

The Gospel of John

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Before we jump into the gospel of John, we should note a very important passage near the end of the book that tells us why John wrote his gospel. In John 20:30-31 he says, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 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." The gospel of John is a book of "signs" that Jesus performed, witnessed by His disciples and recorded to enable the reader to believe in Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God. Jesus is no ordinary man. He is no ordinary prophet or rabbi or scholar. John clearly portrays Jesus as much more than these things, as we will see from the very beginning of his gospel. The whole aim of his gospel is that people might believe in Jesus and receive life in His name.

John 1:1-13

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was 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 life, and the life was the Light of men. 5 The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

6 There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light.

9 There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. 10 He was 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, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

This first chapter of John is packed with important truths about Jesus and who He is. We will see here His pre-existence, His deity, that He is the Creator, His incarnation, His purpose, and what He imparts to us.

Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." I think its clear that John means to echo these words in verses 1-3. Its also clear that he means to draw an equivalence between "the Word" and God. In verses 1 and 2 he makes three points about Christ. First, He was in the beginning, second, He was with God, and third, He was God. He points out again in verse 2 that "He was in the beginning with God." Before we dive into these things, lets examine why John calls Jesus "the Word."

The word "word" translates the Greek word *logos*, which comes from the verb *legō*, "to speak, to say." The word was used in ancient Greek philosophy, initially by Heraclitus, to refer to a "rational divine intelligence, which today is sometimes referred to in scientific discourse as 'the mind of God.'"¹ According to Wikipedia, a Hellenized Jew named Philo of Alexandria, who lived from about 20 BC to 50 AD "used the term *logos* to mean an intermediary divine being or demiurge. Philo followed the Platonic distinction between imperfect matter and perfect Form, and therefore intermediary beings were necessary to bridge the enormous gap between God and the material world. The *logos* was the highest of these intermediary beings, and was called by Philo 'the first-born of God. Philo also wrote that 'the *Logos* of the living God is the bond of everything, holding all things together and binding all the parts, and prevents them from being dissolved and separated."² So then, did John pick up this idea of

1 Discussion of "Logos" from <https://www.pbs.org/faithandreason/theogloss/logos-body.html>

2 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logos>

the Logos, the Word, from Greek philosophy and Philo and apply them to Christ? He may have used it as a point of common reference with Gentile and Greek culture, but I think there is more to it than that, because the idea of the “word of God” is very strong in the Bible. The phrase “word of God” occurs 47 times in the New American Standard Version of the Bible, but the phrase, “word of the Lord” occurs 257 times, and the phrase “says the Lord” when quoting the Lord occurs 502 times. God is a God who speaks and is not silent.

A significant verse when it comes to understanding John 1:1 is Psalms 33:6, “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host.” In Genesis 1 we learn that God created everything by saying “Let there be...”. He said, “Let there be light,” and there was light (Genesis 1:3), He said “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters” and it happened. All things were created in this way by His speech. He spoke and it happened. So John says that the Word of God, the embodiment of the speech of God is God's Son Jesus Christ. Jesus says in John 12:48-49, “He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak.” When Jesus speaks, the Father speaks.

The first thing about the “Word” is that He was “in the beginning.” Note that John repeats this in verse 2. At the beginning of all creation He was already there. This is the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ. He existed before He “became flesh.” Jesus taught very clearly in chapter 6 that He had come down out of heaven and had been sent by the Father (John 6:38, 50-51, 58). John says in John 13:3 that Jesus knew that He had “come forth from God and was going back to God.” In His prayer in John 17 Jesus says in verse 5, “Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.” And again in 17:24 He says, “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.” Jesus did not begin to exist when He was conceived in Mary's womb, but He existed with the Father from all eternity past and shared the glory of the Father.

The second thing about Him is that He was “with God.” The relationship between the Father and the Son is a mystery to us that we will never fully comprehend. Jesus explained it later in John 14 by saying in verse 7, “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.” And in verse 9 He says, “He who has seen me has seen the Father.” And He explains more in verse 10, “Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me?” I think this is the best understanding we can get of the relationship between the members of the Trinity. The Son is in the Father, the Father is in the Son and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son. The members of the Trinity are always “in” one another.

The third thing is that He is God, “the Word was God.” This is a clear declaration of the deity of Christ. It is impossible to read the New Testament honestly and not see that it teaches the deity of Christ very clearly. He was called “Immanuel,” which means “God with us” (Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23). The Jews understood what Jesus was claiming about Himself. John 5:18 says, “For this reason 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.” Probably the clearest declaration of His deity from Jesus Himself is in John 8:58, “Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.’” This is not bad grammar on the part of Jesus, but is His way of identifying Himself as the “I Am” of Exodus 3:14. When Moses asked God, “Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you. Now they may say to me, ‘What is His name? What shall I say to them?’” The Lord answered, “I AM WHO I AM; and He said,

‘Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, “I AM has sent me to you.”’ So then the Jews understood what Jesus was saying and tried to stone Him. Jesus is not just another man, but is God incarnate.

The Word is the one through whom all things “came into being” (verse 3). Some translations say, “All things were made by him” (KJV), but the New American Standard is a more accurate translation of the word *ginomai* at this point. The word *ginomai* occurs three times in this verse and means, “to become, to come into existence, begin to be.”³ If we “make” something, we take existing raw materials and fashion them into an object, but if we cause something to come into existence, we are bringing forth something out of nothing. This is what God did in creation. He spoke and things came into being. He did this through His Son, the Word. Whatever exists came into being through Jesus Christ. Nothing came into being by any other means, but only through Jesus Christ. Everyone and everything owes its existence to Jesus Christ.

In verses 4 through 9 John shifts to the metaphor of light. He says, “In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.” Through Him all things came into being, and in Him was life which is the Light of men. In John 11:25-26 Jesus will say to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?” In John 14:6 He says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” Its not just that Jesus has life or gives life, but He *is* life. And the life is equivalent to light. Jesus says in John 8:12, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.” The life in Jesus is the light, and the light is the life. It is in Jesus that we find life and light. It is in Him that we encounter God the Father. Only in Him do we have life that is truly life.

The light shines in the darkness. The verb “shines” is present-tense, it keeps on shining in the darkness. In 1 John 2:8 he says that “the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining.” The light is not something that used to shine in the past, but then flickered out, nor is it something that will someday shine in the future, but it has been shining all along and will continue to shine forever. The darkness, however, is passing away and cannot continue.

The New American Standard says that the darkness “did not comprehend it.” The word translated “comprehend” is *katalambanō*, to “apprehend, grasp or seize,” to “overtake and seize. The word is used in the sense of *laying hold of so as to make ones own*; hence, *to take possession of*.”⁴ The word is used in John 12:35 when Jesus says, “For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not *overtake* you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes.” He’s not saying that the darkness doesn’t understand the light, but that the darkness does not overcome the light. The darkness cannot seize and overwhelm the light of life in Christ. The World English Bible translates verse 5, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness hasn’t overcome it.” And the Contemporary English Version says, “The light keeps shining in the dark, and darkness has never put it out.” The light is overwhelming the darkness and not vice-versa. This is why, as Jesus said, it is so important for us to “walk in the light” in fellowship with Him at every moment. If we do so the darkness cannot overwhelm us. The darkness will not prevail. It may at times seem like it is gaining the upper hand, but in truth the darkness is on its way out.

John mentions John the Baptist next in verses 6-8, and then will talk about him some more in verses 19 through 36. He says that John was a man who was “sent from God.” The word

³ *Thayers Greek Definitions*

⁴ Vincent, Marvin, *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*

for “sent” is *apostellō*, meaning “to send, to send away, to send someone out on a mission.” The word “apostle” comes from the related noun. The apostles were those chosen by Jesus to be sent out as His witnesses (Luke 6:13). So John the Baptist also was a man who was sent by God to be a witness to the Light, who is Christ. The word for “witness” in verse 7 is the noun *marturia*, and the verb “testify” is *martureō*. John was a witness and it was his job to bear witness to the Light. Jesus will talk about the witness of John in John 5:31-36:

“If I alone testify about Myself, My testimony is not true. There is another who testifies of Me, and I know that the testimony which He gives about Me is true. You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth. But the testimony which I receive is not from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me.”

Jesus did not just appear on the scene saying, “Here I am! I'm the Light of the world! I'm the Messiah! Believe in Me and follow Me!”, but John came before Him pointing to Him and confirming that Jesus is the Light. He prepared the way for Jesus. The testimony of John the Baptist is strong evidence that Jesus is the Light of the world.

The whole intent of the witness of John was “so that all might believe through him.” The word “believe” is used 98 times in John's gospel, and as we pointed out at the beginning, this is the purpose of the book, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God, and that in believing we may have life in His name. Believing in Jesus is not one option among many good and valid options. It is the only option if we want eternal life.

John the Baptist was not the Light, but was a witness to the Light. Some thought that John might be the Christ, but he categorically denied it (see verse 20).

Jesus the Word is the “true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.” Jesus is the genuine Light. He is not a false light; He is not a fake, but is the real thing. He gives light to everyone. Many religions and philosophies talk about “enlightenment,” but Jesus is the genuine Light who really gives us true enlightenment.

The Light came into the world and “was in the world,” the world which was made through Him, but the world did not know Him. The world did not recognize its Creator. By “world” here John probably means not only the physical world, the earth, but also the “world” of humanity, as in John 3:16. Humans were created through Jesus Christ, but they did not know nor recognize Him when he appeared among them. I think there is an implication that it should not have been this way. The world should have known Him. Not only that, but Jesus came “to His own, and those who where His own did not receive Him.” The word translated “receive” is *paralambanō*, which literally means “to take near,” or “to take to ones self.”⁵ The same word is used in John 14:3 when Jesus says to the disciples, “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.” Jesus came to His own nation of Israel, and to His own people the Jews, but they did not welcome Him. He was even rejected by the people in His own home town of Nazareth (see Mark 6:1-6). Those who should have welcomed Him and believed in Him rejected Him and opposed Him.

There are some, however, who receive Him. The word in verse 12 is *lambanō*, “to take.” Some take Jesus the Word to themselves; they welcome Him and accept Him. They are those who “believe in His name.” To believe in Jesus is to “receive” Him. Those who receive

Him and believe in Him are given the right to become children of God. The word translated "right" is *exousia*, which has to do with power or authority. A.T. Robertson says the word here "means authority but includes power. Here it is more the notion of privilege or right."⁶ They become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ as a free gift. They are born (or begotten) of God Himself and not through blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man. My children are my children because my wife and I conceived them and she gave them birth. In a sense, we caused them to come into being. A child must be born to parents, and children of God are born to Him. He is their Father because He gave them birth into His family. He causes them to come into being. This is why the Father sent the Son, that we might be born into His family as His children through faith in Christ.

The proper and correct response to Jesus is to receive Him, to take Him to ourselves and welcome Him. The world is a fallen and corrupt place that rejects its Creator and does not know Him. But those who welcome Jesus and believe in Him are "born again," become children of God and receive the free gift of eternal life in Him.

John 1:14-18

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 John testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me." 16 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. 17 For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

The Word, who was with God, who was God, who was from all eternity, who was the creator of all things, became flesh and dwelt among us. He did not merely appear as a man, but actually became a man. In becoming flesh He did not cease to be the Word. He did not cease to be God. As Paul says in Philippians 2:6-8, Jesus "existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." This is the doctrine of the incarnation. The other gospels tell us how this was done, how He was conceived of the Holy Spirit in the virgin Mary (Luke 1:26-35 and Matthew 1:18-20). John gives us the big picture, that the Word became flesh.

John says that the Word became flesh and "dwelt among us." The word translated "dwelt" is *skēnoō*, which means to pitch ones tent or tabernacle. The Tree of Life version translates this, "And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us." As we all know, a tent is a temporary dwelling for most people. Some nomadic people (like Abraham was) live in tents their entire lives, but for most of us a tent is something we use for short periods of time. Biblical tents, though, were more substantial than the flimsy nylon tents we use for camping these days. If you read the description of the tabernacle in Exodus 26 and 27 you will see that this "tent" was a very magnificent thing with many layers. The physical body of Jesus was His "tent" in which He lived among us. Paul uses the same image in 2 Corinthians 5:1-4, "For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we

6 Robertson, A.T., *Word Pictures In The New Testament*

do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life." Jesus took on an earthly "tent" like ours and camped with us for a while. He lived among us as one of us.

When Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us, John says "we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." His glory became visible. How did John and the other disciples see the glory of the Word? Well, John, along with Peter and James, had the privilege of seeing the literal glory of Christ on the "Mount of Transfiguration" as recorded in Matthew 17:1-13 and Mark 9:2-13. But aside from this amazing experience, John tells us that they saw His glory in His miracles. In John 2:11, after Jesus turned water into wine, John says, "This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him." His glory was seen in this miracle. Just before He raised Lazarus from the dead, Jesus said to Martha, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" (John 11:40). When Jesus called Lazarus out of his tomb, those who were there witnessed the glory of God. In all of His miracles and signs people had the privilege of seeing His glory.

Jesus is the "only begotten from the Father." John uses this word four times of Jesus in the gospel, here in verse 14, also in verse 18 as well as in the famous verse in chapter 3, verse 16, and in chapter 3 verse 18. The word in the Greek is *monogenēs*, which means "only born." It reminds me of what God said to Abraham in Genesis 22:2 about Isaac, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you." Then in Genesis 22:12 God says, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." And again in Genesis 22:16-17 God says, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies." The thing is, Isaac was not the only son of Abraham, but there was also Ishmael who had previously been born to Abraham by Sarah's maid Hagar. Isaac, though, is a type of Christ. He was the only true or legitimate son of Abraham. Jesus is the only true and original Son of God. He is the Son of God in a sense that we are not.

John says that Jesus was "full of grace and truth." Note the emphasis on this in verses 14, 16 and 17. Its interesting that these are the only verses in the gospel of John that mention grace. Truth is mentioned 25 times in the gospel, but grace only here these four times. Jesus is the embodiment of the grace of God and the truth of God. Grace is God's favor which is unearned and undeserved by us. Pastor Earl Palmer defines it as "surprise gift love." When God gives us the forgiveness and eternal life that we do not deserve, that is grace. Jesus illustrated grace in His parable of the "unforgiving servant" in Matthew 18:23-35. A king wanted to settle accounts with his slaves, and one was brought in who owed the king ten thousand talents, which was an incredible sum that he could never possibly repay. Verses 25-27 say, "But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you everything. And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt.'" The grace of God forgives when He could convict and condemn. The grace of God frees when He could imprison. The grace of God gives life when He could kill. John says we have all received "grace upon grace" from the fullness of Christ. To impart grace we so desperately need was the mission of Jesus.

Verse 17 tells us that “grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.” Again, the word “realized” translates *ginomai*. Grace and truth came into being through Jesus Christ. The Law came to us through Moses, but grace and truth came to us through Jesus Christ. The Law condemns us and points to our sinfulness, but Christ provides the grace and truth that frees us from the condemnation of the Law. Jesus later says, “I am the truth” in John 14:6. He also calls the Holy Spirit “the Spirit of Truth” in John 14:17, 15:26 and 16:13. To know Christ is to know the truth. If we have the Holy Spirit we have the truth in us. The Lord will not lead us astray into falsehood. There are many lying spirits in the world (1John 4:1), but the Spirit of Christ is always the Spirit of truth. The truth always comes through Christ.

God is invisible. John says, “No one has seen God at any time.” God said to Moses, “You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!” (Exodus 33:20). Some people have seen representations of God, but not truly God Himself. Paul says clearly that God is invisible in Colossians 1:15 and 1 Timothy 1:17. Jesus says in John 6:46 “Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father.” But then in John 14:7 He says, “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.” In Jesus the disciples “saw” the Father, because the Father is in Him. And this is the point in John 1:18, that though no one has ever truly seen God with their physical eyes, they have seen “the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father.” He is the closest one to the Father and is held close by the Father. We meet and see the Father in the Son. A true encounter with God comes through the Son, Jesus Christ, and we don’t truly know God apart from Him.

Jesus the Word “has explained” God. The word for “explained” in the Greek is *exēgeomai*, from which we get our word “exegesis.” It come from *ex*, “out of,” and *hēgeomai*, “to show the way.” A. T. Robertson says it means, “to lead out, to draw out in narrative, to recount.” He says, “This word fitly closes the Prologue in which the Logos is pictured in marvelous fashion as the Word of God in human flesh, the Son of God with the Glory of God in him, showing men who God is and what he is.”⁷ Other Bible versions translate the word by saying that the Son has “declared” the Father, “revealed” Him and “made Him known.” To know the Father we must pay attention to the Son.

John 1:19-28

This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20 And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." 21 They asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." 22 Then they said to him, "Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?" 23 He said, "I am A VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD, as Isaiah the prophet said." 24 Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. 25 They asked him, and said to him, "Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" 26 John answered them saying, "I baptize in water, but among you stands One whom you do not know. 27 "It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." 28 These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

John has already told us that John the Baptist was not the Light, but came as a witness to the Light. Now John gives us the witness of John. He tells us what John had to say about himself and about the one who was coming after him. John was asked by a delegation of

⁷ Robertson, A. T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*

priests and Levites who came from Jerusalem about who he was. These men were sent by the Pharisees (verse 24). The first thing John said very clearly was, "I am not the Christ." Luke tells us, "the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ" (Luke 3:15). There was widespread speculation that John might be the Messiah, the anointed one. But he was very careful and deliberate about denying that he was the Christ. He would make no claim to being the Christ. He knew his role.

The priests and Levites continued to press him, "What then? Are you Elijah? Are you the Prophet?" They asked if he was Elijah because of the prophecy in Malachi 4:5-6, "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse." Though John denied that he was Elijah, there is a sense in which he was the "Elijah" of Malachi 4. When Jesus spoke of John in Matthew 11 He says in verse 14, "And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come." Later in Matthew 17, after Peter, James and John had seen Jesus transfigured and speaking with Moses and Elijah, they asked Jesus, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" Jesus replied, "Elijah is coming and will restore all things; but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." Matthew then says, "Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist" (Matthew 17:11-13). We discover more about this in Luke 1:15-17 when the angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, and told him about who his son would be, "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mothers womb. And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." John was sent as the forerunner of Christ in the "spirit and power of Elijah." John had the same spirit and the same power as Elijah. Elijah sought to turn the nation back to the Lord, and John also called the people to turn back to the Lord. So though John was not technically the same person as Elijah, he had the same spirit and power and purpose.

John also denied that he was "the Prophet." Probably this is a reference to Deuteronomy 18:15 where Moses says to the people of Israel, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him." John said that, no, he was not this prophet that they were expecting.

Finished with their suggestions and perhaps a bit frustrated, the men asked John to tell them how they should answer those who sent them. What does John have to say about himself? John answered, "I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord, as Isaiah the prophet said.'" This quote from Isaiah 40:3 is also applied to John the Baptist in the other three gospels. John was a voice crying out and delivering a message. It was a message telling people to prepare the way for the Lord. The Lord was coming, and people needed to get ready for His arrival. They needed to prepare by repenting of their sins and being baptized as a symbol of their cleansing.

The men asked a follow up question, "Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" There seems to be an implication that he shouldn't be baptizing, or that it was unusual that he was doing so. Apparently baptism was symbolic of washing or cleansing or purification, and it may have been the custom at the time to baptize

Gentile converts before they could be counted among those who were proselytes to Judaism. Adam Clarke writes:

Baptism was a very common ceremony among the Jews, who never received a proselyte into the full enjoyment of a Jews privileges, till he was both baptized and circumcised. But such baptisms were never performed except by an ordinance of the Sanhedrin, or in the presence of three magistrates: besides, they never baptized any Jew or Jewess, nor even those who were the children of their proselytes; for, as all these were considered as born in the covenant, they had no need of baptism, which was used only as an introductory rite. Now, as John had, in this respect, altered the common custom so very essentially, admitting to his baptism the Jews in general, the Sanhedrin took it for granted that no man had authority to make such changes, unless especially commissioned from on high; and that only the prophet, or Elijah, or the Messiah himself; could have authority to act as John did.⁸

By baptizing it appeared to these men that John was claiming some sort of special authority for himself. The Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council in Jerusalem, had not authorized him to preach or baptize, so they expected him to explain and justify what he was doing. This is similar to the question they asked Jesus when Jesus came to Jerusalem before His betrayal and arrest. He had ridden into Jerusalem on the colt of a donkey, fulfilling the prophecy regarding the Messiah from Zechariah 9:9, He had kicked the money changers and merchants out of the temple courtyard, He had healed many who were blind and lame, and then the following day the chief priests and elders came and asked, "By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?" They had not authorized Jesus to do these things, and He was upsetting their arrangements in the temple area. It is interesting that Jesus replied by saying, "I will also ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John was from what source, from heaven or from men?" This put them in a difficult position. Matthew says, "And they began reasoning among themselves, saying, 'If we say, "From heaven," He will say to us, "Then why did you not believe him?" But if we say, "From men," we fear the people; for they all regard John as a prophet. And answering Jesus, they said, 'We do not know. He also said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things" (Matthew 21:24-27). Neither Jesus nor John needed to be approved and authorized by these men; their authority came from God.

In answer to the question about why he was baptizing, since he wasn't the Christ, or Elijah, or the Prophet, John said, "I baptize in water, but among you stands One whom you do not know. It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." I think this is Johns way of saying "I'm not that important. I just baptize in water. There is another coming who is the important one." Matthew gives us a longer quote from John in Matthew 3:11-12, "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." John just baptized people in water as a symbol of repentance, but the one coming after him would bring a different baptism, a baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire. His baptism would be more significant and life changing.

The one who was coming after John was among them already. The word “stands” is a present-tense verb. He was already standing among them. I don't think John means that Christ was there at that moment, but I think its likely John had already encountered Jesus and had already baptized Him. Verses 29-37 reveal that Jesus came along the next day, and John spoke of his past experience with Jesus. He had already borne witness to Christ previously. He had seen the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus like a dove out of heaven (verse 32), and this had happened when John baptized Jesus (Mark 1:10, Matthew 3:16 and Luke 3:22). Though He was “standing among” them, they did not know Him. They did not perceive Him. He was unknown to them.

John the Baptist made it clear that he was unworthy of this one who was coming after him. He says that he is not worthy to untie His sandal. He is not worthy to do the least bit of service to Christ. The word translated “worthy” is *axios*, which has to do with weight. Thayers Greek Definitions defines *axios* as “weighing, having weight, having the weight of another thing of like value, worth as much.” John is not as “weighty” as Christ. He is not in the same league, he is far less important. He could not even qualify to be the slave of Christ. When Paul preached in Pisidian Antioch he said this about John, "And while John was completing his course, he kept saying, What do you suppose that I am? I am not He. But behold, one is coming after me the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie" (Acts 13:25). John denied that he was fit or competent or worthy to do the simplest act of service to the coming King. If they thought that John was a great prophet and a powerful man, they needed to see that he was insignificant compared to the mighty one who was coming.

Its interesting to read what Jesus said about John, because Jesus said that John was the greatest man in human history up to that point! Jesus said to the crowds, “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who are splendidly clothed and live in luxury are found in royal palaces! But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and one who is more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU. I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he” (Luke 7:24-28). Its amazing to think that of all the great men mentioned in scripture, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah and all the prophets, Jesus says that John is greater than all of them. He was greater because he was more than a prophet. He was the messenger of the Messiah. He was the envoy who prepared the way for Jesus. But even John was not worthy to untie the sandals of Jesus. And Jesus says that the least in the Kingdom of God is greater than John.

No one is really fit or worthy to serve or follow Jesus. Jesus stands in all human history as The Holy One, the Way, the Truth and the Life, the Bread of Life and the Water of Life, the unique Son of God. It is only by His grace that we are allowed to believe Him, to know Him and to follow Him. Whoever we are, we are far below Jesus, and we need to recognize how utterly unworthy of Him we are. It would be good for us if we would recover for ourselves this sense of our unworthiness before Christ.

John the apostle notes that “these things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.” There is another Bethany near Jerusalem, so John is careful to note which Bethany this was.

John 1:29-34

The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30 "This is He on behalf of whom I said, After me comes a Man who

has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me. 31 "I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water." 32 John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. 33 "I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit. 34 "I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God."

The day after John answered the questions of the priests and Levites, he saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Again in verse 36 he says, "Behold, the Lamb of God." Why does John call Him "the Lamb of God?" To me it seems obvious that John is pointing to Jesus as the true sacrificial Lamb who fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah 53:

Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? 2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. 3 He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. 4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. 6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. 7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth. 8 By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due? 9 His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth. 10 But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. 11 As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.

Jesus was this "lamb that is led to slaughter." He was the one who was "pierced through for our transgressions" and "crushed for our iniquities." God caused our iniquity to fall on Him. He was a guilt offering. He will justify the many because he will bear their iniquities. He "bore the sin of many."

Jesus is also the true Passover Lamb. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 5:7, "Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed." His shed blood saves us from death. Three times in

Revelation Jesus is called the Lamb who was slain (Revelation 5:6, 5:12 and 13:8). Clearly in calling Jesus the "Lamb of God" John was indicating that He would be the sacrifice that would really take away the sin of the world.

The mission of Jesus is to take away our sin. His purpose was to die in our place in order to deal with sin. When Mary was pregnant with Jesus the angel told Joseph, "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Sin is the problem with every one of us, and Christ is the solution for every one of us. Why is sin such a problem? Whats the big deal about it? Well, it has caused our death. God warned Adam and Eve that if they disobeyed Him they would die (Genesis 2:17). They did disobey Him by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and so they and we have become subject to death. Romans 5:12 says, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned." But the good news is that Christ has died for our sins and we can be forgiven and receive the gift of eternal life. In Romans 5:17-18 Paul goes on to say, "For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men." John says in 1 John 1:7, "but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin."

In verse 15 John the Baptist had said, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" Now again in verse 30 he reminds people that he said this, "This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" Jesus was coming "after" John, but was really "before" him. The successor of John was really the predecessor of John, and therefore outranked him.

John the Baptist says in verses 31 and 33, "I did not recognize Him." It is possible that John and Jesus had encountered each other before it was revealed to John that Jesus was the Messiah. Luke reveals that Mary was related to Elizabeth, the mother of John, and went to visit her when Elizabeth was pregnant (see Luke 1:36-56). In light of what John says here they may not have ever met each other. I do think that Johns parents probably told him the story of his miraculous birth and about Mary and Jesus.

Johns mission was to baptize in water as a means of manifesting Jesus to Israel. The word translated "manifested" in verse 31 is *phaneroō*, "to make visible." It was not apparent to people that Jesus was the Messiah until John made Him visible, made it apparent that He was the one. This was made apparent to John when the Spirit descended as a dove out of heaven upon Jesus. Matthews account of this event is in Matthew 3:13-17:

Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. 14 But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" 15 But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him. 16 After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, 17 and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

The Spirit descended and remained on Jesus. The Spirit did not just come and then leave again, but remained upon Jesus and stayed with Him. The Spirit was the proof of who Jesus was. God had told John that this would be the sign he should look for. As John preached the kingdom of God and called on people to repent and prepare themselves for the one who was coming and baptized them, he was always on the alert for the one on whom the Spirit would descend. Then one day Jesus arrived and the sign was given. The words of the Father also confirmed it, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." John then knew that Jesus was the Lamb of God and the Son of God.

John said, "This is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus and remained with Him, and Jesus is the one who baptizes people in the Holy Spirit. After His resurrection, Jesus met with His disciples in Jerusalem and told them not to leave the city. Acts 1:4-5 says, "Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, 'Which, He said, 'you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'" Jesus had told them about the "Helper," the Holy Spirit in John 14 and 16, and now before His ascension He tells them to wait until this "baptism" takes place. The promise of the Father would be fulfilled in a few days. Just before His ascension the disciples asked, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus replied, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:7-8). When they were baptized with the Holy Spirit they received power to be His witnesses to the entire earth. The baptism of the Holy Spirit empowers His disciples to be His witnesses. Our power and authority for this purpose comes from the Holy Spirit. The description of their baptism is in Acts chapter 2. Often we get so hung up on the fact that they "spoke in tongues" that we fail to see that the power of the Spirit that came upon them enabled them to be witnesses to the many people from many different places who were in Jerusalem at that time. The Holy Spirit does not come upon believers to merely give them the ability to speak in tongues, but for a much bigger purpose – to communicate Christ to the world. If we want the baptism of the Holy Spirit so we can speak in tongues we are aiming far too low.

John again says in verse 34, "I myself have seen," as he said in verse 32. He emphasizes the fact that he saw these things himself. Having seen, he testified that Jesus is the Son of God. Witnesses testify about what they have seen. A witness who tells about what he heard second or third-hand is not a very valuable witness. John's testimony came from personal experience. Our witness about Christ should also come from what we have experienced of Him. We need to be able to speak of what He has done for us and how He manifested Himself to us.

John 1:35-42

Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, 36 and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" 37 The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. 38 And Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?" 39 He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they came and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. 40 One of the two who heard John speak and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He found first his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which translated means Christ). 42 He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are

Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

John the Baptist had disciples. He had men who were his students who followed him around and learned from him. The day after he first pointed to Jesus as the "Lamb of God," he was standing with two of his disciples and again saw Jesus and said to them, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" One of the two was Andrew, but who was the other disciple? I think it very likely that it was John the apostle himself, recalling this moment when he became a follower of Christ. John never names himself in his gospel. He refers to himself as the "other disciple" a number of times (John 18:16, 20:2-4, 20:8), and "the disciple whom Jesus loved" in 13:23 and 21:20. John then says in 21:24, "This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true."

Andrew and John heard John and followed Jesus. Jesus was walking somewhere, and they followed after Him. This is a very simple explanation of what happens with those who come to believe in Jesus, they hear about Him and then they follow Him. These men as disciples of John believed what John said and then committed themselves to Christ.

Jesus turned and saw them following Him. They were not walking alongside Him, but behind Him. He turned and asked them, "What do you seek?" He assumed they had a purpose in following Him, so He asked them. He assumed they were looking for something from Him. Its interesting that they replied with a question of their own, "Rabbi, where are You staying?" (For his Gentile readers John translates the Hebrew word "Rabbi," explaining that it means "Teacher." Note that this is the first of three Hebrew words that John translates for us in this paragraph. He also translates "Messiah" and "Cephas.") Their question implies that they want to be with Him and stay with Him and learn from Him. They want to be His students. They want Him to teach them and be their Rabbi, their Teacher. This is what a "disciple" of Jesus wants, they want to be with Him. Mark 3:13-15 says, "And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach, and to have authority to cast out the demons." The first priority for a disciple of Jesus is simply to be with Him, and this is what Andrew and John were seeking.

I think the answer Andrew and John gave to the question of Jesus pleased Him. He said, "Come, and you will see." He invited them to come with Him. They came with Him, saw where He was staying, and stayed with Him. We add three more verbs to the progression for these two men. The first two were "they heard" and "they followed," and now we add "they came," "they saw," and "they stayed." They came, saw and stayed in response to His invitation. There is always for those who follow an invitation from Christ. He calls us to Himself. We do not come on our own, but He pursues us. He seeks and saves (Luke 19:10).

It was "about the tenth hour" of the day, and so these men stayed with Jesus. The trouble here is whether John is reckoning the "tenth hour" according to the Roman method, where the hours in the day begin at midnight, or the Jewish method where the day begins with sunrise about 6 AM. The Roman method would make the "tenth hour" 10 AM, and the Jewish method would make it 4 PM. I think the context seems to indicate that it was later in the day. They stayed with Jesus because it "was about the tenth hour." In John 11:9 Jesus is quoted as saying, "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" Clearly He means twelve hours of daylight and is following the Jewish method. The important point is that they were invited by Jesus to join Him and they stayed with Him. They would stay with Jesus for the rest of their lives. Real disciples stay with Jesus. A true and genuine faith in Christ is a durable faith that does not expire.

John identifies Andrew as “Simon Peter’s brother.” Everyone was familiar with Simon Peter. Peter became the more famous and prominent of the two brothers, but we find here that Andrew was the first to believe in Jesus, and then he found Peter and brought him to Jesus. Luke reveals that Andrew and Simon Peter were partners with John and his brother James in their fishing business (Luke 5:1-11) and were the first four disciples Jesus called to follow Him (see also Matthew 4:18-22). It is possible that John followed Andrew’s example and also went and found his brother James. Andrew said to Simon Peter, “We have found the Messiah.” The Hebrew word “Messiah” only occurs twice in the New Testament, here and in John 4:25, where the Samaritan woman says to Jesus, “I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us.” John tells us that “Messiah” means “Christ.” In English the Greek word *christos* (Christ) means “anointed.” Jesus is “the Anointed One,” the King. Andrew told Peter that they had found the Messiah. The Jews had been anticipating Him and looking for Him for centuries, and now finally Andrew says “we have found” Him!

When Andrew brought Simon to Jesus, Jesus said to him, “You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas.” The word Cephas is Aramaic, and, as John points out, the Greek word is Peter (*Petros* in the Greek text). *Petros* means a piece of rock, a stone or boulder. Jesus gave him this nickname to indicate the sort of character he was or would become. Jesus would later say to him, “I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it” (Matthew 16:18). With the other apostles, Peter would become part of the foundation of the church that Christ would build. (See also Ephesians 2:20).

John 1:43-51

The next day He purposed to go into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, “Follow Me.” 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter. 45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” 46 Nathanael said to him, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” 47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” 48 Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” 49 Nathanael answered Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.” 50 Jesus answered and said to him, “Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” 51 And He said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

Jesus went to Galilee purposefully. The path of Jesus was not haphazard, but planned. He went there to find Philip. Much of the ministry of Jesus was carried out in the region of Galilee. He found Philip and said, “Follow Me.” This is what Jesus often said to those He called to be His disciples. This is His call, that we come after Him and accompany Him. He says that we should come and learn from Him (Matthew 22:28-30). This is our purpose if we are students of Jesus.

Philip was from Bethsaida, which is at the northern end of the sea of Galilee. Andrew and Peter were also from there. Philip found Nathanael and told him about Jesus. John 21:2 reveals that Nathanael was from Cana in the Galilee area. Cana was a bit west of the sea of Galilee. Though Jesus had found Philip, Philip still says, “We have found Him of whom Moses

in the Law and also the Prophets wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” Jesus had found Philip and Philip had found Jesus. Philip had been anticipating the coming of the Messiah, and when Jesus came and found him, he believed immediately.

Philip says that Moses and the Prophets wrote of Jesus. Jesus said the same thing in Luke 24:44-47, “Now He said to them, ‘These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled. Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.’” Jesus also said in John 5:39-40, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.” And in John 5:46 He says, “For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me.” We will consider this a bit more when we get to chapter 5, but we see here that Philip was aware of what the scriptures said about the Messiah. He knew that Moses had said that there would be another prophet like him who would arise (Deuteronomy 18:15).

Philip told Nathanael that this man was Jesus from Nazareth, the son of Joseph. Nazareth was a small and insignificant town just a little south west of Cana. I think the reason Nathanael expressed skepticism about “any good thing” coming out of Nazareth is because it was so small and insignificant. It was off the main roadways, and so people did not go there unless it was where they wanted to go. We don’t tend to think that significant people come from tiny and insignificant places. When someone from a small town becomes a famous person, it becomes the most important thing about the place. We recently watched a TV program about the town of Drummond in New Brunswick, Canada where the famous Jockey Ron Turcotte is from. Ron Turcotte is the jockey who rode Secretariat to win the Triple Crown in 1973. He is celebrated in the town as the one significant person who came from there.

Rather than arguing with Nathanael about Nazareth and people from Nazareth, Philip simply said, “Come and see,” and Nathanael came with him to investigate Jesus. This is a good witnessing tactic, to challenge people to come and see for themselves, to make their own investigation into Jesus, to come meet Him for themselves. When people aren’t willing to “take our word for it,” we should challenge them to take an honest look for themselves. Most people don’t take the time or make the effort to really examine whether the claims of Christ are true. We should push them to do so. If someone expresses flat-out rejection of Christ, we should ask them on what objective basis they do so. They often will not be able to justify their position on the basis of an honest examination of the evidence. Nathanael’s assumption that nothing good could possibly come from Nazareth was faulty. Most people have faulty assumptions about Christ and Christianity.

As Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, He pointed out two characteristics of Nathanael. He said first that Nathanael was “an Israelite indeed.” Nathanael was a real Israelite, a true descendant of Israel (Jacob). When Jacob wrestled with the angel and prevailed over him, the angel asked Jacob for his name. Then the angel said, “Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed” (Genesis 32:28). The name Israel means “God strives” or “God prevails.”⁹ Nathanael was no fake Israelite, but a real one. He was not a pretender.

The second thing Jesus said about Nathanael was that there was no deceit in him. The word for “deceit” is *dolos*, meaning a decoy or bait or trick. I think the interesting thing here is that Jacob (Israel) had used deceit to steal his father’s blessing and birthright from Esau (see

9 *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance, Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Definitions*

Genesis 25:29-34 and Genesis 27). I think Jesus is saying, "Here's a true descendant of Israel without the deceit!" Nathanael had not inherited the deceitful character of Jacob. He was an honest man. His skepticism was an honest skepticism, and when he came and saw for himself, he discarded his skepticism immediately. There are skeptics who are dishonest. They will not come see for themselves, and if they are presented with evidence they will not turn from their skepticism, but will continue to cling to their assumptions. Nathanael was not dishonest, but was open to examining the evidence.

Since Jesus said something about Nathanael's character, Nathanael asked Him, "How do you know me?" Jesus had an accurate assessment of Nathanael, and it apparently amazed him. Jesus replied, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Jesus knew Nathanael because He had seen him. He had seen him before Philip called him. He had seen him when he was under the fig tree. I think there's an implication of the miraculous here. Jesus probably didn't "see" Nathanael in the physical sense, but "saw" what he was doing in a divine sense. Commentators think that Nathanael was probably praying there under the fig tree, that the fig tree was a place of prayer and meditation for Nathanael. Micah 4:4, speaking of the "last days," says, "Each of them will sit under his vine and under his fig tree, with no one to make them afraid, for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken." Zechariah 3:10 also says, "In that day, declares the LORD of hosts, 'every one of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and under his fig tree.'" It appears that fig trees were used as places to retreat or gather in peace in the shade to sit and enjoy the shade. I think Jesus knew that Nathanael was a man of genuine devotion to the Lord and not only "saw" him when he was praying under the fig tree, but knew what he was praying about. He saw his heart and soul. Jesus knew him as no one else knew him.

Nathanael was amazed by what Jesus said and immediately believed in Him. He calls Jesus three things in verse 49. He calls Him "Rabbi," or "Teacher." Jesus had just become his teacher, master and mentor. He calls Him "the Son of God" and "the King of Israel." Nathanael knew his scriptures. Psalm 2 tells us that the King God has installed on Zion, His holy mountain is His Son (Psalm 2:6-7). Nathanael says, "You are the one!" Psalm 2:12 says, "Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!" Nathanael followed this directive and "did homage" to the Son and took refuge in Him. Jesus is not just another Jewish Rabbi, but is the very Son of the living God and the King He has installed. His rule will last forever and cannot be overthrown. Nathanael was blessed to realize this.

Jesus answered Nathanael with a rhetorical question, "Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe?" Jesus hadn't had to do much to prompt Nathanael's faith; He had just said that He saw him under the fig tree before Philip called him, and Nathanael believed. Jesus promised him, "You will see greater things than these." It is people of faith who will see great things. It is those who believe who are privileged to see the glory of God. Just before calling Lazarus out of his tomb, Jesus said to Martha in John 11:40, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" Many want to see miracles before they will believe, but Jesus flips that around and says that if we believe we will see great things, we will see the glory of God. Jesus complained in John 4:48, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe." People asked Jesus, "What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform?" (John 6:30). Even Thomas, after the resurrection of Christ, refused to believe He had risen unless he saw for himself. 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" (John 20:25). After Jesus appeared to Thomas and gave him the opportunity to see Him and His wounds, Thomas declared his faith, saying "My Lord and My God!" Then Jesus said, "Because you

have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed" (John 20:29). Jesus commends faith that does not insist on seeing supernatural proof. The Lord is under no obligation to perform for us. He does not have to let us see any miracles. He does not have to submit to our conditions. He did so for Thomas because Thomas was one of His chosen and appointed apostles, and Jesus would lose none of them but the "son of perdition." Those who believe without seeing will nonetheless see great things. Faith opens our eyes to see greater things.

What "greater things" would Nathanael see? Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." This is the first of 25 times in John that Jesus uses the phrase, "Truly, truly, I say to you." The word "truly" is *amēn* in the Greek text, our word "amen." It is a Hebrew word transliterated into Greek and it means "firm" or "sure" or "verily." Saying it twice is a way of intensifying it, like saying "I really, really mean this!" What He is about to say is an absolute certainty. We should note that when Jesus says "you" here in verse 51 it is plural, so He is not just saying this to Nathanael, but to all who were with Him. All who believed in Him would see the heavens opened and the angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man.

The heavens are usually closed. We don't see heavenly things. In a quick search I find four passages in scripture that talk about the heavens being opened. The first is Ezekiel 1:1, "Now it came about in the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month, while I was by the river Chebar among the exiles, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God." The second instance is when John baptized Jesus in Matthew 3:16, "After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him." John 1:51 is the third instance, and then the fourth is when Stephen was being stoned in Acts 7:55-56, "But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.'" When the heavens are opened people are able to see what is going on there. They are able to see spiritual realities. These visions are rare and are a privilege given to those who believe in Jesus.

Probably in what Jesus says here about the "angels of God ascending and descending" on Him we are meant to think of Genesis 28:12 which says that Jacob had a dream where "a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it." Apparently Jesus was saying that He is that "ladder." He is the connection between heaven and earth and between God and humanity. When we believe in Jesus we "see" this in a figurative sense, and perhaps one day we will see it in a literal sense. We will ascend to heaven through Jesus Christ.

John 2:1-11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; 2 and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." 4 And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." 6 Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each. 7 Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." So they filled them up to the brim. 8 And He said to them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it to him. 9 When the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom, 10

and said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first, and when the people have drunk freely, then he serves the poorer wine; but you have kept the good wine until now." 11 This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.

The "third day" here is probably the third day after Jesus came to Galilee and found Philip and Nathanael. Mary, the mother of Jesus was at this wedding and Jesus and His disciples had been invited also. Cana was a little less than four miles north of Nazareth, so it wasn't far from Mary's home. The wine ran out at the wedding, which was a serious problem in those days, and Mary came to Jesus and said, "They have no wine." It seems to me that Mary was a take-charge sort of woman, a problem solver. Why she felt responsibility for this problem I don't know. Obviously her statement to Jesus was more than a simple statement of the fact. Behind the statement was the implication that Jesus could and should do something about it, and Jesus understood what she was saying. Mary knew that Jesus had been baptized by John, that He was gathering disciples and had begun His ministry, so she apparently saw this as an opportunity for Jesus to begin revealing His divine nature.

It seems obvious to me that in Mary's experience with Jesus as He grew up there must have been some glimpses of His divine nature. We know very little about the childhood of Jesus. We know that when He was twelve, after they had observed the Passover in Jerusalem He stayed behind at the temple in Jerusalem instead of going with His family back to Nazareth. When they came looking for Him and found Him in the temple, Mary asked, "Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You." He replied, "Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?" (Luke 2:48-49). Aside from this incident and the birth narratives, we have no real credible records regarding His childhood. But Mary had learned that Jesus could do miracles. She knew that Jesus could solve this problem.

Jesus replied to Mary, "Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come." In calling her "woman" instead of "Mother," He is showing her no disrespect. He will call her "woman" again in John 19:26 when, while on the cross He saw her standing nearby with John, and said to her, "Woman, behold, your son!" and to John He said, "Behold, your mother!" Then John took Mary into his care. I think in calling her "woman" Jesus was saying that He was now in control of His own life and direction. He was no longer under her authority. He was no longer obligated to do as she commanded.

When Jesus asked, "what does that have to do with us?" He is literally saying "What is it to me and to you?" AT Robertson comments, "Literally the phrase means, 'What is it to me and to thee? In this instance F.C. Burkitt (*Journal of Theol. Studies*, July, 1912) interprets it to mean, 'What is it to us? That is certainly possible and suits the next clause also.'"¹⁰ Neither Mary nor Jesus were responsible for the wine at the wedding. They weren't the caterers or the wedding coordinators.

Jesus explained to His mother, "My hour has not yet come." I think He just means that it was not yet time for Him to do such things. John 7:30 says, "So they were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come." Similarly, John 8:20 says, "These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come." Ultimately, His "hour" was when the time came for him to "depart out of this world to the Father" (John 13:1). The time would come when He would be apprehended and put to death, but it was not yet that time. Jesus was

10 Robertson, A.T., *Word Pictures In the New Testament*

aware of what the “hour” was and when it was appropriate to do certain things. It was not yet time for Him to do these kinds of things.

Mary did not argue or dispute with Jesus, but turned to the servants and said, “Whatever He says to you, do it.” There’s no record of any more discussion about this. Mary put Jesus on the spot to take care of the problem. She was confident that He would do what she wanted Him to do, and He complied. I think at this point Jesus was doing as the Law required and was honoring His mother. For her sake He would do this thing. Later He would not comply with His mother and family and would not allow them to take custody of Him (see Mark 3:20-35). Mary was the vessel through whom the “Word became flesh,” but He is still her Lord. There are times when adult children should comply with their parents as a means of honoring them, and there are times when they need to assert their independence. Parents must let go of their adult children and allow them to be responsible for themselves.

The six stone waterpots each held around 20 to 30 gallons each, so when all the waterpots were filled it amounted to between 120 and 180 gallons of water. I have no idea how much wine was required at a wedding like this, but this seems like quite a large quantity! Jesus simply told the servants to fill the waterpots, and they did so, right up to the brim. Then He told them to draw some out and take it to the headwaiter. Some commentators say that not all of this water was immediately turned to wine, but was only transformed as it was drawn out. They say that the water in the waterpots remained water until it was drawn out to be served. I suppose that’s possible. It could be like the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 when the loaves and fish were multiplied as they were served. Jesus did not take the five loaves and two fish and multiply them into a great heap of loaves and fish and then have them served. Maybe it worked the same way in this instance. It is not clear at what point the water became wine. I tend to think that all of this water became wine at once because that seems to have been Jesus intention when he told the servants to fill up the waterpots. However it happened, it was a miracle. Water turned to wine. The problem was solved.

There was a man who was the “headwaiter” or “ruler of the feast” (KJV) or “man in charge” (Contemporary English Version). This guy was probably the one most concerned with the wine supply. The servants took some of the wine to him for his approval, and he tasted it. He had no idea where it came from. The servants who had followed Jesus directions knew where it came from. He was so impressed he called the bridegroom and said, “Every man serves the good wine first, and when the people have drunk freely, then he serves the poorer wine; but you have kept the good wine until now.” Wine tasting and appreciation of good wine is apparently a very ancient thing. People could discern between a good wine and a poor wine. The custom was to serve the good stuff first, and later the poor stuff. The headwaiter says “every man” does it this way. His perception was that the bridegroom had broken with the custom. He had saved the good stuff for last. The wine that had run out was probably at least partly diluted with water. The wine Jesus created was good wine, pure wine. Not only had Jesus created a lot of wine, He had made it good wine. What Jesus does is done well. He does not put out a shoddy product. He does not do a merely adequate or passable job of things.

Turning the water into wine was the first of the “signs” Jesus performed. John uses this word 17 times in the gospel. The Greek word is *sēmeion*, a sign, a mark or indication. Remember that John 20:30-31 says that this book is a book of “signs” recorded so that we may believe in Jesus and receive life in His name. John says that this is the first of these signs. In performing this sign, Jesus made His glory visible. It is not possible for an ordinary person to turn water into wine. The divine nature and power of Christ was seen in this sign with the result that His disciples believed in Him. Didn’t they already believe in Him? If they didn’t believe in Him, then why were they following Him? They had already said, “We have

found the Messiah,” and “You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.” I don't think John means that the disciples began at this point to believe in Him, but that their faith was bolstered and reinforced. They put their trust in Him even more. Their faith was strengthened. As they saw more of these “signs,” their faith would grow even more. They would see that He can command the wind and the waves. They will see that He has authority over evil spirits. They will see that He can raise the dead. With each “sign” they will see more of His glory.

John 2:12-22

After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and His brothers and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days.

13 The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 And 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 Fathers house a place of business." 17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME." 18 The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?" 19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 The Jews then 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 So when 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.

Jesus, still with His mother and brothers, along with His disciples, went to Capernaum and stayed there for a few days. When the time came for the Passover, He went to Jerusalem. In the temple He found that it had become a marketplace, with people selling animals for the sacrifices and money changers doing their business. Jesus was so provoked that He made a scourge of cords and violently drove these merchants out of the temple along with their livestock. He flipped over the tables of the money changers and poured out their coins. He said to those selling doves, “Take these things away; stop making My Fathers house a place of business.” Probably the doves were in cages and had to be carried out by those who had them. Here again Jesus calls the temple “My Fathers house” as He had when He was 12. This is another clear claim that He is the Son of God, the Messiah. This place was His Fathers place, set aside for the worship of His Father. It was not to be made into a marketplace.

The Greek word translated “business” is *emporion* from which we get our word “emporium.” The King James version has a more literal translation, “make not my Fathers house a house of merchandise.” Marks gospel gives us more of what Jesus said on this occasion. In Mark 11:15-17 it says, “Then they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves; and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple. And He began to teach and say to them, ‘Is it not written, “MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS”? But you have made it a ROBBERS DEN.’” The New American Standard Bible uses capitalization to indicate that a passage from the Old Testament is being quoted. The first quote is from Isaiah 56:6-7 which says, “Also the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, To minister to Him, and to love the name of the

LORD, To be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath And holds fast My covenant; Even those I will bring to My holy mountain And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.” God meant for His “house” to be a “house of prayer for all the peoples.” This place was to be a place of prayer not only for Jews, but for Gentiles, peoples of other nations, the foreigners who would “join themselves to the Lord.” God wanted people from other nations to come to pray and worship Him in this place. The Jews largely forgot about this purpose of God and thought the blessings of God were exclusively for them. They forgot that God had said to Abraham, “in you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). We see this attitude in the astonishment of the Jewish believers after Peter led the Roman centurion Cornelius and his family to Christ. When Peter told the Jews in Jerusalem what had happened, they said, “Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life” (Acts 11:18).

What we need to understand at this point is that the area the Jews had turned into a marketplace was the outer courtyard of the temple, called the “Court of the Gentiles.” It was a large colonnaded courtyard that surrounded the inner temple area where people from other nations were permitted to come to worship the Lord. Only Jews were allowed into the inner temple area, but God-fearing Gentiles were allowed in this area. Not only had the Jews made this area a marketplace, but Jesus says they had also allowed it to become a “den of robbers.” This quote is from Jeremiah 7:11 where the Lord says, “Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your sight? Behold, I, even I, have seen it.” People coming to Jerusalem to worship at the temple found that if they had brought their own animals for sacrifice the priests deemed them unacceptable, and directed that they had to buy an approved animal at a high price from the merchants. People could not use the currency of their own to give to the temple, but would have to exchange it for the proper currency at a high exchange rate. The poor, who could only offer a dove for sacrifice, found that they had to buy an approved dove from the merchants. Of course this had the effect of making worship at the temple an unpleasant experience for foreigners. It was a racket and it angered Jesus. When people come to worship the Lord they should not be ripped off. The worship of the Lord should not be a commercial enterprise. Worship should not be a means of making a few people wealthy.

When Jesus did this at the temple His disciples recalled Psalm 69:9, “For zeal for Your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.” David was a man filled with zeal for the house of the Lord, and so was the Son of David, Jesus Christ. The word for “consume” means to “eat down” or “devour.” One of the reasons the Jewish leaders wanted to get rid of Jesus was because He was upsetting their racket. They had a sweet and profitable deal going on for themselves, and Jesus was a threat to them.

As the Jews often asked, on this occasion they asked, “What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?” Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:22 that it is a characteristic of the Jews to ask for signs. In the Greek text the word for “authority” does not occur here. A more literal translation is the World English Bible, “What sign do you show us, seeing that you do these things?” He was acting as if He were in charge of this place and was calling it “My Fathers house.” The priests had not given Him any authority to do these things. They were profiting from the racket and would not have authorized Him to do this. Jesus answered, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” This is the saying the false witnesses at His trial before the Sanhedrin misquoted in their accusations against Him. They said, “This man stated, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days’” (Matthew 26:61). Some who mocked Him as He hung on the cross said, “You who are going to destroy

the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matthew 27:40). Naturally, everyone thought He was talking about Herod's temple. Anyone listening to Him would understand it this way, but John points out that He was speaking of the "temple" of His body. In the future they would destroy the "temple" of His body, but in three days He would raise it up.

The resurrection of Christ is the great "sign" He has given us that proves He is the Son of God and proves that He has all authority in heaven and on earth. He later referred to this sign as "the sign of Jonah" (Matthew 12:39 and 16:4, Luke 11:29). In Matthew 12:39-41 Jesus says, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here." In the case of Jonah it appeared that he had died when the sailors threw him overboard, but then he had, in a sense, risen from the dead to go preach in Nineveh. Jesus explained, "For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation" (Luke 11:30). For those who insist on seeing a miraculous sign, we can say that the sign has already been given, the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection became the centerpiece of the witness of the apostles. Peter said, "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses" (Acts 2:32). Acts 4:33 says, "And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all." In Athens Paul said, "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31).

The Jews, thinking Jesus was speaking of Herod's temple, said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" To them His claim was laughable. It was a ridiculous thing to say. But of course He was not talking about Herod's temple, but the temple of His body. Looking back after the resurrection, John understood what Jesus meant. It is interesting that Paul says that believers are also a "temple of God" because the Holy Spirit lives in them (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). In 1 Corinthians 6:19 he says, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?" Our bodies are actually a place where God dwells by His Spirit, and we are not to profane His temple.

For the second time in this passage in verse 22 John says that the disciples "remembered" something. When Jesus was kicking the merchants out of the temple, they remembered Psalm 69:9, and after the resurrection they remembered what He had said about raising up "this temple" in three days. So they believed the Scripture and believed what Jesus had said.

I think it is likely that Jesus meant to give an answer to the question about what sign He would give to prove His authority that would obscure what He was really saying. He could have said, "Kill Me, and in three days I will rise from the dead." But instead He said what He said about the temple. Neither the Jews who asked the question nor His disciples understood at the time what He was really saying. After His resurrection they would get it. This was probably His first prediction of His death and resurrection. Later He would make it more explicit to His disciples.

John 2:23-25

Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. 24 But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, 25 and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

Though Jesus refused to perform a sign there in the temple to demonstrate His authority to those who asked for it, apparently He was performing signs as He was in Jerusalem. John does not record exactly what the signs were, probably things like healing and casting out demons. Many observed these signs and believed in His name. Many believed in Him, but He would not entrust Himself to them. The same Greek word is used for “believed” in verse 23 and “entrusting” in verse 24, *pisteuō*. This verb occurs 85 times in the gospel of John. He did not entrust Himself to them because He knew all men and knew what was in man. He did not need testimony from anyone about the nature of all men or any particular man. He knows us individually and collectively, and knows we are not worthy of trust. He knew that people would turn on Him.

John 3:1-21

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; 2 this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "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 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot 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 mothers 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 be amazed 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." 9 Nicodemus 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? 11 "Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony. 12 "If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 "No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man. 14 "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; 15 so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.

16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. 17 "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. 18 "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. 20 "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. 21 "But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

Nicodemus was an important man. He was a Pharisee, a man who was a religious conservative, zealous for the Law of Moses. Pharisees considered themselves to be

righteous and looked down on others (Luke 18:9-14). They continually criticized Jesus for a number of things they considered to be offenses, violating the Sabbath, failing to observe their traditions, associating with tax collectors and “sinners,” and so on. Jesus denounced them severely for setting aside the Law of God in order to observe their traditions (see Mark 7:1-13) and for their hypocrisy (see Matthew 23).

Nicodemus was also a “ruler of the Jews.” He was a member of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was the ruling counsel of the Jews in Jerusalem, a supreme court of sorts. On a BBC website, in an article titled “Christianity through a study of the Gospel of Mark,” it says this about the Sanhedrin:

The Sanhedrin was the supreme council of Jews which controlled civil and religious law. It had 71 members and was made up of Pharisees and Sadducees. The head of the council was the high priest, who at the time of Jesus trial was called Caiaphas. The council controlled the issues, concerns and affairs of the Jewish people in Palestine. However, they could not sentence someone to death - only the Romans had the power to do that.¹¹

Nicodemus will be mentioned two more times in John's gospel, in chapter 7, verse 50-51 and after the death of Christ in John 19:39 when he came to help Joseph of Arimathea with the burial of Christ.

Nicodemus came to Jesus at night. The consensus among commentators is that he had come to Jesus secretly because he feared his peers and what might happen if they knew he was interested in Jesus and was thinking He might be the Messiah. Though Jesus was not officially recognized as a rabbi by those who were in power, Nicodemus nonetheless calls Him “Rabbi.” He expresses what he so far knows and believes by this title and by saying, “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.” Because of the signs He performed, many followed and believed in Jesus (John 6:2 and 7:31). The Pharisees and leaders could not deny that He was doing many signs. John 9:16 says, “Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, ‘This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath. But others were saying, ‘How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs? And there was a division among them.’” Again in John 11:47 it says, “Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, ‘What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs.’” Though they could not deny that He was performing many signs, still they would not believe in Him. John 12:37 says, “But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him.” Some did believe, but they would not confess their faith because they feared the Pharisees (John 12:42-43). Nicodemus saw that Jesus was doing these signs and concluded that He had come from God and that God was with Him. He will acknowledge Jesus as a Rabbi and a teacher from God, but will not yet say that He is the Messiah and Son of God.

Since Nicodemus had recognized Jesus as a teacher, Jesus gives him one basic teaching, “Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” There are conditions to seeing the kingdom of God, and one condition is that one must be “born again.” The word translated “again” is *anōthen*, which can be translated “again” or “from above.” Here the NASB translates it “again” in verses 3 and 7, but in 3:31 and 19:11 it is translated “from above.” English translations variously render it as “born again” and “born from above.” It seems in the context that “born again” would be a more obvious understanding, though undoubtedly this type of birth is a birth that comes “from above.” It is a

11 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zh2dpg8/revision/8>

second “birth” that is given by God. It is a spiritual birth into a spiritual life. Jesus defines it here as being “born of the Spirit” in verses 5 and 6.

