance were committed to Jesus.** One evidence of this fact is that we even have this incident recorded for us. How would these events be known unless the man himself had later reported them? Evidently he began publicly promoting Him by recounting his testimony. To the people in Cana, or in Nazareth, this was not evident at the time. Jesus’ involvement was for all practical purposes out of their sight.

Other observations from this episode: First, we do not always have to be present, or lay hands on someone, for God to be able to heal, or cast out a demon. This is a second incident recorded in the NT where the Lord purposely healed someone *in absentia*, the other being the case where He cast out the demon from the Canaanite woman’s daughter (Matt. 15:21-28). That doesn’t mean we should disregard these other means, but let God be God and do things however *He* wants us to do them. **God is not limited by particular methods. The other lesson which both these incidents exemplify is the value of perseverance in prayer.** In both of these examples, the petitioners were confronted with apparent rejection. As they persevered, however, Jesus granted their desire. Cf. Lk. 11:1-13; 18:1-8.

John 5:1-18 -- Healing at Bethesda

“After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ² Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes. ³ In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, ⁵ ...a certain man was there, who had been thirty-eight years in his sickness. ⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, ‘Do you wish to get well?’ ⁷ The sick man answered Him, ‘Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Arise, take up your pallet, and walk.’ ⁹ And immediately the man became well, and took up his pallet and began to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day. ...for this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. ¹⁷ But He answered them, ‘My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.’ ¹⁸ For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.” John 5:1-3,5-9,16-18

Many manuscripts begin chapter 5 by saying, “After these things was *the* feast of the Jews”, referring to the **Passover**. This would, then, be the second Passover mentioned in the gospel of John (cf. 2:13). **An entire year has passed since Jesus had changed the water into wine at Cana of Galilee.** This gives us a better time frame to see how the events from Jesus’ baptism in chapter one until this point, especially concerning the arrest and execution of John the Baptist, could fit into the sketchy narrative that we have. Since this was “the feast”, *Jesus went up to Jerusalem*. This is the third time He had been in Judea since the beginning of the book (cf. 1:19,28,43; 2:13; 4:3,43-47).

John reports that there “is” a pool, called “Bethesda”, having five porticoes. (Could the present tense indicate that the temple and the pool were still intact, indicating a date before 70 A.D. for John’s writing?) The sheep gate was mentioned by Nehemiah (3:1,32; 12:39 – The rebuilding of the walls was started by the high priest at the sheep gate). In 2005, this pool was located by archaeologists. It is, as John reports, near the sheep gate of the temple, and has five porches. **The pool was just north of the temple.** It is a rectangle, divided by a wall or dike. At Jesus’ time, covered colonnades, or porches, went around the circumference, and the dividing wall also was designed to be a covered porch, making five porches in all. Obviously, the author was familiar with the site. The only mention of this pool in ancient writings is this account by the apostle John. **The name, “Bethesda”, could mean “house of mercy” or “house of shame”,** a fitting place for those who were placed there, ...the sick and deformed, those who were *hoping* for mercy.

The latter part of vs. 3, and all of vs. 4, are not in the older and best manuscripts. They seem to have been added by a later (fifth century?) scribe as an explanatory note. He apparently was reporting a theory, as to why the “stirring of the water” in vs. 7 was so significant. **Church historian Eusebius (260-340) supposed that the healing power came in conjunction with red-colored water which would occasionally flow into the pool.** Origen (185-254) and Cyril of Jerusalem (Bishop from 350-386) wrote of a spring that would flow with a ruddy colored water in an intermittent fashion. There is a spring known that does agitate the water in such a fashion, though the reddish water is no longer in evidence. (From the article, *Bethzatha*, in *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*).

Verse 5 tells us that “a certain man was there” -- The Greek verb implies ongoing or continuous action, meaning that **this man was there customarily, or had been there for some time. He had been sick for thirty-eight years.** This information could only have come from someone who had talked with the man. **Waiting by the pool was his last hope.** We are not told what his sickness was. It was not simple paralysis or being lame, for these maladies are specifically described by particular words. **The word used for this man is a generic word for sickness or weakness.** It is actually a compound of the word for strength or robustness with a negative prefix. Thus, it means “unstrength, infirmity, or weakness”. **Whatever had befallen the man, it had left him without strength in his muscles,** yet was not the same as paralysis. Observation: This man had been afflicted with this weakness longer than Jesus Himself had been alive on planet earth. An entire lifetime, certainly this man’s best years had passed by.

When Jesus saw him, He could easily recognize that he had already been a long time in that condition. He must have been a sorry sight. His muscles must have been atrophied, his clothing and possessions mere rags. **The Lord asked him, “Do you wish to get well?”** (vs. 6) The question was very direct, evidently to probe the man's desire to live life. Was he simply there to await death? Had he totally given up on life, or could hope be awakened in him?

The sick man's explanation for having not been healed was, “I have no man to put me into the pool.” Whatever friends or family he may have had, had long since abandoned him, or could not stay there by the pool to wait for the phenomenon to recur. “...when the water is stirred up, ...while I am coming, another steps down before me”. **His weakness was so severe that he could barely move at all, or at best very slowly.** From his remark, it seems that only one person would be healed at a time.

“Jesus said to him, ‘Arise, take up your pallet, and walk’” (Vs. 8). Notice that **Jesus gave the man something to do.** To the man who had been unable to get his body down from the poolside into the water, *this would be an impossible task apart from a genuine healing.* **By his obedience, the miracle would have an immediate**

outward, visible expression. The word translated as “walk” means more than just to ambulate, it means to “walk about (ongoingly)”. It was not a simple “stand up and stretch demonstration” that Jesus asked for. **He was demanding a continual, ongoing demonstration of healing.**

Immediately the man became well, and took up his pallet and began to walk about (vs. 9). The Greek for “well” literally means “whole, sound, or healthy”. This is not the usual word for “healing”. It was used of the restoration of the hand that was shriveled (Matt. 12:13), of the deformed being made whole (Matt. 15:31), or of the woman whose flow of blood was stopped (Mk. 5:34), and of the lame man in Acts 3, who was born lame, yet was able to jump up, leap and run about. **This man, in John 5, not only stopped being afflicted, but he had the strength and wholeness to get up and carry his cot.**

“Now it was the Sabbath on that day.” This is very important information for the rest of the account. **The Jews (John's way of referring to the religious leaders) were objecting to him “working” on the Sabbath.** The religious teachers had interpreted the commandment about the Sabbath (Ex. 20:8-11) in such legalistic, confining and exacting ways that it had become oppressive. Its true purpose had become lost in the minutia of religious tradition (Mk. 2:23-28; cf. Ex. 20:8-11; 31:13,14; Deut. 5:12-15). **Jesus did not break or abolish the fourth commandment, but He did “loose” the Sabbath from such legalistic restrictions** (Matt. 5:17-19). **Ultimately, in Him its purpose is fulfilled** (Heb. 3:12-4:10). **Jesus healed on the Sabbath on numerous occasions.** Controversy with the religious leaders over this is recorded in all of the gospels (e.g., Matt. 12:1-14; Lk. 13:10-17; 14:1-6).

When confronted, the healed man said, “He who made me well was the one who said to me, “Take up your pallet and walk”” (Vs. 11). “I'm simply doing what I was told. *He* healed me. I did not think I should argue. It was *His* idea. *He* was at fault.” **They asked, “Who is the man...?”** These leaders want to find out who is responsible for this outrage (Vs. 12). **But, the man who was healed did not know** (Vs. 13). Beside the fact that Jesus had faded into the crowd was the fact that this man had been out of circulation for years, being confined at the pool. He had had no other opportunity to hear of or see Jesus anywhere else.

Vs. 14 tells us that **Jesus later found him in the temple.** Whether the Lord was actually looking for him, or whether He simply came upon him in the crowd, **He had a word of warning to speak to him, “Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore.” This “sin no longer” may imply that his affliction had somehow been related to a previous sin or pattern of sin.** Possibly it had been a judgment for the man's sin. If true, it would have been clear to the man that Jesus somehow knew what his sin had been, and that possibly he was considering returning to old ways. **“...so that nothing worse may befall you.”** This would seem to be a very ominous warning, indeed, especially in light of the man's experience of the past thirty-eight years!

“The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus” (vs. 15). **This seems almost incredulous!** Either the man was angered at being confronted about his sin, or he was intimidated by the Jewish leaders. **Amazingly, within just a few minutes of his dramatic healing, he betrays the one God had used to heal him!**

“For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath (vs. 16). They could not see past their legalistic interpretation to be affected by the wonder of this miraculous healing. Instead of the miracle causing them to question their interpretation of the law, or of who Jesus is, they became even more offended and incensed at Him. The use of the plural *these things* indicates that this was not the only such incident that the religious leaders were offended by.

“He answered them...” (vs. 17). **What follows is Jesus' explanation or defense for His actions.** “My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.” The verbs are in the present tense, meaning continual or ongoing action. What Jesus is saying is that **the Father has not stopped working.** In fact, **it is the Father who did this work of healing this man. Jesus was just responding in conjunction with what He saw the Father doing** (vs. 19). He did what He did because it's what the Father wanted to do. If anyone had not kept their Sabbath regulations, it was God Himself -- that should give them cause to reconsider their theology!

“For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him...” (vs. 18). This was a serious business. This was not simply a matter of personal opinions, or debate about interpretations. **“He not only was breaking the Sabbath...”** -- The first offense worthy of death, as they saw it. **“...but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God”.** This is an important point that John does not want us to miss. **These religious leaders heard Jesus speak of His relationship to God in a way that was different than that of others.** He evidently claimed a unique Sonship that was not the same as other men. **This is the first example in this gospel of what is termed an “unequivocal claim”, ...one which was clearly understood as a claim to Divinity by those hearing Him, as evidenced by their reactions.** They understood the language and cultural context in which Jesus spoke. Their reaction indicates that **they understood Jesus' words to be blasphemous: to actually claim to being equal with God Himself. Does Jesus “backpedal” in His following explanation?** (vss. 19-47)

John 5:18-47 -- Jesus' Defense for Healing on Sabbath and Calling God His Father

“For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God. ¹⁹ Jesus therefore answered and was saying to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and greater works than these will He show Him, that you may marvel. ²¹ For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes. ²² For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ in order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.”

John 5:18-23

Some people say that Jesus never really claimed to be God. They insist that the Church has read this interpretation into Jesus' words, but that He never actually meant to be understood that way at all. John 5 is one passage that would clearly give such people some difficulty attempting to reconcile Jesus' words with their theory. This chapter contains a clear example of what I refer to as an “**unequivocal claim**”. We can see **by the reaction of the leaders how they understood Jesus' words**. Since they shared a common language, culture, and religious heritage, we could expect that the original hearers of Jesus' words would have a better understanding of what they would mean in that cultural setting. Their judgment of His statement was, “...*they were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He was ...calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God*” (vs. 18).

The remainder of the chapter is a record of Jesus' **further explanation of what He meant by what He said**. Verse 19 plainly states, “Jesus therefore answered and was saying to them”. The critics would hope to find some **retraction, modification, or clarification of His offending statement**. If He were intending to back off or soften His claim, we would expect Him to do so at *this* juncture. **Instead, the Lord only more clearly and plainly reinforces the offensive claim!** He distances Himself from normal humanity, and claims to have authority and responsibility that in the Jewish mind of that time belonged only to God. **At the same time that he firmly establishes His uniqueness as the Son of God, He also clearly reveals to us His *modus operandi*. He does not do anything on His own initiative or authority, but does what He sees the Father doing** (vss. 19,30). Even though He is equal to the Father, He makes clear that He is following the Father's initiatives and directions.

Jesus begins with a solemn statement formula, “*Truly, truly, I say to you...*” Instead of wanting to turn attention *away from* Himself, He basically calls further attention *to Himself*. “Listen up! I am going to say something important!” “...the Son can do *nothing* from Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing.” Jesus is saying that He cannot just go around doing miracles on His own. **He only is able to do what He sees the Father already doing**. He is stating that God was the initiator of this miracle, not Him. Jesus states what should have been obvious. **The healing of the man by the pool was an act of God. If God chose to do that on the Sabbath, that was His choice**. “...for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.” The previous phrase was the *negative statement of this principle*, ...namely that He *cannot do* what the Father *might not be doing*. Now He states it *positively*. **What He sees the Father doing, He engages in it to join with Him in a corresponding way. He has made it His business to act on what He sees the Father initiating**.

“**For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing**” (vs. 20). This would have been a little offensive to Jesus' listeners. The Jews did not often speak of God as “Father”. That was thought of as “too familiar”, bordering on irreverent, in their minds. **The word for “loves” is from the Greek word *phileō*, meaning they have a relationship of affection and friendship. Jesus is not describing an attitude of *distant benevolence*, but a *mutual intimacy and closeness*. (How do you suppose the religious leaders felt about *this*? Interestingly, Jesus says that God feels the *same way* about those who trust in and have affection for Jesus – Jn. 16:27.) **The word for “shows” also means to “point out, draw attention to, or cause to see”. God's activity was somehow communicated or revealed to Jesus by the Father**. (Since He also loves *us*, should we not expect the same?) Furthermore, God intends to *amaze* and *overwhelm* them by the miraculous signs He will do through Jesus. **They ain't seen *nothing*, yet!****

Verse 21 begins with “For just as...” Watch the comparisons that Jesus makes between His Father and Himself. **What would you think of someone making statements like this? Can there be any question of the magnitude of what Jesus is claiming?**

(1.) **Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, ...even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes**. The Son also “makes alive” or quickens people. The Greek does not support the idea of “giving life to”, as though He was giving a commodity to someone. Rather, He “makes alive” the people *themselves*.

(2.) **For neither does the Father judge anyone... rather He has given all judgment to the Son** (vs. 22). This is a new and very radical statement. **The OT characterized God as the Judge of all** (Gen. 18:25; Isa. 2:4; Jer. 25:31; Joel

3:2,12-14). There was some precedent that the Messiah would also judge (Cf. Isa. 11:1-4; 16:5), but **to say that God would not judge anyone, ...and beyond that to claim that He, the Son, would be the Judge of all..., was to make an incredible claim** (cf. Acts 10:42; 17:30,31; II Tim. 4:1)! The next verse begins with a purpose clause (“*in order that*”) to indicate the reason *why* God has given all judgment to Jesus:

(3.) That all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father -- The purpose: to cause people to honor, value, and esteem the Son. The *extent* of this honor is literally, “*according as*”, or “*to the degree that*”, they honor the Father. **Here, Jesus stated that there should be equality in respect and devotion toward Him and His Father. He explicitly states what the Jews had been afraid He was implying** (cf. vs. 18).

(4.) He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. Not only *should* people honor the Son; if they do *not*, they *dishonor* God the Father, because He sent Him. There is no escape, no excuses. **Jesus is altogether as important as God.**

(5.) Jesus claims a unique authority as a Teacher sent from God. We have another solemn statement formula in vs. 24: “Truly, truly, I say to you...” “The one hearing My word and believing in the One having sent Me, has eternal life...” (Note, hearing brings *information, knowledge*. That is *not* enough. There must be *faith, a choice-to-trust* in that knowledge.) Note that it is *Jesus’ word*, ...but His word *as* the One sent from God. If there was any question about who this Son that Jesus keeps referring to might be, His use of the personal pronoun, “My”, removes any doubt. Jesus is saying that **if you listen to what He has to say, accept His teachings as being from God, and trust in those teachings, then “age-type” life (life of the age to come, the kingdom of God) becomes yours.** You *have* it. It is your *current possession*. **Eternal life begins now. It is not just a future inheritance of those who persevere in faith; it is a dynamic that is introduced into our lives at the moment we believe.** “...and he does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life” -- The original language uses a strong negative contrast, “...he *does not*..., rather he/she has crossed over out from the death into the life”. **The verb is in a tense that means that the person crossed over at a point in time and this has ongoing effect, i.e., they remain “crossed over”.** A one-time decision that produces an ongoing effect. Think of the impact of these words on those listening to Him!

(6.) Jesus also claims to have a part in bringing the dead to life. Another “solemn statement formula” in verse 25 indicates a change in the subject. “Truly, truly...” -- Again, pay attention! “...the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God...” If it were not enough to claim to be the judge of mankind, Jesus now also claims to even have a part in the resurrection of the dead! The “*now is*” in vs. 25 probably refers to people who are spiritually dead coming to spiritual life through believing Jesus’ teaching. **It is clear that vss. 28,29 however, are referring to the resurrection of the dead at the end of the age** (Dan. 12:1,2). The fact that some will rise to life, and others to a resurrection of judgment, identifies this resurrection as *the second resurrection* of Revelation 20:11-15, since none of those who are participants in *the first resurrection* will experience the judgment of the second death (Rev. 20:4-6). This is the first time Jesus called Himself “the Son of God” in this gospel (cf. 10:36).

(7.) Jesus claims to have life entirely “in Himself”. In verse 26, we have another comparison with the Father: “... *just as... even so...*” Jesus can give life to others, because God granted Him to have life within Himself.

God gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is “a son of Man” (5:27). The “He gave” language here, and in the previous verse, remind us again that Jesus claimed to be responding to the Father’s initiative, not “taking things” for Himself. *the Son of Man* -- The Greek has no “the” in this phrase. Therefore it should be translated as “*a son of man*”, i.e., human. **The fact that He was a son of man means that He is able to judge with understanding and compassion, having experienced the weaknesses and pressures of human existence** (Heb. 2:17, 18; 4:14-16). Note that He is **both Son of God** (vs. 25) **and son of man**, ...the mystery of the incarnation (Jn. 1:14). Both are Messianic titles, so the listeners may have heard this as a *further claim* (cf. I Chron. 17:11-14; Psa. 2:1-12; Dan. 7:13,14).

In verse 30, we get a restatement of the principle stated in vs. 19, but here with a different focus: “I can do nothing on My own initiative (lit., ‘from Myself’). As I *hear*, I *judge*...” **Even Jesus’ method of making judgments was not discerning by outward appearances, or trusting in self-discernment, but by listening to the Father.** His judgment was sound, because He only wanted God’s will. His judgment was not distorted by self-agenda or pride.

“If I alone bear witness of Myself, My testimony is not true” (vs. 31). Jesus recognizes that **His testimony, by itself, would not be convincing.** Consequently, **He identifies five witnesses that corroborate His claims.** They are: **(1.) John the Baptist** (vss. 33-35; cf. 1:6-8,19-37; 3:22-36. It is significant that Jesus speaks of him *in the past tense* in vs. 35. Apparently, he was no longer alive.); **(2.) the works**, or miraculous signs, that Jesus did (vs. 36 - The Father “has given”, or assigned them; but Jesus executed or completed them.) **(3.) the Father** who sent Him (vss. 37,38); **(4.) the OT Scriptures** (vs. 39); and more specifically, **(5.) Moses** (vss. 45,46).

Why don’t they get it? What is the real problem? -- vss. 37,38,40-47.

John 6:1-21 -- Jesus Multiplies Food and Walks on Water

“Jesus said, ‘Have the people sit down.’ Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. ¹¹ Jesus therefore took the loaves; and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted.”

John 6:10-11

Aside from the resurrection, the multiplication of the loaves and fishes is the only miraculous sign recorded in all four gospels (cf. Mat. 14:13-21; Mk. 6:30-44; Lk. 9:10-17). If we believe that God inspired and directed the writing of the New Testament, we are driven to pay special note to that which He felt was important enough to repeat for emphasis. As is often the case, the apostle John gives us a different side of the story than the other writers. **The bread of life discourse that follows (vss. 22-71) is unique to this book, and adds insight into the significance of this miracle.** Both the multiplication of the food and the walking on water clearly exemplify a breach, or overruling, of the normal observed laws of nature, however. God’s hand was clearly seen in physical, non-subjective events that could not be explained as coincidence, or mass hysteria, or any other imagined human explanation.

The setting for the miracle: Since the events of chapter five, they had traveled again to Galilee (vss. 1-4). Jesus was very popular, due to the miraculous signs which He was doing. John also mentions another Passover, which means that **an entire year had passed since the events of the previous chapter.** Matthew’s version informs us that the following conversation took place in the evening, **...at the close of a long day (14:15). Jesus and His disciples had crossed over the sea by boat, probably from Capernaum (cf. v. 17), to the area around Bethsaida (Lk. 9:10; cf. Matt. 14:15).** This was a distance of over three miles by boat, four or five by land. This would have taken several hours, or more, to traverse. **The crowds not only had traveled that distance to be with Jesus, they had the return trip to make before they could reach their homes, too far to go in the dark.** The disciples were expecting them to need lodging as well (Lk. 9:12). The temperature could drop to fifty degrees at night in March-April, and a cool breeze from the mountains to the north would feel chilly. The mention of the Passover also may indicate that a good portion of the multitude were pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. Returning home was out of the question for them.

Jesus tests Philip with a question, “Where are we to buy bread, that these may eat?” (vss. 5,6) Why Philip? Possibly the question was directed to him because Bethsaida was his home town (Jn. 1:44). **Philip’s response was that it would require more bread than they could buy with two hundred denarii.** A denarius was a day’s wage for the common man. **This sum would represent over six months’ wages worth of bread, ...that’s a lot of bread!** But even *that* amount would not be enough for everyone to receive even a little. **This gives us an idea of the size of the crowd. In Mark’s version, Jesus told the disciples to go find out how much they had to work with.** The involvement of Andrew and the little boy is only found here in John’s account (vss. 8,9). He offered his five loaves and two fishes.

John reports there was “much grass in that place” (vs. 10). This would have made reclining on the ground much more pleasant. **The men were about five thousand in number. Matthew clarifies that this number did not include the women and children present.** The actual amount of people could easily have been triple that amount.

Details of the miracle: (vss. 11-13) Piecing together the accounts, **it appears that Jesus was breaking the bread and fish into baskets, while the disciples carried them out to distribute among the people.** Jesus told the disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments”. It was customary for Jews to gather up any leftover scraps after a meal. **Twelve baskets of fragments were more than the amount Jesus had in the beginning!** If any missed the miracle *before*, it was obvious *now*! The matter-of-fact, quiet, but unmistakable, way in which this sign was performed makes it all the more eloquent in its impact. No sirens, bells, or whistles. The reality of what had happened spoke for itself.

The conclusion of the people: When they realized what had taken place, they thought that Jesus was the Prophet that Moses had spoken of (vs. 14). He had said, “And Yahweh said to me, ‘...I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you’” (Deut. 18:15-19). The Jewish people had been watching for such a prophetic figure to appear (cf. Jn. 1:21; Acts 3:1-26). What the people had concluded was that *just as* Moses had given them bread (manna) in the wilderness, *so now* Jesus had also miraculously fed them bread. In that sense, they identified Him as being “like Moses” (Jn. 6:30-34).

Jesus perceived that they were intending to seize Him and make Him king (vs. 15). Matthew’s version inserts that, at this point, **He compelled the disciples to get into the boat and go ahead of Him (14:22).** Their perception of Jesus’ true mission was not yet clear, so they would be prone to getting caught up in the mob sentiment. **Jesus sent them off by themselves, while He dismissed the crowds.** Then, “He withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone”. He desired to spend time with the Father in prayer (Mk. 6:46).

The account of Jesus’ coming to the disciples at sea by walking on the water (vss. 16-21) is also recorded in Matt. 14:22-27 and Mk. 6:45-52. From these three accounts we find out that the disciples left at Jesus’ insistence

in the evening. They encountered rough weather, and were having difficulty in making progress. The wind often came from the west, and could also come rushing down the valley from the north, bringing very strong winds and storms. The transition from afternoon to evening was a common time for such storms. **Jesus came near them, walking on the water, at about the fourth watch of the night** (3 - 6 a.m.) and *intended* to pass by them (Mk. 6:48). (Note that He did not *know* what would happen! He *thought* it would turn out differently than it did.) **Upon seeing Him, the disciples became afraid, thinking He was a ghost. Jesus calmed them saying, “I am; do not be afraid.”** Many translations render Jesus’ response as “It is I”, but the Greek words that Jesus used were *Egō eimi*, ...literally, “I am”. If their minds had gone back to Job 9:8, they would have been amazed at this prophetic backdrop for claiming to be the “I am”. **Job described God as “the One stretching out the heavens alone, and walking upon the waves of the sea.”** The Greek Septuagint translation was even more clear, “...walking *as upon ground* upon the sea.”

This is the second time in the gospel of John where John records one of these “I am” statements where there is no predicate. This phenomenon has been referred to as an **“I am” absolute**. There are seven of these scattered throughout the book and they are part of John’s proof to convince us that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (20:30,31). They are always in contexts where there is an incredible claim that Jesus makes, or where there is a miraculous display of power. (Such as *here!*) **The allusion referred to by this phrase is the Name of God from Exodus 3:14**, thus these statements are claims to Deity. **Here, after they let Him into the boat, immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going -- Another display of power, as if walking on the water was not enough!** Matthew records Peter’s abortive walk on the water also. The value of this incident is to be reminded again that **the sign itself should not be enough to convince us that Jesus is God**. The power that sustained Peter on the water, until he became afraid, was the *same power* that sustained Jesus. It was a work which the Father *gave* Him to do (5:36), and as such would be just as possible to anyone else that God would direct to undertake. The same is true of the multiplication of food. Similar things had happened in the OT at the hands of other men (I Kg. 17:8-16; II Kg. 4:1-7,42-44). In this instance, however, Peter was the only one of the twelve who was willing to take the necessary risk.

There are two errant interpretations of miracles:

The first is to think that Jesus did miracles because He was God, ...and we are not..., so we should not expect miracles to take place anymore. Of course, this ignores the language used about Jesus’ dependence upon the Father (e.g., Acts 2:22), and the teachings about the nature of the incarnation (Phil. 2:6,7; Heb. 2:17), as well as the glaring contradiction of the miracles performed by a variety of people throughout Biblical and Church history.

The second error is to think that any miraculous sign is necessarily a sign of God’s presence or His blessing. The Scriptures are quite clear that there are *false* signs and wonders that are *not* of God, but look very much like the genuine miracles which God has done (Matt. 24:24; II Thess. 2:7-12). In these cases, the Bible instructs us that we are to examine the other “fruit” of the lives of those who perform signs, i.e., their personal character, theology, and the influence they have on others (Deut. 13:1-5; Matt. 7:15-20).

Why do you suppose that this particular account of the multiplication of loaves and fishes would be included in all four gospels? What is the significance of it? I think that there are two major lessons to be learned from this story.

First, God is able to meet all of our needs. That is not to say that we may not experience hardship or hunger. The apostles all experienced the reality of both of these difficulties (I Cor. 4:9-13). The message is, however, that God *is* able to provide. Jesus made this even more explicit when, shortly after feeding another group of 4,000, He was confronted by Pharisees and Sadducees demanding a sign from heaven. After refusing their demands, He said to His disciples in their boat, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” They misunderstood His statement as referring to the fact that they had taken no bread along. Jesus reminded them how much was left over after the two episodes of multiplying food. Then He asked, “How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?” Bread was not the issue. They had seen how God could provide. He had spoken figuratively about their *teaching*, ...not at all about literal bread (Matt. 15:32-16:12). **Coming to grips with the ability of God to provide was essential for these men to leave their businesses to follow Jesus** (cf. Lk. 5:1-11), as well as for us who are seeking to follow Christ. Can we trust that God can, and will, provide for *us*, if we choose to give more to Him?

The second lesson comes from Jn. 6:27, “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for that which endures to eternal life.” Our natural point of view is to focus on our everyday needs as our first and primary concern. The multiplication of the loaves and fish demonstrated that **there is a spiritual reality which is deeper and more significant than these temporal concerns, alone**. In Matthew 6, Jesus teaches His disciples not to be anxious about their daily needs. Those who do not know God eagerly seek these necessities, but **for us the priority should be to seek God’s kingdom, ...His reign and rule in our lives**. If we do that, He will take care of our needs (vss. 31-33). There is more to our existence than to grow up, make a living, and raise a family. We are here to serve God. **Instead of temporal concerns, we should invest in things that will endure, ...fruit that will remain** (John 15:16).

John 6:22-45 -- Coming to the Bread of Life

“Jesus answered them and said, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves, and were filled.’²⁷ Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man shall give to you, for on Him the Father, even God, has set His seal.’²⁸ They said therefore to Him, ‘What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?’²⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.’³⁰ They said therefore to Him, ‘What then do You do for a sign, that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform?’³¹ Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, “‘He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.’”³² Jesus therefore said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven.’³³ For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.’”

John 6:26-33

The morning after the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, the crowd was looking for Jesus, but He was nowhere to be found. Crossing the Sea of Galilee, they came to Capernaum, searching for Him. They had been so impressed with the miracle, ...and **they were expecting Jesus to *continue* to do such things for them.** Instead of complying with their wishes, the Lord confronted them with their small-minded selfishness (vs. 26). They could perceive no farther than their full bellies. **They missed the real point of the experience, they missed the fact that a sign is meant to point the way to something else.** Not only did He feed them with bread by God’s hand in the wilderness, **He Himself was the Bread from God having come down from heaven to give life to the world.** The remainder of chapter six is the teaching of Jesus which is meant to provoke His listeners (and us) to probe a little deeper into Who He is as the Bread of Life, and what that can mean for us.

“Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life” (vs. 27) -- This sets the stage. The word translated as “food” means “eating”, or a “meal”, not just the food at the meal. **Jesus is saying that there is a deeper level of eating than what they have experienced, ...one that produces eternal life.** “...which the Son of Man shall give to you...” -- Jesus is referring to Himself by His favorite messianic title. **Note the claim: He is the One who gives eternal life.** “...for on Him the Father, *the* God, has set His seal...” -- Jesus’ credentials for His claim come from God.

“What shall we *do*, that *we* may work the works of God? (vs. 28) -- What do we have to do to get this meal?

“This is the work of God, in order that you believe in Him whom He has sent (vs. 29) -- Just believe into/unto Me. Note that **God works in order that you may believe.** Without the working of God, it will *not* happen; *BUT* the text comes short of saying that God will absolutely *cause* belief. **Faith becomes a possibility because of God’s working. God opens the mind and gives revelation, but the person must still choose to trust.** This lesson comes out several times in this passage.

“**What do you do for a sign, that we may see, and believe You?**” (vss. 30,31) -- **Had they not seen enough?** “Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness” -- They *do* want more bread! “...as it is written, ‘He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.’” -- This is a good example of manipulating Scripture toward your own ends. **Jesus had called them out already. All they wanted was a free bread supply.** Note the distinction between seeing and believing. Seeing and believing are *not* the same. They *had* seen, and yet did *not* believe.

“...not Moses..., but My Father...” (vs. 32) -- **Jesus corrects them. God gave them manna, not Moses.** It is important to get the focus in the right place. Jesus continues to call God His own Father (cf. 5:18). “...who gives you the true bread out of heaven” -- Notice the present tense. **Jesus begins to shift from literal bread to a spiritual lesson.**

“...the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world” (vs. 33) -- **Two characteristics of this heavenly bread: (1.) its source or origin is heaven, not earth; and, (2.) it gives life to the world.**

“Lord, *evermore* give us this bread” (vs. 34) -- He definitely has their interest. This is really what they have wanted all along, for Jesus to *always provide* for them, so that they would not have to work.

“**I am the bread of life**” (vs. 35) -- **This is the first of seven “I am” sayings** that John records as part of his attempt to help us come to know who Jesus is (20:30,31). These “**I am**’s” differ from the “**I am**” absolutes that we saw in 4:26 and 6:20, in that **these claims all have predicates**, i.e., their structure is “I am ...(something)”. These predicates reveal more of how Jesus saw Himself functioning in relation to us. **They are definitely claims that separate Him from the rest of humanity, often with a clear messianic or Divine precedent in the OT.** “...he who comes to Me shall not hunger; and he who believes in Me shall not thirst...” -- I think that **the nuances of the Greek are important here.** First, each clause begins with a participial phrase, which emphasizes the ongoing action of the people. It would be “the (one) coming”, or, “the (one) believing”. The Lord is *not* making a statement about people who come once, or who believe at one given point of time. **He is referring to people continually coming**, or what those *in the process of coming* will find. **Second, the last part of each clause is very emphatic in the Greek**, “not *never* might he hunger (at a point in time)” and, “not *never* will he thirst *ever*”. (Greek “stacks up” negatives to communicate

emphasis. They do not cancel each other out, as the “double negative” phenomenon we have in English.) **Finally, what is clear in both languages is that the focal point of these incredible promises is *Jesus Himself*.**

“But...” -- The Greek is a conjunction of contrast, “*rather*”. “...*you have seen Me, and yet do not believe...*” (vs. 36). Jesus is saying that **they are *not* like the ones who come and receive the benefits He has spoken of**. Why? They *have observed the signs* which He has done (vs. 26), but they have *not entrusted or committed themselves to Him*. **They are looking for a Christ-king figure, but *only for their own ends*. They are not interested in doing as He says; they want Him to do as they say!** They “believe” in Jesus for what they think they can get from Him. Their knowledge of Him does not lead them to truly trust in Him. *Seeing is not always believing*. **Believing is NOT simply recognizing or acknowledging truth; it is responding to truth with yieldedness and obedience!**

“All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me” (vs. 37) -- The Greek word for “all” is in the neuter form, meaning that Jesus is referring to “things”, more than people alone. The verb, “gives”, is present tense, meaning “He does give” or “He gives (and *is* giving)”. The word translated as “shall come” is not the usual word for to come or go. This word means more “to be present”. **The phrase would be better translated, “Every (thing) which the Father does give to Me shall be present with Me”**. Some Calvinistic interpreters attempt to find the doctrine of irresistible grace or election here, but such an interpretation cannot really be supported by this verse. The point of the verse is restated in vs. 39, “This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all (*everything*) that He has given to Me, I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day”. “...and the one who comes to Me I certainly will not cast out.” -- **Jesus shifts from neuter to masculine. Now He is talking about *people* who come to Him**. The Greek is emphatic, “...not never will I cast out (him) outside”. Jesus will *not*, for any reason, *reject anyone* who genuinely comes to Him. **These verses are not about *how* one comes to Jesus** (some would imply that they teach that the Father *assigns* certain people to Jesus), **rather they teach the *guarantee* that those who *are* Christ’s will always be His**.

Jesus states once again the idea that He has come to do *the Father’s will, not His own* (vs. 38; cf. 5:30). His work is dependent upon the Father’s desire. Note what the will of God is here in this context -- vs. 39,40. “...that everyone who *beholds* the Son and *believes* in Him, may have eternal life”. **This is the Father’s will, to give eternal (age-type) life to those trusting in, or committed to, His Son**. Note that **it is not enough to *perceive* the truth about the Son, ...one must also believe, or trust in, Him**. **Knowledge is not sufficient to save**. The verbs in the first part of the sentence are participles (‘-ing’ words), “...the (one) *beholding* the Son and *believing*...”. This emphasizes an ongoing process. The verb in the last part describes *a possibility* that *could* take place at a point of time, if the person truly has faith, “...he might have/possess eternal life”. “...and I Myself will raise Him up on the last day.” **Eternal life, though it begins *now* as a present possession, must include a physical resurrection. The Bible knows nothing of a “spiritual resurrection”**. Though somehow it is changed, it is the *body* that is raised (I Cor. 15). Jesus claims that He will personally raise individuals from the dead at the end of the world.

The Jews react against Jesus’ words. They cannot put together how He could have come down out from heaven, for they know His parents (vss. 41,42). In Jesus’ response, He says, “**No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws Him...**” (vss. 44). The first part is clear, “No one is able to come to Me”. The next phrase is interesting, “if ever the Father... might not draw/attract/drag him (at a point in time)”. Though the word translated as “draws” (Gk., *helkō*) *can* mean *to violently drag* (e.g., Acts 16:19; Jas. 2:6), it tends more often to refer to the more subtle action of *drawing up* a net in order to close it, or *bring it near* (Jn. 21:6,11 - Note that a different word [*surō*] is used in vs. 8 for the action of *dragging* the net behind the boat.). **This word also had a figurative meaning of *attracting or drawing by inward power***. It was used in the Septuagint translation of the OT in Song of Solomon 1:4 and in Jer. 31:3. It also occurs in Jn. 12:32 and 18:10. **The reason to go into all this detail is to point out how easily one’s preconceived ideas regarding God’s role in “drawing” people to faith could color how we understand this word**. It is *not* a good word to use to establish a case theologically, because it can be employed in such varying ways. We must rely *more heavily on the context*, than simply the dictionary, to help us understand what this word means *here*. The minimum that we can confidently say is that ***unless there is some activity on God’s part to somehow enlighten us or predispose us to faith, humankind would remain powerless to come to Jesus***. **This probably implies at least unawareness of spiritual truth on our parts, and possibly as much as a moral predisposition against truth**. The former would require *education*, the latter a spiritual *transformation*. Does the context help us?

“It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be *taught* of God.’” (Vs. 45) -- Sounds like spiritual *education*. Cf. Isa. 54:13. **Everyone who has *heard and learned* from the Father comes to Me**. -- Parallels vs. 40. *Hearing* is a part of the education process, *learning* is a response of our wills to what we are made aware of. Jesus says *both* are necessary. This is consistent with the OT view: **God instructs; we choose**. He doesn’t tinker with our wills, though He *does* appeal to us and attempt to educate us. He leaves the choice to us. Cf. Deut. 31:12; Job 36:5-12; Ezk. 18, 33.

John 6:46-71 -- Partaking of the Bread of Life

“I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. ⁵⁰ This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh.’ ⁵² The Jews therefore began to argue with one another, saying, ‘How can this man give us His flesh to eat?’ ⁵³ Jesus therefore said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. ⁵⁴ He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. ⁵⁵ For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. ⁵⁶ He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.’” John 6:48-56

We saw last time that a number of those whom Jesus had fed with the multiplied loaves and fishes had come across the Sea of Galilee looking for Him. They wanted the Lord to continue to supply their need for food. He was not willing to be used by them in this way. Instead, **Jesus challenged them not to labor for the food that perishes, but to seek for eating that which would give eternal life.** They wanted Him to feed them, like Moses gave the Israelites manna in the wilderness. **He began to turn this episode into a spiritual lesson. He pointed out how those who ate the manna all died. Instead, He could give them something that would give them eternal life,** life of the Kingdom to come. **Hearing this, they said, “Lord, evermore give us this bread”** (vs. 34).

Jesus responded by saying that He was the Bread of Life. The one coming to Him will not hunger, and the one believing in Him will never thirst (vs. 35). He then says, “I have come down out of heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. ... The will of My Father is that everyone who *beholds* the Son, and *believes* in Him, may have eternal life” (vss. 38,40). This was troubling to the crowd, and many grumbled, because they knew His parents, and said, “How does He now say, ‘I have come down out of heaven?’”

Jesus repeated His claim, “**I am the living bread that came down out of heaven.** If anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever.” Then, He adds a new twist, “**The bread which I will give for the life of the world is my flesh**” (6:50,51).

Of course, this caused a stir, “How can this man give us His flesh to eat?” Jesus responded by saying that unless they ate of His flesh and drank of His blood, they have no life in themselves. The original language presents this as if they had to at least eat of Him at a point in time, or drink from His blood at a point in time. **If they don’t eat or drink at least once, they are without life** (vss. 50-53). **Then, however, Jesus switches it up. He changes verbs and verb tenses.** “The one continually-gnawing-on or nibbling-on My flesh and continually-drinking My blood has eternal life, and I will raise Him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. **The one continually-gnawing on My flesh and continually-drinking My blood ABIDES in Me, and I in Him** (vss. 54-56).”

In the next verse, Jesus makes an important comparison. He said, “Just as the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on Me will live *because of Me.*” In other words, “**as the Father is My source of life, I will be the source of life to you**”. This is an important insight into the dynamic that Jesus operated by, i.e., He lived by virtue of the Father’s leading, empowering, and sustaining. He promises a similar life dynamic for those who consistently partake of Him. Then He made one last comparison between Himself and the manna God had provided through Moses, “This One is the Bread that came down out from heaven. It is *not* like the manna your fathers ate – and they died. **The one continually-gnawing-on this Bread will live forever.**” The enormity of His statements tends to escape us because we are familiar with the idea of Him being God in the flesh. **For these listeners, the words he uttered must have seemed incredible! Imagine if anyone you knew were to make statements like these. How would you even begin to process them?** John then points out that He said these things in the synagogue at Capernaum, ...located right next door to Peter’s house, where Jesus was probably staying while in town.

It is not surprising, then, to read in the next few verses that the reaction of even Jesus’ followers was, “This is a harsh saying! Who is able to hear it?” The word for “harsh” also means “rough, difficult, hard, unpleasant, hard-to-take”, even “intolerable”. **To the Jews, it was downright offensive!** They had been taught over and over throughout their lives that they were *never* to eat meat that had blood in it. They were *never* to eat any blood (Lev. 7:26). **They went to extreme lengths to drain out all the blood from any animal they slaughtered.** They would wash it, soak it and rinse it several times, so there would be no blood remaining in the flesh when it was being cooked. **It was one of the distinctives that separated them as “holy”. The gentiles took no such precautions, and thus their food, dishes and utensils were defiled with animal blood.** Of course, cannibalism is horrific and abominable in nearly every culture. **Yet, here, this notable Teacher, One who was doing incredible signs and wonders, ...who had just the evening before fed them with miraculously multiplied loaves and fishes..., is now telling them that they needed to eat His flesh and drink His blood.** He used words that were *descriptive* and *repugnant*, ... **GNAWING** on His flesh, **DRINKING** His blood! **Ughhh! It was too much!**

Jesus recognized their reaction. You might expect Him to somehow soften His words, ...smooth things over a bit. **Does He? NO! He gets in their face!** He says, “Does *this* offend you?” The word for “offend” is *skandalizō*, meaning “to catch in a trap, to cause someone to stumble, to offend, to cause to shock or anger someone.” Basically, He is saying, “Does *this* statement upset your apple cart? Does *this* rattle your cage? Does *this* rock your world? Does *this* shake-up your theology? *What if you were to see the Son of Man going up where He was before?*” Wow! He is pushing them to the limits of their understanding and their sense of propriety, and *then* shoving them right over the edge!

Then, after *that* shock wave passed, in order to reel in any who still may be listening and to clarify what He was teaching, He says, “**The Spirit is the One making alive; the flesh does not benefit at all; the personal-directives that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life**” (vs. 63). **This statement is the key to understanding this entire passage!** Jesus was *not* talking about eating His literal flesh, or drinking His literal blood. He clearly states, “The flesh does not benefit at all.” **It is not about eating flesh or drinking blood!** These are just elements of the word-picture He was trying to paint to strongly communicate the main lesson: Life does *not* come from manna, or loaves and fishes. **True life, ...eternal life..., comes only from Jesus. We are lifeless without Him.** As Paul would later teach, “We were dead in our trespasses and sins...” (Eph. 2:1). God can make us alive in and with Jesus. “...and us *being dead* in our trespasses, He *made-us-alive-together-with* the Christ (by grace you are having-been-saved-ones)” (Eph. 2:5).

What is Jesus saying here? What is He actually teaching? “It is the Spirit who makes-alive!” -- How do we get the life of the Spirit? – “The words I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.” What does this mean? Does it mean that we are to study and/or memorize Jesus’ teachings to get life? **Does life come from Jesus’ words somehow? NO! THAT is NOT what He is saying!** That would be like casting spells, incantations, invocations... all superstitious practices of pagan religions. No. Jesus is *not* saying that life comes from His *words*. What is not clear to us in English is that **Jesus is using a different Greek word** than what is used in John 1. There, the vocabulary for “word” was “*logos*”, meaning “word, message, thought”. Here in John 6, Jesus uses a different vocabulary word. **Here, the Greek word, “*rhēma*” is used. This refers to a “personal word or directive”. This is more than just information, or doctrine. It is direction toward a course of action, ...a decision or a pattern of living.** In this case, **the personal message is to “come to Jesus for life”**. He is to be the source of our lives. **We need more than a one-time influx of His life. We need to draw our vitality, strength and power from Him repeatedly, ...ongoingly.** We need to abide in Him. Jesus’ teaching here is remarkably similar to the teaching from John 15, about the Vine and the Branches. Life comes from Him. **This is life from the “Kingdom-age to come”, available to us now.** How do we receive this “Kingdom-life”? Jesus solemnly declared, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the one believing (trusting) *has eternal life*”(vs. 47).

It may not appear obvious to the casual reader, but there is a connection between Jesus’ claim to be “the Bread of Life”, “the Bread that came down out of heaven”, and the Christmas story (6:35,38,41,48,50,51,58). **There is a well-known prophecy in Micah 5 that speaks of the birth of the Messiah, “...as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel.** His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity. ³ Therefore, He will give them up until the time when she who is in labor has borne a child. Then the remainder of His brethren will return to the sons of Israel. ⁴ And He will arise and shepherd His flock in the strength of Yahweh, in the majesty of the name of Yahweh His God. And they will remain, because at that time He will be great to the ends of the earth. ⁵ And this One will be our peace” (vss. 2-5). **What is the connection? The Hebrew name of the village where Jesus was born was “Bethlehem” (Matt. 2:1), as in Micah’s prophecy.** What is not so apparent to us English speakers is the *meaning* of that name. “Bethlehem” means “house of bread” in the original Hebrew. “Ephrathah” was the name of the *region* in which the village was located. “Ephrathah” means fruitfulness in Hebrew. **So, the Bread out from heaven literally came down to earth in the “house of bread”, in the region of “fruitfulness”**. It was said that the “goings forth” of the Messiah were “from long ago, from the days of eternity”. Jesus claimed to formerly have been with God, and to have come from God (6:46,62). He claimed to be the Good Shepherd, the One who would lay down His life for His sheep (10:14,15). He came to reconcile us back to God, making peace through the blood of His cross (Col. 1:19,20). He makes available *to us* a peace that goes much deeper than any peace the world offers (Jn. 14:27), a peace that overcomes the deceptions and difficulties of this world (16:33). **If we trust in Him, take Him as our Ruler, and the source of our lives, we too can have life within ourselves. As we come to Him for life, moment by moment, we learn to abide in Him, and His life within us will motivate growth, change and make our lives fruitful for Him** (15:5).

John 7:1-39 -- Jesus' Teaching at the Feast of Booths

“Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was at hand...³⁷ Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.’³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.’”³⁹ But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” John 7:2,37-39

The first verse of chapter seven sets the stage for the next significant event in John's record. This verse actually grammatically should be attached to the end of chapter 6. That chapter ended with Jesus in Capernaum, in the springtime. This verse indicates that He was traversing Galilee, because it was not safe for Him to spend time traveling throughout Judea. The Jewish leaders had it in for Him, and He was aware of this. Now, however, it was the fall of the year, and “the Feast of Booths was at hand” (vs. 2). This was one of three great annual feasts instituted at Mt. Sinai. They were to be observed as reminders of the spiritual history of the Jews, a celebration and renewal of their relationship with God. Every adult male Jew was to attend these feasts in Jerusalem (Ex. 23:14-17; Lev. 23:1-44). Despite the danger, Jesus was not about to disregard His obligation to observe the Feast of Booths. This particular feast, also called Ingathering, occurred in the seventh month of the Jewish lunar calendar, reckoned beginning from Passover in March-April. This would fall in October after the fall harvest, five days after Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. In the midst of the great abundance produced by this end-of-the-year gathering in of their crops, Jewish families were to construct “booths”, shelters made of sticks and leafy branches, and to live in them for this week long celebration. In this way, they were to remember that their ancestors had lived in such temporary shelters when God brought them out of the land of Egypt. They were to remember God's provision for them in the wilderness, and that He has provided them with all the blessings that they now enjoy. It is interesting that the Feast of Booths is the only OT feast that is mentioned as being observed in the Messianic kingdom to come (Zech. 14:9-21). In that time, all nations, not just Israel, will be required to come up to Jerusalem to observe this yearly celebration.

Jesus' brothers enter into the story line (vss. 3-5). These were other sons of Mary by Joseph. There is no record that Joseph had any older children before marrying Mary, nor is there any other explanation offered in Scripture than to think that they are natural half-brothers of Jesus. There was a specific word for “cousin” (e.g., Col. 4:10) and for “kinsman” or “relative” (Lk. 1:36,58) available, if John and the other gospel writers been intending to write about other close blood relatives of Jesus. The NT descriptions consistently represent them as brothers of Jesus (cf. Matt. 12:46,47; 13:55; Mk. 6:3; Jn. 2:12; Acts 1:14; I Cor. 9:5; 15:7; Gal. 1:19). They are even recorded by name: Jacob (James), Joseph, Simon and Judas. Jesus also had sisters. We do not know their names, nor even how many sisters He had (Matt. 13:55,56). They were advising Him to “Go into Judea, in order that Your disciples may behold Your works.” They were challenging His approach. They thought Jesus should be more aggressive and open, if He wanted public attention. They did not understand Him, nor recognize who He really was. John comments, “For not even His brothers were believing in Him.” This brings up the question, “What must it have been like to be the younger brother of Jesus?” They could never measure up to His performance. Apparently, He was not terribly close to any of them, at least none of them respected and admired Him enough to become a follower. Mark 3:20-35 suggests that they may have thought He had gone mad.

Jesus responded, “My time is not yet at hand” (vs. 6). It is not the appropriate time for Me to go up to Jerusalem, or to more aggressively put Myself forward. “...your time is always opportune.” This seems to mean, “You can always do what you want, without considering an issue of timing.” They were looking at things only from a natural, human point of view. Jesus, on the other hand, was waiting for direction from His Father. “The world cannot hate you; but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil” (vs. 7). Jesus was quite aware that it was His confrontation of the world's motivations and activities that were the basis of its hate toward Him. “Go up to the feast yourselves...” (vs. 8). Jesus tells them to go ahead. “I do not go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come.” Jesus is not deceiving them. He is not saying that He does not intend to come at all, but that He is not going just yet. The Greek allows for it to mean, “I am not going up” in the present tense. It is not an absolute statement, as indicated by the qualifying statement, “...because My time has not yet fully come.” Jesus, being a devout Jew, never missed attending the feasts. His brothers would have known that He was not intending to stay behind in Galilee. They were ready to go right then, and He was not, so they went ahead without Him. See, there can even be family differences and conflicts even when you are doing nothing wrong! Jesus remained true to Himself, and waited on God's leading, even under family pressure. Then, after they had gone, “then He Himself also went up... in secret” (vs. 10). For the moment, this was the prudent way of dealing with the dangers.

As expected, the Jewish leaders were watching for Him, and people were talking about Him. Note the controversy that surrounded Him, and the intimidating influence of the religious leaders on the people (vss. 11-13).

Jesus remained in obscurity until the fourth day, “the midst of the feast”. *Then, “He went up into the temple and began to teach”* (vs. 14). He unabashedly went to the most public place of all and openly made His presence known. The religious leaders could obviously see the skill and accuracy with which He taught. They marveled, “How has this man become learned, *having never been educated?*” (vs. 15). Jesus responded to their questioning among themselves, “My teaching is *not Mine, but His who sent Me*”. On the one hand, He humbly ascribes the glory to God, ...not to *His efforts or innate ability...*, on the other hand, He reasserts His claim that He has been uniquely sent by God. Here again Jesus gives us a glimpse into His *modus operandi*. Just as *the works* He had done were not from Himself, so also *the teachings* He delivered originated from His Father (cf. Jn. 5:19,20,30). In fact, Jesus delineates two kind of teachers in the next couple of verses: (1.) One who speaks “from himself”, whose motivation is to seek “his own glory”; and (2.) One whose teaching is “from God”, whose motive is to seek “the glory of God who sent him”. This one is a true, genuine, dependable messenger of God, one not affected by unrighteous or unjust motives. The difference will be discernable to those who genuinely wish to do God’s will.

Jesus begins to confront their reasons for wanting Him dead. Vs 19 completes the thought of 17,18. The religious leaders were evidently not “willing to do His will”, because they did not carry out the law of Moses. It should not be surprising that *they* would not recognize Jesus’ teaching! In a direct, public confrontation, Jesus challenges them, “Why do you seek to kill Me?” The multitudes, comprised mostly of pilgrims from out of town, dismiss this as crazy talk, “You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?” Jesus goes right on, as if they had said nothing. He is addressing those who knew very well what He was talking about. “I did one deed, and you all marvel...” What was Jesus referring to? (Vs. 21-23; cf. 5:1-18). The argument in vss. 22, 23 points out the ridiculous shortsightedness and inconsistency of their anger at Him for healing the feeble man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath on a previous visit to Jerusalem. If they break the Sabbath to circumcise a baby, could it possibly be wrong for Him to make a man entirely well on the Sabbath? “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment,” Jesus declared. The word translated as “appearance” means “a sight, face”. Therefore Jesus is saying not to make judgments based on first-glance impressions, or “on the face of things”. Snap decisions and surface evaluations are often wrong. Judging with righteous judgment requires a little more thought and investigation. This is an obvious allusion to a famous Messianic prophecy, “He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make a decision by what His ears hear; but with righteousness He will judge...” (Isa. 11:3,4; cf. Jn. 5:30). Jesus’ argument has not only the strength of *good sense*, but a *solid basis in OT precedent*.

Most of the rest of the chapter recounts the confusion and varying opinions about Jesus (vss. 25-53).

In the midst of all this confusion and debate about who He was, Jesus once again stirred them up by making a very bold proclamation (vss. 37-39). “...on the last day, the great day of the feast...” -- The feast lasted eight days, beginning and ending with a solemn assembly (Lev. 23:34; Neh. 8:18). This last day would have been when the pilgrims gathered in the temple to observe the final ceremonies and receive the benediction before returning to their homes. *It would have been one of the most crowded times of the year.* “Jesus stood and cried out...” -- He would have had to shout to be heard, but He would have been heard by many more people than at virtually any other time.

Each morning during the feast a golden pitcher of water was drawn from the pool of Siloam, and brought in procession through the streets of Jerusalem to the temple. This was to remember the provision of water from the rock that God had given Israel in the desert. Each day the priest marched once around the altar, and poured out the pitcher of water on the right side of the altar, while a pitcher of wine was poured out on the left. While he was pouring out this libation, the people sang Isaiah 12:1-3, which says that God has turned away His anger, and He is their salvation. Verse 3 says, “Therefore you will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation.” On this eighth day, they were commemorating the entrance into the promised land, where there were an abundance of springs. Historically, there was no more need for water from the rock, or the daily manna that they ate, so it ceased to be provided. Therefore, in their celebration of that event, when the priest came back with the water, he marched around the altar seven times, instead of once. This time, the people sang Psalm 118:25, a plea, “O Yahweh, do save (‘Yahweh hashua’), we beseech You; O Yahweh, send us prosperity!” At this point, Jesus (‘Yah shua’) stood and made His proclamation, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. The one believing in Me, as the scripture said, ‘out of his belly will flow rivers of living water’”. Clearly He is directing their attention to Himself. Jesus does not quote any particular verse verbatim, so we cannot be certain what passage He may have had in mind. Jer. 2:13, Isa. 44:3 and 58:11 are good possibilities. From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water -- An abundant, limitless source of water from within. Water represented life, for wherever it went, the ground would quickly become lush and fruitful. (Cf. Psa. 1:1-6; Jer. 17:5-8). John explains for us the meaning of Jesus’ utterance. “But this He spoke of the Spirit; ...for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” (Cf. Jn. 14:16-26; 15:26; 16:7-15; Acts 2:33,37-39.)

John 7:40-52; 8:12-20 -- The Light of the World

“Others were saying, ‘This is the Christ.’ Still others were saying, ‘Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He?’ ⁴² Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?’ ⁴³ So there arose a division in the multitude because of Him. ⁴⁴ And some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him. ⁴⁵ The officers therefore came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, ‘Why did you not bring Him?’ ⁴⁶ The officers answered, ‘Never did a man speak the way this man speaks.’ ⁴⁷ The Pharisees therefore answered them, ‘You have not also been led astray, have you?’ ⁴⁸ No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he? ⁴⁹ But this multitude which does not know the Law is accursed. ⁵⁰ Nicodemus said to them (he who came to Him before, being one of them), ⁵¹ ‘Our Law does not judge a man, unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?’ ⁵² They answered and said to him, ‘You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee.’” John 7:41-52

“But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. ² The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them.”

Isaiah 9:1-2

“Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life.’”

John 8:12

It was the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkōt), a time to remember the wilderness wandering. Every Jewish family would build a shelter made out of sticks and leaves to commemorate their 40 year journey through the desert. They would sleep in this shelter for the eight days of the feast. They also commemorated God’s provision of water in the wilderness. Each day a priest would go down to the pool of Siloam and fill a golden pitcher with water from the pool of Siloam, and bring it up triumphal procession through the city streets to the temple. He would march around the altar once, and then pour it out as an offering to God. On the last day of the feast, he marched around the altar seven times, symbolizing the entry of Israel into the land of promise, where there was an abundance of streams and rivers. It was at *this* moment, when this rite had been observed, that Jesus stepped forth and proclaimed, “*If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink, and out of his belly will flow rivers of living water*”, ...a reference, John says, of the Spirit (7:37-39).

This was a very *bold proclamation*, and people understood the significance of His declaration. Note the amount of turmoil and discussion generated by this action in the chapter. Some thought He was the Prophet, the one Moses had prophesied about (Deut. 18:15). Some thought He was the Christ (King of the Jews – Lk. 23:2). Others disputed this, saying that the Christ would not come from Galilee, but from Bethlehem. Some intended to seize Him, but when it came down to it, they couldn’t bring themselves to do it. “Never has anyone spoken in this way,” the temple guards declared. At this, the Pharisees reproached them, saying, “No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him. But this multitude which does not know the Law is accursed.” They were proud, arrogant and despised the people they were supposed to be caring for. Nicodemus, who *was* a Pharisee and a ruler (and who had come to talk with Jesus before – 3:1), tried to be a voice of reason, but they rejected and mocked him. “You aren’t also from Galilee are you? *Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee.*” There was a prejudice against Galilean Jews at play here.

Galilee had somewhat of a checkered past to these religious purists. It *still* colored their perception. Galilee had been part of the northern kingdom of Israel that had split off from following the house of David (932 B.C.). Galilee was an area that included regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, to the west of the Sea of Galilee. That region had fallen to Assyria (721 BC), and had been populated by a mixture of peoples. It became a land of gloom and spiritual darkness. After the exile to Babylon, when Jews came back to the land, they never displaced the gentiles in Galilee, as they did in the area of Judea. So, Galilean Jews were looked down on by Judean Jews, as being somewhat sullied by living in proximity to their gentile neighbors. Even their speech was affected by the ethnic mixture of the populace in their region, and was quite noticeable to Judean Jews (Matt. 26:72). Certainly, the mockery of the Pharisees toward Nicodemus was a reflection of their attitude of superiority over Galilean Jews. If they had followed *their own counsel* to Nicodemus, however, they might have been surprised to find that there is indeed a very strong prophetic passage that refers to Galilee. If they would have searched, they would have seen that there are six references to Galilee in their OT Scriptures, and one of them does refer to a future time.

In Isaiah 9:1-7, the prophet says that God would take away the gloom from this region, and, in fact, “make it glorious, by the way of the sea, ...Galilee of the gentiles. The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. Those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them...” “...You will increase their gladness. They will be glad in Your presence as with the gladness of harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil...” The region of Zebulun and Naphtali includes precisely the region from Nazareth, northward and eastward down the Sea of

Galilee, the area of Jesus' Galilean ministry. The "way of the sea" is the name for the highway that traverses the westward side of the Sea of Galilee. **What other phenomenon had increased their gladness than the healing ministry of Jesus in that very area?** Crowds of people were flocking to hear Him and be healed of their diseases. Certainly, those who were healed experienced joy that could only be comparable to the joy of those at harvest, or those dividing spoil. **But the Pharisees and rulers of the Jews were not interested in honestly searching the Scriptures to see what God had said.** They *assumed* that they already knew enough, and were unwilling to search any further.

At this feast, the Jews also remembered how God led them by a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. Whenever the pillar of fire at night, or the pillar of cloud by day, lifted up, the Israelites packed up and followed it until it again came to a standstill, and they would set up camp again (Ex. 13:21,22; 40:36-38). They did this for the entire 40 years they were in the wilderness. **According to the Mishnah, this experience was commemorated by four gigantic candelabra** (75 feet tall), each with four bowls holding ten gallons of oil each. Worn priestly garments were used for the wicks of these lamps. These were erected in the court of the women. At the end of each day, at a special "Illumination ceremony", these were set ablaze filling the entire temple area with light. Remember, these were the days before electric lights. There was *nothing* like this in everyday life! This was something to behold! The size of these flames and the brightness of these lamps were incomparable and awesome! These 16 torches could be seen for miles away, and **they reminded the people of the glory of the Lord, which had lit the way for the people of Israel in the wilderness.**

Part of the difficulty many of us have in understanding this passage is that the entire section from 7:53-8:11 is not part of the original gospel of John. It does not appear in some of the oldest manuscripts, and it is a "floating passage" in that it appears in different places. When you remove that from the context here, then it is much easier to see how chapters 7 and 8 are one context.

The treasury was located in the court of the women, and John tells us that Jesus spoke out from there (v. 20). So **Jesus was standing right there**, where these huge lamps were being lit, and the crowds nearby, **when He declared to these leaders**, who had been debating His identity, **"I am the Light of the world, he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life"**.

The context of this says everything! You can't miss what Jesus was claiming here. **Jesus is clearly putting Himself in the place of God!** This even *magnified* when you realize that He is the same guy who cried out *that very same morning*, at the water ceremony, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to *Me* and drink, and out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

The Pharisees quickly come back, throwing Jesus' words from a previous encounter (5:31) back in His face, **"You are bearing witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true."**

Jesus deftly responds that **the truth of His testimony concerning Himself is reliable because He knows where He came from and where He is going, but they do not.** They are judging according to external appearances. The Lord said, "I am not judging anyone. But even if I did, my judgment is true; because I am not alone, but I and the One who sent Me. **I bear witness of Myself, and My Father bears witness of Me.**"

When **they asked Him, "Where is Your Father?"** Jesus said, "You don't know Me, nor My Father; **if you had recognized Me, you would have recognized My Father also.**"

This little section ends with "...and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come." This is John's way of preparing us for what will eventually happen. His hour *will* come.

What a powerful, multi-faceted incident!

Jesus, the "great light" of Galilee had come to Jerusalem to proclaim that He is really the light of the entire world! For those who choose to follow Him, He will lead them like the pillar of fire, and they will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. **Just as there is no life without water, so there is no life without light. Jesus is both. He is the Source of Living Water and He is the Light that brings Life.**

We see also, once again, the closed mindedness of those who think they know who Jesus is, but will not take the time to find out all the facts. They are just going on partial information, and making decisions based on only a surface skimming of the information available to them. As a result, **they are blind to the truth that is staring them in the face, simply because they have stopped looking.**

Furthermore, **this is a powerful call to discipleship!** It is the one *following Him* who will not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life. **It is not just about "acknowledging who Jesus is". It requires movement. Dependence. Obedience.** It really comes back to Jesus' *modus operandi* from 5:19. Jesus *did* what He *saw* the Father doing. That sounds very much like the pillar of fire. If the Light of the world leads us somewhere, like the pillar of fire, then we must be willing to pick up and follow Him *wherever* and *however* He leads, and *stay there* as long as He indicates. **If we choose to follow, we will avoid being lost in the darkness, and we will have life's Light.**

John 8:21-59 -- Origins

“He was saying to them, ‘You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world.’²⁴ I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins; for **unless you believe that I AM, you shall die in your sins.**’²⁵ And so they were saying to Him, ‘Who are You?’ Jesus said to them, ‘What have I been saying to you from the beginning?’²⁶ I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world.’...²⁸ Jesus therefore said, ‘**When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I AM, and I do nothing from Myself, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.**’²⁹ And the One sending Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.’³⁰ As He spoke these things, *many were believing in Him.*³¹ Jesus therefore was saying to *those Jews who had believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;*³² and you shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free.’⁵⁸ ...Jesus said to them, ‘**Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM.**’⁵⁹ Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple.” John 8:23-26, 28-32,58,59

The context still is at the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, during the Feast of Booths. This was the final day, ...the culmination of their worship and remembrance of Yahweh’s abiding presence leading them in the wilderness. Jesus, the miracle-working preacher from Galilee had already inserted Himself into their ceremonies *twice*:

(1.) When they were commemorating Yahweh’s provision for their thirst in the wilderness, He boldly cried out, “**If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink, and out of his belly would flow rivers of living water!**” God had provided water from the rock (Ex. 17:6), or by purifying poisonous waters (Ex. 15:23-25), or by directing them to uncover a spring (Num. 21:16-18). As marvelous as these provisions were, they were temporary, and localized. The congregation moved on from each occurrence. They would get thirsty again, and there was need for another miracle. **Jesus was saying that those who came to Him could have an unending spring rising up within them. The Source to satisfy their soul-thirst would be abiding within their own innermost being.**

(2.) When they were commemorating the pillar of fire and cloud that would lead the congregation through the wilderness, Jesus again boldly proclaimed, “**I am the Light of the world, the one following Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of Life.**” *Instead of following the pillar of fire, Jesus instructed the multitude to follow Him.* (While they were debating that no prophet would arise out of Galilee, He Himself stood in their temple, under the 75 foot tall torches which commemorated God’s light, and proclaimed that HE is the Light. If they had the perception to grasp it, they would have seen that HE was Galilee’s great Light, spoken of by Isaiah 700 years earlier [9:1-6].)

We have been reading about how the Jews had intended to kill Him, and even sent soldiers to arrest Him, but it was not yet His time. By the time we get down to 8:20, we are thinking, “Whew! He narrowly escaped disaster! Surely, He will retreat into the crowd, ...or head out of town.” Oh, no! He is just getting warmed up!!

Jesus introduces a new line of thought: He is going to be *leaving*. They will search for Him, and die in their sin. “**Where I am going, you will not be able to come.**” They do not know what to make of this statement. Some think He may even intend to kill Himself! Jesus comes at them again, “**I am from above; you are from below.** ...I am *not* of this world. **I said therefore that you shall die in your sins; for unless you believe that I AM, you will die in your sins**” (vs. 23,24). What does that sound like *to you*? It sounds like He is *claiming to be from heaven, ...and He even seems to use the Divine name in reference to Himself* (“I AM” – Ex. 3:14). This is the third time in this gospel where Jesus speaks this way, using the unusual construction of “I AM” to identify Himself (4:26; 6:20). As we shall see, this is *very significant and intentional* in this chapter. **Somehow, believing in Him can keep them from “dying in their sins”.** Incidentally, **this phrase was used of the fate of those who died in the wilderness wandering.** They “died in their sins” (Num. 27:3). **Remember that they were at the Feast of Booths, a commemoration of the wilderness wandering!** Jesus seems to be drawing a parallel between those who died in the wilderness, and those who went into the promised land. **Just as that entire generation resisted God’s leading in the time of Moses, and were doomed to perish in the wilderness, Jesus is saying that they, too, were resisting the leading and provision of God in their day. If they reject Him, they will “die in their sin”. They will not be able to follow Him.**

This generates a question from His listeners: “**Who are You?**” (vs. 25) Jesus’ response is that **He has been telling them right along, ...since the beginning.** “I hear from My Father who sent Me, and speak what *He* says.” Then He boldly says, “**When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will experientially-know that I AM, and I do nothing from Myself** (Jesus’ *m. o.* – 5:19; 7:16,17), but I speak these things as the Father taught Me” (vs. 28). Moreover, “*He is with Me; and has not left Me alone, because I always do what pleases Him*” (vs. 29). Wow! Powerful words! **At the least, Jesus is claiming to be the mouthpiece of God.** At the most, He seems to be speaking as though *HE were the great I AM.* This is *second* time He seems to be using the Divine name in reference to Himself in this dialogue.

At last, it seems that Jesus is having an impact! “As He spoke these things, *many came to believe in Him*” (vs. 30). If this were a modern-day evangelistic effort, at *this point*, we would be jumping up and down, celebrating at the response of people. “*Many came to believe!*” **For us, ‘faith’ is the ‘finish line’. It is *our* measure of success.**

NOT FOR JESUS! For Him, 'faith' is the 'starting line'! So, immediately He begins telling "those Jews who had believed in Him" *what it means* to be a "disciple". See, Jesus is not looking for "decisions"; He is looking for "disciples"! Again, remember the context of the commemoration of the wilderness wandering. *What good was it if you believed that God was in the pillar of fire, if you did not follow when the pillar moved?* What good was it to get "marching orders" to go take the land, if you *did* nothing? *Doing nothing was seen as rebellion against the counsel of God!* Those who resisted the orders to go ahead were among those who "died in their sins".

What does Jesus say about true or genuine disciples? He only has the opportunity to delineate two aspects of what it means to follow Him, before He has rebellion on His hands:

(1.) The operative principle of discipleship is "if you live in, *continue in, abide in, remain in My word* (or My message), then truly you are My disciples... A genuine disciple is an *active-follower*, one who lives-out the teachings, instructions, message and example of Jesus.

(2.) One key objective of the discipleship process is "...and you will experientially-know the truth, and the truth will set you free" from bondage to sin. That is *not* the sum-total of what being a disciple of Jesus is, however. Looking at the context, again, those who did not believe in Jesus would "die in their sins", but those who were willing to genuinely trust in Jesus would *not* be content to wander through life in sin. They will learn, and live in, Jesus' word, to find liberty from sin in order to *live in the Spirit*. **You have a choice, to die in your sins, or actively follow Jesus.**

The very mention of "slavery" puffed up the pride of some of those listening. "We are children of Abraham; we have never been enslaved to anyone." This initiated a downward spiral in the conversation, as Jesus began to expose the origin of their evil intent toward Him. Jesus said, "I know you are Abraham's offspring; yet you seek to kill Me, *because My word has no place in you.*" Note how quickly Jesus recognized their true hearts! That prideful rejoinder was *not* the response of a teachable disciple! **Pride and discipleship do not go together. Jesus correctly identified the problem: They had no place in their hearts for Jesus' word.** Intellectual recognition of who Jesus was did not address the issue of their heart. **They were unwilling to submit to Jesus as their Master.**

Jesus begins to contrast *His Father with their father*. They claim to be children of Abraham, but **they do not do the deeds of Abraham. His word has no room in their lives.** They seek to kill Him, a man who only told them the truth. Jesus repeats, "*You are doing the deeds of your father*" (vss. 40,41). Exasperated, and wanting to avoid the suggestion that their spiritual origin was illegitimate, they blurt out, "*...we have one Father, God.*" Ironically, *this* was the very claim Jesus Himself had made that had set them against Him, months before (5:18). Now, *they* are making the same statement about *themselves*! Jesus quickly points out, "**If God were your Father, you would love Me,** because I came *from* God and am here. I did not even come from Myself, rather That One *sent* Me" (vs. 42). Why do you not understand what I am saying? Because **you are not able to hear My word. Then Jesus states it plainly, "You are of your father, the devil, and you want to do his desires. He was a murderer from the beginning. ...He is a liar and the father of lies."** By contrast, Jesus speaks the truth, and they can point out no sin in His life (vs. 46). He challenges them, "**If I speak truth, why do you not believe?** He who is out-from God hears the personal-directives of God. **This is why you don't listen, because you are not out from God**" (vs. 47).

At this, they resort to *name calling*, saying He is a Samaritan and has a demon. **He simply dismisses their charge, and points out that He honors His Father, and they dishonor Him.** (What does *that* tell you?) Jesus says He is not seeking to glorify Himself; God will see to that, and will judge those who oppose Him, as well. **Then, He makes one of those solemn statements, "Truly, truly, I say to you..."** Listen up! Important Message Coming! "**...if ever anyone might keep My word, not never will he behold death unto the age.**" *That* is a radical statement! Jesus' opponents are quick to jump on this as a sign that He is, indeed, demonized. They say, "You aren't greater than Abraham, who died? The prophets died also. **Whom do you make yourself out to be?**" (vs. 53).

Jesus gets even more direct: "**My Father, whom you identify as your God, is the One glorifying Me. You have not experientially-known Him, but I do know Him.** If I said that I didn't, I would be a liar like you; but I *do* know Him, and keep His word. Your father Abraham rejoiced in order that he might see My day, and he saw it and was glad." His opponents said, "You aren't even 50 years old, and you have seen Abraham?" **Another solemn statement from Jesus: "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM."** This is the third time in this chapter that Jesus used the Divine name in reference to Himself. **That they understood what He was doing is evident by their reaction: "They picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple".**

Note, those same "believers" from verse 30 are, within a short time, ready to *kill* Him. "**Decisions**" or "**disciples**"? When it said that "many came to believe in Him", clearly their perception of and commitment to Him were not sufficient. They had not yielded to Him as Lord and Master. Jesus is looking for willing followers. True faith should lead to obedient following. **You haven't really "decided for Jesus", if you did not decide to be a disciple.**

John 9:1-7 -- Sin and Suffering: Can We Know Why?

“And as He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. ² And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?’ ³ Jesus answered, ‘Neither this man sinned, nor his parents; but in order that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴ We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no one is able to work. ⁵ While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.’ ⁶ When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and smeared the clay upon his eyes, ⁷ and said to him, ‘Go, wash in the pool of Siloam’ (which is translated, ‘Sent’). And so he went away and washed, and came back seeing.” John 9:1-7

Of the many miraculous signs that Jesus performed, the healing of blindness is related more often in the NT than the cure of any other single affliction (Matt. 9:27; 15:30; 20:30; 21:14; Mk. 8:22; 10:46; Lk. 7:21; 18:35). Undoubtedly, part of the reason for this is because OT prophecies describe healing of the blind as an identifying characteristic of the Messiah, and the reign of God (Isa. 29:18; 35:5; 42:7; cf. Ps. 146:8). Jesus Himself had alluded to these prophecies in reference to His ministry on more than one occasion, once even to help the doubting John the Baptist regain His confidence in Him (Lk. 4:14-21; 7:18-23). In light of his expressed purpose (20:30,31), we would certainly expect John to record at least one incident of the healing of a blind person as evidence for his demonstration that Jesus is indeed the Anointed One of God, Christ the King. This account is by far *the most dramatic incident* recorded, because of the particular nature of this man’s blindness.

“He saw a man blind from birth...” (vs. 1). How would they know that a man was blind from birth just by a sideways glance as they walked by? It was obvious to the disciples as well as to Jesus. What must have been the condition of this man for them to come to this conclusion so readily? He must have had physical features that immediately were recognizable as birth defects, ones which made sight an impossibility.

“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents that he should be born blind?” Behind this statement is the assumption that there is a one-to-one correspondence, or at least a direct causal relationship, between sin and suffering. If someone experiences suffering, sickness, hardship or sorrow, he must have been guilty of sin, ...or he is the direct victim of someone else’s sin. The sorrows of life are direct consequences of the actions of those who experience them, ...especially if the malady is a long-term, debilitating affliction. Some Jewish teachers, in support of such dogma, had concocted the idea that if the parents had not been responsible for the sin which resulted in such horrific consequences, then possibly the child itself had been to blame. Either the child had sinned in the womb, or possibly the souls of children pre-exist conception and the child had sinned while in that state.

One consequence of such a teaching is that it assigns blame to the victim, and closes off the compassion of the heart. Often these poor people were treated with abuse, assuming that they deserved punishment for some past sin. These are examples of the same kind of reasoning exemplified by Job’s “comforters”. God condemned their intellectual machinations as untrue, and He said that His wrath was “burning” against them (Job 42:7). The false image of the character of God portrayed by such theology, and the damage and oppression it causes, is reprehensible in God’s sight. Jesus confronted this kind of thinking in Lk. 13:1-5. Here, tragedy had befallen two groups of people. One group were victims of a natural disaster, the others were unjustly murdered by Pilate’s soldiers. Jesus rebuked the idea that these poor unfortunates had come to such a violent end because they had been greater sinners than others.

“It was neither...; but in order that the works of God might be displayed in him” (vs. 3). Jesus rules out both suggestions in this case. We must be careful how we interpret this statement, however. The Lord is not saying that this man had been given a birth defect by God, and had spent his entire existence from birth to adulthood as a freakish reject and beggar, just so that God could “strut His stuff”, ...with this guy serving as an audio-visual prop for the demonstration of His abilities. There is no doubt that there are some difficult issues involved here. In Ex. 4:11, for example, God says, “Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes him dumb or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?” How are we to understand this? (Actually, the language of both the Hebrew and Greek versions of this verse says that God made them, the individuals; it does not say He made them to become dumb, deaf, seeing or blind. They are His creation, and therefore valuable. Cf. Prov. 22:2. We have misconstrued the entire point of the statement!) Certainly God is not in favor of sickness, disease, or deformity. There will be no such malady in the heavenly kingdom. The healing of such things was a big part of Jesus’ ministry, His revelation of what the Kingdom of God was like.

It’s not possible to solve the problem of evil in just a few sentences. There are some helpful insights to be gained from Lamentations 3:19-38, however. Jeremiah plainly declares:

(1.) The absolute and unending faithfulness and love of God (vss. 22,23). God’s character is completely trustworthy! While this is true, Jeremiah also clearly states that,

(2.) **God is in ultimate control** (vss. 37,38). *Nothing*, good or evil, can occur without His express word. From this last passage, we might conclude that God must be a monster. However, there remains a third glimpse of God that modifies this conclusion, and helps us to reconcile the apparent contradiction. These verses declare that,

(3.) **The evils of life are not the expression of God's heart, i.e., He does not approve of such things** (vss. 33-36). In other words, there are things that happen which are *not* His desire.

When we put these three concepts together we come to a conclusion very similar to God's actions in Job 1 & 2. There, **God allowed evil to occur within certain boundaries, though He Himself did not cause it.** In a sense, **He takes responsibility for the evil, in that He permitted it.** In another sense, however, **it is important to see that He is not evil** (Psa. 5:4), and therefore **He is not the immediate cause of the defect, sickness, or injustice.** Furthermore, Romans 8:28 says that **He is able to weave all things, even painful and destructive experiences, together in our lives so that they can work out for good.** He doesn't *cause* them, but He is able to *redeem* them

Some have attempted to place God on trial because of the inequities or tragedies of life. Others have concluded that, because such evils and suffering exist, He must either not be truly good, or He must not be powerful enough to combat evil. The truth is, as Job discovered (Job 38-42), *we just don't know enough of the big picture to be able to draw any accurate conclusions.* **If we accept the testimony of the Scriptures, we know that God is good and He is all-powerful** (Jer. 32:17; 33:11). We also know that the world God created was without sin, but that sin entered this world through the independent choices of humankind, at the urging of an evil spiritual being masquerading as a beautiful creature. Death came through sin (Rom. 5:12). **God did not cause sin. In fact, He clearly warned Adam against it.**

We also know that the world as we know it is only temporary. **God has promised to create a new world free of the corruption and tragedy of evil.** *Then, He will redress the wrongdoers, and will comfort and bless those who are His.*

The boldest and clearest demonstration of His love and commitment are revealed in the coming of Jesus to be our liberator. He gave Himself to the abuse and injustice of evil men so that, by His suffering and death, He might set us all free. **Whatever the problem of sin and evil may actually be, God did not treat it lightly.** He does not look down upon our tragedies with disregard or with dispassionate, uncaring eyes from some insulated, distant heavenly ivory tower. **He experiences grief and pain over our suffering. He notices and remembers our pain** (Psa. 56:8). *He came to be fully identified as the victim in order to secure our release, and even now He is with us in our pain* (Matt. 25:40,45; 28:20; e.g., Acts 9:4,5). The philosopher's "either/or" scenario is a false dilemma, not taking into account all the facts.

Jesus' response to the disciples' question concerning the origin of the blind man's affliction was not an attempt to explain all of this. His dismissal of their question with a "neither" indicates that **tragedy does sometimes occur to the innocent.** There is no "blame" to be assigned to any one person as the cause of this man's experience. Nevertheless, **Jesus moves beyond this line of inquiry to point their attention in another direction, to see this situation as an opportunity to "display the works of God".** Marcus Dodds, in The Expositor's Greek Testament, observes that "Evil furthers the work of God in the world. It is in conquering and abolishing evil that He is manifested. The question for us is *not* where suffering comes from, but *what we are to do about it?*" His point is well taken. What benefit could it possibly serve to know where fault might lay? **In this case, the tragic circumstances would serve as the backdrop for revealing the power of God.**

"We must work the works of Him who sent me..." (vs. 4).

Whose works? Jesus again is careful to say that the miracles are not done in His own power. They are the works of the Father (lit., "the [One] sending Me [at a point in time]").

Who are to do these works? Literally, "it is necessary *us* (including the disciples) to work the works". In other words, **this was not a dynamic that belonged only to Jesus!** This is borne out by the other gospel accounts. **The disciples also went about doing miracles.**

When can we do these works? "...as long as it is day..." **While the opportunity exists.** "...night is coming when no man can work." Note the imagery of darkness and light, and how this leads into the statement in the next verse. Cf. 1:4,5,9,10.

"While I am in the world..." (vs. 5) -- The Greek literally says, **"Whenever/while I might be in the world..."** **The wording seems to more strongly emphasize the uncertainty or limitedness of His continued presence.** His absence, then, would be the time of darkness referred to in the previous verse. **"I am the light of the world"** -- This was the second time He had made this statement about Himself (cf. 8:12). **Here, it seems to mean, "As long as I am here, my purpose is to reveal the light of God's character in the midst of a world of darkness."**

"When He had said this... He made clay..."(vs. 6). The healing of the blind man was to serve both as a *physical illustration of this spiritual principle He had just been speaking of*, as well as a *demonstration of the power of God working through Jesus.* **It was a powerful sign that revealed God's compassionate heart for this poor beggar, while also pointing again to the inescapable conclusion that God was with Jesus.**

John 9:1-41 -- Bringing Light to the Blind

“The man answered and said to them, ‘Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him. ³² Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, He could do nothing.’ ³⁴ They answered him, ‘You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?’ So they put him out. ³⁵ Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him, He said, ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’ ³⁶ He answered, ‘Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?’ ³⁷ Jesus said to him, ‘You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you.’ ³⁸ And he said, ‘Lord, I believe.’ And he worshiped Him.” John 9:30-38

One of the interesting facts to observe is that the account of **the healing of the man who was born blind only comprises the first seven verses, about 20%, of the chapter. The remaining 80% is about what happens when the man returns home.** The healing accounts in this fourth gospel tend to include this added dimension of what happened to these people once they left. Some experiences were *not* positive. In Chapter 5, for example, we saw how the man who had been healed by the pool was confronted by the Jewish leaders for carrying his mattress on the Sabbath (5:10-13). He got in trouble as a direct result of his obeying the One who had healed him. Later on, in chapter twelve, the religious leaders determine to kill Lazarus because his resurrection had drawn so many away to follow Jesus (12:9-11). John seems to be interested in pointing out that healing doesn’t mean that we will no longer have difficulties. **Oftentimes, being the recipient of God’s healing power may put you in the center of unwanted controversy.** This account of the blind man is the most in-depth treatment of this phenomenon in the gospels. The *consistency* and *practical wisdom* of the healed man, throughout his interrogation, and the *unimpeachable fact* that the miracle had occurred, add to the power of the sign’s impact.

“And as He passed by”. The Greek indicates that *this incident happened right on the heels of Jesus’ departure from the temple in 8:59.* There is no indication of a break in thought or in location. Thus, **this healing of the blind man, and his report of the event to the Pharisees, served as another powerful sign to substantiate the claims of Jesus** from chapter eight. “He saw a man blind from birth.” The setting for the demonstration of power. “We must work the works of Him who sent Me... **While I am in the world, I am the light of the world**” (vss. 4,5) -- **This latter phrase harks back to 8:12,** the beginning of His dialogue with the Pharisees that continued through the end of the chapter. This was undoubtedly on Jesus’ mind as he saw the blind man. **This particular “work of Him who sent Me” was meant to demonstrate in action what had been communicated in words.**

“He made clay... and applied the clay to his eyes” (vss. 6). The Greek for “applied” is *epechrisen*, meaning “He anointed *upon*, rubbed *on*, or smeared *on*”, from the same root word as “Christ”. The Anointed One made an anointing mixture from his own spittle, and then anointed the eyes of the blind man with this clay-like mud. **Jesus not uncommonly used means such as this in healing, probably both to set apart the afflicted area and to symbolize the working of the Holy Spirit** (e.g., Mk. 7:31-37; 8:22-26). *It certainly would have helped the recipient focus their attention on what was taking place in their body, and help them to expect and notice the working of God.* There was also an element of Jesus’ identification with that person, and with what He saw that the Father was doing. **His actions dramatically indicate what He was expecting, as well.**

“Go, wash in the pool of Siloam,” Jesus told him (vs. 7). The temple is on the northern end of Jerusalem, and the pool of Siloam was on the extreme south-eastern corner of the city. In order to go to the pool of Siloam, *this blind man would have to travel through the city almost a half mile!* Obviously, **this was a test of the man’s faith.** Cf. II Kg. 5:1-14. “He went away and washed, and came back seeing.” By this time, Jesus would have been long gone.

In vss. 8-12, we have the former blind man’s testimony to his neighbors. From vss. 8 & 9, we can see that **he did not look exactly the same as he had,** for there was some difficulty in being convinced that it truly *was* him. Remember, he had been *born* blind, something easily recognizable at a glance. **He must have had an obvious facial disfigurement from birth that was now gone!** There was enough similarity that some quickly recognized him. Others thought he just resembled the man. We also discover from their dialogue that he had been sitting by the temple in order to beg alms from people passing by. (Now he will *work* for his living.) “He kept saying, ‘I *am* the one.’” **It took repeated, emphatic insistence by the man to convince them of his identity. Having established that, they ask him what happened.** He related the story. “The man who is called Jesus...” Unlike the lame man by the pool, he knew who had healed Him (Cf. 5:13). Being by the temple gate, he would have been more aware of what people talked about, and may have even heard Jesus teach in the temple courts, whereas the man lying by the pool had been more isolated. “Where is He?” *In response to the neighbors’ inquiry, he had to say that he did not know where Jesus had gone.*

They brought him to the Pharisees, the respected religious leaders who ought to know about this event (vs. 13). **“Now it was a Sabbath...”** (vss. 14-17). Jesus had also healed the lame man on a Sabbath. **This had violated the Pharisees’ sense of propriety.** The claims that He had made at that time (5:16ff.) had stirred up a resentment of Him which had not been forgotten (7:1,19-24). Jesus had only aggravated this outrage by His encounter with them earlier in the day (8:12-59). Thus, upon hearing the testimony of the healed man, **it should not surprise us that some concluded, “This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.”** For others, however, the impact of the sign was too much to lightly dismiss, **“How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?”** Thus, they began to be divided. **“What do you say..., since He opened your eyes?” Asking the former beggar for his opinion, he replied reasonably in light of the evidence: “He is a prophet.”**

The attempt of some to discredit the man’s story proved futile (vss. 18-23). His parents corroborated that he was, indeed, their son and that he had been born blind. They refrained, however, from making any statement about the healing. Not only had they *not been present*, but *their son was an adult* and able to answer for himself. **“...they were afraid of the Jews...”** **These religious leaders were not people who could be trusted with one’s honest thoughts and observations.** It was already known that they had taken a stand against Jesus. This older couple was not willing to risk saying something that could be misconstrued or twisted by them as being pro-Jesus. ***It is a sad state of affairs when those who publicly represent God are seen as so repressive and vindictive as to be unsafe people.*** **“...put out of the synagogue...”** **This was a disciplinary measure designed to control aberrant behavior and teachings.** It could either be for a temporary period, or for an indefinitely long time. For those permanently excommunicated, it meant being shunned as a leper. **No one would have anything to do with you, nor even acknowledge your presence.** It would mean the loss of any business or family relationships, as well. **In the case of an old couple, the loss of these connections could result even in death.**

In their second interview with the man who was healed (vss. 24-34), **the Pharisees encourage him to give the praise to God, not to Jesus, because “we know this man is a sinner”.** **“Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.”** The man bravely refrains from endorsing their conclusion, appealing to the unquestionable miracle that was worked in his life. As they pressed him again for details, undoubtedly trying to find some way to discredit Jesus, the one who had been healed began to lose patience with them. **“You do not want to become his disciples, too, do you?”** The Greek construction shows that he was expecting a negative response. Clearly, he was being sarcastic with them. **“They reviled him...”** In return, **they resort to name-calling.** **“We are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses; but as for this man, we do not know where He is from.”** They were claiming to be faithful to Moses (cf. 5:46,47), and were saying that they were rejecting Jesus because it was not evident that God was with Him. **“Well, here is an amazing thing...”** The Greek is a little *more* pointed: **“In this is the amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, ...and He opened my eyes.”** In other words, **the incredible thing was that they could be so dense as to miss the enormity of what had happened, and what it had to mean!** His logic is formidable: **“We know that God does not hear sinners...”** -- The Greek is not saying that God is not aware of what sinners pray. Obviously, that could not be true if God is omniscient. Also, many times people come to God *because* they see prayer answered. God shows His interest in them, and they respond. Literally, the man said, **“We have observed/know [that] of sinners God does not give heed”.** The meaning is that God has given no indication that He regularly complies with the wishes of people who are not devoted to Him. **“...but if anyone is God-fearing, and does His will, He hears him.”** Literally, **“...if ever anyone might be God-devoted/revering/worshiping (not the word for ‘fear’) and he might be doing the will/desire of Him, of this [one] He hears/gives heed to.”** The point is that **people who are in touch with God tend to have a more effective prayer life, than those who are evil** (Jas. 5:16b). **“Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not of God, He could do nothing.”**

The Pharisees’ response? Anger, name-calling and expulsion. They were unwilling to be taught anything by anyone who was an uneducated beggar.

Having heard what had happened, Jesus sought out the man (vss. 35-41). Finding him to be of a *willing heart*, He revealed to him His identity, i.e., that He is the Son of Man, the Messiah (Dan. 7:13). **The man expressed his faith verbally, and by prostrating himself before Jesus in obeisance.**

“For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind.” A statement with double meaning, illustrated by this entire episode. **“The Pharisees ...said..., ‘We are not blind, too, are we?’ Jesus answered, ‘If you were blind you would not have sin; but since you say, “We see”, your sin remains.’”** Their spiritual pride had not only effectively darkened their minds to obvious spiritual truth, but their *professed expertise* actually made them *more accountable*. Their *attitude* made them *unteachable*, and they were responsible for that.

John 10:1-21 -- True and False Shepherds

"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep."

John 10:11

The context carries over from chapter 9. **Jesus is with the man whom He had healed of his blindness, and who had been unjustly excommunicated by the Pharisees. He is addressing His remarks to *them*.**

"Truly, truly, I say to you...". Once again we see Jesus introduce an important statement by this phrase. The word "you" is plural, so *He is definitely addressing the Pharisees*, not just the man who had been blind. **"...the one who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep is a thief and a robber."** (10:1).

In order to understand this parable that Jesus employs, we must have a little background information. **Sheepfolds in Israel were not just corrals or pens**, which would allow too much vulnerability to predators or thieves. **They were enclosures walled in with rock**, Palestine's most abundant and cheapest building material, **often to a height of more than six feet.** The door also was not a flimsy gate, but usually a **heavy, solid wooden door** that was capable of withstanding an attack by robbers. It was heavily barred, and access was permitted only to those known to the doorkeeper. Obviously, anyone who would try to gain entrance by coming over the wall would have had an illegitimate purpose for being there. **A thief is one who comes with trickery or deception**, who attempts to sneak in and out undetected, **while a robber is one who employs force and violence to get what he wants.** In the case of these religious leaders, *both* images were applicable. They put on the *appearance* of being God-ordained shepherds, or leaders, of the people, but they really were not what they claimed to be, ...and *they were not above using violence* to get or keep what they wanted.

"...the one who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens" (vss. 2,3). **The one who has legitimate authority for the sheep will not need to employ deception or force.** **"...the sheep hear his voice..."** The sheep recognize the voice of the one who regularly cares for them. **The responsiveness of the sheep themselves reveals their relationship to their shepherd.** **"...he calls his own sheep by name..."** **He knows each one personally and intimately.** The flock is not a nameless multitude to him. He recognizes the differences of each sheep, not only their physical characteristics, but also their personalities and individual quirks. His knowledge of the flock is also a sign of the legitimate shepherd. **How different this description of a shepherd's relationship to his flock is to the attitude of the Pharisees toward the people they "oversaw".** They referred to them as **"accursed"** (cf. 7:49).

"When he puts forth all his own..." (vs. 4). **The sheepfold would have contained the flocks of several shepherds.** This shepherd would have taken **only his own sheep**, ...not any that belonged to someone else. **He would also have made certain that all of his sheep had come out, that none were left behind.** For them to be healthy, they needed time grazing on the hillsides. **Only by knowing them well, and by having a number small enough that he could keep track of each individual sheep, could a shepherd effectively do this.** **"...he goes before them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice"**. This is a very different phenomenon than herding cattle or goats. **A shepherd in Israel did not drive his sheep, or even "herd" his sheep. He led them. They followed him because he was familiar to them and because they trusted him.**

"A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers" (vs. 5). **The key mark of the legitimate shepherd is the response of the sheep themselves.** No matter if someone might *pretend to be* the shepherd, or *act like* the shepherd, or even *dress in the shepherd's clothes*, the sheep will not be fooled. **They will not follow the voice of anyone but their true shepherd.**

"This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them..." (vs. 6). **Another stylistic peculiarity of John is that he never uses the word "parable", as the other three gospel writers did. He prefers another word, paroimia, which was never employed in the synoptic gospels, either. This word refers to a saying that is a proverb, byword, puzzle, or "dark saying". It was an utterance whose real meaning was not on the surface, but had a deeper message.** Cf. Jn. 16:25 (twice) and 29. The use of this word here by John indicates that **Jesus was attempting to teach a lesson to the Pharisees here. He was using this description of sheep and shepherd to make a specific, deeper point.** That is why this seems like such a strange thing to comment on in this context, and why some have even thought that this is an entirely new context. **It is supposed to sound peculiar. It is supposed to sound kind of "off the wall", ...so that it will grab your attention and have a greater impact when you finally "get it".** **"...but they did not understand what... He had been saying to them."** If this had been an entirely new context, it would not make any sense to put this comment here. The surface meaning of vss. 1-5 is straightforward enough. What is to be confused about? **Set into the context of chapter 9, however, you can see what they were confused about. It seemed to be a totally irrelevant commentary. What was He getting at?**

“Jesus therefore said to them *again...*” (vs. 7). **Since they were not understanding, Jesus expanded on the illustration, to make it more plain.** “Truly, truly...” *Another* solemn statement coming up! **“I am the door of the sheep.” The only legitimate access into the sheepfold is by means of Him.** He is there to protect the sheep from thieves and robbers who would prey upon them, and to allow admittance to those who are legitimate shepherds. **They had been examining Him to see if He was a legitimate teacher of God. Jesus is turning the tables to say that they are the ones on trial here. He is the judge of their authenticity.** Note, this is the third “I am” saying of this type (6:35; 8:12).