Nicodemus was baffled, thinking Jesus was speaking of literal physical birth, and asked how such a thing could be possible. An old man can't enter into his mother's womb a second time and be born again. Nicodemus did not see that Jesus was not talking about this kind of birth, but a different kind. He does not see that Jesus is using birth as a metaphor for belief. Jesus often does this. He pulls people into a truth by using a metaphor, as He did when He said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” Jesus could have said to Nicodemus, “Unless one believes in Me, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Faith in Christ is the means of being “born again,” as Jesus makes plain in this chapter. John has already told us this in chapter 1, verses 12 and 13, that those who receive Jesus and believe in His name become children of God and are born, “not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Jesus repeated His point to Nicodemus, again saying, “Truly, truly.” One cannot enter into the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. What does Jesus mean by being “born of water?” Some commentators think this is a reference to baptism, and go to some lengths to explain why it fits here, but I think verse 6 makes it plain that Jesus is talking about being “born of the flesh” in contrast with being “born of the Spirit.” I think to be “born of water” means the physical, fleshly birth, and “born of the Spirit” means the second, new birth. To enter the kingdom of God one must experience both births, the physical and the spiritual. Jesus then says to Nicodemus, “Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ This is not an amazing thing, but a simple and fundamental thing.

Everyone who is born of the Spirit is like the wind. Jesus says, “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.” We must note that the Greek word translated “wind” here is the same word translated “Spirit.” The word is *pneuma*, which essentially denotes “a current of air, that is breath or a breeze.”¹² The word occurs 380 times in the New Testament, and in every instance it means (and is translated) “spirit” except here. Only here in verse 8 does it clearly mean “wind.” The word for “blows” is *pneō*, and always has to do with what the wind does (see Matthew 7:25-26 for example). The point Jesus is making is that the wind does what it wants to do, and we hear it, but we don't know its origin nor its destination. We don't understand the ways of the wind. Its presence and power we can feel and observe, but we don't fully comprehend it. Similarly the ways of the Holy Spirit are unknown to us and will puzzle us, but He knows what He is doing and where He is going. Those born of the Spirit also will sometimes say and do things we don't understand, but Jesus says we are not to be amazed.

Nicodemus again asks, “How can these things be?” He can't understand how these things can be possible. He can't see how they work. The fact that something works is often not enough for people. We want to know how they work and why they work. My iPhone works and can do many marvelous things. I know a little bit about how and why it works, but there is a lot about it I don't understand and probably can't comprehend. Nonetheless I use it. Some people will not believe in a thing unless they can have the “how” question answered. They require a thorough explanation, even though they may be incapable of understanding the answer. The second birth by the Spirit is a reality even though we can't understand it. Sometimes we must believe without having all of our questions answered.

Jesus says, however, that Nicodemus, as “the teacher of Israel,” should understand these things. Albert Barnes¹³ suggests that Nicodemus should have understood what Jesus was

¹² *Strong's Greek Dictionary*

¹³ *Albert Barnes Notes on the Bible*

talking about based on passages like Ezekiel 11:19-20 and 36:26-27. Ezekiel 11:19-20 says, "And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God." And Ezekiel 36:26-27 similarly says, "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances." Nicodemus should have been expecting and teaching the fulfillment of this promise. This is what Jesus was talking about. In the new birth we are given a new heart and a new spirit, God's Spirit. Though Ezekiel does not call it being "born again," it is the same idea.

The things that Jesus was saying did not come to Him second-hand. He hadn't heard others speak of these things and then take them up Himself. He hadn't read books about these ideas and then passed them on. He was speaking of what He knew first-hand. He was testifying about what He had seen Himself. He Himself was pure Spirit who also took on flesh. He was man as man was intended to be. The trouble was that Nicodemus did not accept His testimony. The words of Jesus were incredible (not credible) to him.

In speaking of the necessity of being "born again," Jesus was talking about "earthly things." Jesus had told Nicodemus "earthly things" and he did not believe, how then could he believe Jesus if He told him heavenly things? Jesus used the earthly picture of birth to illustrate what needed to take place spiritually for a person to enter the kingdom of God, but Nicodemus could not comprehend it. The earthly pictures and illustrations Jesus gives us represent heavenly truth. Jesus could speak of "heavenly things," but God's ways are higher than our ways, and God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts (Isaiah 55:6-9). Jesus expresses truth on a human and earthly level. Jesus points out that no one has ascended into heaven, but the Son of Man has descended from heaven, and He therefore knows heavenly things. He knows what he's talking about and we should listen. We should trust what He has to say.

In verses 14 and 15 Jesus gets into the "how" of being born again. He answers the questions that Nicodemus has asked. The "Son of Man," who had descended from heaven, must be "lifted up" as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so that those who believe will have eternal life in Him. The reference to Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness comes from Numbers 21:4-9:

Then they set out from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the people became impatient because of the journey. 5 The people spoke against God and Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food." 6 The LORD sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. 7 So the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, because we have spoken against the LORD and you; intercede with the LORD, that He may remove the serpents from us." And Moses interceded for the people. 8 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live." 9 And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived.

Looking to this bronze serpent required faith. The people had to believe, if they had been bitten by a serpent, that looking to the bronze serpent would save them from death. As they trusted in this process they were saved from death. If they dismissed it as nonsense they would die. In a sense we've all been "bitten by the serpent," by Satan and the curse that has come upon us because we believed his lies. Salvation comes to us as we look to Jesus in faith.

The Son of Man must be "lifted up." This phrase occurs four times in John's gospel and clearly refers to Christ's crucifixion. In John 8:28 He says, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me." John 12:31-34 says, "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself. But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. The crowd then answered Him, 'We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, "The Son of Man must be lifted up"? Who is this Son of Man?' Even this early in His ministry, Jesus was telling Nicodemus and the others of the necessity of His crucifixion. The temple of His body would be destroyed. He would be lifted up like the serpent in the wilderness. This was necessary so that whoever believes might have eternal life. Eternal life has been made available to us because the Son of Man has been lifted up. He has died for our sins on the cross and has paid the ransom for our souls. If we believe we receive eternal life.

Before moving on, I think we should reflect on this designation "Son of Man" that Jesus uses to refer to Himself. This phrase occurs 84 times in the gospels, and every time it is Jesus who calls Himself this. It occurs once in Acts 7:56 when Stephen, as he was being stoned, said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." In the Old Testament the phrase occurs 107 times, most often when God addresses a man. In the book of Ezekiel it occurs 93 times when the Lord addresses Ezekiel as "son of man." I think the reason that Jesus took up this designation for Himself is because of the Messianic prophecy in Daniel 7:13-14, "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed." Jesus referred to this passage in Matthew 26:64 and Mark 14:62. When the high priest Caiaphas said, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God," Jesus replied, "You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN" (Matthew 26:63-64). The idea of the Son of Man sitting at the "right hand of power" probably comes from Psalm 110:1, "The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.'" Caiaphas was one of these enemies of Christ who would be made a footstool for Him. If Caiaphas knew his Bible, he would understand what Jesus was saying. He understood that Jesus was clearly saying that He was the "Son of Man" Daniel mentioned, the one who would take His seat at the Father's right hand and rule over His enemies.

It appears that among the English translations of the Bible I have, most of the translators think that the words of Jesus to Nicodemus continue through verses 16 to 21. The "red letters" (indicating the words of Christ) continue through verse 21 in most of them. I'm inclined to think that the words of Jesus to Nicodemus conclude in verse 15 and that verses 16 to 21 are John's explanation and expansion of what Jesus was saying. Both Marvin Vincent in his Word Studies In The New Testament and A. T. Robertson in Word Pictures In The New

Testament take this view. Robertson says, "The interview with Nicodemus apparently closes with John 3:15. In John 3:16-21 we have past tenses constantly as is natural for the reflection of John, but unnatural for Jesus speaking. There are phrases like the Prologue (John 3:19; John 1:9-11). "Only begotten" does not occur elsewhere in the words of Jesus, but is in John 1:14, John 1:18; 1 John 4:9. John often puts in explanatory comments (John 1:16-18; John 12:37-41)." I think at this point John wanted to give more of an explanation of what Jesus was saying, and so gives us this all-important section from verses 16 through 21.

Verse 16, of course, is probably the most famous and familiar verse in the Bible, and it probably should be. It is a clear and concise statement of the good news of Christ. It is the core of the message of Christianity. Most often we hear and see this verse on its own, isolated from the rest of John's comments. It is wise to understand it in context.

First, John tells us that God was motivated by His love. It was His love for the world of mankind that caused Him to act as He has. The word translated "world" is *kosmos*, and here it means the "world" of mankind. God loves all humanity. He loves us so much that he gave His only begotten Son. When we say that someone "so loves" something that they do something unusual or extraordinary, we are saying that they really love that thing intensely. Their behavior demonstrates the strength and intensity of their love. If I were to say, "I so love chocolate that I just spent \$1,000 at Sees Candies," that would be extraordinary and wildly extravagant. John is saying that God's love for humanity is so extravagant that He gave His only begotten Son for us.

Second, God's love moved Him to give. Real love is a thing that gives. Love is expressed in giving, and God gave the most precious thing He had, His only begotten Son. He gave Him as a sacrifice for our sins. He gave Him as the one who would be "lifted up" like the serpent in the wilderness. His love for humanity cost Him His Son. His love was expensive and difficult and sacrificial. If you love someone you give to them, you serve them, you want the best for them, and God wants the best for us.

The third thing here is God's purpose in loving us and giving His Son for us, "that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." John repeats what Jesus said in verse 15. God's aim in giving His Son for us was that we would believe in Him and have eternal life. He does not want us to perish, but He wants to give us eternal life. These are the two directions we can take in life, we can believe in Christ and receive the free gift of eternal life, or we will perish. There is no third or fourth option. There are not many paths to many destinations, but there are only two ways to go. God has made it possible in His Son for us to receive eternal life, and this is what He wants for us. If we refuse it we perish. Jesus says in Matthew 7:13-14, "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it." It is unfortunate that many are heading to destruction and few are heading to life. Paul says, "For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). There are those who have believed and are "being saved," and there are those who are perishing. There is no third category of those who will experience some other option.

God gave His Son and sent His Son into the world. This word in verse 17 for "send" is *apostellō* in the Greek, the same word we saw earlier in reference to John the Baptist who was "sent" by God. The fact that the Father sent the Son is an important emphasis by Jesus in the gospel of John. We will see that many times in John Jesus says that He was sent by the Father. He made it very clear that He had come to do "the will of Him who sent Me" (John 5:30, 6:38, 9:4). Jesus was a man under orders. He did not come to do His own thing, but the Father's thing. He came to accomplish what the Father wanted Him to do.

The mission of the Son was not to judge the world, but to save the world. Jesus clearly taught that one day when He comes in glory He will sit on His throne to judge the world and will separate the sheep from the goats (see Matthew 25:31-46), but now in His first coming His mission was salvation. He did not come to try us, find us guilty, condemn us and sentence us. He came to make it possible for us to be pardoned and acquitted. This is God's purpose in sending His Son. This is what God wants for us. He does not want to condemn us, but to save us.

The one who believes in Jesus is not judged (verse 18). Faith in Christ saves us from judgment and condemnation. In John 5:24 Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." When we believe we pass out of death into life and will not come into judgment. The picture is that we are dead by default and we must be made alive through faith in Christ. I think many have the idea that we are alive and okay with God until we do something really bad and really wicked, and then we are guilty and subject to judgment. The truth is that we are guilty sinners by nature, from conception. We are "by nature children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3). We are under the wrath of God and dead in sin by default. People do not have a "basically good" nature. Faith in Christ who is the Light of the world is the only means of avoiding judgment and condemnation.

Those who do not believe in Christ have been judged already because of their unbelief. Judgment has been pronounced against them already. Their unbelief itself condemns them. Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, and to reject Him is to reject the Father who sent Him. In that passage about the judgment in Matthew 25, Jesus says that He will separate people like a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. The sheep will be welcomed into the kingdom of God, and the goats will be cast out into the eternal fire. Those who are "goats" and decide to remain "goats" through unbelief will be cast out because they are and always have been goats. Their nature was not changed through faith in Christ. The good news is that we who are "goats" by nature can become "sheep" through faith in Christ. Those who believe in Jesus have a transformed nature. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." Faith in Christ transforms us from children of darkness to children of light and of the kingdom.

The judgment is that the Light has come into the world, but people have loved the darkness rather than the Light. This is the guilt of those who do not believe in Jesus. This is what God has against them. He has sent His Son, the Light of the world, but they have loved the darkness and prefer to remain in the darkness because their deeds are evil. John explains, "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed." I think the NASB translation at this point is a little misleading. The word "fear" does not occur in the original Greek text. The English Standard Version is more accurate, "For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed." The word for "exposed" is *elegchō*, and means "to expose, convict, reprove."¹⁴ The word occurs on John 16:8-11 when Jesus speaks of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, "And He, when He comes, will **convict** the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged." The Holy Spirit is the one who makes the world aware of its sins and offenses. He is the one who exposes and uncovers our evil deeds. Paul says that this should be the experience of an unbeliever who comes among believers. He writes in 1 Corinthians 14:24-25, "But if all prophesy, and an

unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is **convicted** by all, he is called to account by all; the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.” The word is translated “exposed” in Ephesians 5:11-14 where Paul says, “Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even **expose** them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. For this reason it says, ‘Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you.’” I doubt that there are many people who want their evil deeds exposed. No one wants their nasty and abusive words and behavior to be recorded and put on social media. People have been arrested and convicted of terrible crimes on the evidence of a viral cell phone video. This is why people avoid the light and won't come to the light. Our evil and sinful nature (the “flesh” as Paul often calls it) hates the Light. What we should love and embrace we hate and avoid. We have a responsibility to come to the Light, but most refuse to do so and prefer to remain in the darkness. This is why an evangelistic strategy based on inviting people to church is not going to be very effective. Those who know Christ must go to the sinners rather than expecting the sinners to come to us.

The one who comes to the Light is the one who “practices the truth,” and whose deeds have been “wrought in God.” John again uses this phrase about “practicing the truth” in 1 John 1:6-7, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.” In 2 John and 3 John he talks about “walking in the truth.” 2 John 1:4 says, “I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father.” And 3 John 1:3-4 says, “For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth. I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.” The truth is not just something we know and believe, but it is also something we are to practice, it is something we do. Those who will not come to the Light and come to Christ are walking in falsehood and darkness. They are not willing to face the truth about themselves and the Lord. They are not willing to admit the truth that they are lost and dead in sin. They will not admit that their deeds are evil and they need to repent. But those who come to Christ see the truth and do it. They turn from their evil deeds to find forgiveness and salvation in Christ. This is the work of God in their lives. God brings them to this point. Coming to the Light and believing in Jesus is something that is worked in us by God Himself.

John 3:22-36

After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He was spending time with them and baptizing. 23 John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and people were coming and were being baptized— 24 for John had not yet been thrown into prison. 25 Therefore there arose a discussion on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purification. 26 And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified, behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him." 27 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 testimony 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 will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Judea was the southwestern part of Israel that included Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Jericho and extended to the south and west to the Mediterranean. After spending time in Jerusalem for the Passover and after His talk with Nicodemus, Jesus spent more time in the land of Judea. He was spending time with His disciples and baptizing, though John 4:2 clarifies that it was the disciples who were baptizing and not Jesus Himself. Meanwhile, John the Baptist continued his ministry in a place called "Aenon near Salim." Apparently it is not certain where this place was. Wherever it was, it was a place with plenty of water for baptizing, and people continued to come to John to be baptized. He was able to do this because he had not yet been thrown into prison. Luke tells us why John was put in prison in Luke 3:19-20, "But when Herod the tetrarch was reprimanded by him because of Herodias, his brothers wife, and because of all the wicked things which Herod had done, Herod also added this to them all: he locked John up in prison." John did not retire from his ministry of baptizing and calling people to repentance after Jesus came on the scene, but he continued as a witness to Christ. He still had a role to play.

While John was baptizing in this place his disciples got into a "discussion" with a Jew about purification. The word "discussion" is a pretty mild translation of the Greek word *zētēsis*. The word means a searching, a seeking, questioning. Other English versions translate it as "argument," "controversy," "dispute" and "questioning." Probably this question about "purification" had to do with John's baptism as compared with Jesus' baptism. We see this in the context because the disciples of John came to him as a result of this and said, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified, behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him." Perhaps the Jew who stirred up the controversy was saying that John's baptism had been superseded by that of Jesus, and no longer had the power of purification. If Jesus really was the Son of God and Messiah, then why should people come to John any longer to confess their sins and be purified? I think this may have been the core of the issue.

John's disciples appear to have been bothered by the fact that now Jesus was doing the same thing that John had been doing, and everybody was coming to see Jesus rather than coming to John. It appeared to them that Jesus had usurped the ministry of John. They had a comparative and competitive spirit. They acknowledged the fact that John had "testified" to Jesus, but still they felt displaced. We do tend to have these feelings when someone else comes along who becomes more popular with people while doing the same thing we are doing. We don't like competitors moving into our established territory. When a new church is planted in a community built around a gifted and powerful preacher and everyone starts attending that church, it can lead to resentment from members of other long established churches. So John's disciples essentially say, "Hey! he's taking business away from us!"

In his answer John shows that he clearly understands his place and his role. Whatever John had was given to him from heaven, and whatever Jesus had was also given Him from heaven. John had his place, and Jesus had His. John was who he was and Jesus was who He was because of the purpose of God. John reminded his disciples of what they had heard him say. He had said, "I am not the Christ," but, "I have been sent ahead of Him." He testified

that Jesus was the Christ and he was not. John was “sent ahead” of Christ, yes, but that does not mean he was superior to Christ or that he should be preferred before Christ or that he should be more successful than Christ. He was sent ahead of Christ to prepare the way for Christ. John had not come to create the cult of John the Baptist, but to point people to Christ.

Jesus is the bridegroom and John is the friend of the bridegroom. It is the bridegroom who has the bride, but his friend rejoices to hear the voice of the bridegroom. John is the groomsman, the “best man” we would say. He stands beside the groom and is happy that his friend is getting married. Jesus also referred to Himself as the “bridegroom” in Mark 2:18-20, “Johns disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they came and said to Him, ‘Why do Johns disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast? And Jesus said to them, ‘While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.’” The bride is the church, those who believe in Jesus. Believers are “betrothed” to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2). Paul also depicts the church as the bride of Christ in Ephesians 5:22-32. Believers are committed to Christ and not to John the Baptist. The fact that Christ had come on the scene and that now everyone was going to Him was not a source of grief to John, but a source of joy. His joy was “made full” by this development. This is what was supposed to happen. His role was to help make this happen, not to try to prevent it. He was to send people to Jesus and not to try to keep them from Him. It was imperative that Jesus should increase and that John should decrease. More literally verse 30 says “He must keep on growing, I must keep on decreasing.”

In addition to being the bridegroom, Jesus is also “He who comes from above” who is “above all” (verse 31). John is the one who is “of the earth” and is “from the earth and speaks of the earth.” He repeats that “He who comes from heaven is above all.” Jesus is in no sense “below” John, but is above John and everyone else because He is from above and from heaven.

John repeats what Jesus said to Nicodemus in verse 32, “What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony.” Jesus had said in verses 11-12, “Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony. If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?” Jesus speaks of heavenly things. He was sent by God and speaks “the words of God” (verse 34) because He has been given the Spirit of God without measure and without limit. Jesus does not have just a measure or portion of the Spirit, but has the fullness of the Spirit. When Jesus speaks and testifies, He says exactly what the Father would say. His words come from the Father. The trouble is that, as John says, “no one receives His testimony.” He does not mean literally no one received what Jesus had to say, but that the majority rejected His testimony. He allows in verse 33 that there are some who do receive His testimony. For the most part, His own people rejected Jesus and would not accept what He had to say. Those who do receive the testimony of Jesus set their seals to the fact that God is true. The word translated “set his seal” is *sphragizō*, “to set a seal upon, mark with a seal, to seal.”¹⁵ John uses the word one other time in John 6:27, “Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.” Those who accept the testimony of Jesus put their stamp of approval on the truth of God. They are saying, “I believe what Jesus says is truth from God.” Jesus speaks the truth of God and if we reject His word, we do not

approve the very truth of God. Most people are actually doing this. They are disapproving of God's truth. They are accepting the contradictions of Satan rather than the truth of God.

Since Jesus comes from above He is above all, and since the Father loves the Son He has "given all things into His hand." John 13:3 says that Jesus knew that "the Father had given all things into His hands, and that he had come forth from God and was going back to God." In Matthew 11:27 Jesus says, "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." Jesus has been given the name that is above every name, and at His name every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:9-11). Whether we believe it and acknowledge it or not, we are all subject to Jesus Christ. He is the Lord whether we like it or not. It is foolish to refuse to believe in Him and listen to what He has to say.

John the Baptist then concludes, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." He underscores to his disciples the how crucial it is that people should believe in the Son of God. The one who believes in the Son of God has eternal life. The word "has" is present-tense, he has it right now, not will have it in the future. Eternal life is the present possession of those who are trusting in Jesus Christ. The word *apeitheō* is translated "does not obey" here. The word comes from *apeithēs*, meaning to be "unpersuadable." Thayers Greek Definitions says it means "not to allow ones self to be persuaded, to refuse or withhold belief, to refuse belief and obedience, not to comply with." Faith and obedience go hand-in-hand, as do unbelief and disobedience. And just as eternal life is a present-tense possession of those who believe, the wrath of God is a present-tense reality for those who refuse to believe. The wrath of God is abiding right now on those who do not believe. Unbelievers are under the wrath of God right now. Of course, both eternal life for believers and the wrath of God for unbelievers will have a full realization in the future, but both are a reality as well here and now.

John the Baptist was important as the forerunner of and witness to Jesus Christ, but Jesus is the all-important one. John would not try to compete with Jesus for attention. He would step aside. He would promote Jesus and not himself. We must do the same.

John 4:1-30

Therefore when 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 went away 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 Jacobs well was there. So Jesus, 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 Therefore the Samaritan woman 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.) 10 Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, Give Me a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." 11 She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? 12 "You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?" 13 Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." 15 The

woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw." 16 He said to her, "Go, call your husband and come here." 17 The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have correctly said, I have no husband; 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly." 19 The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20 "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22 "You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will 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 who speak to you am He."

27 At this point His disciples came, and they were amazed that He had been speaking with a woman, yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why do You speak with her?" 28 So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city and said to the men, 29 "Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?" 30 They went out of the city, and were coming to Him.

Jesus had already stirred up the hostility of the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem when He cleansed the temple, so when the Pharisees heard that Jesus was in Judea and was "making and baptizing more disciples than John," they probably were very displeased that He was becoming more popular and well known. They had been disturbed by John, and now Jesus was surpassing John in popularity. Jesus was increasing and John was decreasing. Jesus was drawing more followers and students than John. This was His purpose, and making disciples, baptizing them and teaching them is the task He gave to His disciples in Matthew 28:18-20. Verse 2 tells us parenthetically that it was not actually Jesus who was doing the baptizing, but it was His disciples.

Jesus knew that the Pharisees had heard what was going on and so He decided to leave Judea and go to Galilee. It was not yet time for Him to allow them to take Him into custody. He had much more to do before it was time to go to the cross.

The region of Samaria is between Judea and Galilee, and the shortest route between the two was through Samaria. Because of the animosity between Jews and Samaritans, the Jews sometimes went around Samaria to the east in order to avoid the Samaritans. Luke gives us an illustration of this hostility in Luke 9:51-56:

When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem; 52 and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him. 53 But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem. 54 When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" 55 But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; 56 for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."] And they went on to another village.

In Samaria Jesus stopped at a city called Sychar, which is described as being “near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.” This was apparently the piece of property that Jacob had bought from the “sons of Hamor, Shechem’s father” for 100 pieces of money as described in Genesis 33:18-20. This is the place where Joseph was later buried. Joshua 24:32 says, “Now they buried the bones of Joseph, which the sons of Israel brought up from Egypt, at Shechem, in the piece of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of money; and they became the inheritance of Josephs sons.” If the time, the “sixth hour,” is to be understood as the Jewish reckoning of time, it was about mid day, and time for a meal, and so the disciples went into town to buy food. Jesus was weary and sat by Jacobs well. They may have been traveling since early in the morning. Jesus was not exempt from weariness. He needed rest like any other human. Exertion made Him tired as it would anyone.

A Samaritan woman came to the well to draw water. It appears from scripture that drawing water was primarily the job of women (see Genesis 24:11-13 and Exodus 2:16). Jesus said to her, “Give Me a drink,” and the explanation for this in verse 8 is “For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.” Jesus was there alone with this woman with no way to get water for Himself, as she points out in verse 11. If He wanted a drink at that point, He had to get it from her. Of course, He could have supernaturally produced or obtained water for Himself, being the Son of God, but He gave her the opportunity to serve Him, and used this as a springboard for the discussion about true “living” water that He could give her.

The Samaritan woman was apparently amazed that Jesus spoke to her. She said, “How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?” Then John parenthetically remarks, “For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.” At this point we must discover the reasons for this animosity. Here’s what Albert Barnes has to say about the Samaritans:

The Samaritans occupied the country formerly belonging to the tribe of Ephraim and the half-tribe of Manasseh. This region was situated between Jerusalem and Galilee; so that in passing from the one to the other, it was a direct course to pass through Samaria. The capital of the country was Samaria, formerly a large and splendid city. It was situated about 15 miles to the northwest of the city of Shechem or Sychar (see the notes at John 4:5), and about 40 miles to the north of Jerusalem. For a description of this city, see the notes at Isaiah 28:1. Sychar or Shechem was also a city within the limits of Samaria.

This people was formerly composed of a few of the ten tribes and a mixture of foreigners. When the ten tribes were carried away into captivity to Babylon, the King of Assyria sent people from Cutha, Ava, Hamath, and Sepharvaim to inhabit their country, 2 Kings 17:24; Ezra 4:2-11. These people at first worshiped the idols of their own nations; but, being troubled with lions, which had increased greatly while the country remained uninhabited, they supposed it was because they had not honored the God of the country. A Jewish priest was therefore sent to them from Babylon to instruct them in the Jewish religion. They were instructed partially from the books of Moses, but still retained many of their old rites and idolatrous customs, and embraced a religion made up of Judaism and idolatry, 2 Kings 17:26-28.

The grounds of difference between the two nations were the following:

1. The Jews, after their return from Babylon, set about rebuilding their temple. The Samaritans offered to aid them. The Jews, however, perceiving that it was not from a love of true religion, but that they might obtain a part of the favors granted to the Jews by Cyrus, rejected their offer. The consequence was, that a state of long and bitter animosity arose between them and the Jews.

2. While Nehemiah was engaged in building the walls of Jerusalem, the Samaritans used every art to thwart him in his undertaking, Nehemiah 6:1-14.

3. The Samaritans at length obtained leave of the Persian monarch to build a temple for themselves. This was erected on "Mount Gerizim," and they strenuously contended that that was the place designated by Moses as the place where the nation should worship. Sanballat, the leader of the Samaritans, constituted his son-in-law, Manasses, high priest. The religion of the Samaritans thus became perpetuated, and an irreconcilable hatred arose between them and the Jews. See the notes at John 4:20.

4. Afterward Samaria became a place of resort for all the outlaws of Judea. They received willingly all the Jewish criminals and refugees from justice. The violators of the Jewish laws, and those who had been excommunicated, betook themselves for safety to Samaria, and greatly increased their numbers and the hatred which subsisted between the two nations.

5. The Samaritans received only the five books of Moses, and rejected the writings of the prophets and all the Jewish traditions. From these causes arose an irreconcilable difference between them, so that the Jews regarded them as the worst of the human race John 8:48, and had no dealings with them, John 4:9.

Our Saviour, however, preached the gospel to them afterward John 4:6-26, and the apostles imitated his example, Acts 8:25. The gospel was, however, first preached to the Jews.¹⁶

The Samaritan woman expected that Jesus as a Jew would and should just ignore her and shun her. When He spoke to her, she was amazed. Not only was she a Samaritan, but she was also a woman, and apparently an immoral woman as well. To her it was completely out of character for a Jewish man to have anything to do with her.

Jesus responded to her question by saying, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.'" Once again Jesus uses an earthly picture to communicate a heavenly truth. There were things this woman did not know. She did not know the gift of God. She did not know how fortunate and privileged she was to have encountered Him at this point. It was God's gift to her that He was there with her. She did not know who it was who was speaking to her. She didn't know that the one who was asking her for a drink was the Son of God, the Savior and the Messiah. If she had known these things she would have behaved differently. Instead of being put off or irritated by Him, she would have been excited to encounter Him. Instead of being asked by Him for a drink, she would have asked Him for "living water" and He would have given it to her. When we see and understand who Jesus really is, then we

must come to Him and ask of Him. He wants to give us this “living water,” but we must come and ask. James says, “You do not have because you do not ask” (James 4:2b). Jesus encouraged the disciples by saying, “Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full” (John 16:23-24). The Lord is a giver, and He longs to give us the things we need the most, but we often are too proud and self-reliant to come to Him and ask. He would give us the best, but we want something far less. In fact we often seem to prefer those things that are vain and worthless. Once our ignorance of Him has been set aside, we should pursue Him and constantly ask of Him.

The woman of course did not understand that Jesus was not talking about physical earthly water, but was talking about the “water” of eternal life. She noted that He had nothing with which to draw water and that the well was deep. He had no way of accessing the water of the well. She asked, “Where do You get that living water?” It was their father Jacob who dug the well and gave it to them, Jacob who became Israel, the father of all the Israelites. She asks, “You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You?” Jacob had given them this water, how could Jesus give her water? How could He possibly be greater than Jacob?

In His reply Jesus pointed out that He was talking about a different sort of water. He contrasts “this water” with “the water that I will give him.” The water of the well was a daily necessity; they had to keep coming back every day to get the water they needed. If they drank from it one day they would be thirsty again the next day. The word “drinks” in verses 13 and 14 is the Greek word *pinō*, to drink. In verse 13 the word is a present tense active mood participle, meaning “to keep on drinking.” In verse 14 the word is a second aorist active verb, meaning “drinking once for all.”¹⁷ It is necessary to drink and keep on drinking earthly water, but the “water” Jesus gives can be drunk once, and then there will be no more thirst. The single drink is sufficient. This is because the water Jesus gives becomes for the drinker “a well of water springing up to eternal life.” The word for “well” is *pēgē*, meaning “a spring.” It can mean a well or source of water, but the word mainly carries the idea of a spring, fountain or flow of water. The English Standard Version translates verse 14, “but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” The one who drinks of the water Jesus gives will have his own internal spring that brings eternal life. Jesus uses the same picture and gives more of an explanation of what He means in John 7:37-39, “Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, “From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.”’ 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 explains that Jesus was speaking of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the “spring.” He is the internal source of the water that brings eternal life, and believing in Him is the means of drinking of this water. Those who believe receive the Holy Spirit, who is the life of Christ in us. Our true “thirst” is satisfied through faith in Christ. Physical water sustains physical life, but the water of the Holy Spirit sustains eternal life.

The woman responded, “Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw.” I wish I knew her tone of voice and expression when she said this. Was she humoring Him? Did she think He was kidding her? Did she think He was crazy? Or was she really interested and sincere? We can’t really know. I don’t think she was fully convinced that He could do such a thing or that He was anyone special. By saying what He had about giving her living water He had implied that He was, indeed, greater than Jacob. He could give

her a better kind of water if she asked. If we take this as a sincere request, then she was maybe beginning to buy into the idea that He could give her a kind of water that would exempt her from thirst and the necessity of coming to the well. She implies that coming to the well was a chore and drudgery she would like to escape. She would love it if she no longer had to keep coming to the well. Indoor plumbing and running water in our homes is a wonderful thing that we take for granted!

Now Jesus in verses 16 through 18 proves to her that He is someone special, and that He knows all about her. He says, "Go, call your husband and come here." The woman answered, "I have no husband." Jesus says that she had said this "correctly." The word is *kalōs* and means "well," or "beautifully, finely, excellently."¹⁸ In verse 18 He says, "this you have said truly." What she had said was correct and true. At that time she had no husband. What was also true was that she had had five husbands in the past, and now she was in a relationship with a man who was not her husband. Without calling her an adulteress He revealed that this is what she was. He uncovered her sin without being harsh about it. He revealed to her that He knew her intimately. He knew her secrets, and He knows our secrets. He knew specifics about her life and behavior. Now she is able to see that He is a prophet.

This is the sort of things that prophets do, they reveal what is hidden. They uncover secrets. When Paul talks about the spiritual gift of prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14:24-25, he says, "But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you." God reveals the truth about individuals to prophets so that they can confront the sin in others and get them to turn from their sin to the Lord.

Having had her sins exposed, does the woman fall on her knees and ask how she can be forgiven? No, rather she changes the subject. The conversation has become too personal and uncomfortable. She shifts the topic from herself to one of the major points of contention between the Jews and Samaritans. She says, "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." The mountain was Mount Gerizim, mentioned in Deuteronomy 11:29 as the mountain where the blessings of the Lord should be placed, "It shall come about, when the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, that you shall place the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal." This ceremony was carried out after the people had entered the land as described in Joshua 8:30-35:

Then Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, in Mount Ebal, 31 just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the sons of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of uncut stones on which no man had wielded an iron tool; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings. 32 He wrote there on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written, in the presence of the sons of Israel. 33 All Israel with their elders and officers and their judges were standing on both sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, the stranger as well as the native. Half of them stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had given command at first to bless the people of Israel. 34 Then afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the book of the law. 35 There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which

Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel with the women and the little ones and the strangers who were living among them.

The Samaritans concluded since this place was the place where God's blessings were proclaimed, and since an altar had been built there, it was the place where people should worship. The well where Jesus and the woman were was right there near these two mountains. Since the Samaritans rejected the rest of the Old Testament after the five books of Moses, they did not recognize Jerusalem as the place where people should worship the Lord. After Solomon finished the construction of the temple in Jerusalem the Lord said, "I have heard your prayer and your supplication, which you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built by putting My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually" (1 Kings 9:3). So the Lord did establish Jerusalem and the temple there as the place where the nations were to come to worship Him.

Its possible, I suppose, that this woman sincerely wanted to get the answer to this important question about where to worship. Since she now realized that Jesus was a prophet, she thought that He could clear up this question for her. Who was right about this, the Samaritans or the Jews? Which group had the truth?

Jesus replied that a time was coming when it would not matter where one was to worship the Father. It would be "neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem." Worship would be liberated from location. We do not need a special designated place to worship the Father. Yes, God had chosen the temple in Jerusalem as the place where His name would be placed. It was the place that was "a house of prayer for all the peoples" (Isaiah 56:7). But in 70 AD Jerusalem was overrun by the Romans and the temple was destroyed. The time came when it was not possible to worship in Jerusalem any longer, at least not at the temple.

The Samaritans were ignorant in their worship. They did not really know the God they worshiped, but the Jews worshiped what they knew. They knew God because God had chosen them as His people. He had chosen Jacob and his descendants as the nation through which He would save the world. It is through the Jews that the Messiah came. This woman and the Samaritans needed to recognize this truth, that the Jews had it right theologically. The Jews did not need to concede to the Samaritans, but the Samaritans to the Jews. Many will not be saved because they hate the Jews. Many feel that if it comes from the Jews it must be rejected. Many see Judaism and Christianity as a little regional religion that is only applicable to a small ethnic group. But salvation is for all who believe from every nation.

The time had come for true worshipers to worship in spirit and in truth. A true worshiper worships in spirit and truth and it does not matter where he is. The fact is that there is too much fake worship. Much that is called "worship" these days is not really worship. The Lord complains about this in Isaiah 29:13-14, "Then the Lord said, 'Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote, Therefore behold, I will once again deal marvelously with this people, wondrously marvelous; And the wisdom of their wise men will perish, And the discernment of their discerning men will be concealed.'" Jesus quoted this passage in Matthew 15:7-9, "You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men." Fake worship is all external rote routine, saying certain words, singing certain songs, going through religious motions, without ones heart really being in it. If our hearts are far from the Lord we cannot really worship Him. True worshipers have a real and spiritual connection with the Father. His Spirit lives in them, and they have fellowship with Him. They truly know Him. Their worship is true worship, sincere worship. This is what the Father is looking for. he's looking for people whose hearts

are His. Worship must be in spirit and in truth because God is spirit. His essential nature is spirit, pure spirit. Yes, there are physical things we do in worship, but our hearts and spirits must be in it.

The woman then said, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us." Though she was a Samaritan, yet she knew and expected that the Messiah was coming. The books of Moses point to the coming of the Messiah in passages like Genesis 3:15, Genesis 49:10, Numbers 24:17 and Deuteronomy 18:15. She expected that when He came He would "declare all things to us." He would clear up all the questions and reveal the real truth. He would be the one with the answers. Jesus answered her, "I who speak to you am He." He was the one she was looking for and expecting. He was the one who could answer the questions. He affirmed that He was the Messiah, the Christ. He never denied that He was the Messiah, as John the Baptist had. He stated plainly that He was the Messiah. He spoke like the Messiah and acted like the Messiah. When He drove the merchants out of the temple and called it "My Father's house," He was plainly acting like He owned the place.

The disciples then arrived with the food they had bought, and were "amazed that He had been speaking with a woman." Jesus had violated their conventions. He had stepped over social boundaries by speaking with this woman. He was not behaving as they expected Him to behave. They thought He should have shunned this woman as they would have. But they were afraid to ask Him about this. They would not try to hold Him to account or rebuke Him for this perceived error. Jesus often surprised His disciples by doing and saying things that were outside their comfort zone. He often didn't do things the way they thought He should. Jesus stepped over social boundaries. He reached out to people who were thought to be out of bounds by His Jewish friends. Now he's going to spend a couple of days with some Samaritans. I'm sure this made the disciples rather uncomfortable.

The woman left her waterpot and went into the city. I think this indicates two things. First, she was in a hurry, and carrying her full waterpot would have slowed her down considerably. Second, she intended to come back. She was quick to follow Jesus' instructions. She said to the men, "Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?" This woman had a hearing among the men, and perhaps had a reputation among them as well. Jesus had revealed that He knew all about her, and she evidently was then convinced that He was the Christ. But her question to the men presents it as a possibility. They listened to her and came out the city to see for themselves if this man might be the Christ.

John 4:31-45

Meanwhile the disciples were urging Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." 32 But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." 33 So the disciples were saying to one another, "No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?" 34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work. 35 "Do you not say, There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. 36 "Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. 37 "For in this case the saying is true, One sows and another reaps. 38 "I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labor." 39 From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all the things that I have done." 40 So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. 41 Many more believed because of His word; 42 and they were saying to the woman, "It is no longer

because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world."

43 After the two days He went forth from there into Galilee. 44 For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country. 45 So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they themselves also went to the feast.

The disciples had come back with the food they had bought and were probably sitting down to eat, but Jesus was not joining in with them, so they urged Him to eat. He replied, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." He had talked with the woman about a different kind of water that He could give, and now He talks about a different kind of food that He had to eat, food the disciples knew nothing about. Of course the disciples assumed He was talking about the natural sense of physical food, and wondered if someone else might have brought Him some food. Jesus explained it to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work." The thing that nourished and sustained Him was doing the will of His Father who sent Him. It was the Father's will and the Father's work that Jesus had been sent to accomplish. Doing the will of the Father was the means of accomplishing the work of the Father. The word for "accomplish" is *teleioō*, to bring to completion. In John 5:36 Jesus says, "But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish - the very works that I do - testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me." Jesus had been given certain works that He had to bring to completion. As He prayed in John 17:4 He said, "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do." Finally, while on the cross we are told that Jesus knew that all things had been accomplished and said "It is finished" after receiving the drink of vinegar (John 19:28-30). On the cross in His death He accomplished and completed the will of the Father. Jesus was able to honestly say that He had completed the work His Father had given Him. He left nothing unfinished that the Father wanted Him to do. Too often I have unfinished projects, but Jesus completed everything. We also have been "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). May our "food" also be doing the will of the Lord and accomplishing His work!

In verse 35 Jesus draws a contrast between what "you say" and what "I say." They said, "There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest." The crops had been planted, the seed had been sown, but they had to wait for another four months before the crops could be harvested. The time for reaping had not yet come. But Jesus said, "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest." Here's another metaphor, another earthly picture with a spiritual and heavenly meaning. The Samaritans were coming out to meet Jesus, and He urged the disciples to look on this "harvest" of souls that was upon them. The one who reaps was already receiving wages and was already "gathering fruit for life eternal." The seed had just been sown and the harvest was already being gathered. The sower and reaper could rejoice together because of the abundant and successful crop. One person has the job of sowing and another has the job of reaping, and Jesus says to the disciples that He has sent them to reap the harvest. They had not had to sow. They had not had to labor to produce this harvest. He says, "others have labored and you have entered into their labor." The disciples were beneficiaries of the work of others.

We find this same picture of sowing seed and reaping a harvest in the parable of the sower and the parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13. The seed sown is "the word of the kingdom," it is the message of the good news of Christ (Matthew 13:19). The good

seed is sown by the Son of Man and produces the crop which is the “sons of the kingdom.” The harvest comes at the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. The “tares,” which represent the sons of the evil one, will be separated from the wheat and burned, but the wheat, the sons of the kingdom, will be gathered into God's kingdom (see Matthew 13:37-43). Peter also uses this picture in 1 Peter 1:22-25, “Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. For, ‘ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER. And this is the word which was preached to you.” The message of the good news of Christ is the seed that causes us to be born again if we receive it and believe it. Jesus had sown the seed in the heart of the Samaritan woman, and she took it to the men of the city and invited them to come see for themselves. They came and would now hear the good news for themselves. The Lord would reap a harvest among the Samaritans as they came to Him and believed in Him.

Many of the Samaritans from Sychar believed in Jesus because of the testimony of the woman. She had simply said, “He told me all the things that I have done,” and had invited them to come meet Him for themselves. Our testimony does not have to be long, complicated and dramatic. We don't have to preach for hours on end. We can simply talk about how Jesus Christ has transformed our lives and saved us from our sins, and that He can do the same for others. He calls us to Himself and through us calls others.

The Samaritans asked Him to stay with them, and He did so, staying there two days among them, and “many more believed because of His word.” Many believed because of the word of the woman, but many more believed because of His word. It was not because of what He did that they believed, but because of what He said. His words were words of truth and power. Those who had believed because of the woman switched the basis of their faith from her word to His. They said to her, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world.” They had listened to her and had come to meet Jesus, and then they listened to Him and their faith was confirmed. John does not say that Jesus did any “signs” among the Samaritans. He may have, but John does not tell us about them. The only miraculous thing was that He knew all about the woman. Maybe as He spoke to them He revealed more secrets of more hearts and conviction had fallen upon them. Through what He said they became convinced that He was the Savior.

We must listen to Jesus. When Jesus, Peter, James and John were on the “Mount of Transfiguration” with Moses and Elijah, the Father spoke and said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!” (Matthew 17:5). Moses and Elijah were impressive, but the Father says, “Listen to My Son!” There are millions of voices contending for our attention, but only one Savior and Son of God. Following Christ means listening to Him, believing in Him and in what He says, and obeying what He commands. More than anyone else, He should have our attention.

From Samaria Jesus proceeded into Galilee. John explains, “For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country.” Mark tells us that when Jesus went to His hometown of Nazareth, the people took offense at Him because they knew Him and His family. Jesus said, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household” (Mark 6:4). We find this same quote also in Matthew 13:57 and Luke 4:24. We might wonder why Jesus went to Galilee if there was no honor for Him there? We should recall that Jesus had been making and baptizing disciples in Judea up to this point. Many were coming to Him and He was becoming well known and popular, and

His opponents were getting agitated (John 4:1-3). Therefore it was time to go back to Galilee and minister there again, though in His hometown He had been rejected. When He got to Galilee, the people there received and welcomed Him because they had seen “the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast.” They had been among those described in John 2:23, “Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing.”

John 4:46-54

Therefore He came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. 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 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. Then they said 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.

Jesus came again to Cana, and John reminds us that this is the place of His first “sign” when He made the water into wine. Now it will also be the place of His second “sign” described here.

The man who came to Jesus there was “a royal official.” The Greek word is *basilikos*, a “royal,” a “nobleman,” one who belongs to a king. Commentators say he was probably connected with Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee.¹⁹ It may have been Chuza, who is mentioned in Luke 8:3 as “Herod’s steward,” or perhaps Manaen, “who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch” (Acts 13:1) and was later part of the church in Antioch. The word had spread that Jesus had come to Galilee and was in Cana, and this official heard about it, so he came to Him because his son was sick and at the point of death. He implored (or begged) Jesus to come to Capernaum and heal his son. The International Standard Version says he “asked Him repeatedly to come down and heal his son.” He was desperate and kept after Jesus so his son could be healed. He thought that surely Jesus would have to come to Capernaum to his son in order to heal him. He had no idea that Jesus could speak the word and give the order and heal his son from a distance. This contrasts with the faith of the Roman centurion, who said, as Jesus was on the way to his house to heal his slave, “Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof; for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man placed under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, Go! and he goes, and to another, Come! and he comes, and to my slave, Do this! and he does it.” When Jesus heard the words of the centurion, He marveled at him and said, “I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith.” (See Luke 7:1-10.)

Jesus said, not only to the man, but also to the others there, “Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe.” (The words “people” and “simply” have been added by the translators of the NASB.) The problem with these people was that they would not believe apart from seeing signs and wonders. The Samaritans believed because they heard His word,

¹⁹ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible; Word Pictures in the New Testament, A.T. Robertson

but the Jews wanted to see signs. Probably there were people with Jesus who wanted to go with Him to Capernaum to witness this sign that He would perform there. They wanted to see if He could do this. But Jesus was not there to perform for people. He was not there to entertain them with spectacular miracles. Yes, He did spectacular miracles and signs in order that people might believe, but it was stubborn unbelief that made people insist on seeing signs. They should have believed without seeing signs, as had the centurion and the Samaritans.

The royal official was desperate and emphatic. He said, "Sir, come down before my child dies." Not only did he think that Jesus had to come and be there in person to heal his son, but he also thought that Jesus had to do this before his son died. Jesus will show us in chapter 11 that He can even raise people from the dead after they have been in the tomb for four days! The centurion understood that Jesus just had to issue the order and his servant would be healed from a distance, but this man's faith was limited. Jesus then said, "Go; your son lives." He had issued the order and healed his son without even making a move toward Capernaum. He corrected the man's erroneous assumptions. Jesus essentially said, "I don't have to come to Capernaum. I have already granted your request and healed your son." The man, to his credit, believed what Jesus said and set off to Capernaum himself. He did not ask how he could be sure his son was healed, and did not argue with Jesus, but trusted that Jesus had spoken the truth. He believed and acted. Confidence in what Jesus says yields obedience to His word. When we believe what He says we follow His directions. The man left for Capernaum in obedient faith.

On the way back to Capernaum some slaves of the royal official met him and told him that his son was alive and had recovered. They told him the same thing that Jesus had said. Probably they were on the way to fetch him and tell him that it was no longer necessary to bring Jesus to Capernaum because his son had recovered and had not died. The slaves did not know what had happened. He asked them what the time was that his son began to get better, and they said, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." He knew that this was the time that Jesus had said, "Your son lives," and he believed in Jesus along with his whole household. He first believed the word that Jesus had spoken, and then he believed in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God. His faith grew and progressed. He went to Jesus in faith, seeking healing for his son, he then believed Jesus word that his son was healed, and then when he saw that the word of Jesus had been fulfilled at the moment it was spoken, he fully trusted in Jesus and realized who He was. Faith grows as we experience the word and work of Jesus in our lives and in the lives of others. Because of this experience this man's whole household believed in Jesus. They all saw the miracle.

John tells us this is the second sign Jesus performed "when He had come out of Judea into Galilee." That is, this was His second sign in Galilee. He had performed signs when He was in Judea (John 2:23 and John 4:45).

John 5:1-18

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, [waiting for the moving of the waters; 4 for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.] 5 A man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. 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." 8 Jesus said to him, "Get up, pick up your pallet and walk." 9 Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day. 10 So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet." 11 But he answered them, "He who made me well was the one who said to me, Pick up your pallet and walk." 12 They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, Pick up your pallet and walk?" 13 But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place. 14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you." 15 The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. 16 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 reason 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.

The Jews had three major feasts when they were supposed to travel to Jerusalem to celebrate there, the Passover, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Booths. Jesus was in Jerusalem for one of these feasts, but we don't know which one.

In Jerusalem by the sheep gate there was a pool called Bethesda, which means "house of kindness."²⁰ This pool was thought to have curative powers, and so a multitude of people were gathered there who were "sick, blind, lame, and withered." Where there is a rumor or account of miraculous healing the desperate will gather. People will come from great distances and spend lots of money to come to a place where they might be healed.

We must note that verse 4 about the angel coming down and stirring up the water is probably spurious. A.T. Robertson says:

All of this verse is wanting in the oldest and best manuscripts like Aleph B C D W 33 Old Syriac, Coptic versions, Latin Vulgate. It is undoubtedly added, like the clause in John 5:3, to make clearer the statement in John 5:7. Tertullian is the earliest writer to mention it. The Jews explained the healing virtues of the intermittent spring by the ministry of angels. But the periodicity of such angelic visits makes it difficult to believe. It is a relief to many to know that the verse is spurious.²¹

Because of this some English translations like the Contemporary English Version and English Standard Version leave out verse 4. Those who were at the pool waiting for the waters to be stirred may have believed this was what was happening, but it is apparently not John who gives us this explanation, but it was added by someone later.

There was a "multitude" of those there who were sick, blind, lame and withered, but Jesus only went to this one man. I think it is worthy of note that Jesus apparently only healed this one man. Why didn't He heal all of them? Why didn't He hold a "Miracle Healing Crusade" and make a big public spectacle of healing all these people? This is what our so called "healers" do today. Apparently Jesus was not interested in drawing crowds and putting on

20 *Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries*

21 Robertson, A.T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*

shows and performing for people. His miraculous healings were a reason that crowds came to Him, but He did not advertise Himself as a healer and promote Himself as such.

The man He approached had been sick for thirty-eight years, evidently paralyzed. Jesus saw him, knew he had been in that condition for a long time, and so asked him, "Do you wish to get well?" It seems like an odd question to ask someone who had apparently been waiting for a long time to have his chance to get into the waters and receive his cure. But the man had not come to Jesus asking for healing, Jesus had come to him. Did he really want to be healed? Maybe in a sense now he was dependent on his illness for sympathy and support. Maybe people gave him alms because of his illness and so it had become his means of making a living. Jesus would not force healing upon him if he didn't want it. We must want what Jesus is able to give. Do we struggle with a chronic sin? Do we really want to be set free from it? Do we want to be rid of our sinful habits, or have we become comfortable with them? Jesus may ask us the same question. Are we sincere in wanting His deliverance?

The man did not directly answer the question. He said, "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." This pool was a "first come, first served" kind of a thing, and only served one at each instance. At least that is what people believed. He could not get into the pool on his own, and he had no one to help him. Though he was there waiting with the others, healing seemed beyond his grasp. He had little hope of being healed. His words seem to be words of despair and of resignation. This is what we do sometimes; we give up on healing. We conclude there is no way we can be healed and delivered, and so we think we must "live with it." But when Jesus shows up and offers healing, it is certain that He can do it!

Jesus ordered the man to get up, pick up his pallet and walk. The word for "walk" is *peripateō*, to walk around. The man previously could not get up, but now he can. The man could not pick up his pallet, but now he can. The man could not walk, but now he can. He had no one who could pick him up and put him in the pool, but now he can pick himself up along with his possessions. He "became well" immediately and did as Jesus had ordered. His healing was not a slow process of gradual improvement, but was instantaneous. When Jesus healed people, He healed them instantly.

As the man was walking in the temple area carrying his pallet, the Jews got after him for "working" on the Sabbath. They said, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet." On the Sabbath the commandment was that people should not "work" on that day. This gave rise to an effort to define what was to be considered "work," down to the minutest detail. On a website for the Jewish Orthodox Union there is an article listing "The 39 Categories of Sabbath Work Prohibited By Law." The first of the 39 prohibited things is "carrying."²² The article notes, "This category involves carrying in a public place. This is one of the few categories of work that is actually mentioned in the Torah. It is also the very first type of work that was prohibited." Jeremiah 17:21-22 says, "Thus says the LORD, 'Take heed for yourselves, and do not carry any load on the sabbath day or bring anything in through the gates of Jerusalem. You shall not bring a load out of your houses on the sabbath day nor do any work, but keep the sabbath day holy, as I commanded your forefathers.'" Working on the Sabbath became a major point of contention between the Jewish leaders and Jesus. So the Jews considered what this man was doing to be work. The thing is, this wasn't really "work" in the sense that it was his job to carry his pallet around. It was a possession that he needed to keep with him, and now that he could get up and walk, he needed to keep it with him, even if it meant carrying it on the Sabbath. The Jewish leaders allowed no latitude in their rules.

22 https://www.ou.org/holidays/the_thirty_nine_categories_of_sabbath_work_prohibited_by_law/#1

The Jewish authorities were not rejoicing about the mans healing, but were upset that one of their rules was being broken. Their critical nature robbed them of the joy that a man had been healed. We see this a number of times in the gospels. If we look at everything with a critical and judgmental eye, we will miss joy. We will fail to appreciate the good things that the Lord is doing if we are always focused on the negative.

The man explained that the one who had made him well had told him to pick up his pallet and walk. The Lord had ordered him to pick up his pallet on the Sabbath, and he did not question the authority of the one who had made him well. Jesus had ordered it, so he did it. He did not yet know who it was, but he knew what the man had done for him and so he obeyed Him.

The Jews asked, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Pick up your pallet and walk?'" They did not ask, "Who made you well?" They wanted to know who it was who was going around telling people they could violate the Sabbath. They needed to put a stop to such lawlessness! They could not tolerate some rogue going around telling people to violate the Sabbath rules. The man could not answer the question because Jesus had slipped away in the crowd. The man hadn't had time to learn anything about Jesus. Jesus knew this confrontation would take place and so deliberately dodged it.

Jesus still had something to say to the man, so later He found him and said, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you." The implication is that the mans illness had been caused by his sin. Maybe he had become injured and paralyzed due to some criminal activity. He had suffered the consequences of his sin for 38 years. Jesus demonstrated that He knew the reason for and cause of the mans infirmity, and warned him that if he returned to it, it could result in something worse than what he had already suffered. The man could avoid further suffering and worse suffering if he would stop sinning. Now that he was well he may have already been thinking of returning to his former sin that resulted in his suffering. It was a great grace of the Lord to him that Jesus found him and warned him. Temptation maximizes the pleasures of sin and ignores the consequences. When we are tempted we must learn to consider the consequences and that something really bad may result from a moment of sin. There are often lasting and painful consequences to our sin. One of the big ideas of the Christian faith is the doctrine of "original sin," and that death and all of our miseries in this life have come upon us because of it. We suffer illness, injury and death because of the disobedience of Adam and Eve (Romans 5:12-21). This curse is lifted by God's grace in the salvation brought about by Jesus. Peter gives us a strong warning in 2 Peter 2:20-22, "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, 'A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT, and, 'A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire.'" Jesus saves us from sin, and it is a great folly for us to return to it.

After encountering Jesus and speaking with Him, the man went off to the Jews and told them it was Jesus who had made him well. Why did he do this? wasn't he grateful for his healing? Didn't he know that if he told the Jews it was Jesus that it would cause trouble for Jesus? Was he unhappy that he had been healed? Did the warning of Jesus upset him, and so he wanted to turn Him in? We are not told why the man did this. Maybe he just wanted to get off the hook himself for the violation of carrying his pallet on the Sabbath and shift the focus to Jesus. Whatever the reason, it looks kind of like a betrayal. He had no obligation to report back to the Jewish authorities. He did not have to submit to their rules and explain himself. The One who is the Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8, Mark 2:28 and Luke 6:5) had

told him to pick up his pallet and walk on the Sabbath, and so there was no problem with him doing so. Obedience to the Lord may get us into trouble with the people of the world. So be it. We must obey Christ rather than men. We are called to observe the commandments of Christ rather than the rules and traditions of the world and worldly religion.

The Jews went to confront Jesus and began to persecute Him because He was “doing these things on the Sabbath.” Obviously the Jews spoke to Him about this because He answered them in verse 17, “My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.” The Contemporary English Version has, “My Father has never stopped working, and that is why I keep on working.” God's work has been continuous and does not stop on the Sabbath. Yes, God rested on the seventh day once His work of creation was complete, but all of creation depends on Him working every day. Albert Barnes comments:

God has not ceased to work on the Sabbath. He makes the sun to rise; He rolls the stars; He causes the grass, the tree, the flower to grow. He has not suspended His operations on the Sabbath, and the obligation to “rest” on the Sabbath does not extend to Him. He created the world in six days, and ceased the work of creation; but He has not ceased to govern it, and to carry forward, by His providence, His great plans on the Sabbath.²³

If the Father works, the Son works. The activity of the Son was governed by the Father, and if Jesus did it, it was the will of the Father. He was doing the will and the work of the Father. This issue of healing on the Sabbath would come up again. We read in Matthew 12:9-14:

Departing from there, He went into their synagogue. 10 And a man was there whose hand was withered. And they questioned Jesus, asking, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—so that they might accuse Him. 11 And He said to them, "What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out? 12 "How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." 13 Then He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand!" He stretched it out, and it was restored to normal, like the other. 14 But the Pharisees went out and conspired against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.

Jesus tackled the issue head-on. When asked about the legality of healing on the Sabbath, Jesus pointed out that any of them would go to work immediately to rescue a sheep that had fallen into a pit on the Sabbath, and that men are much more valuable than sheep. He stated plainly that it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.

The Jews did not just want to arrest Jesus and imprison Him, they wanted to kill Him. There were two reasons for this; first, He was breaking the Sabbath, and second, He was calling God His own Father, thus making Himself equal with God. In their estimation He was worthy of death because He violated the Sabbath and because His claim to be the Son of God was blasphemy. I am the son of my father, and I am no less human than he was. Jesus is the Son of God and is no less God than the Father. The Jews understood this, and so understood that He was claiming equality with God. Jesus does not dispute this claim, but rather will support it.

John 5:19-47

Therefore Jesus 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 the Father will show Him greater works than these, so that you will 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 so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. 24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. 25 "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. 26 "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; 27 and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. 28 "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, 29 and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.

30 "I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. 31 "If I alone testify about Myself, My testimony is not true. 32 "There is another who testifies of Me, and I know that the testimony which He gives about Me is true. 33 "You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth. 34 "But the testimony which I receive is not from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. 35 "He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. 36 "But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me. 37 "And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form. 38 "You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent. 39 "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; 40 and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. 41 "I do not receive glory from men; 42 but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. 43 "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. 44 "How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God? 45 "Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. 46 "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. 47 "But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

First, Jesus says in verse 19 that He, as the Son of God, can do nothing of Himself, but only those things He sees the Father doing. He repeats it in verse 30. The Son only does what the Father does. The Son mimics the Father and mirrors His work. Jesus does not originate or generate any activity that hasn't been willed or approved by the Father. The Father acts first, and then the Son does the same thing. Jesus explains this arrangement further in verses 20 through 23. He explains that the Father loves the Son and shows Him all the things He is doing. Because of the intimacy and love between the Father and Son, the Son is privy to all the Father does. There is nothing the Father hides from the Son. There are no secrets that are withheld. There is nothing the Father wants to do that the Son misses. The

Son is continually aware of the will of the Father. The Father has even greater works to show the Son so that people will marvel. The healing of the man at the pool was great, but there were even greater things to come. The Father wants people to marvel and be amazed at the things the Son will do. As we read the gospels and learn of the things done by the Lord Jesus Christ, it should cause us to marvel at Him and His greatness. He turned water into wine, He healed the sick, cast out demons, walked on water, stilled the storm, fed over 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish, raised the dead and then rose from the dead Himself. These are not routine, run-of-the-mill things that happen every day. They are miraculous and divine, proving to us that Jesus is the Son of God.

He also explains that as the Father raises the dead even so the Son also gives life to those He wishes. This is one of those “greater works” that the Father would show the Son. The power of life and death has been given to the Son. Jesus is the source of life. He gives life to whom He wishes. Note that in verse 40 He says, “you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.” And remember what John said in John 20:31, “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.” We must come to Jesus and believe in Him to receive eternal life. Jesus will reveal more about this in a moment as we move through chapter 5.

He explains further that the Father has given all judgment to the Son that all will honor the Son as they honor the Father. As we noted earlier when we looked at John 3:17, there will be a day when Jesus judges all people and will separate the “sheep” from the “goats,” the saved from the lost, the redeemed from the damned, the righteous from the unrighteous. This is a responsibility the Father gave to the Son so that all will honor the Son. The Greek word translated “honor” is *timaō*, “to prize, that is, fix a valuation upon; by implication to revere.”²⁴ In a court of law we address the judge as “your honor.” The judge sits in a position of authority and that position calls for honor and respect. In the time of Jesus it was not juries that decided guilt or innocence, but judges had that authority. They had the power to acquit or condemn, and now the Father has given this authority over all humanity to the Son. If we respect an imperfect human judge in a human court, how much more should we respect the perfect Son of God in His divine court! If we do not honor the Son we do not honor the Father. The authority of God the Father is exercised by God the Son. Since Jesus was sent by His Father and only does what He sees the Father doing, if we fail to honor the Son, we fail to honor the Father. You can’t have the Father without the Son.

All judgment has been given to the Son, but Jesus says there is a way to avoid coming into judgment in verse 25. He says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.” Note the emphasis Jesus puts on hearing His voice in verses 24 through 29. He mentions it three times. It is hearing, listening, to the word of Christ that produces faith and saves us. Romans 10:17 says, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” Faith depends on hearing. Accepting and believing the word of the Son is the key to receiving eternal life and avoiding judgment. Those who hear and believe pass out of death into life. We are not simply saved from a future eventual death, but we are saved “out of death.” We are dead and under condemnation until we hear the word of the Lord and believe it, then we are made alive in Christ. He is then no longer our judge, but our Savior.

Since the word of the Son is the word of the Father, if we believe the word of the Son we are believing the Father. The Son delivers the Father’s message. We put our confidence in the fact that the Son represents the Father and that whatever He says comes from the Father.

Jesus continues talking about the “dead” who will “hear the voice of the Son of God” in verses 25 through 29. He just said that those who hear Him and believe pass out of death into life, and then in verse 25 He says “an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.” I think here He is talking about the spiritually dead, those who are “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). Now is the time when those who hear the good news of Christ and believe will be made alive in Christ. Paul says in Ephesians 2:4-7, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” Those who are spiritually dead are made alive by God in Christ by His grace through faith.

In the same way the Father has life in Himself, so also He gave to the Son to have life in Himself (verse 26). Life is in the Father, and life is in the Son. Recall that John 1:4 says, “In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.” The Son can give life to whom He wishes (verse 21) because the Father has given Him life in Himself. The Son is the source of life for us as the Father is the source of life. Eternal life comes to us from the Father through the Son.

This is the second time He says that the Father has given Him something. The first thing was “all judgment” (verse 22), the second thing is life, and the third thing is again “authority to execute judgment” (verse 27). He has been given this authority to execute judgment “because He is the Son of Man.” In the Greek text there is no article before “Son of Man,” so if it is translated literally it should be, “because He is Son of Man.” This is an emphasis on the fact that Jesus was truly human, and His perfect humanity qualifies Him to judge humanity. He judges us as one of us. Hebrews 2:14-18 says:

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. 16 For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. 17 Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

Because He is a “Son of Man” and because he “partook” of flesh and blood, He is the perfect High Priest, the perfect sacrifice and the perfect judge of mankind.

Its interesting that life is juxtaposed with judgment here. The judgment of the Son determines whether we are delivered from death and pass into life, or if we remain in death. If we “come into judgment” we are condemned and remain in death. If the Son gives us life we do not come into judgment, but have passed into life.

Jesus talked about those who are spiritually dead in verse 25, who will hear His voice and live, and then in verses 28 and 29 He talks about the future when those who are physically dead “in the tombs” will hear His voice and come forth. He says that we should not marvel at what He is saying. We should not be amazed that He makes this claim for Himself. There will come a time when all of those who are dead and in their tombs will hear the voice of the Son of God and will come forth. There will be a resurrection of all, the unrighteous as well as the righteous. All will answer to His call and no one will be exempted. It is not just the righteous

who will be raised from the dead. This is clearly taught elsewhere, in the Parable of the Wheat and Tares in Matthew 13, in the Parable of the Dragnet in Matthew 13:47-50, in Jesus explicit teaching about the day of judgment in Matthew 25:31-46, and in Acts 24:14-15 where Paul says, "But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets; having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked." Being raised from the dead does not mean, however, that everyone is saved and admitted to the kingdom of God. Those who did the good will be raised "to a resurrection of life," and those who did evil "to a resurrection of judgment." The book of Revelation talks about the "second death" which is the "lake of fire" into which those who did evil will be thrown (see Revelation 2:11, 20:6, 20:14 and 21:8). There are many ways that we categorize different kinds of people, by sex, by race, by age, by nationality, by sexual orientation and so forth, but there are only two categories that really matter, those who are good and those who are evil, those who are "sons of the kingdom," and those who are "sons of the evil one" (Matthew 13:38). Each one of us is in one camp or the other. We are each either on the narrow road to life or the wide road to destruction. There is no third category. Through faith in Christ we can be children of the kingdom and avoid judgment.

In verse 30 Jesus repeats, "I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." He had said essentially the same thing in verse 19. Jesus could do nothing of Himself, but everything He did came from the Father. His judgment is in accord with what He hears from the Father, and therefore His judgment is just. He passes on the judgment of the Father. The Father will never overturn the judgment of the Son. We can't appeal the Sons ruling to the Father, because the Sons rulings are the Fathers rulings. His judgment will never be unjust or in error. His judgment will never be overturned on appeal or thrown out because of a technicality.

In biblical and Jewish law facts had to be established by more than one witness. Deuteronomy 19:15 says, "A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed." This rule is recognized by Jesus in Matthew 18:16 and by Paul in 2 Corinthians 13:1 and 1 Timothy 5:19. In verse 31 Jesus acknowledges that He is testifying about Himself, and also acknowledges that if He is the only one with this testimony, then it is not true. The Pharisees will say in John 8:12, "You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true." We should be cautious when there is only one person making incredible claims, especially about themselves. But Jesus was not alone in testifying about Himself. In verses 32 through 47 He points to five other witnesses that give testimony to who He is.

Initially as I reflected on verse 32 I assumed that the reference to "another who testifies of Me" was about John the Baptist, since Jesus then talks about John in verses 33 through 36a, but most commentators I consulted believe that the reference is to God the Father. In the New American Standard the word "He" is capitalized here, indicating that the translators take it to mean the Father. I suppose this makes sense in light of verses 34 and 36 where Jesus says that this testimony is "not from man," and is "greater than John." The testimony of God the Father must be true. He cannot lie.

Jesus did have a human witness in John the Baptist. Though Jesus has testimony that is not from man, He mentions John "so that you may be saved." The whole purpose of Jesus, the reason He was sent by the Father, was to save the world and not judge it (John 3:17). John had "testified to the truth." The Pharisees had "sent to him" and heard the truth from him.

We should recall the discussion John had with the Jews in John 1:19-27, when he said, “I baptize in water, but among you stands One whom you do not know. It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.” We should recall that he also pointed to Jesus and called Him, “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,” and said that He is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit and is the Son of God (John 1:29-36). John 1:7-8 makes it very clear that John was not the Light, but came to testify about the Light, yet Jesus says that John was “the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.” Similarly Jesus said to His disciples, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16). We, like John, are lights in the world, pointing people to Jesus who is the true light of the world in the full sense.

Jesus says that the Jews were “willing to rejoice for a while” in the light that John produced. The word translated “for a while” is *hōra*, an hour. It means for a moment or for a period of time. For a little while they rejoiced in his message about the coming Messiah, but their enthusiasm did not endure. Their excitement about John was short-lived. What we need is long-term, durable enthusiasm for the message. We should always rejoice in the light of John and of the Lord Jesus.

John was important, but Jesus had testimony that was greater than that of John. Jesus points to the works that the Father had given Him. The works He was doing gave testimony that the Father had sent Him. His miraculous signs said, “This is the Son of God, sent by the Father.” Jesus had said to the disciples that accomplishing the work of the Father was His “food” in John 4:34. Had Jesus really been sent by God the Father? The works He accomplished said “yes.” If there was a question about whether Jesus was really from God, His miracles proved that He was. Again we should cite John 9:16, “Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, ‘This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath. But others were saying, ‘How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs? And there was a division among them.’ His signs proved to some of these men that Jesus was from God. They could not deny or overlook the witness of the works of Jesus.

In addition to the works the Father had given Him, the Father Himself also testified of Jesus. There were times during the ministry of Jesus that the Father spoke and gave testimony about Jesus. Matthew tells us that at His baptism, when the Spirit of God descended on Jesus like a dove, a voice from heaven said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased” (Matthew 3:17). Later, on the “Mount of Transfiguration,” the Father said to Peter, James and John, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!” (Matthew 17:5). So the Father had verbally and audibly testified about Jesus, but Jesus says to the Jews here, “You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form.” The men to whom He was speaking had not heard the Father speak and they had not seen His form. It may be that Jesus is referring to the written testimony of the Father in the Scriptures, which He mentions next. Or perhaps He is referring to the fact that John the Baptist had heard the Father speak of Jesus and had quoted His words. There were people who were there when Jesus was baptized who had heard the words of the Father.

Note the deficiencies in the Jews Jesus mentions in verses 37 through 47:

- “You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form.”
- “You do not have His word abiding in you.”
- “You do not believe Him whom He sent.”

- “You are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.”
- “You do not have the love of God in yourselves.”
- “You do not receive Me.”
- “You receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God.”
- “If you believed Moses, you would believe Me.”
- “You do not believe his writings.”

Jesus did not hesitate to point to the stubborn unbelief of these men in the face of the evidence and testimony that proved He was the Messiah.

The fact that the Jews did not have God's word abiding in them is proven by the fact that they did not believe in the One whom He sent (verse 38). The word of God had been delivered to the Jews through Moses and the prophets and recorded in the Scriptures, but they did not allow His word to remain in them. They weren't mindful of what God had said concerning His Son. If they had been, they would have welcomed Jesus and put their faith in Him. God had even told them explicitly in Daniel 9:24-27 when the Messiah would come. He told them explicitly that He would be born in Bethlehem in Micah 5:2. In Psalm 2 God had told them that He had seated His Son as king over all the nations and that everyone was required to do homage to Him, and that those who would take refuge in Him would be blessed. If these men had been paying attention to the word of God they would certainly have recognized Jesus as the Son of God when He came. Most of the Jews have missed their Messiah because they did not have God's word abiding in them.

The word translated “abiding” in verse 38 is *menō*, to stay or to remain. John uses this word 40 times in the gospel. It is used in John 15:7 when Jesus says, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” It is all-important that the word of the Lord should “abide” in us, that we should be always conscious of what the Lord has said. If we remain in Him and His words remain in us, we have this marvelous promise that we may ask whatever we wish and it will be done. If we meet the conditions our prayers will be granted!

Alongside the testimony from John the Baptist, the works of Jesus, and the word of the Father, the Scriptures also testify to Jesus. The Jews did not have the word of God abiding in them despite the fact that they searched the Scriptures. A.T. Robertson²⁵ points out that the verb “search” in verse 39 can be either indicative (“this is what you do”), or imperative (a command: “Do this!”), but the context shows that it is probably indicative, since Jesus says they did this “because you think that in them you have eternal life.” They were motivated to search the Scriptures because they thought they would find eternal life in them. They thought that knowing and observing the Scriptures would give them eternal life, but they failed to listen to the testimony of the Scriptures. They thought this because of what the Law of Moses itself said. Deuteronomy 30:8-20 says:

"And you shall again obey the LORD, and observe all His commandments which I command you today. 9 "Then the LORD your God will prosper you abundantly in all the work of your hand, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your cattle and in the produce of your ground, for the LORD will again rejoice over you for good, just as He rejoiced over your fathers; 10 if you obey the LORD your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul. 11 "For this

25 Robertson, A.T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*

commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. 12 "It is not in heaven, that you should say, Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it? 13 "Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it? 14 "But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it. 15 "See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity; 16 in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the LORD your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it. 17 "But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, 18 I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. You will not prolong your days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it. 19 "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, 20 by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

The key to life was to follow the commandments and statutes written in the book of the law. Searching the Scriptures was important, but not enough in itself. As Paul says to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:14-15, "You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." The "sacred writings" are meant to lead us to the salvation that is in Christ. We are not saved by Scripture; we are saved by Jesus. Scripture tells us about the salvation that is in Him.

Jesus was clear about this fact that the Scriptures testify about Him. On the day He rose from the dead He appeared to two men, Cleopas and another disciple, who were walking to Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. They did not recognize Him initially and expressed their befuddlement over the things that had happened to Jesus. Luke 24:25-27 says, "And He said to them, 'O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory? Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.'" Later that night He appeared to His other disciples as they were gathered together in Jerusalem. Luke 24:44-47 says, "Now He said to them, 'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled. Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.'" I wish I had a recording of the things Jesus said to them! I would love to hear the passages from the Scriptures that Jesus cited to show them what they said about Him! No doubt He quoted passages like Psalm 2, Isaiah 53 and Daniel 9. Probably some of this material is in Peters sermons in Acts 2:14-40 and Acts 3:12-26 where he quotes from Psalm 16, Psalm 89, Psalm 132, Deuteronomy 18 and Genesis 22:18. The Scriptures do not simply say that the Messiah is coming, but they are explicit about His suffering, death and

resurrection, and the apostles were able to prove to the Jews that this was true as Jesus had proven it to them.

Though the Scriptures testify to Jesus, the Jews were unwilling to come to Him so that they might have life. They had the testimony and evidence they needed to enable them to believe, but they were unwilling to do so. They looked to the Scriptures to find life, and the Scriptures pointed to Jesus, but they would not come to Jesus for life. If we want eternal life we must come to Jesus. He invites us to do this. In Matthew 11:28-30 He says, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." In John 7:37 He says, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" In 1 John 5:11-13 John says, "And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life." Is this narrow? Yes. Is this exclusive? Yes. Are other avenues and viewpoints invalidated by this? Yes. Eternal life is in and through Jesus Christ and God has established no other source. His Son is the exclusive means of life. We "abide in death" if we are unwilling to come to Him.

The question that naturally comes to mind is, "Why were these men unwilling to come to Jesus and believe in Him?" and Jesus addresses the question in verses 41-47. It has to do with what they were seeking for themselves. This word "glory" is important here. Note that it occurs three times in these verses, once in verse 41 and twice in verse 44. Jesus says that He did not receive glory from men. Verse 41 could be literally translated, "Glory from men I am not receiving." He was not motivated by glory from men nor did he accept glory from men. He did not do what He did for the applause and approval of people, but all that He did was for the glory of the Father. By contrast, Jesus says, "but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves." He does not mean the love that comes from God, but love toward God. These men did not truly love God, and since they didn't love God they did not receive Jesus, the Son of God, who had come in the name of the Father. They would receive others who would come in their own names, but they would not receive Jesus, who truly came in the name of the Father. Jesus warned, "Many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ, and will mislead many'" (Matthew 24:5).

Jesus gets to the heart of the problem with His rhetorical question in verse 44, "How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God?" The trouble with the Jews, with the Pharisees and scribes, was that they sought glory from others, but not from God. In fact Jesus said that everything they did was in order to be noticed by men. In Matthew 23:5-7 He says, "But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments. They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men." Being noticed and honored by others was their sole concern and driving motive. He pointed this out and gave examples in Matthew 6:1-18 when He talked about giving, prayer and fasting. He gave the general principle in Matthew 6:1 when He warned the disciples, "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven." He went on to illustrate, "So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full" (Matthew 6:2). Regarding prayer, He said, "When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for

they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full” (Matthew 6:5). And regarding fasting He said, “Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full” (Matthew 1:16). The hypocrites gave, prayed and fasted, but it was all just a performance intended to impress others. There was no love of God in their giving, prayer and fasting. They were not doing these things in order to be rewarded or honored by God. They cared only for the recognition of other men, and so they “had their reward in full.” They would receive no reward from the Father. But there is a reward from the Father for those who do these things secretly in private in order to please Him.

When our primary concern is the approval of others we will not be able to believe in Jesus. This is one of the biggest hindrances to faith in Christ. Many will not believe in Jesus because the approval of family and friends is more important to them than the approval of God. Some are so concerned with being “politically correct” and in step with the dominant views of the culture that they will not consider faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus warned, “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it” (Matthew 10:37-39). Luke puts it in even stronger terms, “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:26-27). What we must do, then, is seek the glory that comes from God. That glory is available to those who value it more than glory from others. God is a rewarder of those who seek Him, according to Hebrews 11:6. Faith in Christ requires that we abandon the quest for recognition from people, even those closest to us.

Jesus tells these Jews that they should not think that He will accuse them before the Father, but that the one who accuses them is Moses. The word translated “accuse” is *katēgoreō*, “to speak in the assembly *agora*, to bring an accusation in court, a public accusation).”²⁶ When Jesus says, “Do not think that I will accuse you,” it is a future tense verb, and when He says, “the one who accuses you is Moses,” it is present-tense. Jesus is denying that He will accuse them in the future, but says Moses is actively accusing them right now. Does He mean that Moses is in heaven just continually accusing these men before the Father? I don’t think so. I think Jesus means that the Law of Moses, the writings of Moses accuse them. They set their hope in Moses, but he is the one accusing them. In Matthew 23:2-3 Jesus says, “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them.” They knew the law of Moses, but they did not observe it. In fact, in some ways they set aside the Law of Moses in order to observe their traditions. Jesus pointed this out in Mark 7:8-13:

"Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men." 9 He was also saying to them, "You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition. 10 "For Moses said, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER; and, HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER, IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH; 11 but you say, If a man says to his father or his mother, whatever I have that would help you is Corban (that is to say, given to God), 12 you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or his mother; 13 thus invalidating

the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that."

This is not just a problem for the Jews of that day, but is a problem for us today as well. The word of God accuses us because we are law breakers. James mentions this problem in James 1:22-25:

But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. 25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

Knowing the word of God is much easier than doing the word of God. The law of God is the standard by which we are judged. It is the thing that accuses us. Jesus has come to save and not condemn. He has come to rescue us and not to accuse us.

Jesus explains, "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" If they had truly believed in the words of Moses, they would have believed in Jesus. Moses wrote about Jesus in Deuteronomy 18:18-19, "I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him." No doubt Jesus is alluding to this passage. Note that it fits with what He is saying in John 5. The Prophet whom God would raise up would have God's words in His mouth. Jesus has been emphasizing that He does and says what the Father does and says. His words and works come from the Father. He represents the Father perfectly. All He did was done in the name of the Father. God warns those who will not listen to the Prophet that He Himself will "require it of him," that is, God will hold them accountable for their failure to listen. They were responsible to recognize the Prophet and listen to Him, but when Jesus came who was that Prophet (and more than a prophet), they did not listen to Him. God put His words in the mouth of His Son, and so if these men had believed Moses they would have believed Jesus. They should have recognized Him as the one who fulfills these promises.

Finally, Jesus asks, "But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" Note the importance of belief, of faith, in this passage. Five times in verses 44 through 47 Jesus mentions belief. These men could not believe in Him because they sought glory from other men rather than from God. They could not believe in Him because they did not believe Moses. They could not believe because they did not believe his writings. Those who do not really believe the writings of Moses are not able to believe the words of Jesus either. If one believes the Old Testament, then one ought to believe the New Testament as well. Jesus fulfills the promises of the Old Testament.

John 6:1-15

After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias). 2 A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick. 3 Then Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat down with His disciples. 4 Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near. 5 Therefore Jesus, lifting up

His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him, said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?" 6 This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do. 7 Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little." 8 One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peters brother, said to Him, 9 "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?" 10 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 then took the loaves, and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted. 12 When they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost." 13 So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. 14 Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world." 15 So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.

The account of the "feeding of the 5,000" is found in all four gospels. It is in Mark 6:30-44, Matthew 14:13-21 and Luke 9:10-17 as well as here in John 6. Mark and Matthew tell us that this happened right after Herod had beheaded John the Baptist. Mark and Luke say that this was also after the twelve apostles had gone out on their preaching and healing mission and then had returned to Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while." Mark explains, "For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat" (Mark 6:31). As they tried to withdraw and went to this "secluded place," the crowds saw them and followed them. In fact, Mark says that the crowds "got there ahead of them." Somehow they knew where He was going. Luke says that it was "a city called Bethsaida" (Luke 9:10). John 1:44 tells us that Philip, Andrew and Peter had come from Bethsaida, so it was a place familiar to these men. Bethsaida was probably on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. When He arrived the crowd was already there, and Mark says, "When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things" (Mark 6:34). Though He was trying to get away to a secluded place with His disciples it turned out that He ended up in a crowded place, with people looking for Him. He felt compassion for these people and so taught them and healed those who were sick (according to Matthew and Luke). He allowed them to interrupt His retreat and used the occasion as a time of ministry. The needs of people came before His own needs and wants.

Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us that it was the disciples who first noted the desolation of the place and suggested to Jesus that He should send the crowds away so they might buy some food (Matthew 14:15 for example). But Jesus replied, "You give them something to eat!" According to Matthew 14:16 He said, "They do not need to go away; you give them something to eat!" It was then that they pointed out the insufficiency of their supplies. They did not have enough food to give them, just five loaves and two fish, nor did they have enough money to buy everyone enough food. At some point during the discussion Jesus asked Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?" Philip answered, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little." One denarius was the typical wage for one day of work (Matthew 20:2). Two hundred days wages would not even allow the crowd to have a little bit of bread. Mark also mentions this figure, though he does not mention Philip (Mark 6:37).

Jesus had asked Philip the question about buying bread because He was testing him. How would Philip answer this question? Jesus knew what He was going to do, but He wanted to see what Philip would say. Would Philip look at the lack of resources or would he look to Jesus in faith? As we might expect, Philip pointed to the lack of resources. He did not say, "Well, Jesus, you changed the water into wine, you've healed a bunch of people, even from a distance, you're always surprising us with the miracles you can do, so it should be possible for you to feed this crowd." To Philip, feeding the crowd was impossible.

Andrew pointed out that they had some very meager resources, five barley loaves and two fish that had been supplied by a lad who was there, but then he asked, "but what are these for so many people?" Often resources are insufficient for the need, but this is not a problem when Jesus is involved.

Barley was seen as poor food in that culture. Adam Clarke comments:

Barley scarcely bore one-third of the value of wheat in the east: see Revelation 6:6. That it was a very mean fare appears from Ezekiel 13:19, where the false prophetesses are said to pollute the name of God for handfuls of barley, i.e. for the meanest reward. And Plutarch, in Apoph. p. 174, speaking concerning the flight of Artaxerxes Mnemon, says he was reduced to such distress as to be obliged to eat barley bread. See Kypke. From this and other circumstances we may plainly perceive that the self-denying doctrine preached by Christ and his apostles was fully exemplified in their own manner of living.²⁷

We mustn't think these "loaves" were like the loaves of bread we get at a bakery or supermarket. They were probably small dinner-roll type loaves, meant as an individual portion. I also doubt that the fish were fresh-caught. They were probably salted and dried fish, which was the means of preserving the fish for market. This was not high-class picnic food.

Its funny how little kids will do this kind of thing. They will hear of an enormous need, thousands of people starving somewhere, and they will give their few cents or few dollars thinking that it will help. They do not see that the pittance they are giving will really not do anything to meet the need. But their spirit is right. They will give what they can, and the Lord will use it in miraculous ways.

Jesus had the people sit down on the grass, took the loaves, gave thanks, and "distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted." Luke tells us Jesus said, "Have them sit down to eat in groups of about fifty each." Perhaps this was to facilitate an orderly distribution of the food. When He blessed the food He looked up to heaven and then began breaking the loaves and gave them to the disciples who distributed the food to the people. He did the same with the fish. He gave them as much as they wanted. Mark says that Jesus broke the bread and "divided" the fish among them all (Mark 6:41). Its hard to visualize how this happened, but somehow as He broke the bread and divided the fish it kept multiplying so that more and more appeared and it was not exhausted. To serve this crowd of over 5,000 it must have taken quite a bit of time and effort on the part of Jesus and the disciples. To serve such a large crowd it takes quite a bit of resources.

Philip had said that even if they had 200 denarii worth of bread it would not be enough for each one to receive just a little. But Jesus gave this crowd "as much as they wanted." He took a meager supply and turned it into a bounty, even an overabundance. Verse 12 says the crowd was "filled," which means "filled up, satisfied." Even though everyone ate as much as they wanted and were filled, still there were leftovers. Jesus ordered the disciples to gather

27 Clark, Adam, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*

the leftover fragments “so that nothing will be lost.” Some translations use the word “wasted” instead of “lost.” Each of the twelve disciples gathered up a basket full of leftover fragments. Regarding the baskets, Vincent's Word Studies says, “These were small hand-baskets, specially provided for the Jews to carry levitically clean food while travelling in Samaria or other heathen districts. The word for *basket* used in relating the feeding of the *four* thousand (Matt. 15:37) is σπυρίς, *a large provision-basket or hamper*, of the kind used for letting Paul down over the wall at Damascus (Acts 9:25). In Matt. 16:9, Matt.16:10, Christ, in alluding to the two miracles, observes the distinctive term in each narrative; using κοφίνου in the case of the five thousand, and σπυρίδας in the other.” There was a surplus, and Jesus did not want it to go to waste. He didn't want it to be left for the birds or hauled to the landfill. I wonder what they did with the leftovers? I wonder if Jesus gave the twelve baskets to the boy who had come with one basket? After all, the original five loaves and two fish had been his, and it would be fun if he had left with twelve baskets full of food after having come with only one! I can't help but think that there must have been a reward for the generosity of this boy.

The people saw this sign that Jesus had performed. They realized it was an amazing miracle, and they said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.” No doubt they were thinking about the passage in Deuteronomy 18:15 where Moses said that God would raise up a prophet like Moses from among them. They were convinced that Jesus must be the Prophet. Since He was the Prophet and the Messiah, they were going to take Him by force and make Him king. Jesus knew this was their intent. The word translated “take Him by force” is *harpazō*, to seize and carry off by force. Undeniably Jesus was the King they were looking for who would come and restore the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6), the one who would defeat the Romans and fulfill Psalm 2. He would be given the nations as His inheritance and would “break them with a rod of iron” and “shatter them like earthenware” (Psalm 2:8-9). But this was not the mission of Jesus in His first coming. It was not yet time for Him to assert His rule over the earth, so Jesus withdrew to the mountain by Himself. I'm not sure how He did this without people following Him, but somehow He pulled it off. Matthew says, “Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away” (Matthew 14:22), and then He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. However He did this, He did not allow them to seize Him to make Him king. He was in charge and He would determine what happened at this point.

Jesus will not be seized and made subject to our notions of what He should be and do. Jesus did not submit Himself to seizure and prosecution until it was time to do so in accord with the will of the Father. His opponents were never able to seize Him, stone Him or kill Him until it was time. Many today want to, in a sense, “seize” Jesus to support their cause. But He has His own purposes that will not be co-opted.

The feeding of the 5,000 reminds us that as we look at our world, the needs will almost always be greater than our resources. Who we are and what we have will always be inadequate to meet the needs around us. This fact must be acknowledged, but a greater fact must be acknowledged as well. Our Father and our Lord are more than adequate. The Lord Jesus Christ is greater than the need and greater than the lack of resources. He does not ask us what we don't have, but what we do have. He will take the little that we have to offer and will multiply it and use it as we trust Him and obey Him to do far more than we could ever ask or imagine! Paul says in Ephesians 3:20-21, “Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.” When we only have what we have, then we don't have much and can't do much. But if we have Jesus, we have all we need to do what He wants to do.

John 6:16-21

Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, 17 and after getting into a boat, they started to cross the sea to Capernaum. It had already become dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. 18 The sea began to be stirred up because a strong wind was blowing. 19 Then, when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat; and they were frightened. 20 But He said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." 21 So they were willing to receive Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

As we noted above, Matthew says that Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and cross the sea. It had been a long and exhausting day, it was dark, and they probably were not excited about getting into a boat and rowing across the sea. For the fishermen among them the darkness was not a problem because they typically fished at night (Luke 5:5 and John 21:3-4). In this account John does not mention a number of details included by Matthew:

Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away. 23 After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone. 24 But the boat was already a long distance from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary. 25 And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea. 26 When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. 27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." 28 Peter said to Him, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." 29 And He said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. 30 But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31 Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32 When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. 33 And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!" (Matthew 14:22-33)

We all know that people can't walk on water, therefore it is understandable that the disciples were frightened when they saw Jesus walking on the water toward them and thought He was a ghost. Again, Jesus miraculously violated the laws of physics. We can only try to imagine what the experience of walking on the water in the wind with a choppy sea was like. It was probably not a problem for Jesus, but for Peter it must not have been easy. Perhaps it was slippery, like walking on undulating glass or ice. Little wonder that Peter took his focus off of Jesus! C.S. Lewis imagines a similar scenario when a visitor from hell tries to walk on the water in heaven in [The Great Divorce](#):

But I did not watch him long, for a new idea had just occurred to me. If the grass were hard as rock, I thought, would not the water be hard enough to walk on? I tried it with one foot, and my foot did not go in. Next moment I stepped boldly out on the surface. I fell on my face at once and got some nasty bruises. I had forgotten that though it was, to me, solid, it was not the less in rapid motion. When I had picked myself up I was about thirty yards further down-stream than the point

where I had left the bank. But this did not prevent me from walking up-stream: it only meant that by walking very fast indeed I made very little progress.

The cool smooth skin of the bright water was delicious to my feet and I walked on it for about an hour, making perhaps a couple of hundred yards. Then the going became different. The current grew swifter. Great flakes or islands of foam came swirling down towards me, bruising my shins like stones if I did not get out of their way. The surface became uneven, rounded itself into lovely hollows and elbows of water which distorted the appearance of the pebbles on the bottom and threw me off my balance, so that I had to scramble to shore.

Once again here Jesus surprises the disciples by doing the impossible. You can't feed 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish, and you can't walk on the water, but Jesus does both. He allayed their fears by saying, "It is I; do not be afraid." It was not a ghost, but it was Jesus, doing another unexpected impossible thing. Three times in the Old Testament, God says, "Do not fear, for I am with you" (Genesis 26:24, Isaiah 41:10 and Isaiah 43:5). In the same way, Jesus tells us that we should not be afraid because He is with us and will be with us always, "even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). If the Lord is with us there is no reason for fear. He will watch over us for good and not for harm.

Being reassured, the disciples became willing to receive Him into the boat, and then they were immediately at their destination. Jesus stopped walking on the water and got into the boat with them. He stepped from a miracle into the ordinary. Matthew says the wind stopped when He got into the boat and the disciples worshiped Him by saying, "You are certainly God's Son!" Worship is saying something true about the Lord and honoring Him. In this miracle these men again saw and acknowledged the glory of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

John 6:22-59

The next day the crowd that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other small boat there, except one, and that Jesus had not entered with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples had gone away alone. 23 There came other small boats from Tiberias near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks. 24 So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats, and came to Capernaum seeking Jesus. 25 When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You get here?" 26 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 will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal." 28 Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so 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 So they said to Him, "What then do You do for a sign, so 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 then 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." 34 Then they said to Him, "Lord, always give us this bread." 35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. 36 "But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. 37 "All that the Father

gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. 38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. 39 "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. 40 "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

41 Therefore the Jews were grumbling about Him, because He said, "I am the bread that came down out of heaven." 42 They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, I have come down out of heaven?" 43 Jesus answered and said to them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. 44 "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. 45 "It is written in the prophets, AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD. Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me. 46 "Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father. 47 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. 48 "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 will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh." 52 Then the Jews began to argue with one another, saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" 53 So Jesus 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. 57 "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. 58 "This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever." 59 These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum.

Though Jesus had dismissed the crowd and sent them away, evidently many of them did not go very far, and returned the next morning to look for Him. They had observed that Jesus had not gotten into the boat with the disciples the previous night and that there was only one other small boat there which was still there. They did not know how Jesus had departed or where He had gone, but they knew that Jesus and the disciples were from the other side of Galilee, the west side, and so they got into other small boats that came from Tiberias and crossed to the other side to Capernaum. Probably they still intended to take Him and make Him king, or at least to see more "signs" from Him.

They succeeded in finding Jesus in Capernaum in the synagogue there (verse 59), and asked, "Rabbi, when did You get here?" They could not figure out how He had traveled there so quickly since He had not gotten into the boat with the disciples. Jesus did not tell them that He had walked on the water across the sea. In fact He did not answer the question at all but rather diagnosed the true reason they were seeking Him. He says that they were not seeking Him because they saw signs, but because they "ate of the loaves and were filled." They sought Him for the wrong reason. They were not seeking Him because they realized He was the Messiah, but because He had fed them. I think in a sense He's saying they sought Him because they wanted a welfare state. They wanted a king who would defeat their enemies, rule over them, feed them and meet their needs. A.T. Robertson says, "They were more concerned with hungry stomachs than with hungry souls. It was a sharp and deserved

rebuke.”²⁸ Jesus then says, “Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.” When they pursued Him they were working for the “food which perishes.” Their focus was on what was temporal and perishable. They needed to raise their sights and pursue greater things, the “food which endures to eternal life.” They sought perishable food, and Jesus wanted to give them eternal food. They sought the things of earth, and Jesus wanted to give them the things of heaven. When Jesus rebuked Peter in Matthew 16:23 He said, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.” These people were doing the same thing, setting their minds on the temporal interests of man. Too often people seek Jesus for temporal and earthly solutions to short-term problems. Jesus has something greater for us. He tells us to seek first God's kingdom and righteousness, and all these earthly things will be added to us (Matthew 6:33).

The food which endures to eternal life is given by the Son of Man. Jesus had said to the Samaritan woman, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.’ And then He said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life” (John 4:10, 13-14). He gives the water of eternal life and the food of eternal life. He is the giver of these things because on Him the Father has set His seal. Paul uses this word for “sealing” in Ephesians 1:13-14, “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation - having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.” If the “sealing” of Jesus by the Father also has to do with the Holy Spirit, then Jesus may be referring to His baptism when it is said that “the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, “You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased” (Luke 3:22). Probably His miracles also were part of this “seal” of the Father. Albert Barnes says, “To seal is to confirm or approve as ours. This is done when we set our seal to a compact, or deed, or testament, by which we ratify it as our act. So God the Father, by the miracles which had been performed by Jesus, had shown that he had sent him, that he approved his doctrines, and ratified his works. The miracles were to his doctrine what a seal is to a written instrument.”²⁹ God's stamp of approval had been put on His Son, and He therefore is the source of all the Father wants to give us.

Since Jesus had told them not to work for the food that perishes, but to work for the food which endures to eternal life, the people asked, “What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?” A.T. Robertson says that their question means, “What are we to do as a habit that we may go on working the works of God?” They were thinking of deeds, practices and activities they should engage in that would constitute “the works of God,” things like alms giving, prayer and fasting (Matthew 6). To these things we could add a number of other things like being circumcised, observing the Sabbath, obeying the ten commandments and so forth. In answer, Jesus simply says, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.” The word “believe” is a present-tense, active subjunctive verb meaning “keep on believing.” They were to believe in Him and go on believing in Him. Belief is not a one time act, but an ongoing thing. Here we see works replaced by faith. There are no works or deeds we can do that result in eternal life. We are saved by the grace of God through faith in Christ and not as a result of works (Ephesians 2:8-9). When we put our trust in Jesus Christ, the one

28 Robertson, A.T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*

29 Barnes, Albert, *Albert Barnes Notes on the Bible*

the Father has sent, we have accomplished the “work of God,” we have fulfilled His work in our lives. It is the Father who brings this about in us. The work God does in us is to enable us to believe in the one He has sent. This is the central point in this passage and the central point in the gospel of John, that we should believe in Jesus and receive life in His name. When Jesus uses these pictures and metaphors about being born again or about the water of life or about the bread of life, He is ultimately talking about faith in Him. This is what we must keep in mind as we try to interpret passages like this.

Of course these people did not say, “OK! We do believe in You! We do believe that You are the Messiah and are the one who has come down from heaven to give us life!” Instead they asked, “What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do you perform?” Jesus had just performed a great sign the day before when He fed them with the five loaves and two fish, and now they demand another sign. They again demand that He prove Himself with another performance! They added, “Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.’” The quote is from Psalm 78:24, and they were probably thinking that the bread from heaven, the manna, was the great sign that Moses was the great prophet and law-giver of Israel, and that Jesus should equal or surpass Moses if He wanted to prove that He was the Messiah.

Jesus corrected their mistaken idea that it was Moses who gave them the bread out of heaven, and says, “it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world.” It wasn’t Moses in the past who gave them bread out of heaven, but right now it is the Father who is giving them the true bread out of heaven. This bread from heaven was before them at that moment, in their presence. John the Baptist said that Jesus was the “Lamb of God,” and here we find that Jesus is the “bread of God.”

Seven times in this passage the phrase “down out of heaven” occurs, in verses 33, 38 (“down from heaven”), 41, 42, 50, 51 and 58. This bread does not originate from earth, but from heaven, given by the Father. This bread “gives life to the world.” This bread is not like the manna God gave them. The manna satisfied their physical hunger for a day, but then the next day they needed more. The true bread from heaven gives eternal life. This is the same thing Jesus said about the water that He would give in John 4:13-14, “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.” He is not talking about physical, earthly bread just as He wasn’t talking about earthly water. These people wanted Him to feed them and meet their needs, but He wanted to give them something greater and more profound.

Hearing that the bread of God which gives life to the world was available to them right at that moment, the people said, “Lord, always give us this bread.” It is similar to what the woman said in John 4:15, “Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw.” The word “always” translates the Greek word *pantote*, meaning “at all times.” The Contemporary English Version renders it, “Lord, give us this bread and don’t ever stop!” They were asking for a continual ongoing supply of this bread. As the manna had been supplied every day, so they wanted Jesus to do the same, to give them this bread every day and forever.

Jesus makes it explicit in verse 35 that He Himself is the bread of life, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.” Note the parallel ideas of “coming to” Jesus and “believing in” Jesus. To come to Jesus is to believe in Him, and to believe in Him is to come to Him. Jesus previously mentioned the necessity of coming to Him in John 5:40 when He said to the Jews in Jerusalem, “You are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.” Those who come to Jesus will not hunger, and those

who believe in Him will never thirst. Of course Jesus is speaking again not of physical hunger and thirst, but of spiritual hunger and thirst. Jesus is talking about “the food which endures to eternal life,” and not about “the food which perishes” (verse 27). Believers must still eat and drink, but their deepest need for true eternal life is satisfied only in Jesus Christ. If we want the food which endures to eternal life we must come to Jesus and believe in Him.

The trouble with these people is that they did not believe in Him. He had said that they had seen Him, that is, He had pointed out to them in verse 26 that they sought Him because they ate the loaves and were filled. They saw the miracle He had done when He fed them, but they still did not believe in Him. They weren't really seeking Him, but what He could do for them. They were pursuing Him because they wanted the food that perishes. They had sort of “come to Him,” but they had not believed in Him. He is urging them to take the next step and believe.

Jesus introduces a new idea in verse 37, that all who are given by the Father to the Son will come to Him, and those who come to Him will certainly not be cast out. Note that He repeats this idea in verse 39, that Jesus will not lose any of those the Father has given Him. Those who believe in Jesus have been given to Him by the Father. If they have been given by the Father to the Son they will come to Jesus and believe in Him. As we move through the Gospel of John we will see several other places where Jesus says that His disciples were given to Him by the Father. We will find it in John 10:27-29, John 17:2, 6, 9 and 24, and John 18:8-9. Jesus guarantees with a double negative that those given to Him by the Father will certainly not be cast out. The same word for “cast out” is used in Luke 13:28 when He warned, “In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being *thrown out*.” Some who think they have standing with Jesus because, as they say, “We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets,” will be thrown out. Jesus will say to them “I do not know where you are from; depart from Me, all you evildoers” (Luke 13:26-27). Most people will be cast out. Most people are on the wide road to destruction and few find the narrow gate and road to life (Matthew 7:13-14). But there are some who have been given to the Son by the Father. They come to the Son and believe in Him and there is no way they will be cast out. Jesus explains further in John 10:27-29, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 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.” Those whom the Father gives to the Son are secure. They are in His hands and it is impossible for anything or anyone to snatch them away.

Jesus explains some more in verses 38 through 40 as He talks about the will of the Father. He repeats that He had come down from heaven, not to do His own will but to do the will of the One who sent Him. And what is the will of the One who sent Him? He says, “This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.” The will of the Father is, first, that not one of those given to the Son will be lost. The word translated “lost” is *apollumi*, which means “to destroy.” Those given to Jesus will not face destruction, but eternal life and resurrection. Second, the will of the Father is that all who are given to Jesus will be raised up on the last day. Note that He mentions this four times in this chapter, in verses 39, 40, 44 and 54. Jesus Himself will be the one who raises them from the dead. Recall that Jesus said in John 5:28-29, “Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.” There is a day on God's calendar designated as the “last day,” and on that day Jesus will raise those

who belong to Him. They will be raised to the “resurrection of life.” The will of the Father is also that those who behold the Son and believe in Him will have eternal life. Jesus does not mean that we must physically see Him in order to have eternal life, because in John 20:29 He says to Thomas, “Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.” Today we must believe without having seen Jesus. Jesus means that we must perceive with the eyes of faith who He really is and then put our faith in Him.

The statement of Jesus claiming that He was “the bread that came down out of heaven” caused problems for the Jews. They grumbled about Him because of this. They were saying, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, ‘I have come down out of heaven?’” This is pretty much the same thing the people in His hometown of Nazareth said. Matthew 13:54-58 says:

He came to His hometown and began teaching them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers? 55 "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? 56 "And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" 57 And they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household." 58 And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.

Here was a man who by all appearances was just an ordinary man, born to Joseph and Mary like any other man, familiar to them, who grew up in Nazareth and was known by the whole community. But now He claims to have come down out of heaven. No one had seen Him descend from heaven. How could this possibly be true? They could not accept it.

Jesus answered and told them to stop grumbling among themselves. He explains, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD. Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me. Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father.” The men questioning Jesus did not believe in Him and did not believe His claim to have come down out of heaven. These claims were incredible to them. Jesus seems to imply in His response to them that they were incapable of believing in Him because to believe in Him requires that the Father who sent Him must draw them to Jesus. No one is able to come to Jesus and believe in Him unless the Father draws Him. What does it mean to be “drawn” by the Father? The Greek word, *helkuō*, means “to drag (literally or figuratively).”³⁰ Jesus uses the word again in John 12:32, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will *draw* all men to Myself.” In John 18:10 it is used of Peter *drawing* his sword. In Acts 16:9 and 21:30 it is used of Paul being seized and *dragged* somewhere. So then is Jesus really saying that no one comes to faith in Jesus unless the Father takes hold of them and brings them to Jesus? Yes, indeed this is what he's saying! The Father takes the initiative in our salvation. It is His work. If we have come to Jesus it is only because the Father has drawn us to Jesus. He compels people to faith in Christ. C.S. Lewis, in his book *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life*, describes his experience of this:

“You must picture me alone in that room in Magdalen, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting

approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England. I did not then see what is now the most shining and obvious thing; the Divine humility which will accept a convert even on such terms. The Prodigal Son at least walked home on his own feet. But who can duly adore that Love which will open the high gates to a prodigal who is brought in kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance of escape? The words “compelle intrare,” compel them to come in, have been so abused by wicked men that we shudder at them; but, properly understood, they plumb the depth of the Divine mercy. The hardness of God is kinder than the softness of men, and His compulsion is our liberation.”

Lewis’s reference to God’s compulsion comes from the “parable of the banquet” in Luke 14:16-24 where people invited to a man’s dinner refuse to come and make poor excuses. He became angry and ordered his slaves to go bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame. They did this but there was still room, and so the master said, “Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.” There is built in to our sinful nature an unwillingness to submit ourselves to the will of God and the invitation of God. Like Lewis we resist Him and run from Him. Psalm 14, quoted by Paul in Romans 3, makes it clear that there is no one who does good and no one who seeks after God. In His grace God compels us to believe. His compulsion, His work of “drawing” us to Christ, is a gift of His grace.

My own experience is similar that of Lewis, though I was much less intellectual and sophisticated in my unbelief. I tried to be an atheist as a teenager and tried to deny the existence of God. I tried to ignore what I knew to be true about the Lord and about the Bible, but I couldn’t sustain it. God pursued me and drew me to faith in Christ. He compelled me to believe. I did not believe because I wanted so badly to believe, but I believed because I felt I had to. My eyes had been opened and I could no longer deny the truth and keep running from Him.

The quote from the prophets in verse 45 is from Isaiah 54:13, and it explains how the Father draws people to the Son. They are drawn by being taught by God. They hear and learn from the Father and then they come to Jesus. Hearing alone is not enough; it must result in learning. It is hearing and heeding, hearing and obeying. It is what Jesus talked about in Matthew 7:24-27, “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.” Both the wise man and the foolish man heard the words of Jesus, but the wise man acted on what he heard and the foolish man did not. The wise man learned from the teaching of Jesus and the foolish man did not. The wise person hears the teaching of God the Father, learns from Him and therefore comes to Jesus in obedience to what God has taught them. The blessing comes in the doing and not just in the hearing (John 13:17).

Being taught by God and learning from Him does not depend on seeing Him. Jesus makes that clear in verse 46. He had said this before in John 5:37, “And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form.” No one

has seen the Father except the Son, “the One who is from God.” Though it is not possible for us to see the Father, still we can learn from Him because He has spoken. What He has said has been recorded in Scripture. As we study the word of God and pay attention to what God has said, the Holy Spirit instructs us and we end up believing in Jesus.

Again Jesus says in verse 47, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.” This is the third time of four in this chapter that Jesus mentions eternal life. He urged them to work for the “food which endures to eternal life” in verse 27, and then in verse 40 said that the will of the Father is that those who believe in the Son will have eternal life, and now assures them that those who believe have eternal life. It is a present-tense reality; those who believe have eternal life right now. There is no genuine believer in Jesus who does not possess eternal life.

For the second time He says, “I am the bread of life” (verses 35 and 48). They had asked Him to give them this bread, and again He is trying to explain that He Himself is the bread. There is a contrast between the manna their fathers ate in the wilderness and this bread. Their fathers ate the manna but still died. The manna did not give them eternal life. But this bread, the bread which is Jesus Himself, comes from heaven and those who eat of it will not die. Those who eat of this “living bread that came down out of heaven” will live forever. The “bread” which is Jesus is “living bread,” and not like the manna. This bread is given by Jesus for the life of the world and it is His flesh. He equates the bread with His own flesh. John 1:14 told us that “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.” The One who had not been flesh became flesh. Everyone knows that bread is no good unless it is eaten, and so the Jews deduced that Jesus was saying they must eat His flesh in order to have eternal life. The Jews then began to argue with each other, asking “How can this man give us His flesh to eat?” Perhaps some were saying that He meant this in a spiritual or figurative sense, and not in a literal sense. They could not see how this was possible. They were not cannibals! In His reply, Jesus ramps things up even more in verses 53 through 58. He appears to say that He means this literally. In verse 53 He mentions not only eating His flesh but also drinking His blood, and says unless they do this they “have no life in yourselves.” If they won’t eat His flesh and drink His blood, they will not have eternal life. But the one who does eat His flesh and drink His blood has eternal life and Jesus will raise him up on the last day. In verse 53 the word translated “eat” is *esthiō*, and simply means “to eat” or “to consume.” In verse 54 the word for “eats” is *trōgō*, “to gnaw, munch, crunch.”³¹ A.T. Robertson says that *trōgō* here is a “Present active participle for continual or habitual eating like *pisteuete* in John 6:29. The verb *trōgō* is an old one for eating fruit or vegetables and the feeding of animals.”³² Some animals seem to do nothing but eat. They are continually grazing and chewing the cud. Jesus says that this is what we must do if we want eternal life, we must continually munch on Him.

We should note a bit more about verse 51 where He says, “the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.” When Jesus inaugurated the Lord’s supper, He took the bread and broke it and said, “This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me” (Luke 22:19). Paul mentions six times in his epistles that Jesus “gave Himself” for us. Galatians 1:4 says Christ “gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.” In Galatians 2:20 he personalizes it when he says, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” In 1 Timothy 2:5-6 he says, “For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.” In Mark 10:45 Jesus says, “For

31 *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance*

32 Robertson, A.T. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*

even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Jesus says in John 10:10 that His life is not taken from Him, but that He lays it down of His own initiative. His life was not taken, but was given. Jesus looked ahead to what He had been sent to do, and summarized it by saying that He came to give His flesh for the life of the world. Eternal life is only possible for us because He did this.

Jesus makes things even more intense in verse 55 as He explains, "For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink." He seems to be saying that He means this literally. He will give us the key to understanding what He's saying in verse 63, and we will look at that in a bit, but I think He is saying this to the Jews deliberately, knowing they would react with revulsion. It was explicitly forbidden in the Law for them to drink blood. In Leviticus 17:10-14 the Lord says:

And any man from the house of Israel, or from the aliens who sojourn among them, who eats any blood, I will set My face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people. 11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement. 12 Therefore I said to the sons of Israel, "No person among you may eat blood, nor may any alien who sojourns among you eat blood." 13 So when any man from the sons of Israel, or from the aliens who sojourn among them, in hunting catches a beast or a bird which may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth. 14 For as for the life of all flesh, its blood is identified with its life. Therefore I said to the sons of Israel, You are not to eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off.

Jesus knew when He said these things that they would be outrageous to the Jews. We should also admit that this is probably the most difficult of the teachings of Jesus for us. The idea that we should eat the flesh of another human and drink their blood is repugnant. These words will drive many away from Jesus.

Eating the flesh of Jesus and drinking His blood is the means of abiding in Him (verse 56). John again uses this word *menō*, to abide. He uses it especially in chapter 15 where Jesus tells the disciples that they must "abide" in Him in order to bear fruit. We live in Him and He lives in us if we eat His flesh and drink His blood. The relationship between the believer and Jesus is just like the relationship between the Father and the Son (verse 57). As the Son was sent by the Father and lives because of the Father, so those who eat the Son will live because of Him. The Father and His will was the "food" of the Son, and the Son and His will is the "food" of believers.

Verse 57 is the only place in the New Testament where God is called "the living Father." In Matthew 16:16 Peter says, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," but nowhere else is He called "the living Father." It is an important point about the Father. He is not a dead idol made of wood or metal or stone. He is the living God. He is the God who is really alive. Recall that Jesus said in John 5:26, "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself." The Father is the ultimate source of true life.

Again Jesus emphasizes in verses 57 and 58 that those who eat Him will live and will live forever. He is not like the manna which nourished them for a day. Partaking of Christ gives us eternal life. We live because of Him.

This teaching of Jesus reminded me of the situation in the garden of Eden where God placed the first man and woman He created. It is described in Genesis 2:8-9, "The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had

formed. Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” Two important trees were put in the garden, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God commanded Adam not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Genesis 2:16-17 says, “The LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.’” They were free to eat from any tree, including the tree of life, but He warned them not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This gave Adam and Eve a choice, to obey or disobey. The consequence of disobedience was death. After listening to and following the deception of Satan and eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God cast them out of the garden and barred their access to the tree of life. They chose disobedience over obedience, and chose death rather than life. Genesis 3:22-24 says, “Then the LORD God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever’— therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.” It’s interesting that the tree of life reappears in the last book of the Bible, in Revelation. Jesus says in Revelation 2:7, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.” This tree is also mentioned in Revelation 22, verses 2, 14 and 19. Access to the tree of life will be restored in the kingdom of heaven. God gave mankind a choice between these two trees, these two destinies, and we chose death. We chose to submit to Satan rather than God, and we have been subjects of Satan ever since. Jesus came to remedy this problem. He came to restore us to eternal life.

John 6:60-71

Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" 61 But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble? 62 "What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before? 63 "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. 64 "But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. 65 And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father." 66 As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. 67 So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" 68 Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. 69 "We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God." 70 Jesus answered them, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?" 71 Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him.

The focus now shifts from the Jews who did not believe in Jesus to His disciples who did believe in Him. Many of those who were His disciples said, “This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?” The Greek word translated “difficult” is *sklēros*, from the verb *skellō*, “to dry,” and means “hard, rough, harsh, stiff.” Many translations use the word “hard.” When they ask, “Who can listen to it?” they mean “Who can accept it?” (International Standard Version). This

business about eating the flesh of Jesus and drinking His blood was too much for the Jews to accept. It was too hard. Jesus had crossed a line and said something they felt was out-of-bounds. Indeed if Jesus is really saying that in order to be saved and have eternal life we must become cannibals, literally eating His flesh and drinking His blood, then this is unacceptable teaching. Besides, it is impossible for us, as His body is no longer present and available on this earth. We have no way of obtaining meat from His body or bottles of His blood.

Jesus was aware that the disciples were grumbling about this. Knowing this, He asked them two rhetorical questions, "Does this cause you to stumble?" and "What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?" I think the sense of what He's saying is this: "If what I've just said to you causes you to stumble, then what will happen if you see Me ascend into heaven?" He had said clearly that He had come down out of heaven as the true bread of life, and now He says that He will ascend back into heaven. If they couldn't accept that He came down out of heaven, how will they accept it if He ascends again? If He ascends, there will no longer be the opportunity to literally eat of His flesh and drink of His blood. So now He's getting to the key to understanding His teaching.

The key is here in verse 63, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." We often see contrasts like this in the New Testament between the flesh and the Spirit, particularly in Romans 8 and Galatians 5. The flesh is unprofitable; it is of no benefit and of no advantage. The flesh is useless and Jesus is not talking about the flesh. We should recall what Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3:5-8, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' 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." His words are spiritual words, not fleshly words. He is talking about spiritual reality and not fleshly reality. He is clarifying to the disciples that when He said that they must eat His flesh and drink His blood in order to have eternal life, He did not mean it literally in regard to His physical body and His physical blood. Life, eternal life, is given by the Spirit of God. Some think that the first occurrence of "spirit" in verse 63 should not be capitalized, but I think in light of John 3 that Jesus is certainly speaking of the Holy Spirit.

I think verses 64 and 65 explain why Jesus said what He had said. Among those who were following Him were many who did not really believe in Him and who would not believe in Him. To the disciples He said, "there are some of you who do not believe." John says Jesus "knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him." Jesus was aware that there were unbelievers among the disciples, and I think He said these things deliberately in John 6 so that they would turn away from Him. Because some who were following Him did not really believe, He said to them that no one can come to Him unless it has been granted to him from the Father. It was in verse 44 that He had said no one can come to Him unless the Father draws him, and now He says this privilege must be "granted him from the Father." Coming to Jesus and believing in Him is a thing that is given to the individual by the Father. It is a gift from God.

Many of those who were following Jesus as His disciples withdrew as a result of what He had said and quit following Him. I like what A.T. Roberson says, "The crisis had come. These half-hearted seekers after the loaves and fishes and political power turned abruptly from Jesus, walked out of the synagogue with a deal of bluster and were walking with Jesus no more. Jesus had completely disillusioned these hungry camp-followers who did not care for

spiritual manna that consisted in intimate appropriation of the life of Jesus as God's Son."³³ These people had wanted to install Jesus as king so that He would defeat their enemies and provide their daily food. But Jesus clearly repudiated that idea. He was going to give His flesh for the life of the world (verse 51). They would have to eat His flesh and drink His blood, and you can't do that if the person is alive. Jesus was clearly saying that His mission was to die to enable us to have life. This is not what these so-called "disciples" had in mind. They sought a political Messiah, not one who would lay down His life as a sacrifice.

The twelve apostles were probably also puzzled and disturbed by what Jesus had said. They also thought in terms of a political Messiah. Peter rebuked Jesus for saying that He must die (Matthew 16:21-22). They did not understand His mission until later, until after His resurrection. So Jesus asked them, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" The question expects a negative answer. Peter, often the spokesman for the apostles, replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy one of God." Peter expresses three beliefs here. First, that there was nowhere else to go, no one else to follow. There was no other rabbi worth following. There was no alternative for Peter and the other apostles other than Jesus. Second, he believed that the words of Jesus were words of eternal life, even if he didn't completely understand them. He had confidence in the words and teachings of Jesus. Jesus was the one who was pointing them toward eternal life. Third, Peter believed that Jesus was "the Holy One of God." They had believed this and had come to know this. The faith preceded the knowledge. They had believed in Him initially and had followed Him, and then as they heard what He said and saw what He did, they became fully convinced of who He was. Their faith in Him grew and their knowledge and understanding of Him grew. He could say these kinds of inscrutable things and they would still believe and follow Him. We don't have to know everything before we believe. We believe first and then we grow in knowledge. Faith does not depend on knowledge, but knowledge on faith.

The apostles had believed in Jesus and come to Him because the Father had drawn them and granted it to them, but also because Jesus Himself had chosen them (verse 70). Luke tells us about this in Luke 6:12-16:

It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. 13 And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles: 14 Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James and John; and Philip and Bartholomew; 15 and Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot; 16 Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

From among those who were following Jesus as His disciples, Jesus chose these twelve men to be His apostles, His "sent ones," His representatives. One of them, Judas, stood out as the one who would betray Him. Jesus said of him, "one of you is a devil." The Greek word for "devil" is *diabolos*, meaning one who slanders or accuses falsely. We get our English word "diabolical" from this word. Judas proved to be a false apostle and a traitor. Jesus did not reveal at this point who it was, but did let it be known that He had chosen one man who was false. Apparently Jesus knew when He chose Judas that Judas would betray Him (verse 64). At the time Jesus said this Judas may not have had any thought of betraying Jesus. I think it

was later that Satan put it into the mind of Judas that he should do this (see John 13:2). At this point I don't think even Judas himself knew he was the one to betray Jesus.