“All who came before Me are thieves and robbers” (vs. 8). **Those who try to lead without proper authority, are thieves and robbers.** There had been plenty of examples of false and abusive shepherds in Israel’s history (Jer. 23:1-5; Ezk. 34:1-31). In addition, there had arisen false messiahs and pretenders-at-position, people who had usurped authority by self-promotion. **If God did not send them to lead, what are they doing there?** The present false shepherds had “*seated themselves* upon the seat of Moses” (Matt. 23:2). They *claimed* a right to the sheep, but lacked the real authority from God. “...the sheep did not hear them...” **The genuine children of God could easily discern that these shepherds did not really care for them, and therefore did not trust them, or give heed to them.**

Passing through the “Door” meant legitimacy and safety in leadership, but it also meant safety, provision and health for the sheep. In the natural, the sheep would follow the shepherd out of the doorway of the fold. The shepherd would lead the sheep to safe and beneficial places to graze, all the while watching over and caring for their needs. In the evening, the sheep would follow the shepherd back to the fold, where they were protected from thieves, robbers or predators. If there was no sheepfold, the flock would be in the open field, exposed to danger. A sheep that was able to come in to the safety of a sheep fold was much more secure. In the word picture application, Jesus says that any sheep that comes through Him into the fold will “be saved”. He or she will go in and go out and find “pasture” (Lit., a ‘spreading-out’, because that is what the flock did, it ‘spread out’ to graze in whatever feeding area it was led to.)

“The thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy...” (vs. 10). **Thieves come with stealth, secrecy, and imposture. Their purpose is to take what does not belong to them.** The Greek actually says, “The thief does not come *except...*” **If they saw no possibility of self-gain, they would not bother to get involved with the sheep at all. It is all about self-interest for them.** Unfortunately, *their gain* comes *at the expense of the sheep.* “I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.” **The purpose of Jesus’ coming was to give benefit to the sheep, His people.** There is no “it” in this latter phrase. Literally, “in order that they might have (and be having) *life* and they might have (and be having) *overflowing/abundance*”. **The health and fulfillment of the sheep is the concern of Jesus.** Think of Psalm 23, the “Shepherd’s Psalm”. “Yahweh is my Shepherd, there is nothing that I lack.” The apostle Paul wrote, “God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed” (II Cor. 9:8). He wants us to have what we need, and extra to help others (Eph. 4:28).

“I am the Good Shepherd...” (vss. 11-15). A fourth “I am” saying. The word for “good” refers not so much to moral uprightness as to “skillful, sound, beneficial”. **The effective shepherd cares for the sheep before his own comfort or safety. A good and healthy shepherd is willing to sacrifice, be uncomfortable, experience hardship, and even risk his or her own life on behalf of the sheep.** By contrast, a hireling will carry out *some of the tasks of shepherding for the sake of his pay; but he will abandon the sheep in the face of danger!* His *real* interest is the *money*, ...not the sheep. As a result, the sheep are easy prey. Like other good shepherds, Jesus was willing to lay down His life (His natural life, self or soul - Gk., *psuchē*) on behalf of His people.

“I have other sheep which are not of this fold...” (vs. 16). **This is probably an allusion to the Gentiles.** “...and I must bring them also”. The word order in the Greek gives a little different emphasis: “...also *these* it is necessary for Me to lead”. It would seem that **the Father has appointed Jesus to be their Shepherd, too.** “...and *they* shall hear My voice.” The sign of an intimate, familiar shepherd relationship. The implication might also be that they do *not* have this relationship with Him *now*, ...but that they *will*. This is one of several places in the gospel of John where **Jesus teaches that a relationship with God should involve real authentic communication from Him.** (Cf. 5:19,30; 6:44,45; 14:16-26; 15:26,27; 16:13-15.) “...and they shall become one flock with one shepherd.” **Jesus was going to make the two groups (Jew and Gentile) into one new people under His leadership** (Cf. Eph. 2:11-22; Rom. 11:17-24).

“For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life...” (vss. 17,18) *The Father delights in such dedicated caring for others that is willing to disregard comfort, convenience, and even safety on behalf of another’s well-being.* “...that *I* may take it again...” A clear reference to the resurrection. *The Scriptures depict all three persons of the triune Godhead as being involved in the raising of Jesus from the dead* (cf. Acts 2:32; Rom. 1:4). **Here the emphasis is upon Jesus’ own role, both in voluntarily laying down His life (no one has taken it from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative) and in voluntarily raising Himself.** Once again, however, *He ascribes to the Father the source of this ability.*

“There arose a division again among the Jews because of His words” (vss. 19-21). As in 9:16, some readily dismissed Him as demonized or crazy, while others could not ignore the powerful sign He had just performed.

John 10:22-42 -- I and the Father are One

“The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, ‘How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.’²⁵ Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father’s name, these testify of Me.²⁶ But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep.²⁷ My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;²⁸ and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.²⁹ My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.³⁰ I and the Father are one.’³¹ The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him.”

John 10:24-31

“At that time...” The Greek also could be rendered as “Then it came to pass/it happened...” This serves as an **introduction to a new context**. “...the Feast of the Dedication...” **This was Hanukkah, a festival commemorating the cleansing and rededication of the Temple after the Jews recaptured it from pagan hands.** It had been under the control of Antiochus Epiphanes for three years, until his forces were driven out by Judas Maccabeus in December of 164 B.C. In our immediate context, **about two months had passed since the preceding conversation between Jesus and the Pharisees had occurred.** “It was winter, and Jesus was walking... in the portico of Solomon” (vss. 22,23). **Winter in Israel is the rainy season, so Jesus was walking in the covered colonnade of Solomon’s porch, located on the eastern end of the Temple.** This later became a favorite gathering place for the early church (Acts 3:11; 5:12). **It was out of the main flow of traffic, and offered not only protection from the rain or hot sun, but also some relative privacy.** Here, these same features also make it a good location for an ambush.

“The Jews therefore gathered around Him...” (vs. 24). The Greek verb means to “encircle” or “surround”. **They were hemming Him in, so that He could not escape their insistent demand to reveal His identity.** Their body language was certainly in tune with the content of their abrupt, direct, confrontational speech, “How long will You keep us in suspense? **If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.**”

“**I told you, and you do not believe...**” (vs. 25). Cf. Jn. 5:19-47; 8:12-59. **Obviously, words were not enough to convince them.** In fact, His words had only aggravated them *more*, not persuaded them. “...the works that I do in My Father’s name, these bear witness of Me.” **The clearest, most unquestionable testimony of Jesus’ identity was to watch what He did.**

“But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep” (vs. 26). The word, “but”, is a strong negative comparative word, meaning “rather” or “on the contrary”. The problem was not that they did not have enough information, or that Jesus had not spoken boldly enough. “On the contrary, you do not believe for/since you are not out from My sheep.” **Their inability or unwillingness to trust in Him was because they were not His.**

“**My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me**” (vs. 27). **Interrelationship and intimacy produces trust.** “...and I give eternal life to them...” The words in Greek place emphasis on Jesus as the subject, “*(Myself)* give to them age-type life”. **He claims to not just introduce them to the path that leads to life, but to actually give them life.** “...and they shall *never* perish...” **The Greek is very emphatic, “...and not never might they perish/be lost unto the age...”** In Greek, the double negative *adds emphasis*. “...and no one shall snatch them out of My hand”(vs. 28). Note the usage of figures from the shepherd/sheep word-picture. **A shepherd watches over the sheep to prevent their being lost, perishing, or from being snatched away by predators.**

“**My Father, who has given them to Me,** is greater than all...” The word for “has given” means “He gave them to Me and they are *still Mine*”. **The action happened in the past, and has ongoing results or implications.** By the way, this statement does not necessarily support the Calvinistic notion of “the elect”, i.e., that some individuals are predestined to become “His sheep”, while others will always be unable to come to faith. All Jesus is saying is that the Father has given Him “sheep”, and that the Jewish leaders confronting Him were not at that moment in that relationship with Him. “...and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand” (vs. 29). **Unquestionably, none could steal from the hand of Him who is “greater than all”.**

These last two verses clearly convey the concept of the security of the sheep. “Eternal security” is the notion that once we are genuinely born from above, we will not lose our salvation. **I used to believe that we could walk away from the Shepherd.** In my attempt to explain the phenomenon of “backslidden Christians” or “apostates” (people who turn away from their faith), **I supposed that God would respect our free will and allow us to walk away from Him, if we so chose.** **The images in these verses strongly disagree with this idea.** The *emphatic language* (“not never shall they perish”), the *definitive act of the Father* (“has given” with ongoing result), the *repeated guarantee of safety* (no one can snatch the sheep from either Jesus or His Father), and *the very word picture itself* (shepherds are *supposed to* keep sheep from straying) **strongly argue that once you are truly part of His flock, you will never be lost. The true sheep of Jesus are eternally secure in their salvation.**

“I and the Father are one” (vs. 30). The word for “one” in Greek is in the neuter case, meaning “one-thing”. In other words, Jesus was not, by any stretch, saying that He and the Father were merely in agreement. He was claiming to be “one-thing” with the Father. **There are two possibilities here:**

(a.) **Jesus may be saying that what He does, the Father also does. The identification between Jesus and the Father is so complete that they are like one** and the same; or,

(b.) **Jesus is claiming to actually be one in essence with the Father, ...so that He and the Father are somehow one and the same Being.** Marcus Dods, commenting in *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, writes, “An ambassador whose demands were contested might quite naturally say: ‘I and my sovereign are one’; not meaning thereby to claim royal dignity, but only to assert that what he did his sovereign did, that his signature carried his sovereign’s guarantee, and that his pledges would be fulfilled by all the resources of his sovereign. So here, as God’s representative, Jesus introduces the Father’s power as the final guarantee, and claims that in this respect He and the Father are one. Whether this does not involve metaphysical unity is another question.” Other passages in John to examine in order to understand this concept: 10:38; 14:7-12; 17:20-23. It is especially interesting that in the John 17 passage Jesus prays for the same oneness for those who would believe in Him.

“The Jews took up stones again to stone Him” (vs. 31). **This is the third “unequivocal claim” in the gospel of John** (cf. 5:17,18; 8:58,59). We know Jesus claimed to be God, because His hearers, who were of that culture and spoke that language, understood that this is what He meant. We can see this by their response. In His answer, **Jesus directs their attention to the good works which He showed them “out-from the Father” and asks, “...for which of them do you stone me?”** In their response, they assert: **“For a good work we do not stone you, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man make yourself out to be God”** (vss. 32,33). Their accusation of blasphemy would only be valid if He was *not* God. They would not even begin to entertain the possibility that He actually *could* be.

Jesus’ response to them has two dimensions:

On the one hand, He seems to using the OT to show that what He said was not all that outrageous.

On the other hand, He actually further asserts His unique origin and special relationship to the Father.

“Has it not been written in your law...” The passage He is about to quote is Psalm 82:6. **By referring to an argument from Scripture, Jesus uses the pride and strength of the Pharisees against them.** They were preeminent Bible scholars, and took great pride in their studies. **“I said, you are gods”** (vs. 34). **In Psalm 82, God confronts rulers and judges who have been unjust,** and have *not* brought about justice for the poor, needy, and powerless. The statement quoted by Jesus refers to how God had exalted them to a high position as representatives for Him on behalf of the people. **They were “gods” in the sense that they were to be mediators of God’s truth and justice** (cf. Ex. 7:1; Deut. 1:16,17). But, because *they had abused their authority*, God was reminding them that they were mere mortals, accountable to Him. **“I said, ‘You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High’. Nevertheless you will die like men,** and fall like any one of the princes.” Cf. Ex. 28:28; Psa. 58:1,2. **“If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came... do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God?’”** **Note Jesus’ logic. If God called mere men “gods”, then how can you be upset that I called Myself the Son of God (a lesser title), since I am more than a mere man (a higher being).** **On the one hand, Jesus seems to be saying that He had not done anything wrong, because God had called human beings “gods” before. Yet, while His claim of being the Son of God seems on the surface to be a lesser title, it was definitely Messianic imagery** (Psa. 2). The Pharisees had themselves seen a claim to equality with God in that statement before (Jn. 5:17,18).

On the other hand, His description of Himself as the one “the Father sanctified and sent into the world” definitely sets Him apart from the rest of humankind. In fact, it is only upon the supposition that He *is* a higher personage than they, or than the judges and rulers of the OT context, that His argument makes sense. It actually is a *further claim of His heavenly origin* and commission. **“(and the Scripture cannot be broken)...”** This statement, set into the heart of Jesus’ question, grounds His argument on the authority of Scripture. This forced the Pharisees to deal with what He was saying. Also, **by expressing this as a question, He placed the burden of coming up with a response upon them,** before they would carry out their desire to stone Him. This statement reminds us that neither Old nor New Testament Scriptures can be summarily discarded or disregarded (cf. Matt. 5:17-20).

“If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me...” (vss. 37-39). **Jesus draws their attention back to His activities, especially His miraculous signs, as His accreditation.** He in effect says that if He is all talk and no corresponding action, then do not believe what He says. **“...but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works.”** **Even though they do not trust or believe His words, they had better not disregard the obvious reality indicated by His actions.** **“...that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father”.** **The signs indicate the Father’s presence in and with Jesus, and also Jesus’ relationship with Him** (cf. 9:16,32,33). This remark incited their renewed desire to arrest Him, but He escaped their grasp.

John 11:1-46 -- The Resurrection of Lazarus

“Then Martha said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.’²² Yet even now I know that whatever You ask from God, God will give You.’²³ ‘Your brother will rise again,’ Jesus told her.²⁴ Martha said, ‘I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.’²⁵ Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me, even if he dies, will live.’²⁶ Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die-- *ever*. Do you believe this?’²⁷ ‘Yes, Lord,’ she told Him, ‘I believe You are the Messiah, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.’” John 11:21-27

“Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany...” Lazarus was a Greek form of the Hebrew name, Eleazar. Bethany was a village about two miles east of Jerusalem (cf. vs. 18), on the far side of the Mount of Olives. This name, and the proximity of their house to Jerusalem, probably indicates a priestly lineage. **Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were siblings.** Vs. 2 is in reference to the well-known incident recorded in some of the other gospels, and in the next chapter (12:1-3; Matt. 26:6-13; Mk. 14:1-9), providing further clarification concerning who these people were. These sisters are probably the same ones mentioned in Lk. 10:38-42 also. **“The sisters therefore sent to Him”** (vs. 3). **They had a clear hope of Lazarus’ healing, if Jesus would come** (vss. 21,32). “...he whom You love is sick.” **Jesus was evidently very close to this family, and cared deeply for them** (cf. vs. 5). “When Jesus heard it, He said...” (vs. 4). He knew immediately that He was to do a miracle. “This sickness is not unto death...” Though Lazarus *did* die, **the ultimate end of this sickness was the opportunity for the miraculous healing power of God to be displayed.** “He stayed two days longer...” (vs. 6). **By the time Jesus received this message, Lazarus had already died** (cf. vs. 39). Nothing would have been gained by rushing off immediately. Jesus never would have been able to get to Bethany in time to prevent Lazarus’ death. No one could accuse him of playing with this man’s life.

Jesus informs the disciples of His intent to return to Judea (vss. 7-10). **They are incredulous that He would return when the Jews had so recently intended to stone Him.** He uses a figurative lesson to assure them. “Are there not twelve hours in the day?” This statement harks back to His teaching in 9:4. We must do the works of God while we have the opportunity. It is not yet night time. “If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world”. The implication is that **if one walks in the will of God, he will be safe from stumbling.** “But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” This latter phrase, “the light is not in him”, is a twist to the figure of speech that *stands out as contrary to nature*, and hence, the point of the teaching. **The light we see by is outside, ...in the world around us.** Jesus’ comment indicates that this spiritual light that guides us is *inside us, ...an interior illumination from God.* This is what can enable us to walk without stumbling.

The Lord tells them that Lazarus has died, and that He goes to raise him from death (vss. 11-16). “Lazarus has fallen asleep...” Sleep was a common descriptive way to refer to death. It is based upon the observation that **the dead person looks like they are asleep.** Bible scholars refer to this as the “phenomenological use of language”. We describe an event *as it appears to us*, even if we know that there is more to it than that. A common example from our culture is the use of the term “sunrise”. We know that this is not a scientifically accurate description of this event. It appears to our eyes as if the sun actually is rising from the horizon, when really the earth is simply turning on its axis. The description of death as “sleep” here is *not meant* to instruct us as to the state of the dead person’s spiritual essence. **Scripture tells us in numerous places that the dead are conscious, not in a state of soul-sleep** (cf. Lk. 16:19-31; II Cor. 5:1-9; Phil. 1:21-23; Rev. 6:9-11).

“Lazarus is dead...” Jesus spoke in plain terms because they had misunderstood. “I am glad for your sakes that I was *not* there, so that you may believe...” Again, Jesus already knew what He was going to do. **A resurrection was a much more powerful sign than a “simple” healing.**

“Thomas ...said to his fellow disciples, ‘Let us also go, that we may die with Him.’” (vs. 16). **The climate was dangerous enough in Judea that the disciples fully expected that not only would He be killed, ...but that they, too, would die with Him.** They were *justified* in their concern. This was, in fact, Jesus’ *last trip* to Judea. It is good that we have this glimpse into Thomas’ character. We learn that there was more to him than the skepticism which he has become known for. He was ready to walk into the face of danger with Jesus.

When Jesus arrives near Bethany (vs. 30), He has a private meeting with each of the surviving sisters (vss. 17-32). In both cases, the first words they uttered to Him was concerning their faith that, had He been there, Lazarus would not have died (vss. 21, 32). **They confidently knew Jesus was able to heal. Martha even goes so far as to express that her hope is not totally exhausted,** “...even now I know that *whatever You ask of God, God will give You*”. **“Your brother shall rise again”** (vs. 23). **Jesus begins to tell her His intent.** She says, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day”. **What Jesus alludes to is too unbelievable to seriously entertain, so she interprets His statement in light of accepted theology.** The Jews believed in a general resurrection of the dead, both of the righteous and the unrighteous, that would take place at the end of the age (Dan. 12:2,13; Jn. 5:28,29).

“I am the resurrection and the life...” (vs. 25). **What an incredible statement!** In the Greek, the use of the pronoun *egō* in this construction *adds emphasis*. It would be like He had said, “I *Myself* am the Resurrection and the Life”. **Jesus is claiming to be responsible for the resurrection of all.** More than that, He is claiming to be the embodiment of resurrection hope and power. **This is the fifth “I am” claim of this type** (6:35; 8:12; 10:9,11), **and the third such statement directly tied to a miraculous sign that dramatically illustrated the claim** (6:1-35; 9:1-40). “...he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies.” The promise of resurrection is for those who are “believing into/unto/towards Me”. The Greek word order, “...even if he might die (at a point in time), he will live...”, clearly states that **though physical death may occur, there is a guarantee of life.** “...everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die...” (vs. 26). The Greek is, “everyone living and believing into/unto/towards Me not *never* might he die (at a point in time) unto the age”. **The former statement had addressed the guarantee of resurrection for those who had physically died. This statement goes farther.** It says that those who are living and are believing in Jesus will never really experience death, at all.

“Do you believe this?” Jesus prompts Martha in this way probably to *clarify*, and thus to *strengthen*, her faith. **“I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world.” This is the strongest, most direct confession of Jesus’ identity in the entire book to this point!** Notice how John has led the reader carefully up to this point by dangling this possibility before our minds in many ways (4:25-29; 7:26,27,31,40-43; 9:22; 10:24). (While women generally were minimized in Jewish culture, God made the point to exalt them as equals. He used Mary to initiate Jesus’ miraculous ministry at the beginning of the book. Here, at the center, we have this powerful confession coming from Martha’s lips. Then, in chapter 20, women are the first eyewitnesses of His resurrection. God was not going to allow the prejudice of the culture silence their testimony.) **This powerful, direct confession, coupled with the stupendous miraculous sign which He is about to perform, serve as a one-two combination in accomplishing John’s purpose** (20:30,31). Both “Christ” (Heb. = “Messiah”, meaning “Anointed One”), and “Son of God” were kingly titles (Lk. 23:2; Ps. 2). “He who comes into the world” is a phrase referring to the fact that **this Messianic King was prophetically promised to Israel.**

Martha returns to tell Mary that Jesus had come, and was calling for her. Her sudden exit appeared to the visiting Jews as though she had been overcome by grief and had gone to the tomb to weep. They followed her to console her. As a result, they became witnesses of the miracle soon to take place.

Vss. 33-38a - In these verses, **the entire group makes its way to the tomb at Jesus’ request. We also have the opportunity to glimpse some of Jesus’ inner emotions.** “When Jesus... saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled.” The Greek says, “As He *saw*... He *was strongly moved within in/with/by the Spirit*, and *He troubled/agitated/disquieted Himself*”. **He entered into their pain and felt their grief** (Isa. 53:3,4). **The Spirit prompted Him to identify with their hurt.** We see Him doing a similar thing in Matt. 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 20:29-34; Lk. 19:41-44. In most of these contexts, this *identification* with people’s pain or need was *followed by action* to address the need. Often these responses were miraculous in nature. Note, too, that **He voluntarily responded to this inner prompting by opening up His emotions.** He did not remain detached or distant emotionally, even though He knew what He was going to do. “Where Have you laid him?” (vs. 34). Jesus *did not know* where the tomb was, ...a sign of His human limitations. “Jesus wept” (vs. 35). The word for the weeping of Mary and her friends is different than that used to describe Jesus’ response. They were loudly wailing and sobbing in expression of their grief and loss. By contrast, **the word used for Jesus’ weeping occurs only here in the NT and means “to shed tears”, but not necessarily accompanied by the loud wailing. Jesus’ display of emotion was sufficient, however, for His enemies to observe, “Behold how much He loved him!”** Some of them commented on His apparent inability to save Lazarus from death, even though He had opened the eyes of the blind man. “Jesus therefore again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb.”

“Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it” (vs. 38b). This was a common form of burial in Palestine. Upon asking that the stone be removed, Martha objected that by this time, there would be a stench, “...or he has been dead four days” (vs. 39). (There was a rabbinic tradition that the spirit would hover around the deceased for up to three days, hoping to re-enter the body. This may account for Jesus’ delay for two days (vs. 6), so that there could be no question that Lazarus was truly dead.) “Did I not say to you, if you believe you will see the glory of God?” (vs. 40) This statement from Jesus was enough for Martha to ask that the stone be removed. “Jesus raised His eyes and said, Father...” **Jesus’ prayer was obviously for the benefit of those standing nearby, that they might know that it was God who was doing the work** (vss. 41,42). “Lazarus, come forth” (vs. 43). **Responding to Jesus’ call, the resurrected Lazarus hopped out, still bound in his grave clothes, and with the napkin still wrapped around his face.** Note that “the burial custom of the Jews” involved the wrappings of strips of cloth, not the use of a burial shroud (Jn. 19:38-40; 20:4-8).

There was a division among those who were there, some believing, some not (vss. 45,46). Some actually went to the Pharisees and reported what Jesus had done. This settled their determination that Jesus had to die, or they feared a crack-down by the Roman authorities, which would be damaging to everybody (especially *them*).

John 11:46-12:11 -- The Anointing at Bethany

“Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining *at the table* with Him. ³ Mary therefore took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.”

John 12:1-3

Once again, John gives us a little more insight into the events recorded by the other gospel writers. **The resurrection of Lazarus at Bethany was virtually explosive in its impact.** Since Bethany was so near to Jerusalem, and because Lazarus’ family was evidently a prominent family, the report of his death would have rapidly spread throughout the city. Obviously, **the Pharisees and Sadducees could no longer control the sentiment and thinking of the common people.** Their worst fears were being realized, as the story was carried throughout Jerusalem, and speculation about Jesus was rampant. **Their fear was that if Jesus was proclaimed to be the Christ-King, and started an insurrection, the Romans would defend their interests by force.** (They painted the most extreme situation in their imagination. The entire removal of the populace was not a normal practice with the Romans, although it *had* happened to Israel before. It would nevertheless be a bloody slaughter, for the Romans were quite ruthless in putting down such revolts.) **Their real fear, however, was the loss of their own prestige and influence** if such a scenario would unfold. **Caiaphas, the high priest, unwittingly prophesied that it was expedient “...that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish”** (11:50,51). After the chief priests and Pharisees had definitely decided to kill Jesus, we read in the last few verses of chapter eleven that Jesus withdrew from Jerusalem to stay in a city called Ephraim, located about twelve miles north northeast of Jerusalem, a fairly isolated place in a mountainous region on the edge of the wilderness. **The Passover feast was near, so pilgrims began to stream into Jerusalem.** They were waiting for Jesus to arrive, but some wondered if He would come at all, probably being aware of the potential risk it was for Him. Meanwhile, **the chief priests were attempting to ascertain His whereabouts so that they might arrest Him.**

Having provided this background, **John begins his account of the events immediately leading up to Jesus’ death.** He first recounts the incident of the woman who anointed Him with very costly perfume, an event that was significant for several reasons. We find information supplied by John that the other gospel writers did not include (Matt. 26:6-13; Mk. 14:3-9), information which adds depth and richness to the story.

“Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany” (12:1). **Only John supplies the information that gives us a chronology of these events.** In both Mark and Matthew, the anointing of Jesus is presented as a flashback (“Now *when* Jesus was in Bethany...” [Matt. 26:6]; “And *while* He was in Bethany...” [Mk. 14:3]), recounted much later in the unfolding of events, when Passover was only *two* days off (Matt. 26:2; Mk. 14:1). **If not for John’s gospel we would not know that this supper took place immediately before the triumphal entry** (cf. vs. 12), **nor would we be able to establish that date as “Palm Sunday”.** The Jews reckoned their days from sundown to sundown. The Sabbath, then would begin at sundown on Friday, and end with the setting of the sun on Saturday. **This dinner would have been Saturday evening, probably after sundown,** so that Jesus and the disciples would not break the Sabbath restrictions against travel. **It would have been one of the quietest times of the week.** Very few travelers would be out on the roads. Virtually everyone would simply stay home after sundown ending the Sabbath day. **This allowed Jesus to come to Bethany undetected.** **“...where Lazarus was...”** Not only were they always welcome there, especially after raising Lazarus from the dead, but Jesus probably had a natural desire to check on his dear friends. Their home in Bethany offered a strategic location from which to commute back and forth to Jerusalem during the week before Passover (cf. Mk. 11:1,11,12,19,20,27; 14:3; Matt. 21:17).

“So they made Him a supper there” (vs. 2). This would be common hospitality for weary travelers. We find out from the other gospel writers that **this meal took place at the “home of Simon the leper”, probably the father of these three siblings** (Matt. 26:6; Mk. 14:3). This was a good way to identify the house and family. If this Simon had been a wealthy, prominent person, getting leprosy would have been a tragedy that would have singled out this family in people’s minds. The “home of Simon the leper” would have then immediately brought to mind the exact family and their house. **“...and Martha was serving...”** From Lk. 10:38-42 we know that this was typical of her. The fact that both women had to *serve* in the house indicates that whatever wealth the family may once have had, they apparently could not afford house servants to do this work. **“Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him.”** He who had died was now once again enjoying life in fellowship with Jesus, bringing wonderful closure to the account of his death and resurrection. Probably seeing Lazarus healthy and full of life at table with Jesus moved Mary to do as she did.

“Mary therefore took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard...” (vs. 3). **John identifies the woman who was unnamed in the other accounts.** Now, for the first time, we understand what motivated her lavish action. (Note that both the setting and the motivation of the woman in Lk. 7:36-50 is quite different. These are two entirely unrelated incidents which

should not be linked together.) The cost of the perfume is the equivalent of 300 day's wages (vs. 5). It was very costly, indeed. However, **Mary is motivated by deep love and gratitude for the return of her brother from the dead.** *Nothing* is too extravagant for the expression of her heart. **"...and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair..."** The parallels record that she poured it over His head (Matt. 26:7; Mk. 14:3). Again, John is telling us the rest of the story. Mid-eastern hospitality at its best would offer oil to anoint one's head, and water to wash one's feet, to refresh the guest from the harshness of travel on the dry, dusty roads (cf. Lk. 7:44-46; Jn. 13:1-15). **Mary's action highly exalted Jesus among the guests,** and the composition of the ointment would have been more physically invigorating than mere water. By wiping His feet with her hair, she was doing nothing inappropriate or sexually suggestive. She was putting herself in the role of one of the lowliest of servants to wash His feet. Using her hair signified her willing devotion to humbly serve Him. **It also expressed her desire to be identified with Him as her Lord,** for they both would have had the same fragrance. **"...and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume."** The use of an entire 12 ounce vial of perfumed oil certainly would have immediately permeated the house with the wonderful fragrance of the nard. Nard, or spikenard, is from the roots of a plant that grows in the Himalayan mountains of India. It was so costly because it was rare to begin with, but then it also had to be imported from India in special jars of alabaster, carefully sealed to preserve the perfume. Usually it would remain sealed until a special occasion where the owner would use it to anoint special guests. **To have such a treasure in one's possession suggests that someone in the family must have had significant wealth,** for it was a luxury item that only the wealthy could afford to purchase and then fully expend. The strength and unique fragrance of the smell would have immediately betrayed its expensive quality to everyone present.

"But Judas Iscariot... said..." (vss. 4,5). In the other accounts, *all* of the disciples were offended and indignant at the waste of this expensive commodity in this way. **John indicates that Judas was the one who primarily gave voice to the criticism,** though they were all apparently expressing similar sentiments (Matt. 26:8,9). "...who was intending to betray Him..." Apparently this event finally pushed Judas to act on his thoughts, for he went to strike his infamous bargain with the chief priests *immediately after* this controversy over Mary's action. **"Why was this perfume not sold... and given to poor people?"** The crux of the criticism was this, "Wouldn't more be accomplished by selling off such extravagances and using the money in a more pragmatic, helpful way?" **For us, the question comes to be, "How utilitarian does God want us to be with the resources He gives us? Are we never to have or give nice things, ...things that go beyond the basic utilitarian function? Or, are we obliged to cut all the 'fat' from our budget and activities, because we are obligated to give every extra penny to the poor?"**

From verse 6, we find out that Judas had some serious character defects before he decided to betray Jesus. He evidently served as group treasurer, but *was a thief* and regularly embezzled funds from the money box he carried. **In reality, it was money, and probably power, that were important to him, ...not people.** What was he was doing with the extra money? Extra food? Clothes? Was he a gambler? Was he saving it to invest in something? (Acts 1:18)

"Jesus therefore said, 'Let her alone...'"(vs. 7). **This rebuke, or command, was directed toward Judas,** since Jesus used a verb that is singular in form, ("You [singular] leave her"). Verse 8 is directed to the entire group (you [plural]). The parallel accounts record Jesus rebuking the entire group, e.g., "Why do you (plural) bother the woman?" (Matt. 26:10). Evidently, though the entire group was scolding Mary (Mk. 14:5), Judas' vehement tone or actions were inordinately angry, threatening, or attacking, so that Jesus felt it necessary to specifically stop him. **"...in order that she might keep it for the day of my burial."** I think what Jesus is saying is, **"Don't spoil what she has done by your criticizing. What she did was a good work for my benefit.** She did what she could. She has anointed my body for burial." (Cf. Matt. 26:10-12; Mk. 14:6-8). "Allow her to keep and savor her joy in giving, without spoiling it with *pointless* criticism." After all, it was an *academic issue,* since *the perfume could not be gathered into the bottle again.*

"For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have Me" (vs. 8). It was not an either/or choice that Mary made. There were many ongoing opportunities to help the poor. Those who follow Jesus *will* help them. *This, however, was a special occasion justifying an unusual expression of generosity.* **Jesus here freed us from bondage to duty, allowing us to express our special affection, or special honor, for some individuals** in ways that go beyond the ordinary. It is one way in which we can outwardly express our hearts. **Jesus is not saying that the poor are unimportant.** A balanced view of this would be that **those who are regularly responsible to assist the poor can expect that an occasional "lavish" act of celebration or honor is acceptable and pleasing to God.** There will always be people who will question the propriety of this, however. Cf. Rom. 14:22.

We see again from verses 9-11 the impact of Lazarus' resurrection. Having heard that Jesus was staying there, people came by to not only see *Him,* but *Lazarus* too. **The chief priests deliberated in order that they might kill Lazarus, because of the attention he brought to Jesus.** Note that it was *only the priests* here, not the entire counsel. If Lazarus was from a priestly family, he may have been especially embarrassing to them.

John 12:12-26 -- The Triumphal Entry

“The next day, when the large crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, ¹³ they took palm branches and went out to meet Him. They kept shouting: ‘Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord -- the King of Israel!’ ¹⁴ Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written: ¹⁵ ‘Fear no more,’ Daughter Zion. ‘Look! Your King is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt.’”

John 12:12-15

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵ He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. ²⁶ If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.”

John 12:24-26

In this chapter John records not only the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, but he brings Jesus’ public ministry to a close. **Up to this point in this gospel, most of Jesus’ teaching has revolved around His identity.** There have been surprisingly few instances where He strongly challenges or invites people to follow Him. **This passage, then, brings to a climax His public claim to be the King of Israel, and His final call and challenge for disciples.**

Vs. 12 begins with, **“On the next day...”** This comment, along with vs. 1, pinpoints the time of the triumphal entry as the Sunday before the Passover. The other gospel records (Matt. 21:1-11; Mk. 11:1-11; Lk. 19:29-44) do not give enough information to determine the timing of this event. John mentions that **there was a “great multitude who had come to the feast.”** It was mostly religious pilgrims, not the locals of Jerusalem, who participated in this procession. This makes sense, since the people of Jerusalem would probably be busy with their daily affairs in the city, while pilgrims would be milling around in a festive mood with few demands upon their time. The other gospels record that Jesus had sent His disciples find a colt for Him to ride on. This appears to have been set up by Jesus beforehand.

“...when they [the crowd] heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, they began to take palm branches and went out to meet Him” (vs. 13). Palm branches were a symbol of victory and celebration. They readily grew around the city. John does not mention anyone laying garments or branches in the road before Him. That information is gleaned from the parallel accounts. From John’s account alone we would have supposed that the crowd was simply waving the branches in celebration. **The disciples had already started laying their garments before Him, so the crowd also began to spread their garments in the road before Him (Lk. 19:29-36), a sign of deference and honor before a king.** This spectacle would have attracted peoples’ attention, as well as set a precedent for their response to Jesus’ coming.

“...and began to cry out, ‘Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.’” “Hosanna” is an exclamation in Hebrew, meaning “Save now”. Their cry was reminiscent of Psa. 118:25,26, a cry of the worshipper to God in the temple. **This last phrase, “...even the King of Israel...” was added by the crowd to clearly signify their intent: to proclaim and welcome Jesus as their king and Messiah.** In this context, “Save now!” would have been expressing more of a hope in a *political deliverance* than in a *spiritual one*. This is confirmed by the crowd’s proclamations recorded by the other gospel writers. “Hosanna to the Son of David...” (Matt. 21:9); “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David...” (Mk. 11:10); and, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord...” (Lk. 19:38) were all shouted out by the crowd as they approached the city. **No wonder the Pharisees, motivated by a sense of outrage, as well as fear of Roman reprisal, told Jesus to rebuke his followers** (Lk. 19:39). If they had felt that His popularity had become a threat before, they must have been horrified at what looked like an open declaration of their worst fears. This procession was making enough noise that the entire city was stirred as He came into the city (Matt. 21:10).

“And Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat upon it” (vs. 14). From the other gospels, we know that Jesus *initiated* His procession into the city riding upon this donkey. **John mentions this detail here, because it is a demonstration that further qualifies His claim to be King.** Instead of approaching Jerusalem on a war horse, **He came seated upon a young donkey, the symbol of peace.** Even while the people were proclaiming Him King, His very demeanor established that He came *in peace*, not *for war*. **“...as it is written...”** -- John quotes from the OT. **The fuller quote portrays the character and intent of this messianic King: “Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.** And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem; and the bow of war will be cut off. And He will speak peace to the nations; and **His dominion will be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth”** (Zech. 9:9,10).

“These things His disciples did not understand...” (vs. 16). In spite of the fact that these men had been raised from childhood to know the OT Scriptures, they did not recognize these things until afterward.

In vss. 17,18, **John informs us that some of those who had been eyewitnesses of Lazarus' resurrection were testifying about Him** and "...for this cause also the multitude went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign." Again, apart from John, we would not know about the significance of this event.

"The Pharisees therefore said to one another, 'You see that you are not doing any good; look the world has gone after Him.'" (vs. 19). This experience only more strongly convinced them that things were hopeless *unless He was removed from the picture entirely*.

"Now there were certain Greeks among those going up to worship at the feast..." (vss. 20-22). Undoubtedly, these were proselytes to Judaism. "...these therefore came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee..." They probably approached Philip because, as a Galilean, he would have been a fluent speaker of Greek, and his name was a Greek name. Philip of Macedon was the father of Alexander the Great. **"Sir, we wish to see Jesus."** They had already been truth seekers in order to become followers of Judaism. Evidently, they were drawn by what they had heard and seen of Jesus. **"Philip came and told Andrew... and they told Jesus..."** One of the characteristics of Andrew is that he is often portrayed as bringing people to Jesus (cf. Jn. 1:40-42; 6:8,9). **"Jesus answered them, saying, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified'"** (vs. 23). Jesus apparently did not spend any amount of time with these Greek proselytes. **The time had arrived for His true mission and character to be seen.** His words prepare them for some understanding of the events that would soon take place. However, He extends to them all the call and challenge of discipleship (cf. Matt. 10:24-42; Lk. 9:23-26). **"Truly, truly, I say to you..."** -- Important saying coming up! Listen up! **"...unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit"** (vs. 24). This is a symbolic reference to what Jesus' death would produce. More than that, however, it is a principle of the Kingdom of God, as Jesus goes on to explain.

"He who loves his life loses it..." (vs. 25). The Greek for "life" is *psuchē*, meaning "soul, self, person or natural-life." It is the same word as in Genesis 2:7 in the Greek Septuagint translation of the OT, "Then the Lord God formed man from the dust from the ground (body), and breathed into his nostrils the breath (spirit) of life; and the man became a living being (*psuchē* - soul, self, individual)." The word for "loses it" can also mean to "destroy, spoil, ruin". Jesus is saying that **if anyone loves, likes, delights in, or cherishes his natural life (his life apart from God), or his individual person, he spoils or destroys it.** "...and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal." The word for "hates" can also mean "to be indifferent to, disregard, despise, to love less, or to lightly esteem." The word for "keep" can mean to "guard, keep safe, preserve, protect, or defend." **What Jesus is saying is that if one lives only to himself, he destroys, ruins and loses his very self. If however, he is willing to disregard himself, ...if he is willing to give away his natural life as a seed-like investment..., he will preserve his self unto/into life of the age to come.** One of the interesting things about this statement is that *the self*, the very thing in danger of being ruined or destroyed by our inordinate self-love, *is the same thing that will be preserved* by being in some way disregarded. **This "soul, self, person, individual, natural life" remains a valuable commodity in God's plan. He does not want to destroy it. Spirituality does not entail the eradication of self. He wants to guard, protect, and preserve it unto or towards eternal life.** If we try to cherish, coddle, or focus on it in an unhealthy way, we will spoil it. **The tendency is to overprotect it, to focus on self too much. This ruins the potential self that God created.** The *self*, the unique root personality and giftedness that each one of us potentially can be, is *not* the problem. **Selfishness somehow perverts or distorts who we are.** Each one of us has been uniquely designed to express certain aspects of God's personality and character that no one else can. **We are all in the image of God in some fashion, but that likeness is expressed and fulfilled especially as we give and serve.** The life that is in us is *meant* to be given away, or expressed outwardly, in order for our full potential to be fulfilled. When we live to "get life" for ourselves, we pervert and truncate who we really were intended to be. When we hoard up our life energies and resources, we become miserly, distorted, and small. **When we generously share our life energies and resources with others, God's image in us finds expression, and He gives us more of His life to share. He Himself becomes our Source of life, ...and we grow, mature, and are fulfilled.**

"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me..." (vs. 26). Actually, the Greek is more pointed, "If ever anyone might serve Me...". Jesus is not saying that following Him is a higher level offered to those who serve Him. He is stating that **if anyone might desire to serve Him, the kind of service He wants is that they would follow Him, i.e., they would be active disciples.** This is important. Many people wish to serve God on *their* terms. It doesn't work that way. We are to attend to Him according to His wants and desires. He is not looking for piecemeal acts of religious service. He is looking for consistent devotion and obedience. **"...and where I am, there shall My servant be also..."** -- A promise for the future. In a practical sense, however, the one *following* Jesus will be available *when* and *where* He is desiring to work. **"...if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him."** God does not forget or take for granted what we do in our pursuit of Jesus. He will value, regard, and acknowledge our faithful service to Jesus.

John 12:27-50 -- The Conclusion of Jesus' Public Ministry

“Jesus therefore said to them, ‘For a little while longer the light is among you. Walk while you have the light, that darkness may not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes.’³⁶ While you have the light, believe in the light, in order that you may become sons of light.’ These things Jesus spoke, and He departed and hid Himself from them.³⁷ But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him.” John 12:35-37

“Now My soul has become troubled” (12:27). The word for “has become troubled” emphasizes the ongoing agitation or unsettledness He feels. It is not just a brief, passing discomfort. “...and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour?’” That would be a natural reaction to the pain. Jesus will wrestle with this again in the garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36-44; Lk. 22:41-44). “**But for this purpose I came to this hour.**” The Greek makes the *contrast* even more distinct, “Rather...” **His very presence in this world was ultimately to lead to His atoning death.**

“Father, glorify Your name” (vss. 28-30). The word, “glorify”, means to “bring honor, praise, good reputation, or exaltation to someone” by *revealing* or *clearly demonstrating* their true character. **Jesus is saying to the Father, “Make known who You are.”** “There came therefore a voice out from heaven...” God responded to Jesus’ petition with a loud, thunderous verbal response. John is the only reporter of this incident, though there was a similar incident that had occurred at Jesus’ baptism, recorded by the other gospel writers (e.g., Matt. 3:16,17). Even though the voice was loud and clear enough for *many* to hear and understand, *others* could not make out what was being said, or were unable to process what they were hearing. To them it sounded like thunder. “**Jesus... said, ‘This voice did not come for My sake, but for your sakes.’**” Further evidence to support John’s thesis (20:30,31).

“Now judgment is upon this world...” (vs. 31). The word, “world,” can refer not only to the planet Earth, but also to an “organized system of things”. It means “the spiritual/political structure and propaganda that is directed or influenced by Satan”, whom the apostle Paul called “the god of this age” (II Cor. 4:4; cf. Eph. 2:1,2). John uses the same Greek word, *kosmos*, in this way in I Jn. 2:15-17. “...now the ruler of this world shall be cast out...” The Greek is more emphatic, “he will be thrown-out outside”. The verb is the same as used for the casting out of a demon.

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth...” (vs. 31). The “and I” is a single word in Greek, meant to tie this statement to the previous verse to establish a contrast, or a simultaneous action (“also I”). The “if” indicates that whenever *the condition* of “being lifted up from the earth” might take place, then *the consequent* in the next phrase will also take place. (Jesus had spoken about “being lifted up” twice before in this gospel -- 3:14; 8:28). He was referring to His death on the cross, as John explains in vs. 33. “...will draw all people to Myself.” The word for “draw” is the same as in 6:44. It means to “draw, attract, drag, or haul-in”. We know from II Cor. 5:14-17 that **somehow Jesus took all people into Himself in His death. In doing so, He not only paid for their sins, ...but somehow they themselves also were put to death with Him.** This was an *objective, historical event* that Jesus did, which Paul encourages those who respond in faith to come to grips with for their progress in spiritual understanding (Rom. 5-7; Gal. 2:20; Col. 2:8-15).

The crowd responds to Jesus’ words, “We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever” (vs. 34). Passages such as Psa. 89:3,4,36; 110:4; Isa. 9:6,7; and Dan. 7:13,14 clearly teach that the Christ would have an everlasting kingdom. “...and how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?” Jesus *seemed* to be teaching something different than what they thought. They asked for clarification.

In response, **Jesus does not answer their question, but rather encourages them to, in effect, “keep their eyes open”,** so that they will be able *to see* and *believe* the truth when the opportunity comes. “For a little while longer the light is among you” (vs. 34). *At that time*, there was a revelation of Truth *among them* which would soon change, and be gone. “Walk while you have the light...” The word translated as “while” can also mean “as”. **Jesus may not only refer to the time that the light is available, but also may encourage them to walk in the amount of light they have.** The command to “walk” means that they are to *actively pursue* truth while they have the chance, ...and *live it out* in the regular activities of life. (The same word is used in Gal. 5:16 for walking in the Spirit.) “...that darkness may not overtake you...” To be passive *guarantees* that darkness will overtake them, having accomplished nothing. The word, “that”, indicates a purpose clause, “in order that ...not”. **Jesus instructs them to walk about as they have the light in order to avoid the darkness.** The word “overtake” occurred in 1:5, and means to “seize you”, or “hold you down”. The word picture certainly implies that **it is a negative experience to be captured or overcome by the darkness.** “...he who walks in the darkness does not know where he is goes.” If you can’t *see* clearly, then your observations and understanding will be inaccurate as well. **Missteps, pitfalls, bumps, bruises, and assorted dangers plague those who travel in the dark** (Isa. 59:9,10). “While you have the light, believe in the light, in order that you may become sons of light” (vs. 36). -- **The goal is to be transformed, to “become”, or “come-to-be”, something that they are not.** Cf. Ephesians 5:6-14. “These things Jesus spoke, and He departed and hid Himself from them.” He did not bask in the popularity of the multitude. It was a dangerous place to be for a number of reasons. (Cf. Jn. 2:23-25; 6:15; 11:47-57.)

Vss. 37-43 -- **The effect of Jesus' ministry.** “Though He had performed so many signs before them, *they were not believing in Him.*” A ministry of miracles will not necessarily produce real faith. They were not perceiving the message that the “signs” were pointing to. This resistance had been foretold centuries before by Isaiah the prophet (53:1). “For this cause they could not believe...” John goes on to quote another passage from Isaiah 6:10 to explain what appears to say that God Himself was interfering with their ability to clearly perceive the truth. At first blush, this is a difficult and awkward concept to have to deal with, “Does God really keep people from seeing the truth? Does He harden their hearts?” This does not seem to square with a God who is “not wishing for anyone to perish, but for all to come to repentance” (II Pet. 3:9) or, “Who desires all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (I Tim. 2:4). There is an *apparent contradiction* between these conflicting statements concerning God’s actions and motives. This difficulty can be explained, if we carefully examine some other passages that will add some light to our dilemma. **First of all, an important principle of interpretation is that we should rely on the *clear passages* of Scripture to help us interpret the *more difficult passages*.** The passages from II Peter and I Timothy, and many others like them, clearly teach that God *does* want everyone to turn from the darkness and vanity of sin and idolatry to an honest, real relationship with Him. Whatever this difficult verse from Isaiah is meant to teach, it is not meant to contradict that clear teaching about God. **Secondly, Jesus gives us a clue in Matthew 13:10-17. Here, He explains to the disciples that He could not speak clearly to the people because they did not want to see the truth.** The same passage from Isaiah is quoted, only it is expressed entirely as though the people have done this *to themselves*, e.g., *they* have closed their eyes and ears so as not to perceive truth. **Third, throughout the gospels we see Jesus speaking in figurative language, ...answering direct questions about who He was with somewhat indirect or obscure answers** (if He answered them at all), ...telling people who were healed to *not publicize what He had done, ...slipping away from boisterous crowds who wanted to make Him king, etc.* There seems to have been two things going on at the same time. On the one hand, He was demonstrating and teaching that He was the Messiah. On the other hand, He would not allow Himself to be misunderstood and pinned down by His words. He kept speaking in parables and avoiding the misguided popularity of the crowds. As He Himself said, in Matthew 7:6, “Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample you under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.”

Almost as an example of these latter two points, John mentions that “**many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees... were not confessing Him,** lest they should be put out of the synagogue, for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God” (vs. 42). These rulers could *see* the truth, but by their reticence to acknowledge it, they were acting like the people in Isaiah’s prophecy. Jesus had correctly identified this stumbling block to their faith two Passovers previously. **They were more concerned about what people thought of them than what God did** (5:44). The Pharisees had taken such a negative stand against Jesus that they had made it quite clear that they would use anything He said against Him. They were like the swine or dogs in Jesus’ word picture.

Vss. 44-50 - **The final words of Jesus’ public ministry.** Vss. 44,45 emphasize Jesus’ unity with the Father. To believe in Him is to believe in the One who sent Him (vs. 44). **To identify with Jesus is to identify with God.** “And he who beholds Me beholds the One who sent Me” (vs. 45). Jesus is so fully identified with God that He expresses the character of God. **To see Him is to see God who sent Him.**

“I have come as light into the world...” (vs. 46). Finally, **He clearly states that He Himself was the light.** Think about what He had said in 35,36. The light was only going to be with them for a short time. He had encouraged the people to believe in Him in order to become “sons of light”. How strange all of this must have sounded! “...that everyone who believes in Me may not remain in the darkness.” The darkness was *already in place*. He came to reveal truth and to become a guiding light for those who would choose to walk with Him.

Vss. 47-48 - **There is accountability that accompanies the presentation of truth.** “And if anyone hears My sayings, and does not keep them, I do not judge him...” Jesus is saying that those who reject His words won’t have to answer to Him. “...for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.” Cf. 3:17; 8:15. **His present mission was not to judge, but to be the sin-bearer and revealer of God’s heart.** There *will* come a time, however, when it *will* be His responsibility to judge (Jn. 5:22-29; Acts 10:42; 17:30,31). “...the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.” Jesus will not take personal revenge, rather the person will be accountable for the truth he heard.

“For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me direction, what to say, and what to speak” (vs. 49). **The authority of Jesus’ words come from God.** It is for that reason that His words are so important. We have another glimpse here of Jesus’ *modus operandi* (cf. 5:19,30,36; 7:16,17; 8:28; 10:37,38).

“And I know that His commandment is eternal life...” (vs. 50). The word for “know” here is knowledge-by-observation, I-know-because-I-have-seen. **God’s consistent communication to and through Jesus has been to bring about age-type life, life of the coming Kingdom of God into people’s lives in this world.** “Therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.” Jesus faithfully presents the message of the Father.

John 13:1-17 -- Supper Conversation: The Call To Servant Leadership

“Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. ² And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him, ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God, and was going back to God, ⁴ rose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself about. ⁵ Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.”

John 13:1-5

“And He said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called “Benefactors.”’ ²⁶ But not so with you, but let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant. ²⁷ For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves.”

Luke 22:25-27

“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; ⁴ do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be held on to, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave...”

Philippians 2:3-7

Once again, true to form, John supplies us with a different view of events than what the other gospel writers had recorded. He is the only one to tell us about the incident of Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet at the last supper. The full impact of this can only be experienced by piecing together the conversation and events from the other accounts. It is also interesting that John chose not to make any mention of the symbolic covenant meal of wine and bread that came to be celebrated as the Eucharist. Even though this was recorded in the other accounts, we would expect that if it was supposed to have *the* significant, central place in church gatherings that it later received under Roman Catholicism, John would at least have made some reference to it. Instead, he is totally silent. The closest he came to making any comment that could have any bearing on the Eucharist was his recording of the Bread of Life discourse in chapter 6, which took place much earlier and in an entirely different context. Here, Jesus did say, however, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh (*His* flesh in the context) profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are Spirit and are life” (6:64). **Could it be that even by the end of the first century John could see that a “magical interpretation” of the Lord's supper was creeping into church gatherings? Was he (or the Holy Spirit) purposely attempting to bring corrective balance to this** by recording this interpretative comment in Jn. 6, and the absolute silence in Jn. 13 about the institution of the Lord's supper?

Vss. 1-3 - **The setting was before the Judean Feast of the Passover, though we know that Jesus and His disciples were gathered here to eat *their* Passover meal** (Lk. 22). Galileans observed the Passover a day earlier than Judean Jews. We are told that Judas has already determined to betray Jesus. John describes this course of action as something Satan had put into his heart. **John mentions twice (for emphasis) that Jesus knew that He would soon be leaving this world to go to the Father** (1,3). Furthermore, He was very much aware that “the Father had given all things into His hands”, which meant that **He was conscious of the authority and power that was His**. John makes much of this so that we will not miss the dramatic contrast of the action He is now to undertake.

Vss. 4,5 - **He changed out of His clothes, girded Himself in a towel, and began to wash the disciples' feet. This was a job that would have been done by the *lowliest* of servants**, normally done when the guests first arrived. Apparently, when Peter and John (Lk. 22:8) had gone to prepare for the meal, this was overlooked. For whatever reason, their feet had not been washed since they had arrived. Though *all* would have been aware that this courtesy had been left undone, ***the disciples were not willing to volunteer to serve one another in this fashion***. When it was apparent that no one was going to care for the comfort of their compatriots, Jesus rose from the meal and performed this humble service. Once again, as He had done before in preparation for the Incarnation, “He emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave” (Phil. 2:7). **His action was virtually incomprehensible, even *shocking*, to these men who had been steeped in their tightly structured hierarchical social structure**. Those with power and prestige *did* not, and were not *supposed to*, do such tasks. **In their minds, He was doing a very radical, demeaning thing, entirely inappropriate for an important rabbi to “lower Himself” to do.**

Vss. 6-11 - **At first, Peter objects to Jesus' action. *Never shall you wash my feet!*** -- Peter refused to be the cause of Jesus' indignity. ***If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me*** -- **Jesus tells Peter that his refusal is to shut Jesus out of his life. *Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.*** -- **Peter, in his characteristic zeal for Jesus, wants to be bathed all over, if that is what it takes to share in Jesus' fellowship. *He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.*** -- Appealing to their life experience, Jesus points out that one who has bathed gets his feet dirty walking about the dusty streets in sandals, though the rest of his body stays clean. **Those who are clean only need a little “touching up”, to renew their**

purity (cf. Jas. 1:27; I Jn. 1:9). **They as a group were clean by virtue of their faith in Him** (15:3). *but not all of you* -- John explains this comment for us in the next verse. Jesus was referring to His betrayer, Judas Iscariot.

Vss. 12-17 - **Jesus returns to His place at the table, and begins to explain the meaning of His actions.** *You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am.* -- Jesus acknowledges that He is the one they look to for instruction and direction. **These were titles of great authority and respect among the people. "Teacher" would have been the equivalent of the Aramaic word "rabbi", which literally means "great one"** (1:38,49; 3:2; 20:16). A rabbi was held in high esteem in Israel in those days. It was customary to sit at his feet, ...in deference, not just for practicality..., and to walk *behind* him, not alongside him. He carried a great deal of authority and respect. **The very essence of the title, "Lord", was authority and prestige.** Those who had such a title were the powerful, privileged, and respected. *If I, then, the Lord and the Teacher washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you should also do as I did to you.* -- **Jesus modeled authority and power that did not exempt people from service, ...rather, it was good and fitting for even the most prestigious and powerful to perform the humblest and simplest task to care for the comfort and well-being of others.**

At this point, it would be valuable to look at what Luke records of the conversation of that evening. In chapter 22, verses 24-27 he writes, "And there arose also a dispute among them as to which of them was regarded to be the greatest. And He said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it (verbal form of the same word "Lord" as in Jn. 13) over them, and those who have authority over them are called (or "call themselves") "Benefactors". But not so with you, but **let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant.** For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But **I am among you as one who serves.**'" Luke records this immediately after describing the last supper, though the structure of the Greek would allow it to be another comment of what had happened *during* the supper. John chose to expand on this incident in his gospel account. It would be not uncharacteristic of Jesus that, *as this dispute was unfolding*, He would quietly have gotten up from the table, changed into the servant-garb, and began washing the disciples' feet. His actions would have been conspicuous enough to cause the argument to stop while they try to understand what He is doing. In the end, **Jesus' explanation of His actions would have more powerfully confronted their foolish posturing and competition.** Incidentally, **the phrase, "as the youngest", meant to be teachable and to act as though one did not have a higher place of prestige or authority.** In Eastern society, age was honored, often being equated with wisdom. Unfortunately, sometimes those who were older would tend to "pull rank", insisting that their opinions be heard and accepted without question, because they had the accumulated wisdom and experience to know best. Their tendency to "puff themselves up" in this way would shut down healthy inquiry and debate (e.g., Job 15:1-10; cf. Job 32:4-10). Usually, this meant that the status quo of power and prestige would be maintained, but the discovery of truth or real wisdom would suffer.

The last supper was not the first time that Jesus had spoken to them in this fashion. Just a little over a week earlier, on their way *to* Jerusalem for this very feast, James and John had been seeking special status among the disciples, asking that they could sit next to Him, one on either side, in His coming glory. Jesus put them off by saying that this was not His to give. The other disciples, however, overheard this conversation and were upset with the two brothers. **Jesus gathered them all together and said, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them** (lit., "lord it down upon them"); and their great men exercise authority over them (lit., "exercise authority down upon them"). **But it is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all.** For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mk. 10:42-45). Jesus described the hierarchical, top-down system of the world and forbade them from operating that way. **He said that those in His kingdom who had power or greatness were to employ it in serving others and building them up.** Power in the kingdom of God is not to be accumulated for prestige, or used to control people. Rather, it is to be freely given away. **It is to be used to liberate people from bondage and to set them free. Jesus pointed to His own life as the prime example of this healthy use of power.**

Vs. 16 - *Truly, truly I say to you* -- Important proclamation coming. *a slave is not greater than his master; neither is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him* -- **If Jesus, the Master, has come to be a servant, then the apostles should not expect to be served. They, like Him, are to be leaders at serving others.**

Vs. 17 - *If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them* -- **It is not enough to mentally understand this concept. Happiness will come to those who actually implement it by serving others** (cf. Acts 20:35). Faith is more than knowledge. It is the implementation of knowledge. To be a Kingdom leader,to experience the joy that comes with Spirit-led serving..., we must *act on* the Spirit's prompting.

John 13:16-38 -- Jesus Predicts His Betrayal, Prepares His Disciples

“Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master; neither is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. ¹⁸ I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me.’ ¹⁹ From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He. ²⁰ Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.’ ²¹ When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.’” John 13:16-21

Vs. 18 - *I do not speak of all of you. I know whom I have chosen* - In the previous verses, **Jesus had been talking about servant leadership. He had just said that those who lived this way would be happy** (blessed). This is a transition to a new topic, i.e., that of Jesus’ betrayer. **Happiness would not come to Judas, because of the course he was choosing.** Jesus had chosen them all (Lk. 6:12,13). The word for “know” is knowledge-by-observation, i.e., I have observed, therefore I know. Jesus had been watching their character, as witnessed by their words, actions and attitudes. *but it is that the Scripture might be fulfilled* -- The conjunction is a strong negative comparative, “rather”. Not all of you will be servant leaders experiencing happiness, rather **one of you will betray Me, in order that the prophecy of Scripture might be fulfilled.** *He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me* -- From Psalm 41:9, this speaks of a close friend who habitually ate (the word is the same as “gnaw” in Jn. 6:54-58) at His table.

Vs. 19 - *From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He* -- The word “He” is not there in the Greek. **This is the sixth instance of the “I am” absolute.** This construction also occurred in 4:26; 6:20; 8:24,28, 58. **In each case, there is either evidence of supernatural power, or an obvious unique claim of some sort.** This construction would have stood out in Greek as drawing peculiar attention to the speaker. The allusion to Exodus 3:14 would have also been apparent. **Here, Jesus is saying that He will tell them of the future events about to unfold so that they might believe that He is the I AM.**

Vs. 20 - *Truly, truly* -- Important saying immediately following. *he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me* -- This statement refers back to vs. 16, “...a slave is not greater than his master; neither is the one sent greater than the one who sent him”. The point of that proclamation was that **the servant could expect no greater authority or privilege than his master.** Here, Jesus is saying that the messenger carries the authority of the one he represents. **The treatment of the messenger will reflect the value placed upon the master by the recipients of the message.**

Vs. 21 - *He became troubled in spirit* -- Lit., “He was troubled/agitated in/with/by the S/spirit”. It could be a glimpse into how the Holy Spirit was at work within Him. Either way, **He was emotionally stirred.** *and testified, ...Truly, truly, one of you will betray Me* -- Definitely a solemn, shocking statement to tell the group.

Vss. 22-27 - **This comment left the disciples totally at a loss.** *There was reclining on Jesus’ breast* – The customary style of eating in Palestine at the time was to lie obliquely around a low table, with one’s head next to the table, and propped up on your left elbow so that your right hand would be free to eat with. Because of the oblique angle, and everyone being positioned on their left side, the head of the person on your right would come to about the middle of your chest. *one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved* -- John refers to himself in this way on several occasions in this gospel (19:26; 20:2; 21:7,20). By speaking of himself in the third person like this, he attempts to maintain some humility, while at the same time honestly reporting the close relationship he had with Jesus. **Jesus, like anybody else, had friendships with various levels of intimacy.** Even among the twelve disciples, whom He chose from a larger group of followers specifically to be able to spend more time together (Lk. 6:12,13; Mk. 3:14), there were differing levels of intimacy with Him. **This is a fact of life to be noticed and accepted.** There is only so much of any one person that they can share with others. **To be on a less intimate level does not necessarily mean rejection. It may just reflect the limitations of time and energy that the other person has.** Among the twelve, there were the inner three, Peter, James, and John (e.g., Mk. 6:37; 9:2; 14:32,33), and of these, John seemed to be closest to Jesus of all. *Simon Peter therefore gestured to him* -- **Peter signaled to John to find out from Jesus who this traitor was.** Without accusing him in front of the group, **Jesus indicated to John that it was Judas, son of Simon Iscariot,** by discreetly employing an agreed-upon signal, the passing of a dipped morsel of food to the traitor. Customarily, **when the host would personally pick out a delicacy from the food and give it to a guest, it was understood as a special sign of friendship and honor.** This would have served to hide from the other disciples that Judas was the betrayer, and it also would have been a **final appeal of friendship from Jesus toward Judas before he acted on his scheme.** *And after the morsel, Satan entered into him* -- **This is the *only* time where the Scriptures clearly reveal Satan personally coming into someone to control or influence him.** (Some think that he had “entered” Simon Peter in Matthew 16:21-23, because Jesus said in His rebuke, “Get behind Me, Satan!” A careful look at the rest of Jesus’ words, however, shows that He was still speaking to Peter, so at

best it is not clear.) The last recorded encounter that Jesus had had with Satan directly was during the testing in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11; Lk. 4:1-13). Luke's record concludes with "...and when the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time". Now, **not only had Satan suggested the idea to the mind of Judas (13:2), but he was himself personally bringing together the enemies of Jesus to destroy Him.** *Jesus therefore said to him, "What you do, do quickly."* -- **Jesus addressed Satan, commanding him to speedily carry out his scheme.**

Vss. 28-30 - These verses explain how it was that Judas had ever been able to leave that room that night. Basically, **none of the other disciples knew what was going on, or why Judas was leaving.** *And so after receiving the morsel he went out immediately* -- In response to Jesus' words of dismissal. **...and it was night** -- John places this phrase strategically, right after Judas left. It is meant not only to describe the physical surroundings, but also the spiritual dynamics of the Satanic plot that began to unfold. Cf. Lk. 22:47-53.

Vss. 31,32 - *When therefore he had gone out* -- **Now Jesus could talk more freely. Things had been set in motion. Now is the Son of Man glorified** -- **To be glorified is to "be clearly revealed, to have your qualities, character, and accomplishments made known"**. The form of this Greek verb in vs. 31, and in its first occurrence in vs. 32, conveys the idea of past completed action, "He *was* glorified". Setting this in the past would seem to be in conflict with the use of the word "now". The emphasis has to be more on the *type* of action than on the *time* of the action. **The statement means that at this present time ("now") Jesus is glorified/clearly revealed** (at a point in time). Again, He is speaking of the events leading to the crucifixion that were beginning to unfold outside the room they were gathered in. **...and God is glorified in Him** -- This has all been at the initiative of God and, therefore, reveals His heart and character as well. *God will glorify Him in Himself, ...immediately* -- The verb changes to the future tense. **Christ will be made known by past, present, and also in future events soon to come.**

Vs. 33 - *Little children* -- A term of endearment and familiarity that also expresses the relative immaturity and vulnerability of the disciples in their faith. (This became one of John's favorite terms. The other seven occurrences of this word are used by him in 1 John - 2:1,12,28; 3:7,18; 4:4; 5:21). **Jesus' attention turns to the needs of these men, as they unknowingly are to face the crises of the next few hours, and of the days to come.** The remainder of this chapter through to the end of chapter sixteen are Jesus' words of explanation, counsel, encouragement and preparation for them during this last evening together. *I am with you a little while longer* -- Jesus had spoken these words to the crowds months before (7:33,34; 8:21-24), and again only a few days earlier (12:35,36). Now He is relating them again to His disciples. *You shall seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, I now say to you also, "Where I am going, you cannot come,"* -- **He who had been their teacher, master, counselor and friend was going to be unavailable to them. He was going to leave them to go somewhere that they could not accompany Him.**

Vss. 34,35 - *A new commandment I give to you* -- **What would the "old commandments" have been? The Law of the OT.** Jesus was claiming to have authority to add to these commandments given by God. *that you love one another* -- **The focus of Jesus' instruction "to love" here is to those specifically within the community of believers, not to love all men everywhere in this way. "One another" also is a reflexive pronoun, meaning that the love is to go both ways.** As I love, I am to be loved, as well. Only other believers can return this kind of love. *even as I have loved you* -- **Jesus' own example becomes the model of love in our relationships with one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples** -- **This is the distinctive mark that true disciples of Jesus are to become evident by.** Not our words, our theology, our church buildings, or our religious activities, rather **by our giving, serving magnanimous love evidenced within the Christian community.** *if you have love for one another* -- The Greek is, "if ever y'all might have (and be having) love in/with/to one another". Notice that **whenever this phenomenon might take place, people will experientially-know that we are followers of Jesus** (e.g., Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37). **What kind of love is this? The Greek word is agapaō,** a relatively little-used term. Because of Jesus and the Christian movement, **this term became almost exclusively used for Christian love,** ...love produced by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22). **Instead of being an emotion, it is a verb, an action. It describes the unselfish, consistent direction of your own self-will toward another's well-being.** It is a uniquely Christian virtue. John tells us that **only those who are born of God can love in this way** (1 Jn. 4:7). This is the love which God had for the world that prompted Him to send Jesus for us (Jn. 3:16). Like God, **we are to love all people, but our primary focus is to be toward loving the brothers and sisters in Christ** (1 Thess. 3:12).

Vss. 36-38 - **In Peter's brief interchange with Jesus, we find that the disciples can't follow Jesus now, but they will later.** Looking back from our perspective, we can understand that Jesus was referring to His death, and His return to His Father. **Peter was not satisfied with Jesus' response, and in typical bravado style insists that He is tough enough and committed enough to face whatever lay ahead, even death.** The Lord challenges his overestimation of himself, predicting that *in that very night he would even deny that he knew Jesus three times.*

John 13:36-14:31 -- More Table Talk, With Interruptions

“Simon Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, where are You going?’ Jesus answered, ‘Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you shall follow later.’ ... ‘Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way where I am going.’ ⁵ Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?’ ⁶ Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me. ⁷ If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.’ ⁸ Philip said to Him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.’ ⁹ Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, “‘Show us the Father’”? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. ¹¹ Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me; otherwise believe on account of the works themselves. ¹² Truly, truly, I say to you, the one believing in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father.’ ... Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, ‘Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us, and not to the world?’”
John 13:36; 14:1-12,22

Chapters 13-17 of John together record Jesus’ conversation with His disciples on the eve of His arrest. **13:31-14:31 contain Jesus’ words to the eleven around the supper table after Judas Iscariot had left.** As Jesus attempts to prepare them for the events of the next few hours, **His comments are broken up four times by various disciples** (13:36; 14:5; 14:8; 14:22). It is helpful to read the passage this way to see how Jesus responded to the interruptions, and yet returned to some key themes repeated throughout the evening.

As we have seen, once Judas left, Jesus began to tell the disciples that He was leaving, and that they would not be able to follow. **He began to talk about how they were to love one another,** with a love like His own. This was to be the premier identifying mark of those who would follow Him, visible enough for all people to see. *Simon Peter said to Him -- Suddenly Peter interrupts with a question about where Jesus was going.* (Vs. 36 – It is clear where his mind turned off. He was still back at vs. 33 in his thinking.) In the brief interchange, Jesus predicts that Peter would not stand so “rock-firm” in his commitment as he might suppose. Before the night was out, he would deny Jesus three times.

14:1-6 - **Returning to His theme of trying to comfort them, Jesus tells them to not be troubled.** The word here is the same as we have seen before in John 11:33 and 12:27. It means, “don’t be agitated/disturbed/upset/terrified/frightened”. *Believe in God, believe also in Me.* -- Jesus probably meant “trust in” or “have confidence in”, more than “intellectually consent to”, as the word “belief” has come to mean in our culture, i.e., “you trust in God, trust in Me also”. **“Don’t be upset, but have confidence in what I am saying to you.”** *In My Father’s house are many dwelling places -- The household of God has many rooms. If it were not so...* -- In the Greek NT, this phrase is presented as a question: “But if not, (would) I ever have said to you, ‘I go to prepare a place for you’?” Evidently, Jesus had spoken these words to them before, though we have no record of it (cf. Lk. 16:9). The point is, “Why would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you, unless (1) there really was enough room for you; and (2) I really was going to go?”. *If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.* -- **They would be together again. The whole idea of going to “prepare a place for them” meant that He intended to come back for them.**

And you know the way where I am going. (14:4) -- The Greek is, “Where I go y’all know (intellectually) the road/way/path.” The way that Jesus was going to His Father was by His death. That is why in 13:33 He said that “Where I am going, you cannot come.” **He did not want them to die with Him,** as Thomas and Peter had earlier suggested (11:16; 13:37). That would not accomplish anything lasting. **He had trained them as apostles (representative ambassadors) to carry on His work after He was gone.** *Thomas said to Him --* Wherever Jesus’ immediate train of thought was heading, it was **interrupted by Thomas’ question. Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?** (14:5) -- Thomas confessed that he and the others were not understanding what Jesus was talking about. They were not able to follow what He was telling them. His logic is sound, “If we don’t understand where You are going, how are we able to know or perceive the road/way/path?” *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life...”* -- Jn. 14:6 is the sixth “I am” saying of this kind in the book (6:35; 8:12; 10:7,11; 11:25). The emphatic nature of the expression would be better translated as “I (Myself) am”, drawing specific attention to Him. **In effect, Jesus’ answer to Thomas’ question was, “All you need to know is Me, Thomas.”** Jesus is the way/road/path to the Father, the *destination* that Jesus was departing to (cf. vs. 2). He is the truth, all the information, the correspondence to reality, that they would need to find their way. He is the life, to overcome the fear of death. The last time they had heard Him refer to Himself as the life was when He prepared to raise Lazarus from the dead. The way to the Father is secure in

Him, who is Himself the path, the accurate map of reality, and the One who said, “he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die”. *no one comes to the Father, but through Me* -- **Simple statement of fact. Jesus is the only means to come to the Father.** Notice, however, that He did *not* say that no one would come to the Father unless he believed certain information about Him, ...nor that a person needed a certain kind of faith. Regardless of whether it may be possible to come to know God apart from professing faith in the historical Jesus, what we do know is that **Jesus alone paid the potential price for all people to come to God** (I Tim. 2:3-6; I Jn. 2:2; II Cor. 5:14,15; I Tim. 4:10), including the OT saints (Rom. 3:23-26; Isa. 53).

Vss. 7-11 -- **In this section, Jesus refers to His role as the Revealer of the Father**, whereupon He is immediately interrupted by Philip, whom He briefly responds to. *If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also* -- The earliest manuscripts have, “If you *had* known Me, also My Father you *will* know”, a guarantee of the effectiveness of His role as the Way. The words for “know” refer to experiential, relational knowledge, not merely intellectual. *from now on you know Him, and have seen Him* -- The words, “from now on” would probably be better translated “from this time”, “presently”. The statement refers to Jesus’ incarnational role as the Revealer of God (cf. 1:14,18). As they presently know Jesus, they have seen the Father. **Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.”** (14:8) -- Not quite catching the drift, Philip apparently thinks that Jesus is going to initiate some deep religious experience. Jesus’ response in the next few verses clarifies what He meant. ***the Father abiding in Me does His works*** -- **This is the clearest statement of the dynamic that Jesus operated by.** He has alluded to it several times throughout the book. He did nothing “from Himself”, rather the words and works He performed were from the Father (5:19,20,30, 36; 7:16,17; 8:28,29,38; 10:25,32,37,38; 12:49,50). **Now we find out clearly that they were from the Father, who was indwelling Jesus** (cf. Lk. 5:17; Acts 2:22; 10:38). *Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me...* -- Trust Me that what I am telling you is true. ...*otherwise believe on account of the works themselves* -- If you can’t just accept what I am saying, how do you explain the miracles that I perform? The fact that I do them testifies that God is with Me somehow.

Vs. 12 - **Jesus begins to make the application to the disciples, i.e., He will send the Holy Spirit so that they will be able to operate in the same way He does.** *Truly, truly, I say to you* -- Important declaration approaching! *he who believes in Me* -- Lit., “the (one) believing”. *the works that I do shall he do also* -- **An astounding statement to our ears, yet the apostles would have heard it much differently.** After all, they had done these same kind of dramatic works that Jesus was referring to (Lk. 9:1-6; 10:1-11). **They would have heard these words as an extension of that ability and authority to all believers.** *and greater works than these shall he do* -- Greater in what sense? In power? In a larger geographical area? With greater impact? In greater numbers? No explanation is given. By the way, some would attempt to argue, using 6:28,29, that Jesus was not at all referring to miraculous signs here, but only to those works that resulted in the spread of the gospel. This is an unwarranted conclusion, motivated by a fear or skepticism of “supernatural power-demonstrations”. The way that the word “works” is most often used in John would include, if not specifically highlight, the miraculous (cf. 5:36; 9:3,4; 10:31,37,38). Furthermore, it is quite clear that “power ministry” was definitely one key aspect of the effective gospel testimony of the early church (Acts 2:43; 3:1ff.; 4:10-14,33; 5:1-16; 6:8; 8:4-13; 9:17,18,32-42; 10:38; 13:6-12; 14:3,8-18; 15:12; 16:16-18; 19:11-17; 28:3-10; I Cor. 2:1-5; 4:18-21; I Thess. 1:5; Heb. 2:1-4). ...*because I go to the Father* -- **Why is Jesus’ absence from them, and His going to be with the Father, an explanation for this new dynamic made available to every believer?** In vs. 16, Jesus says that He will ask the Father, and the Father would send the Helper. In 16:7, He would tell them that if He did not leave, the Helper would not come to them. Finally, in Acts 2:33, we find out that Jesus received the Spirit from the Father, after He ascended into heaven. He then “poured Him out” upon the church.

Vss. 13-24 – **The declaration of His leaving also provides a connecting link to Jesus’ further thoughts about the Holy Spirit**, who would be a comforter/helper to them like He Himself had been. As He talks of the Spirit’s coming, He mentions (vss. 18,19) that He Himself would come to be with them, and though they will see Him again, the world will see Him no longer. *In that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.* -- In this unusual sentence, **Jesus alludes to the new dynamic that will prevail in those coming days.** Somehow, even as they have witnessed the Father in Jesus, and heard Him say that He was in His Father, **in that day they will experientially-know that Jesus Himself will be in them, and they in Him.** Moreover, somehow He will remain in His Father, which means that **they, too, will be in the Father!** This kind of talk, prompts **the fourth interruption from Judas (not Iscariot): Lord, what then has happened that you are going to disclose Yourself to us, and not to the world?** (14:22) - - Unable to really grasp what Jesus spoke of, it was a reasonable question. Of course, Jesus spoke of things that had not yet taken place, so there was no way to plausibly explain it to them, so **Jesus assured them that the Spirit will teach them what they would need to know** (vs. 26). For now, He spoke to them before the events unfolded, so that they would be able to maintain their faith after the crisis of His death took place (vs. 29). **Arise, let us go from here.**

John 14:12-24 -- Love, Obedience, and the New Covenant

“And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; ¹⁷ *that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you.*”
John 14:16-17

We saw in an overview of Jn. 13:31-14:31 that **Jesus was attempting to teach His disciples about the new dynamic that would be available as a result of His return to the Father.** In 14:12-23, Jesus introduced some aspects of what would become available to them when the indwelling relationship which He experienced with the Father (i.e., the Father living in Him and He in the Father) came to be extended to them, and to anyone who would believe in Him.

Vs. 12 - This is where Jesus' thoughts began to shift from Himself to His disciples, and others who would believe in Him. **The first aspect of the new dynamic of the indwelling Spirit would be the ability to perform miraculous works like Jesus Himself had.** The phrase, “because I go to the Father” refers to the coming of the new Comforter, which the Father will send at Jesus' request (vss. 16,17,26; cf. 16:7; Acts 2:33).

Vss. 13,14 - *And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do* -- This appears to be an amazingly broad, open-ended promise, though in reality there are some important parameters for what is being said here. First, the “and” at the beginning of the clause indicates that this is not a completely new thought. Rather, it is another example of what would be introduced as a *result* of Jesus' going to the Father. Just as there would be miraculous power available, **there will also be an effective prayer dynamic that will be made possible by the indwelling Spirit.** Secondly, asking “in My name” is more than simply a password, or a magical formula. It stands for asking for what is in accordance with Jesus' character, authority and will. *that the Father may be glorified in the Son* -- This provides a third limiting parameter. The purpose of the answer being granted is that it would bring honor to the Father through the Son. This means that anything which would *dishonor* either God the Father or Jesus would not be something which would be promised by this utterance. *If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.* -- Notice that here, as also in the previous verse, **Jesus presents Himself as the active agent who will respond to their requests**, “I will do it”. Now He also is teaching them to ask Him. **He is also the recipient of their prayers** (e.g. Acts 7:59; Rev. 22:20). This is another claim to being God.

Vs. 15 - *If you love Me* -- **This is the first part of a conditional statement.** The Greek verb here is describing a possibility, “if ever you might love Me”. **Once the condition is met, the remaining part of the statement will follow** logically, or of necessity. *you will keep My commandments* -- The verb has changed to a simple future, which is meant to communicate certainty to this latter half of the proposition. Obedience *will* follow, or accompany, love for Jesus. You cannot have true love for Jesus without also valuing and obeying His wishes. It may be possible for a person to obey Jesus, at least for a time, without loving Him. The statement does not speak to that possibility. What it *does* say is that **genuine love will produce, or be accompanied by, obedience.**

For whatever reason, **most of us tend to hear Jesus' words here in a backwards fashion.** We immediately start evaluating our performance to see if we are really loving Him. **We somehow misconstrue His words to be saying, “Now, I want you to prove you love Me by your obedience.”** We even think that He is instructing us to work *more* on our performance so that our love for Him will grow. That is totally opposite of what is really being said here! This statement is not meant as some kind of performance evaluation. **In the context, obedience from love is the third ingredient of the new dynamic which will be introduced by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.** It is meant as a *promise* to *claim* and to expect. Just as the promise of miraculous works, or of effective prayer, were to be expressions of the new life-dynamic, so now, **as a result of the Spirit's presence, hearts that love Him will now be inclined to obey Him.**

This is a continuation of Jesus' introductory thoughts about the new Spirit-dynamic, not a change of direction in His thoughts. Furthermore, **from Luke's account of the last supper, we find that Jesus had earlier referred to the cup of wine as “the new covenant in My blood”** (Lk. 22:20). This would have brought certain OT passages to the minds of the disciples that referred to this topic (Jer. 31:31-33; 32:37-42). **The essential difference of the new covenant was that God's Law would be written upon the hearts and minds of His people. Obedience would no longer be foreign to their “uncircumcised hearts”** (cf. Deut. 29:1-4; 30:1-6), **but would be the natural outworking of their new hearts.** Ezekiel taught that they were to receive new hearts and a new Spirit, which would *enable* them, ...even “*cause*” them..., to walk in obedience (Ezk. 11:14-20; 36:22-38). **In light of this background, it makes sense that Jesus would refer to obedience as a result of a new heart attitude, ...the result of the receipt of a “new Spirit” from God.** Under the old covenant, obedience was too often motivated by fear (Deut. 4:1-28; 5:29), though even from earliest times God was attempting to reveal to them His loving character, and appeal to the loyalty and obedience that springs from love (Deut. 4:29-40; 5:10; 6:4-9). The inner transformation of the heart brought about at new birth introduces an entirely new variable into the equation of human behavior. **Now, as we understand the love commitment of the Father, and as**

we are ministered to by the messages of assurance and acceptance by the indwelling Holy Spirit, we become able to no longer fear rejection, judgment or punishment (I Jn. 4:9-19; Rom. 5:1-5; 8:14-16). Even the “fear of the Lord” begins to take on an entirely different hue, and we even find it to be a delightful awe (Isa. 11:3), instead of an oppressive dread. **Obedience does come more and more from a heartfelt desire and delight to do His will** (Phil. 2:12,13; Ps. 40:8).

Vs. 16 - *And I will ask the Father -- They would not be able to do these things without the enabling power of God. Jesus will ask His Father for this very thing*, the indwelling empowering presence of the Holy Spirit, to be given to them. *and He will give you another Helper* -- There are two Greek words for “another”. One, *allos*, means “another of a similar kind”, “another-like” (cf. II Cor. 11:4 – “another Jesus”). The other word, *heteros*, means “another of a different kind”, “other”, “strange” (cf. II Cor. 11:4 – “a different spirit”). **The word translated as “helper”, and its related forms, have a broad range of common translational meanings.** The word in Greek is *paraklētos*, from which we have the English derivative, “paraclete”. **Basically, it means “one called/invited alongside (usually to help or assist in some fashion)”**. The breadth of translation options comes from the various applications that this term may have in different contexts. It has been rendered as “helper” (NASB), “comforter” (KJV) in this context (Jn. 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7), or as “advocate” (I Jn. 2:1). In addition, related forms are variously translated as “exhort”, “encourage”, “urge”, “entreat”, “console”, or “appeal”. (This is significant when talking about the gift of exhortation or encouragement in Rom. 12:8. It is important to see that there may be a wide range of expressions of that gift.) **Jesus had functioned in this capacity for the disciples. Now He is saying that He would ask the Father to send a replacement who would be like Him. that He may be with you forever** -- The Greek literally is, “in order that (purpose clause) He might be (being) with you into/unto the age”. Jesus is saying that **while His stay with them has been temporary, the Holy Spirit will never leave them. It was God’s purpose to make available to them an ever-present Helper-like-Jesus.**

Vs. 17 - *that is the Spirit of truth* -- Lit., “the wind/breath/spirit of the reality/truth”. This is not just a “truthful or genuine spirit”. **It is the Spirit, or “breath”, of what is real.** It is the clear, fresh wind which comes from what is real, and carries the fragrance of truth wherever it goes. *...whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him* -- **The world is not able to receive, grasp or take this “breath of truth” because it does not perceive or experientially-know Him** (1 Cor. 2:14). *but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you* - **The disciples did experientially-know this “breath of fresh air”. He had been dwelling alongside of them (*para*), so they were familiar with Him. However, Jesus goes on to say that this “wind of what is real” will actually come inside of them (*en*) to live. What will that do to their lives?**

This is the essential difference of the new covenant. The Spirit of God no longer will live only on the outside, “among the people”, or “in their midst”. He will actually come into their hearts to live, and to dispense His character and influence within and through their unique personalities.

Vs. 21 - *He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me* -- The Greek uses participles to describe the ongoing action of these verbs, “the (one) having ... and keeping/obeying... that (person) is the (one) loving Me.” **Again, there is a strong connection between *agapē*-love for Jesus and obedience.** It is important to note, however, that **obedience is not the condition for love, rather it is the fruit or identifying mark of genuine love for Jesus.** Love does not equal obedience, but neither can one truly love or esteem Jesus and at the same time disregard His commands. **Let there be no deception. Feelings of warmth, attraction, appreciation, or thanksgiving toward God may only be sentimentality, not real *agapē*-love.** *and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father* -- What father could not value one who esteems and honors his child? *and I will love him* -- We need not fear that our love will be spurned or unappreciated. Jesus will love those who love Him. *and will disclose Myself to him* -- The Greek word for “disclose” means to “reveal, make visible or manifest within”. **He speaks of revelation to the inner consciousness. Christ responds to those who esteem Him with greater openness of heart and intimacy.** Cf. I Sam. 2:30b; Psa. 25.

Vs. 23 - *If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word* -- A return to the original statement from vs. 15. **Love will produce obedience.** *and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him* -- The word translated as “abode” is the same word as “dwelling places” in vs. 2, only singular in form. The one loving Jesus will enjoy the daily communion and interaction that accompanies living in the presence of another. Notice that **instead of requiring us to be responsible to “dwell in God’s presence”, the Father and Jesus will come to us and abide with us.** The word for “with” is *para*, meaning “alongside of, near, in the presence of”. Jesus is not describing an indwelling relationship here, as the promised new Spirit-dynamic would be. If meant literally, this would refer to Jesus’ second coming and the dwelling of the saints in the New Jerusalem (vss. 2,3,18; 17:24; I Thess. 4:16,17; Rev. 21).

Vs. 24 - *He who does not love Me does not keep My words* -- This is a negative statement of the same principle as above. **Just as genuine *agapē*-love will produce obedience, the resulting lack of love is a disregard of Jesus’ words.** As a reminder, Jesus again states that His message is not His; it is the Father’s who sent Him.

John 15:1-17 -- Abiding in Jesus' Love

“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing. ⁸ ...By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and come to be My disciples. ⁹ Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. ¹⁰ If ever you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and your joy may be made full. ¹² This is My commandment in order that you might love one another, just as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are My friends, if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, in order that you might go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you.”

John 15:5,8-16

You might ask, “What was Jesus' death and resurrection all about? What does it mean to me, day to day?” Throughout the scriptures, from the time of the fall, **God has been looking to secure for Himself a people who will be loyal to Him.** He prepared the way, prophesying and promising His plan to bring salvation to all people who would choose to respond to Him. **It is important to see that this is not just about *saving* people, ...it is about *calling out and liberating* those who are willing to *follow* Him!** He has shown us a wonderful, gracious love, ...an *agapē*-love, a benevolent purpose to benefit humankind, even though they had done nothing to earn it. **He demonstrated this love when we were distant from Him, at odds with Him, ignorant of Him, and wanting nothing to do with Him.** We were self-seeking, living for pride and pleasure. We were “children of wrath”, in that our lives were displeasing to Him. Nevertheless, **He saved us, not because of deeds we had done in righteousness, but purely out of His mercy.** His love drew Him to come to dwell among us as a human being, and pay the price for our redemption. **For those who respond to His grace, He washes us with the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, and begins a process of renewing us to make us like Him.** That is the ultimate goal, to make us like Him, ...**He desires to mold and shape our hearts to become vessels that can contain and express His life and His love.** Jesus speaks of this great purpose in this passage in John 15.

He is the Vine, ...He is our *Life-source*. We are to *abide* in Him, ...*live* in Him, ...*stay* in Him, ...*get our life from Him*. **If we do that, we will bear much fruit** (vs. 5). **He called us and set us about the business of bearing fruit.** **What kind of fruit? The fruit of His life expressed through us.** “...fruit that will remain.”

“*Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love*” (vs. 9). -- The Greek for “love” is *agapāō* here. Jesus' love for them had been like the love that the Father had for Him. In 3:34,35, the Father's *agapē*-love caused Him to give Jesus *everything* into His hand. In a similar way, **Jesus's love will give to us everything we need.** **This will come to us as we remain in this place of intimacy, openness, and benevolent *agapē* with Christ.**

“*If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love*” (vs. 10). -- The concept is this: Whenever they would be obedient, they will in fact *be abiding in His love*. This could be interpreted in two ways: Either Jesus is saying, “Your obedience will *earn* My love”, or **He is saying “Obedience is the way to *continue* to experience the intimacy and love that are already directed toward you”.** The first is a “do-in-order-to-get” scenario, the second is a “do-in-order-to-enjoy-and-continue-in-what-is-already-yours” idea. The first explanation would *imply* that Jesus *will withhold His love* if we don't perform. The second implies that **we might wander away from the experience of His love if we don't pay attention and walk responsively with Him.** His love toward us is secure and unquestionable. **It is our experience of it that is the concern.** The entire context, and especially the use of the word “abide” strongly favors the second interpretation. Also, the fact that Jesus used a form of the verb for “keep, obey” that *emphasizes a point-of-time decision* would seem to argue that *He is describing a choice* to obey that confirms the experience of being “in tune with” Him. “...*just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love*” -- **Jesus is calling them to live in relation to Him as He has lived in relation to the Father.** This also clarifies the first clause. **Jesus never had to earn the Father's love.** His obedient choices enabled Him to experientially dwell in it, however.

“*These things I have spoken to you, that My joy might be in you, and that your joy may be made full*” (vs. 11). - This statement makes clear that **Jesus is describing “abiding in His love” as a joyful, positive experience, not as some “walking-on-eggshells” relationship** where fear of rejection always hovers. **No, it is not about the danger of falling out of God's favor. It is about maximizing joy!** It is the joy that Jesus experienced and lived by that He is attempting to introduce to us. **His desires nothing less than that we “be filled” with it.** Cf. Nehemiah 8:10.

“This is My commandment, that you love one another” (vs. 12). -- **Do you want to live in and experience the love of Jesus? Then love one another.** You will come to experience the love of Christ being expressed through you to others, and you will also be loved by Christ through others in return. *“...just as I have loved you.”* -- Again, **this passage is very plainly not about getting or earning Christ’s love.** The Greek here is a past, completed action. He points to the love He has *already* expressed to them as the example for their love for one another.

“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends” (Vs. 13). -- The Greek for “friends” are “the-ones-he-likes-or-enjoys” (*phileōn*, from the other word for love, *phileō*). John writes in I Jn. 4:9, “By this the love (*agapē*) of God was manifested to us, that God has sent His unique Son into the world so that we might live through Him.” Paul tells us that “one will hardly die for a righteous man, though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ... For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Rom. 5:7,8,10). **God’s *agapē* love goes beyond even the love Jesus says is the “greater love”. He was willing to lay down His life for His enemies, not just His friends. How much more is His willingness to give of Himself toward those who love Him in return?**

“You are My friends, if you do what I command you” (vs. 14). -- This is not some childish, self-centered demand, “If you want to be my friend then you have to do what I say”. **Because Jesus is the King, the Christ, He must be obeyed. To function as a friend, to “be” a friend to Him, requires that we recognize His authority and follow His directives.** To disobey Him is to function as one serving the enemy. This is not the nature of *all* relationships, but it *is* the nature of a relationship with Jesus. We are not two equals having a casual interaction. He is the King. To be His friend demands that we recognize and value His authority.

“No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things I have heard from My Father I have made known to you” (vs. 15). -- **Even though a relationship with Jesus as King demands respect and obedience, He does not see us as simply slaves,** at His beck and call. Slaves are just told what to do. They are not privy to relationship, or intimate sharing with their master. There is no expectation that they need to know what their master’s thoughts, values, or plans are. There is no expectation that a close friendship might develop between slave and master. Jesus uses this well-known social relationship to point out that His disciples are *not* simply performers for Him, ...pawns to do His will. **He does value them as friends, and shares with them His intimate thoughts and counsel** (cf. Prov. 3:32; Psa. 25:14).