Before we move on to chapter 7, I think we should address a question that may occur at this point regarding eating the flesh of Jesus and drinking His blood. The question is whether this refers to the sacrament of communion. Is Jesus saying that we must partake of communion in order to have eternal life? Is the Lord's Supper the means of eating His flesh and drinking His blood? When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper at the Passover observance with His disciples, He took some of the bread, broke it and said, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." After they had eaten He took the cup and said, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood" (Luke 22:19-20). Jesus did not say, "Keep doing this if you want to be saved and have eternal life," but He said, "do this in remembrance of Me." The Lord's Supper is a memorial, a remembrance and a reminder of the Lord's death. Paul says the same thing in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." So then communion is a reminder of Jesus and His death and a proclamation of His death. We are to keep doing this until He comes, but there is no indication that we obtain salvation through taking communion. It is symbolic of the fact that we are, in a spiritual sense, eating His body and drinking His blood, that we are depending on His death for our life. If eternal life depended on taking communion, then salvation would not be by grace through faith, but by the "work" of taking communion. I think Jesus has made it very clear that when He says these things He's talking about believing in Him. Believing is the "work of God."

John 7:1-13

After these things Jesus was walking in Galilee, for He was unwilling to walk in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him. 2 Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near. 3 Therefore His brothers said to Him, "Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. 4 "For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." 5 For not even His brothers were believing in Him. 6 So Jesus said to them, "My time is not yet here, but your time is always opportune. 7 "The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil. 8 "Go up to the feast yourselves; I do not go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come." 9 Having said these things to them, He stayed in Galilee. 10 But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as if, in secret. 11 So the Jews were seeking Him at the feast and were saying, "Where is He?" 12 There was much grumbling among the crowds concerning Him; some were saying, "He is a good man"; others were saying, "No, on the contrary, He leads the people astray." 13 Yet no one was speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews.

Jesus confined Himself to Galilee at this point and was unwilling to go to Judea because the Jews there sought to kill Him. The Jewish leaders in Judea had determined that He must be eliminated. John 5:18 told us, "For this reason 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.” It was not yet time for Him to be arrested and killed, so He stayed in Galilee.

It was time for the Feast of Booths, and so the people of Israel were to gather in Jerusalem to celebrate it together. This feast is commanded and explained in Leviticus 23:33-44:

Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 34 "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'On the fifteenth of this seventh month is the Feast of Booths for seven days to the LORD. 35 'On the first day is a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work of any kind. 36 'For seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation and present an offering by fire to the LORD; it is an assembly. You shall do no laborious work. 37 'These are the appointed times of the LORD which you shall proclaim as holy convocations, to present offerings by fire to the LORD—burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each day's matter on its own day— 38 besides those of the sabbaths of the LORD, and besides your gifts and besides all your votive and freewill offerings, which you give to the LORD. 39 'On exactly the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the crops of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD for seven days, with a rest on the first day and a rest on the eighth day. 40 'Now on the first day you shall take for yourselves the foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. 41 'You shall thus celebrate it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. 42 'You shall live in booths for seven days; all the native-born in Israel shall live in booths, 43 so that your generations may know that I had the sons of Israel live in booths when I brought them out from the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.'" 44 So Moses declared to the sons of Israel the appointed times of the LORD.

The Feast of Booths is also mentioned in Deuteronomy 16:13-17. It was held in the month of Tisri, which in our calendar is September and early October.

The brothers of Jesus were heading to Jerusalem for this feast, and urged Him to leave Galilee and go to Judea as well. The reason they gave Him was, “so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing.” When Jesus was in Judea previously, many had believed in Him. John 2:23 says, “Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing.” When Jesus was in Judea, He “was making and baptizing more disciples than John” (John 4:1). His brothers were aware that He had disciples in Judea, and so they urged Him to go to the feast in order to do more signs and make Himself more of a public figure. They explained, “For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world.” Apparently this advice is not sincere, because John tells us that they did not believe in Jesus. These words were likely uttered in sarcasm. They were saying, “If You’re so great, go to Judea and show the world!” Their idea that the aim of Jesus was to be “known publicly” was incorrect. Public acclaim and popularity was not what Jesus was about. He was not trying to make a public spectacle of Himself. He was not trying to show Himself to the world. Note that the contrast between public and private is mentioned again in verse 10. The word translated “publicly” here is *parrhēsia*, “*all out spokenness*, that

is, *frankness, bluntness, publicity*; by implication *assurance*.”³⁴ His brothers were challenging Him to go speak and act openly at the feast.

In His answer Jesus said that He was not going up to the feast because His time had not yet come (verses 6 and 8). The word for “time” in these verses is *kairos*, meaning a season or occasion. Often in John Jesus uses the word *hōra*, “hour” when He talks about a specific time that is coming, as in John 2:4, “Woman what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come.” It was not the season for Him to go to Jerusalem and reveal Himself publicly. But for His brothers, their time was “always opportune.” Many translations say “your time is always here” or “always ready.” They fit in to the unbelieving society of their time. There was nothing objectionable about them to the leading Jews in Jerusalem. They were just brothers of this crazy guy who claimed to have come down out of heaven. In fact, in their unbelief they stood with those in Judea who opposed Jesus.

Why did Jesus say that it was not yet His time? Why had His time not yet fully come? He explains in verse 7, “The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil.” The brothers of Jesus were not hated by the world because they were of the world and were in accord with the world. But the world hated Jesus because of what He said about it. This is why the Jews in Judea wanted to kill Him. We noted some of these things He said about them in John 5:37-47, that they really did not love God, that they sought glory from other men rather than from God, that they didn’t really believe the writings of Moses, that Moses would accuse them, and so forth. There is no stronger denunciation of these men than what Jesus says to them in Matthew 23, calling them hypocrites, blind guides, fools and blind men, whitewashed tombs, sons of those who murdered the prophets, serpents, and a brood of vipers.

The fact that the deeds of the world are evil is a basic biblical and Christian idea. In the Parable of the Wheat and Tares in Matthew 13 Jesus teaches clearly that those represented by the “tares,” the weeds, are “sons of the evil one” (Matthew 13:38). We must understand that apart from the redemption we have in Christ, we are evil by nature and we do evil. Jesus touched on this truth in Matthew 7:11 when He talked about prayer, “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!” Paul writes in Romans 7:18-21, “For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.” Human nature is not basically good, but basically evil. This is why Jesus had to die, to atone for our sins. He tells us the truth about ourselves, but are we willing to listen?

So let’s be honest here. Do we love people who tell us we are evil? Do we welcome those who denounce us and point the finger at the evils in our lives? Probably not. No one likes to be told they are evil. No one likes to have their wickedness exposed. Usually when people are publicly accused of some act of evil, they deny it categorically. We do not love those who accuse us of evil. Jesus pointed to the evil of men and women. He gave testimony to the evil deeds of the world, and this is why the world hated and still hates Him. It is the reason the world hates Christ, Christians and Christianity. The world knows that we condemn things they embrace. They know we reject as evil many things they affirm as good; sexual immorality, abortion, greed, envy, drug abuse, selfish ambition and so on. But it is essential that we come to grips with this fact that we are evil and do evil. We must recognize the problem and not deny it. It is God’s blessing to turn us from evil. Peter said to the Jews, “For you first, God

34 *Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries*

raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways” (Acts 3:26).

Like Jesus, we who follow Him are trying to turn people from their wicked ways and get them to put their faith in the Lord. We are trying by the power of the Spirit to open their eyes to the truth of their sinfulness and point to the forgiveness and grace that is in Christ. We must be careful about this, however. As we point out the sin of others we must recognize our own sin. We must deal with the “log” that is in our own eye before we try to remove the “speck” from our brother’s eye (Matthew 7:1-5). Only those who have recognized their own sin and turned to Christ are qualified to make the forthright but tactful attempt to point out the sin of others. We must not try to denounce drug abuse while abusing drugs. We must not try to condemn adultery while committing adultery. Paul warns of this in Romans 2:1-11:

Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. 2 And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. 3 But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? 4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? 5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, 6 who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: 7 to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; 8 but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. 9 There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, 10 but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 11 For there is no partiality with God.

As we call on people to turn from their sin and evil we realize that we also must do so. We do not call on people to renounce their sins from a position of untainted holiness, as did Jesus, but as those who are in the same position but having received forgiveness and redemption through faith in Christ.

Since His time had “not yet fully come,” Jesus told His brothers to go up to the feast themselves, but that He would not go up. They left, and He stayed in Galilee. The difficulty here is that verse 8 seems to contradict verse 10. Jesus did go up to the feast after His brothers had gone. He said He would not go to the feast, and then He went to the feast. The key is that He went “as if, in secret.” He did not take His brothers’ advice and go up publicly, but went up secretly. He did not go to the feast in the way that His brothers said He should go, with a big public spectacle. Later He will ride into Jerusalem on the colt of the donkey, proclaiming Himself to be the Messiah, but that time had not come.

How did Jesus do this “in secret”? Well, we aren’t told how He did it. Did He disguise Himself? Did He wear a cloak with a hood over His head? Did He go without the knowledge of His disciples? We just don’t know. Apparently He was there for a few days before He went into the temple to teach. Probably He did not rendezvous with His brothers, but stayed away from them. No doubt He did not initially do anything to draw attention to Himself, but just appeared to be one of the crowd. We know that after the resurrection Jesus had the ability to conceal His identity and keep people from recognizing Him (see Luke 24:13-35). Perhaps He used this ability at the feast.

The Jews in Jerusalem at the feast also expected that Jesus would be there and were asking, "Where is He?" They were looking for Him. Whether they were proponents or opponents, they had an eye out for Him. There was much "grumbling" among the crowds about Him and opinions were divided. Some said, "He is a good man," but others said, "No, on the contrary, He leads the people astray." Some saw Jesus as a deceiver who was leading people in the wrong direction. Though there was much of this debate going on, no one was speaking openly about Him "for fear of the Jews." This is the first of three times in John's gospel we find this phrase. We find it again in John 19:38, "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." It occurs again in John 20:19, "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.'" Fear of the Jewish leaders who were determined to put Jesus to death caused people to avoid speaking of Him openly or showing any support for Him. One reason for this fear was that the Jewish leaders had decided to bar those who supported Jesus from the synagogues. The parents of the man who had been born blind feared this. John 9:22-23 says, "His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. For this reason his parents said, 'He is of age; ask him.'" John 12:42-43 says, "Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God." Many today will not confess Christ for this very reason, they fear the disapproval of others. Many drop their faith in Christ when they find that they face "affliction or persecution" because of it (Matthew 13:21).

John 7:14-24

But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach. 15 The Jews then were astonished, saying, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?" 16 So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. 17 "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself. 18 "He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him. 19 "Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?" 20 The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?" 21 Jesus answered them, "I did one deed, and you all marvel. 22 "For this reason Moses has given you circumcision (not because it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and on the Sabbath you circumcise a man. 23 "If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath? 24 "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

The Feast of Booths was a seven day event plus an eighth day for a "holy convocation" (Leviticus 23:36). So sometime in the middle of the feast Jesus went up to the temple and began teaching. The Jews there asked the same question that the people of Nazareth had asked, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?" Jesus was teaching and teaching well, as a well-trained rabbi, but He was just a carpenter from the small town of Nazareth. He had not been educated at one of the prestigious rabbinical schools in

Judea. Paul could say that he had been “educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers” (Acts 22:3), but Jesus had no such education. In the eyes of the Jewish leaders Jesus had no credentials and was not qualified to be a rabbi, and yet they could see that He had “become learned.” Somehow He had gained the knowledge necessary to teach the word of God with accuracy.

There is an arrogance that comes with higher education, and with that arrogance comes a disdain for others who do not have a similar education. People with advanced degrees are seen as more credible and authoritative than uneducated people. Paul says, “Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies” (1 Corinthians 8:1). Jesus addressed this as He spoke about the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:2-12:

“The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; 3 therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them. 4 “They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. 5 “But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments. 6 “They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, 7 and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men. 8 “But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. 9 “Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. 10 “Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. 11 “But the greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 “Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.”

Many people pursue the prestige and respect they get from being called “doctor.” They are seen as authorities and teachers and people who have answers to questions and solutions to problems. Indeed, those who have thoroughly studied a subject are probably better equipped to answer questions about the subject. We don't go to an auto mechanic if we need a brain surgeon. But Jesus tells us not to pursue titles or take them to ourselves. In the body of Christ we are all brothers and sisters, and we all have one Teacher and Leader and Father.

How had Jesus become learned? Where had He received His education? Jesus answers that His teaching did not originate from Himself, but from the One who sent Him. His teaching originated from God (verse 17). All that Jesus did came from the Father (John 5:30), and all that He said came from the Father. He did the works of the Father and spoke the words of the Father. The teaching of Jesus comes directly from God Himself. The person who will know this is true is the person who is “willing do do His will.” Those who reject the teaching of Jesus demonstrate that they are not willing to do God's will, that they will not submit themselves to the will of God. Those who are sincere in wanting to do what God wants will see that the teaching of Jesus comes from God.

Jesus says that the one who “speaks from himself” is seeking his own glory and honor. But the one who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true and “there is no unrighteousness in Him.” There is an inherent insincerity in those who speak from themselves, who spin their own truth out of their own minds. They are not credible and should not be followed. They seek their own exaltation. Christ is credible because He seeks the glory of the Father and speaks the words of the Father. He does not seek to exalt Himself.

The Jews were very proud of the fact that they had been given the Law of Moses. They relied on it and boasted in it (see Romans 2:17-23). But they did not carry out the Law. Jesus asks in verse 19, “Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you carries out the Law?”

Why do you seek to kill Me?" They did not have any justification for wanting to kill Him. He had done nothing that required His death according to the Law.

The crowd that replied to Jesus apparently was unaware of the plot of the Jews in Jerusalem to kill Jesus, and so they said, "You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?" These may be people who were unaware of how Jesus had healed the man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath (John 5:1-18). Perhaps they had come from other places to observe the feast and hadn't heard what had happened when Jesus was there previously. They are very quick to charge Him with having a demon.

The "one deed" Jesus had done previously in Jerusalem on the Sabbath caused the Jews to marvel, but also caused them to oppose Him because He was "working" on the Sabbath and told the man He had healed to "work" on the Sabbath. Jesus addressed the issue by pointing to the practice of circumcision. According to the Law, a newborn boy was to be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth (Leviticus 12:3). If this day fell on a Sabbath, they had to go ahead and "work" on the Sabbath by circumcising him so they wouldn't violate the law about circumcising on the eighth day. They had to violate the Sabbath law to keep the law of circumcision. Jesus pointed out that this law did not originate with Moses, but was "from the fathers." God gave the law of circumcision to Abraham, as recorded in Genesis 17:10-14:

"This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 "And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. 12 "And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants. 13 "A servant who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14 "But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."

Right after God said this to Abraham, Abraham had himself and all the men of his household circumcised. This "sign of the covenant" predates the Law of Moses.

Jesus asked them, "If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath?" There are several other occasions in the gospels when Jesus had confrontations over this issue of healing or working on the Sabbath. In Matthew 12:1-8 there was a confrontation over the disciples picking heads of grain and eating them on the Sabbath (also recorded in Mark 2:23-28). In Mark 3:1-6 and Luke 6:6-11 there is the story of Jesus healing a man in a synagogue on the Sabbath who had a withered hand. Jesus asked, "I ask you, it is lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or destroy it?" When Jesus healed the man's hand His opponents were "filled with rage, and discussed together what they might do to Jesus." Another noteworthy incident is in Luke 13:10-17:

And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. 11 And there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all. 12 When Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your sickness." 13 And He laid His hands on her; and immediately she was made erect again and began glorifying God. 14 But the synagogue official, indignant because Jesus had

healed on the Sabbath, began saying to the crowd in response, "There are six days in which work should be done; so come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day." 15 But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead him away to water him? 16 "And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?" 17 As He said this, all His opponents were being humiliated; and the entire crowd was rejoicing over all the glorious things being done by Him.

The issue came up again in Luke 14:1-6:

It happened that when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on the Sabbath to eat bread, they were watching Him closely. 2 And there in front of Him was a man suffering from dropsy. 3 And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" 4 But they kept silent. And He took hold of him and healed him, and sent him away. 5 And He said to them, "Which one of you will have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?" 6 And they could make no reply to this.

Jesus seems to say in all of this that human needs come before a strict observance of the Sabbath law and tradition. Clearly it is lawful to do good and meet human needs on the Sabbath. Clearly if there is an emergency or a crisis, it is legal and imperative to do what needs to be done on the Sabbath. In fact, Jesus says in Matthew 12:8, "the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." Jesus stands over the Sabbath as Lord, and He will do what He must do on the Sabbath.

The anger of the Jewish authorities toward Him was unjustified. Their insistence on a strict and unbending observance of their Sabbath traditions was unreasonable. It was entirely appropriate that Jesus should heal a man on the Sabbath, and it should have been celebrated rather than condemned. Jesus commands them, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." The word translated "appearance" is *opsis*, seeing or sight. Judging by what we see is not necessarily righteous judgment. What Jesus had done did not look right to the Jews because of their notions about the Sabbath, but it was right. Their judgment of Him was unrighteous. They got it wrong. This is why He chewed them out about their hypocrisy. What appears to be wrong may not always be wrong. What appears to be right may not always be right. We need righteous judgment.

John 7:25-36

So some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill? 26 "Look, He is speaking publicly, and they are saying nothing to Him. The rulers do not really know that this is the Christ, do they? 27 "However, we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from." 28 Then Jesus cried out in the temple, teaching and saying, "You both know Me and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. 29 "I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me." 30 So they were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come. 31 But many of the crowd believed in Him; and they were saying, "When the Christ comes, He will not

perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?"

32 The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about Him, and the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to seize Him. 33 Therefore Jesus said, "For a little while longer I am with you, then I go to Him who sent Me. 34 "You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come." 35 The Jews then said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find Him? He is not intending to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks, is He? 36 "What is this statement that He said, 'You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come'?"

Now we get the perspective of the "people of Jerusalem," who knew that their leaders wanted to kill Jesus. Most people there for the feast from elsewhere probably did not know about this plot against Jesus, but the people of Jerusalem were aware of it. They recognized that here was Jesus, the man they wanted to kill, but the leaders were not saying anything to Him. He was speaking openly and teaching, and the leaders were not doing anything about it. They speculated, "The rulers do not really know that this is the Christ, do they?" Did the rulers secretly know that Jesus was the Christ but were unwilling for some reason to admit it? If they knew He was the Christ, shouldn't they proclaim it and support Him rather than trying to kill Him? They were baffled by the inaction of the rulers.

Probably the Jews from Galilee who were there had made it known that they were familiar with Jesus, that He came from Nazareth and that they knew His family. He was just a son of a carpenter, an insignificant man from an insignificant town. So the Jews were saying, "we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from." They evidently had the idea that Jesus could not possibly be the Messiah since they knew His origin. Despite the fact that the Scripture clearly said He would come from Bethlehem in Micah 5:2, and that He would be the son of David in 2 Samuel 7:12-14, they had the idea that His appearance would be mysterious; perhaps that He would come down out of heaven. Of course we saw in chapter 6 that Jesus clearly claimed to have come down out of heaven and to have been sent by the Father. They knew His earthly origin, but did not recognize His heavenly origin.

Jesus responded to the claim that the people knew where He was from. He acknowledged that they did know Him and where He was from, but they did not know the One who sent Him. The International Standard Version renders the first part of verse 28 as a question, "So you know me and know where I have come from?" The Contemporary English Version also takes this view. From an earthly perspective they did know where He came from, but Jesus knew what they did not know. He again repeated that He had not come of Himself, but He was sent by the One who "is true." The One who sent Jesus is true, genuine, truthful, and not false. They did not know the Father, but Jesus knew Him and was from Him and sent by Him. In the next chapter Jesus will say, "...and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word" (John 8:55). The knowledge of Jesus transcends our knowledge. We do not know what He knows. This is why we must listen to Him carefully.

The people "were seeking to seize Him," but were not able to even lay a hand on Him "because His hour had not yet come" (verse 30). The time was coming for Him to suffer and die, but it had not yet come. They could not apprehend Him until that hour came, and when it came, He gave Himself up willingly. No hand would be laid on Him until that time.

Many in the crowd believed in Jesus because of the signs He had performed. They asked their fellows, "When the Christ comes, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?" Later, after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the chief priests and

Pharisees even acknowledged that Jesus was performing “many signs” (John 11:47). His miraculous signs were undeniable even to His opponents. If another came along claiming to be the Christ, he would not perform more signs than Jesus. Jesus exhibited the true signs of the true Messiah. This was the foundation of the faith of these people, and was a powerful argument for faith in Him. The Pharisees heard people saying these things and were concerned that Jesus was becoming more popular and influential among the people, and so they along with the chief priests sent officers, subordinates, to seize Him.

Jesus responded to the Pharisees and said, “For a little while longer I am with you, then I go to Him who sent Me. You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come.” Jesus knew the time was coming for Him to depart and return to the Father who sent Him. John 13:1 tells us that Jesus knew that time had come. He would be with them for a little while longer, but then would return to the Father. Jesus wants those who are truly His disciples to be with Him there. He will tell the disciples in John 13:33, “Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, “Where I am going, you cannot come.” This concerned Peter, and he asked, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus responded, “Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later” (John 13:36). Jesus then says in John 14:1-3, “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 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. 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.” Jesus will also ask for this as He prays in John 17:24, “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.” Those who really believe in Jesus will follow after Him and will be with Him in the Father’s house. He wants us to join Him there and see His glory. The disciples can and will come to the place where He was going. But to His opponents He says, “where I am, you cannot come.” They are prohibited from joining Him in His Father’s house. In His scathing denunciation of the Pharisees and scribes in Matthew 23, Jesus says in verse 33, “You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?” He went on to say that they would be held guilty for all the righteous blood shed on earth in verses 34 through 36. If they stay on their course, they will not escape this fate. They needed to escape this sentence, but Jesus seems to say that they will not. They will continue to look for the Messiah, but they had already rejected Him and would never know Him.

The Jews again did not understand what He was saying. They only understood it from an earthly perspective. They wondered if He meant that He was going away to the “Dispersion among the Greeks.” A great number of Jews had been scattered from Israel and lived among the Gentiles. These men are talking about this “Dispersion.” As Paul traveled around the Roman world he found a Jewish synagogue in virtually every city he visited. These men speculated that Jesus meant He was going to leave Israel and travel among the “Greeks.”

John 7:37-52

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. 38 "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will 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.

40 Some of the people therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, "This certainly is the Prophet." 41 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 descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" 43 So a division occurred in the crowd because of Him. 44 Some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him. 45 The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, "Why did you not bring Him?" 46 The officers answered, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks." 47 The Pharisees then 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 crowd which does not know the Law is accursed." 50 Nicodemus (he who came to Him before, being one of them) said to 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 him, "You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee." 53 [Everyone went to his home.

The eighth day was the last day of the feast, and was observed as a Sabbath (Leviticus 23:36). One of the customs that was observed during this feast involved water that was brought from the pool of Siloam and poured out at the altar. The custom is described in Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible:

In later times novel customs were attached to the observance. Such were the daily procession round the altar, with its sevenfold repetition on the 7th day; the singing of special Psalms; the procession on each of the first 7 days to Siloam to fetch water, which was mixed with wine in a golden pitcher, and poured at the foot of the altar while trumpets were blown (cf. John 7:37); and the illumination of the women's court in the Temple by the lighting of the 4 golden candelabra (cf. John 8:12). The 8th day, though appearing originally as a supplementary addition to the feast, came to be regarded as an integral part of it, and is so treated in 2 Maccabees 10:6, as also by Josephus.³⁵

Marvin Vincent and A. T. Robertson say that as the priest poured out this water at the base of the altar the people chanted the words from Isaiah 12:3, "With joy shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation."³⁶ So we see again that Jesus takes up this metaphor of thirst and water in verses 37 and 38, as He had with the woman at the well in chapter 4. He is the "well of salvation," and He invites the thirsty to come to Him and drink. Again, believing in Him is the means of doing this. He again combines coming to Him with believing in Him as He had in John 6:35. He invited them to come to Him and drink and believe in Him and promised that if they would do this they would have rivers of living water flowing from their innermost being. It is the same thing He said to the woman in John 4:13-14, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." To the woman Jesus spoke of a well of water, but here He speaks of rivers of water.

In Matthew 5:6 Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." The thing that moves us to come to Jesus is a sense of need and lack. To be hungry means that we need food and lack it. To be thirsty means that we need water and lack it. When Jesus says "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink," He means if we are thirsty for righteousness, if we have a spiritual thirst for God. There must be a recognition of this need. Most people don't realize how spiritually thirsty they really are.

³⁵ A.W.F. Blunt, *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*

³⁶ Vincent, M.R., *Word Studies in the New Testament* and Robertson, A.T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*.

There is a minor problem in verse 38 in that there is no passage in Scripture that corresponds with Jesus' quotation. There is no Old Testament verse that says, "From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water." There are some passages that carry similar ideas. We've mentioned Isaiah 12:3 above. Isaiah 58:11 says, "And the LORD will continually guide you, And satisfy your desire in scorched places, And give strength to your bones; And you will be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail." Isaiah 55:1 says, "Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost." I also think of Jeremiah 2:13, "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns That can hold no water." So I think Jesus picked up on these ideas from the Scriptures to say that He is the source of this "living water," and that they needed to come to Him for it.

The Greek word translated "innermost being" in the NASB is *koilia*, which literally means "belly." The King James Version translates it literally, "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The "innermost being" is really the idea.

When we come to Jesus and drink of the water that He gives, we then also become a source of living water. His living water will be in us and flow from us. How can this be? John explains in verse 39 that Jesus was referring to the Spirit. At that time the Spirit had not yet been given to those who believed in Jesus because Jesus had not yet been glorified. He had not yet ascended to His Father and had not yet sent the Spirit. Jesus will say in John 15:26-27, "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning." He ties the sending of the Spirit with His "going away" in John 16:7, "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." The Holy Spirit would not be sent to the believers until Jesus had returned to the Father, until He had been glorified. We will see more about this when we get to chapters 15 and 16.

What does it mean in practical terms for the believer to have "rivers of living water" flowing from his "innermost being"? We have seen clearly in John's gospel that believing in Jesus results in eternal life. Having received eternal life and having received the Holy Spirit, believers then become conduits of this life to others. They become channels through whom the Holy Spirit flows out to others. After His resurrection Jesus told the disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit Whom He would send in a few days, and what they would be doing as a result of His coming. We read in Acts 1:3-8:

To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. 4 Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." 6 So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; 8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

When the Holy Spirit came upon them He would give them the power and authority to be the witnesses of Christ throughout the world. They would go through the whole earth talking about Jesus and pointing people to Him. They would be empowered by the Holy Spirit to proclaim Christ and lead people to faith in Him. We read of how this promise of the Spirit was fulfilled in Acts 2:1-4:

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

When the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit they spoke with many different languages. The people in Jerusalem for Pentecost who had come from many different nations heard them speaking in their various languages, and recognized that they were “speaking of the mighty deeds of God” (Acts 2:6). This led to an opportunity for Peter to preach the good news of Christ to them for the first time, as recorded in Acts 2:14-41. He explained to them what was going on in verses 16-21:

But this is what has been spoken through the prophet Joel: 17 “It will be in the last days, says God, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions. Your old men will dream dreams. 18 Yes, and on my servants and on my handmaidens in those days, I will pour out my Spirit, and they will prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in the sky above, and signs on the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and billows of smoke. 20 The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord comes. 21 It will be that whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (World English Bible)

God had promised that when He poured out His Spirit on His people they would prophesy, they would speak and proclaim His message, and this is what was happening. God had poured out His Spirit and these men were prophesying. As a result of Peter’s message about 3,000 people believed in Christ and were baptized (Acts 2:41). When we look at subsequent instances of people receiving the Holy Spirit, we find that they often spoke and prophesied as a result (see Acts 4:8 and 31, Acts 10:44-46 and Acts 19:6). In Ephesians 5:18-19 Paul says, “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord.” Jesus also mentioned this to the disciples in Matthew 10:17-20, “But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues; and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.” Believers filled with the Spirit speak and sing of the Lord and glorify Christ. The Holy Spirit wants to speak through us and through us communicate the good news of Christ to the world. This is what should be happening through believers in Jesus.

John returns to the debates among the people and leaders in verses 40 through 52. Some, upon hearing these words from Jesus, said, “This is certainly the Prophet.” They

meant the prophet like Moses who was promised in Deuteronomy 18:15. Some were convinced that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, but the big argument against this was the perception that Jesus had come from Galilee and not from Bethlehem. Some pointed out that the Scripture said clearly that the Christ was to be a descendant of David and come from Bethlehem. They knew Micah 5:2, "But 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." Of course we know from Matthew and Luke that Jesus was indeed born in Bethlehem, and that He was in fact a descendant of David. Matthew knew Jesus and His family, and Luke had thoroughly investigated the subject (see Luke 1:1-4). The Father had seen to it that His Son was born in Bethlehem according to plan. So those who contended that Jesus had come from Galilee and not from Bethlehem were wrong. If they had asked His family, they could have learned the truth.

The crowd was divided because of Jesus (verse 43). They were not unified in their views about Jesus. Jesus is a divider. He says in Matthew 10:34-36, "Don't think that I came to send peace on the earth. I didn't come to send peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man at odds against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A man's foes will be those of his own household" (World English Bible). This may seem like a startling statement from Jesus, that we should not think that He came to send peace on the earth, but rather a sword. He came to divide, not to unite. Mankind is divided by Jesus into the "sons of the kingdom" and the "sons of the evil one" (Matthew 13:38). These groups cannot be in harmony, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6:14-16, "Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God." It is an illusion to think that believers can be in harmony and unity with unbelievers.

Again we are told that some people wanted to seize Him in verse 44, but no one actually did so. Verse 30 explained that this was because His time had not yet come. Even the officers sent by the chief priests and Pharisees for this purpose failed to carry out their orders. When they were asked why they had not brought Him, they said, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks." They pointed to the uniqueness of the speech of Jesus. He spoke as no one ever before or since has spoken. We've seen that His words came, not from Himself, but from the Father. Peter had pointed out that Jesus has the words of eternal life. Matthew 7:28-29 points out that Jesus taught with authority, "When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes." The teaching of Jesus was an authoritative kind of teaching they had never heard before. The officers sent to arrest Him were overwhelmed by His teaching and decided not to carry out their orders.

The Pharisees answered their officers with rhetorical questions, "You have not also been led astray, have you? No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he?" Some in the crowd held the view that Jesus was leading people astray (verse 12), and the Pharisees held this same view. To them Jesus was a pretender and deceiver, and the gullible crowds were following Him into falsehood and away from truth. Rather than examine and rebut His teaching, they reviled Jesus. They made assumptions that were not true. This is how we tend to respond when opponents make arguments we can't refute. They also pointed out that the educated and knowledgeable people had not believed in Him. The men who were really the experts in the Scriptures had not believed in Jesus. This mirrors the attitude of those who are highly educated intellectuals today. Only uneducated and unsophisticated

ignoramuses would believe in God and Jesus. Those who are truly in the know will be atheists or maybe agnostics.

The chief priests and Pharisees condemned the crowd of people who believed in Jesus. In contrast to the rulers and Pharisees, they said the crowd did not know the Law and was accursed. A. T. Robertson comments, "The Pharisees had a scorn for the *amhaaretz* or "people of the earth" (cf. our "clod-hoppers") as is seen in rabbinic literature. It was some of the *ochlos* (multitude at the feast especially from Galilee) who had shown sympathy with Jesus (John 7:12, John 7:28)."³⁷ The truth of the matter is that God chooses to reveal His truth to the lowly and childlike. Jesus says this in prayer in Matthew 11:25-26, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight." And Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:18-31:

For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, "I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE." 20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. 22 For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, 29 so that no man may boast before God. 30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, 31 so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."

The Father is pleased to reveal the truth to "infants," to those who are not wise, not mighty, not noble. They are weak, base and despised. They are "things that are not." The world does not "come to know God" through its wisdom. The wise and intelligent do not come to know God through their wisdom and intelligence, but we come to know God through His gracious revelation of Himself in His Son.

Nicodemus, whom we met in chapter 3 in the discussion about being "born again," spoke up at this point to ask, "Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?" Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin. He plucked up some courage to point out proper legal procedure. The others had just said that none of the rulers or Pharisees had believed in Jesus, and Nicodemus could have said, "I believe in Him," but he did not have the courage to do so. Later he will help care for the body of Jesus after His death (John 19:39). Here he advocates that the Sanhedrin should give Jesus a fair hearing and should not condemn Him out of hand. These men had

37 Robertson, A. T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*

condemned Jesus without due process and were determined to put Him to death. The sole argument they advanced for refusing to believe in Him was “no prophet arises out of Galilee.” If they had investigated, they may have discovered that He had indeed been born in Bethlehem.

John 7:53 – 8:11

[Everyone went to his home. But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

2 Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them. 3 The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court, 4 they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. 5 "Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?" 6 They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. 7 But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." 8 Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. 9 When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court. 10 Straightening up, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" 11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more."]

You will note that this passage in the New American Standard Bible is contained inside brackets. The NASB margin notes say, “John 7:53 – 8:11 is not found in most of the old mss” (manuscripts). A. T. Robertson says that the passage “is certainly not a genuine part of John’s Gospel. The oldest and best MSS. (Aleph A B C L W) do not have it. It first appears in Codex Bezae. Some MSS. put it at the close of John’s Gospel and some place it in Luke. It is probably a true story for it is like Jesus, but it does not belong to John’s Gospel.” Reformer John Calvin was aware of this and says in his commentary on John, “It is plain enough that this passage was unknown anciently to the Greek Churches; and some conjecture that it has been brought from some other place and inserted here. But as it has always been received by the Latin Churches, and is found in many old Greek manuscripts, and contains nothing unworthy of an Apostolic Spirit, there is no reason why we should refuse to apply it to our advantage.” To me the story does seem to have a ring of authenticity to it, so let us approach it as such.

Whether this happened right after the conclusion of the feast of Booths, I have no idea. Clearly though it depicts Jesus in Jerusalem teaching in the temple. When others went to their homes Jesus went to the Mount of Olives, just east of Jerusalem. Possibly He went to the Garden of Gethsemane, which was on the Mount. Early the next morning He returned to the temple and “all the people were coming to Him.” He again attracted a crowd. He sat down and taught them, and of course the scribes and Pharisees kept an eye on Him.

The scribes and Pharisees set up a test for Him, as they often did. They tried to put Him in a difficult position in order to make Him look bad to the crowd. Here they try to make Jesus choose between judgment and compassion, between fulfilling the letter of the Law or appearing to be soft on sin. They knew He was compassionate toward sinners and spent time with them. In Matthew 9:9-13 we read:

As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector's booth; and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed

Him. 10 Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, "Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?" 12 But when Jesus heard this, He said, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. 13 "But go and learn what this means: 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Since He had come to call sinners, He spent time with them, He reached out to them, He ate with them and called them to Himself. He is compassionate toward sinners.

The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman to Jesus who had been "caught in adultery." They emphasized her guilt by saying she had been caught "in the very act." I immediately have to wonder, "Where is the man?" If she was caught in the very act, there must have been a man involved as well. Had he escaped? He was as guilty as the woman and also deserving of death. My theory is that these men had set up this whole thing. I'm just speculating, but I think one of them had lured this woman into a tryst so that his accomplices could take her into custody for the purpose of putting Jesus into this bind. It just seems too convenient that this opportunity happened to present itself to them.

They pointed out that Moses commanded that those who committed adultery were to be stoned to death. Here is what Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 22:22-27:

"If a man is found lying with a married woman, then both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman, and the woman; thus you shall purge the evil from Israel. 23 "If there is a girl who is a virgin engaged to a man, and another man finds her in the city and lies with her, 24 then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city and you shall stone them to death; the girl, because she did not cry out in the city, and the man, because he has violated his neighbor's wife. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you. 25 "But if in the field the man finds the girl who is engaged, and the man forces her and lies with her, then only the man who lies with her shall die. 26 "But you shall do nothing to the girl; there is no sin in the girl worthy of death, for just as a man rises against his neighbor and murders him, so is this case. 27 "When he found her in the field, the engaged girl cried out, but there was no one to save her."

Note that in the case of consensual adultery both the man and woman were to be put to death, but in the case of rape only the man was to die. The aim was to "purge the evil from Israel." Adultery is an evil, and among God's people it was not to be tolerated. So these men asked Jesus, "what then do You say?" Do you contradict Moses? This is what the Law says, so what do You say? Will Jesus affirm the Law and say, "Let her be stoned!", or will He say, "Leave her alone and let her go"?

The true motive of these men is revealed in verse 6, "They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him." Their concern was not about justice or about purging evil and punishing wrongdoing, but their concern was to force Jesus to contradict the Law of Moses so they would have a reason to accuse Him and prosecute Him. They wanted Him to incriminate Himself. This is not the only time they will try to do this sort of thing.

Jesus did not initially answer, but stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger. This is the only time we are told that Jesus wrote anything. It would certainly be interesting to know what He wrote, but we can only speculate. Dr. David Kyle Foster, in an article on

Crosswalk.com³⁸, suggests that Jesus was writing the names of the men who were testing Him and perhaps their sins in the dust of the ground. He contends that Jesus was doing what was prophesied in Jeremiah 13:14, "LORD, you are the hope of Israel; all who forsake you will be put to shame. Those who turn aside from you will be written in the dust, because they have forsaken the LORD, the spring of living water" (International Standard Version Bible). I suppose this is plausible given the way that the accusers departed from Jesus one by one, perhaps as Jesus wrote their names on the ground, but again it is speculative and not certain.

The men continued to pester Jesus about this and continued to press Him for an answer, so He stood up and said, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." He then stooped down again and continued to write on the ground. Regardless of what He wrote on the ground, He knew all of these men and could name their sins if He chose to do so. He knew of their adulterous acts. He knew not one of them was sinless. He knew that if they condemned this woman, they condemned themselves. He knew their hypocrisy. He could explicitly point out how each one of them deserved to be stoned to death. His answer to them is brilliant. He cast the problem back on their shoulders. He didn't fall into their trap by saying, "No, let us set aside the Law of Moses and let her go." Neither did He say, "Yes, by all means, let's gather up stones and put her to death." The only one qualified to cast the first stone at her was the sinless one.

Probably realizing that Jesus could indict each one of them, the scribes and Pharisees began to leave one by one, beginning with the older men. It probably began with the older ones because they had a heavier weight of sin and guilt than the younger men. Instead of being humiliated, Jesus had humiliated His opponents. Instead of being cornered, He had cornered them and forced them to face their guilt and hypocrisy. So they left and He was there alone with the woman. I don't think it means that Jesus and the woman were the only ones there, but that all the scribes and Pharisees left. The crowd was probably still there witnessing this.

Once the accusers were gone, Jesus stood up again and asked the woman, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" She replied, "No one, Lord." He then said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more." The mission of Jesus was not to judge and condemn, but to save. John 3:17 says, "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him." And in John 12:47 Jesus says, "If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world." Jesus was the one who was qualified to condemn this woman, but He did not. He is the sinless one who could have thrown the first stone, but he chose not to. We must notice that He does not affirm her sin. He doesn't deny that she had violated God's Law. He does not say that she is not guilty. He tells her to "sin no more." She is guilty and needs to turn from her sin. He does not say what our culture says today, that such things are not really sin. He does not condone adultery. He does not wink at sexual immorality.

When we find ourselves in a situation where we are tempted to haul someone up before others and point the finger at them and insist on justice, we should be very careful lest the finger be pointed at us as well. We all are sinners. We have all strayed and deserve judgment and death. We must deal with the log in our own eyes before we try to deal with the specks in the eyes of others (Matthew 7:1-5). All of us must turn from our sins and trust in Christ. If we do so we will not be condemned (Romans 8:1). Our appeal to others is to do as we have done. We call upon fellow sinners to turn from their sins as we have turned from our sins.

John 8:12-20

Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." 13 So the Pharisees said to Him, "You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true." 14 Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. 15 "You judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone. 16 "But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and the Father who sent Me. 17 "Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true. 18 "I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me." 19 So they were saying to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also." 20 These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.

Here we find that Jesus was still in Jerusalem and still in the temple area teaching. Maybe it was still the last day of the feast. He makes another of His audacious claims, saying that He is the Light of the world, and those who follow Him will not walk in darkness, but will have the Light of life. We should recall what John wrote in chapter 1, "In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it" (verses 4 and 5), and "There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man" (verse 9). This was another clear claim that He is the Messiah. Isaiah 49:6 says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth." Isaiah 60:1-3 says, "Arise, shine; for your light has come, And the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth And deep darkness the peoples; But the LORD will rise upon you And His glory will appear upon you. Nations will come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising." Jesus says that He is the one who fulfills these scriptures as the Light of the world.

Apart from Christ the world is in darkness, and it is deep darkness that covers the earth. In deep darkness even a little light is significant. When I was a boy on vacation with my parents we visited Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico. On the guided tour we went to a large chamber at the bottom of the cavern where the tour guide turned off the lights and it became pitch dark. This was in the days before cell phones, so none of us on the tour had any source of light that we could turn on. There was absolutely no light in that cave. After a minute or two the tour guide lit a single candle that illuminated the entire chamber. It was amazing to see the impact of that single little source of light! It made me realize how terrifying it would be to be in a cave like that with no source of light. The world has no source of light other than Jesus Christ. It is a spiritually dark and fearful place, with no light and no life to offer, but the good news is that God has sent the Light. Those who follow Him will not have to walk in the darkness, not knowing where they are going, but they will have the Light of life that He is.

The Pharisees did not agree. They said, "You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true." A. T. Robertson points out, "This technical objection was according to the rules of evidence among the rabbis. 'No man can give witness for himself' (*Mishnah, Ketub. 11. 9*)."³⁹ Jesus had said back in John 5:31, "If I alone testify about Myself, My testimony is not true." Then He pointed to the testimony of John the Baptist, the testimony of the works that He did, the testimony of the Father Himself, and the testimony of the Scriptures and Moses. So He has already pointed to the fact that He was not alone in His testimony about Himself. Here He

does not deny that He is testifying about Himself, but He asserts that His testimony is true because He knows where He came from and where He is going. The Pharisees did not know these things. He had knowledge they lacked, so He knew the truth of the matter and they were ignorant. He knew His true origin and His true destination. He knew He had been sent by the Father from before His incarnation, and knew that He would depart to be with the Father in glory once again. The issue here is the truth of what Jesus had said, and Jesus knew the truth; the Pharisees did not.

Not only were the Pharisees deficient in knowledge, they were also deficient in their judgment. They judged according to the flesh, but Jesus was not judging anyone (verse 15). But if Jesus were to judge, His judgment would be true, as was His testimony (verse 16). It would be true because He did not judge alone, but His Father was in the middle of it with Him. The Pharisees spoke from ignorance and evaluated things from a fleshly, earthly perspective. But Jesus had the perspective of His Father, the judgment of the Father, and was able to pass that along if He needed to.

Jesus was not alone in His testimony about Himself, but the Father also was testifying about Him. Jesus pointed out to these men what they well knew, that in their law it was recorded that “the testimony of two men is true.” His claim to be the light of the world was confirmed by the Father. In fact, the Father had sent Him into the world to be the light of the world. There is not one thing Jesus will say that will be contradicted by the Father. The Father always will say, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!” (Matthew 17:5).

The Pharisees asked, “Where is Your Father?” They hadn’t seen Him, hadn’t met Him, and it appeared to them that He was not present. He had not appeared before them to testify about His Son. One of the reasons they wanted to kill Jesus was because He was “calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God” (John 5:18). They understood that His reference to “My Father” was a reference to God, and so their question may be skeptical and derisive. The sense of their question is probably, “Where is He? Let Him appear before us to confirm Your testimony about Yourself!”

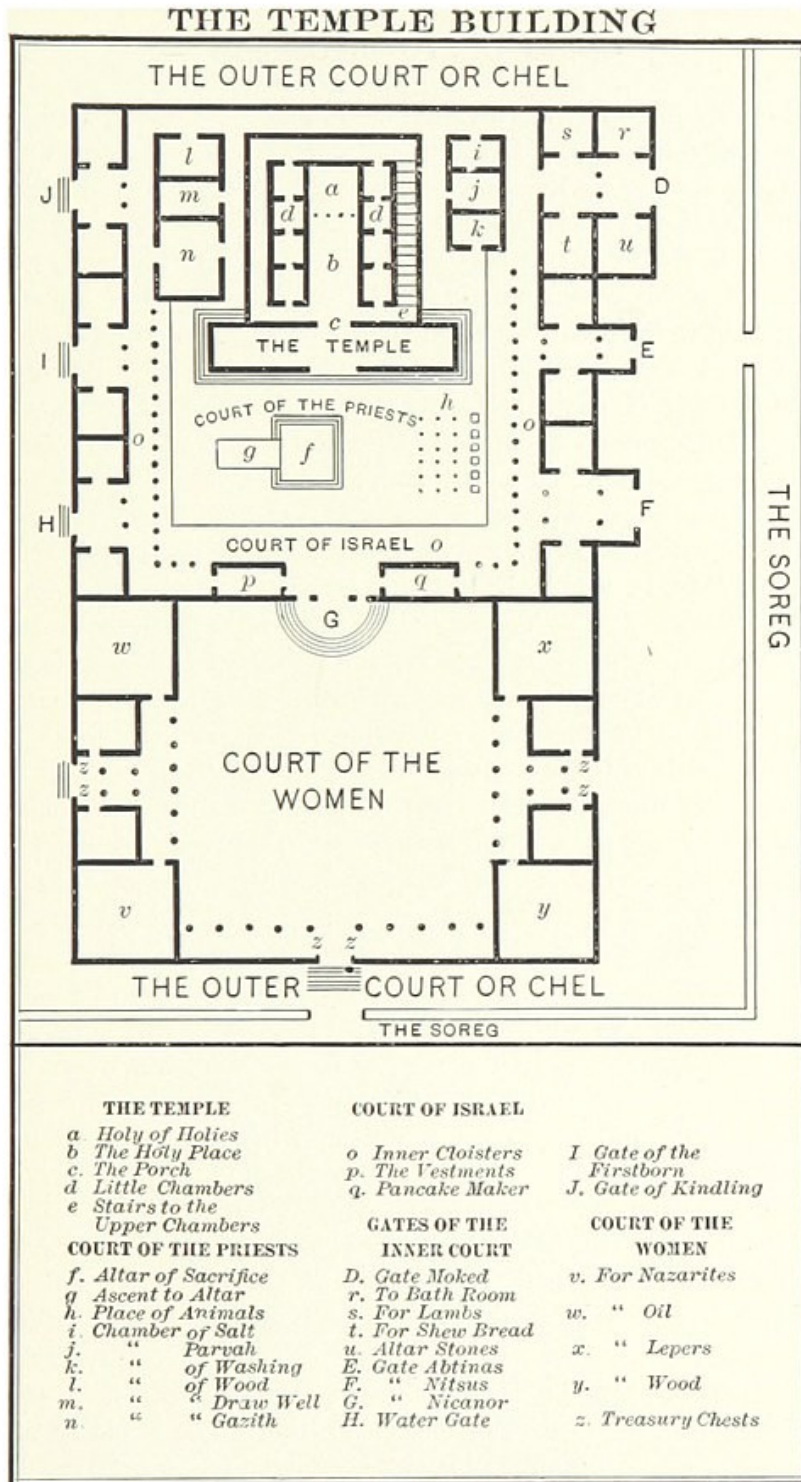
In answer Jesus again pointed out their ignorance, “You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also.” This is the same thing He will say to the disciples later in John 14:7-11:

“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 can 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 is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves.”

The only way to know the Father is to know the Son. John explained in John 1:18, “No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.” Jesus Himself is the physical manifestation of the Father. The Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father. These Pharisees could not and would not see the Father.

Jesus spoke these things in the area of the treasury in the temple courtyard. In the image below you will note that the “treasury” was in the “Court of the Women.” Treasury chests were located to the left and right sides in this image. Apparently this was the most public area of the

inner temple, and a place that Jesus preferred for His teaching. It is where Jesus and the disciples observed the poor widow who put her two small copper coins into the treasury (Mark 12:41-44).



Again we are told that “no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.” The Pharisees could not grab Him at this point, angry as they were with Him. They were thwarted. They could do nothing to Him until the proper hour had come.

John 8:21-30

Then He said again to them, "I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come." 22 So the Jews were saying, "Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?" 23 And 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 "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." 25 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." 27 They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father. 28 So Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. 29 "And He who sent 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 came to believe in Him.

Jesus told the Pharisees again that He was going away, that they would continue to seek Him, that they would die in their sin and could not come to the place where He was going. They would continue to look for the Messiah, but had already rejected Him. He injects a new idea He had not mentioned previously, this fact that they would die in their sin. Note that He emphasizes it again in verse 24. In verse 21 He uses the singular “sin,” and in verse 24 the plural. In verse 21 it is the principle of sin, that all people are sinners with a sinful nature, and in verse 24 it is collective acts of sin. We sin because we are sinners. It is sin in us that causes us to commit individual acts of sin (Romans 7:7-25).

What does it mean to “die in your sin”? It means to die without being forgiven. It means to die without your sin debt being covered through faith in Christ. It is to die condemned and under the wrath of God. It is the worst thing that can happen to anyone.

Again the Jews debated among themselves about what He meant when He said He was going away. They ask, “Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come’?” These are likely cynical, mocking words, “What’s He going to do, kill Himself?” They were probably making fun of Him in their ignorance of His meaning.

Jesus was deadly serious in His efforts to warn these men. We should see His severe kindness toward them in His words. He is trying to open their eyes to their condition and the peril they faced. He was speaking the blunt truth to them that they needed to hear. They were “from below,” but He was “from above.” They were “of this world,” but He was “not of this world.” The phrase, “of this world” is used six times in the gospel of John, and twice it is pointed out that Satan is the “ruler of this world,” and he has been judged and will be cast out through the work of Christ (John 12:31 and John 16:11). Those who are from below and are of this world will die in their sins. They are members of the kingdom of darkness and are subjects of Satan. As the one from above, Jesus knew the danger these men faced which they could not see nor acknowledge.

Since they were from below and of this world, Jesus warned them they would die in their sins. He explained further, “for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.” The word “He” is supplied by the New American Standard translators. The Greek text literally says, “unless you believe that I Am, you will die in your sins.” Jesus was making the claim to

be “I Am.” This originates from Exodus 3:13-14, “Then Moses said to God, ‘Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, “The God of your fathers has sent me to you.” Now they may say to me, “What is His name?” What shall I say to them?’ 14 God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM’; and He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, “I AM has sent me to you.”’” In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, the words “I Am” are *egō eimi*, the same words we find in John 8:24, 28 and 58. Jesus was making it very clear to these men that He is “I Am” in the flesh. He is the one who spoke to Moses.

Note that Jesus issues an ultimatum here. He says, “Unless you believe that I Am, you will die in your sins.” There is a terrible consequence for failing to believe that He is who He is. It is inevitable and unavoidable that those who will not believe in Jesus will die in their sins. We’ve been told this already. John 3:36 says, “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” There are several other places in the gospels where Jesus issues similar warnings:

- Matthew 5:20 “For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”
- Matthew 18:3, “Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”
- Luke 13:3 and 5, “I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”
- John 3:3 “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”
- John 3:5 “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”
- John 6:53 “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.”

The good news here is that we don’t have to die in our sins. We may believe in Jesus and be forgiven and not die in our sins. We may be converted, become like children and enter the kingdom of heaven. We may repent and not perish. We can be born again and enter the kingdom of God. We may partake of Jesus and have His life. If we are wise we will heed His warning and believe in Him. But if in our pride, arrogance and stubbornness we refuse to believe we are sentenced to condemnation and death.

Having said that they must believe “that I Am,” the Pharisees asked, “Who are You?” They wanted Him to state clearly who He was claiming to be, perhaps because they wanted to charge Him with blasphemy. This is what happened when He affirmed to the high priest that He was the Christ, the Son of God. The high priest tore his robes and said, “He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy” (see Matthew 26:63-66). Jesus Himself put this question of who He was to the disciples in Matthew 16:13-17, “Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’ 14 And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.’ 15 He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ 16 Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ 17 And Jesus said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.’” This is an all-important question. There are many opinions and varying views about Jesus and about who He was or is, but the revelation of the Father is that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God. This is what we must believe about Him.

The answer Jesus gives the Pharisees in verse 25 is treated in the New American Standard as a question, “What have I been saying to you from the beginning?” It could also be understood as a statement of fact, “Just what I have been telling you from the beginning”

(English Standard Version with similar translations in the King James and other versions). Marvin Vincent says that this is “A very difficult passage, on which the commentators are almost hopelessly divided. There are two main classes of interpretations, according to one of which it is to be read *interrogatively*, and according to the other, *affirmatively*.”⁴⁰ Whether it is a question or a statement of fact, the meaning is essentially the same. He is who He always claimed to be from the beginning. All along He has called God His Father, “making Himself equal with God” (John 5:18). He has consistently said that He is the Son of God and has not denied who He is. He did not need to explicitly say, “I am the Christ.” There should be no confusion over who He claimed to be.

Jesus did not continue to pursue the question of who He is, but rather pointed out that He has much more to say and to judge concerning these men. They will not control the conversation or dictate what He will say, but He will say what needs to be said. They will not judge Him, but He will judge them. Again He says that He passes on to the world the things He has heard from the One who sent Him. What He speaks to the world is true because the one who sent Him is true. This is the third time we are told in the gospel of John that God is true. John 3:33 says, “He who has received His testimony has set his seal to this, that God is true.” In John 7:28 Jesus said, “He who sent Me is true.” And here in verse 26 He again says, “He who sent me is true.” What the Son says is absolutely true because the Father is true, and the Son says what the Father says. There is no falsehood in the Father or the Son.

These men lacked understanding. They did not understand that Jesus was speaking about the Father. They didn't get that His reference to “He who sent Me” was a reference to the Father. They will know the truth in the future. He says, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.” When Jesus talked about being “lifted up,” He was talking about His death. John 3:14 says, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.” In John 12:32 He says “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.” Then verse 33 says, “But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die.” The death of Christ on the cross is the centerpiece of the good news of Christ, the sacrifice of the Son of God Himself which truly atones for the sin of mankind. On the cross Christ died for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3). Peter says “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed” (1 Peter 2:24). Paul says that Christ “gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father” (Galatians 1:4). The prophecy in Isaiah 53 tells us clearly of the significance of the death of Christ on the cross. Verses 4 through 6 say, “Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.” The Jews should have seen this in the crucifixion of Christ, that He was fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 53, the picture of the lifted serpent, and the suffering of the Messiah depicted in Psalm 22. Even the centurion who saw Him die said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!” (Probably meaning “a son of a god” or something similar.) Even this pagan Roman saw that there was something unique about Jesus.

What we will know from His being “lifted up” is that He is “I Am,” and that He does not act on His own initiative, but He only speaks what the Father has taught Him. The Father had sent the Son, but was always with Him. The Father did not leave the Son to go it alone, but was with Him, and so the Son always did the things that were pleasing to the Father. Doing the will of the Father was the thing that sustained Him (John 4:34). As Jesus did nothing apart from the Father, we who belong to Him and are sent by Him can do nothing good apart from Him. We will see more about this in chapter 15.

As Jesus said these things, “many came to believe in Him” (verse 30). Apparently this means that many came to believe that He was indeed the Christ. The things He said were persuasive.

John 8:31-38

So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." 33 They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free'?" 34 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. 35 "The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. 36 "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. 37 "I know that you are Abraham's descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. 38 "I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father."

Though “many came to believe in Him,” were they really committed disciples (students or pupils) of Jesus? Would they follow Him as their Lord and Rabbi? Would they commit themselves to Him and His teaching? Would they listen to Him and follow His commands? He says to them, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” In John 14:21 He says, “He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me.” Believing that Jesus is the Christ, that He is the Savior, that He is God incarnate is the beginning point that must lead to listening to Him and following Him. Many “believe for a while” and then fall away (Luke 8:13). They do not hold to Jesus and follow Him for the long-term. It was ultimately the rabbi who decided who his disciples would be and not the potential disciples. Ray Vander Laan writes:

Most students sought out the rabbis they wished to follow. This happened to Jesus on occasion (Mark 5:19; Luke 9:57). There were a few exceptional rabbis who were famous for seeking out their own students. If a student wanted to study with a rabbi he would ask if he might “follow” the rabbi. The rabbi would consider the student's potential to become like him and whether he would make the commitment necessary. It is likely most students were turned away. Some of course were invited to “follow me”. This indicated the rabbi believed the potential talmid had the ability and commitment to become like him. It would be a remarkable affirmation of the confidence the teacher had in the student. In that light, consider whether the disciples of Jesus were talmidim as understood by the people of his time. They were to be “with” him Mark 3:13-19; to follow him Mark 1:16-20; to live by his teaching John 8:31; were to imitate his actions John 13:13-15; were to make everything else secondary to their learning from the rabbi Luke 14:26.⁴¹

41 <https://www.thatttheworldmayknow.com/rabbi-and-talmidim>

If these believers wanted to be His disciples, they would have to continue in His word. They would have to listen to and follow His teaching.

If they would continue in His word, then they would know the truth, and that truth would set them free. Jesus teaches only the truth, and when we pay attention to His teaching we learn the truth. If we really want to come to know the truth we must pay attention to the teaching of Jesus. To reject His teaching is to reject the truth and to remain in bondage.

As usual the Jews listening to Jesus did not understand what He was saying about being made free. They understood it from an earthly perspective. They said, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free'?" I guess they overlooked the fact that they had been slaves in Egypt, and even then were subject to the Roman empire. They were not a "free" people. But of course Jesus was talking about a different kind of slavery and freedom.

The slavery that Jesus was talking about was slavery to sin. All who sin are slaves of sin. Sin is the master of those who commit sin. The word translated "commits" in verse 34 is *poiēō*, to make or to do, and it is a present-tense active participle, speaking of a continuous practice. The English Standard Version says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin." Who are these people who are practicing sin and are slaves to it? The clear answer is "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Paul quotes from Psalm 14 as writes in Romans 3:9-12, "What then? Are we better than they? No, in no way. For we previously warned both Jews and Greeks, that they are all under sin. As it is written, 'There is no one righteous; no, not one. There is no one who understands. There is no one who seeks after God. They have all turned away. They have together become unprofitable. There is no one who does good, no, not so much as one'" (World English Bible). Isaiah 53:6 says, "All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him." Everyone commits sin and is a slave to sin. Jesus is the only exception; He alone is the holy one. We all fall short and are not perfect. We all do the evil we should not and fail to do the good we should. We are all owned by sin, ruled by sin, subject to sin, obedient to sin. We are not free, but are in bondage. This is mankind's great problem that Jesus came to solve.