“You did not choose Me, but I chose you” (vs. 16). -- Certainly, this was true about the disciples’ relationship with Jesus. They were with Him, because He had selected them, picked them out of a larger group of followers for a specific task (Lk. 6:13; Jn. 6:70; 13:18; Acts 1:2). Jesus’ point here is to again emphasize what this relationship is all about. They are *not* equals, just “hanging around” together. **By His initiative, they were selected to accompany Him, and to be trained by Him.** Obviously, they also had come along voluntarily, and in that sense they *chose* to be there. (It wasn’t some kind of “hypnotic mind control”.) Their desire to be one of His inner disciples was not sufficient in itself, however. That prerogative belonged to Jesus. *“...and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit”* – As we saw, the word translated as “appointed” most commonly means “placed” or “put”. In a context like this, however, the word means either “I put you (in a place)” or “I put you (to work, or be about a task)”. Cf. Acts 20:28; I Tim. 1:12; 2:7. Again, **the clear message is that Jesus is in control. He is the one who assigned them to their place or task.** The word “put” or “place” is also a form of the same word He used in vs. 13, “he might lay down/place/put his life...” (cf. I Jn. 3:16). “That” means “in order that”, a purpose clause in Greek. **The purpose was that they might go away (or go about their business) and produce fruit apart from His physical presence, but supported by His life.** *“...and that your fruit should remain”* -- Jesus is looking for fruit that will endure, eternal fruit. The word “remain” is the same as “abide”, hence, that their fruit might “live in, continue in, remain, or endure”. *“...that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you”* -- The word “that” designates another purpose clause in Greek. He chose and appointed them... **“in order that** what anything ever you might ask (at a point in time) of the Father in My name, He may give to you”. This restates the theme, from 14:13; & 15:7, regarding effectual prayer. **Asking in His name means to ask on His authority, in response to His instructions. Christ had given them His authority to accomplish the tasks He had appointed them to do.**

“This I command you, that you love one another (vs. 17). -- **Literally, “these (things) I command you”, referring to the entire previous context of abiding and obeying,** not to the phrase that follows. **He is not here commanding them to love, but to abide in Him and in His love.** The purpose of this was “in order that you might love one another”. **Abiding in Jesus will produce the love,** because it is the tenor of His heart. **We love because He first loved us** (I Jn. 4:19). **This was the purpose for His coming: to call out a people for Himself, ...a people who will come to Him, follow Him, partake of Him, abide in Him, become like Him, and bear fruit for Him.**

John 15:18-16:4 -- The World Will Hate You

“If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. ²¹ But all these things they will do to you on account of My name, because they do not know the One who sent Me... ²³ He who hates Me hates My Father also. ^{16:1} ...These things I have spoken to you, that you may be kept from stumbling. ² They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God. ³ And these things they will do, because they have not known the Father, or Me. ⁴ But these things I have spoken to you, that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.”

John 15:18-21,23; 16:1-4

This section addresses the issue of persecution. Jesus tells them that they can *expect it* to follow them.

“*If the world hates you...*” (vs. 18) -- **The world will not necessarily always hate us. Sometimes they recognize and admire the actions and qualities of Christians.** Cf. Acts 5:12,13. “...*you know that it hated Me before it hated you.*” -- Being hated by the world is not necessarily an indictment of one’s character, or an indication that one is not following Jesus. In fact, quite the opposite. **It is often because we are following Jesus that the world turns on us.**

“*If you were of the world...*” (vs. 19) -- They were no longer *of* the world, though they lived *in* it. “...*the world would love its own.*” -- The Greek is “...the world ever was loving/enjoying (*phileō*) its own”. **It is a characteristic of the world system that it approves of what conforms to it, but hates what does not.** “...*but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*” -- No longer is the world their source or origin (the meaning of the Greek word for “of”, and “out of” here). **Because the world is no longer their source, or their orientation, “...on account of this, the world hates you”.** In vs. 16, Jesus had just reminded the disciples that they had not chosen *Him*, rather *He* had chosen *them* and had appointed them to bear much fruit. He had chosen the twelve to be more specifically trained to live as He did, and to represent Him to the world by preaching and miraculous ministry (Luke 6:12-17; Mark 3:13-15). **Jesus’ choice of them not only changed their orientation from the world to God, it also set them in active confrontation with the world system, ...questioning peoples’ values and focus, and calling people to change their minds (repent) concerning what is important.** Jesus’ choice here does not necessarily mean a “choice unto salvation” as those who believe in predestination might emphasize. It could simply refer to the fact that His selection of them to be about a certain task or calling put them in the spotlight, and consequently brought the disdain and hostility of the world upon them. The same principle applies to us today. **As we understand that Christ has selected us to represent Him to our little corner of the world, and we begin to do so, we will also begin to run into opposition and resistance.** The apostle Paul said, “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (II Tim. 3:12). “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’” (vs. 20) -- **As they treated Jesus, they will treat His disciples, either with persecution or obedience.**

“...*all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake...*” (vs. 21) -- The Greek says, “on account of My name”, i.e., *in reaction to Jesus’ name and person, not for the benefit of His name.* “...*because they do not know the One who sent Me*” -- The word for “know” here is knowledge-by-observation. They have not seen or recognized the presence of God in Jesus.

“*If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin...*” (vs. 22) -- **Jesus’ ministry among them had confronted them with a truth-test that they had never faced before, and they had rejected Him.** “...*but now they have no excuse for their sin.*” -- **They cannot pretend to have “not known”.** All pretense had been removed.

“*He who hates Me hates My Father also.*” ” (vs. 23) -- **Our reaction to Jesus reveals our attitude toward the Father.** Remember, the word “hate” can mean “disregard”, or “esteem lightly” in Eastern cultures, not just a strong negative emotion of hostility. **The one who disregards Jesus thinks lightly of the Father as well.** How can this be true? If anyone really loved and valued the Father, he would come to value what the Father did. He would investigate carefully Jesus’ truth claims, not dismiss them out of hand.

“*If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well.*” (vs. 24) -- **The miraculous signs which Jesus had performed served to make them more accountable.** Nicodemus had said, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him” (3:2; cf. 5:36; 7:31; 10:32,37,38; 12:37). **The fact that they had repeatedly seen these powerful evidences of God’s presence with Him and still disregarded, or even despised, Him made them more clearly responsible.** They could not claim ignorance, when the evidence was so obvious. **Their rejection of Jesus was also a rejection of the Father, who was the One who enabled Him to do these works** (14:10). “*But ... in order that the word may be fulfilled that is written in their Law, ‘They hated Me*

without a cause” (vs. 25) -- **Twice this very phenomenon had been prophesied and recorded in the Psalms (35:19; 69:4).** It had happened to David, who was a prophetic type of the Messiah who was to come. **The Pharisees and Sadducees were so proud of being ‘people of the Book’,** people who studied and valued the Torah, **yet here they were living out the part of the unjust enemy who “hated without cause”.**

“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father...” (vs. 26,27) -- The Helper is the Paraclete, the “one called alongside to help”, the one Jesus had referred to as “another (like Me) Helper” in 14:16,17. **Believe it or not, the question of who sends the Holy Spirit, and whether He “proceeds” from the Father only, ...or from both the Father and the Son..., has been a point of debate and actual division in church history.** The Eastern Orthodox churches held that the Spirit “proceeds from the Father”, while the Western Church (both Roman Catholics and Protestants) have confessed that He “proceeds from Father and the Son”, even though this is not plainly stated in the NT. **This issue, along with the question of the authority of the pope, which the Eastern Churches refused to acknowledge, led to the Great Schism of 1054,** when the Eastern Churches separated from the Western, Roman Catholic Church. The language in the NT *can be* somewhat confusing. In Jn. 14:16, Jesus says *He* will “ask the Father and He (the Father) will give you another Helper”. Again, in vs. 26, it is depicted as “the Holy Spirit, whom *the Father will send* in My name”. In *this* verse, 15:26, Jesus is the one who will “send” the Holy Spirit “from the Father”, but He is further described *in the same verse* as “the Spirit of truth, who *proceeds from the Father*”. In 16:7, again, Jesus says, “*I will send Him* to you”. Jesus was described by God to John the Baptist as “the one who *baptizes* [people] in the Holy Spirit” (Jn. 1:33). After His resurrection, Jesus told His disciples, “And behold, *I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high*” (Lk. 24:49). This took place at Pentecost, and Peter explains that **Jesus, “...having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He (Jesus) has poured forth this which you both see and hear” (Acts 2:33).**

I think that it is best to live with the tension of a little bit of unexplained mystery, especially when realizing that we are attempting to understand the infinite God, than to split over doctrinal speculation. It may be *more work* to be faithful to present the actual language of Scripture, but our attempts to “summarize” or “synthesize” what the Scriptures teach, often create more problems than it solves. The apostle Paul said that **as servants of Christ we have been entrusted as “stewards of the mysteries of God” (I Cor. 4:1).** As such, it is expected of stewards to be trustworthy. **What does that mean? That we need to teach and preserve the revelations of God accurately and without distortion.** Paul knew that **pride, arrogance and division come when we “go beyond what is written” (I Cor. 4:6).** One of the things I appreciate about the Covenant fellowship is that they chose to *not* develop a creed, but to hold to a watchword, “Where is it written.” This enables them to hold to the Scripture as their foundation, without distortion.

“*He will bear witness of Me, and you will bear witness also...*” -- **There will be a joint ministry of testimony between the Spirit and the apostles. Both parties are essential for effective ministry to take place.** The Spirit not only *opens the hearts and minds* of people to the message of truth, and *convinces them, He also bears witness with powerful signs and answers to prayer* that authenticate the teaching and testimony of the apostles (II Cor. 4:4; Jn. 16:7-11; Acts 1:8; 2:1-47; 3:1-26; 4:29-31; 5:1-16; 6:8-10; 8:4-24; 10:44-48; 14:3; 15:12; 19:11-20). “...*because you have been with Me from the beginning.*” (vs. 27) -- **Their credibility as witnesses came from the fact that they had been intimately associated with Jesus for so long. They had been in a place to observe and know about Him. Cf. Acts 1:21,22**

Chapter 16, vs. 1 – “*These things I have spoken to you, that you may be kept from stumbling.*” -- Cf. 13:19; 14:29. **Being forewarned is to be forearmed. By preparing them for the difficulties they would face, ...not only in this night, but also in years to come..., Jesus was strengthening them to be able to endure.**

“*They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.*” (vs. 2) -- **Jesus is warning them that they will not be readily accepted by men. Quite the contrary, they will be hunted down and killed for their testimony.** Being outcast from the synagogue was to be completely cut off socially. It was to be shunned by all devout Jews. For a businessman, this often meant financial ruin. **For the disciples, who were devout Jews seeking to serve the God of their fathers, it was also to have to endure being misunderstood and reviled, ...for being faithful to God..., by the very people who should have been most eager to embrace their message. It was to be scorned by people that they had valued and respected all of their lives.**

“...*these things they will do, because they have not known the Father, or Me.*” (vs. 3) -- **Their lack of real spiritual understanding of God, or Jesus, is behind their rejection and violent persecution.**

“...*these things I have spoken to you...*” (vs. 4) -- **On the one hand, He tells them now to prepare them; on the other hand, He did not tell them these things before, because He was there to protect them and to be their strength. Now, however, He is leaving, and they will need the soundness of mind that His words will give.**

John 16:5-15 -- The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

“But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. ⁸ And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰ and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; ¹¹ and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. ¹² I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. ¹⁴ He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said, that He takes of Mine, and will disclose it to you.”

John 16:7-15

“*But now I am going to Him who sent Me*” (vs. 5) -- Jesus had customarily spoke in these terms, referring to the Father as *the One who sent Him* (5:24,30,36-38; 6:39,44,57; 7:16-18,28,29,33; 8:42; 10:36; 13:20; 14:9,24; 15:21; cf. 15:28). This language served to emphasize: (1.) His divine, preexistent origin in eternity; (2.) His present dependent relationship upon the Father; (3.) that He had a strong, conscious sense of mission, i.e., He was here to accomplish some thing(s) as a representative of the Father; and, (4.) He would return to Him who sent Him, to a place that they (the disciples) could not presently come. “...and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are you going?’” -- Initially, Peter had asked Jesus in these exact words (13:36). Possibly Jesus’ seemingly terse response to him, ...and the prophetic warning that he would deny Jesus before morning..., had made Peter introspective, or at least somewhat withdrawn. He had become uncharacteristically quiet since that interchange. No one else was continuing this line of inquiry.

“*But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart*” (vs. 6). -- Jesus had not encouraged speculation as to where He was going, being more concerned to clearly prepare them for what was to take place. Since He had announced that He would be leaving, the focus of the evening’s teaching revolved around what would happen to them, how they would manage. They certainly were sad and confused by all of this. In spite of all He had said to prepare them for this day, they did not understand what would soon happen.

“*But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away...*” (vs. 7) -- Lit., “...it is beneficial/profitable/better to y’all in order that I might depart/go away”. This was inconceivable to the disciples. How could it be beneficial to them to have Jesus leave them? “...for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.” -- Again, Jesus turns their focus to the promise of the Holy Spirit. Somehow, having the Holy Spirit will be better than having Jesus with them.

It was necessary for Jesus to leave in order for the Holy Spirit to come. We don’t understand all the reasons why, but it is clear from the consistent testimony of the Scripture that this was not a mere “costume change” for Jesus. Some people teach a heretical doctrine called “modalism”, which holds that there are *not* three persons within the triune Godhead, ...rather God was just putting on different hats, assuming different roles, that were meant to be instructive about spiritual truths. He was attempting to communicate truth about His character in order to help us identify with Him, and better relate to Him. These people insist that Trinitarians have misunderstood the purpose of Jesus’ coming, or of this talk about the Holy Spirit. These are meant only as instructive roles for us to learn relational truths from. They were not meant to teach us anything about the essence of God’s eternal nature. For them, Jesus left the stage so that God could take off the Jesus-hat and come back on-stage as the Holy Spirit, which is more in line with His real, natural state, anyway. The Father-role was just a construction to teach us about God’s love for us. There really was not any Father, separate from the Son, or separate from the Holy Spirit. These were just different hats worn by God to teach us about Him. The problems with this view is that it doesn’t take into serious account all of the Scriptures pertinent to this subject. Many passages, such as this verse, cannot be taken at face value to fit with this teaching. The actual language of the passage must be “minimized” and reinterpreted to fit this particular scheme. Times when all three persons of the Trinity are present, such as at Jesus’ baptism, are especially awkward to deal with from this perspective. Jesus’ prayer life is either just “staged” for the instructive value of His example to us, or we have to create a schizophrenic Jesus, where the human side talks to the Divine side of His personality (and calls it “Father”). Verses that refer to Jesus in heaven “sitting at the right hand of the Father” must be explained away.

“*And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment*” (vs. 8) - - Literally, “and that-One coming (at a point in time)”. Jesus is keeping their attention focused on the coming of the Paraclete. The word translated as “convict” means to “show something for what it really is”, to “expose”, to “convince”. Often it is used in the context of reproof or rebuke, as in exposing or confronting someone’s sin. Here it implies that not only does the Spirit reveal the truth of these things to people, but He does so in such a way as to be

convincing and confrontive. He *verifies*, or *establishes some measure of unavoidable certainty*, about the things He “exposes”. **The purpose of this is to *move people to action* based upon this new information.**

“...concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me...” (vs. 9) -- This is capable of two very different interpretations. Either Jesus is saying that their sin *is* that they do not believe in Jesus, ...or, as seems more likely, **He is saying that the Spirit convinces people of their sin *because* they have not yet found forgiveness and relief by faith in Jesus.** In other words, the Spirit works in the life of these people to convince them that they have a need for a Savior from their sin. Sin is the terminal illness; Jesus is the cure.

“...concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me...” (vs. 10) -- **The Spirit will convince people of new understandings or perceptions of righteousness by virtue of the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus.** He will *verify* that Christ is righteous, and that righteousness is found in Him, ...that God’s plan to redeem mankind is righteous, etc. **Without the resurrection and victorious ascension of Christ, there would be no objective basis for these claims.** As Paul would later say, “...if Christ has *not* been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith is in vain...(I Cor. 15:13-19). But, in fact, He *has* been raised, and that is the basis for a new righteousness provided by God in Him. Before the Spirit’s impact on their lives, these things would have seemed to them to be foolishness (I Cor. 2:14). **The Holy Spirit will convince people of the reality and reasonableness of the truth.**

“...and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.” (vs. 11) -- **Jesus had spoken of the “ruler of this world” in reference to Satan**, in 12:31, and again in 14:30. The apostle Paul uses similar language in Ephesians 2:2. **The fact that he exists, or has been judged, is a third area that will take spiritual convincing.** How could anyone see that this is true? Only through the lens of Christian teaching about Jesus’ victory over Satan and the forces of darkness at the cross (Col. 2:15; Acts 2:24; Heb. 2:14,15), ...and the demonstration of that victory and authority through the casting out of demonic powers..., could the veracity of the claim that Satan has been defeated possibly be established. **The Holy Spirit will take the pertinent information that someone has been made aware of in these three areas, and use it to begin to expose, clarify, and convince that individual of its truth.**

“I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now...” (vs. 12) -- The word translated as “bear” also means to “carry (as a load, or even carrying an unborn child), endure, or tolerate”. **The point is that they were “maxed-out” in their capacity to handle any more information.** “But when He...” (vs. 13) -- Lit., “that-One”. Cf. vs. 8. “...the Spirit of truth comes...” -- This is now the third time Jesus has referred to the Holy Spirit by this title (14:17; 15:26). **The repetition is meant to drive this perception of the Holy Spirit deeply into our thinking. He is the Spirit of truth.** The wind or breath of truth. Truth’s Spirit. The Greek for this phrase is “...whenever that-One might come (at a point in time), the Spirit of truth...”. The phrase communicates either that the Spirit is to come at one, single, yet-unknown point in the future, ...or it refers to any individual occasion or incident when He might show up. “...He will guide you into all the truth...” -- This is what He will do when He comes. The Greek could mean that “all truth” is the destination where He will lead us, i.e., He will lead us into a correct understanding of reality. Or, it could just as legitimately mean that **He will lead us in/with/by all the truth, i.e., He is a fully reliable source of information.** This seems to fit the context better, ...I don’t know of anyone who has yet been led into “all the truth” in their understanding. “...for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak...” -- The emphasis of this comment is that **He will faithfully communicate what has been communicated to Him, without the addition of His own extraneous ideas.** He will, in fact, operate by the same *modus operandi* that Jesus had operated by (cf. 5:30; 7:16-18). “...and He will disclose to you what is to come.” -- The word translated as “disclose” is *not* the same as in 14:21. Literally, Jesus is saying, “the (things) coming He will announce to y’all”. **Jesus meant that He will inform them of what they need to know in future situations.** He was not necessarily referring specifically to future events concerning the return of Christ, as some have attempted to read into this verse.

“He shall glorify Me...” (vs. 14) -- **It is the motivation of the Holy Spirit to magnify Jesus. This is the Father’s agenda for the remainder of this age: to magnify Jesus, to sum up all things under Him, and to put His enemies under His feet** (Eph. 1:9,10; Phil. 2:9,10; I Cor. 15:20-28). Just as we spoke of the difference between the *glory* or *radiance* of the sunshine as distinguished from the fullness of the actual light, heat and radiation taking place in the sun itself, in the same way **the Holy Spirit will show us a small portion of the fullness of Christ. His purpose is not to magnify Himself, ...but Christ**, who by His incarnation, death, and resurrection has made available God’s provision for us. “...for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you...” -- Again, the word “disclose” means to “announce, proclaim”. **He takes “out from” the fullness of Jesus and announces or reveals what is pertinent to the moment.**

“All things that the Father has are Mine...” (vs. 15) -- **A strong statement of equality with the Father. Everything that the Father has belongs to Jesus.** Cf. 13:3; 17:10. “...therefore I said, that He takes of Mine, and will disclose it to you.” -- Since it *all* belongs to Jesus, how could it be otherwise?

John 16:16-33 -- Returning To The Father Who Loves Us

“A little while, and you will no longer behold Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me.”¹⁷ Some of His disciples therefore said to one another, ‘What is this thing He is telling us, “A little while, and you will not behold Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me”’; and, “because I go to the Father !”?’”

John 16:16-18

“A little while, and you will no longer behold Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me...” (Jn. 16:16) -- Jesus is still trying to prepare the disciples for His rapidly approaching death. **Though He will die, they will see Him again, ...a hint of the victory of resurrection.**

The disciples, confused by His remarks, talk among themselves, not able to understand His words (vss. 17,18). Jesus acknowledges their confusion, and attempts further clarification (vss. 19-22). **“Truly, truly I say to you”** - Introduction to a very serious, solemn declaration. **“...you will weep and lament...”** -- The word for “lament” was commonly used in reference to lamentation for the dead (e.g., translated as “we sang a dirge” in Matt. 11:17; also used in I Samuel 1:17 in the LXX to translate David’s “lament” over Saul and Jonathan). **This was a very specific prediction of His death, and their sorrowful response.** **“...but the world will rejoice...”** -- The world, referring to those who were not His followers, especially those prompted and manipulated by the “ruler of this world” (12:31; 14:30; 16:11), would rejoice at His death because He had confronted them with truth (3:19-21), or because they saw Him as a potentially explosive political liability (11:47-53). **“You will be sorrowful”** -- Notice that **Jesus did not rebuke them for this; He expected it.** It was a normal response to an emotionally painful event. It was not wrong (nor a “lack of faith”) for them to mourn or experience the pain of sorrow. **“...but your sorrow will be turned to joy”** -- Only the resurrection could produce this emotional change. In vs. 21, **Jesus likens their experience to that of a woman in labor.** During the birthing process, she is in pain, pain so great at times that she may want to “give up and call the whole thing off”, if she could. Once the child is born, however, the resulting joy overshadows the pain. **“...she remembers the anguish no more”** -- This does not imply that her memory banks are wiped clean of any remembrance of pain. The Greek means “to keep in mind, call to mind”, thus **the new mom occupies her mind with the joy of the newborn, not with the painful memories of the labor.** In the same way, **“...you too now have sorrow, but I will see you again”** (a clear prediction of resurrection), **“...and your heart will rejoice....”** He was not saying that they would *forget* the painful scenes that they would experience and witness in the next twenty-four hours, but the pain of those times will be overcome with the joy of reunion with Him. **“...and no one takes away your joy.”** -- **The resurrection event will be irreversible, and nothing else can reach to overshadow its impact. No matter what they may face from that time, that event will provide a base and support for joyous victory that this world cannot remove.**

“In that day you will ask Me no question...” (vs. 23) -- A misleading translation. The Greek simply says, “In that day you will ask Me nothing”. Jesus is not limiting the context to questions. **He is changing the focus of His teaching to prayer. He wishes to direct them to the Father, not just Him.** **“Truly, truly, I say to you...”** -- Take note. **“...if you shall ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you in My name”** -- The Greek word order is different, “...ever anything y’all might ask (at a point in time) the Father in My name, He will give [it] to you”. **The emphasis is on our “asking in Jesus’ name”,** not the Father’s “giving in Jesus’ name”. Asking in Jesus’ name means more than simply tacking that label on the end of our prayers. It means asking according to the authority of His character and purpose, in agreement with Him and His will. It is a reminder that **they are given access to the Father, His resources and abilities (16:15) by means of their identification with Him.** Their relationship with the Father is not on the basis of their own merit or religious accomplishments, but by virtue of their connection to Jesus.

“Until now you have asked for nothing in My name...” (vs. 24) -- This is *new*. It had not been their practice to ask in Jesus’ name. They approached God as any OT saint would have. **“...ask, and you will receive...”** -- Jesus never said that their prayers would not be heeded *at all*, if they did not do as He suggested, ...only that **they would have greater success in prayer, when they did ask in His name.** **“...in order that your joy may be full”** -- Joy is to be one of the motivations for seeking God in prayer. God is the One who set things up this way, making obedience to be an exciting pleasurable experience. The Greek for “may be full” expresses that our joy is filled at a point in time with ongoing result. It is not to be a “flash in the pan” type of experience, but one that continues to affect us.

“These things I have spoken to you in figurative language...” (vs. 25) -- Much of what He had been telling them has been somewhat obscured by the analogies, allusions, and figures of speech He had used to try to talk about spiritual truths, or of the events concerning His death and resurrection. **“...an hour is coming when I will speak no more in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father”** -- Some things could not be understandable until after His resurrection (cf. Lk. 24:26,27; 44-49).

Jesus speaks of a new relationship with the Father (vss. 26,27). **“In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say that I will request the Father on your behalf...”** -- **We may have to rethink some of our theology on**

Christ's role as mediator and intercessor. Here he says that He will *not* act as a go-between. When you think of it, how dysfunctional would our relationship be with the Father, if it *were* necessary for Jesus to act as a “communication filter”, or a “buffer”, to make us and our requests acceptable to Him? **This kind of thinking is based upon the assumption that God is still *angry* with us, ...that Christ's payment for sin covers us, but we are still fundamentally evil and unacceptable to God. Therefore we had better keep our distance, lest we be destroyed by His holy wrath.** This theology does not fully come to terms with the idea of new birth (Jn. 3:1-8), new creation (II Cor. 5:14-21), or the new man (Rom. 6:2-11; Eph. 4:22-24). **The NT declares that God accepts us as His own children, and that we can have confident access when we come to Him in prayer. Why? “...for the Father Himself loves you...”** -- The Greek word translated as “loves” is a form of *phileō*, meaning **God enjoys us, He likes us, He has affection toward us.** *Agapē* love (e.g., Jn. 3:16) communicates more the idea of a consistent benevolent attitude and action toward another, even if possibly they might be an undesirable, unpleasant person. Hence, Jesus could tell us to “love (*agapē*) your enemies and do good to those who hate you” (Lk. 6:27). Jesus' point, here in Jn. 16, is that He doesn't need to stand up to defend our interests, or to convince the Father to be nice to us. No, the Father *Himself* takes delight in us and enjoys us. Therefore, we can pray with confidence that God receives us and hears us. Cf. Heb. 10:19-22. **“...because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father”** -- **The basis of our favor with the Father is in our treatment of and response to the Son. Again the word for our “love” for Jesus is a form of *phileō*, implying affection, friendship, and enjoyment of Him. The word implies *relationship*, ...not a sterile, distant admiration, or worshipful deference.** For the disciples, it had grown out of three years of spending time with Him, walking and talking throughout the Palestinian countryside. The challenge for *us* is to avoid the “religious trap” of *distancing ourselves in reverence* toward Him to the point where we can never come close enough to Him to really *enjoy Him as a Friend*. **Delighting in Jesus**, along with acknowledging and trusting who He really is as the Message having “come out from God” (Jn. 1:1), **opens the Father's heart of love and affection toward us.**

“I came forth from the Father, and have come into the world...” (vss. 28) -- The image conveyed by these words is that Jesus had been with the Father before He was born into this world as a human being (cf. Jn. 8:23,42). **“I am leaving the world again, and going to the Father.”** -- This was the place He had said that He would be going to, a place where they would not be able to come (7:33-36; 8:21,22; 13:33). **“His disciples said, ‘Behold, now You are speaking plainly’...”** (vs. 29) -- The language is finally straightforward enough for them to understand that He is saying that He is returning to God, ...though how much they grasped beyond that is unclear. **“Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You”** (vs. 30) -- Some have used this verse to support the idea that Jesus was omniscient while He was here on earth. Other passages clearly refute this notion, e.g., Matt. 24:36; Mk. 5:30-32; Heb. 2:17. What, then, did the disciples mean by their response? I think what they meant was that **they were finally convinced that Jesus knew what He was talking about, and what He was doing.** He did not need them to give Him their two cents' worth of counsel. It was a declaration of their trust in Him. **“...by this we believe You came from God”** -- The Greek is “with this”, as “with this [realization] we (now) trust that you came from God”.

“Do you now believe? Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and leave Me alone” (vss. 31,32) -- Jesus responds to their affirmation by prophesying of their abandonment of Him. In Matthew's version (26:31), Jesus quotes an OT prophecy that says “strike... the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered”. **“...and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.”** -- **The Father remains His source of strength** to face the trials of the coming hours. **We are given the same assurance of His presence on our behalf** (Matt. 28:20; Jn. 14:16; Heb. 13:5,6; Psa. 46:1).

“These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace” (vs. 33). The Greek is a purpose clause. The force of the first verb is that these words have been spoken but will have an ongoing effect. It is not a simple past action. **It means that the words are still there, available for their comfort. Note that the thrust of Jesus statement is that He has spoken these things in order that they might have peace in Him.** The second verb describes an ongoing possibility. **“...that you might-have-and-be-having peace...”** **Peace in that culture meant more than just inner tranquility.** Because of the influence of the Hebrew “shalom”, **this word also meant “balance, order, wholeness.”** **“In the world you have tribulation...”** -- **The word for “tribulation” here means “pressure, pressing together; a suffering brought on by outward circumstances, oppression, affliction.”** In other words, the affliction of the world is primarily external. It presses in upon us. **It can be painful, but it does not own or control our inner selves. We have a choice as to how we respond to these pressures.** Jesus' answer? **“...but take courage; I have overcome the world”** -- The word translated by “but” is a strong negative disjunction, “rather”. It describes a radical departure from being grieved, afraid, defeated or sorrowful. **“Take courage” means to “be confident, to be positive, to be cheerful and unafraid.”** Why? Because, Jesus has overcome, defeated and conquered the world system.

John 17:1-7 -- Jesus' High Priestly Prayer: Glorified With The Father

“Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, ² even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. ³ This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. ⁴ I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. ⁵ Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. ⁶ I manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me, and they have kept Thy word. ⁷ “Now they have come to know that everything Thou hast given Me is from Thee; ⁸ for the words which Thou gavest Me I have given to them; and they received *them*, and truly understood that I came forth from Thee, and they believed that Thou didst send Me.” John 17:1-8

Once again, the apostle John gives us a glimpse into the events of Jesus' life that are completely different than what we find in the other gospel accounts. There is no mention by the other writers of this prayer at all. Instead, they uniformly record Jesus' struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane, which will occur later (cf. 18:1). *This* prayer is uttered at some point *after* they had left the upper room (14:31), and *before* they crossed over from Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives, where the garden was located (Jn. 18:1; Matt. 26:30,36). Probably, Jesus paused after stepping out through the East Gate at the NE corner of the city. Having exited through the Temple courts, the city would have been immediately behind Him. As He would have surveyed the scene, the Kidron Valley lay before Him, and beyond that, on the other side, stood the Mount of Olives. This was probably the same route He had been taking with His disciples every night that week, for the road to Bethany went that way. They had been lodging on the Bethany side of the Mount, probably at the home of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary (Matt. 21:17; Mk. 11:11,12; 14:3; Lk. 21:37,38). Tonight, before beginning the descent into the valley, He lifted His eyes toward heaven and prayed aloud this prayer.

“*Father, the hour has come...*” (vs. 1) -- The time has arrived. “*...glorify Your Son...*” -- The word “glorify”, also translated as “praise” or “honor”, means to “make known the splendor, reputation, or true character of someone”. The related word picture has to do with light. The “glory” of a candle would be the perceived radiance and warmth that it would give off. This “glory” would tell us something of the actual nature of the flame itself, though in a lesser degree. The essence is greater than the radiance that comes from it. To “glorify” the candle flame would be to hold it up for all to see, and to point out its qualities. In a similar fashion, **Jesus is asking the Father to hold Him up to be seen by humankind so that His qualities and true nature might be displayed and perceived by them.** “*...that the Son may glorify You.*” -- Jesus, the eternal Word in human flesh, was full of the Father's glory (1:14). **His whole purpose in coming was to reveal the Father's heart and purpose toward humankind. By holding Jesus up to the spotlight, the Father was enabling Him to more fully complete His mission.**

“*...even as...*” (vs. 2) -- Literally, “according as”, meaning “in proportion to”, or “in accordance with”. “*...You gave Him authority over all mankind...*” -- The word “gave” is a past completed action. This authority, or “legal right and power”, was granted to Jesus by the Father at some point in the past. “Over all mankind” seems more clear to our ears than the literal idiom, “of all/every flesh”. A better translation might be, “You gave Him legal authority *concerning* all flesh”, or even “concerning *every* flesh”. “*...that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.*” -- This is a purpose clause in Greek. A somewhat difficult construction, it would be best translated “in order that everything which You have given to Him, He might give (at a point in time) to them eternal/age-type life”. There is clearly a change of reference from the “all” in “all flesh” to that in “all which You have given to Him”. “All flesh” is feminine in gender, while the “all” which God “has given” to Jesus is neuter in gender. **The point of this unusual construction seems to be that “everyone, no matter what gender or ethnic background (Jew or gentile), whom God has given to Jesus, He (Jesus) might give to them ‘age-type life’.”** Note that the fact that God the Father might “give someone to Jesus” does not mean that this person automatically *has* eternal life. **God gave Jesus the authority to endue people with eternal life. Instead, the verse seems to be communicating Jesus' intention to give His disciples the same life-dynamic He experienced, age-type life, or life-from-the-age-to-come.** Note, too, that when the Father has given someone to Jesus, the kind of action happened in the past with ongoing effect (cf. 6:39,65). This seems to coincide with the concept of eternal security. **Once we “have been given to Jesus”, we remain His.**

“*And this is eternal life, that they may know You...*” (vs. 3) -- The word translated as “that” here is the Greek word *hina*, which indicates a *purpose clause*, ...not an *equivocation or definition* of eternal life. In other words, Jesus is *not* saying, “Eternal life *equals* knowing God”. The purpose clause says that “eternal life is in order that they *might know* (and be knowing) You”. **Age-type life is the starting point, or the open door, from which intimacy, relationship, and experience of God can be effectively pursued and discovered.** Receiving eternal life is not the end or goal, rather it is the beginning of a pursuit. “*...the only true God...*” -- “True” can also mean “genuine”, “dependable”, or “real”. There are certainly many false deities, as well as many imperfect perceptions of the God Who Is. **Jesus**

declares that *there is only one genuine God, ...Who can be known more accurately and personally.* Cf. Isaiah 37:20 (the Greek in the Septuagint translation [LXX] for “alone” is the same as is translated “only” here); Exodus 34:6 (the Greek word in the LXX translated as “truth” [“faithfulness” in some versions] is identical to that translated as “true” here.) Both of these OT passages would have been familiar creedal teachings of Judaism. Jesus combines these two concepts here. See also I Cor. 8:5,6; I Jn. 5:20,21. **“...and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” -- The pursuit that begins with age-type life is not just in order that we might know God, but that we might also come to experientially know and be knowing Jesus the Messiah-King. This is one of the key places where the Christian faith moves *beyond* other religious philosophies, due to the revelation we have been given through Christ. Jesus is not just the “way to God”, some sort of “gate” that we “pass through” on our way to our destination. He is Himself an aspect of that destination. He will remain part of our ongoing relationship with God. As we were told in Jn. 5:22,23, the Father has chosen to have human beings honor and value the Son even as they honor and value Him. Jesus will remain part of our future. He will be the ultimate judge of humankind. He will establish His kingdom on the earth for a thousand years, and He will remain as a joint ruler with God throughout eternity in the new creation (Rev. 19:11-20:6; 21:22,23; 22:1-5). He has not just been “absorbed” back into the Godhead. He will remain somehow distinct and separate for all time, an unending testimony to us of Divine love and commitment.**

“I glorified you on the earth...” (vs. 4) -- Jesus had magnified, honored, and made the reputation of His Father’s character evident. **“...having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.”** -- **This is the way in which Jesus made the Father known and praised, by doing his will.** We are also in the same relation to both God the Father and Jesus. **By doing His will, we also will “bear much fruit, and so prove to be [His] disciples”.** This glorifies both the Father and the Son as well (Jn. 15:8).

“And now, glorify Me together with Yourself, Father...” (vs. 5) -- The phrase translated as “together with” means “in the presence of, before, beside, alongside”. **Jesus is asking to return to be with the Father in glory.** This is made more specific by the next phrase: **“...with the glory which I had with You before the world was.”** -- He is alluding to His pre-incarnate existence as the eternal Word (1:1). **He wishes to return again to His former glory, the glory He was enjoying with the Father before He came to the earth as a man.** Cf. Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 2:14-17.

“I manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world.” (vs. 6) -- **The word translated as “manifested” means to “make visible, make evident, make known, reveal, show”.** Jesus had done the work mentioned in 1:14,18. **He had revealed the Father’s heart to these men by His day-to-day life with them.** The reference to “Your name” is not readily apparent. **Jesus introduced no new name, *per se*,** which He taught to His disciples. **There are two possibilities that stand out in Jesus’ life:** (1.) **One would be His constant reference to God as Father, even *Daddy*, a practice which had irritated the religious leaders.** This was carried on into the early church. Cf. Mk. 14:36; Jn. 5:17,18; Rom. 8:15,16. (2.) **The other possibility would be the name “Jesus”, itself. The Hebrew equivalent, Y’shua, literally means “Yahweh saves”.** Yahweh was the covenant name of God that He employed in His relationship to the nation of Israel. It occurs far more than any other word in the Hebrew OT (7,283 times). You cannot read the Hebrew OT and not have that name implanted in your brain. **The name, Y’shua, would be very symbolically significant. It implies that He Himself is the salvation of Yahweh, or the embodiment of that salvation.** Though it was a common name for male children (being identical as the Hebrew for “Joshua”, the great leader of Israel), God had expressly communicated to Joseph and Mary independently that this should be the name for the child conceived in Mary’s womb (Lk. 1:31; Matt. 1:20,21). We also can observe that **the disciples interpreted Matthew 28:19** – “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” -- **as referring to the name “Jesus”,** for the baptisms recorded in the book of Acts are repeatedly exercised in that name. Jn. 17:11 would also argue for this interpretation: **“...keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me...”**. **“Yours they were, and You gave them to Me...”** -- Some wish to make a major point of the language of apparent ownership that comes out in this verse. **The Greek literally says, “to You they were, and to Me You gave them”.** This is not necessarily saying that God was sovereignly controlling their brains, and chose to assign them to Jesus. **It may mean that their hearts were already toward God in some way, and that He then directed them to Jesus,** such as happened to the disciples of John the Baptist in the first chapter of the book (1:35-37). The language does not negate free will, nor imply some kind of spooky mind-control on the part of God. **“...and they have kept Your word.”** -- **They have been faithful in following Jesus and doing God’s will.** They were receptive and responsive to Jesus’ teachings from the Father. Cf. vs. 8.

Vss. 7,8 summarize what the disciples have learned from their time with Jesus. Two things:

- (1.) Everything Jesus had and was came from God; and,**
- (2.) Jesus had come forth and had been sent by God into this world.**

John 17:9-19 -- Jesus' Prayer For His Disciples

"I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹ "I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are. ¹² While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled. ¹³ But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. ¹⁴ I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. ¹⁸ As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth." John 17:9-19

"I ask on their behalf..." (vs. 9) -- From verses 6-8, **this would refer to the disciples**, especially the eleven who are with Him. **"...not on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me..."**-- The Greek does not really say, "on their behalf", but "concerning" or "about" them, ...just a way of narrowing the scope of His interest. The phrase "You have given" does not have to imply that they are unthinking possessions to be traded back and forth. The word for "give" can also mean "entrust", as to "give into someone's care". **"...for they are Yours."** -- The Greek does not use the normal construction that would be used to express possession. Instead of saying, "of You" or "Yours", Jesus actually said, "because they are to/in/with You". This language expresses that the disciples already had some attachment to, or interest in, God the Father that eventually directed them to be open to following Jesus. **These were men who were already interested in the things of God before they met Jesus** (e.g., Jn. 1:35-51).

"...and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine..." (vs. 10) -- **First, this statement expresses complete openness and shared commonality in the relationship between Jesus and the Father.** The phrase, "everything I have is yours" may be spoken by a host to his guest, ...though possibly the offer is not to be taken literally in that case. It is a way to express an open heart and an open home, a way of dedicating oneself and one's worldly goods to the needs and interests of the other person. If we have called Jesus our Lord, then we have implied a similar commitment. **Secondly, Jesus' statement was based upon either the Father's open-hearted offer to Him, or upon the fact that the Father's things really were His, or both.** Using our example of having a guest in your home, to move beyond your personal declaration of openness and commitment your guest, to *claim* a reciprocal response from him is not possible (In fact, it would be offensively inappropriate!), ...*unless* he had already made such an offer to you, ...or unless you had some legal basis to your claim. You don't just say, "*Your stuff belongs to me.*" **Third, in the context, Jesus is not presuming upon some imagined level of trust**, ...nor "hyping" Himself up into some kind of "faith mind-set", where He appropriates the things of God with "the eye of faith". **He is simply, calmly stating a fact that was true about His relationship to the Father and His "things".** **"...and I have been glorified in them."** -- This is a reference to the disciples. In spite of the lack of understanding, and imperfections, they *had* magnified Jesus.

"And I am no more in the world..." (vs. 11) -- Obviously speaking of His soon departure as though it were already an established fact. **"...and they themselves are in the world, and I come to You."** -- **Jesus is leaving them behind.** *His concern is that they will be left without His oversight and care.* **"Holy Father, keep them in Your name which You have given Me..."** -- Probably a reference to the fact that His name literally meant "Yahweh's salvation", or "Yahweh saves". The word translated "keep" can also mean "guard, maintain, or keep firm". **"...in order that they might be one, even as We are."** -- This introduces an interesting concept that continues to pop up throughout the prayer, i.e., the concept of oneness among the followers of Jesus. The word for "one" is in a form meaning "one thing". **This signifies more than just being united in purpose or thought.** Somehow *they* are to be one thing, "according as", or "in a similar way as", *Jesus and the Father* are one thing. **This would seem to be referring to a shared life, or essence.** Cf. Jn. 10:30. The verb, "they might be" signifies a possibility that has not yet taken place, while "in order that" indicates a purpose clause. Somehow it seems that the Father's "keeping them", or "maintaining them", in the name (or person) of Jesus is intended to make it possible for them to experience this "one-thing-ness", which they do not presently possess. **Could this be a reference to the coming Holy Spirit?** He currently was "with them", but Jesus had said He would come to dwell "in them"? (Jn. 14:17)

"While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me..." (vs. 12) -- The form of the verb "was" indicates ongoing action in the past, in this case, "I was being with them". This is also true for "I was keeping them". Jesus *had been doing* what He *now asks the Father to do.* **"...and I guarded them..."** -- The form of this verb is different. It indicates past completed action. In other words, this job is *done* now. **"...and not one... perished but the son of perdition..."** -- We are used to thinking of this in terms of Judas having lost his

salvation. It is interesting that both the words “perished” and “perdition” come from a common root which means “to be destroyed; to come to nothing, waste; to be made empty or void; to be lost, to stray”. **At the time Jesus is speaking, Judas was still very much alive.** Certainly, he had strayed, and had not fulfilled his potential, but his eternal destiny was not yet sealed. **He had not perished, yet, though he certainly was confused and “lost” from the group. “...that the Scripture might be fulfilled.”** -- E.g., Psa. 41:9; 109:4-8.

“But now I come to You...” (vs. 13) -- Again, He is very much aware of the brevity of His time left on earth. **“...these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy made full in themselves.”** -- This is the stated purpose of Jesus’ prayer, “in order that they might (the *possibility* might come to pass) have/possess My joy having been fulfilled (or, ‘having been filled-full at a point in time with ongoing effect’) in or among themselves”. This phrase has occurred twice before in the book, first in 3:29 of the Baptist’s joy over Jesus’ success, and then also in 15:11, where Jesus speaks of this full “Jesus-joy” being the result of abiding in Him and obeying the Father. Is He speaking of the joy of realizing that He is risen from the dead, or is He praying for something more than even *that*?

“I have given them Your word...” (vs. 14) -- The verb means that the message *had been transmitted* or *delivered to them* and they *still* have it. **“...and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”** -- Jesus had spoken of this before in 15:18-16:4.

“I do not ask You to take them out of the world...” (vs. 15) -- That would be a “quick fix” solution that many of us would opt for, if *we* had a say in things. This was not Jesus’ prayer, however. **The disciples of Jesus had a job to accomplish, as do we. We must remain here to fulfill our calling.** Some churches teach that we are to separate from the world, out of fear that we might be corrupted by its influences. While recognizing the danger of compromise (e.g., I Cor. 15:33; II Cor. 6:14-7:1), the clear expectation of the NT is that we must remain in some contact with sinful people (I Cor. 5:9-13) so that they can see our good works, our changed behavior and attitudes (Matt. 5:14-16; I Pet. 2:11,12). Undoubtedly this will, at times, expose us to the danger of persecution (II Tim. 3:12), but it is part of the reality we must deal with. **“...but to keep them from the evil one.”** -- Satan and his forces are behind much of the hatred and lashing out against Christians (Eph. 2:2). It is part of a spiritual onslaught that we must learn to resist and overcome (Eph. 6:10-18; Rev. 12:7-12). Jesus’ petition here is virtually the same as He taught the disciples to pray in what we call the Lord’s Prayer, i.e., “...deliver us from the evil one” (Matt. 6:13). **Satan is a fearsome adversary from whom we need the Lord’s continual protection** (I Pet. 5:8). Without it, he would quickly destroy us.

Vs. 16 is a statement concerning their basic identity and orientation. **Like Jesus, we are not of the world.**

“Sanctify them in the truth...” (vs. 17) -- To “sanctify” something means to set it apart from common use for a special or holy purpose. **Jesus asks the Father to set apart, consecrate, and dedicate the disciples for His purposes.** The preposition “in” could also be translated as “by”, or “with”. Thus **they are to be set apart by truth, by a new perception of, and identification with, what is reality. “Your word is truth.”** -- One distinction needs to be made here that does not come out in English very well. In the first phrase, Jesus asked the Father to set them apart by “the truth”, a big picture including all that is real and genuine. In this second phrase, however, Jesus does not refer to the word as “*the* truth”, but simply as “truth”. What this means is that **God’s word is a sound, trustworthy source for understanding at least a portion of what is the total “reality”, but it is not equal to *all* that is “real” or “true”.** We need to be aware of this distinction so as to not have unrealistic expectations, or become too narrow minded. **All that is true is *not* in the Scriptures, ...but what *is* there is true and dependable.**

“As you did send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.” (vs. 18) -- In a manner that is *like* or *comparable* to Jesus’ commissioning by the Father to reveal the truth of God, He has now commissioned His apostles. **The implication would be that they also are equipped in a similar way as He had been, and would follow a similar methodology.**

“And for their sakes I sanctify Myself...” (vs. 19) -- The verb tense here is present, ongoing action, “I am sanctifying, consecrating, dedicating Myself”. Jesus clearly was devoting His life on their behalf. **“...that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.”** -- Another purpose clause in the Greek. **Jesus’ dedication of His life, ...to die on their behalf..., was for the purpose of enabling them to be set apart for God. Jesus’ death would make possible something that *did not at that time exist*, so there must have been more to this than simply the apostles’ intentions to serve God. Moreover, the Greek actually uses *two verbs*, “they might be (in an ongoing fashion)” and “having been sanctified (i.e., sanctified at a point in time with ongoing result)”. **Jesus’ death and resurrection would allow a new cleansing and dedication that could remain in effect indefinitely.** This is an important distinction to grasp: Jesus did not just die to save us; He died to *dedicate* us. He laid His life down, so we would be freed to do the same: to live for God.**

John 17:20-26 -- Jesus' Prayer For Future Believers

"I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; ²¹ that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. ²² The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; ²³ I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. ²⁴ Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵ O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; ²⁶ and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them." John 17:20-26

"I do not ask on behalf of these alone..." (vs. 20) -- Jesus expands the focus of His prayer. **"...but for those who believe in Me through their word..."** -- The NASB translation here sounds like a shift *away from* His current disciples to future believers. Actually the Greek is *inclusive*, "rather also concerning the ones believing by means of their word into/unto Me". **Jesus' thoughts do not move away from the apostles, but reaches beyond them to include the fruits of their ministry.**

"...that they may all be one..." (vs. 21) -- This is a purpose clause in Greek. "I am asking... *in order that* they might be one [thing]". As we saw in vs. 11, **Jesus is praying for their essential unity, not just an organizational unity.** The verb form indicates a future possibility (i.e., something that did not *as yet* exist, but would come to pass) that would be ongoing, "they might be (being)".