The trouble with being a slave is that he "does not remain in the house forever." The slave can be cast out or sold by the master at any time. He is not a member of the family and has no inheritance in the family. Sarah, referring to her maid Hagar and her son Ishmael, said to Abraham, "Drive out this maid and her son, for the son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son Isaac" (Genesis 21:10). Paul quotes this passage in Galatians 4:28-31, "Now we, brothers, as Isaac was, are children of promise. But as then, he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. However what does the Scripture say? 'Throw out the servant and her son, for the son of the servant will not inherit with the son of the free woman.' So then, brothers, we are not children of a servant, but of the free woman." A slave is a servant in a household for a while, but the son of the father remains a part of the household forever. By the way, the word translated "remain" in verse 35, *menō*, is the same word translated "continue" in verse 31 ("if you continue in My word). The word means to stay in a given place, to remain there. If we stay in His word, we will also be the disciples of Jesus, we will be made free and stay in the household of God.

The one who does remain in the house forever is the Son, and the Son is the one who can make us free. Those set free by the son are truly free. Their freedom can't be nullified or taken away. If we are set free by the Son we will not again be enslaved. It is Jesus the Son who sets us free from our slavery to sin.

In verse 31 Jesus said that if they continued in His word, then they were truly His disciples, and now in verse 37 He says, "you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you." He admits that they are the physical descendants of Abraham. The word "descendants" translates the Greek word *sperma*, seed. Yes, they are physically descendants of Abraham, but they are not acting as his children. The word of Christ had no place in them, they did not accept the things He was saying. Real students of a teacher accept what the teacher says, but these people, even some who professed faith in Him, were skeptical of His teaching. His word had "no place" in them. The word for "place" is *chōreō*, to have space or room.⁴² Real disciples accept and continue in His word (verse 31), but these people had no room for His word. They would not accept the things He said. This is why they wanted to kill Him, because they rejected His word. It was all-important to accept the word of Jesus because He spoke the things which He had seen from His Father. The word of Jesus came from the Father, but these people did "the things which you heard from your father." They listened to the word of their father, the devil (verse 44). Yes, they were descendants of Abraham, but their true spiritual father was Satan, and they were doing his will.

John 8:39-47

They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. 40 "But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. 41 "You are doing the deeds of your father." They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God." 42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. 43 "Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. 44 "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. 45 "But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. 46 "Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? 47 "He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God."

The Jews drew confidence in their standing with God from the fact that they were descendants of Abraham, but John the Baptist warned them, "Bear fruit in keeping with repentance; and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham" (Matthew 3:8-9). They were not children of God simply because they were descendants of Abraham. Yes, they were the "seed" of Abraham, but they were not really his children because they did not do the deeds of Abraham. Jesus points this out in verses 39 and 40. Abraham did not and would not seek to kill a man who told him the truth from God. Abraham listened to what God said and believed it, but these men rejected the word of God spoken through Jesus.

In Genesis 18 the Lord appeared to Abraham in human form, along with two angels, also in human form. He promised Abraham, "I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son." The great outstanding characteristic of Abraham was that He believed in the Lord and in His word. Genesis 15:4-6 says, "Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 'This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.' And He took him outside and said, 'Now look

42 Robertson, A. T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*

toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness." Abraham believed the truth that God told him and became the great model of faith and of a man justified by faith (see Romans 4). Abraham did not reject the word of the Lord and then seek to kill Him, as these men were doing. These men were not doing the deeds of Abraham, but were doing the deeds of their father.

The Jews objected to what Jesus was saying and replied, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God." They were not illegitimate children, born to prostitutes. They contended that God was their father. As He did when they said "Abraham is our father," Jesus replied with another "if...then" statement, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me." The fact that they did not love Jesus was proof that God was not their Father. The gospel of John makes it very clear that Jesus was conscious of His pre-existence with the Father and of being sent by the Father (John 13:3 and 17:5). He was not on a self-generated mission, but was carrying out the will of His Father and speaking the words of His Father.

We cannot have God the Father apart from God the Son. Many want to simply be theists and believe in some concept of God, but do not believe in Jesus as the Son of God. If we love the Father we will love the Son. If we don't love the Son, we don't love the Father who sent Him. Only those who embrace Jesus truly love God.

Jesus told those who "believed in Him" in verse 31 that they must continue in His word in order to be His disciples, but then in verse 43 He says, "Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word." They lacked comprehension of what Jesus was saying because they were incapable of hearing His word. It wasn't just that they were unwilling, but they were unable. The word "cannot" translates the Greek *ou dunasthe*, not able, to not have power or ability. They did not have the power to hear His word. Why did they lack this power? It is because they were of their father the devil and wanted to do his desires, and because they were "not of God" (verse 47). Jesus was very blunt with them about this. He put His finger on the exact problem and told them the truth about themselves.

The word translated "desires" in verse 44 is *epithumia*, and means a strong desire or longing. It is often translated "lusts" in the New Testament and "coveting" in Romans 7:7 and 8. In a few instances it has a positive meaning, as in Luke 22:15, when Jesus said, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer," but usually it has to do with desires for evil. The phrase, "you want to do" is a present-tense active phrase and means that they want to go on doing the desires of their father; they want to persist in doing what he wishes. And what does the devil desire? Jesus points out two primary characteristics of the devil, that he is a murderer and he is a liar. He wants to deceive and to kill, and this is what he has wanted from the beginning. In fact the lies are the means he has used to murder us. In Genesis 3:1-5, when Satan tempted the woman to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he first questioned the word of God and then contradicted the word of God:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" 2 The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" 4 The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! 5 "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Of course the woman and the man listened to Satan and did as he suggested, ate from the forbidden tree and brought death to all humanity. As a result mankind is now subject to Satan. We believe his lies and live by them and reject the truth that God reveals.

The devil will not speak the truth. He does not stand in the truth and there is no truth in him. It is his nature to speak lies and he is the originator of lies. It is a huge mistake to look to Satan and his demons for guidance. John warns in 1 John 4:1-3, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world." Many kinds of falsehood cover the earth and they all originate from Satan. He has succeeded in leading most people astray and away from the truth that is in Christ.

Jesus had told these people the truth He had heard from God, but because they loved the lies of the devil they did not believe Jesus. He asked another rhetorical question in verse 46, "If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?" None of them could convict Him of sin, and so His word could be believed, but why didn't they believe Him? Again He says, "for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God." The one who is "of God hears the words of God." They did not really love God and did not really want to do His will. They actually wanted to kill the one who told them the truth.

John 8:48-59

The Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?" 49 Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. 50 "But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges. 51 "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death." 52 The Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.' 53 "Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?" 54 Jesus answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God'; 55 and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word. 56 "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." 57 So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" 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.

The Jews charged Jesus with being the worst sort of person they could think of – a Samaritan with a demon. They saw the Samaritans as apostates, pretenders and deceivers, people posing as the people of God who were to be rejected by the true people of God. In charging Him with having a demon they blasphemed the Holy Spirit and so were "guilty of an eternal sin" (see Matthew 3:22-30).

Jesus calmly and flatly denied that He had a demon, and then pointed out the fact that He honored His Father and they dishonored Him. Remember that in John 5:22-23 Jesus said, "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him." Again, one cannot honor the Father and dishonor the Son. To dishonor the Son is to dishonor the Father.

In saying this Jesus was not trying to glorify Himself; He was not seeking His own glory, but the Father sought it for Him and bestowed it upon Him. He is the one who will judge.

Jesus then spoke another of His “truly, truly” statements in verse 51, “Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death.” The word for “keeps” means to guard or to watch over something. We guard the things that are valuable to us and keep them safe. To keep the word of Christ is to value it, to hold to it, to guard it and ultimately to obey it. Jesus will emphasize in chapter 14 that the one who keeps His word is the one who really loves Him (John 14:15, 21, 23 and 24). Jesus promises that anyone who keeps His word will never see death, will never “taste of death” as the Jews put it. There is a strong double negative in the Greek at this point, that the one who keeps His word will “no, not ever” see death. Of course, Jesus does not mean that the one who keeps His word will never die physically. Those who believe in Jesus and keep His word will still die physically. Jesus makes it clear in John 11:25-26, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.” Believers who die physically will be raised by Jesus to eternal life (John 5:25-29). They will not see eternal death, the “second death” (Revelation 2:11, 20:6, 20:14 and 21:8). Those who keep the word of Jesus have passed out of death into life.

The Jews contended that this statement was proof that Jesus had a demon. They pointed out that Abraham and the prophets had died, and yet here was Jesus, saying that if anyone keeps His word they will never taste of death. Their rhetorical question assumes a negative answer, “Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died?” He would not claim to be greater than Abraham, would He? Well, yes, He would! In Matthew 12 Jesus claims three times to be greater than something or someone else. He says in Matthew 12:6 that He is greater than the temple. In verse 31 He says He’s greater than Jonah, and in verse 42 that He is greater than Solomon. Jesus is in fact the Lord of Abraham, the One who appeared to him and spoke with him.

The Jews again pressed Jesus to say explicitly who He was, “The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?” They want to charge Him with blasphemy. They contended that He was a demon-possessed Samaritan, so what does He say about Himself? But Jesus does not glorify Himself. His glory would be nothing if He glorified Himself. It is the Father who glorifies Him, and His Father is the one they say is their God. We should be wary of people who glorify themselves and proclaim their own greatness, especially if this greatness is not recognized by others. The Father promoted the Son’s glory, and the Son’s glory came from the Father. John said, “We saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

Jesus would not and could not say that He did not know the Father. If He were to say He didn’t know the Father He would be a liar like these men confronting Him. They had not come to know the Father, though they said “He is our God.” Jesus knows the Father intimately and is one with the Father. He does not traffic in lies and falsehoods. He will not deny that He knows what He knows, and He keeps the word of the Father. He is the man that we were all originally meant to be, a man who truly knows God and lives by His word. Because of the fall, we have lost the close knowledge of God and the ability to live by His word, but in Christ this can be restored to us.

Regarding Abraham and the question these men asked about Jesus being greater than Abraham, Jesus said, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” Seeing “the day” of Jesus caused Abraham to rejoice and be glad, but what in the world does Jesus mean by this? How could Abraham have seen “the day” of Jesus? Again, I think it was Jesus Himself who appeared to Abraham and spoke to Him. It was Jesus who promised him in Genesis 12:2-3, “And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make

your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” This promise is fully fulfilled in the coming of Christ to the earth. Galatians 3:13-14 says, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, ‘CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE’— in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” In the covenant with Abraham and the promises to Abraham he in a sense “saw” the day of Christ. He saw the day of Christ from a distance, as it says in Hebrews 11:13, “All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.” In contrast to these men, who had the privilege of personally seeing and hearing Christ and then hating and rejecting Him, Abraham rejoiced to see His day and was glad. The fulfillment of the promise to Abraham and the coming of Christ is a joyous thing, a thing to be celebrated!

The cynicism and misunderstanding of the Pharisees and scribes again comes out in verse 57, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” They could see He was not old enough to have been alive at the time of Abraham, and so they ridiculed Him. What He was saying was ridiculous to them because they had an earthly focus.

Finally, Jesus says to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.” The word translated “was born” is *ginomai*, “to come into being, to happen, to become.”⁴³ “I am” is present-tense. Jesus does not say, “before Abraham was born, I was,” but “I am.” Marvin Vincent says, “It is important to observe the distinction between the two verbs. Abraham’s life was under the conditions of time, and therefore had a temporal beginning. Hence, Abraham *came into being*, or *was born* (γενέσθαι). Jesus’ life was from and to eternity. Hence the formula for *absolute, timeless existence, I am*.”⁴⁴ Again, this is a reference to God’s statement to Moses in Exodus 3:13-14 that His name is “I Am.” This is probably the most clear declaration from Jesus of His deity. He is the one who said to Moses, “I Am who I Am,” and He says the same to these men. The notion that Jesus never claimed to be God is a complete fiction. Those who would diminish Him are in league with the opponents to whom He was speaking

The Jews understood what He was saying and picked up stones to throw at Him. They got His point, that He was claiming to be God, and so they decided then and there that He should be stoned to death for this claim. But Jesus hid Himself and eluded them. His hour had not come. They could not yet put Him to death.

John 9:1-41

As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. 2 And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so 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 can 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 applied the clay to his eyes, 7 and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came back seeing. 8 Therefore the neighbors, and those who previously saw him as a beggar, were saying, "Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?" 9 Others were saying, "This is he," still others were saying, "No, but he is like him."

43 *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance*

44 Vincent, Marvin, *Word Studies in the New Testament*

He kept saying, "I am the one." 10 So they were saying to him, "How then were your eyes opened?" 11 He answered, "The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went away and washed, and I received sight." 12 They said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know."

13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who was formerly blind. 14 Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. 15 Then the Pharisees also were asking him again how he received his sight. And he said to them, "He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see." 16 Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." But others were saying, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And there was a division among them. 17 So they said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?" And he said, "He is a prophet." 18 The Jews then did not believe it of him, that he had been blind and had received sight, until they called the parents of the very one who had received his sight, 19 and questioned them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?" 20 His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; 21 but how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself." 22 His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. 23 For this reason his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

24 So a second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner." 25 He then answered, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." 26 So they said to him, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" 27 He answered them, "I told you already and you did not listen; why do you want to hear it again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?" 28 They reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. 29 "We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He is from." 30 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. 39 And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind." 40 Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, "We are not blind too, are we?" 41 Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

Jesus was still in Jerusalem at this point, and as He was going along, He saw a man who had been blind all his life. This is emphasized in this chapter, that he was born blind and had never been able to see. The disciples noticed the man also and knew that he had been born blind. Verse 8 reveals that he was well known to people there because he used to sit and beg, probably emphasizing the fact that he was born blind in order to stir up the compassion of others. This is probably what he was doing when Jesus and His disciples came along.

The disciples asked Jesus, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" Their assumption was that such a misfortune must be punishment for someone's sin. They wanted to know who was responsible, who was to blame. In John 5 we read about the man at the pool of Bethesda who had been sick for 38 years. After Jesus healed him He said to him, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you" (verse 14). Apparently his illness had been a result or consequence of his sin, but this is not always the case. We know from the book of Job that sometimes misfortune and illness comes even to the righteous, who have done nothing that calls for punishment. Jesus debunked this assumption in Luke 13:1-5:

Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. 2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? 3 "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. 4 "Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? 5 "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

The Jews did indeed believe that those who suffered such fates were "greater sinners" and "worse culprits" than others. (The word translated "culprits" in Luke 13:4 is *opheiletēs*, meaning "debtors.") But Jesus says that is not true. Everyone deserves such a fate and everyone must repent in order to avoid perishing in a similar manner. Everyone is guilty and everyone is a sinner. This blind man was not worse than others and therefore was born blind. His parents were not worse than others. There was another reason for his blindness.

So why was he born blind? Jesus said, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him." There was a reason for his affliction. Jesus doesn't say that his blindness was purposeless or senseless, but there was a purpose in it, to display the works of God. The word translated "display" is *phaneroō*, to make something visible which had previously not been seen. By healing this man Jesus would make the works of God visible, they would be put on display. Of course, the works of God are all around us in creation. Romans 1:20 points this out, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse." But in our spiritual blindness we overlook and ignore the proof of the works of God all around us. In the miracles that Jesus did He made the works of God visible and undeniable. When Jesus turned the water into wine in Cana, John commented, "This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested (*phaneroō*) His glory, and His disciples believed in Him" (John 2:11). This was the purpose of Jesus, to display the works of the Father and glorify Him. The works Jesus did are the great proof that He is the Son of God and the Word made flesh. This man, then, was born blind for this very moment when Jesus came along to heal him.

At this point, many people will question God's kindness. They will say, "So God made this man blind on purpose, just so Jesus could heal him? Isn't that cruel? Isn't that unfair?" When Moses expressed reluctance to do what God was calling him to do, sending him to Egypt to bring Israel out of their slavery there, Moses said, "Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." Moses had a disability, a speech impediment, and therefore lacked confidence in his ability to do what God was telling him to do. The Lord replied, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes *him* mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to

say” (Exodus 4:10-12). God explicitly says that He makes people “seeing or blind.” He makes us as we are. He purposely made this man blind from birth, which seems to us like cruelty. But we are in His hands. He is free to do with us as He pleases. We are clay in His hands, and He fashions us as He sees fit for His purposes. Because we are all guilty sinners we deserve only death, we deserve to perish (Romans 6:23), anything less than death is the mercy and grace of God. God is under no obligation to create us perfectly whole, healthy and functional and to keep us that way.

When we are afflicted, it is appropriate that we should ask, “What is God’s purpose in this?” There is some comfort in knowing our suffering is not pointless. For Paul, his “thorn in the flesh” was given to him to humble him and keep him from exalting himself (see 2 Corinthians 12:1-10). James tells us that trials of all kinds are tests of our faith (James 1:2-4), so at minimum we can know that God’s purpose in our suffering is to test our faith and let us see if it is real. If we believe during good times, will we continue believing during bad times? Will we continue to trust Him, or will we turn away and curse Him? This was the test that Job faced. Also I think that our sufferings often serve as reminders that we live in a fallen and sinful world that is subject to decay and death, and that we need to daily cry out to the Lord for His help. We will not be here in this life permanently and so suffering is inevitable. Suffering can prompt us to call upon the Lord rather than relying on our own resources.

What Jesus was doing was working “the works of Him who sent Me” while it was day. One of the works of the One who sent Him was to heal this blind man. While He was on the earth it was “day,” but the night was coming when no one can work. Having worked nights for a while in the past, I can tell you that it is not natural for us to work at night. Of course at the time of Jesus they did not have electric lights, but just oil lamps and candles for illumination at night. Watchmen could stand guard at night, but not much else. Modern technology has enabled some industries to work around the clock, but it’s still true that most work is done during daylight hours. Jesus says that while He was in the world He was the Light of the world. He provided illumination to the world while He was here, and so the works of God had to be accomplished while He was in the world. The works of God require the presence of the Son of God. Does this mean that since Jesus ascended back into heaven the works of God may no longer be done? No, because Jesus will say in John 14:12-14, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.” The disciples will do His works by asking in His name, and He will do it. It is still Jesus who will do the works, but He will do them through the disciples. In Acts 3:1-10 is the account of Peter healing the man who had been lame from birth. Peter said to him, “I do not possess silver or gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene – walk!” Peter raised him up by the right hand and he began to leap and walk and praise God. Peter explained what had happened by saying, “And on the basis of faith in His name, *it is* the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which *comes* through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all” (Acts 3:16). He says the same thing before the Sanhedrin in Acts 4:10, “let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this *name* this man stands here before you in good health.” As Jesus did the works of the Father who sent Him, so Peter did the works of the Son who sent him. The works done during the day may still be done by those who are sent by Christ.

Jesus used what seems to me an unusual method to heal this man’s blindness. He spat on the ground and made clay from the saliva, applied the clay to the man’s eyes, and told him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. It’s funny that the Greek word meaning “to spit” here is *ptuō*,

which is what spitting sounds like. This is not the only instance of Jesus spitting. Jesus also spit and used His saliva when He healed a deaf man in Mark 7:31-35. He also spit on the eyes of another blind man as part of the process of healing him in Mark 8:22-26. Though this may seem weird and even gross to us, commentators say that the Jews believed that saliva had medicinal qualities. A. T. Robertson says, "The curative effects of saliva are held in many places. The Jews held saliva efficacious for eye-trouble, but it was forbidden on the Sabbath."⁴⁵ Jesus did not always heal blindness with saliva. In Matthew 9:27-30 He touched the eyes of two blind men and healed them, but did not spit. In Mark 10:46-52 Jesus healed Bartimaeus of blindness by simply saying, "Go; your faith has made you well." So we mustn't think that spit is the key to healing the blind, and we mustn't think that Jesus always followed the same procedures in what He did. In this instance, though, Jesus apparently accommodated Himself to the Jewish idea that saliva had this medicinal quality. Maybe Jesus was deliberately "working" this way on the Sabbath as a way of making a point to the Jews who were watching Him.

Jesus told the man to "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam," and John felt the meaning of the word "Siloam" was significant enough that he should tell us the word means "Sent." Remember this was the pool from which water was drawn during the Feast of Booths, and was associated with the saying in Isaiah 12:3, "Therefore you will joyously draw water From the springs of salvation." Jesus sent the man to this pool to wash, but did not go with him. He had to find his way there and wash and then received his sight. Probably someone helped him get there. It was an act of faith for this man to do as Jesus directed. He trusted in Jesus and followed His instructions, and therefore was healed.

There is a similar story involving Elisha in 2 Kings 5:1-14:

Now Naaman, captain of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man with his master, and highly respected, because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram. The man was also a valiant warrior, but he was a leper. 2 Now the Arameans had gone out in bands and had taken captive a little girl from the land of Israel; and she waited on Naaman's wife. 3 She said to her mistress, "I wish that my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! Then he would cure him of his leprosy." 4 Naaman went in and told his master, saying, "Thus and thus spoke the girl who is from the land of Israel." 5 Then the king of Aram said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel." He departed and took with him ten talents of silver and six thousand shekels of gold and ten changes of clothes. 6 He brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, "And now as this letter comes to you, behold, I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may cure him of his leprosy." 7 When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man is sending word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? But consider now, and see how he is seeking a quarrel against me." 8 It happened when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, that he sent word to the king, saying, "Why have you torn your clothes? Now let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel." 9 So Naaman came with his horses and his chariots and stood at the doorway of the house of Elisha. 10 Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored to you and you will be clean." 11 But Naaman was furious and went away and said, "Behold, I thought, 'He will surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and

45 Robertson, A. T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*

wave his hand over the place and cure the leper.' 12 "Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. 13 Then his servants came near and spoke to him and said, "My father, had the prophet told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?" 14 So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child and he was clean.

Elisha did not do what Naaman expected him to do, and initially Naaman responded badly. He had his own ideas about how the prophet should heal him. Thankfully he listened to the encouragement of his servants and complied with Elisha's directions and was healed. Our notions about how the Lord should heal may come from a place of error or arrogance. We may not understand the directives of the Lord, but we should always comply with them.

Most of the time when Jesus healed someone He did not require them to do anything, but in this case He did. Jesus certainly could have healed the man without any spit or clay or telling him to wash in the pool. We've seen that Jesus can heal even from a distance by simply issuing the order. So why did He make this man follow this procedure? It may have been a test of faith; would he do as the Lord said? Would he trust the word of the Lord? It may have been a means of concealing this healing somewhat from His opponents, as the man went privately to the pool to wash. We can only speculate about this. The man did not argue with Jesus or question Him, he simply did as Jesus directed. He went and washed in the pool and "came back seeing." He came back to the place where he had encountered Jesus, but apparently Jesus had moved on.

The place he returned to where he had encountered Jesus was probably also the place where he usually sat and begged. The people who were familiar with him as a blind beggar saw him and asked, "Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?" They could see that he had been healed and now could see. The fact that he could now see was what caused the confusion. Some thought that surely it could not be the same man. They said, "No, but he is like him." But the man himself kept saying, "I am the one." He had to keep on telling them that he was the man. The logical next question was, "How then were your eyes opened?" If he was really the man who was the blind beggar, then how did he receive sight? They needed an explanation. People born blind did not just suddenly receive sight, so how had this happened?

In answer the man simply told the story, "The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went away and washed, and I received sight." He knew that the man who had healed him was Jesus. This is an indication that there was more dialog between Jesus, His disciples and this man than John records for us here. He had learned the name of Jesus through his interaction with them. The word translated "received sight" is *anablepō*, meaning "to look up." As soon as he washed and opened his eyes, he was able to "look up" and see for the first time in his life. It must have been an incredible experience for him!

The people then asked, "Where is He?", and he replied, "I do not know." He had told them all that he knew. He had no idea where Jesus had gone. Probably he had come back from the pool looking for Jesus, but Jesus was no longer there.

Apparently the people examining this man and what had happened decided that this was a case for the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin because it had taken place on a Sabbath. Clearly this was another instance of Jesus "working" on the Sabbath and violating the Sabbath. It was another piece of evidence against Jesus being the Messiah. Never mind that an incredible miracle had been done! Instead of seeing a great demonstration of the grace and power of

God, these people saw a violation of the Law. Unbelievers will do this - they will refuse to see what is plainly a work of God and instead will choose to see it as a violation, as something evil and wrong. Isaiah 5:20 says, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!" This is what those who prefer darkness will do. They not only will avoid the light, but will say that the light is actually darkness and the darkness is actually light. Though their minds are darkened, they will claim to be enlightened.

It had been firmly established that this man was, in fact, blind. The people who used to see him sitting and begging knew it, and now it was obvious that he had been given sight. So then the Pharisees did not initially ask if he had really been blind, but were asking him how he received his sight. Again the man simply said, "He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed and I see." That was how it happened. The Pharisees were divided in their response. Some said, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." Others asked, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" One group focused on the Sabbath violation, and the other on the fact that Jesus was performing miraculous signs. One group maintained that a man who was really "from God" would keep the Sabbath, and the other pointed out that a sinner couldn't possibly "perform such signs." Probably Nicodemus was one who supported the idea that the signs Jesus was performing gave evidence that He was from God and was not a sinner. Nicodemus had said to Jesus in John 3:2, "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." There is no record that the Pharisees who condemned Jesus were able to answer this question. If Jesus was a sinner, a Sabbath violator, and was not from God, then how could He do these miracles? They had no explanation for it.

In the midst of their division the Pharisees asked the man what he had to say about Jesus, since He had opened the man's eyes. What view had he adopted about Jesus? The man replied, "He is a prophet." He did not confess Jesus as the Christ, but as a prophet. At this point he had adopted the view many others had, that Jesus was a prophet. He believed that Jesus was "from God" and represented God as a prophet.

Next the "Jews," the hostile Pharisees, tried to question whether this man was really blind in the first place. Maybe this whole thing was just a hoax. They decided to disbelieve that he had been born blind and had received sight. They set aside his testimony and the testimony of the people who knew him and called his parents. They asked his parents three probing questions in quick succession, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?" There is an implied accusation in their question, "who you say was born blind?" They were saying that the parents had maintained that their son was born blind, but they did not believe it. I suppose they thought they could get his parents to admit that it was their son but that he had not actually been born blind. His parents affirmed that he was their son and that he had been born blind, but they had no idea how his eyes had been opened. They did not know how it happened nor who did it. It was no hoax that he had been born blind. He had not been pretending to be blind in order to have success as a beggar. The parents passed the responsibility for explaining the thing to their son who, as an adult, could speak for himself. They probably mean that their son was at least 30 years old, and they were no longer responsible to answer for him. Adults speak for themselves and no longer need the intervention of their parents.

Verses 22 and 23 tell us why the parents had responded this way. It was because they were afraid of the Jews. The Jews had decided that those who confessed Jesus to be the Christ would be "put out of the synagogue." This fear is mentioned again in John 12:42-43, "Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved

the approval of men rather than the approval of God.” In John 16:2-3 Jesus says to the disciples, “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. These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me.” It was a strong threat the Pharisees held over people to keep them from believing in Jesus. Marvin Vincent explains why this was such a powerful threat:

Three kinds of excommunication were recognized, of which only the third was the real cutting off, the other two being disciplinary. The first, and lightest, was called *rebuke*, and lasted from seven to thirty days. The second was called *thrusting out*, and lasted for thirty days at least, followed by a “second admonition,” which lasted for thirty days more. This could only be pronounced in an assembly of ten. It was accompanied by curses, and sometimes proclaimed with the blast of the horn. The excommunicated person would not be admitted into any assembly of ten men, nor to public prayer. People would keep at the distance of four cubits from him, as if he were a leper. Stones were to be cast on his coffin when dead, and mourning for him was forbidden. If all else failed, the third, or real excommunication was pronounced, the duration of which was indefinite. The man was to be as one dead. No intercourse was to be held with him; one must not show him the road, and though he might buy the necessaries of life, it was forbidden to eat and drink with him. These severer forms appear to have been of later introduction, so that the penalty which the blind man's parents feared was probably separation from all religious fellowship, and from ordinary intercourse of life for perhaps thirty days.⁴⁶

Having interrogated the parents, the Pharisees now knew that the man had indeed been born blind and had indeed been healed by Jesus, so they called him back in to interrogate him some more. They said to him, “Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner.” In saying “Give glory to God,” they were admonishing him to tell the truth. Joshua used the same phrase when he ordered Achan to confess his sin in Joshua 7:19, “My son, I implore you, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and give praise to Him; and tell me now what you have done. Do not hide it from me.” The implication of the Pharisees again is that Jesus, being (in their view) a sinner, could not possibly have healed the man's blindness. Therefore they were admonishing him to tell them the real story of how he was healed. For some people it does not matter how solid the evidence is for Christ, they will not believe in Him.

Clearly the man was irritated and insulted by the Pharisees' line of questioning. He knew very little about Jesus, but he did know what had happened to him. He didn't know whether or not Jesus was a sinner, but he did know that he had been blind and now he was able to see. The man believed Jesus to be a prophet, and prophets can be sinners like everyone else, but this one had opened his eyes, that much he knew.

The Pharisees asked again, “What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?” So now they have been forced into a corner. They have to admit that the man had really been blind and had really been given sight by Jesus. Maybe they asked these questions again because they thought he might forget what he told them before and his story might change. Maybe they could catch him in an inconsistency. The man responded, “I told you already and you did not listen; why do you want to hear it again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?” He knew that Jesus was a rabbi with disciples, and he considered himself a follower of Jesus also. We can't know if he planned to go searching for Jesus once the

46 Vincent, M. R., *Word Studies in the New Testament*

Pharisees released him, but I think it probable. He could see how stubborn these men were in their unbelief and their unwillingness to listen to him. They certainly did not want to become disciples of Jesus, they had already rejected Him and condemned Him as worthy of death. Sometimes it is fruitless to try to reason with people like the Pharisees. No matter what you say they won't listen. No matter what evidence you present they won't believe.

The response of the Pharisees to the man's defiance was to revile him, to abuse him. They said, "You are His disciple, but 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." Essentially they were saying, "We are superior to you because we are disciples of Moses, but you are that man's disciple." (The word "his" does not occur in verse 28, but rather it is *ekeinos*, "that one.") They showed their contempt for Jesus in this expression.) They knew for certain that God had spoken to Moses. Exodus 33:11 says, "Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend." Jesus affirmed that the scribes and Pharisees were "seated" in the "chair of Moses" in Matthew 23:2-3, "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them." They indeed taught the Law of Moses, but did not do it. John has said in John 1:17, "For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ." It is right and good that the Law given through Moses should be taught. In fact Jesus says in Matthew 5:17-20:

"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. 18 "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. 19 "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."

So it is good and right to be students of Moses and to study and practice and teach the Law given through him. It is still the expression of God's will for us, but it does not save us. Jesus is the one who saves us from our sins. The Law convicts us of sin and is meant to be our tutor to lead us to faith in Christ (Galatians 3:24-25). Despite claiming to be disciples of Moses, these Pharisees did not follow the teaching of Moses because they did not believe in Jesus. Remember what Jesus said to them in John 5:45-46, "Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me." The Pharisees did not truly believe the teaching of Moses, and so they were not really his disciples.

In contrast to Moses, the Pharisees said that they did not know where Jesus was from. They had decided that He could not be from God because He broke the Sabbath (verse 16). They had judged Him to be a sinner (verse 24). They knew they could have confidence in Moses, but did not believe Jesus was from God.

The man was angry and sarcastic in his reply to the Pharisees. He said that it was "an amazing thing" that they could not discern where Jesus had come from in the face of the evidence of his healed blindness. They, who were supposed to be wise and righteous, could not see the plain truth staring them in the face. Jesus had done a marvelous miracle and opened the man's eyes, but these men would not see the divine origin of it. He then pointed to truths they all knew and believed. He said first that "God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him." Psalm 66:18 says, "If I regard

wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear.” Isaiah 59:1-3 says, “Behold, the LORD’S hand is not so short That it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood And your fingers with iniquity; Your lips have spoken falsehood, Your tongue mutters wickedness.” The Lord turns a deaf ear to those who walk in sin and rebellion against Him. God listens to those who fear Him and do His will. The man could see that God had heard Jesus and had granted His request. The Father always hears the Son (John 11:41-42). It was obvious to him that Jesus was at least a God-fearing man who was doing the will of God.

His second point to them was the unprecedented nature of the miracle Jesus had performed, “Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind.” This kind of healing had never been heard of since the beginning of the world. There is no record in the Old Testament of anyone healing the blindness of one who had been born blind. Neither Moses nor any of the prophets had done such a thing. Psalm 146:8 says, “The Lord opens the eyes of the blind.” It is a work of God when the blind are miraculously given sight. Jesus answered the doubts of John the Baptist by saying that this was part of what He was doing, giving sight to the blind (Matthew 11:5). Jesus had done something no one else had ever done in all of human history.

The third point is his conclusion, “If this man were not from God, He could do nothing.” He concluded that Jesus could not have healed him if He were not from God. This was the obvious inference from the facts. Since He had done this thing that no one else had ever done, He must be from God. He knew it was a gracious work of God that had given him sight, but these men denied it. They could not see what was obvious.

The adversarial Pharisees did not turn from their error, but doubled down on their rejection of this man. They said, “You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?” The Pharisees had the same idea the disciples of Jesus had at first, that this man had been born blind due to sin, his own or that of his parents. They would not put up with an attempt on his part to teach them, and so they cast him out of their meeting. Rather than humbling themselves, admitting that he was right and seeing the truth that was so obvious, they attacked him and rejected him. They could not refute his arguments, so they resorted to a personal attack on his character. This is what arrogant and self-righteous people do. They are not teachable. They will not listen even when the truth is plainly stated to them. They see themselves as the arbiters of truth. Beware of those who will not listen to reasonable arguments. Beware of those who won’t ever admit error. Beware of those who always reject those who contradict them. Let us be humble enough to be teachable. Let us listen even to opponents. They may point to truth we are unwilling to admit.

After the Pharisees put him out the man did not have to find Jesus because Jesus found him. Jesus heard about what had happened, and when He found the man He asked, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” This was equivalent to asking, “Do you believe in the Messiah?” The man had expressed faith that Jesus was a prophet and was from God, and so Jesus took him to the next level of believing that Jesus was the “Son of Man,” the Messiah. Since this was the first time the man had actually seen Jesus, he asked, “Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?” He wanted to know who He was so that he could believe in Him. He had heard Jesus previously, but had never seen Him. So Jesus replied, “You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking to you.” He had now seen Jesus as well as heard Him. Jesus did not say, “It’s Me!” or “I’m the one!” He spoke of Himself in the third person. I think this is because the man asked, “Who is He?” and not, “Is it you?” He was thinking the man asking him the question must be someone else checking in on him.

The first time he called Jesus “Lord” in verse 36 he probably just meant it in the sense of “sir.” The second time in verse 38 he truly uses it in the sense of “Lord.” He recognized the divinity of Jesus and that He was the Messiah. Note that he confessed belief in Jesus and worshiped Him. Faith in Christ leads to worship of Christ, and it is proper that we should worship Him. When the Roman centurion Cornelius tried to worship Peter, Peter said, “Stand up; I too am just a man” (Acts 10:25-26). But when Jesus was worshiped He did not reject it. He did not say it was improper, but received it. Indeed we must worship Jesus as God incarnate Lord and Savior. Again we should recall what Jesus said in John 5:22-23, “For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.” To worship the Son is to worship the Father. True faith in Christ produces worship of Christ.

In verse 39 Jesus seems to contradict what John’s gospel has said previously about His mission. John 3:17 says, “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.” God did not send His Son into the world to pass sentence on the world, but to bring salvation to the world. The verses following John 3:17 make it clear, though, that those who do not believe in Jesus are already judged, already condemned, because of their unbelief. Jesus came into the world as the light of the world, but people loved the darkness instead of the light and would not come to the light. This is the judgment. Those who won’t believe in Jesus remain in a default state of judgment. So when Jesus says in John 9:39, “For judgment I came into this world,” I think He means that His coming in itself is the thing that will separate those who are saved from those who are condemned. He said in Matthew 10:34-36 “Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; and A MAN’S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD.” We’ve seen that Jesus causes a division between those who believe in Him and those who do not. This is the “judgment” He came to bring about.

It is obvious in verses 39-41 that there is more than physical “blindness” in view. Jesus and the Pharisees were talking about a metaphorical, spiritual blindness. The man Jesus healed had received both physical and spiritual sight. He saw physically and he also “saw” the truth about Jesus, that He is the Lord and Messiah. His eyes were opened in both senses. The antagonistic Pharisees though, who claimed to “see” and know the truth, were actually blinded to it. They became blind to the truth of Christ. Indeed, God hid the truth from them, as Jesus said as He prayed in Matthew 11:25, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants.” It is the humble, the lowly and the childlike who are privileged to see the truth in Christ. Arrogant know-it-all types do not receive the revelation of the truth from the Father, but they remain blind to it.

There were Pharisees there who heard what Jesus said and asked, “We are not blind too, are we?” The question anticipated a negative answer, “No, you’re not blind.” They perhaps expected Jesus to say, “No, you have the Scriptures and the Law of Moses, you are certainly not blind.” But Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.” Jesus pointed to their claim to see the truth, but they rejected the plain truth about Him which had been proven by His miraculous signs. Because they really could “see” the plain truth about Him, but still rejected Him, their sin remained. Because of their knowledge of the Scriptures, they had greater responsibility to believe the Scriptures and Moses and put their trust in Jesus. Those who were ignorant of these things did not have the same level of responsibility. Those who have never heard of the Bible or of

Jesus can't be held responsible for rejecting Him. When they do hear of Him, then they can be held responsible.

This brings up the question, "So if people who are spiritually blind have no sin, isn't it better to keep them that way than to tell them the truth? Aren't they accepted by God as long as they are ignorant?" Well, no. We must understand first here that Jesus is talking about blindness to Him and who He is, and the particular sin of rejecting Him, and not of the general sinfulness that we all inherit from Adam. Second, we must understand the clear doctrine that all people are "under sin" and are lost and condemned apart from Christ. Paul makes this very clear in Romans 3. He says in Romans 3:9, "We have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin." In verse 19 he says that all the world is "accountable to God." Apart from faith in Christ, we are all "children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3). All must hear of Christ and have the opportunity to come out of the darkness into the light.

Spiritual blindness is what we are up against in the business of sharing the good news of Christ with the world. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." This is the problem. Blinded minds must be opened to the truth. When Paul told king Agrippa about how the Lord had appeared to him on the road to Damascus, he said that Jesus told him He was sending Paul to the Gentiles, "to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me" (Acts 26:18). As we share the message of Christ, we need to pray that the Lord will grant opened eyes and minds to the truth. People are able to turn from darkness to light and escape from the dominion of Satan if their eyes are opened. People cannot receive forgiveness, sanctification and an inheritance in God's kingdom unless their eyes are opened.

John 10:1-21

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. 2 "But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. 3 "To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 "When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 "A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers." 6 This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.

7 So Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 "All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. 9 "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. 10 "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. 11 "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. 12 "He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 "He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. 14 "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, 15 even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. 16 "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd. 17 "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. 18 "No one has taken it away 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 received from My Father."

20 Many of them were saying, "He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?"
21 Others were saying, "These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?"

Jesus has made some amazing claims in the gospel of John. He has said, "I am the bread of life" in John 6:35, "I am the light of the world" in 8:12, "I am from above" in 8:23, and "before Abraham was born, I am" in 8:58. He will make some more fantastic claims as we continue through John. Now in chapter 10 He depicts Himself as the "good shepherd" and the "door of the sheep." He will contrast Himself as the good shepherd with those who are thieves and robbers and hired hands.

The "fold" of the sheep was simply an enclosure made of a wall of stones with an opening for a door. Hastings Dictionary of the Bible says, "When away from villages, the sheep are herded at night in **fold**s, which are roughly made enclosures of piled-up stones; the shepherd lives in a cave or hut adjoining, and is in very intimate touch with his sheep, each of which he knows unfailingly at a glance." Jesus says that if someone climbs into the fold and does not enter by the door, he is a thief and a robber, but the one who enters by the door is a shepherd. The doorkeeper knows and recognizes the shepherd and opens the door for him. The sheep respond to him. They know his voice, he calls them by name and leads them out. He "puts forth" his own and goes ahead of them. The sheep follow him because they know his voice. The word for "puts forth" is *ekballō*, to expel or drive or cast out. It is the same word used when Jesus made a scourge of cords and drove the money changers out of the temple (John 2:15), and when the Jews expelled the man healed of blindness (John 9:34). Some of the sheep may be reluctant to leave the fold, so the shepherd has to push them out. Once they are out of the fold, they follow him and will not follow strangers because they don't know the voice of strangers.

The shepherd has the privilege of access to the sheep. He is able to enter by the door. The doorkeeper recognizes the shepherd and opens the door for him. The word for "doorkeeper," *thurōros*, occurs four times in the New Testament. In Mark 13:33-37 Jesus mentioned the doorkeeper as He urged His followers to be alert for His coming:

"Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come. 34 It is like a man away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert. 35 Therefore, be on the alert—for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— 36 in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep. 37 What I say to you I say to all, 'Be on the alert!'"

The doorkeeper had a very important responsibility in securing the man's house until he returned. He had a special command to stay on the alert at all times. In John 18:16-17 the doorkeeper at the court of the high priest was a slave girl who admitted Peter into the courtyard. A doorkeeper apparently was a sort of guard who was only supposed to admit authorized people into a restricted area. The doorkeeper of the sheep fold recognizes that the shepherd is the authorized owner of his sheep and opens the door for him.

The shepherd calls his sheep and they hear his voice. He calls them by name. Each sheep has a name and the shepherd knows them all. He knows them individually and cares

about them individually. In the Parable of the Lost Sheep in Luke 15:4-7 Jesus pointed out that the shepherd with 100 sheep will leave the 99 in order to seek the one sheep that had gone missing, and once he finds it he will have a party with his neighbors. The sheep are not just important to him as a flock, but as individuals.

There might be more than one flock in the fold at night, but the sheep who belong to a particular shepherd know his voice and recognize him. They respond to his call to them. Note the emphasis Jesus puts on the fact that His sheep hear His voice and respond. We see it in verses 3 and 4, verse 16 and verse 27. He also says they do not listen to nor follow strangers in verses 5 and 8. A few years ago we took Bochy, our boxer (dog) to training classes for several weeks. One of the things he learned was to pay attention to us and ignore others. Part of the training was for me to give him a command, like "sit," and then the trainers tried to call him and distract him. He learned pretty quickly to focus on me and ignore them. This is what the sheep of Jesus are to learn. There are many voices calling to us in the world, but we must listen only to the voice of our Shepherd and follow only Him.

Shepherds in that time and place did not drive their sheep. They did not use dogs to push the sheep where they wanted them to go, but they went ahead of them and they followed him. Jesus pointed this out in verses 3 and 4. The sheep knew him, knew his voice and so they followed him. This is an important and fundamental point about leaders and leadership, that leaders go first, they do not drive their followers from behind, but they know each of their followers, go before them and say, "Follow me!" The army recognizes this truth. In an article on the US army website titled "12 Principles of Modern Military Leadership," it says:

Taught to lead by example, leaders inspire their Soldiers to perform deeds of heroism and sacrifice, which often requires suppression of natural feelings such as fear. Leaders do not encourage their Soldiers by saying, "onward," but rather, "follow me," the very apropos motto of the U.S. Army Infantry School.

To inspire troops, leaders must instill a pervasive attitude to motivate their troops to advance under withering fire or hold a seemingly untenable position. To accomplish this, leaders must be present at the forward edge of the battle area so their Soldiers will follow their example and respect their judgment, leadership ability, and tactical knowledge.⁴⁷

Leaders who are worth following do not push people from behind, but go ahead of them. They don't expect those under their authority and guidance to go where they are unwilling to go and do what they are unwilling to do. Leaders who try to push people ahead of them quickly build resentment among their followers. Jesus is a shepherd who goes ahead of His sheep and calls them to follow Him. Jesus did what He expects us to do. After Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, He said, "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. 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 also should do as I did to you" (John 13:13-15). Jesus does not just tell us what to do, He shows us what to do.

What the sheep must do is hear the voice of the shepherd and follow Him. They hear his voice (verse 3), know his voice (verse 4) and therefore follow him. On the "Mount of Transfiguration" in Matthew 17:5, God said to Peter, James and John, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" Though Moses and Elijah were also there, God ordered these men to listen to Jesus. Jesus was the important one in the meeting; He

47 https://www.army.mil/article/208766/12_principles_of_modern_military_leadership_part_1

was the authority. If we are really the sheep of Jesus we know His voice. We can distinguish His voice from all the other voices in the world. Romans 8:14-15 says, "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'" If we are children of God we have received His Spirit and are being led by His Spirit. Our responsibility is to hear His voice and do as He says.

When Jesus says in verse 5 "A stranger they simply will not follow," there is a double negative in the Greek text. They will "no never" follow a stranger. The word for "stranger" is *allogenes*, "one who belongs to another," that is, one who does not belong to their flock. It could be a reference to the thief or robber, but may also apply to a shepherd of another flock. Instead of following the stranger, the sheep will flee from him because they don't know his voice. They will not be led astray into another flock to which they don't belong. When we see people who profess to follow Christ following others, we can be sure they don't really belong to Christ. A genuine sheep of Jesus will not fall prey to the deceptions of the world. Too many today who say they are Christians are listening more to the world than they are to Christ.

This stuff about sheep and shepherds was a "figure of speech." The word is *paroimia*, and is an "old word for proverb from *para* (beside) and *oimos*, way, a wayside saying or saying by the way."⁴⁸ We could say it is an allegory, illustration or proverb. The Pharisees listening to Jesus did not understand what He was saying, so Jesus will continue to interpret it for them.

In verses 7 through 18 Jesus identifies Himself as both "the door of the sheep" and "the good shepherd." For those who are sheep, Jesus is the door into the fold. The sheep must go through Him to enter into His fold. Those who came before Him claiming to be the Messiah were thieves and robbers. I don't think in verse 8 that Jesus is referring literally to everyone who came before Him including Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets and so on. I think He means those who came before Him who claimed to be the Messiah and the shepherds of Israel, but who were actually impostors and deceivers. His sheep did not hear these men and did not follow them. Those who are really the sheep of Jesus will not be deceived by impostors. Jesus made this clear in Matthew 24:23-25 when He spoke of His second coming, "Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not believe him. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you in advance." I think His implication is that it is not possible to mislead the elect. The false Christs and false prophets will try to mislead the elect but will not succeed. Jesus is the true "door" through whom anyone may enter, be saved, go in and out and find pasture. The sheep who belong to Jesus find safety in His fold and provision of their needs as He leads them to pasture. They have security instead of anxiety and will not be in want. They have the experience described in Psalm 23:

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

The purpose of the thief is to steal, kill and destroy. The thief is destructive and does not have the welfare of the sheep in mind. False prophets are wolves in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15-20), and they care only for themselves. They pose as sheep in order to deceive the sheep and exploit them. This is why we must be especially wary of pastors and evangelists who enrich themselves by their so-called "ministry." If some minister lives a lavish lifestyle and is often emphasizing the importance of donating to his ministry, he is likely to be a false shepherd and false prophet. In contrast, the purpose of Jesus is to give life to His sheep, and that abundantly. The word for "abundantly" means a surplus or an excess amount of something. The life Jesus gives is not just bare survival at the edge of starvation and death, but is eternal life, overflowing life, the kind of life we all yearn for. He came to give us this life. John writes in 1 John 5:11-12, "And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life."

Not only is Jesus the "door" of the sheep, He is also the good shepherd. What does the good shepherd do? He lays down His life for the sheep. Note His emphasis on this in verses 11, 15, 17 and 18. The primary concern of the good shepherd is the welfare of the sheep, and if necessary he will give his life defending them in order to save them. Of course, this is the whole mission and purpose of Jesus, to save His sheep, and it was necessary for Him to lay down His life to accomplish this. His death on behalf of His sheep is the ultimate proof of His love for them. He will say in John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." If we wonder if the Lord really loves us, we should reflect on this truth. The ultimate demonstration of God's love for us is the death of Christ for us. Romans 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

In contrast to the good shepherd is the "hired hand" of verses 12 and 13. The word for "hired hand" means "a wage worker."⁴⁹ The hired hand is not a shepherd, is not the owner of the sheep, and so when he sees the wolf coming he abandons the sheep and flees. The wolf then snatches the sheep and scatters them. The sheep the wolf can't snatch are scattered and the flock is dissipated. The hired hand is not classified with the thieves and robbers, but as a hired hand he is not concerned about the sheep. He is more concerned about his own safety. He will rescue himself rather than the sheep. He will not lay down his life for the sheep because they are not his sheep. The shepherd is the owner of the sheep who "calls his own sheep by name" (verse 3) and "puts forth his own" (verse 4). He will stay with them and defend them from the wolf. Jesus uses the word "snatch" again in verses 28 and 29, "and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 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." The sheep may be snatched from a hired hand, but not from the good shepherd. They are safe in his hands.

I think that too many of our pastors in our churches are "hired hands." The word "pastor" means "shepherd." The Greek word for "shepherd" in the New Testament, *poimēn*, is only once translated "pastors" in our English translations, in Ephesians 4:11. Everywhere else it is translated "shepherd." A pastor, then, is supposed to be a shepherd of the sheep. He is supposed to be concerned about the sheep; he is supposed to protect and defend the sheep, and he is supposed to go after the sheep who have strayed. But I think that many pastors are just doing the job they were hired to do. They are hired by the flock and often fired by the flock. They often stand above and apart from the congregation and are not really part of it. I've known pastors of large churches who were almost inaccessible to ordinary members of

the church because they were too important and too busy to have time for them. They are seen as the trained professionals, the CEOs of the corporation, and when they step down or are removed they leave and are not part of the organization any longer. This is a very poor model for local church leadership, I think. The New Testament teaches that the elders (plural) of a local congregation are to serve as the shepherds of the congregation. This is made plain in Acts 20:17-31 and 1 Peter 5:1-4. In Acts 20:28-31 Paul said to the elders of the church in Ephesus, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears." Notice that the primary task for these elders, these shepherds, these overseers, was to "be on guard" and to "be on the alert" in order to protect the flock from the "savage wolves" that would come among them. They would be men who would come along "speaking perverse things" in order to "draw away the disciples after them." Knowing this threat himself, Paul constantly admonished each person with tears when he was among them. The shepherds of our congregations should constantly be on the alert for false teachers and false teachings and should warn against them. These things need to be confronted and nipped in the bud before they take hold and grow. Too often in our desperation for someone, anyone, to fill a teaching or leadership position in the church we allow any warm body who volunteers to do it. This can be a huge mistake. The shepherds must check people out before they are allowed to teach or preach, and then must also constantly monitor what is being said. Too many today are bringing false conspiracy theories and personality cults into the body of believers. These things must be rooted out, and it is the job of the shepherds to do so.

Another characteristic of the good shepherd is that He knows His sheep and they know Him (verse 14). He knows them as the Father knows Him, and He knows the Father. The sheep know the good shepherd by experience and not just by theory. They don't just know about Him from reading of Him, but by living experience of Him, by relationship with Him. I just read a book by World War 2 correspondent Ernie Pyle, so I know a little bit about him and his life, but since he was killed in 1945 I have never had the opportunity to have a relationship with him and really "know" him in that sense. But Jesus knows me, has called me by name, and brought me into a relationship with Himself. Every day His sheep hear His voice, recognize it and follow Him. If we only know Him in theory from what we've read, we are poor sheep.

Jesus says in verse 16 that He has other sheep "which are not of this fold." He means He has sheep who are not Jewish. The book of Revelation says that people from every tribe, tongue, people and nation will be in the kingdom of heaven (Revelation 5:9, 13:7 and 14:6). When He marveled at the faith of the Roman centurion, Jesus said, "I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 8:11). Scripture makes it clear that God's salvation is not just for the Jews, though at that time they thought that it was. The Lord had to force Peter to go share the gospel with Cornelius the centurion (Acts 10:1 – 11:18). The good news of Christ is for all people everywhere, and not for an exclusive few.

It was necessary for Jesus to bring these other sheep who were not of the Jewish fold. He said, "I must bring them also." The word translated "bring," *agō*, means "to lead." He would lead them out of the world. He would call them to Himself, and they would hear His voice and follow Him. They would join the Jewish sheep and become one flock with one shepherd. There may be different "folds," but one flock. There are different races, nationalities and

languages, but one flock with one shepherd. This unity in diversity is one of the beautiful things about the body of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12). We must see that the Lord wants to use us to call more of His sheep out of the world to Himself. This is the work of evangelism. Through the faithful proclamation of the good news of Christ, the sheep will hear the voice of the Lord calling them and will respond and join the flock.

Jesus says in verse 17 that the Father loves Him because He lays down His life so that He may take it again. He says in verse 18 that this was the commandment He received from His Father. The Father ordered the Son to lay down His life and take it up again. This was the reason the Father sent the Son into the world. We've seen that Jesus made it clear that His "food" was to do the will of the Father and accomplish His work (John 4:34), and that He always did the things that were pleasing to the Father (John 8:29). Jesus was in perfect harmony with the Father and never did or said anything that the Father did not want Him to do or to say. This is why the Father said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." A disobedient and rebellious son is a great grief to his father, and brings dishonor to his father. But Jesus is the beloved Son who always does the will of His Father, and so the Father has no objection to the Son. Jesus is in no way displeasing to the Father.

Speaking in the past tense as if it had already taken place, Jesus says in verse 18, "No one has taken it away 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." Jesus' life was not taken, but was given. He was going to lay down His life voluntarily, of Himself. Yes, He was arrested by men, condemned by men and crucified by men, but He voluntarily gave Himself up and surrendered Himself to them. As He said to Pilate, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above" (John 19:11). He uses the same word for "authority" there that He uses here, *exousia*, which means "power to act."⁵⁰ Jesus had the power and authority to lay down His life and to take it up again. His authority did not end with His death, but extended also to His resurrection. He would lay down His life, but then take it up again. He would put it aside and then pick it up again. The language used when Jesus died on the cross confirms this. Matthew 27:50 says, "And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit." The word translated "yielded up" is the verb *aphiēmi*, to "send away."⁵¹ He sent His Spirit from His body. John 19:30 says, "Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit." The word for "gave up" is the verb *paradidōmi*, "to hand over, to give or deliver over."⁵² Jesus decided on the cross when it was time to yield His Spirit.

Again a division occurred among the Jews as they took opposing viewpoints about Jesus. Some said, "He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?" Others said, "These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?" Some again pointed to the evidence of His signs, particularly His healing of the blind man, to deny that He could be demon-possessed. To them His miracles were at least proof that He wasn't demon-possessed.

John 10:22-42

At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; 23 it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. 24 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

50 *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance*

51 *ibid*

52 *ibid*

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. 32 Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?" 33 The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God." 34 Jesus answered them, "Has it not been written in your Law, 'I SAID, YOU ARE GODS'? 35 "If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), 36 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'? 37 "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; 38 but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father." 39 Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him, and He eluded their grasp.

40 And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing, and He was staying there. 41 Many came to Him and were saying, "While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true." 42 Many believed in Him there.

The Feast of the Dedication is what we know today as Hanukkah. The [International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#) says this about the Feast of Dedication:

A feast held by the Jews throughout the country for eight days, commencing on the 25th Kislev (December), in commemoration of the cleansing of the temple and dedication of the altar by Judas Maccabeus after their desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes (1 Macc. 4:56, 59). The feast was to be kept "with mirth and gladness." 2 Macc 10:6, 7 says it was kept like the Feast of the Tabernacles, with the carrying of palm and other branches, and the singing of psalms. Josephus calls it "Lights," from the joy which accompanied it (*Ant.*, XII, vii, 7). At this winter feast Jesus delivered in the temple the discourse recorded in John 10:24, at Jerusalem.

It was during this feast that Jesus was again in Jerusalem. Though the NASB says, "At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem," it was probably sometime after the events of verses 1-21. Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon, which was a colonnade on the east side of the temple. This is the same place where Peter would later be used of the Lord to heal a lame man (Acts 3:11). It is also evidently the place where the early church would gather. Acts 5:12 says, "At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico."

Once again the "Jews," the opponents of Jesus, challenged Him and said, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." In the Greek text their question literally says, "How long will you lift up our soul?" The [Literal Standard Version](#) translates it, "Until when do You hold our soul in suspense?" The context indicates this is their meaning, as they next urge Him to "tell us plainly." They want Him to say, "Yes, I am the Christ." But why won't Jesus say it? Why won't He tell them plainly? Why does He consistently refuse to explicitly say it? I think it is because of the conception that the Jews had of the Messiah and what He would do. They were looking for a King who would overthrow the Romans and "restore the kingdom to Israel" (Acts 1:6). They knew that the Messiah, as the Son of David,

was to sit on David's throne and rule forever (2 Samuel 7:12-13). But it was not at that time the purpose of Jesus. His purpose was to lay down His life for His sheep and not to destroy the enemies of Israel. If He had said, "Yes, I am the Christ," they would have taken it as a claim to the throne, as a claim that He intended to rule over Israel and the world. He will one day rule in fullness, but that time hasn't yet come.

Jesus would not explicitly say, "I am the Christ," but He did contend that He had told them and they did not believe. He had consistently claimed to be the Son of God and always called God His Father. He had even made the claim that "before Abraham was born, I Am" in John 8:58. His claim to deity had been unmistakable. He had made it clear who He was. But it was useless to answer the question "plainly" because these men did not believe it in any case. They would just try to prosecute Him. They saw Him as a threat rather than a savior.

As He had done before, He pointed to His works, His signs, as evidence of who He was. He said, "the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me." We've just seen in verse 21 that some argued that Jesus could not be demon-possessed because a demon could not possibly open the eyes of the blind. In John 9:16 some of the Jews were saying, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" They could not deny the miracles that Jesus was doing, and Jesus pointed to them as witnesses that He is the Messiah. The works He did were done in the name of His Father. They were the works of the Father done by the Son, proving that the Father was in Him and He in the Father. Jesus essentially said, "My works speak for Me."

Despite the testimony of His works, His opponents did not believe, and the reason they didn't believe was because they were not His sheep. The sheep of Jesus believe. He says, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." They hear Him, put their full confidence in Him, and follow Him. As we've seen, He knows them individually and intimately by name. This is how believers are to live. We are to hear the voice of Jesus, fully trust Him, and follow Him. Those who are not the sheep of Jesus do not listen to Him, do not trust in Him and do not follow Him. Those who are not His sheep do not recognize Him as their shepherd.

Those who hear the voice of Jesus, believe in Him and follow Him are given eternal life and will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of the hand of Jesus. When Jesus said, "I give eternal life to them," the verb "give" is present-tense. He is not saying that He will give them eternal life in the future, but that He is giving them eternal life right now. Because Jesus gives them eternal life they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of His hand. The sheep who are in His hand are also in the hand of the Father, and it is impossible for anyone to snatch them from the Father because He is greater than all. The Father has given them to the Son, and so the sheep of Jesus are in the hand of the Son and of the Father. The sheep in the hand of the Good Shepherd are safe and secure. They need not fear the wolf. Jesus will not lose those whom the Father has given Him (John 6:39).

The issue of "eternal security" has long been debated among differing groups, with some saying that it is possible to lose one's salvation through disobedience or unfaithfulness, and others saying that no, if we are really saved we are secure in our salvation even if we stumble and fall at times. I think it is explicit here that if we really have been called by the Father, given by the Father to the Son, heard the voice of the Son, believed in Him and followed Him and have therefore become His sheep, then He has given us eternal life. We can be sure that we will never perish and are safe in His hand. We will not be snatched away by anyone. The wolf will not deceive us and lead us away from the Good Shepherd. So what about those who seem to be sincere believers and then after a while fall away and renounce their faith in Christ? There are many who have done this. I think Jesus answers this question in the Parable of the Sower, which is found in Matthew 13, Mark 4 and Luke 8. Jesus explained that

the four types of soil onto which the seed falls represent four responses to the “word of the kingdom”:

"Hear then the parable of the sower. 19 "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. 20 "The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21 yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. 22 "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. 23 "And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty." (Matthew 13:18-23)

Notice that there is only one type of soil, the good soil, that produces the crop that the sower wants. The other three are unfruitful. Notice too that the person represented by the rocky soil receives the word immediately with joy, but has no firm root and is only temporary. When trouble comes his way because of the word, he immediately “falls away” and abandons his faith. His faith was not genuine, but was temporary and conditional. Similarly the person who is represented by the thorny soil is unfruitful because other things become more important than the word, and faith is choked out by these other concerns and priorities. The person represented by the good soil is the one who hears the word, understands it and bears fruit. He produces the crop that the sower is after. Luke 8:15 gives a bit more detail, “But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.” The faith of these people is sincere, not conditional and temporary. The seed of the word becomes the most important thing to them and they “hold it fast” and persevere. They hang on to it and don’t let it go. Those who abandon the Good Shepherd to follow someone else demonstrate that they were never really His sheep in the first place.

What Jesus says here about how no one can snatch His sheep from His hand is akin to what Paul says in Romans 8:31-39:

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. 35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." 37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

There is nothing that can snatch or separate those who belong to Christ from Him. He holds them securely.

Having said that His sheep can't be snatched from His hand nor can they be snatched from the hand of the Father, Jesus then said, "I and the Father are one." This does not mean that Jesus is the same person as the Father, but that Father and Son are of one essence or nature. If I say about my earthly father, "I and my father are one," I'm not saying that we are the same person, but that I am the same kind of being as my father, and we are unified, we are "on the same page." As I pointed out before, the relationship between the Father and Son is a mystery to us. Jesus said He is "in the Father and the Father is in Me" (John 14:10), but they are distinct personalities.

The Jews understood something about what He was saying, and took up stones to stone Him. Jesus said to them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?" The works He had showed them were good works and they came from the Father. Their quality was good and not evil, and the origin was perfect and divine, so what was it about His works that called for Him to be stoned? The Jews denied that they were stoning Him for a good work but said it was for blasphemy. They said it was "because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God." We saw this first back in John 5:18, "For this reason 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." The penalty in the Law for blasphemy was death by stoning. Leviticus 24:16 says, "Moreover, the one who blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him. The alien as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death." If Jesus had uttered blasphemy He was worthy of death, but only if His claim to be the Son of God was not true. But Jesus was truly the Son of God, so His claim was not blasphemous. He would not say otherwise.

In answer to this Jesus pointed to Psalm 82:6 which says, "I said, 'You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High.'" He did not quote the next verse, which says, "Nevertheless you will die like men and fall like any one of the princes." Psalm 82 talks about what God says as he "judges in the midst of the rulers." He says this to the rulers, to the men in charge. He asks them, "How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked?" Then He tells them to "Vindicate the weak and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and destitute. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them out of the hand of the wicked." This is what God says to men like these Pharisees and the members of the Sanhedrin. He says to them in their Law, "you are gods," even though they are unjust and show partiality. No doubt these men were familiar with Psalm 82 and could understand that Jesus was pointing out that God even called men like them "gods." Jesus then asked, "If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), 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'?" Jesus is a special case. He stands apart from the men addressed in Psalm 82. He is the one the Father sanctified and sent into the world. The word "sanctify" means to make holy or to consecrate. Since Jesus was already perfectly holy the word in this context probably does not mean "to make holy," but to consecrate, to set apart. Jesus was set apart and sent into the world as the unique Son of God. If God would refer to the corrupt rulers as "gods," and it wasn't considered blasphemy, then how can these men say that Jesus is blaspheming when He claims to be the Son of God? Note that Jesus says explicitly here that He is the Son of God. He will not explicitly say, "I am the Christ," but He will say "I am the Son of God." This should be plain enough for these men. He has not kept them in suspense, but has made it plain who He is.

We need to say something about the parenthetical statement in verse 35, “and the Scripture cannot be broken.” The word for “broken” is *luō*, “to loosen – break up, destroy, dissolve.”⁵³ Speaking of the Law in Matthew 5:19 the same word is used when Jesus says, “Whoever then **annuls** one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” It’s interesting to see what other translations do with the word *luō* in Matthew 5:19. The English Standard Version translates it “relaxes.” In the International Standard Version it is “sets aside.” The King James, World English and Tree of Life Bible use the word “breaks.” Clearly Jesus in John 10:35 does not mean that people can’t set aside the Scriptures or disregard them or break God’s commandments, they do it all the time. What He means is that the Scriptures stand and their words are true and authoritative no matter what people do. If God has said it then it can’t be overturned by people. We are unable to overturn God’s laws as we might overturn our own laws. The word of God came to the rulers mentioned in Psalm 82 and called them “gods,” and that word stands and can’t be done away with. Note that Jesus equates the “word of God” with “the Scripture.” It was spoken and then it was written. It was spoken by God and therefore is true and people cannot overturn it; they can’t nullify it. This is why the phrase “it is written...” carried weight with the Jews.

Jesus again points to the evidence and testimony of His works which came from the Father in verses 37 and 38. He tells them not to believe Him if He does not do the works of the Father. He had, indeed, shown them many good works from the Father (verse 32), but if they are not really from the Father, then they should reject Him. On the other hand, if the works were really from the Father, then they should believe the works. The works reveal the truth. If they will believe the works then they will be able to know and understand that the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father. This is what Jesus wanted for these men and it is the reason He urged them to believe the works. Focusing on His works which plainly proved that He was from the Father would lead them to believe in Him. In verse 38 when Jesus says, “that you may know and understand” it uses the same verb for “to know” twice. The Greek text reads, “*hina gnōte kai ginōskēte*.” The verb is *ginōskō*, “to know.” The first instance, *gnōte*, is a second aorist tense verb, “to come to know,” and the second is *ginōskēte*, a present tense verb, “to keep on knowing.” So a literal translation would be “so that you may come to know and keep on knowing that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father.” This is what these men needed to know. Some among them, like Nicodemus, did point to His works and believed them to be from God as we have seen. The rest of them needed to open their eyes and see this truth.

The Jews tried again to seize Jesus, but He “eluded their grasp.” They had tried to seize Him before and failed (see John 7:30, 7:44 and 8:20). John doesn’t tell us how He escaped, whether it was by natural or supernatural means, but explained in 7:30 and 8:20 that “His hour had not yet come.” Until His “hour” came, the Jews would not be able to apprehend Him and kill Him.

After escaping from the Jews in Jerusalem, Jesus “went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing, and He was staying there.” He probably went to the place called “Bethany beyond Jordan” referenced in John 1:28, which is east of Jerusalem and just north of the Dead Sea on the east side of the Jordan river. There was another Bethany which was very close to Jerusalem where Mary, Martha and Lazarus lived. Jesus will go there next.

As people had gone out to John the Baptist in this place beyond the Jordan, so they came to see Jesus there. Those who came to Him were those who had heard the testimony of John and had seen the signs Jesus performed and believed in Him. They remembered what John had said about Jesus and could see in the signs Jesus performed that his words were true.

John 11:1-16

Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. 3 So the sisters sent word to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick." 4 But when Jesus heard this, He said, "This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it." 5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days longer in the place where He was. 7 Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." 8 The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?" 9 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. 10 "But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." 11 This He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep." 12 The disciples then said to Him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." 13 Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep. 14 So Jesus then said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, 15 and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him." 16 Therefore Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, so that we may die with Him."

Mary, Martha and Lazarus were good friends of Jesus. In Luke 10:28-42 is the story of Jesus being welcomed by Martha into their home and the account of her frustration with Jesus and Mary because Mary wasn't helping her with her preparations. John clarifies in verse 2 that "It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair." This incident is actually mentioned in the next chapter, John 12:1-8. We should not equate this incident with the similar one in Luke 7:36-50 where Jesus was dining with a Pharisee and a sinful woman came in and anointed the feet of Jesus with perfume and wiped them with her hair. In John 12 Jesus was not at the home of a Pharisee but again was in Bethany and apparently the dinner was being held at the home of "Simon the leper" (Matthew 26:6-13), but Martha, Mary and Lazarus were there and Martha was serving. It was a different setting involving different people.

When Lazarus became sick, Martha and Mary sent word to Jesus saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick." How did they send word to Jesus? No doubt someone went with the message on their behalf. Many people were going out to see Jesus where He was beyond the Jordan, and they probably found someone to take the message for them. The Bethany where they lived was about 2 miles east of Jerusalem, and it was about 19 miles to the place where Jesus was, so it was probably a full day's journey to reach Jesus, and another full day for Him to walk to Bethany in Judea. Clearly the sisters expected Jesus to respond and come immediately to heal Lazarus. This is what people do when they hear that a loved one is gravely ill.

When word got to Jesus He said, "This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it." The phrase "not to end in death" translates the Greek *ouk estin pros thanaton*, which literally means "is not to death" or "is not

toward death.” The sickness was not in the direction of death, but instead had another purpose, the glory of God and of the Son of God. Lazarus was sick for the glory of the Father and the Son. As the man born blind was in that state so that works of God might be displayed in him (John 9:3), so the sickness and death of Lazarus had a special purpose. Jesus knew that the sickness of Lazarus was to end in the glory of God. He already knew what He was going to do.

It is an interesting statement in verses 5 and 6. We are told that Jesus loved Martha, Mary and Lazarus, and then we are told that when He heard Lazarus was sick, He stayed where He was for two more days. He did not immediately pack up and run to them. It seems an odd expression of love! He did not do what Mary and Martha expected Him to do, and when He finally arrived they expressed their disappointment with Him. He was deliberate about this. Though He truly loved them, He delayed His departure for two days. Probably Lazarus died on the day the message was sent to Jesus after the messengers had left, since we learn in verse 17 that when Jesus arrived Lazarus had been dead for four days. It would have taken a day for the message to get to Jesus, then He stayed there beyond the Jordan for two more days, then it would take another day to get to Bethany.

After the two days He said to His disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” The disciples pointed out that the Jews in Judea had just tried to stone Him the last time they were there and questioned the wisdom of returning there. They were in a safe place, and Jesus wanted to go back to the danger? They felt that they had escaped death and had gotten away from their enemies, and now Jesus was saying they should go back.

It may be difficult to see the relevance of Jesus answer to their question in verses 9 and 10. Why does He say this stuff about twelve hours in a day and walking in the day and so forth? I think we have to recall what He said in John 9:4-5, “We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world.” As work was done during the twelve hours of daylight and was suspended at night because of the lack of light, so the same principle applied to walking and traveling. The one who walks during the day does not stumble because he has the light of the world that allows him to see dangers and obstacles. If someone walks at night he will stumble “because the light is not in him.” Of course Jesus is not just talking about literal light and darkness, of day and night; He is talking also of spiritual light and darkness. He is the Light of the world and as long as He was in the world it was “day.” There would be a time when He would depart and the night would come, but it was not yet that time. Jesus still had things to do while He was in the world. Going to Judea was as safe as being anywhere else. He would not die until that time had come. It was necessary for Him to go and do what He had to do, and His opponents would not be able to apprehend Him until the proper time came.

Jesus then told them in verse 11 why He had to go to Judea, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep.” Of course the disciples didn’t understand that He was using sleep as a metaphor for death, and so they pointed out that Lazarus should be okay on his own if he was just asleep. They were thinking of literal sleep. Jesus used this figure of speech for death in Matthew 9:24 when a man’s daughter had died and He came to raise her. He said to the mourners, “Leave; for the girl has not died, but is asleep.” Paul also uses sleep as a metaphor for death in 1 Corinthians 11:30 and 15:51, and in 1 Thessalonians 4:14 and 5:10. Awakening someone from death is as easy for Jesus as awakening someone from sleep.

Since the disciples misunderstood Him, Jesus made it plain and said, “Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him.” It was for the sake of the disciples and their faith that Jesus delayed going to Bethany. He was glad that He was not there to prevent Lazarus from dying because He had a greater

miracle in mind. I don't think in saying this that Jesus meant that His disciples did not believe in Him, but that their faith still had some limitations that needed to be removed. They had seen Him heal people in person and heal them from a distance with a word. He had even raised at least a couple of people from the dead (Matthew 9:18-26 and Luke 7:11-17). But in this case by the time they reached Bethany Lazarus had been dead and in the tomb for four days. Surely Jesus was powerless in such a case! Surely He could do nothing at this point! But He will show them that even then He can still raise the dead! He will show them that He is the "resurrection and the life" (verse 25). Faith needs to grow. Limitations need to be removed. We need more and more of an understanding of the limitless capabilities of our Lord.

Thomas spoke up and said to the other disciples, "Let us also go, so that we may die with Him." John explains that Thomas was called Didymus. The word *didymus* means "twin," and commentators point out that the name Thomas in Aramaic also means "twin." Didymus was the Greek version of his Aramaic name. So Thomas apparently had a twin brother or sister. Apparently Thomas believed it was inevitable that if they returned to Judea they would be put to death along with Jesus. This may be a glimpse into the depth of hostility they faced from the Pharisees, scribes and priests.

John 11:17-29

So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. 18 Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off; 19 and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning their brother. 20 Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him, but Mary stayed at the house. 21 Martha then said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 "Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." 23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" 27 She said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world." When she had said this, she went away and called Mary her sister, saying secretly, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." 29 And when she heard it, she got up quickly and was coming to Him.

Though the message Jesus received from Mary and Martha said that Lazarus was sick, Jesus knew that he had died. He went to them knowing Lazarus was in the tomb. When He arrived He found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days. The word "already" may indicate that he had been put in the tomb very soon after death, that it was a bit surprising to find that he had already spent four days in his tomb.

Since Bethany was so close to Jerusalem, about two miles to the east, many of the Jews from Jerusalem had come to Martha and Mary to console and comfort them in the loss of their brother. Obviously these were Jews who were familiar with Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Were some of them opponents of Jesus? Probably some, but not many. Verse 46 says that some of them went to the Pharisees and told them about Jesus raising Lazarus.

Someone told Martha and Mary that Jesus was coming, so Martha went out to meet Jesus, but Mary stayed at the house. Possibly Jesus had sent word ahead to them so He could meet with them outside of their home. Many people were there consoling them, and perhaps Jesus did not want to deal with them. He was not in Bethany yet (verse 30), and

evidently remained there to meet with Mary after Martha came. Martha was the more active of the two sisters, and so she was quick to come to Jesus.

Martha came straight to the point with Jesus and expressed her disappointment, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.” She expressed both her disappointment and her faith. When Lazarus got sick, she and Mary had said, “We need Jesus! If He can come, he can heal Lazarus and keep him from dying!” When he died, they said, “If only Jesus had been here!” They knew He could have prevented their brother’s death. Martha still had confidence, though, that Jesus could still do something. He would receive whatever He asked from God. The Father does whatever the Son asks, and the Son only asks for what the Father wants to do.

Jesus replied to Martha, “Your brother will rise again.” The Greek word for “rise again” is the future tense form of the verb *anistēmi*, which literally means to “stand up.” Lazarus will stand up, he will arise. A dead man cannot do this, he can’t get up and stand. Only one who is alive can arise and stand. Martha acknowledged the truth that Lazarus would eventually be raised from the dead. She believed that Lazarus would one day be raised from the dead on the last day. She believed in the doctrine of the resurrection of the righteous on the last day, but that was little comfort to her at that moment of loss and grief. When a loved one dies it is some comfort to be reminded of the resurrection on the last day, but the sting of death and loss is still felt. Jesus was not talking about the future resurrection on the last day, but an immediate resurrection that day! Martha’s brother would stand up later that day! That was the plan of Jesus!

Martha believed in the eventual resurrection on the last day, but Jesus asked her to take her faith to the next level. He said, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?” Jesus says to her, “Here’s what you need to know about the resurrection – I am it! I am the one who raises people from the dead and gives them life!” Jesus is the life of mankind (John 1:4). Eternal life is in Him, and if we have Him we have life, if we don’t have Him we don’t have life (1 John 5:11-12). He assures those who believe in Him that they will live even if they die, and that they will never die. Yes, believers will die physically as Lazarus had, but even then they will live. When He says in verse 26 that those who believe in Him “will never die,” He uses a double negative, *ou mē apothanēi* in the Greek text. We might translate it, “will absolutely not die.” The Contemporary English Version translates it, “And everyone who lives because of faith in me will never really die.” Jesus then asked Martha, “Do you believe this?” Did she believe that in Jesus was life? Did she believe that Jesus is the resurrection? Did she believe His assurances that those who believe in Him have eternal life even if they die physically?

Martha replied, “Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, *even* He who comes into the world.” She used the past tense and expressed what she had already believed in the past about Jesus and continued to believe. Her faith had content. She believed specific things about Jesus. She believed that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, the anointed one, the King. She believed that Jesus was the Son of God. She believed that He was “He who comes into the world.” This expression has been used previously in John’s gospel. John 1:9 says, “There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.” John 6:14 says, “Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, ‘This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.’” John 9:39 says, “And Jesus said, ‘For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind.’” It was the expectation of the Jews that one would come into the world who would be the prophet like Moses, the Son of David, the

Messiah, and they were looking for Him and anticipating His coming. So Martha says she believes that Jesus is this one.

As Martha could articulate her faith, so we need to be able to articulate our faith. We should be able to express clearly the specific things we believe. If someone asks, "What do you believe?" we ought to be able to respond clearly without hesitation. Christians, of all people, should not have a vague, fuzzy, ill-defined notion of what they believe. We should not say things like, "Well, I'm not sure, but I think maybe this and that...". Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Our faith is a matter of assurance and conviction, not of uncertainty, guesswork and wishful thinking.

After confessing her faith in Jesus, Martha went and called Mary. She said, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." Obviously Jesus had sent Martha on this errand. He wanted Mary to come meet Him where He was. Martha said this secretly to Mary, perhaps whispering it to her. Mary got up quickly and headed off to meet Jesus. There may be an implication here that Jesus just wanted Mary to come and not the crowds.

John 11:30-37

Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met Him. 31 Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and consoling her, when they saw that Mary got up quickly and went out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. 32 Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." 33 When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled, 34 and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Jesus wept. 36 So the Jews were saying, "See how He loved him!" 37 But some of them said, "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?"

Jesus could have come with Martha to their home to speak with Mary, but He chose to stay where He was and have her come to Him. Though He may have intended to have some private time with Mary, the Jews who were there consoling Mary and Martha saw her get up and hurry off and followed her. They supposed she was going to weep at the tomb, so they followed her.

When Mary arrived and saw Jesus, she fell at His feet. When Jesus was in their home previously and Martha was "distracted with all her preparations," Mary was sitting at the Lord's feet listening to His teaching (Luke 10:39). In John 12 we will find the story of how Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with some costly perfume (John 12:1-8). This was the place that Mary chose, to be at the feet of the Lord. She was a genuine disciple who truly worshiped Him and listened to Him. She loved nothing more than sitting at the feet of Jesus.

Falling at His feet, Mary said the same thing Martha had said, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." She also was disappointed. She and Martha both felt let down by the Lord. Jesus had not done what He could have done. The Jews express the same sentiment in verse 37. The disappointment was based on some assumptions. One assumption was that if Jesus had been present, He would have healed Lazarus and prevented his death, and that this is what Jesus would have wanted to do. Instead Jesus had deliberately delayed and allowed Lazarus to die. A second assumption was that Jesus had to be present in order to heal Lazarus, which we have seen is a faulty assumption. A third assumption was that since Lazarus had been dead for four days it was too late for Jesus to do anything. Lazarus was dead, buried and that was it. All of these assumptions were faulty.

Our disappointments with Jesus are often based on faulty assumptions about Him and what He should do. When the Lord does not do what we think He ought to do, we should remind ourselves that He probably has a better idea. He probably has a bigger miracle in mind and a bigger purpose. His thoughts and ways are always higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Verse 33 tells us that the reaction of Jesus to the weeping of Mary and the Jews was that “He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled.” The Greek word translated “deeply moved” is *embrimaomai*. Strong’s Greek Dictionary says the word is “From *en* and *brimaomai* (to snort with anger); to have *indignation on*, that is, (transitively) to *blame*, (intransitively) to *sigh* with chagrin, (specifically) to sternly *enjoin*: - straitly charge, groan, murmur against.” A. T. Robertson comments, “The notion of indignation is present in the other examples of the word in the N.T. (Mark 1:43; Mark 14:5; Matthew 9:30). So it seems best to see that sense here and in John 11:38. The presence of these Jews, the grief of Mary, Christ’s own concern, the problem of the raising of Lazarus - all greatly agitated the spirit of Jesus (locative case *tōi pneumati*). He struggled for self-control.”⁵⁴ Other translations render this word as “greatly troubled” (International Standard Version), and He “groaned in the spirit” (King James Version and World English Bible). The word for “troubled” is *tarassō*, meaning “to stir up” or “to agitate.” Obviously Jesus had a strong emotional reaction, not only to the death of Lazarus, but also to how his death had impacted Martha, Mary and the mourners. He was upset about it, agitated and even indignant.

We need to understand that the Lord is not happy that humanity has chosen death over life and has subjected itself to Satan rather than God. It cost Him His life to redeem us. That we must die was never His original intent for us, nor was it His intent that we should experience loss and grief as we do. Seeing the impact of death and grief upon these people He loved provoked Jesus. The good news is that He can do something about it! He can reverse it! He can and has fixed the problem!

Jesus asked, “Where have you laid him?” and they replied, “Lord, come and see.” No doubt He knew where the tomb was, but He gave them the dignity of leading Him there.

Verse 35 is the shortest verse in our bibles, “Jesus wept.” Marvin Vincent points out that here is “A different verb from that in John 11:31. From *δάκρυ*, *tear*, and meaning *to shed tears, to weep silently*.”⁵⁵ Jesus did not wail loudly like the Jewish mourners would have been doing, but silently shed tears. His weeping was not a show, but was genuine grief, a sincere expression of sorrow and sympathy. He wept with those who wept. Romans 12:15 exhorts us to “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.”

As the tears flowed down His face, those with Him could see a bit of the depth of His emotion. They interpreted it as an expression of Jesus’ love for Lazarus and exclaimed, “See how He loved him!” Others took a different view and said, “Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind, have kept this man also from dying?” I guess their implication is, “If He really loved Lazarus, then He should have kept him from dying.” They acknowledged that He had opened the eyes of the man who was blind, but in this case they felt Jesus had fallen short of what He could have done and should have done. It’s an odd kind of love that has the power to keep someone from dying and fails to do so, like an emergency room doctor who could save someone’s life but refuses to do so. They expressed the same view as Martha and Mary, that Jesus could have kept Lazarus from dying, but didn’t.

John 11:38-44

So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a

54 Robertson, A. T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*

55 Vincent, Marvin, *Word Studies in the New Testament*

stone was lying against it. 39 Jesus said, "Remove the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days." 40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" 41 So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. 42 "I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me." 43 When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." 44 The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

At the tomb, Jesus was again "deeply moved within," the same word as verse 33. The tomb was a cave with a stone lying against it. There is a tomb in the area today that is thought to be the tomb of Lazarus, and details about it and photos can be found online. Jesus told them to remove the stone. When Jesus rose from the dead the stone was rolled away by an angel (Matthew 28:2), but in this case the people had to remove it themselves. They had to open the tomb to allow Lazarus to emerge.

Martha had expressed her faith in Jesus, but at this point she could not grasp the idea that He was actually going to raise Lazarus from the dead and call him out of the tomb. She was disturbed by His order to remove the stone because she knew that after four days a dead body would be decayed to the point that it would emit a terrible odor. She thought opening the tomb was a bad idea. Opening the tomb would not help the situation, and she tried to discourage it. What good would it do to look at the dead and decaying body of Lazarus? Jesus replied, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" Jesus had not explicitly said this to her in verses 25 and 26. He had not explicitly said, "I am going to the tomb to raise your brother from the dead." He had said to her, "Your brother will rise again." In reply to her statement of faith that he would rise again on the last day, Jesus had asked her if she believed that He is the resurrection and the life, and that those who believe in him will live if they die and will never die. His plan to raise Lazarus at that time was implicit in what He said to her. He had told the disciples that He was going to "awaken" Lazarus out of sleep (verse 11), so they knew what He was planning to do (or should have known).

Note that Jesus says the opposite of what people often say regarding belief and sight. We often say, "If I see it I will believe," but Jesus says, "If you believe you will see." Our proverb is "Seeing is believing," but Jesus says the opposite. Faith opens our eyes to see the glory of God. If Martha and the others there would believe in Him and trust in Him, they would see God's glory; they would see a most incredible miracle. John had said, "we saw His glory" in John 1:14, and this was one instance where they saw it. Unbelievers are blind to the glory of God. The glory of God is seen every day in the creation all around us. God's fingerprints are all over everything in all creation, but unbelievers can't see it. Only believers have their eyes opened to God's glory. Jesus challenged Martha and challenges us to belief.

The will of Jesus prevailed over the will of Martha and the stone was removed from the tomb. Jesus raised His eyes to heaven and prayed. First, He thanked His Father for having heard Him. The clear implication is that Jesus had already asked and the Father had already heard and answered. Martha had expressed faith that whatever Jesus asked of God He would receive in verse 22, and so Jesus thanked the Father for hearing Him. Jesus knew that the Father always heard Him, but He expressed His thanks for the sake of those standing around watching Him and listening to Him. He wanted them to understand that He had made His request of the Father and that the Father had heard Him. He wanted them to understand when Lazarus emerged from the tomb that it had happened because God the Father had

granted the request of God the Son. He prayed this prayer and said these things so that they would believe that the Father had sent Him. We see again this emphasis in John's gospel on the fact that Jesus was sent by the Father and the importance of believing that fact. The Jews had debated after Jesus healed the blind man about whether Jesus was "from God" (John 9:16, 19 and 33). This prayer and the raising of Lazarus would be another proof that Jesus was sent by God the Father. If they hadn't been convinced by the healing of the blind man, maybe they would be convinced by the resurrection of a man who had been dead for four days!

Jesus cried out with a loud voice of command, "Lazarus, come forth." He did not say, "Lazarus, rise!", nor did He say, "Go in and get Lazarus!", but rather ordered the already raised Lazarus to come out of the tomb. Somehow Lazarus, bound with wrappings, managed to obey the Lord's command and came forth. Perhaps he had angelic help. It may be that his legs were wrapped separately, and so he could get up and walk, but apparently this was not the common practice at the time. However he managed it, Lazarus, "the man who had died," did emerge from the tomb. Then Jesus issued another command to those around, "Unbind him, and let him go." He had truly been dead but now was alive, but still bound by the graveclothes. There is a marvelous picture of salvation here, of what Jesus does for each person who believes in Him. He raises them from the dead and releases them from bondage. He sets them free from death and their bondage to sin and Satan. In Christ we are no longer subject to death, but Jesus gives us life and sets us free.

John 11:45-57

Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him. 46 But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done.

47 Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. 48 "If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." 49 But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, 50 nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish." 51 Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, 52 and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. 53 So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.

54 Therefore Jesus no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews, but went away from there to the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there He stayed with the disciples. 55 Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves. 56 So they were seeking for Jesus, and were saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?" 57 Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him.

As a result of the raising of Lazarus, many who had witnessed it believed in Jesus. I think it is interesting in verse 45 that it says these Jews were those who "came to Mary." There is no mention of Martha. Maybe Mary was the more popular and winsome of the sisters who gained more sympathy from others. These people had followed Mary and not Martha. They

stayed with Mary when Martha went off to see Jesus. Martha was probably the more headstrong and independent one.

Many believed in Jesus but some went to report what happened to the Pharisees. I think the implication is that even though they witnessed this amazing miracle they did not believe in Jesus, they did not put their faith in Him. They did not say, "Wow! I guess this guy really is the Messiah!" They were still His opponents and went to report Him to the authorities. How could they see such a thing and still fail to believe in Jesus? It is the effect of a hard heart. Their hearts were the hard soil from the Parable of the Sower, where Satan is able to pluck the seed of the word out of their hearts so they won't believe (Matthew 13). They had blinded minds that kept them from seeing and believing the truth (2 Corinthians 4:4). In John 6 Jesus indicated that they were those who had seen Him and yet not believed (verse 36) because they had not been given to Him by the Father (verse 37) and had not been drawn by the Father to the Son (verse 44). They loved the darkness rather than the light (John 3:19-21).

The chief priests and Pharisees convened a counsel. They brought the Sanhedrin together to discuss this latest development with Jesus. They ask the rhetorical question, "What are we doing?" The question is not "What should we do?", but rather points to the fact that they had done nothing while Jesus continued to do miracles and attract more followers. They were idle while He was active. They admitted that He was "performing many signs," and could no longer deny the fact. In verse 48 they expressed their fears, "If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." They thought that if they continued to do nothing Jesus would gain enough support to take over and rule as a political Messiah, bringing down the wrath of the Romans on the nation. They knew how the Romans dealt with insurrection and rebellion. These leading men would lose their position and probably their lives and the nation would be destroyed. They saw Jesus as a threat to themselves and to the nation. They felt sure that Jesus was not the real Messiah and would certainly not be able to overthrow the Romans. The irony is that if Jesus had come to be the political Messiah He would have had no trouble destroying the Romans. When Jesus was being arrested and Peter began to strike out with his sword, Jesus said, "Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. 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? How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?" (Matthew 26:52-54). Jesus had more than enough heavenly forces at His disposal to deal with any earthly opponents. Of course it was not the purpose of Christ at this time to take the throne and rule, but to lay down His life for His sheep. The Jewish Sanhedrin had no clue about this bigger plan.

The ironic thing about this concern of the Jewish leaders is that in 70 AD the thing they feared Jesus would trigger came upon them. The Romans did come and take away their place and nation. In response to a rebellion that began in 66 AD, the Romans came and captured Jerusalem and destroyed the temple, as Jesus had prophesied in Matthew 24:2.

It was clear to Caiaphas what needed to be done; Jesus had to die. He chewed out the members of the Sanhedrin for failing to see what was plain to him. They had offered no solution, but he could see it clearly. As he saw it Jesus had to die for their good and for the good of the nation. They and the nation were in peril because of Jesus and therefore He had to be eliminated. This was the "expedient" or profitable course of action for them. This one man had to die for the nation.

John comments that the words of Caiaphas were prophetic words, words that were inspired by God. He was not speaking on his own initiative. Despite his evil and wickedness, he spoke truth from God about Jesus dying for the nation, thus fulfilling his position as high priest. It may be that at times if it suits God's purpose prophetic words may be spoken by

those who are far from being godly people. If God can speak through a donkey (see Numbers 22:22-33), He can even speak through people who are opponents of Christ. I'm of course not suggesting we should give credence to everything godless people say, just that sometimes they may point to truth we need to hear. They may unknowingly speak words inspired by God.

John goes on to comment that Jesus was not just going to die for the Jewish nation, but "in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad." This echoes what Jesus said about His sheep in John 10:16, "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd." The death of Jesus would serve His purpose of gathering His scattered children together into one family. God's children are scattered all over the earth and His purpose is to bring them together, to gather them. The purpose of Jesus was far greater than simply reigning over Israel.

The Sanhedrin saw the sense in the words of Caiaphas and so made definite plans to put Jesus to death. The decision was made and so they put their heads together to come up with a plan to do away with Jesus. They decided what had to be done, and now they had to figure out how to do it. Verse 57 reveals one step they took, they gave orders "that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him." The problem was that they didn't know where Jesus was, and so could not apprehend Him. They put out the word that people should inform on Jesus. Maybe they offered a reward for information leading to His apprehension. We know that Judas was given a reward for betraying Him.

Knowing the Sanhedrin was planning to kill Him, Jesus stopped walking publicly among the Jews and withdrew to a town called Ephraim. Commentators say that it is not certain where this town was, maybe 20 miles or so north of Jerusalem. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia says, "The town near the wilderness to which Jesus retired after the raising of Lazarus (John 11:54). This probably corresponds to Ephrem of Eusebius, *Onomasticon* (s.v. "Afra") 5 Roman miles East of Bethel. This may be the place named along with Bethel by Josephus (*BJ*, IV, ix, 9). It probably answers to *eḏ-Taiyebah*, a large village about 4 miles North of *Beit'in*. The antiquity of the site is attested by the cisterns and rock tombs. It stands on a high hill with a wide outlook including the plains of Jericho and the Dead Sea." The "hour" of Jesus had not yet come, so He withdrew to this place with His disciples.

As the Passover approached people were coming to Jerusalem from all over to purify themselves at the temple before Passover. They were looking for Jesus in Jerusalem and as they stood in the temple they speculated about whether He would be there. They asked one another about their opinions on the subject, "What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?" They knew that the Sanhedrin was after Him, and they thought that maybe Jesus would not come at all to the Passover in order to avoid being apprehended. They knew that the chief priests and Pharisees were asking people to turn Him in. Some were looking for Him out of curiosity, and some were probably looking for Him in order to report Him to the authorities.

In Matthew and Mark we are told that the authorities were not planning to kill Jesus during the Passover. Matthew 26:1-5 says, "When Jesus had finished all these words, He said to His disciples, 'You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be handed over for crucifixion.' Then the chief priests and the elders of the people were gathered together in the court of the high priest, named Caiaphas; and they plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth and kill Him. But they were saying, 'Not during the festival, otherwise a riot might occur among the people.'" The opponents of Jesus knew how popular He was with the people and feared that if they seized Him publicly during the festival, His supporters might rise up against them. But they were not in control of the timing of Jesus' death. Jesus was to be killed on the Passover because He is the true Passover lamb. John the Baptist said that

Jesus is the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," and Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 5:7, "For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed." The "hour" for His death was on Passover, sending a clear message that Jesus is indeed the one who gave His life for the life of His people.

John 12:1-11

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 then 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. 4 But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, 5 "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?" 6 Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. 7 Therefore Jesus said, "Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. 8 "For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me."

9 The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead. 10 But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also; 11 because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.

Right off the bat we have a difficulty here regarding the timing of events. According to Matthew and Mark, this supper where Mary anointed Jesus with the perfume occurred two days before the Passover. Matthew tells the story of the supper in Bethany right after the passage quoted above in Matthew 26. In verse 2 Jesus said that the Passover was coming in two days, then in Matthew 26:6-13 is the account of the supper and the anointing of Jesus. Mark tells the story of the supper in chapter 14:3-9, but in verse 1 he says, "Now the Passover and Unleavened Bread were two days away." I'm not completely sure how to resolve this. I think it is possible that there is a gap of four days between verse 1 and verse 2. In verse 1 we have Jesus coming to Bethany six days before the Passover, and then John narrates the supper in verses 2 through 8 that occurred two days before Passover. Having mentioned that Jesus had come to Bethany six days before the Passover, John then looks ahead four days to the supper and the anointing. We don't have to assume that they "made Him a supper there" six days before the Passover.

As we noted previously, according to Mark and Matthew this supper took place at the home of Simon the leper. We see another example here of the difference in character between Martha and Mary. Martha was serving, but Mary was worshiping Jesus, honoring Him with an offering of something precious. The story in Luke 10:38-42 reveals that Martha's serving could distract her from more important and valuable things like sitting at the feet of Jesus listening to Him:

Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word. 40 But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me." 41 But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered

about so many things; 42 but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Serving is certainly a good and essential thing, but it can sometimes draw us away from things that are more important. Martha's stress and frustration was self-imposed and caused resentment toward Mary and even toward Jesus! It caused her to even question whether Jesus cared about her!

Lazarus was there "reclining at the table" with Jesus. At that time people did not have dining room tables and chairs like we use today, but they had a low table close to the floor, and people would actually recline on cushions around the table, leaning on one arm as they ate with the other. We see in verse 9 that Lazarus had become an attraction as well as Jesus.

Mary produced a pound of expensive perfume "of pure nard" and anointed the feet of Jesus with it and wiped His feet with her hair. Matthew and Mark tell us that this nard was contained in an alabaster vial which she had to break in order to pour it out. Regarding the nard, the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia says:

Spikenard is the plant *Nardostachys jatamansi* (Natural Order, *Valerianaceae*); in Arabic the name *Sunbul hind*, "Indian spike," refers, like the English and Latin name, to the "snike"-like shape of the plant from which the perfume comes. The dried plant as sold consists of the "withered stalks and ribs of leaves cohering in a bundle of yellowish-brown capillary fibres and consisting of a spike about the size of a small finger" (Sir W. Jones, *As. Res.*, II, 409); in appearance the whole plant is said to look like the tail of an ermine. It grows in the Himalayas. The extracted perfume is an oil, which was used by the Romans for anointing the head. Its great costliness is mentioned by Pliny.

It is indeed costly. I discovered that you can buy a 16 ounce bottle of organic spikenard online for about \$3,000. The nard Mary had was "pure" nard, that is, genuine unadulterated nard. It was the real thing.

John tells us that Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with the perfume, and Matthew and Mark say that she anointed His head. I don't see why this should be viewed as an either/or thing. Probably she anointed both His head and His feet. I'm not sure how this perfume was supposed to be used, but I imagine that it was not usually all poured out at once. With expensive perfumes we usually just use a little dab at a time. A little perfume or cologne goes a long way! In fact, it can be overwhelming if someone uses too much perfume! But Mary used the whole pound of nard on Jesus. She poured it all out on Him like an offering. We don't know how she got it, but it must have been a precious possession. She had saved it for a special occasion and then gave it all away for the sake of Jesus. The fragrance of the perfume permeated the whole house.

Mary's lavish gift to Jesus was a shocking thing to some who were there. This was not what one was supposed to do with such a valuable perfume! Judas Iscariot said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?" Judas was one of the disciples of Jesus, but was "intending to betray Him." At this point the intent to betray Jesus was in the heart of Judas. He probably thought he could profit from the betrayal, since the Sanhedrin was asking people to turn Jesus in.

Matthew and Mark reveal that Judas was not the only one who was shocked by Mary's behavior. Matthew 26:8-9 says, "But the disciples were indignant when they saw this, and said, 'Why this waste? For this perfume might have been sold for a high price and the money given to the poor.'" The word for "waste" in Matthew is *apōleia*, meaning ruin, loss or

destruction. The disciples were upset by what she had done. A very valuable thing had been lost and wasted, seemingly for no good reason. Mark adds “they were scolding her” (Mark 14:5). The word translated “scolding” is *embrimaomai*, “to snort with anger; to be moved with anger, to admonish sternly.”⁵⁶ Judas gave voice to their outrage and became their spokesman. Judas put a value of 300 denarii on the perfume that had been wasted. A denarius was one day’s wage for a worker (Matthew 20:2), and so 300 denarii was almost a year’s income for a laborer.

John reveals the true motive of Judas in verse 6, “Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.” We get a glimpse here into how the finances of Jesus and the disciples were managed. For some reason Jesus allowed Judas to be the treasurer for the group, and so he kept the money box. No doubt Jesus knew that Judas was stealing some of the money from the money box for himself, but allowed it to take place. Judas was certainly not a trustworthy treasurer, but for some reason Jesus did not confront the issue. The fact that Judas managed the money is mentioned again in John 13:29 when Jesus dismissed Judas from the Passover meal to go betray Him, “For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, ‘Buy the things we have need of for the feast’; or else, that he should give something to the poor.” Judas was a lover of money and Satan was able to use that love of money to tempt him. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 6:9-10, “But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” The love of money became the ruin of Judas Iscariot.

John’s account of the response of Jesus to the criticism of Mary is brief, “Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me.” There is a more lengthy defense of Mary in Mark and Matthew. Mark 14:6-9 says, “But Jesus said, ‘Let her alone; why do you bother her? She has done a good deed to Me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you wish you can do good to them; but you do not always have Me. She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial. Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her.’” Matthew 26:10-13 says much the same, “But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, ‘Why do you bother the woman? For she has done a good deed to Me. For you always have the poor with you; but you do not always have Me. For when she poured this perfume on My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial. Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her.’” Jesus would not join with the others in criticizing Mary, but He would defend her. He ordered the disciples to back off and leave her alone. He asked, “Why do you bother the woman?” Jesus had also defended Mary’s behavior when Martha complained in Luke 10. Mary’s love for Jesus caused her to behave in ways that prompted the disapproval of others, but Jesus would defend her. It is appropriate to be lavish and demonstrative in our expression of love for the Lord, and we must beware of being embarrassed or scandalized by people who are “on fire for the Lord.”

What Mary had done was a “good deed” and not something worthy of condemnation. She couldn’t do much, but she had done what she could; she had anointed His body for burial. Probably she was not conscious that she was anointing Him for burial, but was spending this lavish gift on Jesus in order to honor Him. Jesus assigned this significance to her act. Jesus used it as another opportunity to speak of His impending death and burial.

All three gospels mention that Jesus said, "For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me." Mark adds His statement that they can do good to the poor whenever they wish. There was a very limited window of time during which they could do such things for Jesus. Jesus was not discouraging them from doing good to the poor, but was pointing out that what Mary had done was good and appropriate and was not a waste. If she had sold the perfume and given the money to the poor it would have been a good thing, but it was also a good thing to pour it on Jesus as an expression of love for Him.

What Mary did is recorded in the gospels, and Jesus promised it would be spoken of wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world. Jesus touches on His purpose here that the gospel should be preached in the whole world, and as part of the preaching of the gospel, Mary's sacrificial worship would be remembered. Of course, this is not what she was after when she anointed Him, but she would be honored throughout history rather than dishonored. Subsequent generations and peoples around the world would praise her rather than criticizing her.

We need to be careful about criticizing the worship of others. What may seem crazy or outrageous to us may be truly honoring of the Lord. This requires discernment, because some truly crazy things are being done today in the name of worship. I find it difficult to believe that barking like a dog or acting as if we are intoxicated are true expressions of worship. We need to separate the wheat from the chaff. We must ask whether the expression of worship and devotion is sincere or is more of a selfish "look at me!" kind of thing. Much of the lavish spending we do "for the Lord" is actually for ourselves.

The raising of Lazarus caused many to believe in Jesus. When the crowd heard that Jesus was in Bethany again with Martha, Mary and Lazarus, they came to see Him and to see Lazarus. Lazarus became an attraction. No doubt many who had heard the story from others came to see and hear the truth for themselves. The chief priests could see that they were losing the people to Jesus, so they planned to put Lazarus to death as well as Jesus. I guess they reasoned that if they killed both Jesus and Lazarus, then Lazarus would stay dead and could no longer cause trouble for them. The blindness and hard-heartedness of these men is astounding! They were, as Gamaliel warned later, fighting against God (Acts 5:34-49).

John 12:12-19

On the next day the large crowd who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began to shout, "Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, even the King of Israel." 14 Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, 15 "FEAR NOT, DAUGHTER OF ZION; BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING, SEATED ON A DONKEY'S COLT." 16 These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him. 17 So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify about Him. 18 For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign. 19 So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him."

Here again John leaves out details that the other gospels include about Jesus riding into Jerusalem on the donkey, and includes a couple of things they don't mention. The account of the "triumphal entry" is in Matthew 21:2-11, Mark 11:1-10 and Luke 19:29-40. The other three gospels tell us that Jesus sent two disciples into the village of Bethphage to retrieve the

donkey's colt. He told them if anyone questioned them about why they were untying it, they should say, "The Lord has need of it," and then they would be allowed to take it. When they brought the colt to Jesus, they put their coats on it and Jesus sat on it. As He rode toward Jerusalem the crowd of common people heard He was coming, went to meet Him, and were spreading their coats and "leafy branches" (Mark 11:8) in the road before Him. John tells us they were "branches of the palm trees." John records a similar scene in heaven before the throne of God involving palm branches in Revelation 7:9-10, "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.'" A. T. Robertson remarks, "Bernard notes that to carry palms was a mark of triumphant homage to a victor or a king (Rev. 7:9)."⁵⁷

As Jesus rode along the people were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel." Mark reports that they said, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David; Hosanna in the highest!" Matthew's account is similar, "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!" Luke's account is different. He reports they said, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord; Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" The word "hosanna" is a Hebrew word, *hoshia-na*, and is a cry for salvation. Strong's Dictionary says it means, "oh save!" and the New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance says, "save, we pray." In this context the people were probably hailing Jesus as the one who saves, as their Savior. The idea they were expressing was probably something like, "Yes! Bring about our salvation!" On his website "Desiring God," John Piper writes this about the word hosanna:

Our English word "hosanna" comes from a Greek word "hosanna" which comes from a Hebrew phrase *hoshiya na*. And that Hebrew phrase is found one solitary place in the whole Old Testament, Psalm 118:25, where it means, "Save, please!" It is a cry to God for help. Like when somebody pushes you off the diving board before you can swim and you come up hollering: "Help, save me . . . *Hoshiya na!*"

But something happened to that phrase, *hoshiya na*. The meaning changed over the years. In the psalm it was immediately followed by the exclamation: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" The cry for help, *hoshiya na*, was answered almost before it came out of the psalmist's mouth. And over the centuries the phrase *hoshiya na* stopped being a cry for help in the ordinary language of the Jews. Instead it became a shout of hope and exultation. It used to mean, "Save, please!" But gradually, it came to mean, "Salvation! Salvation! Salvation has come!" It used to be what you would say when you fell off the diving board. But it came to be what you would say when you see the lifeguard coming to save you! It is the bubbling over of a heart that sees hope and joy and salvation on the way and can't keep it in.

So "Hosanna!" means, "Hooray for salvation! It's coming! It's here! Salvation! Salvation!"

And "Hosanna to the Son of David!" means, "The Son of David is our salvation! Hooray for the king! Salvation belongs to the king!"

And "Hosanna in the highest!" means, "Let all the angels in heaven join the song of praise. Salvation! Salvation! Let the highest heaven sing the song!"⁵⁸

It is important to see that these people were recognizing Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One, the King, the "Son of David." They thought He was coming to take the throne of Israel and rule. They thought that finally they would see the fulfillment of the promise of the restoration of the kingdom of David. They thought that Jesus had come to save them from their enemies and from the oppression of Rome. No wonder they were so excited! We can see this hope and expectation in the words of the Zacharias the father of John the Baptist after John was born in Luke 1:67-75:

And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: 68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, 69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant— 70 As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old— 71 Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES, And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US; 72 To show mercy toward our fathers, And to remember His holy covenant, 73 The oath which He swore to Abraham our father, 74 To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, 75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.

The crowds did not grasp the idea that Jesus had come to lay down His life for His sheep. They did not understand that He had come to give His life as a sacrifice for their sins. Though Jesus had explicitly told the disciples about this, they didn't get it either and were bitterly disappointed when He was crucified.

It should not surprise us that the people had this expectation. John and Matthew tell us that what Jesus was doing as He rode into Jerusalem fulfilled the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9, "Rejoice greatly, O 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." They saw that Jesus was deliberately fulfilling this prophecy and so they joined in and rejoiced greatly and shouted in triumph. The next verse in Zechariah 9, verse 10, says, "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." What they didn't know and perhaps couldn't yet know was that there would be a large time gap between His coming to Jerusalem to die and His coming back to reign. He made that plain in His teaching about His second coming in Matthew 24 and 25. According to Luke, just before Jesus entered Jerusalem He told them the "Parable of the Minas" in Luke 19:11-27. Luke 19:11 says that He told this parable "because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately." The parable makes it clear that He was going to go away to receive authority as King and then return at a later date with that authority. The supposition of the people was false. The kingdom of God was not going to "appear immediately." These people were going to be disappointed.

Some among the crowd were not pleased at what was going on. Luke says, "Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Him, 'Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.' But Jesus answered, 'I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!'" (Luke 19:39-40). They did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, and so thought this whole thing was inappropriate and that

58 <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/hosanna>

Jesus should repudiate what was being said about Him. But the crowds shouting these things were right. He is the Son of David, the One who comes in the name of the Lord. He is the one who was bringing salvation. What the crowds were saying was true and appropriate, and Jesus not only would not rebuke them, but if they were to be silent, then the stones themselves would cry out. Creation would recognize and acclaim Him even if people would not.

As these things were happening, the disciples didn't understand the significance of them. They at that time did not recall Zechariah 9:9. They didn't say, "Hey! Jesus is fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9!" Some in the crowd may have understood what He was doing, but apparently the disciples didn't. After Jesus was glorified, they looked back, remembered what had happened, and then understood. In hindsight there was understanding, which is often the case for us. In the midst of life we often miss the spiritual truth and significance of things, but looking back later we can see them.

When was it that Jesus was "glorified"? This has been mentioned already in John 7:39, "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." Jesus said that He would send the Holy Spirit, the "Helper," after He had gone away (John 16:7). He would be glorified when He went away, back to the Father. Coming up in the next paragraph in John 12 Jesus will say, "the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (verse 23), and then He will talk about His death. In John 13:31-32 after Judas left to betray Him, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately." After His resurrection Jesus appeared to the two disciples who had walked to Emmaus and said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:25-26). It was through His death, resurrection and ascension that Jesus was glorified. After these things took place the disciples understood what had happened and understood what was written about Jesus.

Matthew tells us that when Jesus rode into Jerusalem the whole city was stirred up and people were asking "Who is this?" The crowds with Jesus said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee" (Matthew 21:10-11). John tells us that those who had seen Jesus call Lazarus out of the tomb were giving testimony about what they had seen. Perhaps the testimony about the raising of Lazarus was combined with the identification of Jesus as the prophet from Nazareth. So as they heard the testimony about Jesus, people went out to meet Him. They wanted to meet the man who had called Lazarus out of the tomb. The crowd grew because of the witness of the crowd that testified about Him. This should be the effect of our witness. The crowd of disciples, of those following Jesus, should grow because of our testimony about who He is and what He has done and can do.

Seeing this going on, the Pharisees were in despair. They said, "You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him." They no longer needed anyone to tell them where He was, all they had to do was follow the crowds. When they said that they were not "doing any good," the Greek word is *ōphēleō*, which means useful, beneficial or advantageous. Their efforts were in vain. We find in Matthew, Mark and Luke that during the time in Jerusalem leading up to His betrayal and arrest, Jesus was speaking out against these men in parables and they understood what He was saying, but because they feared the crowds, they didn't seize Him (see Matthew 21:46, Mark 12:12 and Luke 20:19). At this point it appears that they thought there was nothing they could do.

Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; 21 these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." 22 Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus. 23 And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 "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.

Some of those who came to Jerusalem for the Passover were Gentile converts to Judaism, and John mentions some Greeks who were there who wanted to see Jesus. They came to Philip and politely said, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip was from Bethsaida, which is thought to have been on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. He and Andrew both had Greek names, so these Greeks came to Philip to ask him if they could see Jesus. Philip told Andrew about the request and then they went to Jesus together.

The Greeks had probably "seen" Jesus as had all the crowd, but I think what they wanted was a private meeting with Jesus. We are not told why they wanted to meet with Jesus or what their agenda might have been, but we may guess at what they were thinking as we examine the response of Jesus. I think they had the same idea that the rest of the crowd had, that Jesus had come to Jerusalem to establish His kingdom. They thought the kingdom of God was going to be inaugurated at that time and they wanted to be close to the King. Many people want to be close to those in power so that they can exert influence on them or obtain important positions for themselves. It may be that these Greeks were motivated by these kinds of concerns.

Jesus answered Philip and Andrew and the Greeks in verses 23 through 26. When they told Him there were some Greeks there who wanted to talk with Him, He did not say, "Sure! I'm here for them too! These are My other sheep who are not of the Jewish fold, so I would love to meet them." Instead He started talking about how His hour had come for Him to be glorified, and how a grain of wheat must fall into the earth and die in order to bear much fruit, and about how the one who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. Essentially He was saying that the hour had not come for Him to be glorified by bringing in His kingdom and establishing His reign on the earth, but that the hour had come for Him to be glorified in His death.

Jesus again says, "truly, truly," His expression of a certain and important truth, in verse 24. In order to bear much fruit a grain of wheat must fall into the earth and die. Unless it does this it remains alone, but if it falls into the earth and dies it bears much fruit and produces much more wheat. Paul uses the same illustration as he discusses the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, "But someone will say, 'How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?' You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies; and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own." The seed by itself is of little use if it insists on remaining a seed. If it is not planted in the earth it can't produce the crop it is supposed to produce. Jesus could not "remain alone." He had to die in order to bear fruit. His death was necessary in order to produce more children of God. This will be made explicit in verses 32 and 33. He would not try to save Himself and avoid suffering; He would not avoid death, because it was His purpose. It was the

commandment of the Father (John 10:18) and it was necessary to ransom and redeem mankind (Matthew 20:28).

As the necessity of the death of the seed for the sake of the crop is true for all seeds, so it is true for all those who would follow Christ that they must also “die” to their lives in this world. Jesus says, “He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.” Jesus had said the same thing previously. In Mark 8:34-37 He says, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” The same saying is recorded in Matthew 16:24-26 and Luke 9:23-25. This is a paradox. We save our lives by losing them. If we try to preserve our lives as they are in this world we will lose them. There are two options here. We may love our lives or hate our lives in this world. Jesus says that the key to keeping our lives “to life eternal” is to hate our lives in this world. What does this mean? It means self-denial. It means saying “no” to self and to the desires of our flesh. It means following the leading of the Holy Spirit rather than the desires of our sinful flesh (Galatians 5:16-26 and Romans 8). It means serving others rather than self.

It's a simple principle that when you follow someone, you end up going the same way they are going, and get to the same destination. Jesus said that if anyone serves Him, he must follow Him, and so He will end up in the same place that Jesus is. This is what a student of Jesus wants. They want to follow Him, learn from Him, work with Him and wind up in the place where He is. This is what the disciples except for Judas Iscariot wanted – they just wanted to follow Jesus and be with Him, and so He invited them to do so. A true and sincere believer wants this and will not refuse to follow Jesus. Those who do this will be honored by the Father.

John 12:27-36a

"Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. 28 "Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." 29 So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, "An angel has spoken to Him." 30 Jesus answered and said, "This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes. 31 "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. 32 "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." 33 But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. 34 The crowd then answered Him, "We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?" 35 So Jesus said to them, "For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will 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, so that you may become sons of Light."

In verse 27 when Jesus says that His “soul has become troubled,” the word translated “soul” is the same word translated “life” in verse 25, *psuchē*. The basic meaning of *psuchē* is “breath.” Thayer's Greek Definitions says it is “the vital force which animates the body and shows itself in breathing.” Genesis 2:7 says, “Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” It is the breath of God breathed into Adam that animated Adam and brought him to life. This same breath animated Jesus. In a sense Jesus is the second Adam. Paul says in 1

Corinthians 15:45 "So also it is written, 'The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL.' The last Adam became a life-giving spirit." Jesus was a sinless man as Adam was when God breathed into him the breath of life. Jesus truly does share in human nature, being a man like Adam, but also fully God.

As a man like Adam, the soul of Jesus was troubled. We saw this word for "troubled" applied to Jesus before in John 11:33, "When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled." Jesus as a man was not above being stirred and agitated. Jesus confessed that His soul was troubled. He let those around Him know that He was troubled and did not pretend that He wasn't. Why was He troubled? Because the "hour" had come for Him to suffer and die. On this trip to Jerusalem He knew what was coming during the Passover feast. He knew He would be betrayed, seized, abused, condemned to be crucified and die. Anyone facing such a thing would be troubled.

What should Jesus say, facing such a prospect? How should He pray? Should He say, "Father, save Me from this hour?" Facing suffering and death, should He ask the Father to keep Him from it? We see in the other gospels that Jesus later wrestled greatly with this issue in the Garden of Gethsemane. Matthew 26:36-46 tells the story:

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." 37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. 38 Then He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me." 39 And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will." 40 And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour? 41 "Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." 42 He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done." 43 Again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. 44 And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. 45 Then He came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. 46 "Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!"

Facing the "cup" of suffering and death, Jesus did pray that if possible, it might "pass from" Him, but each time He prayed He submitted to the will of the Father. I think it is right to see this as a great temptation that Jesus was facing. He had the strong desire to avoid the suffering and death He knew He was facing. We are tempted when we are lured and enticed by our own desires (James 1:14 ESV). His strong desire was that the cup pass from Him. At this point His will was in conflict with what He knew to be the will of the Father. This is why He says, "Yet not as I will but as You will" and "Your will be done."

Jesus asked for what was impossible and for what would not pass away. He knew and had taught the disciples explicitly that He was going to Jerusalem to die. Jesus had said that the Father had commanded Him to lay down His life for His sheep (John 10:17-18). He had rebuked Peter for saying "God forbid it Lord! This shall never happen to You." He had told Peter, "You are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's" (Matthew 16:22-23). But now in the garden, Jesus Himself asks for something that He already knows is not in accord

with the will of His Father. How could He do this? Didn't He say "I and the Father are one"? How could His will diverge from the will of His Father? Didn't He say "I always do the things that are pleasing to Him"? (John 8:29). This is a mystery I don't think we can fully grasp. But here Jesus shows that sometimes when we pray we may even ask for things we know God can't or won't do. He made a request He knew would not be granted. Why did He even ask? Because that is what He was feeling; that is what He wanted. We should be honest with God about what we want, even if we know it diverges from His will. We should ask even when we know the request won't be granted, because prayer is communication with God, and communication sometimes requires that we honestly admit what we want and how we are feeling.

Instead of saying "Father, save Me from this hour," Jesus said, "Father, glorify Your name." Jesus wanted the name of the Father to be glorified in whatever happened to Him. As we make our requests of the Father, this should always be a part of them. We should always say, "Father, whatever happens with me and however you choose to answer this prayer, let it glorify You."

The Father responded to the Son. A voice came out of heaven and said, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." It is not often that people hear God's voice directly from heaven. We have two other instances in the gospels of this happening. In Mark 1:11 and Matthew 3:17 we are told that when Jesus was baptized, a voice came out of heaven and said, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased." Matthew says, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." The Father's voice was heard again on the Mount of Transfiguration when He said to Peter, James and John, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" (Matthew 17:5). The Father directly affirmed His Son and testified about Him. Hearing this and being enveloped by the bright cloud, Peter, James and John were terrified and fell on their faces to the ground (Matthew 17:6). It was an overwhelming experience for them, and is very similar to what the nation of Israel experienced when God gave them the ten commandments in Exodus 19 and 20. At that time the people heard the voice of God themselves as He gave them His commandments. After God finished speaking to them, Exodus 20:18-22 says, "All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood at a distance. Then they said to Moses, 'Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die.' Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin.' So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God was. Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'You yourselves have seen that I have spoken to you from heaven.'" Hearing the voice of God from heaven is a powerful, overwhelming and very rare thing.