Sometimes it is interesting to think about what He didn't say, in order to understand more clearly the meaning of the word construction that He *did* choose to employ. Just by changing the form of the verb, **He could have communicated the idea that they might come to be "one [thing]" at a point in time.** The emphasis would have been on them coming to be "one (thing)" at that future possible moment. Or, **He could have used another form that would indicate that He wanted the Father to make them "one" at a future possible moment and that they would remain "one" from that moment on.** He did not choose to express His thought in either of these ways. Rather, **He chose to say, "that they might be (being) one [thing]".** The difference seems to be that **Jesus is praying that they will choose to continue in the state of being one.** This may possibly imply that they are to live out, or habitually express, this essential "oneness" that Jesus is talking about. The essential "oneness" is a given state, a starting point, that they are to continue to experience in an ongoing fashion, according to Jesus' prayer. **The opposite of His request would be for them stop being "one", i.e., they would come to be more than one essential thing, ...to somehow become fractured, mixed, or "other than" the one [thing] of Jesus' prayer.** In other words, we could selfishly choose to *not* continue in this oneness. It would seem that this has been the norm throughout most of church history

"...even as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You..." -- A comparative word picture that helps us to understand what He is talking about. The language of "You in Me, and I in You" sounds like He is talking about some kind of "shared life", doesn't it? This is "*essential oneness*", not just "teamwork" or "agreement". **The way that Jesus and the Father experienced oneness was similar to how He prays that we might "be (being) one".** How can *we* be "*in one another*" like *they* are? Cf. Rom. 12:4,5; I Cor. 12:26,27. **"...that they also might be in Us..."** -- In English, this sounds like it is to be the completion of the previous phrase. In the Greek, it is a separate purpose clause, alongside of the first one in this verse. **Their becoming one-thing is in order that they might also be in the Father and Jesus.** **"...that the world may believe that You did send Me."** -- A *third* purpose clause. In other words, "I ask... (1.) *in order that* [they] all might be one [thing], just as You are in Me, and I in You; (2.) *in order that* also they might be being in Us; and (3.) *in order that* the world might believe that You sent Me (at a point in time). The exact relation of these ideas to one another is not obviously clear. Are they three separate unrelated ideas, just listed next to each other? Are they meant to be fully progressive in nature, moving from one to another? How do they overlap or relate to each other? If they do, **how does our (1.) being one [thing] (with intermingled life and identity in relationship to one another, like that of Jesus' own relation to the Father), and (2.) sharing intermingled life and identity with Jesus and the Father, relate to (3.) the world believing that God did send Jesus?** The Lord does not expand on what He may have had in His mind. It is for *us* to ponder.

"And the glory which You have given Me I have given them..." (vs. 22) -- **What "glory" is He talking about?** In 1:14, we were told that the incarnate Word had glory, glory like a unique son of a father might have, **a glory full of grace and truth. This glory, or radiance, made visible the character of the invisible God** -- 1:18; 2:11; 7:16-18; 11:4,40. Cf. I Pet. 4:14. The verb, "I have given" communicates the idea that Jesus *had given* them this glory and it *remains* theirs. It may refer to His *intent*, however, not necessarily to what *has happened* in fact, yet, ...since those who will believe

through the preaching of the apostles (vs. 19) do not as yet exist as believers. “...*that they may be one, just as We are one...*” -- Another purpose clause. **Jesus had transferred the glory which He had to them... in order to bring about this “one-thing-ness” among His followers**, a “one-thing-ness” like Jesus and the Father experienced.

“...*I in them, and You in Me...*” (vs. 23) -- **What would it mean for Jesus to be in them?** Looking back, **we can see this fulfilled by the ministry of the Holy Spirit**. Rom. 8:9,10,15; Gal. 4:6; Matt. 28:18-20. What about the Father being in Jesus? Cf. Jn. 14:7-10. “...*that they may be perfected in unity...*” -- Another purpose clause. **Jesus’ and the Father’s indwelling are to bring about the goal of “one-thing-ness”**. The verb, translated as “they may be perfected”, is a combination of the verb “to be” (lit., “they might be [being]”) with a participle that communicates an ongoing completed state, “having been perfected/matured/fully grown/completed/brought to fulfillment”. This participle obviously implies some kind of a process that is brought to an end or fulfillment. The phrase “in unity” uses a different preposition, meaning “into, unto, towards”, but the noun is the same, “one (thing)”. Thus, **it would be better translated, “...in order that they might be having been completed/fully grown into one (thing)”**. “...*that the world may know that You did send Me, and did love them, even as You did love Me.*” -- Yet another purpose clause. **The end-purpose of this process of building this “one-thing-ness” He had been praying for, is that the world might then experientially-know the reality of Christ’s claims and the veracity of the gospel message of God’s love**. Evidently, whatever this “one-thing-ness” might be, it ought to be *visible enough* that unbelievers will not only be able to *see* it, ...but that they would also *be amazed enough* by what they see to conclude that Jesus must have been the Son of God, sent from heaven to save humankind. **This will verify God’s love (agapē) not only for Jesus, but also for the human race.**

“*Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am...*” (vs. 24) -- There is a shift back to focus on the eleven disciples, “whom You have given to Me” (vs. 9). The “I desire” is followed by a purpose clause in Greek, “in order that where I am, also these might be with Me”. “...*that they may behold My glory...*” -- Another purpose clause. They might be *with Me* “in order that they might see My glory”. The word for glory is the same throughout the chapter. “...*which You have given Me...*” -- The verb implies a glory granted and remaining in His possession. Evidently the disciples will not be able to see it fully in this life. Cf. Phil. 2:5-11; Ex. 33:17-23. “...*for you did love Me before the foundation of the world.*” -- Jesus had existed, and been in relationship with the Father, before the world was created.

“*O righteous Father...*” (vs. 25) -- God is just, equitable, fair, righteous in character and in His dealings with men. “...*although the world has not known You...*” -- “Although” is the NASB translators’ choice for the word usually rendered as “and, also, or even”. The world did not experientially or relationally know God. “...*yet I have known You...*” -- **Jesus did have that experiential relationship with God, the basis of His works and words among us**. Cf. Jn. 5:19,20,30; 8:54,55. “...*and these have known that You did send Me.*” -- 16:30-31; 17:7,8.

“...*and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known...*” (vs. 26) -- Jesus had revealed to them the meaning of His name, Y’shua, the name which He said was the Father’s and had also been given to Jesus (vs. 11). “Y’shua”, the Hebrew form for “Jesus”, means “Yahweh saves”. **Jesus had shown them the Father’s heart to do just that, and will even more fully make it evident to them by the events of His death, resurrection, and by the ongoing teaching ministry of His Spirit**. “...*that the love wherewith you did love Me may be in them, and I in them.*” -- A final purpose clause in this high priestly prayer. **The purpose of the revelation of the Father’s heart and character will be to bring about the possibility that the love of God might dwell inside the disciples** (Rom. 5:5; I Jn. 4:7-21), and that **Jesus Himself might dwell in them**.

It seems that this “shared life” or “essential oneness” is from the Holy Spirit. He is called the Spirit of glory in I Peter 4:14, ...and in II Corinthians 3:18, Paul says we are being transformed from one degree of glory to another by the Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, the Father could be “in” Jesus, and “in” us. **His indwelling presence provides the basis for our essential unity**.

Jesus still prayed that we might be *matured* into unity, because the unity of the Spirit is only real and visible as we are abiding in Him. **We can have the basis for unity dwelling within us, but not experience it, because we choose to not follow the Spirit’s leading**. Because of the Spirit in us, we are also members of one another in the spiritual body, the church. You are part of me, and I am part of you, as fellow members of the Body of Christ. **What Jesus was praying for is that we would come to a full and mature expression of that unity in the Spirit**.

When we are abiding in Christ, *filled with the Spirit*, and have put aside our earthly differences in favor of our spiritual oneness, **it will become visible in our love and solidarity for and with one another**. We are bound together by Life, the Life of God. **The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit**. **When our walk shows that unity and love, people will know that Jesus was sent from God, and that we are His followers** (Jn. 13:34,35).

John 18:1-12 -- Jesus' Arrest in the Garden

“Jesus therefore, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth, and said to them, ‘Whom do you seek?’⁵ They answered Him, ‘Jesus the Nazarene.’ He said to them, ‘I AM.’ And Judas also who was betraying Him, was standing with them.⁶ When therefore He said to them, ‘I AM,’ they drew back, and fell to the ground.” John 18:4-6

“*When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth...*” (18:1) -- The language indicates that He finished the prayer of chapter seventeen immediately before leaving the city. He probably exited through the East Gate (sometimes called the Golden Gate), which was in the NE corner of the temple. “*...with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden...*” -- From the East Gate, a roadway immediately descends into the Kidron valley, which runs north to south next to the city. Part of this road continues to the NE toward Jericho, while another roadway breaks off toward the E and makes its way over the Mount of Olives to Bethany, where Jesus had been staying. The Garden of Gethsemane was located just a short distance up the Bethany roadway, still on the lower western slope of the Mount of Olives. **Matthew and Mark tell us it was a “place” known as “Gethsemane”, which is Hebrew for “olive press”** (Matt. 26:36; Mk. 14:32). The word translated as “place” referred to “property, farm, or country estate’. This was someone’s land, their private olive orchard. Since Jesus frequented there, the owner probably was a friend of His, and had given his permission to roam the grounds. The site was distinguished by the fact that there was an olive press there amid the trees, and, as **John alone informs us, there was also “a garden” there.** It was near the roadway, and lay almost directly across the valley from the East Gate of the temple. From that vantage point, had they been looking, it would have been easy to see anyone approaching them from the city, especially a large crowd with torches. The garden itself, however, would have been further among the trees, and away from the roadway a bit. It may also have been enclosed by a wall, which would have offered more privacy. “*...into which He Himself entered, and His disciples.*” -- Note that Jesus posted no guards. Could it be that by bringing the disciples into the garden with Him, He purposely kept them from noticing the crowd until it was almost upon them?

“*Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place; for Jesus had often met there with His disciples.*” (vs. 2) -- This was a customary gathering place for Jesus and the twelve. Again, being a private estate, it would have offered Jesus some refuge from the crowds that pressed in around Him in the city, as well as a safe, quiet place to be refreshed in a beautiful natural setting. Judas knew the Master’s customary movements, as well as the layout of the property. **The privacy offered by the setting also provided the enemies of Jesus the perfect location for His arrest** (Matt. 26:3-5).

“*Judas then, having received the Roman cohort...*” (vs. 3) -- **Although the word “Roman” is not specifically mentioned in the text, “the cohort” could only refer to the Roman soldiers stationed in the fortress of Antonia,** immediately next to the temple. At Passover time, the Romans made these soldiers available to the Sanhedrin, or Jewish high council, for the purpose of maintaining order. **A cohort was a tenth part of a legion, or equivalent to 600 men.** Obviously, the Jewish leaders were very concerned about the potential explosiveness involved in taking such a popular figure as Jesus into custody. “*...and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees...*” -- **The Roman soldiers joined the temple guard,** ...men trained as soldiers..., **and other servants** of both of these rival factions of Jewish leadership. The word translated as “officers” can also mean “servants”, or “attendants”. It was properly used to describe the temple guard, which would have been under the control of the chief priests. The mention of the Pharisees, however, indicates that they also sent a delegation of men to make certain there would be no slip ups. The presence of Malchus in vs. 10, a personal slave of the high priest, may be indicative of still other “non-professionals” recruited to strengthen the size and determination of the force sent to capture Jesus. **Why such precautions? Aside from the potential for a popular uprising, probably these steps were taken to assure that the mission was accomplished.** The temple guard had been sent to arrest Jesus once before, and came back empty-handed (7:32,45,46). They had been swayed by Jesus’ words. To prevent a similar fiasco, the force assembled to take Him now was comprised of professional, “no-nonsense” Romans, who had no interest in Jewish religion or politics, as well as by others who were hand-picked from the “hard-core”, loyal followers of both the priests and the Pharisees to be more reliable for accomplishing this task than the temple guard was perceived to be after their failed attempt. “*...came with lanterns and torches and weapons.*” -- There were no street lights, to illuminate the way. Enclosed lanterns, as well as open torches were issued to the posse in order to assist them in finding their man. Jesus’ comment in Lk. 22:52 reveals that **there were swords and even clubs among the weapons which He saw.** In addition to the weapons which the professional soldiers would have carried, ...swords and spears, battle axes or maces..., many were armed with only big wooden sticks. This again reveals their determination, and their expectation of resistance or a possible mob uprising.

“Jesus therefore, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth...” (vs. 4) -- The Lord was neither surprised nor deceived concerning who this group of torchbearers were, nor what they had come for. He did not wait for them to take the initiative, nor did He attempt to escape. Instead, **He took charge of the situation and stepped forward to meet them.** Had He not done this, undoubtedly they would have attempted to take the entire group. **“...and said to them, ‘Whom do you seek?’”** -- If Jesus knew who they were and why they had come, why ask this question? Aside from formalities, it was to clarify in the thinking of this mob what their real purpose was, so that as He voluntarily surrendered to them, they would allow His disciples to go free, since their purpose did not include them. This is made plain by the later verses. **The form of the Greek word, translated as “whom”, is singular, “What person are you seeking?”**

“They answered Him, ‘Jesus the Nazarene.’” (vs. 5). Ironically, the designation, “Nazarene”, had a two-fold meaning. On the one hand, what these people meant was a way of identifying Jesus by His home town, Nazareth. On the other hand, **the Hebrew word netzer means “sprout, shoot, or branch”.** It was used to prophetically describe the person that would someday arise from the cut-off Davidic line to once again become great king of Israel (Isa. 11:1). In that sense, it was a title of the Messiah, the Anointed One. Matthew made note of the prophetic fulfillment of this in Matt. 1:23. From this prophetic perspective, **the mob was unwittingly asking for Jesus the Branch, the Messiah. “He said to them, ‘I am.’”** -- In spite of the fact that many translations include the word “He” in their rendering of this response, there is nothing in the Greek to support this. **This is the seventh and final example in John’s gospel where Jesus expressed Himself in this construction known as the “I am’ absolute”.** I think it is significant that in John’s attempt to convince His readers that Jesus is the Christ (20:30,31), he used exactly seven miracle accounts (which he calls “signs”), seven “I am” claims with predicates (e.g., “I am the Bread of Life”), and that there are also exactly seven contexts where this unusual “I am” absolute construction appears (cf. 4:25; 6:20; 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19). In each instance, there is a significant display of power, or a significant claim made, in association with this expression. From the standpoint of numerological design, **a case made by three groups of seven components would be stylistically pleasing to the Jewish mind.** I cannot help but think that it was intentional. The seven “‘I am’ absolutes”, then, are critical to this stylistic overview, and their significance as corroborating witnesses should not be overlooked. **“And Judas also who was betraying Him, was standing with them.”** -- Apparently, having approached with the crowd, but not having yet kissed Him as the agreed-upon sign to identify Him (Matt. 47-50; Mk 14:43-46; Lk. 22:47,48).

“When therefore He said to them, ‘I am’, they drew back, and fell to the ground.” (vs. 6) -- This is the display of power associated with the “‘I am’ absolute” saying in this context. Obviously, these 600+ men had no intention of showing Jesus any sign of deference, nor were they of a frightened frame of mind whereby they might have been startled in some way. How they might have understood what happened, we do not know. It did not deter them, however, nor was it intended to do so. **This event is relayed to us by John not only as a final sign as to who He was, but also to indicate the complete voluntariness of His surrender.** Certainly, the power was available and present for Him to immobilize them and to simply walk away, had He so desired. Vss. 7-9 is a further explanation as to why this event took place. It brought the focus of the crowd to Jesus alone, and made possible the escape of the disciples.

“Simon Peter therefore having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s slave, and cut off his right ear...” (vs. 10) -- From the other accounts, we can surmise that Judas had now kissed Jesus, and that the soldiers had laid hold of Him. **From John alone do we find out that this unnamed disciple in the other gospel accounts was Peter.** This is very characteristic of the impetuous fisherman, however, and comes as no surprise. He undoubtedly meant to cut off the man’s head, but succeeded only in snagging an ear. Luke’s account alone reports that Jesus healed the man (Lk. 22:51). **“...and the slave’s name was Malchus.”** -- **Again, information given to us only by John.** Vs. 15 reports that John (the “another disciple”) was known to the high priest, and gained access, therefore, into the courtyard of his house. Unquestioned access to the courtyard, and familiarity with the names of his servants, would suggest that there was some ongoing relationship between John and the high priest’s household.

Vs. 11 is Jesus’ rebuke of Peter. Lk. 22:51 and Matt. 26:52-54 offer a more complete composite picture. Certainly the experience of just having seen everyone retreat and fall to the ground would have added some reality and depth to Jesus’ comment recorded by Matthew: “Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?” **“The cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?”** -- The only reference in John to the “cup” that Jesus had agonized about in the other accounts (Matt. 26:36-43; Mk. 14:32-41; Lk. 22:41-44). By this time, the prayer struggle had been resolved, and He was ready to “drink the cup” which the Father had designated for Him.

“So the Roman cohort and the commander, and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus, and bound Him.” (vs. 12) -- The same players as before. Again, the word, “Roman”, does not appear in the Greek text. **The word translated as “commander” is chiliarch in Greek. This is an official Roman military title, often translated as “tribune”, an officer in command of 600-1000 men. Undoubtedly, the Roman troops were involved in the arrest.**

John 18:12-27 -- A Night of Questioning

¹⁷ The slave-girl therefore who kept the door said to Peter, ‘You are not also one of this man’s disciples, are you?’ He said, ‘I am not.’ ²⁵ ...Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They said therefore to him, ‘You are not also one of His disciples, are you?’ He denied it, and said, ‘I am not.’ ²⁶ One of the slaves of the high priest ...said, ‘Did I not see you in the garden with Him?’ ²⁷ Peter therefore denied it again; and immediately a cock crowed.” John 18:17,25-27

“So the Roman cohort and the commander, and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus, and bound Him and led Him to Annas first, for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.” (vss. 12,13) -- The office of the high priesthood was subject to the domination of Rome. Though they were somewhat tolerant of the Jewish religious practices, they reserved the right to remove any high priest who was perceived as a liability to the interests of the Empire. **In the OT, the high priesthood was a life-long position. Annas, appointed high priest in A.D. 6, offended the Romans and was deposed in A.D. 15. He was then succeeded briefly by his son, Eleazar, who in turn was replaced by Caiaphas, the son-in-law of Annas, in A.D. 18. Although Caiaphas continued in this role officially until A.D. 36, most Jews probably still viewed Annas as the true high priest.**

It is quite obvious that Jesus’ Jewish trial was an attempt to squeeze as much of the process into as brief a time as possible, and still maintain some arguable semblance of legality. Normally, there were three aspects of a trial, (1.) a preliminary hearing; (2.) a trial before the ruling high priest and the Sanhedrin; and (3.) the final decision and sentencing by the Council of the Sanhedrin. Since Jewish law forbade the sentencing of a man on the same day as his trial, the hearing before Annas was probably conducted to give the appearance (and justification) of having followed proper protocol. **Thus we have (1.) a separate preliminary hearing before Annas (Jn. 18:12,13,19-24); (2.) the night meeting of Jesus with the Sanhedrin and Caiaphas, which served as His trial (Matt. 26:57-68); and, (3.) the gathering again of the high priest and the Council shortly after daybreak for the necessary legal conviction and sentencing (Matt. 27:1; Mk. 15:1; Lk. 22:66-71).** From there, the Council would bring Him to Pilate, “very early in the morning” (i.e., probably between 6:00 and 7:00 a.m.), so that they could gain the desired sentence of death. **Thus, within a period of only 12 hours or less, Jesus was arrested, charged before an inquest, tried, convicted and sentenced to death.** Most people in Jerusalem would have been unaware of the events of this night, until well after the entire judicial process was over, and He was on His way to the cross.

“Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews...” (vs. 14) -- A reference to 11:47-53. Is there likely to be a fair trial before one who thought it expedient that Jesus die for the “greater good” of keeping the peace?

“Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple.” (vs. 15) -- From John alone we find out how it was that Peter came into the courtyard of the high priest. *“So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in.”* (vs. 16) -- John’s family apparently was familiar enough to the family and servants of the high priest that no one questioned his request. *“You are not also one of this man’s disciples, are you?”* (vs. 17) -- Note that the way the servant girl asks the question implies that she knew that John was a follower of Jesus. This should not surprise us. If John was so familiar to the high priest’s household, his association with Jesus must have been well known to them all. Yet, in spite of the fact that John’s presence was tolerated, Peter still was afraid to admit his relationship with Jesus of Nazareth. *“Peter was also with them, standing and warming himself.”* (vs. 18) -- The mention of the charcoal fire and Peter’s behavior are details we might expect of an eyewitness account. They set the stage for Peter’s other denials. There was a group huddled together for warmth around this fire. Peter was trying to “blend in”, as well as keeping warm.

The hearing before Annas. *“The high priest questioned Jesus about His disciples and His teachings.”* (vs. 19) -- The direction of this line of interrogation was apparently to incriminate others, probably reflecting his intention of arresting the entire inner circle of Jesus’ disciples. *“Jesus answered him, ‘I have spoken openly to the world; ...and I spoke nothing in secret.’”* (vs. 20) -- The Lord’s response is a simple statement that what He was in public was no different than what He was or taught in private with His disciples. There was no hidden agenda or “secret society” behind the scenes. *“Why do you question Me?”* (vs. 21) -- In the Jewish legal system, the accused was supposed to be presumed innocent, unless witnesses would testify against him. In any case, not only was Jesus’ testimony not required to prove His innocence, ...it was also clearly not of any value to those who were present, since they already considered Him guilty. *“Question those who have heard what I spoke to them.”* -- This would be the proper course of action. *“...one of the officers standing nearby struck Jesus, saying, ‘Is that the way You answer the high priest?’”* (vs. 22) -- To strike an accused person in either a hearing or a court trial was not only *uncalled for*, it was also *illegal*. Jesus’ response was exactly to the point, not at all out of place. To these abusive authorities, however, any questioning of their methods was neither *accepted* nor *tolerated*. The apostle Paul experienced similar treatment at the hands of the high priest officiating at his trial (Acts 23:1-3). **Clearly, these men were corrupt, the legal process**

was merely a sham, and Jesus was NOT going to be getting a fair trial. “Jesus answered him, ‘If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?’” (vs. 23) -- The Lord was not intimidated by their abuse. Instead, He confronted the perpetrator with his wrong. It was clear to all there who the innocent and the guilty really were. **“So Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.”** (vs. 24) -- Note that in vs. 22, the officer refers to Annas as the high priest, but here Caiaphas is recognized as the current officiating high priest. **It is the trial before Caiaphas and the entire Council of the Sanhedrin that is highlighted by Matthew (26:59-68) and Mark (14:53-65), while Luke’s account focuses on the gathering of the next morning (Lk. 22:66-23:1; cf. Mk. 15:1).** As we have seen so often in our study of John’s gospel, *the author assumes that the readers have access to other gospel accounts, and chooses to avoid reduplication.* Instead, he simply fills in the gaps in our knowledge by relaying other information which is missing from the earlier accounts. Hence, **John is the only gospel writer to tell us about this earlier appearance of Jesus before Annas.** Since the high priests were part of the Sadducees, the wealthy noblemen who owned property in the Jerusalem area, it is likely that Annas met with Jesus in one part of the high priest’s estate, while Caiaphas was convening the other Council members in preparation for the trial of Jesus in another part of the property. Peter would not have found it necessary to leave the courtyard of the high priest, since both trials would have been held in the nearby buildings.

Peter’s final denials. We saw earlier that the gatekeeper had prompted the first denial (vs. 17). We saw, too, that Peter joined others warming themselves by a fire (vs. 18). When we attempt to combine the accounts of the various gospel writers, it is important that we realize that there were a number of people nearby. **What is universally stated is that Peter denied Jesus three times before the rooster crowed. The number of questions put to him, however, certainly cannot be limited to three.** Some may have been asked in “clusters” by different people in the group, who asked them almost simultaneously. Some scholars, have found up to six separate denials by Peter, based upon the fact that Mark’s version records that Jesus said Peter would deny Him before the rooster crowed *twice* (14:30,72), while the others do not mention more than one cock crow. Some have suggested three denials before the first cockcrow, and an additional three times between the first crow and the second crow. Some of these variations can be explained in terms of (1.) Mark giving us more information about the specific rooster crow being referred to, while the other writers left out the details as unimportant to their purposes; and (2.) there were occasions when Peter was asked questions by more than one person, to which he responded by a single denial. Thus, there could have been several who may have queried him, but on only three occasions did he respond by a denial statement.

According to John’s account, Peter’s first denial happened earlier, when **the girl at the gate** asked him if he, like John, was a disciple of Jesus (vs. 17). A second challenge was delivered by yet **another servant girl** in the courtyard (Matt. 26:69; Mk. 14:66), when he was warming himself by the fire, to which he replied, “Woman, I do not know Him” (Lk. 22:57). “I do not know nor understand what you are talking about” (Mk. 14:68). Again, a little later, **a third person, this time a man**, saw him and said, “You are one of them too!” To this, Peter replied, “Man, I am not!” (Lk. 22:58). [Some manuscripts of Mark’s gospel include, in 14:68, “...and a rooster sounded”.] After this encounter, Peter apparently withdrew to the gateway porch, or forecourt, where yet **another servant girl** (Matt. 26:71) accused him of being “with Jesus” to the ones gathered there. Matthew records that he “denied it with an oath, ‘I do not know the man.’” In a fifth interchange, **a relative of Malchus**, the man whose ear Peter had cut off, said to him, “Did I not see you in the garden?” Peter denied that, as well (Jn. 18:26,27). **A sixth individual, a man**, now about an hour after the confrontation by the man in the courtyard (Lk. 22:59), began to insist that Peter was with Jesus, because he was a Galilean. Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are talking about.” Then **the bystanders** came up and said, “Surely, you too are one of them, for even the way you talk gives you away” (Matt. 26:73). Peter began to curse and swear, “I do not know the man!” **“...immediately a rooster crowed.”** (vs. 27) -- Luke adds that this happened while Peter *was still speaking*, and at that moment *Jesus turned to look at him*. Then Peter remembered what the Lord had said, and went out weeping bitterly (Lk. 22:60,61).

There are three lessons to highlight from these events: **First, we observe the creative gyrations of legalism.** This is consistent with what we know of extra-biblical reports of the religious groups of that day. They were sticklers for following certain aspects of the law, while violating the very heart and spirit of what the law was intending. People find ways to put on an appearance of legality, while selfishly manipulating things to get their way. We see it on every level of human society: in families, in companies, in churches, in government. **Second, we can observe that Jesus both spoke up for Himself, for truth and proper procedure, and then He also chose to be silent.** There are times to speak up, and there are times to be silent (Ecc. 3:7). It is appropriate to speak up for justice and truth, to remind others of the right way. When surrounded by unjust and oppressive authorities, however, the prudent person will keep silent (Amos 5:13). He will not be heard anyway, and may make himself the untimely target of evil men. **Third, the fear of man brings a snare** (Prov. 25:25). For all his bravado and good intentions, when it came down to it, fear ruled in Peter’s life. May we have grace to trust in Yahweh instead of fear people.

John 18:28-40 -- The Conflict of Two Kingdoms

“Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.’³⁷ Therefore Pilate said to Him, ‘So You are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.’³⁸ Pilate said to Him, ‘What is truth?’ And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, ‘I find no guilt in Him.’³⁹ But you have a custom, that I should release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?’⁴⁰ Therefore they cried out again, saying, ‘Not this Man, but Barabbas.’ Now Barabbas was a robber.” John 18:36-40

“*Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early...*” (18:28) -- John does not record Jesus’ trial before Caiaphas (Mk. 14:53-64). Neither does he mention the sentencing hearing, held early in the morning before they brought Jesus to Pilate (Mk. 15:1). **Although giving an outward show of staying within the limitations of the law, these secret legal proceedings were clearly in violation of the intent of the law.** They were plainly an indication of the desperate attempt of those in power to quietly remove Jesus, who had so often been a thorn in their sides, with the least amount of political damage. If the time reference to the “sixth hour” in 19:14 was 6:00 a.m. in Roman time, then the arrival of the Sanhedrin members with their Accused would have been *very* early, shortly after the brief sentencing hearing that would have occurred at daybreak. “...*they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover.*” -- How ironic! Here they are knowingly committing a clear travesty of justice, ...going to elaborate lengths to conduct secret meetings at night, even attempting to find false witnesses to accuse the pre-condemned man (Matt. 26:59), so that they could *say* they followed proper procedure and appear righteous to people, ...and now they were concerned about *religious purity*! Had not **Jesus correctly observed that they were after glory which came from men**, and they were not seeking the glory which was from the one and only God (7:44)? **Thus, it was important for them to keep up appearances, above all else.** Their concern lay in the notion that to enter the house of a foreigner would cause them to become unclean, and they would not be able to participate in the feast (cf. Acts 10:28).

“*Pilate went out to them...*” (vs. 29) -- An accommodation to their religious sensibilities. “*What accusation do you bring against this Man?*” -- To try the case before the governor, there would need to be a charge levied against Jesus which would be serious enough to warrant a Roman trial. Since Jesus was found guilty of blasphemy by the Jews, a meaningless concept to the Romans, **the accusers would need to bring a charge against Jesus that would not only justify a trial before the governor, but also warrant a death sentence.** “*If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him to you.*” (vs. 30) -- The Jewish leaders tried to see if Pilate would just “rubber stamp” their decision. “*Take Him yourself and judge Him according to your law.*” (vs. 31) -- Pilate was not in the mood for political games. If they were going to bother him with this case, they had better have a good reason. It is important to recognize that this was no ordinary judge. This was the Roman governor. There were lesser courts to deal with unimportant issues. “*We are not permitted to put anyone to death.*” -- The Romans did not allow local people to have the power of capital punishment. It would be only too easy for Roman supporters to be removed under trumped up charges, if such power were available to local magistrates and judges. Thus **Rome determined that it was in her self-interest to try all capital cases under Roman law, by Roman officials**, to prevent such political purges. “*...signifying by what kind of death He was about to die.*” (vs. 32) -- Jewish capital punishment was carried out by stoning, while **capital crimes under Roman jurisprudence were punishable by crucifixion, for those who were not Roman citizens.** This fulfilled what Jesus had implied in 3:14; 8:28, and what He had directly said in the other gospel accounts (e.g., Matt. 20:19). Furthermore, as Paul states in Galatians 3:13, **death by crucifixion signified that Jesus became One accursed of God, according to the Law** (Deut. 21:22,23; cf. Isa. 53:1-9).

Kingdom questioning -- “*Are You the King of the Jews?*” (vs. 33) -- **These are the first words of Pilate to Jesus in all four gospel accounts.** Though not referred to by John, from Luke’s account we see that the accusations of the Jews themselves suggested this title to Pilate. Luke records three basic charges against Jesus: (1.) misleading the nation; (2.) forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar; and (3.) saying that He was Christ, a King (Lk. 23:1,2). “*Are you saying this of your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?*” (vs. 34) -- This question is somewhat puzzling, until we recall that the conversation between Pilate and the Jews was out of Jesus’ hearing. He had been brought into the Praetorium, while they had remained outside (vs. 28). **It would seem that Jesus was attempting to discern something from the governor’s response, before giving answer to the question.** Was Pilate an honest inquirer, or was he simply following up on the Jews’ accusation, ...i.e., that Jesus was a self-proclaimed Jewish Messiah? **If, however, Pilate perceived in Jesus a true threat against Rome, he would misunderstand the nature of Jesus’ Kingdom**, and the cause for which He truly had come. It may be that Jesus asked Pilate the question to make him

think a little more deeply, and personally, than he would have otherwise considered the significance of the Man before him, and what He stood for. **“I am not a Jew, am I?”** (vs. 35) – Pilate’s response reveals that he did not at all consider this encounter as *anything* of significance to him. **“Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have you done?”** -- Pilate was attempting to give Jesus an opportunity to defend himself. **“My Kingdom is not of this world.”** (vs. 36) -- Instead of responding directly to the governor, Jesus leads the conversation in an entirely different direction. **The Lord makes clear that the Kingdom which He reigns over is no threat to Rome, or to the Jews. “If My Kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews...”** -- This statement cut at the core of the Roman governor’s concern. **There was no attempt at political insurrection here, ...no threat to the peace, or to Roman power. “So you are a King?”** (vs. 37) -- In a follow-up question, Pilate attempts to draw out any other underlying competition with Rome. **“You say correctly that I am a King. For this end I have been born, and for this I have come into this world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.”** (vs. 37) -- This certainly is not the language of someone attempting to rebel against Rome. Jesus’ message was not directed against the political and economic power structures of His day. His message was aimed at the human heart. If the heart was changed, there *would be* changes made in the ways people related to each other. **Truth was the rallying cry, weapon, and mark of the Kingdom of Jesus. “What is truth?”** (vs. 38) -- Whether this was a cynical mockery of what Pilate saw as Jesus’ naiveté, ... or if it was an honest statement of Pilate’s self-doubt about what Jesus was saying..., the result is clear: **Pilate concluded that Jesus was not guilty of any crime. “I find no guilt in Him.”**

The Barabbas Exchange -- Before commenting on this strange, but significant, twist of events, it is helpful to note that **Jesus’ trial before Herod (reported only by Luke) took place immediately after this first interview with Pilate** (Lk. 23:1-15). Having found no guilt in Jesus, the Roman governor had hoped to pass off the jurisdiction, and, thus, the responsibility, of this distasteful case to his Galilean counterpart, Herod, since Jesus was from Galilee. In spite of Herod’s attempt to question Him, Jesus said nothing. Having publicly mocked Him, Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate. **Since neither Herod, nor he, had found any substance to the charges against Jesus, Pilate intended to scourge Him and release Him** (Lk. 23:14-16). What follows concerning Barabbas is recorded in all four gospel accounts. **“But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover...”** (vs. 39) -- Matthew and Mark both make reference to the same custom (Matt. 27:15; Mk. 15:6). We know from history that such a practice was not without parallel in other locations on special occasions. The Romans did this as both a token of good will, and also as an expression of their self-confidence. It was like throwing a bone to a dog. What is clear is that this was a well-known, established tradition, probably initiated by Roman governors before Pilate’s time. His statement, “you have a custom” is probably a reference to this previous history. **“...do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?”** -- It is not altogether clear who brought up the custom, the governor or the crowd. **Certainly, Pilate wanted to use this custom as way to release Jesus. This would serve his interests well, since Jesus was guiltless and harmless, in his mind, while other prisoners who might be chosen would be much more of a liability.** Pilate was not ignorant of Jesus’ popularity, nor the underlying treachery of the chief priests (Matt. 27:18), and was undoubtedly counting on the crowd to jump to support this proposal. (At this juncture, Matthew 27:19 reports that Pilate’s wife sent him a message, imploring him to have nothing more to do with Jesus, referring to a troubling dream she had experienced. In spite of their great accomplishments, many Romans were very superstitious. Such dreams or omens would have had a very unsettling effect.) Note the continued focus on Jesus as “the King of the Jews”. **“Not this Man, but Barabbas.”** (vs. 40) -- The chief priests and elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas instead of Jesus (Matt. 27:20; Mk. 15:11). **The contrast between the two men could not have been more dramatic.** The name meant “son of a father” (Heb., *Bar* = “son of” and *abba* = “father”). If, as the ancient traditions report, Barabbas’ first name was also Jesus, then **he would have been all that the enemies of Jesus were falsely attributing to Jesus, i.e., the illegitimate child of an unknown father, a political insurgent famous as a robber and murderer against Roman forces. He was all Jesus was not, ...a folk hero of near-messianic notoriety, one who had tried by force to overthrow Roman power and to create justice by a “rob from the rich and give to the poor” type of strategy. If anyone was “misleading the nation, and forbidding them to pay taxes”, it was Barabbas, yet in the choice between Jesus a son of a father (Barabbas), and Jesus the Son of the Father, the priests and the people rejected the true Messiah, and chose a worldly counterfeit.**

At Jesus’ trial, we definitely see two very different kingdoms. Jesus represents the Kingdom of God, whose power becomes visible wherever truth is recognized and embraced. Truth changes hearts, transforms relationships, and liberates people from sin and selfishness to live for God. Power and ability are given to serve others. The worldly kingdom is established and maintained by force and deception. Power is used to serve self, and to dominate and control others. **We must choose our King. If we choose Jesus, then we must be willing to live according to His ways.**

John 19:1-16 -- The King of the Jews: Mockery, Mystery and Murder

"I gave My back to those who strike Me, and My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting."

Isaiah 50:6

"His appearance was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men. ¹⁵ Thus He will sprinkle many nations..."

Isaiah 52:14-15

"Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged Him. ² And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and arrayed Him in a purple robe; ³ and they began to come up to Him, and say, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and to give Him blows in the face. ⁴ And Pilate came out again, and said to them, 'Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no guilt in Him.' ⁵ Jesus therefore came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, 'Behold, the Man!'"

John 19:1-5

"Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him." (19:1) -- A Roman scourging utilized the infamous "cat of nine tails", a whip consisting of leather strips with bits of bone or lead attached to them. The weight of the lead would increase the punishing force of each blow, and the sharp bits of bone would penetrate the flesh, tearing it as the whip was withdrawn. By the time a scourging was completed, a man's back and legs would be a shredded, pulverized, bloody mass. Victims of a Roman scourging often died under the whip, or as a result of the beating.

The Mockery of Jesus – "The soldiers..." (vs. 2) -- Matthew and Mark tell us that the entire Roman cohort, a tenth-part of a legion, or a company equaling 600 men, **were "called together"** into the Praetorium (Matt. 27:27-31; Mk. 15:16-20), the palace of the governor, away from the eyes and ears of the Jews (Jn. 18:28). From Luke's account, we know that Herod and his men had already ridiculed and mistreated Jesus, sending Him back to Pilate in a beautiful robe (Lk. 23:10,11). Apparently, this inspired the cruel mockery of Jesus at the hands of the Roman soldiers. The fact that the entire cohort was "called together" signifies that **there was a particular intent to make an example of Jesus**, ...an example of Roman domination and superiority over these rebellious, subject people. It was a propaganda exercise to rally the men together to dramatically express their subjugation and humiliation of their enemies.

"...twisted together a crown of thorns..." -- A clear reference to the charge against Him of being the "King of the Jews". The soldiers supplied a mock crown to dress Him for their charade. **"...a purple robe..."** -- Whether this was the same robe Herod sent, or a different one, the significance of the color was that it was the color worn by royalty. Purple dye was very expensive, made from a gland salvaged from the shells of certain mollusks. The most desirable species was fairly rare, and the harvesting and production process was very labor-intensive. **"Hail, King of the Jews!"** (vs. 3) -- Dressed in the costume appropriate for their sport, the soldiers began to act out their mock respect, rapidly turning to cruel brutality. From Matthew, we discover that they also gave Him a reed as a scepter. They began by kneeling before Him in mock deference. Instead of the customary kiss, however, they spat in His face, and beat His head with the reed scepter, driving the thorns into His scalp (Matt. 27:29-31). John adds that they slapped Him in the face. How many participants actually struck Him is not clear, but Isaiah's prophecies about the suffering Servant of Yahweh could have been literally fulfilled in Jesus: "I gave My back to those who strike Me, and My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting"; and, "His appearance was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men" (Isa. 50:6; 52:14). **Between the whipping, and the brutal beatings at the hands of the temple guards, and now the Roman soldiers, surely the Lord would have been virtually unrecognizable**, all but de-faced by the abuse He endured.

"Pilate came out again..." (vs. 4) -- Remember, the Jews were waiting outside (18:28,29). **"I find no guilt in Him."** -- This is the second time the governor has declared Jesus innocent (cf. 18:38).

"Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe." (vs. 5) -- The humiliation and mockery done to Jesus would have been apparent to all. **"Behold the Man!"** -- Pilate directs the crowd's attention to the broken and beaten man, the so-called "King of the Jews", dressed in mock royal finery. He may have hoped that this extreme humiliation would satisfy their purposes, and they would assent to let Jesus go. **"When the chief priests and the officials saw Him, they cried out saying, 'Crucify, crucify!'"** (vs. 6) -- Instead, their thirst for blood and vengeance caused them to cry out for more punishment. Probably the extremity of Jesus' wounds, instead of pricking their compassion, had the effect of almost dehumanizing Him, degrading Him in their eyes, so that they only wanted Him destroyed (cf. Deut. 25:1-3). **"Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him."** -- The words of an exasperated Pilate. He knew they could not legally execute Jesus. This third time he declares Jesus' innocence, yet he could not convince the crowd to accept his decision. Legally, his decision was binding, but he wanted the people to be in agreement with him. **"He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God."** (vs. 7) -- From an OT Hebrew perspective, the title, "Son of God", was a title for the King, the Messiah (Psa. 2). To Pilate, with his polytheistic background of Greek and Roman mythology, this title would have meant something entirely different, possibly bringing to mind a demi-god, such as Hercules. The Greek construction would lend itself to promoting this

confusion, since there is no “the”, i.e., “He made himself (a) son of God”. His subsequent reaction and his questions would seem to support this supposition.

Pilate’s Growing Desperation – *“When therefore Pilate ...heard this..., he was the more afraid.”* (vs. 8) -- The word “more” indicates that he was *already afraid*, undoubtedly a reference to the unsettling message from his wife regarding her dream about Jesus (Matt 27:19; cf. study notes from 18:39,40). Although John does not mention it, he assumes that the reader would have known about it. There is no other explanation from the context that would give cause for Pilate to be “more” afraid. *“...and he entered into the Praetorium again, and said to Jesus...”* (vs. 9) -- The combination of (1.) Jesus’ strange way of talking about His kingdom as being “not of this world” (18:36); (2.) the warning from Pilate’s wife (approximately simultaneous to 18:39); and now, (3.) the knowledge that Jesus claimed to be a son of God, compels Pilate to interview Jesus yet again, in private. This is no longer just a passing thought in Pilate’s mind. He just had Jesus paraded out before the crowd (vs. 5). Now, he has Him brought again away from the presence of the crowd to where he could speak to Him in private. He needs to make sure he is not getting himself into some much deeper, mysterious trouble brought on by the gods. *“Where are You from?”* -- Again, the question itself betrays the thought process Pilate must have been traveling. There is more to this Man than meets the eye. *“But Jesus gave him no answer.”* -- Cf. Isa. 53:7. *“Do you not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?”* (vs. 10) – Pilate was accustomed to being answered when directing questions to an accused person. He reminds Jesus of the seriousness of His situation, claiming to have life or death authority over Him. *“You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above...”* (vs. 11) – Jesus’ words actually play into Pilate’s fears. The reality is that Pilate is only playing a part in a cosmic drama orchestrated by powers beyond this world. His authority over Jesus is only what has been permitted by heaven. *“...for this reason, he who delivered Me up to you has the greater sin.”* -- These words do not remove the responsibility of Pilate’s choice, but they indicate that the cosmic drama orchestrated from above is not about him. The Jewish leaders will be judged far more harshly than Pilate, for they were clearly conspiring unjustly to do evil. *“As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him...”* (vs. 12) -- Clearly, Pilate believed what Jesus was saying enough to attempt to secure His release. He could see that Jesus was innocent, and he knew that handing Him over to the Jews would be wrong, i.e., a sin. Although it may be judged as a lesser sin by Jesus, nevertheless it would be a fault levied *against him*. He was hoping to “cheat fate”, if there was some larger supernatural plot, avoid his culpability in this sordid affair, and escape being manipulated as a pawn by divine beings. To us, this might sound far-fetched, but Greek and Roman mythology was full of such tales.

Pilate Outmaneuvered – *“...but the Jews cried out, saying, ‘If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar.’”* -- This was the trump card with which the Jews could pressure the governor for his compliance. The Greek is stated more directly, “If ever you might release this one...”. **The Jews were making a very direct threat. They were saying that if Pilate, ...by any method, strategy or loop-hole..., succeeded in releasing Jesus, they were going to report him as a traitor to Caesar. This was no idle threat, and Pilate knew it.** Caesar had become very insecure and suspicious of any possible rivals. Others had been removed from positions of power, some had even been charged as traitors themselves, for not taking a strong enough stand against crackpots and imagined threats to Rome. Pilate knew he could not afford to risk such an inquisition. He was checkmated by the Jews. *“When Pilate therefore heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down at the judgment seat...”* (vs. 13) -- From this point, Pilate goes through the motions, but clearly under protest. It is probably at this juncture that Pilate washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this Man's blood; y’all see!” (Matt. 27:23). He was calling them to witness that *he* was not the one who wanted Jesus’ death. In response, the crowd answered, “His blood be upon us and our children!” *“And he said to the Jews, ‘Behold, your King!’ ...The chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but Caesar.’”* (vss. 14,15) -- To remove any doubt concerning his loyalty, and to force the Jewish leaders to make their own statement of loyalty to Rome, Pilate presented Jesus as the King of the Jews. As distasteful as this was to the Jewish leaders, had they not replied with a declaration of loyalty to Caesar, Pilate could have charged *them* with treason, turning the tables on his blackmailers. Ironically, their confession was true enough. Certainly, God was *not* their King, though they would have claimed so. Now they were forced to confess that the only king they serve is one who was an earthly power who dominated them by force and political expediency (i.e., self-interest). *“So he then delivered Him to them to be crucified.”* (vs. 16) -- **By self-compromise, they succeeded in their self-seeking purpose: the murder of the innocent King of the Jews.**

The posturing and hostile interactions between Pilate and the Jewish authorities sound very similar to our political scene today. **Many interactions in families, the workplace, and even between “friends” can be tainted by similar dynamics: attempts to “one-up”, manipulate and control someone else. Often, ...in the competitiveness of such interactions..., truth, integrity and morality are sacrificed for expedience.**

John 19:17-37 -- The Crucifixion of the King

“They took Jesus therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. ¹⁸ There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between.”

John 19:17-18

“*They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross...*” (vs. 17,18) -- The details of the journey to the cross, mentioned by the other gospel accounts, are not referred to by John. There is no mention of His stumbling under the cross, or of Simon of Cyrene being forced to carry His cross to the place of execution, or of His words to the women along the way (cf. Lk. 23:26-31). “...*to the Place of a Skull, ...Golgotha...*” -- All the gospel writers agree on this point, although Luke does not call it Golgotha, the Hebrew Aramaic name. This would have been meaningless to his Gentile readers. “*There they crucified Him...*” (vs. 18) -- Note, that **to crucify someone referred to the method of execution**. The eventual outcome would be death, but **crucifixion is not equivalent with death**. Thus, in Rom. 6:6, our old self can be described as “having been crucified with Him”, and yet Paul could also describe the old self in Eph. 4:22 as still being in existence, and even “being corrupted (ongoingly) according to the lusts of deceit”. As long as we are alive in these earthly bodies, the old self somehow remains with us, and we can either give in to it, or we can “lay [it] aside”. **Again, what was crucifixion?** The victim was either lashed or nailed to a cross, so that his arms were outstretched, and his feet were propped up on a small shelf. **One of the most cruel and excruciating deaths ever devised by man**, it progressed like this: As the victim tired, he began to sag, which caused his arms to stretch further out, expanding his chest. In order to breathe, the victim would have to push or pull himself up enough to let air out of his diaphragm. As he became more tired, eventually he would not be able to do this anymore, and would asphyxiate. The nails in the hands and feet were more for the purpose of torture, than for support. They were strategically placed in nerve centers that were especially sensitive, so that as the victim struggled for air, the movements required for breath would horrifically aggravate the pain. In addition, the nails placed in wrist/hand area would cause the muscles of the arm to spasm and cramp, with no relief possible. To “crucify” someone was to place them on the cross, so that this slow torturous death process could proceed.

Pilate’s inscription. – “*Jesus of Nazareth, The King of the Jews*” (vs. 19) -- Again, John brings us back to this theme. Note that this was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, so that passersby could read the charge. Though the Jewish leaders wanted Pilate to modify the statement to indicate that Jesus was a false claimant to the throne of Israel, Pilate refused to do so. Thus, in the eyes of Rome, Jesus was executed as a legitimate king.

Dividing of Jesus’ garments (vs. 23). Recorded in all four gospels, undoubtedly because of the clear fulfillment of OT prophecy. “...*this was to fulfill the Scripture...*” – (vs. 24; Psalm 22:18).

Providing for the care of His mother. “...*standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.*” (vs. 25) -- Women are recorded as being present at the crucifixion in all four gospels. Matthew says that there were “...many women... looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee while ministering to Him” (Matt. 27:55). The scene of a crucifixion was no place for respectable women. **One of the horrific aspects of crucifixion was that the condemned person was generally stripped naked, totally exposed to the onlooking gawkers.** While the other writers mention the women standing a ways off, only John includes this brief account of those women who had come near to the cross during Jesus last hours. Of Mary the wife of Clopas, we know nothing else. Mary Magdalene is referred to by all four gospel writers as being at the crucifixion and at the tomb on Resurrection morning. The only other reference to her is found in Lk. 8:2,3, where we learn that she was one of several women who were following Jesus’ entourage of disciples, and was helping to support His ministry out of her private means. In her case, we learn that her devotion toward the Lord began when He delivered her from seven demons. We learn also that Jesus’ mother was there. This may fit our ideal of motherhood, but many a condemned man has died alone, with no family or friends nearby. Certainly this was the fulfillment of old Simeon’s prophetic declaration to her so many years before, “Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed, -- and a sword will pierce even your own soul -- to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed” (Lk. 2:34,35). No matter the pain or shame to herself, Mary wanted to be near her son during His last hours. “*When Jesus saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby...*” (vs. 26) -- Apparently, this was not a planned-out arrangement that Jesus was about to make. It appears to have been rather a spur-of-the-moment kind of decision. Yet, who would be more suitable for the charge which Jesus was about to give than His beloved friend and disciple John? “*Woman, behold your son!*” -- As the firstborn male, it was Jesus’ responsibility to provide for His mother in her old age. By this declaration, and the reciprocal form directed to John, Jesus appointed this closest of the twelve disciples to care for her in His stead. “*From that hour the disciple took her into his own house.*” (vs. 27) – Jesus’ wishes were heard and honored.

Final words of Jesus. The gospel writers record seven utterances of Jesus given from the cross. They are: (1.) His prayer of intercession for His executioners, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they do” (Lk. 23:34); (2.) His words to His mother and John, providing for her care (Jn. 19:26,27); (3.) His assurance to the believing thief, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise” (Lk. 23:45); (4.) His cry of abandonment, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34); (5.) His cry for water, to fulfill the Scripture, “I am thirsty.” (Jn. 19:28); (6.) His cry of victory, “It is finished!” (Jn. 19:30); and (7.) His cry of committal, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit” (Lk. 23:46). The struggle for Jesus was obviously not primarily a physical one, for having passed through the time of God’s wrath upon Him as the Sinbearer (Isa 53; II Cor. 5:21; I Pet. 2:24), He declared, **“It is finished!”** (vs. 30) (Gk. – *Tetelestai*, meaning literally, “Paid in full!”), and regained the composure to voluntarily dismiss His spiritual essence into the Father’s care. **“And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.”** -- Apparently, there was something very unusual about the manner in which He did this. Mark reports, “When the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him saw the way He breathed His last, He said, ‘Truly this man was the Son of God’” (Mk. 15:39). Earlier, Jesus mentioned that no one could take His life, but that He would lay it down voluntarily. “No one has taken it from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I have received from My Father” (Jn. 10:18). When Jesus cried out to the Father to receive His spirit, He then deliberately laid down His head and “gave up”, or “delivered over”, His spirit. The words and manner of Jesus’ expiration appeared to be so deliberate as to be noticed by the centurion, who had seen countless others fight the agonizingly slow gasping struggle for breath, before finally succumbing to exhaustion. **The Man who lived as no one else had lived (Heb. 4:15; Jn. 8:46), and spoke as no one else spoke (Jn. 7:46), also died as no one else died. Death could not take Him, because it had no hold on Him. Consequently, He “gave Himself over” to death, so that in His resurrection He could demonstrate His complete victory over it** (Heb. 2:10-15; Acts 2:22-24).

Proof that Jesus was definitely dead. **“Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, ...asked Pilate that their legs might be broken...”** (vs. 31). The OT Law provided that the corpses of those who had committed a crime worthy of death be hung from a tree as a sign of deterrence to the people. However, the corpse was not to be hung overnight, but was to be buried the same day. To leave a corpse exposed (as was common among the Gentiles) was to defile the land (Deut. 21:22-23). Thus, the conspirators who plotted to murder Jesus were concerned to avoid ceremonial defilement, and took steps to make certain that this turn of events would not occur. By having the victims’ legs broken, they would no longer be able to push their bodies up to catch their breath, and would soon suffocate. By thus hastening their death, no one would be left hanging on the cross, or die in the night. **“So the soldiers came, and broke the legs...”** (vs. 32) -- This was done by the use of a large sledgehammer. **“But coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.”** (vs. 33) -- This is the first evidence that He was dead. Certainly, professional soldiers would be able to tell if He was dead. **“But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately water and blood came out.”** (vs. 34) -- This rush of water and blood from the wound would best be explained by the collection of fluid and blood which would have filled the sac around the heart (the pericardium). The separation of plasma from the blood cells begins immediately upon death. **“He who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true...”** (vs. 35) -- John himself was present and was an eyewitness to these events. **“...so that you might also believe.”** -- **John’s account was designed to bring people to faith. In order to establish the resurrection, it was necessary to firmly establish Jesus’ death,** so that no naturalistic explanation could be given. **“For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture...”** (vs. 36) -- John sees significance in the events that took place, events which are further evidence for the claim that **Jesus was the Messiah prophesied by the OT Scriptures.** **“Not a bone of Him would be broken.”** -- The fact that Jesus’ legs were not broken fulfills the OT law regarding the Passover lamb (Ex. 12:46), as well as the Psalm 34:20 reference which John quotes here. Jesus was the true Passover lamb, the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world (Jn. 1:29), as well as “the righteous [one]”, in a fuller sense than the OT may on the surface suggest. **“They shall look on Him whom they have pierced.”** (vs. 37) -- A reference to Zechariah 12:10, describing Israel’s future repentance and mourning.

The significance of Jesus’ crucifixion cannot be overemphasized. He, like a sin-offering, or a Passover lamb, bore our sins in His body on the tree (I Pet. 2:24; cf. Heb. 9:28; Isa. 53:12). So totally did Jesus identify with us, that Paul would write that God, “made Him who knew no sin to *be* sin on our behalf” (II Cor. 5:21). **Jesus bore the full wrath of God for our sins.** Isaiah had foretold this 700 years before, “...He was pierced for our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on Him, and we are healed by His wounds. ⁶ We all went astray like sheep; we all have turned to our own way; and Yahweh has punished Him for the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:5,6). **God’s purpose in doing this was more than simply to reconcile us to Him** (II Cor. 5:18,19). It was to free us from the weight and bondage of sin, so that we become righteous in Him. **We are to live to honor and serve God, by walking in the freedom made available through Jesus, and reconciling others to Him through our service and sharing.**

John 19:38-42 -- A Burial Fit For A King

“After these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. So he came and took away His body. ³⁹ Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. ⁴⁰ So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.” John 19:38-40

“*After these things...*” (vs. 38) -- That is, after it was clear that Jesus was dead. “*...Joseph of Arimathea...*” - Arimathea was a small village about twenty miles NW of Jerusalem, in the hill country of what had been the portion of the tribe of Ephraim. What else do we know of this Joseph? We know that he was a good and righteous man, one who had been expecting the Kingdom of God. He was also wealthy, and a well-respected member of the Sanhedrin, the Council of the Jews (Matt. 27:57; Mk. 15:43; Lk. 23:50). Because of his prominence, and his role in Jesus’ burial, He is referred to in all four gospels. “*...being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews...*” -- Literally, the Greek says, “...but having been hidden on account of the fear of the Jews”. John reminds us of the oppressive, controlling nature of the religious authorities of Jesus’ day. Like the crowd in the Temple (7:11-13), and the parents of the blind man (9:18-23), Joseph had been fearful of standing up for Jesus in any public way, lest some kind of rejection or sanctions would be levied against him. “*...asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus...*” -- Typically, the bodies of victims of a Roman execution would be simply brought to the city dump and left unburied, a final public indignity for those who would dare to cross Rome. At best, they would be buried in an unmarked grave in a place of dishonor. The notoriety of the crime often determined the final treatment of the corpse. Understandably, a family member might ask that the body be released to them, to avoid such loathsome treatment of their loved one. **For Joseph to make this request was a very bold and courageous act of love and respect for Jesus** (Mk. 15:43).

Devotion to Jesus overcame his cowardice. This act also publicly clarified that he had *not* been in agreement with the other Council members, who had plotted against and condemned Jesus to death (Lk. 23:51). “*...and Pilate granted permission.*” -- From Mark we learn that Pilate was surprised that Jesus would already be dead, since often those crucified would live two or three days. Thus, ***Pilate specifically summoned and questioned the centurion in charge of the execution to confirm the fact of Jesus’ death***, whereupon he released the body to Joseph. This is another evidence that Jesus had not simply passed out. He was unquestionably dead. The fact that Pilate released Jesus’ body to Joseph is unusual, but probably arose from the fact that he knew Jesus was innocent. Probably due to the pangs of his own conscience, he saw no purpose in allowing further abuse or indignity to one he had desired to acquit. In a passive-aggressive manner, he also was able, by this, to somewhat dull the self-satisfaction of the enemies of Jesus. “*So he came and took away His body.*” -- Mark and Luke intimate that Jesus was still hanging on the cross when Joseph arrived (Mk. 15:46; Lk 23:53). **Jesus’ removal from the cross did not happen immediately upon His death. There was a significant interval of time in between**, long enough for Joseph to visit Pilate, ...for Pilate to send for and question the centurion, ...and then for Joseph to purchase linen in the marketplace before returning to take Jesus’ body from the cross. **This renders any so-called “swoon theory” (i.e., that Jesus had not really died, but had only passed out) ridiculous.** To be hanging that long without a breath was impossible. Remember, in order to take a breath, the victim would have to move to push himself up, an action which would have been seen by the guards or bystanders. **This interval is another strong line of evidence that establishes the finality of Jesus’ death.**

“*Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came...*” (vs. 39) -- Only John mentions Nicodemus’ part in the preparation of Jesus’ body. (We met Nicodemus in chapter 3, and he surfaced again in 7:50,51). He was a “ruler of the Jews” (3:1), which probably indicates that he had a seat on the Sanhedrin, as did Joseph. He was a Pharisee, and a well-known teacher (3:1,10). “*...bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight.*” -- The mixture of these aromatic spices was commonly used in preparing the dead. The “pounds” referred to here are 12 oz. pounds, or “troy weight”. The equivalent in avoirdupois weight would be 75 pounds. Stop for a moment and think of how much a can of cinnamon is, usually about one quarter of a pound. We are talking about *buckets* of spices! Even if you were to think of water, how many buckets would it take to make up 75 pounds? Close to nine bucketfuls! Dried spices would have weighed *less* than water, requiring a *greater volume* to make up 75 pounds. **The amount purchased was enough for 100 or more standard burials! Only kings and great persons were buried with such large amounts of spices.** By comparison, the great rabbi Gamaliel was buried with 40 pounds of spices, ...and *that* was noteworthy enough to record for future posterity! The cost of such a large amount of spices would also have been very expensive, certainly more than the disciples or the family of Jesus could have ever afforded. Although Nicodemus was undoubtedly also a wealthy man, this special treatment of the corpse of Jesus could only indicate a very deep admiration and love which Nicodemus must have developed. Unfortunately, there is no mention of either of these men after this careful, loving, ...yet unfinished... preparation of Jesus’ body for burial. **Just as Jesus’ birth**

was marked with extravagant gifts, so also in His death He was honored lavishly, ...truly a burial fit for a King!

Again, the contrast with the ignominious end of most crucified criminals is striking, and would have been even more stark to the people of that generation who were more familiar with what was common practice.

“So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.” (vs. 40) -- There is some confusion regarding the “burial custom of the Jews”. Did they use a shroud? Did they wrap the dead in linen strips, much as an Egyptian mummy? Did they use a casket or sarcophagus? **We tend to “read in” our own suppositions as to how it “must have been”**. Our translations have *perpetuated*, not clarified, some of these misunderstandings. It *appears* that the first three gospels tell us that a shroud was used (Matt. 27:59; Mk. 15:46; Lk. 23:53), whereas John seems to be describing something like a mummy-style preparation. This confusion is magnified by claims that the “burial cloth of Jesus” has been found (e.g., the Shroud of Turin, ...one of *several* ancient cloths for which this holy notoriety has been asserted). Most of these questions disappear, however, if one looks closely and seriously at the texts, and compares these with the results of archaeological findings. We now know, for example, that **it was customary for the Jews to bury their dead within a few hours of death. Thus, the hasty preparations made here, although pressured additionally by the time constraints of the afternoon time of Jesus’ death, and the beginning of the Passover Sabbath at sundown, would not have been all that unusual.** Hence, Joseph and Nicodemus would have known right where to go to purchase the supplies they needed for this task, and these ingredients would have been already prepared, meaning that **the main task involved would have been the application process.**

It was customary for the corpse to be washed, anointed, then straightened and bound tightly with linen strips (cf. 11:44), about a foot wide. There is some question as to the use of the spices. In one view, they were mixed together with oil in a paste-like consistency, and added between the layers of linen. Not only did this serve as an aromatic preservative, but it also dried to cement the bandages into a hardened shell that adhered to the body. Others think they were a dry powder stuffed between the layers of wrappings. The purpose of the spices was *not* to be a preservative, but to merely cover the smell of putrefaction. The jaw was also tied shut, and the head wrapped around with linen, much like a turban, with the end of the length, or “napkin” placed over the face (cf. 11:44). **Speculations about a “shroud” or “burial cloth” are unfounded. A closer examination of the original language supports this,** as there is no indefinite article in the Greek (i.e., no “a” or “an”). Hence, when the translators wrote that Joseph bought “a linen cloth”, **the actual Greek simply says that he “bought linen”**. **The details of how the linen was used is described for us by John, although the language of the other writers also refer to the same practices,** e.g., “wrapped” in Matt. 27:59 and Lk. 23:53 means literally “to roll up” or “wrap in”; and the word in Mk. 15:46 (a *different* Greek word choice) also means to “wrap in”. Hence, instead of simply covering the body with a sheet, **Jesus’ body was wrapped mummy-style from the feet to the neck, and a separate cloth was used to wrap His head and cover His face** with a “napkin”. The gummy spice mixture would have soaked through the grave clothes, sticking them not only to each other, but also to Jesus’ body. (Removal of the grave clothes, then, would have been a very difficult and messy process.)

“Now in the place where He was crucified, there was a garden; and in the garden a new tomb; in which no one had yet been laid.” (vs. 41) -- **From Matthew, we find that it was Joseph’s own tomb,** one which he had hewn out of the rock hillside (Matt. 27:60), so **there would have been no other entrance but the front doorway.** It was not uncommon for anyone of moderate wealth to prepare a tomb for the burial of family members. Undoubtedly, the fact that Joseph had purchased a site in Jerusalem, though his village was some twenty miles distant, was indicative of his piety. Normally, family tombs would have been in the vicinity of their home village. To be buried in Jerusalem, the holy city, was desirable, but typically only the local inhabitants, ...or those of prestige or wealth would be buried there. Joseph fit in the latter class. **Rock hewn tombs were cut into the hillside, and usually consisted of a court, which was nine feet square,** where the funeral procession would come to an end, and family members would gather for any final services. **On the sides of the room, burial niches, or shelves, were cut out of the rock. On one of these, the body would be laid, and the final preparations of wrappings and spices would be made.**

“Therefore because it was the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.” (vs. 42) -- We find here *the reason* for Jesus being placed in Joseph’s tomb. The day was drawing to a close, and there was little time to look for other accommodations. **Joseph’s tomb was close at hand, and ready. Thus, the prophecy of Isaiah 53:9 was fulfilled: “His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death.”**

As you think of Jesus’ interment, in your mind imagine that **His body had been wrapped up on all sides in an encasement of two to three inches of spices wrapped up between layers of cloth.** This would have been done respectfully, carefully, leaving no areas exposed, up to the neck, or chin. Then, they would have wrapped a turban around His head, with more spices, and folded the last corner over His face. **For Him to escape would be unthinkable,** being tied and bound underneath layers of cloth and spices, and **to steal the body would have required body snatchers to deal with those pungent, gummy and heavy grave clothes.**

John 20:1-13 -- The Empty Tomb

“And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷ and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸ So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed. ⁹ For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.”

John 20:6-9

“*Now on the first day of the week...*” (20:1) -- That is, on Sunday morning, the day after the Sabbath. “*Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark...*” -- From the other gospels, we find that she was accompanied by at least two other women, i.e., another Mary, as well as Salome and/or Joanna (depending on whether these are two names for the same person, or refer to separate individuals), and possibly others (Matt. 28:1; Mk. 16:1; Lk. 24:10). Some of the minor discrepancies regarding the time (for example concerning whether it was dark, or the sun had risen) are resolved by a closer look at the original language. For example, the word translated as “came” can also mean “went”, thus it could be that they *started* to the tomb while it was still dark, or as Luke expressed it, “deep dawn” (Lk. 24:1). Then, the sun could indeed have risen by the time they actually *arrived* at the tomb, as Mark reported (Mk. 16:1). “*...and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb.*” -- From Mark’s account, we find that this was a matter of concern to the women, because it was a very large stone (Mk. 16:3,4). It was common practice to have a large disc-shaped stone, which would be rolled into a trough in front of the entrance to the tomb. To remove such a stone required rolling it back up out of the trough, which would not have been easy. Such stones would have fit snugly against the entrance of the tomb, to prevent access by animals, and to contain the offensive odors of decomposition (Jn. 11:39). Since this was designed to be a rich man’s tomb, an extra-large stone would have been used to deter desecration by grave robbers. John makes no mention of the women’s purpose in coming, but from Mark and Luke we discover that they had prepared spices to anoint the body. Apparently, they did not know of the extensive preparations of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, though they had sat opposite the tomb during this time (Matt. 27:61). They also appear to be ignorant of the steps the chief priests and Pharisees had taken to secure the tomb (Matt. 27:62-66). With the tomb having been sealed, and with a squad of guards posted, they undoubtedly would have been turned away. Their ignorance was due to the fact that they had stayed home during the Sabbath day, according to the Law. John makes no mention of how the stone was rolled away, just that they found it so when they arrived. From Matthew we are informed that an angel had rolled it away.

“*And so she ran and came to Simon Peter...*” (vs. 2) -- Again, John does not relate what is in the other gospel accounts. He mentions nothing of the angels who met them at the tomb, who told them to inform the disciples (Matt. 28:1-8; Mk. 16:1-8; Lk. 24:1-9). “*...and the other disciple whom Jesus loved...*” -- A reference to John, the author, who apparently was the closest of the twelve to Jesus. “*...and said to them, ‘They have taken away the Lord... and we do not know where they have laid Him.’*” -- From the other accounts, we know that the angels clearly proclaimed to the women that Jesus was risen from the dead. There is no indication that any of them had difficulty believing the angelic announcement. *Once again, John lets us in on a particular story not covered by the other gospel writers.* Here, he reports the story of Mary Magdalene’s slowness of heart to believe in Jesus’ resurrection. This not only adds human color to the account, but also actually strengthens the credibility of her testimony, because there can be no doubt that she was not at all predisposed to “wishful thinking” in this matter. Note what she tells the disciples: “*They have taken away His body, and we don't know where they laid Him.*” Clearly, she is not thinking “resurrection”, at all.

“*Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they were going to the tomb...*” (vs. 3) -- In response to the report of the women, they ran to see for themselves what had happened.

“*And the two were running together...*” (vs. 4) -- That is, they started out together. “*...and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter, and came to the tomb first.*” -- John, traditionally the younger of the two, was more fleet of foot, and outran Peter. The vividness of the details speaks strongly of a first person account.

“*...and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there...*” (vs. 5) -- From the entrance, John could see the grave clothes still lying on the shelf. Had there been a grave robbery, what possible purpose would there have been to steal a corpse and take the time to laboriously untie and unwrap the sticky spice-filled wrappings, only to carry away a naked, sticky cadaver? Another factor is that both the myrrh and aloes were very powerful aromatic spices (think of Vicks Vaporub, and you have a close approximation of the strength and volatility of this compound), which would have been not only easily detectable, but also difficult to wash off. Had anyone removed the grave clothes, they would certainly have smelled strongly of the pungent odor of myrrh and aloes. No. If someone were to steal the body, they certainly would have chosen a method which required the least amount of time at the tomb, and they would have wanted to have as little actual contact with the body and wrappings as possible. It would have required several men, and a stretcher or some other means of conveyance for transporting the body. “*...but he did not go in.*” --

Possibly a mixture of fear and respect for the dead kept him from going inside. His upbringing would also have played a part in his hesitancy, since to visit or touch a tomb would make a person unclean (Num. 19:16).

“Simon Peter therefore also came, ...and entered the tomb...” -- Peter was not going to let fear or defilement stand in the way of his devotion to Jesus. **“...and he beheld the linen wrappings lying, and the face-cloth, which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.”** (vss. 6,7) -- The question is, **“What did they see?”** Were the linen wrappings removed from the body, lying in a pile on the floor, with the face cloth bundled up in another pile? Or, **did they see grave clothes which were still lying where they had originally been, only there was no longer a body contained within their folds?** The Greek language does not rule out either possibility, although the word describing the condition of the face cloth is more descriptive of an orderly arrangement than a pile of discarded cloth. The word, *entulissō*, means to “wrap in”, or “roll in”, describing the action of wrapping around the head. Here, in Jn. 20:7, the Greek says, “and the face cloth, which was-being upon His head, not lying with the grave clothes, rather separately being-having-been-wrapped into one position/place.” What was the purpose of this observation? Was it to say that there were two piles of cloth, as opposed to one jumbled mass of linen strips? Or, was it to describe the orderly arrangement of the grave clothes and face cloth, still laying where they had originally been, ...separated, not because they were cast aside into separate piles, but because they had been originally wrapped that way, indicating that the body had passed through the wrappings?

“Therefore the other disciple who had first come to the tomb entered then also...” (vs. 8) -- John, emboldened by Peter’s entrance into the tomb, followed after him. **“...and he saw and believed.”** -- This is an indicator that **what they saw was unusual and inexplicable enough to cause them to believe in the resurrection.** The empty tomb, and the manner in which the grave clothes were lying was clear enough evidence to them that they concluded that Jesus must have risen from the dead.

“For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.” (vs. 9) -- In spite of the numerous times Jesus had told them He was going to rise again, **it had been unfathomable to them. Now there was unquestionable evidence supporting the fact of His resurrection laying right in front of them.**

“So the disciples went away again to their own homes.” (vs. 10) -- **Even now, though they had come to faith, it was still not quite real. Instead of rushing back with joy, they returned home, pondering what they had seen.** There was an empty tomb, and vacated grave clothes, but they had not yet been confronted with a risen Christ.

Mary’s despair. – **“But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping...”** (vs. 11) -- Apparently, Mary either had not yet entered the tomb, or could not process what was to be seen there. Certainly, she still was not of a mind to believe that Jesus had risen. Probably she had herself only returned from telling the disciples, who had run ahead of her to the tomb. It would also seem that either the disciples did not speak to her concerning their thoughts, or possibly she had missed them when they departed. **“...and, so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb.”** -- This is the second time that John mentioned the necessity of stooping in order to peer inside (cf. vs. 5). This tells us that the doorway was not the height of a full-grown female. The entrance was probably only about four feet high, maybe less. **“...and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying.”** (vs. 12) -- All four gospel accounts mention an angelic visitation to the women, though the details vary. In the other accounts, the angels clearly proclaim Jesus’ resurrection, and send the women to tell the other disciples (Matt. 28:1-7; Mk. 16:1-8; Lk. 24:1-12). John, writing later, assumes that the reader was familiar with these accounts. The information he records is meant to be supplementary, and appears to have occurred *after* these other accounts. If the other women were there, or nearby, John makes no reference to them. The focus is on Mary. **“And they said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’”** (vs. 13) -- This question makes no sense unless we see that Mary already had been told of Jesus’ resurrection. She should have been joyful and excited. Evidently, she had not clearly perceived what the angels had declared to her and the other women before they ran to get the disciples. Mary was overcome with grief and confusion. **“She said to them, ‘Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.’”** The tomb was clearly empty, the body was gone, and, **in spite of all she had been told, poor Mary could not believe the unbelievable.** The Good News had fallen on a heart too broken and despairing to hear and grasp what was being said. All she knew was grief.

The empty tomb was an essential part of the evidence for the gospel message. If the tomb was not empty, ...if the body was still there, then there had been no resurrection. By definition, in the Jewish mind of that time, resurrection meant the return to life of a dead body. All the poetic and philosophical ramblings of our modern times, about resurrection being “the rise of faith of the disciples”, would have been dismissed as nonsense in the first century. **For someone to “rise from the dead” meant that they came back to life. The first, and primary bit of physical evidence to support that claim had to be an empty tomb.** The further evidence of **the undisturbed, but empty, grave clothes, would provide a second, very powerful, physical sign that something miraculous had happened.**

John 20:13-18 -- Despair Turned To Faith -- The Resurrection

“...she turned around and saw Jesus standing, and did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?’ Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, ‘Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.’ ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, ‘Rabboni!’ (which means, Teacher). ¹⁷ Jesus said to her, ‘Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, “I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.”’” ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord,’ and that He had said these things to her.” John 20:14-18

In last week’s study, we left Mary Magdalene in the depths of blind despair, ...so blind that she could not even begin to imagine the truth that the angels and the empty grave clothes *pointed to*, namely that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead, just as He had said He would. So, in her deep sorrow of unbelief, she did not have the slightest inkling of “hope against hope” that could have prepared her for what she was about to experience.

“*Woman, why are you weeping?*” (20:13) -- The angels at the tomb first tried to gently help Mary “connect the dots” in her understanding, so that the wonderful truth of Jesus’ resurrection could break through the dark cloud of her confused and crushed state of mind. “*Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.*” -- Mary could think of nothing beyond, “Where is the body?” “What have they done with the body?” “*When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus.*” (vs. 14) -- We are not told why she did not recognize Him. She certainly was not expecting Him, and her eyes were filled with tears. She was not at all predisposed to the idea that He might appear to her. Thus, when He did come to her, she did not recognize Him.

“*Woman, why are you weeping?*” (vs. 15) -- This is the second time she had been asked this question within a few moments, yet she was unable to begin to grasp what was truly being asked her. On the face of it, the question was ridiculous! Obviously, she was at a tomb, mourning for someone who was dead. Yet, Mary was so absorbed in her own concerns, she could not even see the strangeness of being questioned about grieving at the tomb of someone you love. “*Whom are you seeking?*” -- This was more to the point of Mary’s felt need. She wanted to know where Jesus’ body was. Her answer reveals, again, her total lack of awareness that Jesus may have risen from the dead. **John builds a strong case against those would try to explain away the resurrection appearances as wishful thinking.** Mary was not in the least *expecting*, or even *hoping for*, the unimaginable truth that Jesus could live again.

“*Supposing Him to be the gardener...*” -- John lets us glimpse what is going on in Mary’s mind, information he could only have gleaned from her as they reflected on this experience at a later time. How in the world was Mary processing this? How could she *not* recognize Jesus, when He was standing right there? Well, again, she was not at all, ...in any way, *shape or form...*, expecting Jesus, so her mind jumped to another reasonable explanation, one which may have offered a revived hope of finding the Lord’s body. Maybe *this* is the gardener! Maybe *he* knows where Jesus’ body is! **Why did she think of a gardener? Because, the tomb was not placed in a cemetery. It was in a private garden, a rich man’s garden** (Jn. 19:41,42; Matt. 27:57-61). The word for “garden” implies a walled-in area, where special trees and plants were arranged, planted and tended. **Of course, a rich man’s garden would have had someone to care for it!** Jesus had been placed in Joseph’s tomb because it was convenient, and it had been getting late in the day. Rather than trying to secure another spot, Joseph had graciously offered his own tomb, so Jesus was interred there. Mary could not have known if Joseph had intended this to be a permanent, or temporary arrangement. It was a *family tomb*, after all, and not one belonging to Jesus’ family, so **the possibility of the body being moved after the sabbath was not at all unthinkable. In fact, it should have been expected.** She may have anticipated this and may have thought, “Oh, no! They have moved Jesus’ body! They certainly didn’t waste any time! Where did they bring Him? How will I find out what has been done with Him? Ah, here is someone who can tell me what is going on!” “*Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.*” -- Again, **please note that Mary was not at all thinking “resurrection”. Her only concern was finding out what happened to Jesus’ body.**

“*Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’*” (vs. 16) -- Note that after several indirect appeals to Mary, the Lord took the direct approach. Sometimes we are just not “getting it”, though it would seem to others that we should. **God is not unwilling to come at us more clearly and openly, at times**, if that is what it will take for us to see the truth, ...**though He will not force us to obey.** People throughout history have testified of very direct and clear encounters with God, or with revelation that was almost impossible to miss. **Why does He not do this with everyone? It would seem that there is a need for an element of uncertainty for faith to be what it is.** There is a fine line between God revealing Himself in some way, and of being almost *compelled* to believe by the directness and power of the revelation which God could give. It is clear from history, however, that **clear revelation does not necessarily produce a lasting change in one’s heart.** The prophet Balaam would be a good example of this (Numbers 22-24). He had some very

clear personal revelation, and, for fear of his life, was willing to go back home when invited to curse Israel. God permitted him to go with the Moabite and Midianite delegation, but strictly forbade him to say anything other than what He conveyed to him. In the record of those chapters, Balaam did well to carefully obey God. That was not the end of the story, however. We are disappointed to find out that later Balaam apparently caved in to greed, and, for a reward, told the enemies of Israel how to get God to be angry with Israel, so that He would turn against them. It was Balaam who suggested the plot to send the daughters of Midian to cavort with the Israelite men, in order to lead them into sin, and the displeasure of the Lord (Num. 25:1-9; 31:7,8,15,16). This story illustrates that clear revelation *alone* is not sufficient to change the human heart. **Understanding what is true and right is not the same as believing, or trusting in, what is true and right.** Furthermore, **obedience that is not freely offered from a desire to please and do right toward God, will not be sustainable in the long term.** In Mary's case, however, there was not a problem of stubbornness or willfulness keeping her from faith. Rather, **Mary's grief and her expectations had kept her from apprehending the truth. Jesus cut through all of that by personally revealing Himself to her.**

"She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, 'Rabboni!' (which means, Teacher)" (vs. 16) -- Note that the text says that "she *turned*". This indicates that she was not looking Jesus full in the face. This provides another partial explanation for why she did not recognize the Lord. She had not taken a close look at Him. Instead, when she became aware of Him standing there, made the *assumption* that He was the gardener ("supposing"). Though she spoke to Him, she did not look intently at Him. "Rabboni" is a personalized form of the word "rabbi", meaning "*my teacher*". For John, however, it was enough to translate it as "Teacher" for His Gentile readers, although his Jewish readers would have been aware of this additional nuance.

"Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father..." (vs. 17) -- This is a tough phrase to translate from the Greek, without some explanation. Literally, it would be rendered as, "Not (for yourself) be touching/holding/fastening/clinging concerning Me, for not yet have I gone up (and stayed up) to the Father". The point of the "for yourself" part of the translation is that it is meant to convey that Mary was either intensely involved in the act of holding onto Jesus, or that the action was deeply affecting her. This may seem obvious, but Jesus was prohibiting her from doing this, for some reason. Then, the next phrase would seem to be an explanation of why she should stop holding onto Him, namely that He was *here*, ...not gone away to the Father. **The encounter was meant to assure and comfort her regarding His resurrection.** Her grief had been so deep that she had been missing all the signs, so Jesus came to her personally to assure her. **The "stop clinging to Me" part is not meant as a word of rebuke, but of assurance.** "It's OK. You can let Me go. Everything is all right. I am right here. I have not left for good."

"...but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'" -- In order to move Mary on, emotionally, the Lord gave her a *responsibility*. (God did the same thing with the prophet Elijah in I Kings 19. Elijah was discouraged and depressed. As part of his recovery process, God gave him some specific tasks to fulfill [vss. 15,16]. This gave him a sense of direction in a time of confusion, and helped him regather himself to get moving again.) **She needed to move past both the grief, and the emotional clinging of relief at being with Jesus.** Neither state was productive, though very human. Jesus comforted Mary, *then sent her on an errand for Him*. This got the focus off of her own emotions, and the larger picture of what was going on became more clear. Thus, she became the first one to see the risen Christ, as well as the first one to *testify* as to His resurrection. The *content* of what Mary was to declare to the disciples is interesting. **Was Jesus attempting to differentiate Himself and His relationship with God from theirs, ...or was He attempting to identify theirs with His?** I believe the intent was the latter. Based upon what Jesus had said in 16:26,27, He saw that the disciples would have the same relationship with the Father as He had. Because of their faith in Him, the Father would love them. What Jesus is communicating to them through Mary is that the time of which He had spoken had come. **Because of His death on the cross, it was now possible for them to have a relationship with the Father that they had never enjoyed before.** Before the crucifixion, God "had overlooked the sins" of people (Rom. 3:25). He "winked" at them, but because they were not actually *removed*, there was still some distance maintained between them and God. Now, however, **because Jesus had actually paid for sins, and they were truly removed, God could justly accept them and share Himself intimately with them.** Now, He could be their Father, like He was Jesus' Father, and they could have the intimate relationship with God that Jesus enjoyed, i.e., they could be "one" with God, as Jesus and the Father were one, by virtue of the coming of the Spirit into their lives (17:20-22). *Legally, that became their inheritance-right by means of Jesus' death and resurrection.*

"Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord,' and that He had said these things to her." (vs. 18) -- Freed from grief, and refocused by Jesus' commission, **she became the first gospel witness!**

John 20:19-20 -- The Upper Room Appearance of the Risen Christ

“And He said to them, ‘What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?’ And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, ‘Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?’ ¹⁹ And He said to them, ‘What things?’ And they said to Him, ‘The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, ²⁰ and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. ²² But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³ and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see. ²⁵ And He said to them, ‘O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?’ ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.”

Luke 24:17-27

“So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ ²⁰ And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord.” John 20:19-20

According to the gospel of Luke, there were two other appearances of Jesus, which had taken place earlier in the day: (1.) Jesus’ appearance to those on the road to Emmaus (24:13-33); and (2.) a personal appearance to Simon Peter (24:34).

Luke recorded in some detail the experience of the two on the road to Emmaus (Lk. 24:13-33). Two disciples of Jesus (not of the twelve apostles) had left Jerusalem, and were traveling to Emmaus, a town about seven miles distant. Jesus walked up alongside of them as they journeyed, and had engaged them in discussion. They did not recognize Him because God had prevented their eyes from that recognition. As He listened to their consternation about how their hopes had been dashed when the prophet Jesus had been crucified, ...and how His body was missing from the tomb..., He chided them about being “unperceptive and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken”. Then He took them on a tour of the scriptures, and explained to them more thoroughly what they had to say concerning Himself. Later on, they asked Him to stay with them for dinner. He was made known to them as He broke bread at the supper table, ...and then *He disappeared!* Upon realizing what had happened, they immediately returned the seven miles to Jerusalem (Lk. 24:13,33), and found the eleven disciples gathered (actually, we find out from John that Thomas was not there -- 20:24) along with some other followers of Jesus, who told them that Jesus had also appeared to Peter. **Of this personal encounter with Jesus, we have no record, although Paul alludes to it as the “first” resurrection appearance, ...at least “first” in his list of eyewitnesses (I Cor. 15:5), for we know that He appeared to Mary Magdalene before He appeared to Peter (Jn. 20:11-18).**

It was during the interaction between the Emmaus travelers and the ten other disciples that Jesus made His upper room appearance (Lk. 24:36). This gives us a clue as to when this would have occurred. Luke reported that the Emmaus travelers had invited Jesus to stay with them, since it was “getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over” (Lk. 24:29). They had actually gathered for their evening meal when Jesus was recognized by them, we can conclude that it must have been at least 5:30-6:00 p.m. by this time. Then these two disciples had to repack and journey an uphill road back to Jerusalem, which would have taken more than two additional hours. Thus, **the upper room meeting we are about to examine would have occurred in the later evening, certainly well after dark, probably approaching eight-thirty or nine o'clock.**

“*When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week...*” (20:19) -- That is, Sunday evening. “*...when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews...*” -- We find out from Acts 1:13 that they were staying in a large, upper room. It was large enough for 120 people to gather therein (Acts 1:15). **Fearing further retaliation from the Jewish leaders who had just crucified their Master, the disciples were staying to themselves and kept the doors shut, and probably locked** (the Greek word encompasses both meanings). **The point of telling us this is not only to indicate the fear of the disciples, but also to set the stage for the miraculous appearance of Jesus.** He did not simply sneak into the room when they weren’t looking. The doors were barred against any surprise visitors. “*Jesus came and stood in their midst...*” -- His sudden appearance right in the midst of their gathering was *startling*, conveyed more vividly in Luke’s account. “*...and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’*” This was the normal Hebrew greeting. The Hebrew word, *shalom*, which underlies this greeting refers to health, prosperity, and balanced order. It was a *declaration*, ...not a wish. Literally, the Greek simply says, “Peace to you”, not “*May* peace be with you”, which sounds more like a desire for peace, not a statement or declaration of it. **Jesus was here bringing peace, not asking or hoping that it might happen.**

“And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side.” (vs. 20) -- From Luke’s account, we learn that they thought that possibly they were seeing a ghost (Lk. 24:37). **Jesus took deliberate action to show that He was risen with a physical body. He was not a phantom.** According to Luke, He said, *“See My hands and feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, because a spirit does not have flesh and bone, as you see that I have.”* The word for “handle” means to touch by feeling, grabbing hold, implying movement of the hands over the body. It means more than simply “touch” with a poke of a fingertip. It means “squeeze, rub, hold”. The experience of actually feeling and handling Jesus’ flesh was such a vivid and overwhelming experience in John’s mind that he later used the same word in His first epistle, *“What we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld, and what our hands handled concerning the Word of Life...”* (I Jn. 1:1). Then, if this were not enough: **“And saying this, He showed them His hands and His feet.”** (Lk. 24:40). **He specifically went out of His way to show them the wounds in His hands and in His side, to convince them that it was indeed Him, ...and that He was a living miracle!** There were the holes in His body, but there was no blood! **Unquestionably, He was risen from the dead!**

To the Jew, resurrection required the coming to life of a physical body. Jews had a holistic view of human nature. God had created everything. The heavens, the earth, the plants, the animals, ...and it was all good (Gen. 1:21). God had not created anything that was inherently evil. Everything God had made was good. According to Genesis 2:7, God formed the man’s body from the dust of the ground and breathed into it the breath or spirit of life, and the man came to be a living soul, or self. **A human being was not a conglomeration of parts.** He did not just “have” a body, a soul, and a spirit. **He was a body, made alive by the spirit, to become a conscious individual self.** When a person died physically, that conscious spirit-self continued on, but *the person was incomplete without a body.* Paul described the disembodied state of the conscious self as a “naked” state (II Cor. 5:3). Thus, *to the Jewish mind, the resurrection would require a new body,* because it is to be a restoration of what God created humanity to be.

To the Greek, however, the resurrection of the body was confusing, even offensive (e.g., I Cor. 1:23; Acts 17:30-32). **They saw human existence as dualistic, i.e., that humankind was a combination of spirit and body.** In Greek philosophy, spiritual perfection was understood as the ideal. Matter was a particular expression of the ideal, and was inevitably fraught with imperfections and fell short of the ideal. So, **physical matter was seen as intrinsically evil** (or irrelevant) and spirit was viewed as good. **In the Greek mind, the body was nothing more than a prison-house for the spirit-self. To be rid of the body was a good thing, in their view.** It was finally to escape the prison of imperfect shapes and deteriorating existence in this imperfect world, to attain existence as a perfect spiritual consciousness. The notion that God was the Creator of the material world, and that He raised Jesus from the dead in a physical body would be offensive on two fronts.

It is clear that the teaching of Jesus and the apostles were consistent with the teachings of the Scripture, not Greek philosophy. Thus, **Jesus sought to clarify that He was not some disembodied spirit, but a resurrected person, complete with a body. This physical aspect of the resurrection made it verifiable, hence Jesus encouraged His disciples to use their physical senses to establish that He really was there, risen from the dead.** Luke tells us that, in addition to touching Him, they gave him food to eat, and watched Him eat it (24:42,43). A ghost, or spirit, cannot eat a meal of fish.

It is important to see that the Bible treats Jesus’ resurrection as an historical event, ...not as a symbolic hope, or “the rise of faith in the disciples”, as though this were merely an overcoming of fear, while Jesus’ body still lay in a tomb. No. Without the resurrection of Jesus’ body there is no hope of grace through Him. The resurrection was an actual event, as verifiable as any other historical event of the past. These eyewitness accounts form the backbone of the evidence (I Cor. 15:4f). **We have already seen some of the corroborating evidence: The empty tomb, and the empty grave clothes.** If the resurrection required a physical coming to life of a dead body, then the grave clothes and the tomb could not have still contained a body for the claim of resurrection to make any sense. All that the hostile authorities would have to do would be to open the tomb and show that the corpse was still there. Instead, the grave was empty. “Come, see the place where He was lying” was the angel’s invitation (Matt. 28:6). **Another key piece of corroborating evidence for the resurrection was just beginning to take place: The radical transformation of the disciples.** From fearful, devastated men, hiding behind locked doors, they would soon become fearless, motivated, bold spokesmen for the Master. Their unified testimony declared that Jesus was ALIVE! Risen from the dead!

“...the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.” -- You can imagine the height of their emotion, moving from despair, to disbelief, to fear and now to the most incredulous experience of joy. Jesus had said that their “grief will be turned into joy” and that “no one will take your joy from you” (16:20,22). **The resurrection is the most significant event of world history. Just as it was a life-transforming event for those disciples in the upper room on that night, it can also be the foundational truth for us, the beginning of radical transformation for us, if we make Him our Joy.**

John 20:21-23 -- Jesus' Words of Commission

“So Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’²² And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’²³ If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.”

John 20:21-23

“*So Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you; ...’*” (20:21). Again, the declaration, “All is well” was designed to comfort and to clear away the lingering emotions that the disciples had been experiencing in their hopelessness, and now in their alarm. “...*as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.*” – Jesus did not waste any time. There was a job to do. (There *still* is!) Just like the Father sent Him, now He is commissioning them (and us!).

“*And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’*” (vs. 22) -- This is a very controversial passage. **Did the disciples actually receive the Holy Spirit on this occasion, or was this merely a symbolic, prophetic action** which was intended to dramatize the relationship between Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the disciples? **How one understands this verse becomes a watershed interpretation in that person's theology**, leading to other consequent interpretations, especially regarding the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2).

For example, **many of those involved in the charismatic movement see in this passage a Biblical basis for what has been their personal experience.** They *believed* in Jesus, maybe even had a very moving conversion experience, but *knew little of the power of the Holy Spirit*, often for an extended period of years. Their spiritual lives were, at best, mediocre, ...with very little intimacy with God, or fruitfulness. Then, *at a later time*, they experienced a powerful influx of the Holy Spirit, *usually in conjunction with an experiential manifestation* of some sort, such as the gift of tongues (ala Pentecost), or being “slain in the Spirit” (falling to the ground in an almost trance-like state, unable to move). From that time on, they experience *an intimacy and immediacy with God*, an empowerment of the Spirit, and a *fruitfulness in service*, which they had not previously experienced. Hence, **like their own experience, they tend to see Jn. 20 as the time when the disciples initially received the Holy Spirit to indwell them and cause them to be born again, and then Acts 2 is a second work of the Holy Spirit, a “baptism of the Spirit”, which is an empowering for ministry.** The persuasiveness of this interpretation to those who have had such an experience is extremely powerful. It is difficult for them to see beyond their personal journey to examine carefully what the Biblical text actually says.