When He spoke, the Father spoke of having glorified His name in the past, and said that He would glorify it again. He had done it and would do it again. This is what we are asking for when we pray, "Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name" (Matthew 6:9). This is the first request we are told to make in the "Lord's prayer." Those who turn away from God do not honor His name; they do not glorify Him, but dishonor Him. Those who follow Christ are to seek the honor of His name as their first priority. We are to honor Him ourselves and prompt others to do so as well. How had the Father glorified His name in the past and how will He glorify it in the future? Through His Son! Jesus will say to the disciples in John 13:31-32, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately." The Son had brought glory to the Father and would continue to do so. What was about to happen to Jesus would not be a

failure of God's purpose but a fulfillment of it. It would not be something that would dishonor the name of the Father but would glorify it.

The people standing there at that time all heard the voice from heaven, but apparently many did not comprehend what God was saying. Some thought it was thunder, which may give us a hint about what it might sound like if we heard God speak from heaven. Some said, "An angel has spoken to Him." Some understood that it was speech, but possibly they didn't understand what was said. This is similar to the incident when the Lord spoke to Saul as he was on his way to Damascus; those with him heard the voice, but did not understand what was being said (Acts 9:7 and Acts 22:9). Jesus at least understood what the Father was saying, and perhaps the disciples did as well. The speech of God is obscured from those who do not believe. It is believers who are privileged to hear and see the truth from God.

The Father did not speak for the sake of Jesus. He did not say this to reassure His Son. Jesus needed no reassurance because He was fully confident of these things. There was no uncertainty on the part of Jesus. The voice had come from the sake of those who were there with Jesus, so that they might believe. As we saw in the other examples of the Father speaking of the Son, He spoke to affirm His Son and to prompt people to believe in Him and listen to Him. The Father showed that He listened to and responded to His Son.

What was going to happen in "this hour," the "hour" that had come? Jesus says in verses 31 and 32, "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." He says two things about "this world." First, He says that judgment is upon it, and second, that its ruler is going to be cast out. The Greek term for "judgment" is *krisis*, and means a court ruling or decision. Jesus has said that God has given all judgment to the Son (John 5:22) and that He has the authority to execute judgment because He is the Son of Man (John 5:27). Jesus said that His judgment is just because He does not seek His own will but the will of the Father (John 5:30). He said that His judgment is true because He is not alone in it, but the Father is with Him in it (John 8:16). So now the time had come for this judgment upon the world, and that judgment would happen at the cross. Jesus would bear the judgment for the whole world Himself on the cross. The iniquity of us all was laid on Him (Isaiah 53:6).

The death of Jesus also brought about the defeat of "the ruler of this world." Jesus will mention him again in John 14:30, "I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me" and John 16:11 when He spoke of the work of the Holy Spirit, "and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged." The ruler of this world is Satan. We might wonder in what sense is Satan the ruler of this world and how did it come about? In Luke 4:1-13 we find the account of how Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness. Of the second temptation it says, "And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, 'I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours.'" Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE HIM ONLY"' (Luke 4:5-8). We get a little insight here into how it is that Satan can make this offer. Authority over the kingdoms of mankind had been "handed over" to Satan. Jesus did not dispute this point with him. Who handed it over to him? Who abdicated as ruler over the earth and handed dominion over to Satan? I think the answer comes from Genesis and the fall of mankind. When God determined to create man, He said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth" (Genesis 1:26). After creating them, He said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living

thing that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1:28). God created the man and woman to rule over the earth. They were unique among all the creatures of the earth in that they were created in God’s image and likeness. There is no created creature like man. This is why God gave humanity dominion over the earth and all of its creatures. In the fall (Genesis 3) Adam and Eve gave themselves over to the lies of Satan rather than the word of God and submitted themselves to him. They followed Satan’s word rather than God’s word and submitted to the false authority of Satan rather than the true authority of God. In doing so, they in effect made Satan their ruler. Humanity still rules over the earth and its creatures, but Satan rules over humanity.

We must hasten to say that the Lord was still in the middle of all of this. The fall of man did not take Him by surprise. Indeed, He had created the conditions through which this could take place. He created the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He had commanded the man and woman not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He had warned them of the consequences of disobedience. He had allowed Satan to have access to the man and woman. He made it possible for them to turn away from Him, and I don’t think we can fully comprehend His reasons for doing things this way. Further, He knew that they would turn away. He knew that they would listen to Satan and submit to Him and all along He had a plan for the redemption of mankind and for restoring the kingdom through His Son.

Now we see in John 12:31 that through His death Jesus will “cast out” Satan, the ruler of this world, and will re-assert His dominion over all men. Remember Hebrews 2:14-15, which says, “Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.” Jesus deposed Satan, not by submitting to him and worshiping him, but through his atoning death on the cross that paid for the sins of mankind. When Satan offered to make Jesus the ruler over all the kingdoms of the earth if He would bow down and worship him, he was offering Jesus a shortcut to the eventual goal of ruling over mankind. Satan, of course, does not want to be “cast out” and “rendered powerless” but wants to maintain his position and power over humanity. He has desired all along to actually depose God Himself! But Christ has cast him out through His death and resurrection.

When Jesus said, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself,” He was indicating “the kind of death by which He was to die.” We must recall what He said in John 3:14-15, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.” Also in John 8:28 He said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.” Of course He was talking about being “lifted up” on the cross. Note the results or purposes of His being “lifted up,” that He will “draw all men to” Himself, that those who believe in Him will have eternal life, and that people will know that He is the Son of God who represents the Father. He was lifted up for the sake of all humanity. His death benefits us. His death purchased eternal life for those who believe in Him.

When Jesus says that if He’s “lifted up” He will “draw all men” to Himself, He does not mean that all men will be saved. He doesn’t mean that all people will come to Him and believe in Him. Jesus used this same word for “draw” in John 6:44 “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.” He made it clear that many do not and will not believe in Him because they are not His sheep (John 10:26). In Luke 13:23-30 we read:

And someone said to Him, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?" And He said to them, 24 "Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 25 "Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, 'Lord, open up to us!' then He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know where you are from.' 26 "Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets'; 27 and He will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you are from; DEPART FROM ME, ALL YOU EVILDOERS.' 28 "In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out. 29 "And they will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God. 30 "And behold, some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last."

So obviously not all people will come to Christ and be saved. In fact it appears it will be a relative few. So when Jesus says "I will draw all men to Myself," I think He means it in the sense of "all kinds of men." He will draw people from all the nations and peoples, and not just from the Jews. This fits with Luke 13:29 and with the context of John 12 where these Greeks were trying to see Him. People from all the diverse nations, languages and groups on the earth will be drawn to Christ because of His sacrifice for them.

I think also that the drawing of men to Himself is to be seen in contrast with the casting out of the ruler of this world. Satan will be cast out, and people will be drawn to Christ because of His death on their behalf. Satan will be defeated and people will be liberated from his dominion.

The crowd responded to Jesus by appealing to the scriptures, and what they have to say about the Messiah, "We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?" According to the Law, the Christ was supposed to "remain forever." Where did they get this idea? There are several places. Psalms 89:3-4 says, "I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to David My servant, I will establish your seed forever And build up your throne to all generations." Psalms 110:4 says, "The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, 'You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.'" Isaiah 9:6-7 says, "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this." Ezekiel 37:24-25 says, "My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons' sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever." Then there is Daniel 7:13-14, which may be the primary passage these people were thinking of. It explicitly mentions the "Son of Man," and says, "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed." Jesus had said in John 12:32, "If I am lifted up," but the people quoted Him as saying "The Son of Man must be lifted up." They knew that He called Himself the "Son

of Man,” knew that He meant that He was the Christ, and therefore naturally thought of Daniel 7:13-14. The Son of Man is supposed to receive an everlasting dominion which won't be destroyed, but here is Jesus saying that He is going to be “lifted up.” If He's going to die and not remain forever, then who really is the “Son of Man”? How can He claim to be the Son of Man and say that He's going to die? In view of the scriptures cited, this was a valid question. I guess they forgot about Daniel 9:26 which says very clearly, “Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.” I guess they also forgot about Isaiah 53 that clearly speaks of the atoning death of the Messiah, and Psalm 22 that depicts His crucifixion. They heard from the Law what they wanted to hear and ignored what they didn't want to hear. This selective hearing is a big problem for mankind.

In His response to these people, Jesus again, for the fourth time, talks about light and darkness. In John 8:12 Jesus said, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.” Before healing the blind man in John 9 He said, “We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world” (John 9:4-5). In John 11:9-10 Jesus had said to the disciples, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” Now He again uses this metaphor and says “For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light.” Jesus is the Light and will be with them for only a little while longer. He warned them that they faced the danger that the darkness might “overtake” them. The word is *katalambanō*, and means “to lay hold of” or “to seize.” We saw this same word in John 1:5, “The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not **comprehend** it.” The darkness can never overtake or overwhelm the Light, but it will overtake those who don't walk in the light.

Notice that twice here Jesus says, “while you have the light,” and tells them they need to do two things while they have the light. First, they need to walk in the light. The person who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. We need to walk in the light to see where we are going. Those who stay in the darkness are directionless. Their lives are aimless. They don't know where they are going to end up. To walk in the light is to walk with the Lord in the direction He is going, and we won't end up going the wrong way.

Second He told them to “believe in the Light.” As we've seen, He Himself is the Light, so again Jesus urged them to believe in Him. He kept on urging these people to believe in Him. If they would believe in Him, they would “become sons of light.” To be a “son of” something was a Hebrew idiom. In John 17:12 Jesus will refer to Judas as the “son of perdition,” and in Luke 16:8 Jesus says, “the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light.” Paul uses this same idiom in 1 Thessalonians 5:4-5, “But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness.” We become sons of light when we believe in Jesus, the one who is the Light of the world. Believing in Him is the prerequisite to walking in the Light.

John 12:36-43

These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them. 37 But though

He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him. 38 This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?" 39 For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, 40 "HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED AND I HEAL THEM." 41 These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him. 42 Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.

It looks like Jesus was finished speaking to these people in the first part of verse 36, but then it also appears that John picked up some additional exhortation from Jesus in verses 44 through 50. Verse 36b says that Jesus spoke these things and then went away and hid Himself from them. Then John has an explanation for the unbelief of the Jews. Jesus had urged them to believe in Him, but even though they saw Him perform so many signs, they nonetheless persisted in their unbelief. He had given them the signs they insisted on seeing, but even then they would not believe. What is the reason for this stubborn unbelief? John quotes from Isaiah and points to three reasons for their unbelief.

The first reason for their unbelief was that it fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah. The quote in verse 38 is from Isaiah 53:1, "Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" When the suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 came upon the scene to suffer and die for the sins of mankind, who would believe it? The "arm of the Lord" was revealed in Jesus and the signs He performed, but who believed it? Isaiah's rhetorical questions are a complaint about the unbelief of those who rejected the report he delivered. The failure of so many to believe in Jesus fulfilled this prophecy. The report came to them and the arm of the Lord was revealed to them, but they didn't believe in it. It was not a failure on the Lord's part or on the part of the one delivering the message, but on the part of those who should have believed.

The second reason for their unbelief was that they were unable to believe because their eyes were blinded and their hearts were hardened. They could not see with their eyes and perceive with their hearts and be converted and healed. The quote in verse 40 is from Isaiah 6:10. Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us that Jesus quoted this passage when He explained to the disciples why He spoke in parables. Matthew 13:11-17 says:

Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. 12 "For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. 13 "Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 "In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE; 15 FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES, OTHERWISE THEY WOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.' 16 "But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears,

because they hear. 17 "For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

Notice that the quote from John in verse 40 indicates that God has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts so that they can't see or perceive. We might wonder why and how God does this. It seems unfair and counter to God's purpose. Doesn't God want people to see, perceive, return and be healed? Well, yes, of course He does, but we must try to understand the balance between God's activity and man's responsibility. We are responsible for how we respond to God's initiative. We see this in the example of the Pharaoh of Egypt in Exodus, and how his heart was hardened. In Exodus 4:21 God said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go." As we read through the story of God bringing the plagues upon Egypt in order to force Pharaoh to release the Israelites, it is said both that God hardened Pharaoh's heart and that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Exodus 8:15 and 8:32 say that Pharaoh hardened his heart, Exodus 9:12, 10:1, 10:20, 10:27, 11:10 and 14:8 say that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart. Why did God do this? What was His purpose? In Exodus 7:3-5 the Lord says to Moses, "But I will harden Pharaoh's heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. When Pharaoh does not listen to you, then I will lay My hand on Egypt and bring out My hosts, My people the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great judgments. The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst." God hardened Pharaoh's heart in order to multiply His signs and wonders in Egypt so that people would know that He is the Lord. Pharaoh's heart was hardened through the process of hearing the word of the Lord and having opportunities to respond to it in faith and obedience. As he refused to submit to God's word, his heart was hardened more and more.

It is our nature that if we continue to refuse to listen and submit to God's truth we will become hard-hearted. Our eyes will not see, our ears will not hear and our hearts will not understand. The more we resist God's will and grace, the harder we become. This is why we are exhorted in Psalms 95:7-11, "Today, if you would hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, As in the day of Massah in the wilderness, When your fathers tested Me, They tried Me, though they had seen My work. For forty years I loathed that generation, And said they are a people who err in their heart, And they do not know My ways. Therefore I swore in My anger, Truly they shall not enter into My rest." The author of Hebrews quotes this passage and issues the same exhortation in Hebrews 3 and 4. These Jews in Jerusalem had heard of and had seen the signs Jesus had performed and refused to believe. They had heard His teaching. They had heard Him urge them to believe, but refused to believe, and so their eyes were blinded and their hearts were hardened. The fact that Jesus continued to exhort these people to believe proves that it was not God's will that they should be faithless. Jesus continued to pursue them.

Isaiah said what he said because "he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him." Before Jesus even came to this earth, the glory of Christ was revealed to Isaiah. In Isaiah 6:1 he writes, "In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple." In Isaiah 6:5 he says, "my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Jesus said that Abraham also had "rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). John told us in John 1:14, "we saw His glory." Some are privileged to see His glory, and many are blinded to it.

The third reason for unbelief is that these people "loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God." John says that many of the rulers had believed in Him, but would not

confess that faith in Him because they feared the Pharisees. They feared that they would be put out of the synagogue. Many of these leaders, like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, did believe that Jesus was the Christ, but kept it a secret because of this fear. Mark tells us that Joseph of Arimathea was “a prominent member of the Council” (Mark 15:43). John says in John 19:38 that he was “a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews.” He kept his faith in Christ secret because he wanted the approval of the Pharisees and other members of the Council. He did not want to become a pariah to these men by confessing faith in Jesus. Thankfully he gathered his courage and stepped up to take responsibility for the care of Jesus’ body after His death. Evidently he overcame his fear. Many today secretly believe in Jesus, but because they fear others and want approval from others they fail to publicly confess their faith.

John 12:44-50

And Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me. 45 "He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me. 46 "I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness. 47 "If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. 48 "He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. 49 "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. 50 "I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."

I think these verses are a continuation of what Jesus was saying in verses 35 and 36. I think John rewinds a bit at this point as he recalled the additional things Jesus said before He “hid Himself from them.”

Note first here the “he who” statements in verses 44, 45 and 48. There is a contrast here. In verses 44 and 45 Jesus speaks of “he who believes” and “he who sees.” In verse 48 He turns to “he who rejects Me and does not receive my sayings.” These are the two options with Jesus, to see Him and believe in Him, or to reject Him and His teachings. There are great benefits to those who believe and grave consequences for those who don’t.

The one who believes in Jesus does not just believe in Jesus, but he also believes in the One who sent Him. To believe in the Son is to believe in the Father. Jesus is not saying “The one who believes in Me doesn’t really believe in Me.” He’s saying that belief in Him is also belief in the Father. Faith in the Son is faith in the Father. The one who sees Jesus sees the One who sent Him. The Father is seen in the Son. Jesus again affirms that He is one with the Father. You can’t have the Father without the Son. No one comes to the Father except through the Son (John 14:6).

In verse 46 Jesus again touches on the theme of light and darkness, continuing the illustration from verses 35 and 36. He says, “I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness.” In verse 35 He warned that there was danger that the darkness might “overtake” or seize them, and now He says that they will not “remain in darkness” if they believe in Him. Everyone is in the darkness by default, but everyone who believes in Jesus is released from the darkness. Those who don’t believe in Him stay in the darkness. The Lord wants us to turn from the darkness and come into His light.

Twice in verses 47 and 48 Jesus refers to “My sayings,” and then points out in verse 49 that His “sayings” came from the Father. The Father told Jesus what to say and speak. This

word translated “sayings” occurs 12 times in John, and usually it is translated “words.” Here for some reason the translators decided to use the word “sayings.” His words are “spirit and are life” (John 6:63). Peter said, “You have words of eternal life” (John 6:68). This is why it is crucial to hear His words and keep them. As we saw in John 10, those who are the sheep of Jesus hear His voice and follow Him. They hear His call and obey it, they hear and heed. Those who hear His word but don’t keep it will eventually face judgment. Again we should recall that Jesus warned of this same thing in Matthew 7:24-27 when He talked about the wise man who built his house on the rock and the foolish man who built his house on the sand. They both heard the words of Christ, but the foolish man failed to keep His word and practice it.

Again in verse 47 Jesus says that He had not come to judge the world but to save the world. The reason the Father sent Him into the world was to save the world and not judge it. But there will be judgment in the future for those who reject Christ and do not receive His sayings. The word He had spoken will judge them on the last day. When they heard the word of Jesus, they heard the word of the Father. Jesus only said what the Father commanded Him to say. Whatever Jesus said came directly from the Father, and the command of the Father was regarding eternal life. When we refuse to listen to Jesus and believe in Him we refuse eternal life, remain in darkness and continue to be subject to the wrath of God.

For the sixth and last time in John’s gospel there is reference to “the last day” in verse 48. Jesus mentioned this “last day” four times in chapter 6 when He talked about how He will raise up those who believe in Him on the last day. Martha expressed confidence that Lazarus would be raised on the last day in John 11:24. Now we see that the last day will also be a day of judgment for those who don’t believe in Jesus. They heard the words of Jesus which are the words of the Father, the words of eternal life, but did not believe His words and did not believe in Him. They are judged because of their unbelief (John 3:18).

John 13:1-11

Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. 2 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 got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself. 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. 6 So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter." 8 Peter said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." 9 Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." 10 Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." 11 For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, "Not all of you are clean."

Verse 1 sets up everything that occurs and everything Jesus says during the Passover meal with the disciples through chapter 17. Before the Feast Jesus knew “that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father.” Verse 3 tells us that Jesus also knew “that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from from God and was going back to God.” He knew the hour had come for His betrayal and death. He

knew His position and authority. He knew His origin and destination. Knowing these things He did what He did. Knowing these things, Jesus loved His own “to the end.” He had loved them, and He continued loving them to the end. He was about to lay down His life for them as the greatest demonstration of His love (John 15:13).

The “hour” was the hour of His departure out of this world to go to the Father. The word for “depart” is *metabainō*, “to go from one place to another.”⁵⁹ It’s more than just leaving a place. It is about moving from one place to another, both departure and arrival. The same word is used in John 5:24, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.” When we believe we depart from death and arrive at life. When He met with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration, they spoke of “His departure which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem” (Luke 9:31). In that passage the word for “departure” is *exodos*, which means to exit from a place, to take a road out of a place. To go back to the Father required that He exit from this world, and once He did this His work would be accomplished. Paul said that to “depart and be with Christ” is “very much better” than living on in the flesh (Philippians 1:23), and so we should also look forward to the time we depart this world to be with the Lord. It’s sad that so many believers cling so desperately to life in this world when eternity with Christ in His kingdom lies before us. We need to cultivate Paul’s perspective.

It was during supper that Jesus got up and washed the disciples feet. As John begins to tell us about it he mentions that the devil had “already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him.” Satan was behind the betrayal of Judas. Satan wanted to have Jesus put to death, somehow being blind to the fact that this was actually the purpose of God. Satan played right into God’s hands as he sought to have Jesus put to death, and Judas was his tool. Luke 22:1-6 says, “Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was approaching. The chief priests and the scribes were seeking how they might put Him to death; for they were afraid of the people. And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, belonging to the number of the twelve. And he went away and discussed with the chief priests and officers how he might betray Him to them. They were glad and agreed to give him money. So he consented, and began seeking a good opportunity to betray Him to them apart from the crowd.” Satan himself actually entered into Judas and moved him to betray Jesus. This does not absolve Judas of responsibility, however. Judas was a greedy man and allowed Satan to use him. Jesus had known this was going to happen for quite a while. John 6:70-71 says, “Jesus answered them, ‘Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?’ Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him.” This is one of the things Jesus was aware of as He stood up to wash the feet of the disciples. He will wash their feet and then dismiss Judas.

Jesus knew “that the Father had given all things into His hands.” We’ve noted before that in Matthew 11:27 and Luke 10:22 Jesus says, “All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” And in Matthew 28:18 He says, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” The name of Jesus has been exalted above every other name and everyone and everything is subject to Him. This was true at the time of the Passover supper with the disciples. Jesus is the King whom God has installed (Psalm 2) and He cannot be overthrown. Everyone owes allegiance to Him.

Jesus also knew He had come from God and was going back to God. The word for “going back” to God is *hupagei*, a present-tense verb. A more literal translation would be “that it was

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from God He came forth, and to God He is going.” He was at that time heading back to God, moving in that direction.

Knowing these things, Jesus proceeded to perform one of the lowliest of tasks which was usually performed by a slave (if a household had a slave). He stood up and “laid aside His garments,” probably meaning His outer garments as some translations have it. He “girded Himself” with a towel, wrapping it around His waist. He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet. We might wonder why Jesus thought this was necessary. In order to understand why He did this we must recall that meals were eaten while reclining on cushions next to a low table as we noted in chapter 11. This means that the feet of one person might be in near proximity to the head or face of someone else. We must also note that people of that day mostly wore sandals and their streets and roads were not paved. In addition, there were probably a lot of animals that walked the streets and may have left their droppings behind. As we might imagine, a person’s feet might get very dirty as they walked around during the day. It was the custom that when a person came into a house, they would wash their feet. The host was expected to provide the water needed for this necessity. We see this custom mentioned several times in the Old Testament:

- Genesis 18:3-4 - Abraham said to the angelic visitors, “My Lord, if now I have found favor in Your sight, please do not pass Your servant by. Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree.”
- Genesis 19:2 - Lot said to the angels, “Now behold, my lords, please turn aside into your servant’s house, and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way.”
- Genesis 24:32 says, “So the man entered the house. Then Laban unloaded the camels, and he gave straw and feed to the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him.”
- Genesis 43:24 says, “Then the man brought the men into Joseph’s house and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their donkeys fodder.”

1 Samuel 25:40-41 shows that the washing of feet was the lowly task of a servant, “When the servants of David came to Abigail at Carmel, they spoke to her, saying, ‘David has sent us to you to take you as his wife.’ She arose and bowed with her face to the ground and said, ‘Behold, your maidservant is a maid to wash the feet of my lord’s servants.’” When Jesus ate dinner at the home of a Pharisee named Simon, a sinful woman came in and wet the feet of Jesus with her tears, wiped them with her hair, kissed His feet and anointed them with perfume. When Simon was critical of this, Jesus said to him, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair” (Luke 7:44). Clearly the expectation was that Simon should have provided the means for Jesus to wash His feet when He came into his house, but Simon had not done it.

So then we find that the disciples at the Passover supper had failed to wash their feet. No one took on the job of getting the water, basin and towel ready. The water, basin and towel were available, but they didn’t use them. They may have thought that this task was beneath their dignity; either that or they were just kind of neglectful slobs. Sometimes in these kinds of situations we will think that someone else should have taken care of the need and that it was the fault of someone else that the need wasn’t addressed. So Jesus, the Teacher and Lord, took care of it. He humbled Himself to serve, knowing who He was, where He had come from and where He was going.

There is a lesson here about humility. Humbling yourself does not mean saying that you are a worthless nobody. Humility is not denying your abilities or position. It is a decision to put the needs of others before your own in order to serve them in lowly ways. It is taking the last seat at the table instead of the first (Luke 14:10). It is laying aside your sense of self-importance, position and privilege to serve others.

When Jesus came to Peter, Peter made it clear that he didn't think it was appropriate for Jesus to wash his feet. The others would not question what Jesus was doing, but Peter would! The Lord, the Teacher, the Son of God, the Messiah, should not be washing feet like a slave! Peter should wash the feet of Jesus and not the other way around! Peter is the only apostle with the audacity to try to tell Jesus that He is wrong about something (see Matthew 16:22 also). In His answer Jesus reveals that what He is doing has a greater significance than simply washing feet. He said, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter." Peter could not at that point see or perceive the symbolic significance of what Jesus was doing, but later he would come to know it by experience. Marvin Vincent says, "The A.V. ignores the distinction between the two words. "Thou *knowest* not" (οὐκ οἶδας), of *absolute and complete knowledge*. Thou shalt *learn* or *perceive* (γνώσῃ), of knowledge gained by experience."⁶⁰ Peter could not yet understand the true spiritual washing that Jesus would provide for them through His death, but he would come to understand it later on.

Even though Jesus assured Peter that there was a special significance to the act of washing his feet, Peter strongly refused to allow it, "Never shall You wash my feet!" Vincent notes, "A very strong expression. Literally, *thou shalt by no means wash my feet as long as the world stands*."⁶¹ Peter hadn't yet learned that he should be careful about saying "never" to the Lord. In Matthew 16:22, reacting to the statement of Jesus that He would suffer and die at Jerusalem, Peter said, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You!" In Matthew 26:33 Peter says, "Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away." We will often find that when we say "this will never happen," or "I will never do this," then it will happen or we will do it. It is folly to contradict the teaching of Jesus.

Jesus replied to Peter, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." The word translated "part" is *meros*, a portion, a part, a share or an allotment. In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the younger son used the same word when he said to his father, "give me the **share** of the estate that falls to me" (Luke 15:12). If Peter refused to allow Jesus to wash him, he would have no share in Christ. He would not share in the blessings of Christ. This is a crucial truth. We will have no part in Christ and His kingdom unless He washes us. Paul mentions this spiritual washing in Titus 3:3-7:

For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. 4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, 5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

We must be washed and cleansed by Christ or we do not have eternal life and are not heirs of His kingdom.

⁶⁰ Vincent, Marvin, *Word Studies in the New Testament*

⁶¹ *ibid*

Peter immediately changed his mind. In fact, he said, "Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." I can imagine that Jesus may have chuckled at this point. I think there's humor here that we shouldn't miss. Peter would not miss out on his share in Christ. If that was in jeopardy, then he would go all-in on the washing. He was conscious that more needed washing in this spiritual sense than just his feet; he wanted comprehensive cleansing. He went from thinking that Jesus was doing too much to thinking that Jesus was doing too little! He needed more than just a foot-washing.

Jesus replied with the obvious point that one who has just taken a bath and washed his whole body does not need to bathe again, but just needs to wash his feet. He is completely clean except for his feet which have gotten dirty from walking to his destination. Peter had been completely washed except for his feet, so it wasn't necessary to wash his hands and head. Using the plural, Jesus then said, "and you are clean, but not all of you." The apostles were all clean except for one. John gets at his meaning in verse 11, "For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, 'Not all of you are clean.'" Judas was in the process of betraying Jesus and Jesus knew it. Now Judas knows that Jesus knows. Judas is about to be dismissed by Jesus, and if the others had been paying attention, they would have known about Judas as well. I wonder what was going through the mind of Judas at this point. Jesus could have exposed him and ordered him beaten or killed. The others could have turned against him. They could have cast him out and then fled. But none of this was in the mind of Jesus. He would allow Judas to complete what he was doing. Judas may have been filled with fear at this point.

John 13:12-20

So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? 13 "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. 14 "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 "For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. 16 "Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor 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."

When He was finished washing their feet and reclined at the table again, Jesus asked, "Do you know what I have done to you?" He wanted them to think about the true significance of what He had done. He wanted them to reflect on the fact that He, as their Teacher and Lord, had washed their feet. He is greater than them. He is the Master (verse 16). The Teacher, the Lord, the Master is not supposed to wash the feet of those who are His students and servants. They are supposed to serve Him and not the other way around. Luke tells us that during the Passover the disciples had an argument about which of them was the greatest. He writes in Luke 22:24-27, "And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest. And He said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called "Benefactors." But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like 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 the one who

serves.” Maybe this argument among the disciples was part of what prompted Jesus to wash their feet. Jesus was not just the Master reclining at the table being served by His servants, but He Himself became the servant. He took the role of the slave.

What had Jesus done to them? He had given them an example, that they should do for one another as He had done for them. They were right to call Him “Teacher” and “Lord,” because that is who He is, and if He washed their feet, then they also should wash one another’s feet. The word translated “example” is *hupodeigma*, which comes from the verb *hupodeiknumi*, from *hupo*, “under” and *deiknuō*, “to show.” So literally it means “to show under.” A. T. Robertson defines *hupodeigma* as “to show under the eyes as an illustration or warning.”⁶² Washing their feet was a show, a demonstration, a little drama to illustrate the sort of service they were to render to each other. Jesus not only told them to serve one another in humble ways, He showed them how to do it. And note that this is not an optional thing. He says, “you also ought to wash one another’s feet.” The word for “ought,” *opheilō*, means “to owe.” They had an obligation to wash one another’s feet. Humble service to one another is an obligation for believers, and we must not think that we are exempt from it.

At this point I think I must add that I don’t think Jesus was instituting foot washing as a formal church ordinance or rite. There are some Christian groups that observe foot washing as an ordinance, believing that Jesus commanded this particular practice. I suppose there’s no harm in it, but I think we miss the point if we don’t see that this applies to many other things that we should do to serve one another. I think John gets at what Jesus was talking about in 1 John 3:16-18, “We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.” When we see a need in a brother or sister, we are to do what we can to meet that need. If they have dirty feet we should wash them. If they are thirsty we should give them something to drink. If they are hungry we should feed them. Love lays on us the obligation to look out for the needs of others and do what we can to meet those needs.

For the 18th time in John, Jesus says “Truly, truly, I say to you...”. This time it is a rather obvious statement of truth, “Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.” Masters are greater than slaves and the one who sends a messenger is greater than the messenger. We find similar statements by Jesus in Luke and Matthew. In Luke 6:40 Jesus says, “A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.” In Matthew 10:24-25 He says, “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master.” Slaves and messengers are servants, but Jesus served those who were His subordinates, and they are expected to follow His example in their service to others. They must not think that they are greater than Jesus because He washed their feet.

The disciples will not be blessed simply because they know things, but only if they do them. Knowing we should humbly serve one another is an important thing, but we won’t be blessed unless we do it. I would say that our knowledge of what we should do always surpasses our actually doing what we should do. Someone has said, “When all is said and done, more will have been said than done.” We are better at preaching than practicing. We must go beyond being mere hearers of the word and become doers of the word who will be blessed in what we do (James 1:22-25).

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Jesus has already said in verses 10 and 11, thinking of Judas, "Not all of you are clean." Now He says, "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.'" Jesus had chosen all twelve of these men. In John 6:70-71 Jesus said, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?" John comments in verse 71, "Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him." In Luke 6:12-16 we read:

It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. 13 And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles: 14 Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James and John; and Philip and Bartholomew; 15 and Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot; 16 Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Though we are told that Jesus chose Judas as one of the twelve, it seems here in John 13:18 that He is implying that He hadn't really chosen Judas in the same sense that He had chosen the others. He does not include Judas among those of whom He is speaking. Judas is the one who is unclean. Apparently there is a sense in which Judas was not "chosen" as the other eleven had been. Judas was chosen in order to fulfill the Scripture from Psalm 41:9 that says, "He who eats my bread has lifted up his heel against me." I think Jesus knew from the time He chose Judas that Judas would betray Him. Judas probably didn't know it, but Jesus did. Judas would follow Him, would "eat His bread," and then would "lift up his heel" against Jesus. He would kick at Jesus. Ultimately Judas used his association with Jesus to gain profit for himself.

We've noted from the outset that the gospel of John is a record of some of the signs Jesus performed that enable people to believe in Him and receive life in His name (John 20:31). The most recent signs we've read about have been the healing of the blind man and the raising of Lazarus. Now in verse 19 Jesus says He's going to do something else going forward so that they can go on believing in Him. He says, "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." He is going to tell them about things that are going to happen before they happen so that they will see that He knows the future. He's going to tell them that one of them will betray Him, and He's going to tell Peter that he will deny Him. When they see the betrayal of Judas and the denial of Peter they will see and believe that He knows the future. He will also tell them that He will go away to prepare a place for them and then return to receive them to Himself in John 14:2-3, and He will tell them that He will send them the Holy Spirit in chapters 14 through 16. Again in John 14:29 He will say, "Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe." They will see the reliability of the predictions and promises of Jesus and it will bolster their faith in Him. It will be another demonstration of His capability as the Son of God. We can have faith in what Jesus has said about the future. We can have confidence in His promises. He will prepare a place for us and He will return. He will send the Holy Spirit upon those who believe.

Jesus told them in verse 16 that the one who is sent is not greater than the one who sent him. Now in verse 20 He says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me." The other gospels tell us of similar sayings. In Matthew 10:40-42 when Jesus was giving the disciples instructions before He sent them out to preach and heal, He said, "He who receives you receives Me, and

he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward." Mark 9:36-37 says, "Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them, 'Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me.'" In Luke 10:16 He says, "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me." Jesus was going to send these men out as His representatives to the world. They would be His ambassadors and envoys and would communicate His message to all mankind. To receive and welcome them was to receive and welcome Jesus. To reject them was to reject Jesus.

There are many today who want to receive Jesus but want nothing to do with His people. There are many who say they are followers of Christ, but want nothing to do with the "church." But it appears from what Jesus says here that receiving Him is a package deal. We receive the Son, the Father and those who follow the Son. We become sheep of His flock, and we must join the other sheep in His fold. When Jesus appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus, He said, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" Saul replied, "Who are You, Lord?" and Jesus said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:4-5). Saul was persecuting the church. He was heading to Damascus to arrest Christians and bring them to Jerusalem, but Jesus said that He was the one Saul was persecuting. To abuse those who belong to Jesus is to abuse Jesus. We need to note what Jesus says about the separation of the sheep from the goats in Matthew 25:31-46:

"But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. 32 "All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; 33 and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. 34 "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 'For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; 36 naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' 37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? 38 'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 39 'When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40 "The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.' 41 "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; 42 for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; 43 I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.' 44 "Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' 45 "Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' 46 "These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

The sheep are distinguished from the goats by virtue of the fact that they take care of those who belong to Jesus, "even the least" of them. John pulls no punches about this when he writes, "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also (1 John 4:20-21). Don't say you love Jesus and then revile His people. Yes, they are sinful and flawed and far from perfection, but He has chosen them and redeemed them and they are in the process of becoming like Him, and if you are a believer in Christ you are one of them.

John 13:21-30

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." 22 The disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one He was speaking. 23 There was reclining on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. 24 So Simon Peter gestured to him, and said to him, "Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking." 25 He, leaning back thus on Jesus' bosom, said to Him, "Lord, who is it?" 26 Jesus then answered, "That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him." So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. 27 After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly." 28 Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him. 29 For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, "Buy the things we have need of for the feast"; or else, that he should give something to the poor. 30 So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.

For the third time in John's gospel we are told that Jesus was "troubled in spirit." John 11:33 tells us that He was troubled by the effect of the death of Lazarus on Mary, Martha and the Jews. When He knew that His "hour" had come for his suffering He said in John 12:27, "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour." Now as He gets specific about the betrayal of Judas He again becomes "troubled in spirit." Anyone would be bothered by the knowledge that a close friend and associate was planning to betray them. This was a great grief and a disturbing truth to Jesus, and He testified to the twelve that one of them would betray Him. Again He says "truly, truly." This was a certainty. He did not say, "One of you may betray Me," but "One of you will betray Me."

Despite the fact that Jesus had already spoken about this before, the disciples were surprised by this announcement that one of them would betray Jesus. They all looked around at each other, "at a loss," perplexed, about which one of them He was talking about. None of them suspected such a thing might be done by any of them. There is no indication that they suspected Judas. Matthew and Mark tell us that each of the disciples began to deny that they could be the ones who would do this. Matthew 26:21-25 says:

As they were eating, He said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me." 22 Being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, "Surely not I, Lord?" 23 And He answered, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me. 24 "The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born." 25 And Judas, who was betraying Him, said, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself."

And in Mark 14:18-21 it says:

As they were reclining at the table and eating, Jesus said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me—one who is eating with Me." 19 They began to be grieved and to say to Him one by one, "Surely not I?" 20 And He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who dips with Me in the bowl. 21 "For the Son of Man is to go just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."

Like the others, Judas also said, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" But to him Jesus said, "You have said it yourself." The Scripture would be fulfilled and the Son of Man would "go...as it is written of Him," but Jesus warned that Judas would face terrible consequences. Jesus pronounced woe upon him. Judas would cause great misery for himself by his betrayal of Jesus.

For the first time in John's gospel John refers to himself in verse 23 as the disciple "whom Jesus loved." He will refer to himself this way four more times in chapters 19, 20 and 21. John was reclining right next to Jesus and was leaning on His bosom. Peter gestured to John and said, "Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking." The word translated "gestured" literally means "to nod." He signaled John by nodding, and may have whispered this to John. Probably Peter was right next to Jesus and John. I'm not sure why Peter didn't just ask this question out loud to Jesus. Maybe he sensed that Jesus was trying to handle this discretely, giving the traitor a chance to repent. Jesus had not pointed His finger at Judas and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that Judas will betray Me." Everyone wanted to know who it was, so Peter asked John to ask who it was, and John asked Jesus, "Lord, who is it?" They had all denied that they would betray Him, so Jesus had to reveal who it was. Judas would not reveal his plans to them.

Rather than telling John outright, "It's Judas," Jesus said, "That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him." A. T. Robertson says, "It was and is in the orient a token of intimacy to allow a guest to dip his bread in the common dish (cf. Ruth 2:14)."⁶³ Apparently Jesus was revealing the answer to John without revealing it to the others. So Jesus gave the morsel to Judas. I assume, then, that John knew at that point that it was Judas, but he didn't disclose it to the rest of the disciples. Jesus would not allow the others to stop Judas from what he was intending to do.

For the first time in the gospel of John the name Satan is used in verse 27 as Satan entered into Judas. Jesus had said, "one of you is a devil" in John 6:70, and John 13:2 says that the devil had put into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus, but now Satan is named. Satan himself came and entered into Judas. Judas would be the tool of Satan to destroy Jesus, or so Satan thought. In actual fact Satan was the tool of God to bring about the will of God. Isaiah 53:10 says, "But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand." Jesus knew the time had come for His betrayal, suffering and death on the cross, and so He said to Judas and to Satan, "What you do, do quickly." Judas now could see that Jesus knew he was the betrayer. He was exposed, and John now also knew it was Judas. Soon all of the other apostles would know it was Judas, so it was obvious that it was time for him to go. Judas had probably not planned to betray Jesus that night because the Sanhedrin had decided not to kill Jesus during the Passover, but Jesus controlled the timing. Instead of repenting and turning from his plan, Judas went ahead with it despite the strong warnings from the Lord. We are often too proud

63 Robertson, A. T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*

to turn from the evil plans we have put into motion, even when we are strongly warned. Judas would go ahead and pursue personal profit at the expense of Christ and even though it would soon cost his own life (Matthew 27:3-5 and Acts 1:16-19). It is very foolish to ignore the warnings of the Lord.

Except for John, the other disciples did not know why Jesus said this to Judas. They speculated that Jesus was sending Judas out to buy what they needed for the feast or to give money to the poor. Judas of course knew what Jesus was saying, and so after receiving the morsel He “went out immediately.” There may have been some fear that drove his haste, since he had been exposed as the traitor. If Jesus or John had given the word, he might have been set upon by the others. As he left, John tells us “it was night.” I don’t know if John mentioned this as some kind of metaphor for the darkness of Judas’s deed, but it is pointed out by some commentators. He has used it in this sense when he said, “men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). And Jesus had talked about believing in Him so that we won’t “walk in the darkness” (John 8:12, 12:35 and 12:46). Judas chose to leave Jesus and walk out into the darkness.

John 13:31-35

Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; 32 if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately. 33 "Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' 34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Once Judas was dismissed Jesus had some very important things to say to the remaining disciples, and His teaching at this time takes up a good percentage of John’s gospel. From here through chapter 17 Jesus is speaking to the disciples during and after their Passover meal.

Once again Jesus concerns Himself with His own glorification and the glory of God in Him. Recall that He said in John 12:23, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” And then in John 12:27-28 He said, “Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name.” Then a voice came out of heaven: “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” This was the primary concern of Jesus, the glory of God. With the departure of Judas, the wheels were set in motion for His suffering and death. God is glorified in His Son, and God will glorify the Son, and will do it immediately. The disciples must see that the things that were about to happen were for the glory of Christ and for the glory of God. They must see that these things were not accidental tragedies, but meant for the glory of God. They must see that things were not spiraling out of control, but moving ahead according to the will of God for His glory.

John records in verse 33 that Jesus called them “little children.” This word, *teknion*, is only used here in the gospel of John, but John uses it seven times in his first epistle. In the Lord’s sight, we are all His “little children.” It is a term of affection and not condescension.

As He had said before to the Jews, now He says to the disciples, “I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’” He had said to the Pharisees in John 7:33 and 34, “For a little while longer I am with you, then I go to Him who sent Me. You will seek Me, and will not find Me;

and where I am, you cannot come.” Then again in John 8:21 He said to them, “I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come.” The disciples will have Jesus with them for a little while longer, but then He will go to the Father and they will not be able at that time go with Him. The word “cannot” translates the Greek *ou dunamai*, literally, “you are not able,” or “you do not have the power.” It was not possible for them to come with Him at that time. He was going ahead without them.

In verses 34 and 35 Jesus gets to the important thing. He has a new commandment for them, that they should love one another as He has loved them. If they love one another all people will know that they are His disciples. We might ask, “What is new about this commandment? Doesn’t the Old Testament command us to love our neighbor as ourselves?” Yes, Leviticus 19:18 says, “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.” And Jesus said this commandment is the second most important of all the commandments, the first being that we love God (see Matthew 22:36-40). But now Jesus tells them to love one another as He has loved them. The standard for love among believers is not loving as we love ourselves, but loving as Jesus loves. Jesus raises the bar for love. The Old Testament commandment told us to love as we want to be loved, to care for others as we care for ourselves. Now we must ask, “How would Jesus love others?” He would sacrifice Himself. He would lay down His life. We must progress from treating others as we would like to be treated to treating others as Jesus would. Since Jesus was going away the disciples would not be able to love and serve Him directly, but they would continue to love Him by loving one another. By loving one of the “least” among them, they would be loving Jesus (Matthew 25:40). We can’t love Jesus and reject other brothers and sisters in Christ. John says plainly in 1 John 4:19-21, “We love, because He first loved us. If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.” The professing believer who condemns and avoids other believers does not really love the Lord.

What the disciples, the students, of Jesus should learn from Him is how to love one another. In the school of Jesus this is one of the most important parts of the curriculum. As we learn from Him we should be able to love others more and more. Love among the followers of Jesus is the main indicator that they are His followers. If there is one thing Satan wants to disrupt among believers it is this. In a world of people seeking genuine love, the fellowship of believers in Christ ought to be the place where it is found.

John 13:36-38

Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus answered, "Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later." 37 Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You." 38 Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times.

As Jesus was trying to emphasize this “new commandment” that they love one another, Peter was hung up on His statement that He was going away and they could not come with Him. So Peter asked, “Lord, where are you going?” In His reply, Jesus clarified that where He was going they could not follow Him at that time, but they would follow Him there later. The unbelieving Jews could never follow Him, but the disciples would be able to later. Jesus would go before them and later they would follow. Jesus always goes first. He blazes the trail. He shows the way and sets the pace.

Peter then asked, “Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You.” When Jesus said “you cannot follow Me now,” the word for “now” is *nun*, meaning “at this time, the present.”⁶⁴ When Peter says “now,” the word is *arti*, and means “right now, this minute.”⁶⁵ Peter did not want to wait to follow Jesus, but always wanted to be with Jesus at every instant. Even though Jesus had told them what was going to happen to Him, Peter and the others still hadn’t grasped it. It was commendable that Peter had such a passion to follow Jesus every instant, but He didn’t understand fully what he was saying. He would not really follow Jesus to death at this time. He said he would lay down his life for Jesus, but Jesus knew the truth.

Jesus questioned Peter’s bravado, “Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times.” Not only would Peter not follow Jesus to death, he would, in fact, deny Him three times in order to preserve his own life!

There was more to this conversation than we find here in John. Matthew tells us that Jesus told them all that they would all “fall away” that night. Matthew 26:31-35 says, “Then Jesus said to them, ‘You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, “I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK SHALL BE SCATTERED.” 32 But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.’ 33 But Peter said to Him, ‘Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away.’ 34 Jesus said to him, ‘Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’ 35 Peter said to Him, ‘Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You.’ All the disciples said the same thing too.” Peter felt that he was exceptionally committed to Jesus. He claimed that it didn’t matter what others did, he would remain faithful. Peter and the others could not conceive that they would ever fall away or deny Jesus, but their determination was not enough to carry them through the crisis. This is often true for us; we don’t really know what we will do when the crisis comes. It is not bad to be determined and to make a plan and to say, “I won’t fail,” but when the trial comes, we must look beyond ourselves and our determination to the power of the Lord.

Luke gives us more insight into the conversation with Peter. He opens the curtain so that we can see more of what was going on spiritually. In Luke 22:31-32 Jesus says, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; 32 but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” Then Luke 22:33-34 says, “But he said to Him, ‘Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!’ 34 And He said, ‘I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me.’” What was about to happen was a “sifting” of Peter by Satan. Albert Barnes comments:

Grain was agitated or shaken in a kind of fan or sieve. The grain remained in the fan, and the chaff and dust were thrown off. So Christ says that Satan desired to try Peter; to place trials and temptations before him; “to agitate him” to see whether anything of faith would remain, or whether all would not be found to be chaff - mere natural ardor and false professions.⁶⁶

It is similar to what Satan did to Job. Satan was convinced that the faith of Job was not genuine, and if God allowed Job to suffer, Job would surely turn away from God and curse Him (Job 1:9-11). Satan thought that if he was allowed to “sift” Peter, then Peter would surely abandon his faith in Christ. This is why Jesus said, “I have prayed for you, that your faith may

64 *Thayer’s Greek Definitions*

65 Robertson, A. T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*

66 Barnes, Albert, *Albert Barnes Notes on the Bible*

not fail." Jesus did not pray that Peter would not be sifted and tested, but that through the testing, Peter's faith would endure. Jesus knew that Peter would turn around and be able to strengthen his brothers as a result of his failure.

The trials and temptations that come our way are tests of our faith (see James 1:2-4). They reveal whether our faith is genuine or false. Many abandon faith in Christ when they are "sifted" and tested. We must understand that these things will come our way and that they are tests of our faith. We must hang on to our faith through them. Peter would deny Jesus and they all would "fall away," but their faith would prove genuine nonetheless. The prayer of Jesus would be granted and their faith would not fail.

John 14:1-7

"Do not let 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 "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."

We have noted how Jesus was "troubled" as He came to the tomb of Lazarus, and how He said in John 12:27, "Now My soul has become troubled." Also in John 13:21 we're told that Jesus "became troubled in spirit" right before He said that one of the disciples would betray Him. Now He uses the same word and says to the disciples, "Do not let your heart be troubled." So how can He, having allowed Himself to be troubled, tell the disciples that they should not allow themselves to be troubled? Note that He says it again in verse 27. He had just said some troubling things to them. He had said one of them would betray Him. He had said Peter would deny Him. He had said they would all fall away because of Him. He had said He was going away and they could not come with Him. Now He says that they should not allow their hearts to be troubled by these things, particularly by the fact that He was going away. He was going away for a good reason and was not simply abandoning them.

If our hearts are "troubled," it is because we have allowed it. If I say to someone, "Do not let this happen" (whatever "this" might be), then I am saying that they have the power to keep the thing from happening. If I say to a house-sitter, "Do not let the cat go outside," I am saying that the cat is not supposed to go outside and they have the ability to keep the cat from going outside. In this case, Jesus is saying to them that they are not supposed to allow their hearts to be troubled about His departure, and they have the ability to prevent their hearts from being troubled. How is this possible? Through faith! He says, "believe in God, believe also in Me." Faith is the antidote to a troubled heart. The psalmist recognized this as he admonished his soul in Psalm 42:5-6, "Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence. O my God, my soul is in despair within me; therefore I remember You from the land of the Jordan and the peaks of Hermon, from Mount Mizar." In Psalm 42:11 he again says, "Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God." When we face disturbing and troubling things, we must look beyond our resources and understanding to the God who knows what He is doing, who will bring about what is good and will provide the help we need. Remind yourself, "I will yet praise Him."

The specific reason the disciples should not let themselves be troubled is because Jesus was going away for a purpose that would benefit them. He was going to His Father's house to prepare a place for them. He says there are many "dwelling places" in the Father's house. The word for "dwelling places" is *monē*, an abode, a place to dwell, a residence. There are many of these in the Father's house. There is no limit to the space in the Father's house. This is not an exclusive place for a privileged few, but there is plenty of room for all who will come. Jesus would have told them if this wasn't true; He would have said, "Guys, there are just a few dwelling places in the Father's house, so make your reservations right away before they are all gone!" Marketers often use this inducement to get people to buy something hastily. But Jesus assures us there is room for all.

Jesus told them He was going to the Father's house to prepare a place for them. The word for "place" is *topos*, a spot, a place, "any portion or space marked off, as it were from surrounding space."⁶⁷ A space will be prepared and set aside for them. There will be prepared spaces for all of them, set aside as their dwelling places, prepared by Jesus. In Psalm 23:6 David expressed confidence that since the Lord was his shepherd, he would dwell in the Lord's house forever, "Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever." Again, in Psalms 27:4 David says, "One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD And to meditate in His temple." Followers of the Lord want to live in His house forever, and so they will!

Along with His assurance that He was going to the house of the Father to prepare a place for the disciples, Jesus also promised that He would "come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." He had promised that they would follow Him later in 13:36, so now He explains the plan. He will go ahead and get a place ready for them in the Father's house, and then He will come back to pick them up and take them to His home. He wants them to be where He is, and wants us to be where He is.

Apparently this promise from Jesus is rooted in Jewish customs of betrothal and marriage. Ray Vander Laan writes:

In ancient Israel, when it was time for a man and woman to marry, both fathers would negotiate the bride price to compensate the bride-to-be's family. After exchanging a glass of wine to conceal the agreement, the couple was formally engaged. The young man then told his fiancée, in effect, "I'm going home to my father's house to prepare a place for you. When I'm finished, I'll return and take you to be my wife." The son (typically in his mid-twenties) would then build a new house on to his father's existing one. As generations married and built their houses onto the original one, they created a housing complex called an insula. Here, family members ate, worked, and lived together. Everyone benefited as family members shared their lives and values. As the son worked on his new home, he eagerly awaited his father's final approval. Only the father could decide when the building was finally complete.⁶⁸

When the young man completed the home for his bride, he would gather his friends and they would go together to retrieve the bride and her friends and the wedding would take place. The bride would then live with her husband in the house of his father. Part of this custom is illustrated in the Parable of the Ten Virgins in Matthew 25:1-13. Jesus will come for His bride, the body of believers, the church, and will take her home to be with Him forever. This is the

⁶⁷ *Thayer's Greek Definitions*

⁶⁸ <https://www.thatttheworldmayknow.com/marriage>

great hope we have as followers of Christ, the hope in His promise to come again to retrieve us so that we can be with Him forever. This is the truth believe that calms a troubled heart.

Jesus assures them, "And you know the way where I am going." The word for "way" is *hodos*, a road, path or route. They know the road to the place where Jesus was going. Thomas, however, wasn't so sure about this. He asked, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?" How can we know the way to a place if we don't know where the place is? If someone says to us, "I'm going away somewhere, and you know the way," the natural question is, "Where are you going?" Jesus answered with what is arguably the most powerful of His "I Am" statements, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." Jesus Himself is the road or the route to the Father. He had made it clear that He was going to the Father, to the Father's house, and He Himself is the way to this place for the disciples. It is through Jesus and through Him exclusively that we may come to the Father. No one can come to the Father in any other way except through Jesus. We won't come to the Father through meditation, education, good deeds, baptism, communion, helping the poor or any means other than through faith in Jesus Christ. This exclusive claim of Christ is a stumbling block for many today. Many reject the idea that there can only be one way to God and try to maintain the fiction that all religions say essentially the same thing and that all are equally valid. But there is no one like Jesus Christ. Christianity is necessarily exclusive in its claims because the Lord was exclusive in His claims.

Not only does Jesus say that He is the way, but He also says He is the truth. John 1:14 told us that Jesus is "full of grace and truth," and John 1:17 says "grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ." Jesus embodies the truth and brought the truth into being. He is truth incarnate, the truth of God and from God. Someone who is always truthful can always be believed. Jesus is completely credible, and we can put our faith in Him without any doubts or hesitation.

In addition to being the way and the truth, Jesus is also "the life." He said to Martha in John 11:25-26, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die." If we want to come to the Father and have a place in His house, we must come through Jesus Christ. If we want the truth, we must come to Jesus. If we want life, we must receive in by faith in Jesus Christ.

Apparently the disciples did not fully "know" Jesus yet. They didn't fully grasp who He really is, because He says to them, "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him." We should recall John 1:18, "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." In John 10:37-38 Jesus had said to the Jews, "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father." He will go on to discuss this more in the next section of John 14. The Son reveals the Father. To know the Son is to know the Father, and to see the Son is to see the Father.

John 14:8-14

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 can 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 is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves. 12 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater

works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. 13 "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.

Jesus had just told them that to know Him was to know the Father and that they had seen the Father, but now Philip says, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Surely this was a facepalm moment for Jesus. Philip essentially said that they were not satisfied with the revelation Jesus had given them to that point and they needed more. What He had revealed was insufficient and they needed more; they needed to actually see a manifestation of the Father. Philip didn't feel that it was enough that he had seen Jesus, and apparently didn't agree that seeing Jesus was the same as seeing the Father. He wanted an experience like Moses had of seeing the glory of God in Exodus 33:18 through 34:8. Philip was not one of the apostles who had seen the glory of Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Jesus replied to Philip with three rhetorical questions, "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 can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me?" The first question implies that Philip had had plenty of time to "come to know" Jesus. By this time there should be no question in Philip's mind about who Jesus was. The deity of Jesus should have been clear to Philip by that time. That Jesus was God incarnate should have been plain to Philip. The more time we spend with Jesus the better we come to understand and appreciate who He really is. We may start with a very weak, basic and limited faith, but that faith should grow as we spend time with Him and see Him work.

Jesus was incredulous that Philip would say, "Show us the Father." Philip had seen the Father in the Son. He was asking for what he had already experienced. If the Father came to the earth and manifested Himself in human form, He would be Jesus. I'm not saying that Jesus is the Father, but that the Father is in the Son, as Jesus explains. The Word did become flesh and dwell among us and the disciples did see His glory (John 1:14).

Jesus had talked many times about how the Father was in Him and He was in the Father. He had said that His words were the Father's words and His works were the Father's works. Whatever He said came from the Father and whatever He did came from the Father. So He asked Philip, "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me?" Here is a fundamental truth that Philip needed to believe. Jesus again explains that His words are the Father's words and that the Father who abides in Him does His works through Him. The Spirit of the Father was in the Son and spoke and worked through the Son. I suppose we could say it is similar to a person being inhabited by an evil spirit. Satan entered into Judas and so Judas carried out the works of Satan. But Jesus was inhabited by the Spirit of His holy Father and so carried out His work. Can we explain this mystery more than this? Can we make it more comprehensible? I don't think so. If I were to say, "My father, Hank Murdock, is in me, and I am in him, and what I say comes from him, and what I do comes from him," you would probably think I was some kind of kook. I am not my father. Yes, something of my father and my mother is in me because they conceived me and I come from them, but I am a distinct person from my father. But Jesus is one with the Father in ways that I am not one with my earthly father. So this is a doctrine we can't fully understand, but we must believe anyway.

Jesus urged Philip once again to believe in verse 11, "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves." He had said essentially the same thing in John 10:37-38, "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father." The works He did

proved that the Father was in Him and He was in the Father. Philip had plenty of proof of the truth of these words in the works of Jesus, the works of the Father. These works provide us with a solid foundation for faith in Christ.

Jesus then says that those who believe in Him will do the same works that He did, and will in fact do “greater works.” Jesus declares this as a certainty and reveals how this will happen in verses 12 through 14. The one who believes in Jesus will do the works that Jesus does and will even do greater works because Jesus was going to the Father. A. T. Robertson and Marvin Vincent argue that Jesus does not mean that believers will do more remarkable miracles or miracles that were greater in quality than Jesus, but that their miracles will be greater in quantity; their ministry will be a “wider work of apostolic ministry under the dispensation of the Spirit.”⁶⁹ The ministry of Jesus was limited to the region around Judea and Galilee, but the ministry of the apostles would spread to the whole world.

These “greater works” would be done as a result of asking in the name of Jesus. He will mention this several more times as we move forward through chapter 16. As Jesus has gone to the Father and has been exalted to the highest place at His right hand and has been given authority over all things, He is attentive to the requests made in His name by those who believe in Him. Note that this seems limitless, “Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do,” and “If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.” I can think of many things to ask for that don’t think would please the Lord or glorify the Father. We must understand what it means to ask “in the name” of Jesus. It is not just saying “in Jesus name, amen” at the end of a prayer. I think it means to ask as one who represents Him and His interests on earth. It is to ask in His stead, as if He were making the request. Albert Barnes says:

This is equivalent to saying on my account, or for my sake. If a man who has money in a bank authorizes us to draw it, we are said to do it in his name. If a son authorizes us to apply to his father for aid because we are his friends, we do it in the name of the son, and the favor will be bestowed on us from the regard which the parent has to his son, and through him to all his friends. So we are permitted to apply to God in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, because God is in him well pleased, Matthew 3:17, and because we are the friends of his Son he answers our requests. Though we are undeserving, yet he loves us on account of his Son, and because he sees in us his image. No privilege is greater than that of approaching God in the name of his Son; no blessings of salvation can be conferred on any who do not come in his name.⁷⁰

Asking in Jesus’ name is asking for what He would ask for; it is making the request He would make of the Father. The purpose and outcome is the glory of the Father in the Son. John says in 1 John 5:14-15, “This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.” Asking in the name of Jesus, then, is asking in accord with the will of God. We can have confidence that these requests will be heard and granted.