This is a common danger in interpreting the Bible. It is very easy to “read into” the text things that are not actually stated, because we expect things to have been a certain way, ...especially if our expectations are based upon our personal experience or our church traditions. In this case, however, **the Biblical data is clear that the disciples did not receive the Holy Spirit in that upper room on resurrection-day evening. How can we know this?**

In Acts 10 and 11, we have the account of the first Gentiles coming to Christ and receiving the Holy Spirit. No one really expected that God would accept them as Gentiles, but the Holy Spirit fell upon them while Peter was still sharing the Good News with them, and they all spoke in tongues, *just as the apostles did at Pentecost* (Acts 2:4). The text says they “were amazed, because *the gift of the Holy Spirit* had been poured out on the Gentiles also” (10:45). Peter's response was, “Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have *received the Holy Spirit* just as we did, can he?” (10:47). **Note that in these two statements, Peter linked Pentecost (not the upper room) with receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.** In the next chapter, as he recounted these events to the church in Jerusalem, he noted, “...the Holy Spirit fell upon them *just as He did upon us at the beginning*” (11:15). In the next two verses, he refers to this as the fulfillment of John's word that Jesus would *baptize with the Holy Spirit*, but **also links this “baptism” of the Spirit with “receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit”.**

On a parallel track, it is important to see that Luke 24 reports that on that resurrection-day evening Jesus told the disciples, “I am sending forth *the promise of My Father* upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high” (24:49). Luke returns to this same upper room conversation in Acts 1, giving us more details. **Jesus linked the “promise of the Father” with the “baptism with the Spirit”** in vs. 4,5. In verse 8, He mentions that **they will receive power “when the Holy Spirit has come upon you”**, obviously indicating that *this had not occurred*, as yet. Then, in chapter 2, when Peter is explaining the powerful manifestations of the Holy Spirit, who had just “filled” them (2:4), he indicates that Jesus, “having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has *poured forth* this which you both see and hear” (2:33). Soon after, he invites his hearers to “Repent, and ...be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ...; and you will receive *the gift of the Holy Spirit*. For the promise is for you...” (2:38,39). In other words, **Peter links the “filling of the Spirit” and the “gift of the Spirit” with “the promise of the Father” which has been “poured forth” upon the church.**

When you attempt to put all these pieces together, it becomes clear that, **although Jesus breathed on them and told them, “Receive the Holy Spirit”, in the upper room, ...He went on to tell them to wait for the promise of**

the Father, the baptism of the Spirit, ...which did not occur until Pentecost. Looking back on these events, **Peter saw Pentecost, not the upper room, as the time when they received the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

In addition, **Peter clearly understood this as a very definite and significant shift in how the Holy Spirit worked in the lives of people.** As Jesus had indicated in the upper room on the night of His arrest, He was going to depart from them, but He would “ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom ...you know... because He abides *with* you and will be *in* you” (Jn. 14:16,17). In the conversation that followed, Jesus repeatedly refers to the fact that this Helper, the Holy Spirit, will be sent to them, both by the Father (14:26), and by Jesus from the Father (15:26; cf. 16:7). **Jesus had said that the Spirit’s coming would introduce a new dynamic, something which would be more advantageous to them than even Jesus’ physical presence** (16:7). The author of the fourth gospel had already hinted at this new dynamic in Jn. 7:37-39. There, he refers to the Spirit, “whom those who believed in Him (i.e., Jesus) were to receive, for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” **From the words of promise, waiting and anticipation, ...to the powerful events of Pentecost, ...to Peter’s explanation of those events and his later recollection of his experience, ...the testimony is consistent: The apostles did not actually receive the Holy Spirit until Pentecost.**

Therefore, **what Jesus meant by breathing on them and commanding them to receive the Holy Spirit, was a prophetic act, NOT an actual impartation of the Spirit.** The Greek word for Spirit also means “wind, or breath”, so **the act of breathing on them, and saying, “Receive Holy Breath/Spirit”, would have dramatically portrayed the reality that the Spirit of God that was in Jesus was the same Spirit that would be given to them,** enabling the apostles to do as Jesus had done (cf. Jn. 14:12). This is even further strengthened by the fact that **John used the exact same word as is used of God breathing into Adam the breath of life in the Greek Septuagint translation of Gen. 2:7.** Clearly, John saw that *his spiritual life and ability to serve* came entirely from the life of God given to him by the indwelling Spirit.

The other sidebar to this is that **the Holy Spirit was given, once for all, poured out upon the church at Pentecost.** Peter’s conclusion is that **He is the “gift” that is available to all who believe.** Regarding all of us who are true believers, the apostle Paul says, “by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, ...we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (I Cor. 12:13). **Biblically, the baptism of the Spirit happens at conversion, but there are many experiences of the Spirit that may follow in our spiritual journey.** The point is not to try to analyze this to death. That leads only to unprofitable quarreling. Let us rejoice in whatever manner the Holy Spirit chooses to work in the lives of God’s people. Let us marvel and glory in His mighty workings, as well as His quiet whisperings. **In any case, the point of Jesus’ admonition in Jn. 20:22, and again in Acts 1:8, is “...take hold of the Holy Spirit...”.** Do not *ignore* His working, do not *spurn* or *turn away from* His promptings, but **get hold of what the Spirit is doing in you, and respond to Him.**

A.J. Gordon observed: “...for God to *give* is one thing; for us to *receive* is quite another. Christ came to earth to make atonement for sin and *to give* eternal life, and *as sinners we must receive Him by faith in order to obtain forgiveness and sonship.* Similarly, the Holy Spirit came to the earth *to give* the ‘power from on high’, and *as believers we must in like manner receive Him by faith in order to be empowered for holiness and for service.*” Of course, as we saw with Cornelius, God can come upon people who *don’t* even understand. Can’t put *Him* in a box! Nevertheless, we ought to be asking and seeking to be led and filled by the Spirit (Lk. 11:13; Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:16,18)

“If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.” (vs. 23) -- This may seem to be a shocking statement, but it is part of Jesus’ commission to His followers. **Just as the Father had sent Jesus to forgive and retain sins, so also He has given us that same role.** Now this is not some spooky thing, as if *we*, by waving our hand over someone, or uttering some words, had the ability to forgive sins, or prevent them from being forgiven. That is a total misunderstanding of what is meant. **First, we need to see that Jesus established a precedent that God gives such authority to people.** In healing the paralytic, Jesus had spoken words of forgiveness to the man, and the Pharisees balked at what they perceived as blasphemy (“Who can forgive sins but God?” -- Mk. 2:7). Jesus *demonstrated* that He had the authority to forgive sins *by healing* the man. In Matthew’s account, “when the crowds saw *this*, they were awestruck, and glorified God, who had given such authority to men (Matt. 9:1-8). **Secondly, it was by the power and authority of God, which were given to Jesus for this purpose, that He was able to heal and to forgive sins.** Now, by Jesus’ commission *to us*, this power and authority are given to us. **Third, we are not causing the forgiveness or retention of sin.** To those who believe in Jesus, we can say, “Your sins are forgiven” because they *have been* forgiven (Acts 2:38; Eph. 1:7). “Your faith has saved you” (Lk. 7:48-50). To those who are resistant to God, or are not looking to His grace, we can say, “You are still held in the bondage of your sins”, because that is what is the case (e.g., Act 8:20-23). Their heart is not right, or they are still trying to stand on their own merits, instead of accepting God’s provision in Christ for them. **We are simply God’s instruments to bring words of direction and clarification to what He has done for people, and what their spiritual condition actually is.**

John 20:24-31 -- Thomas' Encounter With The Risen Christ

“After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, ‘Peace to you.’²⁷ Then He said to Thomas, ‘Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.’²⁸ Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’²⁹ Jesus said to him, ‘Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.’³⁰ Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;³¹ but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”

John 20:26-31

Once again, we have an incident reported only in John's gospel. It probably would have been a bit embarrassing for Thomas to have had to deal with this notoriety during his lifetime. Possibly for that reason, and for the sake of brevity, the other gospel writers make no mention of Thomas' doubt, or resistance to faith, which John chooses to share with us here. **Thomas went on from this time of doubt to become a bold evangelist, bringing the message of his Lord and his God to India,** where he bravely faced torture and martyrdom for his faith (cf. 11:16).

“*But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus...*” (20:24) -- This is the second time John refers to Thomas as “Didymus” (cf. 11:16). **“Thomas” would be the Hebrew name, and “Didymus” the Greek equivalent. Both names mean “Twin”, indicating that he had another sibling,** of which we know nothing. In a day when surnames were not commonly used, being a twin was an unusual thing, providing an easy way to identify someone. “*...was not with them when Jesus came.*” -- There is an apparent difficulty with this statement and Luke 24:33, where the disciples returning from Emmaus, “found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them”. Is this a contradiction? Does this call into question the accuracy of Luke's research and reporting? Not necessarily. Luke's track record of relating with accuracy and detail the events he reports is amazingly precise in those bits of information which he passes along to us. It is important to remember, however, that the purpose of the gospel accounts was *not* to give a detailed, event-by-event account, according to our 21st century standards. **The Good News was first and foremost a proclamation of glad tidings, not a detailed historical treatise.** One of the most obvious characteristics of the synoptic gospels is that Matthew and Luke definitely compress some of the details recorded in Mark. Abbreviation and abridgment of detail were not uncommon, in order to tailor the writing or storytelling to the author's purpose and audience. Hence, in accordance with commonly accepted practice of their day, the gospel writers would leave out details, in order to briefly tell their story in a way that suited their purpose. They did not fictionalize, or create detail that was not true to what actually happened. They merely left out detail, compressing the account to suit the end they had in mind. (Cf. Matt. 8:28-34; Mk. 5:1-20). This is one of the valuable features of having several different sources. We can cross-check the sources to get a clearer picture of what actually happened. “*...was not with them when Jesus came.*” -- He had missed not only the resurrection appearance, but also the commissioning by the Lord.

“*So the other disciples were saying to him, ‘We have seen the Lord!’*” (vs. 25) -- The other disciples reported to Thomas what they had experienced. “*But he said, ‘Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.’*” -- **Thomas was not going to simply accept the testimony of the others.** Jesus was going to have to *show Himself* to him, in order for him to be convinced. His statement was very emphatic in the Greek, “If ever I do not see... not never will I believe”. **He had decided upon some very specific tests to determine if this was a hoax, or a real resurrection appearance.** Note, again, that in Thomas' mind the idea of resurrection was nonsensical if the body of Jesus, ...the very same body which died on the cross..., was not the body that would appear to him. **He was requiring tangible, verifiable evidence that this person who appeared to the others was in fact the risen Christ,** not someone simply playing on their emotions. Could it be that he was a little miffed that Jesus would appear to others, but not to him? After all, He had personally appeared to Peter. And the two on the road to Emmaus were not even among the twelve, and Jesus walked with them for some hours. He even appeared to *women*, ...but not to Thomas, one of His own twelve chosen disciples? Could it be that the emphatic nature of Thomas' words grew out of feeling forgotten and overlooked, rather than intellectual skepticism alone? **Interestingly, that is often the case with those who stubbornly resist the evidence for Christ's resurrection. There is often an emotional hurt, or a pride, which keeps them from truly having an open mind about this issue.** Thus, they may *say* that there is not enough evidence, ...while at the same time they are not honestly investigating the evidence which *is* available. They keep an investigation of this reality at arm's length, because they do not *want* it to be true.

“*After eight days...*” (vs. 26) -- Thomas had over a week to stew about this, and was apparently as unbending as ever. “*His disciples were again inside, and Thomas was with them.*” -- Setting the stage for Jesus' appearance. “*Jesus came, the doors having been shut [locked], and stood in their midst and said, ‘Peace be with you.’*” --

Thomas is getting a replay of the experience of the previous week. Clearly, Jesus did not clandestinely sneak into the room, He just appeared in their midst, when Thomas and the others knew that the doors were shut and locked. The Greek is very vivid here. In vs. 19, the description of Jesus' appearance on the previous week, John had used the past tense, "Jesus came and stood in their midst". Here, John uses the present tense, "Jesus comes", to dramatically pull us into the experience. The use of the historical present is used again in vs. 27 and 29, when Jesus addresses Thomas.

"Then He said to Thomas..." (vs. 27) -- Lit., "He says to Thomas". **"Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side..."** -- Jesus was well aware of Thomas' words, spoken over a week before. **Jesus invited Thomas to inspect His wounds, so as to remove all doubt.** At this point, the resurrection body of Jesus still bore the marks of the crucifixion. In the book of Revelation, also written by John, the appearance of Jesus is greatly transformed. Whether He still carries the scars is not clear. Unlike injuries, deformities and the infirmities of old age, which will undoubtedly be absent from our resurrected bodies, these scars remain, so that there can be no question that this is Christ Jesus. The wounds that were unfairly and cruelly inflicted upon the Son of Man are now a testimony of love and victory. **"...and do not be unbelieving, but believing."** -- The word translated as "believing" is an adjective, meaning "faithful, trustworthy, reliable, or believing". **Jesus' words were not only about Thomas' need to come to faith, but also his obligation to fulfill the responsibility he had been trained for as an apostle.**

"Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and My God!'" (vs. 28) -- This was not just an exclamation, words uttered at the shock of suddenly seeing a risen dead man. The word, "answered", implies a reasoned response, and John specifically tells us that Thomas' words were directed to Jesus. **Doubting Thomas is the first to actually call Jesus "My God".** Being a Jew, raised with a strong emphasis on a strict and exclusive monotheism, this was a significant statement to make. The heart of Judaism, encapsulated in the *shema* (Deut. 6:4) is that Yahweh is one. There were no other gods *before* Him, there will be none *after* Him, in fact, there are none *besides* Him (Deut. 4:32-40; Isa. 43:10,11; 44:6,8; 45:5,6,14,18,21,22; 46:9). Furthermore, He is a jealous God, and will not share His glory with anyone (Ex. 20:6; Isa. 42:8; 48:11). Yet, **Jesus claimed to be God, seven times associating Himself with titles that belonged only to God** (6:35; 8:12; 10:7-9,11; 11:25,26; 14:6; 15:1), **and seven more times speaking of Himself as the "I am", a clear reference to identification with Yahweh** (4:26; 6:20; 8:24,28,58; 13:19; 18:5-8). In His teachings **He was claiming that He would do things that were ascribed to God (...and did them!) and said He was to receive glory and honor that belonged only to God** (e.g., 5:17-29; 10:25-38; 14:8-14). Having heard and seen all these things, and having witnessed the crucifixion, and now confronted with the reality of the resurrection, **Thomas draws the conclusion consistent with all of the evidence, namely that Jesus was not only the Master, He was somehow also God Himself, come in human flesh.** This is the same conclusion to which John also came, and was used as the introductory statement of this gospel (1:1). **It has been the purpose of this writing to assemble the evidence to bring us to this same conclusion,** expressed by the wavering doubter, as he was confronted with the irrefutable, living Evidence Himself.

"Jesus said to him, 'Because you have seen Me, have you believed?'" (vs. 29) -- That was clearly the case with Thomas. It took clear, convincing, tangible proof for Thomas to accept the Good News, and yield his allegiance. **"Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."** -- Thomas' stubborn withholding of trust without compelling evidence was a lesser faith than that of those who would hear and give their trust without a direct appearance of Jesus. **It is important to note that most of the earliest disciples were privileged to experience an encounter with the risen Jesus.** Certainly all the other ten apostles had, as would the brothers of Jesus, and even a group of 500 (I Cor. 15:5-9). Jesus' point was that Thomas had more than enough evidence to choose to trust in Him, even before this personal interview. **A heart that was more open and pliable is of greater value than one who must be compelled to yield** (Psa. 32:9). **God is looking for those who are responsive.**

"Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book..." (vs. 30) -- It is evident in numerous places that **Jesus was performing many, many more miracles than what we have recorded** in John, or in the other gospels combined. **Those selected by the authors were chosen because they were unusually memorable, or to fulfill a particular purpose that the author had in mind.** The phrase "in the presence of the disciples" is included to remind the reader that **there were eyewitnesses to these events.** They did not simply grow out of over-emotionalism, or legend. They were real, space-time events which were observed and verified by others. **"...but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ..."** (vs. 31) -- John reveals to us his purpose. **"...and that believing you may have life in His name."** -- Knowledge is *not* enough. Jesus came to bring *life* (Jn. 10:10). Consequently, *life* is what we should be looking for.

John 21:1-25 -- The Risen Jesus By The Sea

“So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Tend My lambs.’¹⁶ He said to him again a second time, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love Me?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Shepherd My sheep.’¹⁷ He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love Me?’ Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, ‘Do you love Me?’ And he said to Him, ‘Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Tend My sheep.’”

John 21:15-17

Another example of an incident recorded only by John, this very sensitive and important account of Jesus’ restoration of Peter offers great insight into God’s love for imperfect people.

The Setting (21:1-4). Seven of Jesus’ disciples go fishing on the Sea of Galilee, at Peter’s suggestion (cf. 6:1). They fish all night, but catch nothing. In the morning, a man (Jesus) was standing on the beach:

“*Children, you do not have anything to eat with bread, do you?*” (vs. 5) The word, “children”, was a common word for a child, servant or slave. It implied “**one under training**”. The word translated as “fish” in many versions refers to “something eaten with bread”, usually relish or fish. The question in Greek implies that a negative answer is expected by the inquirer. This is kind of odd, unless you realize who is doing the asking. Normally, you would expect that a crew of seven men who were fishing all night *would have* caught at least enough for breakfast!

“*Cast on the right side of the boat...*” (vs. 6). -- An odd request, but they had experienced success before in a similar situation (Lk. 5:1-11). In fact, that occasion was the last time they had gone fishing together as professional fishermen, having left their nets to follow Jesus after that experience. **Here they were, attempting to return to a way of life which they had left behind in order to follow their Master, ...and He shows up again to re-issue His call!**

“*So they cast, ...and were not able to haul it in, because of the great number of fish.*” -- Again, sounds familiar (Luke 5:6-9). “*Therefore the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, ‘It is the Lord.’*” (vs. 7) John recognized the parallel, and could come to no other conclusion. “*...Peter... threw himself into the sea...*” -- Peter could not wait for the boat to come ashore, so, putting his garment on, he swam to shore. This was very characteristic of Peter’s impulsivity. “*The other disciples came in the boat..., dragging the net of fish*” (vs. 8).

“*...they saw a charcoal fire already laid and fish placed on it, and bread.*” (vs. 9) -- They were surprised to see that breakfast was nearly already prepared. The meal was the proper setting for what Jesus intended to do. It offered a time for them to unwind and get comfortable, ...an unhurried time to talk. “*Bring some of the fish you have now caught.*” (vs. 10) -- Jesus certainly could have supplied *all* of the fish for breakfast. Instead, He chose to “need” the fruit of their labors (which He Himself had given to them) to make them feel more comfortable, and to give them a sense of ownership and participation in the meal. “*Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three...*” (vs. 11). Although Peter longed for Jesus, and was anxious to see Him, he did not feel comfortable, and evidently did not know what to say. At the first distraction, he was off serving and helping, ...but also *avoiding* talking with Jesus. He even took time to count the fish, which would take a few minutes, as you could imagine. “*...and although there were so many, the net was not torn.*” -- This fact is reported to reinforce the supernatural character of this event. “*Come and have breakfast.*” -- Jesus breaks the distraction, and calls them all back to attend to His purpose for their meeting.

The reinstatement of Peter (vss. 15-17). “*...when they had finished breakfast...*” -- Sharing a meal together is a good preparation for a serious discussion. Cf. Est. 5-7. “*Jesus said to Simon Peter...*” -- The purpose for this gathering is directed primarily toward dealing with Peter. “*Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?*” (vs. 15) -- Like a surgeon operating on an infected wound, this question was designed to directly bring up and expose Peter’s past statements of arrogance and self-inflation (Matt. 26:33-35; Mk. 14:29-31). **Peter had, in effect, claimed to love Jesus more than all the rest. He had said that even if all the others fell away, he would remain steadfast.** When Jesus had told him that he would deny Him, Peter exclaimed that he would willingly die rather than betray his Master. In reality, however, **when faced with the actual possibility of arrest and death, he had wimped out** and had done exactly as Jesus had said. **Fear had won out, and he denied that he even knew Jesus.** He felt this failure very deeply (Matt. 26:78; Lk. 22:60-62). **Not only did he see that he had failed, but he extrapolated from his disappointing performance that he himself was a failure,** unworthy of being an apostle. Thus, he was ready to go back to fishing. At least, he could do *that* respectably. The gifts and callings of God are irrevocable, however (Rom. 11:29), and Jesus had come to call him once again to the role that was originally assigned him. “*Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.*” -- **Notice, first, that Peter did not reassert his claim that his love was a greater love than possessed by the others.** In fact, though it is not apparent in our English translations, **Peter even shrunk back from even using the terminology which Jesus used.** Indeed, **he did have a love for Jesus, ...but not one of the quality which Jesus had asked.** Jesus’ question was,

“Simon, son of John, do you *agapas* Me more than these?” Peter’s response was, “Indeed, Lord, You know I *phileō* You.” **There is a significant difference in these two words. Jesus and Peter were *not* comparing apples to apples, here. *Agapaō* was a little used Greek word, one which Jesus had selected to describe the unusual love of God, the kind of love which was exemplified by Jesus’ willingness to lay down His life for us (Jn. 15:13), and the kind of love which the Master had said should be distinguishing mark of His disciples (Jn. 13:34,35). The peculiar nuance of this Greek word is that **it flows out of the will, *not* the emotion. It is a benevolent choice to give of oneself for another.** It is not dependent upon the response of the other party, since it comes entirely from within *the giver*, ...his or her fullness, or willingness to give. Truthfully, Peter could not have claimed to have had this kind of love, based upon his woeful failure in the courtyard of the high priest. **Peter responded with the honesty of his heart, he loved Jesus as a friend;** he enjoyed Him and His friendship. **This word, *phileō*, spoke of a mutuality of enjoyment and compatibility.** It is most often used of a friendship kind of love. Peter gushed out, “Lord, You know that I delight in Your friendship!” **“He says to him, ‘Tend My lambs.’”** -- Surprisingly to Peter, **Jesus accepts his lesser form of love, and gives him the responsibility of tending and feeding His followers.****

Before that can sink in, however, Jesus asks another question. **“Simon, son of John, do you love Me?”** (vs. 16) In this second question, Jesus again uses *agapas*. Peter’s response is exactly as before, “Yes, Lord, you know that I delight in Your friendship!” **“Shepherd My sheep.”** -- Again, **Jesus seems to accept him where he is at, and gives him the responsibility of watching over and caring for His followers.**

“He says to him the third time, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love Me?’” (vs. 17) **This time, Jesus uses the same word that Peter had been using** in his responses to Jesus’ first two questions, a form of *phileō*. **“Peter was grieved...”** -- No wonder. **It would seem that Jesus was doubting even the affection that Peter had for Him! Was He calling Peter a liar?** Was He going to tell Peter that even his affection, his “friendship-love”, was defective? **“Lord, You know all things, You experientially-know that I love You.”** – Peter’s desperate cry **appealed to what he knew that Jesus had experienced.** **Now they are comparing oranges to oranges.** **“Jesus says to him, ‘Tend my sheep.’”** –

This final acceptance, and assignment to duty, removes any question of Peter being on probation, ...or needing to try to be something he is not. **Jesus took him right where he was, and was willing to set him to work about His business. What about Peter's shame, his fear of failing again? “Truly, truly, I say to you...”** (vs. 18) -- Once again, Jesus employs this formula to indicate that a very significant statement was to follow. This was addressed to Peter alone, as the singular form of “you” indicates. The remainder of verse 18 is a comparison of how Peter used to live, versus what will happen in the future. Vs. 19 interprets the saying as referring to what kind of death Peter would die, glorifying God. **“In the end,” Jesus told Peter, “you will succeed where you failed before. You will lay down your life for Me.” “Follow Me!”** -- **Jesus again renews the call of discipleship!** This is the *fourth time* Jesus had specifically called Peter to follow Him (cf. Matt. 4:19; Lk. 5:1-11; 6:12-14).

“Lord, what about him?” (vs. 21) – Peter, seeing John walking behind them, did what is characteristic of so many of us. **Instead of responding directly to God’s call on our own life, we often tend to see who else is following.** We want to be part of a larger group. We don’t want to be the “odd ball”. We quickly look around to see the response of others. **It is a subtle way of diverting our attention away from the intensity and directness of God’s call on our lives.** God’s call is a very personal and individual offer. Furthermore, our personal journey is unique to us. We can’t really compare it to others. **I must be faithful to God’s will for my life. I am answerable to Him,** and He will not measure me by the performance of others. I will stand before God *alone*. **“...what is that to you? You follow Me!”** (vs. 22) – Jesus would not be diverted from His purpose, nor would He let Peter off the hook. He came to reinstate Peter, and set him to work for the Kingdom.

“This saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die...” (vs. 23) – Jesus never intended to really imply that John would not die until He returned. That, however, became a rumor which the aged apostle felt was important to clarify. **“This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.”** (vs. 24) – All of the other apostles had long been dead. To all his contemporaries, there could be no question regarding who this disciple was. It could only be John the son of Zebedee. His testimony was reliable because he had been an eyewitness to the events recorded, as well as a confidant of the Lord Jesus while He was here.

“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.” (vs. 25) – John would know. He was there for those very intense three and a half years. **What John wrote is only a very brief sketch, ... meant to complement the other gospel writings, and meant to draw us toward his Master.**

Chapter Outline for the Gospel of John

Write down three events or important concepts from each of the following chapters:

Chapter 1

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Chapter 2

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Chapter 3

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Chapter 4

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Chapter 5

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Chapter 6

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Chapter 7

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Chapter 8

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Chapter 9

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Chapter 10

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Chapter 11

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Chapter 12

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Chapter 13

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Chapter 14

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Chapter 15

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Chapter 16

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Chapter 17

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Chapter 18

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Chapter 19

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Chapter 20

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Chapter 21

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Write down the Seven "I am" sayings

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6
- 7.

Write down the Seven Signs

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6
- 7.

Study Sheet For Gospel of John

Theme Verses --

7 Signs

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

7 "I am" Sayings

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

7 "I Am" Absolutes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

The Great Sign --

Five Witnesses to Who Jesus Is --

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Jesus' Modus Operandi

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Three Unequivocal Claims

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

When Can We Obtain Eternal Life? --

What should we work for? --

What is God's work? --

God must draw us ("pre-venient grace") --

Knowledge not the same as faith --

Who will Jesus accept? --

Diet for maintaining spiritual connection --

A Key to Spiritual Discernment --

How to make good judgments --

Jesus' Answer to a Christmas Prophecy --

A Mark of True Disciples --

The Nature of Satan --

Purpose of the Thief vs. the Good Shepherd --

Eternal Security --

A Walk that Reinforces the Talk --

Law of Kingdom Growth --

Discipleship Required --

What does Spiritual Leadership Look Like? --

What Brings Blessing? --

The Main Recognizable Mark that we are Jesus' Disciples --

Seven Invitations to Prayer

- 1.)
- 2.)
- 3.)
- 4.)
- 5.)
- 6.)
- 7.)

Purpose of Eternal Life -

Jesus' Prayer For Oneness –

Study Sheet For Gospel of John – With Answers

Theme Verses -- 20:30,31

7 Signs

1. Water into Wine -- 2
2. Healed Official's Son -- 4
3. Healing of the Lame Man -- 5
4. Feeding of 5,000 -- 6
5. Walk on Water -- 6
6. Heal Man Born Blind -- 9
7. Raise Lazarus From Dead --11

7 "I am" Sayings

1. Bread of Life – 6
2. Light of the World -- 8,9
3. Door of the Sheep – 10
4. Good Shepherd – 10
5. Resurrection and the Life – 11
6. Way, the Truth, and the Life – 14
7. True Vine – 15

7 "I Am" Absolutes

1. 4:26
2. 6:20
3. 8:24
4. 8:28
5. 8:58
6. 13:19
7. 18:4-8

The Great Sign -- Jesus' Resurrection -- 20

Five Witnesses to Who Jesus Is -- 5

1. John the Baptist -- vss. 33-35
2. The works Jesus did -- 36
3. The Father -- 37,38
4. The OT Scripture -- 39,40
5. Moses -- 45-47 (cf. Deut. 18:15)

Jesus' Modus Operandi

He did what He saw the Father doing -- 5:19
He did the Father's will -- 5:30
He spoke what the Father taught Him --8:28;
cf. 7:16,17; 12:49,50.

Three Unequivocal Claims – The reaction of His listeners clearly demonstrate that He was claiming to be God

1. Called God His own Father, making Himself equal to God -- 5:16-18
2. Before Abraham was, I am -- 8:56-59
3. I and the Father are one -- 10:22-31

When Can We Obtain Eternal Life? – *Now!* -- 5:24

What should we work for? -- Not for perishable food, but for eternal life. -- 6:27

What is God's work? -- That we might believe in Jesus. -- 6:29.

God must draw us ("pre-venient grace") -- 6:44

Knowledge not the same as faith -- 6:40,45

Who will Jesus accept? -- 6:37

Diet for maintaining spiritual connection -- 6:56

A Key to Spiritual Discernment -- 7:17

How to make good judgments -- 7:24

Jesus' Answer to a Christmas Prophecy -- 7:52; 8:12

A Mark of True Disciples -- 8:32

The Nature of Satan -- 8:44

Purpose of the Thief vs. the Good Shepherd -- 10:10

Eternal Security -- 10:28

A Walk that Reinforces the Talk -- 10:37,38

Law of Kingdom Growth -- 12:24

Discipleship Required -- 12:26

What does Spiritual Leadership Look Like? -- 13:1-16

What Brings Blessing? -- 13:17

The Main Recognizable Mark that we are Jesus' Disciples -- 13:34,35

Seven Invitations to Prayer

- 1.) 14:13 -- Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.
- 2.) 14:14 -- If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.
- 3.) 15:7 -- If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.
- 4.) 15:16 -- ...I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give to you.
- 5.) 16:23 -- ...if you shall ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you in My name.
- 6.) 16:24 -- Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full.
- 7.) 16:26,27 -- In that day you will ask in My name; and I do not say to you that I will request the Father on your behalf; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father.

Purpose of Eternal Life -- 17:3 - "...in order that they might experientially-know You and Jesus..."

Jesus' Prayer For Oneness -- 17:20-23.

Gospel of John Quiz # 1

In what chapter...

...was Jesus "deeply moved in spirit, and was troubled..."?

...did Jesus testify "that a prophet has no honor in his own country"?

...did Jesus say, "Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I have spoken to them; behold, these know what I said"?

...did Jesus take his clothes off?

... did Peter put his clothes on?

...did Jesus say, "...it is to your advantage that I go away"?

...did someone call Jesus an animal?

...does John tell us that Judas was a thief?

...did someone liken himself to being like Jesus' best man?

...did Jesus say that the testimony of two men is true?

...did Jesus say that no one takes His life from Him, but He lays it down on His own initiative?

...do Mary and Martha appear?

...did Jesus say that He saw someone under a fig tree?

...does it say that many of the rulers believed in Him, but were more concerned about human approval, rather than God's?

...did someone prophesy that Jesus was going to die for the nation?

...do we learn of the burial customs of the Jews?

...does Jesus predict Peter's denials of Him?

...does Jesus tell us that He has overcome the world?

...does Jesus tell us that the dead will hear His voice?

Gospel of John Quiz #1 – With Answers

In what chapter...

...was Jesus "deeply moved in spirit, and was troubled..."?	11:33
...did Jesus testify "that a prophet has no honor in his own country"?	4:44
...did Jesus say, "Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I have spoken to them; behold, these know what I said"?	18:21
...did Jesus take his clothes off?	13:4
... did Peter put his clothes on?	21:7
...did Jesus say, "...it is to your advantage that I go away"?	16:7
...did someone call Jesus an animal?	1:29
...does John tell us that Judas was a thief?	12:6
...did someone liken himself to being like Jesus' best man?	3:29
...did Jesus say that the testimony of two men is true?	8:17
...did Jesus say that no one takes His life from Him, but He lays it down on His own initiative?	10:18
...do Mary and Martha appear?	11,12
...did Jesus say that He saw someone under a fig tree?	1:48
...does it say that many of the rulers believed in Him, but were more concerned about human approval, rather than God's?	12:42,43
...did someone prophesy that Jesus was going to die for the nation?	11:51
...do we learn of the burial customs of the Jews?	11,19
...does Jesus predict Peter's denials of Him?	13:38
...does Jesus tell us that He has overcome the world?	16:33
...does Jesus tell us that the dead will hear His voice?	5:25

Gospel of John Quiz # 2

What chapter...

...says that it is necessary to die in order to bear much fruit?

...says it is necessary to abide in order to bear much fruit?

...says it is necessary to continually eat and drink in order to abide?

...tells us how to abide in Jesus' love?

...tells us to continue in (abide in) Jesus' words?

...makes us a promise if Jesus' words abide in us?

...does Jesus say that God's word is truth?

...talks about a slave-girl?

...does Jesus tell His disciples that one of them is a devil?

...tells us that those who receive Jesus have the right to become
God's children?

...says that people who do evil hate the light?

...is Thomas ready to die with Jesus?

...does Jesus say that He will not leave us alone, but He will come
to us?

...tells of a message written in 3 languages?

...speaks of a charcoal fire? (two chapters)

...does Jesus say to believe in the light, to become children of light?

...does Jesus tell someone to wash?

...does Jesus tell someone to give Him water?

...does Jesus tell people to come to Him for water?

Gospel of John Quiz # 2 – With Answers

What chapter...

...says that it is necessary to die in order to bear much fruit?	12:24
...says it is necessary to abide in order to bear much fruit?	15:5
...says it is necessary to continually eat and drink in order to abide?	6:56
...tells us how to abide in Jesus' love?	15:9,10
...tells us to continue in (abide in) Jesus' words?	8:31
...makes us a promise if Jesus' words abide in us?	15:7
...does Jesus say that God's word is truth?	17:17
...talks about a slave-girl?	18:17
...does Jesus tell His disciples that one of them is a devil?	6:70
...tells us that those who receive Jesus have the right to become God's children?	1:12
...says that people who do evil hate the light?	3:20
...is Thomas ready to die with Jesus?	11:16
...does Jesus say that He will not leave us alone, but He will come to us?	14:18
...tells of a message written in 3 languages?	19:20
...speaks of a charcoal fire? (two chapters)	18:18; 21:9
...does Jesus say to believe in the light, to become children of light?	12:36
...does Jesus tell someone to wash?	9:6
...does Jesus tell someone to give Him water?	4:7
...does Jesus tell people to come to Him for water?	7:37

Gospel of John Quiz # 3

Where...

...are three clear evidences that Jesus really claimed to be God?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What makes these so important?

...are important testimonies that Jesus mentioned that point to His divinity?

What are they?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

...does Jesus tell us the purpose for eternal life?

...was the Spirit for believers under the Old Covenant?

...is the Spirit for believers in Jesus now?

...does Jesus tell us what is the distinctive between people who say they believe in Him versus those who are truly following Him? What is the difference?

...does John tell us his purpose for writing his gospel?

...are two example verses for demonstrating that you cannot lose your salvation once you truly have been born again?

- 1.
- 2.

What do theologians call this doctrine?

Where...

...does a person get the authority to become a child of God?

...does Jesus talk about what has to happen in order for that to take place?

...do we learn who anointed Jesus?

...does it talk about how others can prepare the hearts of people, and we might be able to reap the rewards of their efforts?

...does it talk about Jesus having existed before He was born? (two separate passages)

...do we see examples of people being persecuted in John's gospel?

...does Jesus warn us of persecution?

...does Jesus require that those who serve Him be active followers of Him?

...does Jesus tell us what characteristic would convince the world that we are His?

...did someone tell a lie in the gospel of John?

...does Jesus speak of bearing much fruit?

...do we learn about roles of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers? List them.

...does Jesus eat in the gospel of John?

...does Jesus say something to test someone?

...does it say that others were trying to test Jesus?

How are you doing with *this* test?

Gospel of John Quiz # 3 – With Answers

Where...

...are three clear evidences that Jesus really claimed to be God?

1. 5:17,18
2. 8:58,59
3. 10:30,31

What makes these so important? -- The reaction of His listeners. They understood the language and the cultural/religious context of His words.

...are important testimonies that Jesus mentioned that point to His divinity?

What are they?

1. John the Baptist - 5:33
2. The works He did - 5:36
3. The Father - 5:37
4. The Scriptures - 5:39
5. Moses - 5:46

...does Jesus tell us the purpose for eternal life? 17:3

...was the Spirit for believers under the Old Covenant? External to them, but with them - 14:17

...is the Spirit for believers in Jesus now? With them and inside of them - 14:16,17

...does Jesus tell us what is the distinctive between people who *say* they believe in Him versus those who are truly following Him? 8:30-32 What is the difference? Those who are truly following Him abide in (continue in, live in) His word.

...does John tell us his purpose for writing his gospel? 20:30,31 - theme verses

...are two example verses for demonstrating that you cannot lose your salvation once you truly have been born again?

1. 6:39
2. 10:27-29

What do theologians call this doctrine? Eternal Security

Where...

...does a person get the authority to become a child of God? 1:12

...does Jesus talk about what has to happen in order for that to take place? 3:1-7

...do we learn who anointed Jesus? 12:3

...does it talk about how others can prepare the hearts of people, and we might be able to reap the rewards of their efforts? 4:36-38

...does it talk about Jesus having existed before He was born? (two separate passages)
e.g., 1:1,2,14; 16:28; 17:5

...do we see examples of people being persecuted in John's gospel? e.g., 9:26-34

...does Jesus warn us of persecution? 15:18-16:4

...does Jesus require that those who serve Him be active followers of Him? 12:26

...does Jesus tell us what characteristic would convince the world that we are His?
13:34,35

...did someone tell a lie in the gospel of John? 18:17

...does Jesus speak of bearing much fruit? 12:24; 15:5

...do we learn about roles of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers? List them.

Helper - 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7
Teacher & Guide- 14:26; 16:13
Reminder - 14:26
Convincer - 16:8-11
Life-giver - 6:63
Witness - 15:26

...does Jesus eat in the gospel of John? 12, 13, 21

...does Jesus say something to test someone? 6:5,6

...does it say that others were trying to test Jesus? 8:6

How are you doing with *this* test?

Gospel of John Quiz # 4

Write the chapter number next to the clue - In what chapter...

1. Does Jesus walk on water?
2. Is there a serpent mentioned?
3. Does Jesus heal a blind man?
4. Does Jesus find someone in the temple?
5. Is there a vinedresser?
6. Does the Word become flesh?
7. Is someone released from bonds?
8. Are people curious to see Lazarus?
9. Does Jesus skip lunch?
10. Is "It is the Spirit who gives life..."
11. Does the high priest question Jesus?
12. Is "Sanctify them in the truth..."?
13. Was Thomas not with them?
14. Is "Why can I not follow You right now"?
15. Is the Triumphal Entry?
16. Is the second sign?
17. Does Jesus raise Lazarus?
18. Is "the thief comes to steal, kill & destroy"?
19. Is the New Commandment?
20. Is the Great I Am?
21. Are the theme verses?
22. Are 153 fish?
23. Are Nathanael & Phillip?
24. Is the friend of the bridegroom?
25. Do Jesus' brothers not believe in Him?
26. Does Jesus' say "draw some out"?
27. Is Joseph of Arimathea mentioned?
28. Does a woman anoint Jesus?
29. Are the fields white for harvest?
30. Does Jesus question His mother?
31. Does Satan enter into Judas?
32. Does Jesus promise to send another Helper?
33. Is the command, "Receive the Holy Spirit"?
34. Do people question John about his identity?
35. Does someone get kicked out over Jesus?
36. Can a man be born of water and the Spirit?
37. Is "My sheep hear My voice"?
38. Is "Walk while you have the light"?
39. Is "greater love has no one than this..."?
40. Is 300 denarii mentioned?
41. Do the Priests and Pharisees plot to kill?
42. Is "you are of your father, the devil"?

43. Is “out of his belly will flow” the Spirit?
44. Are believers challenged to be disciples?
45. Is the Law of Kingdom Growth?
46. Does the slave not remain in the house?
47. Do people hate the light?
48. He came to His own but was not received?
49. Jesus was scourged?
50. Zeal for God’s house consumed Him?
51. The Son is to be honored just as the Father?
52. “All who come to Me I will not cast out”?
53. Jesus wept?
54. “You call Me Teacher and Lord...”?
55. Seven disciples gather to go fishing?
56. Are Jesus’ disciples doing the baptizing?
57. Is “He is of age, ask him.”?
58. Is the Feast of Booths?
59. Is the Feast of Dedication?
60. Is a voice from heaven?
61. Is Jesus ambushed in Solomon’s Portico?
62. Does Jesus get tired at noontime?
63. Does a man go away empty-handed?
64. Are there five loaves and two fishes?
65. Is a woman caught in adultery?
66. Does Jesus warn someone not to sin?
67. Does it say Jesus will judge the dead?
68. Does Jesus send His disciples off alone?
69. Is the Spirit to convict people of sin?
70. Does it say we will do the works Jesus did?
71. “Do not labor for food that perishes...”?
72. “Who is it, Lord?”
73. “No man has seen God at any time...”?
74. Is Jesus leaving to prepare a place for us?
75. Do people fall backwards to the ground?
76. Is Satan called a murderer and a liar?
77. Does someone talk to a “gardener”?
78. Does it speak of God hardening hearts?
79. Does it speak of God drawing people?
80. Does someone go swimming?
81. Some love the approval of men over God?
82. Says we must be willing to do His will?
83. “Blessed are you if you do them”?
84. Is God glorified if we bear much fruit?
85. Will the truth set us free?
86. “So, you are a King?”

Gospel of John Quiz # 4 – With Answers

Write the chapter number next to the clue - In what chapter...

1. Does Jesus walk on water? - 6
2. Is there a serpent mentioned? - 3
3. Does Jesus heal a blind man? - 9
4. Does Jesus find someone in the temple? - 5
5. Is there a vinedresser? - 15
6. Does the Word become flesh? - 1
7. Is someone released from bonds? - 11
8. Are people curious to see Lazarus? - 12
9. Does Jesus skip lunch? - 4
10. Is "It is the Spirit who gives life..." - 6
11. Does the high priest question Jesus? - 18
12. Is "Sanctify them in the truth..."? - 17
13. Was Thomas not with them? - 20
14. Is "Why can I not follow You right now"? - 13
15. Is the Triumphal Entry? - 12
16. Is the second sign? - 4
17. Does Jesus raise Lazarus? - 11
18. Is "the thief comes to steal, kill & destroy"? - 10
19. Is the New Commandment? - 13
20. Is the Great I Am? - 8
21. Are the theme verses? - 20
22. Are 153 fish? - 21
23. Are Nathanael & Philip? - 1
24. Is the friend of the bridegroom? - 3
25. Do Jesus' brothers not believe in Him? - 7
26. Does Jesus' say "draw some out"? - 2
27. Is Joseph of Arimathea mentioned? - 19
28. Does a woman anoint Jesus? - 12
29. Are the fields white for harvest? - 4
30. Does Jesus question His mother? - 2
31. Does Satan enter into Judas? - 13
32. Does Jesus promise to send another Helper? - 14
33. Is the command, "Receive the Holy Spirit"? - 20
34. Do people question John about his identity? - 1
35. Does someone get kicked out over Jesus? - 9
36. Can a man be born of water and the Spirit? - 3
37. Is "My sheep hear My voice"? - 10
38. Is "Walk while you have the light"? - 12
39. Is "greater love has no one than this..."?
40. Is 300 denarii mentioned? - 12
41. Do the Priests and Pharisees plot to kill? - 11
42. Is "you are of your father, the devil"? - 8
43. Is "out of his belly will flow" the Spirit? - 7
44. Are believers challenged to be disciples? - 8

45. Is the Law of Kingdom Growth? - 12
46. Does the slave not remain in the house? - 8
47. Do people hate the light? - 3
48. He came to His own but was not received? - 1
49. Jesus was scourged? - 19
50. Zeal for God's house consumed Him? - 2
51. The Son is to be honored just as the Father? - 5
52. "All who come to Me I will not cast out"? - 6
53. Jesus wept? - 11
54. "You call Me Teacher and Lord..."? - 13
55. Seven disciples gather to go fishing? - 21
56. Are Jesus' disciples doing the baptizing? - 4
57. Is "He is of age, ask him."? - 9
58. Is the Feast of Booths? - 7
59. Is the Feast of Dedication? - 10
60. Is a voice from heaven? - 12
61. Is Jesus ambushed in Solomon's Portico? - 10
62. Does Jesus get tired at noontime? - 4
63. Does a man go away empty-handed? - 2
64. Are there five loaves and two fishes? - 6
65. Is a woman caught in adultery? - 8
66. Does Jesus warn someone not to sin? - 5, 8
67. Does it say Jesus will judge the dead? - 5
68. Does Jesus send His disciples off alone? - 4
69. Is the Spirit to convict people of sin? - 16
70. Does it say we will do the works Jesus did? - 14
71. "Do not labor for food that perishes..."? - 6
72. "Who is it, Lord?" - 13
73. "No man has seen God at any time,..."? - 1
74. Is Jesus leaving to prepare a place for us? - 14
75. Do people fall backwards to the ground? - 18
76. Is Satan called a murderer and a liar? - 8
77. Does someone talk to a "gardener"? - 20
78. Does it speak of God hardening hearts? - 12
79. Does it speak of God drawing people? - 6
80. Does someone go swimming? - 21
81. Some love the approval of men over God? - 12
82. Says we must be willing to do His will? - 7
83. "Blessed are you if you do them"? - 13
84. Is God glorified if we bear much fruit? - 15
85. Will the truth set us free? - 8
86. "So, you are a King?" - 18

Gospel of John Quiz # 5

In what 4 chapters does Philip appear?

In what 2 chapters does Caiaphas appear?

In what 2 chapters does John the Baptist appear?

In what 2 chapters does Nathanael appear?

In what 2 chapters does Martha appear?

In what 3 chapters does Nicodemus appear?

In what 2 chapters does Mary Magdalene appear?

In what 3 chapters is Mary, Jesus' mother mentioned?

In what 3 chapters does Andrew appear?

In what 4 chapters does Thomas appear?

In what 3 chapters is the city of Cana mentioned?

In what 6 chapters does Peter appear?

In what 2 chapters does Pontius Pilate appear?

In what 4 chapters does Judas Iscariot appear?

In what 9 chapters do the Pharisees appear?

In what 2 chapters is Jesus referred to as Joseph's son?

How many other Joseph's in John? Who are they?

What was the name of Judas Iscariot's father?

What was the name of James & John's father? Where is he mentioned?

In what 7 chapters is Moses mentioned?

Gospel of John Quiz # 5 – With Answers

In what 4 chapters does Philip appear?	1, 6, 12, 14
In what 2 chapters does Caiaphas appear?	11, 18
In what 2 chapters does John the Baptist appear?	1, 3
In what 2 chapters does Nathanael appear?	1, 21
In what 2 chapters does Martha appear?	11, 12
In what 3 chapters does Nicodemus appear?	3, 7, 19
In what 2 chapters does Mary Magdalene appear?	19, 20
In what 3 chapters is Jesus' mother mentioned?	2, 6, 19
In what 3 chapters does Andrew appear?	1, 6, 21
In what 4 chapters does Thomas appear?	11, 14, 20, 21
In what 3 chapters is the city of Cana mentioned?	2, 4, 21
In what 6 chapters does Peter appear?	1, 6, 13, 18, 20, 21
In what 2 chapters does Pontius Pilate appear?	18, 19
In what 4 chapters does Judas Iscariot appear?	6, 12, 13, 18
In what 9 chapters do the Pharisees appear?	1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 18
In what 2 chapters is Jesus referred to as Joseph's son?	1, 6
How many other Joseph's in John? Who are they?	Son of Jacob - 4; Joseph of Arimathea - 19
What was the name of Judas Iscariot's father?	Simon – 6:71; 13:2,26
What was the name of James & John's father? Where mentioned?	Zebedee - 21:2
In what 7 chapters is Moses mentioned?	1,3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9