John 14:15-21

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. 16 "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

69 Vincent, Marvin, *Word Studies in the New Testament*

70 Barnes, Albert, *Albert Barnes' Notes On The Bible*

the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. 18 "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 "After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. 20 "In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. 21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."

Now in verse 15 for the first time Jesus says, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." Note that He repeats it in verse 21, "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me." In verse 23 He again says, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word," and verse 24, "He who does not love Me does not keep My words." The word translated "keep" is the Greek word *tēreō*, "(a guard); to watch over, to guard."⁷¹ We watch over and guard those things that are valuable and important. Those who love Jesus will have His commandments and will guard them. They will value them and obey them. Genuine love for Jesus results in keeping His commandments, His word. We find the same word for "keep" at the end of the "Great Commission" in Matthew 28:20, translated "observe," when Jesus says regarding His disciples, "teaching them to **observe** all that I commanded you." Keeping and observing the commandments of Christ is the primary concern of a follower of Jesus. It is the curriculum in the university of Christ. A professed Christian who has no interest in keeping the commands of Christ is not really a follower of Christ.

Also now for the first time Jesus tells them that He is going to send them the Holy Spirit. Back in John 7:37-39 we read, "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, "From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water."' 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." It would be after His glorification that Jesus would ask the Father and the Father would send "another Helper" to be with the disciples forever. The word translated "helper" is *paraklētos*, from *para*, "to the side of," and *kaleō*, "to summon," so it basically denotes one summoned to the side of another. John is the only New Testament writer who uses the word, and he uses it five times, here in verse 16, also in verse 26, in John 15:26 and 16:7, and then in 1 John 2:1. Marvin Vincent says that this word originally meant "*one who is called to another's side to aid him*, as an advocate in a court of justice. The later, Hellenistic use of *παρακαλεῖν* and *παράκλησις*, to denote *the act of consoling* and *consolation*, gave rise to the rendering *Comforter*, which is given in every instance in the Gospel, but is changed to *advocate* in 1 John 2:1, agreeably to its uniform signification in classical Greek."⁷² Paul gives us an idea of how the Holy Spirit helps the believer in Romans 8:26-27, "In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." The Holy Spirit is the One sent from the Father at the request of the Son who provides the believer with the help, comfort and counsel that is needed.

An important point here is that the Helper, the Holy Spirit, is a "He." He is a person, not merely a force or a power like electricity. Jesus says, "that He may be with you forever." He says that the world "does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides

71 *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance*

72 Vincent, Marvin, *Word Studies in the New Testament*

with you and will be in you.” Some believers occasionally speak as if the Holy Spirit is an impersonal power that they control, as in Star Wars the Jedi control and use the “force.” We must relate to Him as a person, listening to Him and talking to Him and following His leading and instructions, allowing Him to use us and work through us.

The Holy Spirit is “the Spirit of truth.” Jesus will explain further in John 16:13, “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.” The Holy Spirit will only speak and reveal what is true. He will not lead us into falsehood. Satan is a liar and the “father of lies” (John 8:44) and wants to lead us away into error and falsehood, but God’s Spirit is the Spirit of truth. The world is not led by the Spirit of truth, but by the spirit of falsehood and lies. As we listen to and follow Him, we will be walking in the truth. John says in 3 John 1:3-4 “For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth. I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.” To walk in the truth is to walk in the Spirit and follow His leading.

The unbelieving world cannot receive the Spirit of truth because it does not see Him or know Him. Of course, since He is a Spirit, no one can physically “see” the Holy Spirit. What Jesus probably means is that the world doesn’t perceive Him, it doesn’t discern Him. Unbelievers lack the spiritual discernment to perceive the Holy Spirit. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:14, “But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.” But those who believe in Jesus do know the Holy Spirit “because He abides with you and will be in you.” The Holy Spirit was present with them at that time and in the future He would be in them. In the past the Spirit would come and go from people. 1 Samuel 16:14 says, “Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him.” But Jesus says that the Spirit will be with them forever and will be in them. He will not come and go, but will remain in them.

Jesus promises them, “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” He had been talking about how He was going away, that He was leaving and was going back to the Father’s house, but now He says He won’t leave them as orphans. We get our word “orphan” directly from the Greek word which is *orphanos*. An orphan is a child who has no parents. A. T. Robertson comments, “Old word (*orphos*, Latin *orbus*), bereft of parents, and of parents bereft of children. Common in papyri of orphan children. In John 13:33 Jesus called the disciples *teknia* (little children), and so naturally the word means “orphans” here, but the meaning may be “helpless” (without the other Paraclete, the Holy Spirit). The only other N.T. example is in James 1:27 where it means ‘fatherless.’”⁷³ Life is especially difficult for orphans, and Jesus would not leave His disciples bereft of His presence. He would come to them in the person of the Holy Spirit and would be with them and in them Himself. The last words in Matthew’s gospel are “and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). Jesus does not call us to Himself, give us life and then leave us to fend for ourselves. The Holy Spirit is His presence in us. We mustn’t think that He is not with us.

After His crucifixion the world would not see Him any longer. Jesus did not appear to any unbelievers after His resurrection, but only to His disciples. The world lost its opportunity to see Jesus, but the disciples will continue to see Him. They would see Him after His resurrection and by faith they would continue to “see” Him even after His ascension. They would see Him because He would live in them. They would see Him in the presence of the Holy Spirit. They would see Him in His answers to their prayers. They would see Him as He

73 Robertson, A. T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*

worked through others. Because He lives, they will live. He had said this previously in John 6:57, "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me." Believers can be sure of eternal life because of this guarantee by Jesus. Does He live? Of course He does! Will we live? Of course we also will live!

The Holy Spirit would give them knowledge. Because of the Holy Spirit they would know that Jesus is in the Father and that they are in Christ, and Christ is in them. As the Father is in the Son, so the Son is in those who believe in Him. This is true for those who love the Lord, who have His commandments and keep them. The Holy Spirit gives us confidence in the truth about Jesus. 1 Corinthians 2:12-13 says, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words." And in 1 John 3:24 he says, "The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us." Assurance comes from the Holy Spirit. Satan wants to continually assault us with questions and doubts, but when we walk by the Spirit we have assurance.

Those who have the commandments of Christ and keep them are the ones who really love the Lord, who are truly His disciples and members of His family and are therefore loved by the Father and the Son. Yes, God loves the whole world (John 3:16, Matthew 5:43-48) and loves and values everyone, but there is a special love for those who are His children through faith in Christ. They receive His favor in ways unbelievers do not. Jesus will disclose Himself to those who love Him. The word for "disclose" is *emphanizō*, and means "to exhibit, appear (in person), to declare."⁷⁴ The King James translates it "manifest," and the World English Bible has "reveal." Jesus was going to die on the cross and be buried, but He would rise and in the future He would give them the Holy Spirit, He would come to them (verse 18), they would see Him (verse 19), and He would love them and disclose Himself to them. These are the great blessings those who love the Lord receive.

John 14:22-31

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?" 23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. 24 "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.

25 "These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. 26 "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. 27 "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. 28 "You heard that I said to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. 29 "Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe. 30 "I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me; 31 but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here.

Judas (not Iscariot) is called Thaddaeus in Matthew 10:3 and Mark 3:18. In Acts 1:13 he is called "Judas the son of James." Peter and Thomas had interrupted Jesus with questions,

and Philip had asked Him to show them the Father, and now Judas interrupts to ask, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?" His question seems to imply that he thought something had happened to change the Lord's plans. He probably had been thinking that soon Jesus would "disclose Himself" to the world as Messiah and King and establish His rule on the earth. But now Jesus has said that He is going to disclose Himself only to those who love Him. Judas wanted to know why the primary plan had been abandoned and now a backup plan was being implemented. He didn't see that the death and resurrection of Jesus had been the primary plan all along.

In His answer to the question of Judas, Jesus again repeated in a little different terms what He had just said. He discloses Himself only to those who love Him and keep His word. He does not disclose Himself to those who hate Him and refuse to keep His word. The plan had not changed. This is always how it was going to work. The special love of the Lord and His self-disclosure is reserved for those who love and follow Him. This involves not just Jesus showing Himself to them, but the Father and Son actually coming to them and making their abode with them. The word for "abode" in verse 23 is the same word translated "dwelling places" in verse 2, *monē*. Those who love the Lord and keep His word actually become the dwelling place of the Father and the Son. Paul asks in 1 Corinthians 3:16, "Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" This is something we must know as believers in Jesus, that He actually has taken up residence in us. We don't just have doctrines and beliefs, we have the Lord Himself in us!

We have seen in the gospel of John that Jesus has emphasized the importance of hearing and keeping His word. Here is a review:

- John 5:24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life."
- John 5:47 "But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"
- John 8:31 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine."
- John 8:37 "I know that you are Abraham's descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you."
- John 8:43 "Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word."
- John 8:51 "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death."
- John 12:47-50 "If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."
- John 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him."
- John 14:24 "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me."

Those who do not love Jesus do not keep His words, and His words are the words of the

Father. When there is a rejection of Christ there is also a rejection of His teachings, and a rejection of Jesus and His teachings is a rejection of God the Father.

While Jesus was with the disciples He had spoken the words of the Father; He had given them the truth from the Father. But what about the future? What will happen after He departs to the Father? How will they hear His words then? Jesus explained that the Helper, the Holy Spirit, would be sent by the Father in the name of the Son and would teach them all things and remind them of all that Jesus had said. They would need more teaching, and the Holy Spirit would provide it to them. They would need reminders of what Jesus had said. If they were to love Him by keeping His word, they would often need reminders of His word. So the Holy Spirit is a Helper, an Advocate, a Teacher and one who reminds. What Jesus said must not be forgotten by those who follow Him, and so the Holy Spirit brings to mind the things Jesus said that we need to follow. This suggests that for the believer, the Holy Spirit speaks in our minds to remind us of things. When we are facing a situation and a relevant teaching of Jesus comes to mind, it is likely the Holy Spirit doing exactly what Jesus said He would do. If I face someone who is hostile and abusive toward me and the words of Christ come to mind, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44), that is probably a reminder from the Holy Spirit. If I have harmed someone by something I've said or done and the word of Christ comes to me, "Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering" (Matthew 5:23-24), it is probably a word of reminder from the Holy Spirit. We can expect the Holy Spirit to lead us into conformity with the teaching of Jesus. He will not lead us otherwise.

In addition to and because of the presence of Christ in the Holy Spirit, the disciples will have the peace of Christ (verse 27). He both gives His peace to them and leaves His peace with them. He does not give a troubled and fearful heart, but a peaceful heart. The Greek word for "peace" is *eirēnē*, "Probably from a primary verb εἶρω *eirō* (to *join*); *peace* (literally or figuratively); by implication *prosperity*: - one, peace, quietness, rest, + set at one again."⁷⁵ The Hebrew idea of peace, *shalom*, has to do with overall well-being, and the word *shalom* was used as a greeting among the Jews (see Matthew 10:12-13). Yes, peace has to do with the absence of conflict and upheaval; Jesus contrasted peace with "a sword" in Matthew 10:34-36, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household." Apparently when Jesus says He is giving them peace He does not mean they will have peace with others, even with others in their families. The believer will have enemies and opponents even within his own family. So what sort of peace does He give them? Romans 5:1-2 says, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God." The peace Jesus gives is peace with God. Through faith in Him the believer is no longer an enemy of God, but has been forgiven and reconciled to God (Romans 5:10). And then Philippians 4:6-7 says, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." In Christ the believer has the peace of God that sets aside anxiety, goes beyond comprehension and guards his heart and mind in Christ. This is the peace that Jesus gives.

This peace that Jesus gives is the peace that belongs to Him and comes from Him. Jesus is the source of true peace; He has it and gives it. He gives it continually. Note that the word for “give” occurs three times in verse 27, and each time it is a present-tense active verb, “My peace I am giving to you.” He does not give it as the world gives. How does the world give, and how is the method of Jesus different from that of the world? First, the world can’t really give peace because it doesn’t have it. The Jews greeted one another with the word and the wish, but they couldn’t impart it. Jesus lamented over Jerusalem and said, “If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes” (Luke 19:42). Jesus can give it because it is His to give. Second, the world, by and large, does not really want peace. They don’t want peace with God or the peace of God. They prefer the darkness to the light, and there is no true peace in the darkness. Third, the peace of the world is a counterfeit peace. The world talks about “inner peace” and recommends things like meditation, spending time in nature, letting go of the past, loving oneself and so forth, but these things do not achieve true peace. True peace comes from Jesus.

Again, Jesus ordered them, “Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.” In verse 1 we noted that the key to a heart free from trouble is faith, and here we see that the peace Jesus gives is another key. Faith in Christ goes hand-in-hand with the peace of Christ. Those who believe in Jesus receive the peace of Jesus, and can therefore keep His commands. Believers do not have to have troubled and fearful hearts. Even in a world full of upheaval we can be free from anxiety and fear if we trust in Christ and receive His presence and peace.

Jesus told them He was going away, but would come back to them. He said in John 14:3 “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.” He said in verse 18, “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” He reminds them again of this in verse 28, and says “If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.” The implication here is that the disciples didn’t love Jesus as they should. If they really did love Him, they would be excited by the fact that He was going to the Father. They mourned that He was leaving them and did not celebrate the fact that He was going to His Father. The reason they should rejoice is “the Father is greater than I.” This would be a great thing for Jesus and for the disciples because He was going to prepare a place for them and because in the person of the Holy Spirit whom He would send, He and the Father would come to them. The Father and Son would live in them as a result of Jesus returning to the Father. This is a cause for rejoicing. They should have been glad that Jesus was going to the Father; it would be a great thing for them.

Jesus was telling them what was going to happen so that they might believe as they see it happening (verse 29). He did not want them to lose their faith when they saw him condemned and crucified. This is why it is amazing that when they were told that Jesus had risen from the dead they didn’t believe it (Luke 24:11). He had told them exactly what was going to happen. They should have been waiting at the tomb to meet Him on that Sunday morning.

The time remaining for Jesus to speak with them was getting short because the “ruler of the world” was coming, but, Jesus said, “he has nothing in Me” (verse 30). Satan had entered into Judas and Judas had been dismissed to betray Jesus. Satan was coming for Jesus, but really he had no true power over Jesus. Jesus never submitted to Satan’s temptations. Satan had no hold over Jesus, no influence over Him. Jesus was not in any way obligated to do as Satan demanded, but was completely free of him. When the chief priests and officers came with Judas to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, He said to them, “Have you come out with swords and clubs as you would against a robber? While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me; but this hour and the power of darkness are yours”

(Luke 22:52-53). They were operating under the “power of darkness,” the power of Satan, when they came out against Jesus. When Jesus surrendered Himself to them He was not submitting to the power of darkness and to Satan, but was actually submitting Himself to the will of the Father. As He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, “not My will, but Yours be done” (Luke 22:42). As He said in John 12:27, “Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour.” Though Satan drove Judas and the others who came against Jesus, it was all in fulfillment of the will of the Father.

The obedience of the Son to the Father is proof of the love of the Son for the Father. The world can see that the Son loves the Father because He always does exactly what the Father commands. The world and its ruler stand against the will and rule of God, but Jesus does nothing outside of the will of God.

After saying these things, Jesus said, “Get up, let us go from here.” Probably Judas was on his way back to the room where they had held their Passover meal, and so Jesus decided to withdraw from that place and go to Gethsemane. Probably also the rest of what He has to say in chapters 15 through 17 were spoken on the way to the garden and in the garden.

John 15:1-8

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so 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. 6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. 7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples."

The metaphor of Jesus being the “true vine” was perhaps suggested by the institution of the “Lord’s Supper” during the Passover meal, or perhaps by passing by or through a vineyard on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus says that He is the “true vine.” Literally in the Greek text it reads “I am the vine the true.” Hosea 10:1 says, “Israel is a luxuriant vine; He produces fruit for himself. The more his fruit, The more altars he made; The richer his land, The better he made the sacred pillars.” A parable depicting of Israel as a vineyard also occurs in Isaiah 5:1-7:

Let me sing now for my well-beloved A song of my beloved concerning His vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill. 2 He dug it all around, removed its stones, And planted it with the choicest vine. And He built a tower in the middle of it And also hewed out a wine vat in it; Then He expected it to produce good grapes, But it produced only worthless ones. 3 "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge between Me and My vineyard. 4 "What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes did it produce worthless ones? 5 "So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard: I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed; I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground. 6 "I will lay it waste; It will not be pruned or hoed, But briars and thorns will come up. I will

also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it." 7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel And the men of Judah His delightful plant. Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; For righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress.

Grape vines and vineyards are planted for the purpose of producing grapes. A vine or vineyard that doesn't produce grapes or produces "worthless ones" is a waste of soil, effort and time. A vineyard owner with such a worthless vineyard will stop trying to work with it and will let it be destroyed. Israel had become a worthless vineyard, and so the Lord allowed it to be overrun by its enemies. But Jesus is the true vine who produces the fruit the Father wants. His fruit is not worthless.

The Father is the "vinedresser." Other translations say "gardener," "vintner," "husbandman" and "farmer." The word for "vinedresser" in the Greek is *geōrgos*, from *gē*, the soil, and *ergon*, to work or toil. So the Father is a worker of the soil. He is an agriculturalist who is looking for a harvest; He is looking for fruit. It is critically important that we understand this. We must grasp the fact that what God wants from us is good fruit. This is consistent biblical teaching as we saw in Isaiah 5 and as we see elsewhere. We see it in the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13:3-9 and 18-23. We see it in the Parable of the Wheat and Tares in Matthew 13:24-30 and 36-43. In Matthew 7:15-20 Jesus says that we can tell false prophets by their fruits. He says, "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." In Luke 13:6-9 is the Parable of the Fruitless Fig Tree:

And He began telling this parable: "A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any. 7 "And he said to the vineyard-keeper, 'Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?' 8 "And he answered and said to him, 'Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer; 9 and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down.'"

John the Baptist also said, "Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. Indeed the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Luke 3:8-9). It is clear that those who do not produce the good fruit that God is looking for will be cut down and thrown into the fire. So Jesus will now tell His disciples what they must do in order to bear the good fruit the Father is looking for.

As the vinedresser, the Father takes away every branch in Jesus that does not bear fruit, and every branch that does bear fruit He will prune so that it will bear more fruit. The Father wants some fruit, more fruit, and His desire is for "much fruit" (verses 5 and 8). As we've seen, a fruitless branch is a worthless branch and must be eliminated. The vintner doesn't want his vines putting energy into worthless branches. Some have questioned whether verse 2 actually means that a branch that is "in" Christ will be cut off and thrown away if it bears no fruit. Some argue that the word translated "takes away" means "to lift up," and it means that the fruitless branch needs to be lifted up off the ground and tied up so that it can become fruitful. The word is *airō*, and does basically mean "to lift," but by implication it also can mean "to take up or away."⁷⁶ I like the idea that God does not actually remove fruitless branches, but

lifts them up and works with them so they can become fruitful. There are two things that make me hesitate to embrace that interpretation. First, as we've seen, the consistent teaching of scripture and of Jesus is that those who are unfruitful are false and will be plucked up and thrown into the fire. The tares will be removed from the wheat and destroyed. The fig tree that produces no figs will be cut down. Second, in observing the three grape vines we have in our back yard over the years, I've seen this phenomenon of branches that produce no grapes. We built a pergola behind our garage and trained the grape vines so that they would grow over the top of the pergola. We are not really serious about harvesting good grapes from these vines, and so we haven't done the proper pruning and cultivating that is needed. Some of the fruitless branches can get very long and look luxuriant, but they bear no grapes. If I were more concerned about grapes I would cut these things off and throw them into our composting bin. I don't think tying them up would help since they are already up off the ground. It is good for the other branches if the fruitless branches are taken away. So who are these branches "in" Christ that are fruitless? I think they are the people represented by the rocky soil or the weedy soil in the Parable of the Sower; they receive the word and even believe it but can't bear fruit because their faith was temporary and conditional or because competing values and interests choke out the seed of the word. They are like Judas and must be cut off from the vine. They appear for a while to be "in" Christ, but they do not persevere and eventually fall away. Jesus says in verse 8 that it is those who bear much fruit who prove to be His disciples.

As the vinedresser, the Father will prune or "cleanse" the branches that do bear fruit so that they may bear more fruit. The Greek verb translated "prunes" in verse 2 is *kathairō*, to cleanse. The word "clean" in verse 3 is the related adjective *katharos*, clean. The Father knows the potential for fruit-bearing for each branch, and so will cleanse each one by cutting away what is unnecessary. We can always bear more fruit, but there are many things in our lives that hinder the production of the fruit God wants. Sin, selfishness, limited faith, fear and many other things keep us from being more fruitful. I think this "pruning" or "cleansing" process is the discipline of God described in Hebrews 12:3-13:

For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. 4 You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; 5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; 6 FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES." 7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. 11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. 12 Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

Note that the discipline of God “yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.” God’s discipline of His children, His pruning and cleansing, is not necessarily a pleasant experience for them, but it is for their good, that they might share His holiness and produce more good fruit. We should therefore seek and welcome God’s discipline and cooperate with Him in His pruning and cleansing efforts in our lives. As the author of Hebrews says, we should respect God and submit to His discipline because it is proof that we are His children. When He reveals something in our lives that needs to be “pruned,” we should work with Him to see that the thing hindering our fruitfulness is removed.

The Father will continue a cleansing process that Jesus had already started with the disciples. Jesus says to them in verse 3, “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.” He had used the same word, *katharos*, in John 13:10 when He said, “He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.” The means of their cleansing was the word He had spoken to them. The word translated “because of” is *dia*, meaning “through.” The word of Christ, His teaching, is a thing that cleanses and corrects the believer. I love the comments of Albert Barnes about this:

It does not mean that they were perfect, but that they had been under a process of purifying by his instructions all the time he had been with them. He had removed their erroneous notions of the Messiah; he had gradually reclaimed them from their fond and foolish views respecting earthly honors; he had taught them to be willing to forsake all things; and he had so trained and disciplined them that immediately after his death they would be ready to go and bear fruit among all nations to the honor of his name. In addition to this, Judas had been removed from their number, and they were now all true followers of the Saviour.⁷⁷

This emphasis on His words and commandments and what He had spoken to them will continue through chapter 17, and in 17:17 He will say to the Father, “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.” The word of the Lord is a thing that cleanses and sanctifies us.

In view of the fact that Jesus is the vine and the disciples are the branches, what is His commandment to the branches? It is simple, “Abide in Me and I in you.” We’ve seen this word “abide” before. We discussed the meaning of *menō* when we looked at John 5:38, “You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent.” In John 6:56 we saw it again when Jesus said, “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.” The responsibility of the branch is to abide, to remain, in the vine. The branch is not to drop off and fall away. The branch can’t produce any fruit by itself; it must remain connected to the vine. The believer must continue eating the flesh of Jesus and drinking His blood, drawing His spiritual life from Jesus. This is the only way to bear the fruit that God wants from us. Jesus makes it clear in verse 5 that He is the vine and the disciples are the branches. If they will do as He says and abide in Him, they will bear much fruit. Apart from Him, though, they can do nothing. We mustn’t think that we can do God’s will and please Him apart from Christ. The first and most fundamental thing when it comes to doing the will of the Father is believing in the Son. When Jesus was asked, “What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?” He answered, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent” (John 6:28-29). To abide in Christ is to continue walking in fellowship with Him by faith at all times. It is to continue believing in Him, trusting in Him, communicating with Him and doing as He directs.

77 *Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*

Paul expressed concern that the believers in Thessalonica might have abandoned their faith in Christ; that perhaps they were not “abiding” in Christ any longer. He said he sent Timothy to them, “to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know. For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain” (1 Thessalonians 3:2-5). Many will abandon faith in Christ and no longer “abide” in Him when affliction and suffering comes along because of that faith. This was Paul’s concern. Paul told them “in advance” that these things would happen. But Paul received good news from Timothy. He says in 1 Thessalonians 3:6-8, “But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you, for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord.” So then Paul is saying essentially the same thing as Jesus, that we must stand firm, continue in faith in the Lord, and abide in Him no matter what happens. The Thessalonians did this and so must we.

What if someone does not abide in Christ? If a branch drops off of the grapevine, it withers and dies. It “dries up” as Jesus says here and is thrown away. The dead branches are gathered and burned. This is what happens to those who do not abide in Christ. Faith in Christ is an ongoing, daily, moment-by-moment thing. If we say, “Yeah, I believed in Jesus 30 years ago,” but there’s no current, consistent and ongoing walk of faith with Him, then we may not truly be “abiding” in Him. The fruitful branch is always connected to the vine and doesn’t let go.

In verse 7 Jesus seems to give the disciples a blanket, “blank check” promise that whatever they ask for they will receive. He says, “If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” In John 14:13-14 He said, “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.” To ask in Jesus’ name is to ask in His stead, as His agent and representative. Now we should note that this promise is conditional. Whatever we ask will be done if we abide in Christ and if His words abide in us. If we are in union and harmony with Christ and are keeping His word, then whatever we want and whatever we ask will be in harmony with His will and plan and He will be happy to do what we ask. If we are asking and nothing is being “done” for us in answer to our prayers, then we must have a problem with our abiding in Christ and/or His words abiding in us.

The first question in the Westminster Shorter Catechism is “What is the chief end of man?” The answer is “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.” If we then wonder how to glorify God, Jesus gives us the answer here in verse 8, “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples.” A more literal translation is, “In this was My Father glorified, that you may bear much fruit, and you will become My disciples” (Literal Standard Version). The disciples of Jesus progress from some fruit to more fruit to much fruit. They shouldn’t get stalled and plateau at a little fruit level. The Father is looking for “much fruit,” maximum fruit, and disciples of Jesus should be progressing toward this aim individually and collectively.

Before moving on we should ask the question, “What is meant by ‘fruit’?” Grapevines produce grapes, but what kind of “fruit” should disciples of Jesus produce? Jesus does not here specify what it is, so we must look elsewhere. In Isaiah 5:7 we read this, “For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel And the men of Judah His delightful plant. Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; For righteousness, but behold, a cry

of distress.” The “fruit” God was looking for from Israel was justice and righteousness. The opposite would be injustice and unrighteousness. Whatever is just and right is good fruit. To be upright and in a right relationship with God and others is fruit God expects. Paul also mentions the fruit of righteousness. In Ephesians 5:9 he says, “the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth.” In Philippians 1:11 he mentions being “filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” We also saw that Hebrews 12:11 talks about this, “All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.” Words and deeds that are good and right and just are good fruit. In Galatians 5:22-23 Paul lists the “fruit of the Spirit,” “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” If these things, produced by the Spirit, are evident in our lives, then we are bearing good fruit and glorifying the Father. Good fruit also certainly includes the good works that God gives us to do. Paul says in Ephesians 2:10 “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” And in Matthew 5:16 Jesus says, “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” Probably also good fruit consists of those who are led to Christ through the believer’s witness. This may be the kind of fruit Jesus is referring to in verse 16.

John 15:9-17

"Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. 10 "If 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 so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. 12 "This is My commandment, that you 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 that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. 17 "This I command you, that you love one another."

The Son had loved the disciples as the Father had loved Him. We’ve seen that the Father said, “This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased.” Jesus always did the things that were pleasing to the Father (John 8:29), and so the Father was always with Him. I don’t suppose that Jesus was always well-pleased with the disciples as the Father was well-pleased with the Son. No doubt the disciples often did not particularly please Jesus by their attitudes, words and actions, but nonetheless He loved them. So He orders them, “abide in My love.” They must remain in His love as they remain in Him. They must continue in a mutual relationship of love with Jesus, maintaining their love for Him, and abiding in His love for them. But how do they do it? He tells them immediately, “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” Jesus had shown them how to do this by keeping the commandments of the Father. This is conditional. If they will keep the commandments of Jesus they will abide in His love. If they fail to keep His commandments they will not abide in His love. He had told them that if they loved Him they would keep His commandments (John 14:15, 21 and 23), and so again He emphasizes this to them. If a branch doesn’t abide in the vine, it is thrown out and dries up

and burned, and if a disciple does not keep the commandments of Jesus, he does not abide in the love of Jesus.

Is Jesus saying here, then, that His love is conditional? Is He saying that if we don't keep His commandments He does not love us? We often hear it said that God's love toward us is unconditional, that He loves us no matter what we do or what sort of person we are. Doesn't John 3:16 say that God loves the world? Yes, indeed God does love all humanity individually and collectively. Jesus pointed out that God even loves His enemies in Matthew 5:43-48, "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." It was God's love for all humanity that moved Him to send His Son for our redemption. Romans 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." But though God loves all people generally, He has a special love reserved for those who are His chosen children, for those who believe in Him and who keep His commandments. Look at what Moses said to Israel in Deuteronomy 7:7-13:

"The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8 but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9 Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments; 10 but repays those who hate Him to their faces, to destroy them; He will not delay with him who hates Him, He will repay him to his face. 11 Therefore, you shall keep the commandment and the statutes and the judgments which I am commanding you today, to do them. 12 Then it shall come about, because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you His covenant and His lovingkindness which He swore to your forefathers. 13 He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock, in the land which He swore to your forefathers to give you."

This sounds very similar to what Jesus was saying to the disciples here in John 15:10. God keeps His covenant and lovingkindness with those who love Him and keep His commandments. If we love Jesus and keep His commandments we remain in His love. A professed Christian who has no concern about obeying the commands of Christ is no true disciple of Jesus.

The reason that Jesus had spoken these words to them was so that they might have His joy in them, and that their joy might be "made full." Jesus has joy; it belongs to Him, and through the things He says the disciples will come to receive His joy as well. The words of Jesus do not just lay burdensome responsibilities on us, but they impart joy to us. His words are the words of eternal life and hope. The disciple of Jesus is privileged to hear the truth of the Father from the Son. The godly person finds delight in the law of the Lord. Psalm 1:1-2

says, "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night." Psalm 40:8 says, "I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart." Psalm 112:1 says, "Praise the Lord! How blessed is the man who fears the lord; who greatly delights in His commandments." And Psalm 119:35 says, "Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, For I delight in it." To know and follow the commands of Christ is a delight and a joy and not a misery. It is liberation rather than oppression.

What is the commandment of Christ? Jesus repeats it in verse 12, "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you." And in verse 17, "This I command you, that you love one another." He had said it for the first time in John 13:34-35, and now He drives it home again. This is His major commandment to them, that they should love each other as He has loved them. He had loved them by laying down His life for them, which is the greatest expression of love. We can't give more than our very lives; it is the utmost that we can do. He had said in John 10:11, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." Remember that Paul personalized it and said that the Son of God "loved me and gave Himself up for me" in Galatians 2:20. This is real love that is totally unselfish and costly.

Jesus would no longer call the disciples "slaves," but "friends" if they will do as He commands. If they will love each other as He loved them they will be His friends. He had referred to them as "slaves" in John 13:16, "Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him." He will remind them of this in a moment in John 15:20, "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." In His parables about His second coming in Matthew 24 and 25 He pictured His disciples as slaves who were left in charge of His interests and assets while He was away (see Matthew 24:45-51 and Matthew 25:14-30). But now Jesus says that if they will obey His commandments they will be more to Him than mere slaves; they will be friends. Slaves are not friends, and Jesus wants friends. The Lord did not save us in order to obtain a slave labor force. Yes, while we are on this earth we are to look after His interests and do as He ordered, but we do it because we love Him and are devoted to Him. Yes, He is our Master and Lord, but He is also our greatest Friend who has died for us.

Friends enjoy privileges that slaves do not. A slave "does not know what his master is doing." A slave receives orders and carries them out, but he does not know the overall purpose of the master. The master does not disclose his purpose and plan to the slave. He does not ask the slave for advice. The slave is simply a tool, a functionary for carrying out a part of his plan. But a friend is brought into the counsel of his friend. Jesus explained, "I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you." The disciples were privileged to hear from Jesus everything the Father had to say to them. They were privy to God's plan, and His will was not hidden from them. Friends get to know things that slaves are not allowed to know. Our relationship with Jesus is more than a Master to slave relationship; it is a friend to friend relationship. He shares His thoughts and intentions with us. He lets us in on what He is doing.

The disciples were not friends of Jesus because they had chosen Him, but because He had chosen them. He had prayed all night and then chose the twelve as apostles (Luke 6:12-13). He said "Many are called, but few are chosen" in Matthew 22:14. They should not think that they were in this privileged position and relationship with Him because of their wise choice. It is not as if there were numerous rabbis from which to choose and they happened to choose the one who was the Son of God and Messiah. Jesus had sought them, called them

and chosen them. Of course, many people have difficulty accepting the idea that the Lord chooses some but not others, and I'm tempted to launch into a full-scale study of the subject, but I think that would take too much time and space here. Let me just say that if we're serious about the teaching of the Lord and the scriptures, we can't reject this doctrine. For further study on this subject you should look into Romans chapters 9 and 11, Ephesians 1:4, 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 and other passages containing the words, "choice," "choose," "chose" and "chosen." You will find that this is a doctrine that can't be dismissed. The Lord does the choosing, and we respond in faith and obedience.

In addition to choosing them, Jesus "appointed" them to go and bear fruit, fruit that would remain. The word translated "appointed" is the verb *ethēka*, the first aorist active indicative form of *tithēmi*, meaning "to set, put or place."⁷⁸ He chose them and gave them a position and a task, an appointment to go and bear fruit. In the "Great Commission" in Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus told them to go and make disciples of all nations, to baptize them, and to teach them to observe His commandments. This was the task to which He appointed them. He said essentially the same thing to Paul in Acts 26:16-18, "But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me." He appointed them as His witnesses to the world (Acts 1:8) and provided the Holy Spirit who would give them the power and ability to be His witnesses. They were to go and communicate the good news of Christ to all peoples on earth and bear the "fruit" of new converts to Christ who would remain in their faith in Him. Paul mentions this "fruit" in Romans 1:13 when he talks about his eagerness to come to Rome to preach the gospel, "I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles." The student of Jesus has the same purpose as Jesus; not to condemn, but to save. As He came for the salvation of sinners, so we go for the salvation of sinners.

One of the key means of bearing this fruit is prayer. Jesus says, "so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you." Prayer is crucial to the fulfillment of our responsibility to go make disciples, and so our prayers must be about this purpose. We are to ask that His kingdom might come and His will might be done on earth as it is in heaven. We are to pray as Paul suggested in Colossians 4:2-4, "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak." Yes, we should pray about the things that cause us anxiety (Philippians 4:6-7) and cast all of our anxieties on the Lord because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7), but much of our prayer should also involve asking that the gospel of Christ would go forth to all the world. We should always be asking the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest (Matthew 9:37-38).

Again in verse 17 Jesus repeats, "This is command you, that you love one another." We might say that the primary fruit He is looking for is that His people love one another. This is the central thing for a follower of Jesus. He has told them to abide in Him in order to bear much fruit. He has told them to abide in His love by keeping His commandments, and His commandment is that they love one another. He has told them that they are His friends if they keep His commandments.

John 15:18-27

"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, because of this 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 for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me. 22 "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. 23 "He who hates Me hates My Father also. 24 "If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. 25 "But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE.' 26 "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, 27 and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

Jesus now turns from the theme of love to the theme of hatred, namely the hatred of the world for Jesus and His followers. Back in John 7:7 Jesus said to his brothers, "The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil." The world hates Jesus because He points out that its deeds are evil, and the world hates His followers as well. When Jesus says, "If the world hates you," it is not just a possibility. Vincent says, "The indicative mood with the conditional particle assumes the fact as existing: If the world hates you, *as it does*."⁷⁹ It is not just a possibility that the world might hate believers, but it is a certainty that it does. The disciples needed to recognize that the world hated Jesus before it hated them. Commitment to following Jesus means that we will be hated by the world. Why is this? Jesus explains it is because believers are not of the world and because He chose them out of the world. In 1 John 3:13 John says, "Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you." When we are chosen by Christ out of the world we are no longer in harmony with the world and its beliefs, values and practices. We are citizens of the kingdom of Christ and are subject to Him. We are no longer citizens of the domain of darkness ruled by Satan. John says in 1 John 2:15-17, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever." If we love the world and want the world to love us, we are not walking with the Lord. James says, "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4). Peter also points to the reasons for the world's hostility toward believers in 1 Peter 4:1-5:

Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. 3 For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. 4 In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and

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they malign you; 5 but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

The world hates believers because they have turned from sin to Christ and no longer live a life pursuing the “lusts of men” as the world does, but now live for the will of God. The people of the world want everyone to affirm and applaud their lusts, immorality and idolatry, and if we don’t, we face their wrath.

Jesus tells His men that what they must do is remember that He said, “A slave is not greater than his master.” He had said it in John 13:16, “Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.” They are not greater than Jesus, and so if the world persecuted Jesus, they can be sure that it will persecute them as well. The word translated “persecuted” is *diōkō*, to pursue someone and put them to flight, to cause someone to flee. We’ve seen several instances when the Jews intended to take Jesus and put Him to death, but He escaped or fled from them. If they did this to Jesus, they will do the same to His servants and friends. On the other hand, if they kept the word of Jesus, they will also keep the word of the disciples. If they listened to Jesus and followed His teaching, they will also listen to the disciples and follow their teaching. The apostles became the teachers to the early church. They passed on the teaching of Jesus to those who believed through their testimony.

The world will hate and persecute believers in Jesus for His name’s sake. They bear the name of Christ and so the world hates them as they hate Him. In Matthew 10:22 Jesus said, “You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who had endured to the end who will be saved.” He says again in Matthew 24:9, “Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.” But in that persecution is blessing. The last of the “beatitudes” in Matthew 5:11-12 says, “Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” I think this reality is one of the things that sometimes makes us reluctant to confess Christ. We are reluctant to say, “I’m a follower of Jesus” because of this hatred and persecution. No one wants to be hated, rejected and persecuted; but we are His sheep and His witnesses. We have a responsibility to point people toward faith in Him.

Jesus gets to the real root of this hatred in verse 21. It is “because they do not know the One who sent Me.” We’ve seen that Jesus has said clearly that to believe in Him is to believe in the Father who sent Him, and that to reject Him is to reject the One who sent Him. We do not know the Father apart from the Son. We cannot believe in the Father and reject the Son. The unbelieving Jews thought they knew and honored God, but they would not believe in the Son of God, demonstrating that they did not know the Father. Being a mere theist without believing in Jesus will not do any good.

Hatred for the Son is hatred for the Father (verse 23), and there is no excuse for it; there is no cause for it. Jesus points out two things He had done among the Jews in verses 22 through 24. He had spoken to them and He had “done among them the works which no one else did.” Note the conditional statements, “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin,” and, “If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin.” I don’t think Jesus means that they would be sinless and righteous and holy if He hadn’t come and spoken to them and done His works among them. Certainly they would still have been sinners who violated God’s commands. I think what He means is clarified in the “but now” statements that follow. He says, “but now they have no excuse for their sin,” and “but now they have both seen and hate Me and My Father as well.” The sin

they didn't have before He came was the sin of rejecting the Son and the Father. He came, they heard Him speak and saw His miraculous signs, and yet they still refused to believe in Him. This is the greatest sin – to see and hear from the Son of God and then reject Him. The officers of the chief priests and Pharisees who were sent to arrest Jesus came back without Him and said, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks" (John 7:46). When some of the Jews believed argued that He was the Christ, they pointed to His signs. In John 7:31 they asked, "When the Christ comes, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?" Some of the Pharisees, in John 9:16, said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" Even His opponents had to admit, "this man is performing many signs" (John 11:47). But then John 12:37 says, "But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him." They heard His unique teaching and saw His supernatural signs, but still did not believe in Him. The word translated "excuse" in verse 22 is *prophasis*, "an outward showing, that is, pretext."⁸⁰ There was no valid reason for their unbelief and hatred for Jesus; He had provided plenty of proof and evidence for who He is.

The hatred of the world for Jesus fulfills what is written in their Law, "They hated Me without a cause." The reference is probably to Psalm 69:4, "Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; Those who would destroy me are powerful, being wrongfully my enemies; What I did not steal, I then have to restore." This was the experience of David, and also of Jesus the Son of David. The word translated "cause" in verse 25 is *dōrea*, a gift. It means there was no payoff for their unbelief, but it was gratuitous. They hated Him without any compensation. There is no profit in hatred for Jesus and there is no good reason for it.

Facing the hatred of the world, the disciples would need the "Helper," the Spirit of truth from the Father who testifies about Jesus. When the Holy Spirit speaks, He speaks of Jesus. His purpose is to testify about Jesus, to tell us about Him. The Holy Spirit also enables the disciples to testify about Jesus as well. Giving testimony to the world about Jesus is what we are here to do. The apostles would testify about Him because they had been with Him from the beginning. They had been with Him, had learned from Him, had seen His miraculous signs, would be witnesses of His resurrection, and therefore could speak of Him and bear witness to Him. After the ascension of Jesus Peter proposed that Judas needed to be replaced with another who would take his position. He said, "Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us - beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us - one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection" (Acts 1:21-22). One of the criteria for the selection of this man was that he had to have been with them from the baptism of John until the ascension of Jesus. He had to be a witness of the entire scope of the ministry of Jesus. He had to have first-hand experience of the words and works of Christ.

John 16:1-11

"These things I have spoken to you so 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 "These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me. 4 "But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. These things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you. 5 "But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' 6 "But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. 7 "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."

The first thing I notice about chapter 16 is that four times Jesus says, "These things I have spoken to you...". He says it in verses 1, 4, 25 and 33. He also mentions the things He had said to them in verses 4 and 6, and in verse 12 He says, "I have many more things to say to you." So clearly Jesus is explaining to them here why He has said the things He has said to them.

First, He had spoken to them about the hatred of the world "so that you may be kept from stumbling." There was a danger that when they faced the opposition of the unbelieving Jews they might "stumble" because of their fear of ostracism. Jesus tells them clearly, "They will make you outcasts from the synagogue." We have seen how the fear of this made many "stumble" and turn away from confessing faith in Christ. The parents of the man born blind did not confess Christ because of this fear (see the commentary on John 9:22). The followers of Jesus would not make themselves outcasts, but the world would cast them out. They would not leave the synagogue, but would be kicked out of it; they would be excommunicated. Believers in Christ will be outcasts. We should not "stumble" and abandon our faith in Christ when this happens, but rather we should expect it and endure it.

Not only would believers in Christ be cast out of the synagogue, but a time was coming when they would be killed for the sake of Christ. Jesus says, "but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God." This is what Paul thought before His conversion as he sought to arrest believers in Jesus. Paul said to Agrippa, "So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities" (Acts 26:9-11). Paul would later write to Timothy, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Timothy 1:12-13). Many sincerely think that they are doing God's will when they murder Christians. They have been deluded by Satan; they act out of ignorance and unbelief. Again, Jesus has told us this so we won't be taken by surprise when we see it happening. God will not always deliver us from persecution and even death. If we lay down our lives for the sake of Christ we are blessed.

Those who hate Jesus and His followers and put them to death think they are offering service to God, but the truth is that they do this because they do not know the Father or the Son (verse 3). Jesus repeats what He had said in John 15:21, "But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me." Many think they act in obedience to God's will, but they don't really know God and have never known Him. Those who know and love the Father love His children as well.

The second instance where He explains what He had said to them is in verse 4, "But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. These things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you." The "hour" of their opponents was coming, the "hour" when the disciples of Jesus would be made

outcasts and even killed for sake of His name. They needed to be prepared for this, and so Jesus told them these things so that they would remember when it came to pass. The opponents of Jesus would become opponents of His followers as well. The work of Christ would not end with His death, but would continue through His followers, and so the hatred aimed at Jesus would be aimed at them after His departure. As long as He was with them, He absorbed the opposition and protected His people, but now they needed to know what to expect.

The statement in verse 5 seems odd to me, “But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’” It seems odd because Peter had asked this very question in John 13:36, “Lord, where are You going?” Now Jesus says that none of them is asking the question. I think the context must reveal the reason Jesus said this. I think He means they were no longer asking the question “Where are you going?” Their focus had shifted and they had abandoned the question. Instead of asking the question and seeking further clarification, sorrow had filled their hearts as a result of what He had said (verse 6). They were very sad that He was going away, and they mourned. They thought it would be a heavy blow and a loss that would leave them hopeless. But He wanted them to know it was a good thing that He was going to Him who sent Him. It was advantageous for them (verse 7). If He didn’t go back to the Father the Helper would not come to them, but if He went away, He would send the Helper to them. It wasn’t a bad thing for them that He was going to the Father, but a good thing. It would not be a loss for them, but a gain.

In verses 8 through 11 Jesus speaks of what the “Helper” will do for the world. He will “convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.” The Greek word translated “convict” is *elegchō*, which the King James version translates “reprove.” Albert Barnes says, “The word translated ‘reprove’ means commonly to demonstrate by argument, to prove, to persuade anyone to do a thing by presenting reasons. It hence means also to convince of anything, and particularly to convince of crime. This is its meaning here.”⁸¹ He presents proof of the reality of sin, the requirement and provision of righteousness, and the fact that judgment is coming. Here is an outline for us of the subjects addressed by the gospel message. We must address the problem of sin. The world must see that they are sinners and that they fall short of God’s glory (Romans 3:23). The world must see that righteousness is in Jesus Christ and is attainable by us only through faith in Him (see Romans 3:21-26). The world must see that a day of judgment is coming that they will not be able to escape. This is the work of the Holy Spirit through the message preached by those filled with the Spirit.

Jesus explains that the Holy Spirit will convict the world “concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me.” Unbelief is the fundamental sin, the base or foundational sin. From this sin all other sins spring forth. John 3:18 told us, “He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” When Jesus was asked, “What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?” He replied, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent” (John 6:28-29). It doesn’t matter how many “good” things we do in life if we refuse to believe in Jesus. As long as we refuse to believe in Jesus the Son of God we cannot please God by anything we do. The Holy Spirit convicts the world about their sin of unbelief and turns them toward faith in Christ.

The Holy Spirit convicts the world concerning righteousness because Jesus was going to the Father and people would no longer see Him. Jesus is the “Righteous One,” the one who modeled righteousness while He was on the earth. Isaiah 53:11 says, “As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My

Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities.” Jesus is called the “Righteous One” three times in the book of Acts. In Acts 3:14 Peter says, “But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you.” Acts 7:52 says, “Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become. And in Acts 22:14 Paul quotes Ananias who said to him, “The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth.” When people saw Jesus, they saw the one righteousness man, the only one in all history. No one could convict Him of sin (John 8:46). Once He had returned to the Father people could no longer see Him. We have no opportunity now to see what a perfectly righteous and holy man is like. The Holy Spirit steps into this void to convict the world about righteousness. He works to show the world that righteousness is available through faith in Christ.

The Holy Spirit will also convict the world concerning judgment “because the ruler of this world has been judged.” In John 12 when Jesus talked about the fact that His “hour” had come, He said, “Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out” (John 12:31). He mentioned the “ruler of the world” again in John 14:30, “the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.” Satan, the ruler of this world, has been judged. He has been found guilty and condemned. His power has been nullified through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Since Satan has been judged, those who follow him and are subject to him will be judged also. He has been “cast out” and his followers also will be cast out. The Holy Spirit convinces the world that they face judgment for their unbelief. If they will not believe they will be condemned as their ruler has been condemned. As long as people follow Satan’s lead and remain his children they will end up where he is.

John 16:12-15

"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 will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will 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."

There was much more that Jesus needed to say to them and to teach them, but at this point they did not have the ability to bear them. The word for “bear” is *bastazō*, and means to pick up or carry. They were things that the disciples at that point were not ready to carry. What were these things? Albert Barnes speculates, “They were still full of Jewish prejudices, and were not prepared for a full development of his plans. He probably refers here to the great change which were to take place in the Jewish system - the abolition of sacrifices and the priesthood, the change of the Sabbath, the rejection of the Jewish nation, etc. For these doctrines they were not prepared, but they would in due time be taught them by the Holy Spirit.”⁸² Now, I’m not so sure about “the change of the Sabbath” and the “rejection of the Jewish nation,” but clearly there were things that they needed to learn that they weren’t yet ready to accept. Jesus had promised in John 14:26, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.” The Holy Spirit is a teacher, speaking the things that we can bear when we can bear them.

What will the Holy Spirit do when He comes? Note the verbs in verses 13 and 14: He will guide, He will speak, He will disclose, He will glorify Jesus and He will take what comes from Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the “Spirit of truth” as Jesus has said before and concerns Himself with guiding believers into all the truth. The Greek word translated “guide” is *hodēgeō*, to show the way, to lead. The Holy Spirit is the believer’s guide into all the truth. He shows us the way to all the truth. The disciples at this point had some of the truth that had been disclosed by Jesus, but there was much more for them to learn. They needed to grasp all the truth that God had for them, and the Spirit would lead them into the complete truth.

The Holy Spirit guides by speaking. It is impossible to guide or lead someone without communicating with them in some way. Information must be transferred from the leader to the followers in an understandable form. This requires speech in verbal or written form. So we find instances in the book of Acts when the Holy Spirit spoke. In Acts 8:29 it says, “Then the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go up and join this chariot.’” Philip then went and shared the good news of Christ with the Ethiopian eunuch. In Acts 10:19-20 it says, “While Peter was reflecting on the vision, the Spirit said to him, ‘Behold, three men are looking for you. But get up, go downstairs and accompany them without misgivings, for I have sent them Myself.’” Peter then went to the home of Cornelius the Roman centurion and shared the good news with him and his household. Peter said, “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean” (Acts 10:28). No doubt this was one of the truths that Peter needed to learn from the Holy Spirit that he could not “bear” earlier. Paul and Barnabas were part of the church in Antioch and in Acts 13:2 it says, “While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’” In Acts 21:11 a prophet named Agabus passed on a message from the Holy Spirit, “And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, ‘This is what the Holy Spirit says: ‘In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’” So we find that at times the Holy Spirit spoke to individuals and groups and gave them explicit instructions regarding what they were to do. He led and directed them by speaking. He at times revealed what was going to happen if a certain course was pursued.

The Holy Spirit is not mute, and I don’t think He has stopped speaking. I think He leads us in the same way today that He led the apostles. There are some who say that since the canon of the New Testament has been completed the Holy Spirit has nothing more to say and if anyone claims that the Holy Spirit has spoken to them the claim must be spurious. They say that the Holy Spirit would only speak to the apostles and once they were dead, we would hear no more from the Holy Spirit directly. I don’t find any valid evidence for this idea in the New Testament. Rather, Paul says in Romans 8:14-17, “For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.” Those who are children of God are being led by the Spirit of God. He “testifies with our spirit that we are children of God and heirs.” How can He do this without speaking? I think it is probably true that He has no further “revelation” of great doctrines that need to be added to what is already in the Bible, but I think He definitely provides personal and corporate direction and assurance to His people. He convicts us of our sins and turns us toward righteousness. He gives us words to speak when opportunities come along to share the good news of Christ. He tells us to reach out and speak to others. He assures us that we belong to Christ.

The Holy Spirit does not speak “on His own initiative” as Jesus did not speak on His own initiative. He says what He hears from the Father and the Son. Father, Son and Spirit are one and say the same thing. When the Spirit speaks, the Father and Son speak. He delivers the word of the Lord.

Jesus says that the Spirit will “disclose to you what is to come,” and “He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.” The word translated “disclose” is *anangellō*, to declare or to announce, to deliver a message. The word is translated “declare” in the English Standard and World English versions. What He will in the future disclose or declare to them that they could not bear at that time were the things that were to come, literally “the coming things.”⁸³ Possibly part of this was the experience of John when the contents of the book of Revelation were shown to him. In Revelation 1:1-2 he writes, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.” Then in Revelation 1:10-11 he says, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet, saying, ‘Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.’” The things revealed to John were revealed while he was “in the Spirit.” These were things that “must soon take place.”

In verse 15 Jesus explains why He said, “He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.” He said it because “All things that the Father has are Mine.” There is nothing belonging to the Father that doesn’t belong to the Son. Whatever the Spirit discloses ultimately comes from the Father through the Son. There is nothing hidden by the Father from the Son and Spirit.

John 16:16-24

"A little while, and you will no longer see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me." 17 Some of His disciples then said to one another, "What is this thing He is telling us, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'; and, 'because I go to the Father'?" 18 So they were saying, "What is this that He says, 'A little while'? We do not know what He is talking about." 19 Jesus knew that they wished to question Him, and He said to them, "Are you deliberating together about this, that I said, 'A little while, and you will not see Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me'? 20 "Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy. 21 "Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world. 22 "Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you. 23 "In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. 24 "Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.

In verse 10 as Jesus talked about how the Holy Spirit would convict the world concerning righteousness, He said, “because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me.” This statement, combined with what He says in verse 16, puzzled the disciples. In verse 16 He says, “A little while, and you will no longer see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me.” The disciples would not see Jesus after His death on Friday until after His resurrection on Sunday. Thomas would not see Him until 8 days after His resurrection. No doubt this is

what He was talking about, but the disciples were unable to understand what He was saying. They talked to each other and asked, "What is this thing He is telling us?" Specifically they wondered about what He meant by "A little while" (verse 18). A "little while" is an indeterminate period of time. It could mean a few minutes, a few days, a few weeks or even a few years. If we get up on Christmas morning and the kids are anxious to open their presents and the grownups say, "We'll do that in a little while," the kids want to know what is meant by "a little while." Does it mean ten minutes? Thirty minutes? Two hours? The longer the delay the more the frustration. They don't want to be put off; they want to know what is more important that must be done first. The disciples wanted to know what Jesus meant by "a little while."

For some reason the disciples were afraid or hesitant to come right out and ask Jesus the question about what He meant. Maybe they were afraid it would be treated like a silly question or that He would be frustrated with the question. When Philip asked to see the Father in John 14:8-11 it seems that Jesus was a bit frustrated by the request. Philip hadn't yet grasped the truth that he should have grasped. There have been times I have been hesitant to ask a question because I was afraid I should have already known the answer. Often I have realized I hadn't been paying attention in a discussion and I missed a fact that I should have gotten. It's embarrassing to have to ask, "Sorry, but what was that thing again?" Sometimes the answer is, "Weren't you paying attention? We've been discussing this for ten minutes!" Maybe it was this sort of dynamic that was going on for the disciples. Thankfully, Jesus "knew that they wished to question Him," and addressed the question.

Jesus asked them if they were deliberating about His saying, "A little while, and you will not see Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me." He was aware that they were puzzled about this and were trying to figure out what He meant. He answers with another "truly, truly" statement, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy." During the "little while" when they don't see Him, they will weep, lament and grieve. He will be taken from them and struck down. He will suffer and be crucified. He will die on the cross and be buried in a tomb, and it will seem to the disciples that all is lost and their hope is gone. The weeping and lamenting of the people of that time was done aloud. They did not weep and lament silently. When the daughter of a synagogue official died and Jesus arrived to raise her up, Mark 5:38 says, "They came to the house of the synagogue official; and He saw a commotion, and people loudly weeping and wailing." While the disciples would grieve, the world would rejoice. The man who was such a threat to the Pharisees and scribes and chief priests had been eliminated. The man who had denounced them and exposed their hypocrisy had been put to death.

Thankfully the weeping, lamenting and grieving would not last long for the disciples. Their grief would be turned to joy. When Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to them Luke tells us "they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement" (Luke 24:41). Their experience will be like a woman in labor who suffers considerable pain in the process. When the child is born "she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world." The joy blots out the pain and anguish and replaces it. She no longer calls the pain to mind because of the joy. The resurrection of Christ would overturn their grief. We have joy in our faith because of the resurrection, because Jesus has overcome sin and death and the world.

Jesus assures them again in verse 22, "Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you." He had said in verse 16, "you will see Me," but now He says, "I will see you." Jesus will make a point of seeing them. As they wanted to see Him again, so He wanted to see them as well. It was

all-important to Him to see them and spend time with them. Jesus does not want to avoid us. When they see Him and He sees them their hearts will rejoice and they will have a joy that can't be revoked. The joy of the believer in knowing the risen Christ can't and won't be taken away by anyone. The sorrow and grief of this life is temporary, but the joy of knowing Christ is permanent. The Christian faith is a joyful faith, a rejoicing faith. Our worship should be full of this. Let us not sing sad dirges full of woe and despair, but joyful songs of celebration and hope in the victory of Christ.

In verse 19 where it says that Jesus knew they disciples "wished to question Him," the Greek verb for "question" is *erōtaō*, to ask a question. The verb occurs again in verse 23, "In that day you will not question me about anything." Then Jesus switches to the verb *aiteō* when He talks about asking in His name. The verb *aiteō* means to make a request, to ask for something. Though when they see Him again they will not be questioning Him again as they had about His statement that they wouldn't see Him for a little while, still Jesus urges them to make requests of the Father in His name. Their questions for clarification may drop off, but they should keep making requests. (Or rather they should begin making requests!) As the Holy Spirit leads them into the truth and discloses things to them, they won't have to ask so many questions, but they should start to ask in His name for the things they need. Jesus wants them to get this. He has urged them about this before. In John 14:13-14 He said, "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it." In John 15:7 He said, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." Again in John 15:16 He said, "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you." Note that again He says that if the disciples will ask the Father for anything in the name of Jesus, He will give it. And in verse 24 He says "ask and you will receive." The Father is not reluctant to give what the disciples ask in the name of Jesus. Note the contrast between "anything" in verse 23 and "nothing" in verse 24. They had not asked for anything in the name of Jesus, and they needed to begin asking. If they would ask, the Father would give, they would receive and their joy would be made full. When the Father grants our requests and we see Him respond to us, we experience full joy. Our joy is filled full.

I think an important thing to point out in regard to what Jesus says here about asking in His name is that the word "you" here is plural. We should perhaps adopt the Southern expression "y'all" in verses 23 and 24, "In that day y'all will ask me no questions. Most certainly I tell y'all, whatever y'all may ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to y'all. Until now, y'all have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and y'all will receive, that your joy may be made full." Yes, Jesus told us to pray privately and individually in Matthew 6:5-6, and we should ask for things individually in our prayers, but also we come together for corporate prayer and agree together for the things we should request in the name of Jesus. Jesus says in Matthew 18:19-20, "Again, assuredly I tell you, that if two of you will agree on earth concerning anything that they will ask, it will be done for them by my Father who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the middle of them." It seems to me that corporate and coordinated asking by congregations of believers is almost entirely missing in churches today. An example of this kind of collective corporate prayer by the early church is in Acts 4:23-31:

When they had been released, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24 And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN

THEM, 25 who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, 'WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS? 26 'THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST.' 27 "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur. 29 "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, 30 while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus." 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

Notice what they asked, that the Lord would “take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence,” and that God would extend His hand to heal, and that signs and wonders would take place through the name of Jesus. Note also that God gave them what they requested and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and received the boldness, the confidence, that they had requested. It appears that we need to spend more time praying together collectively, agreeing on things we should request of the Father in the name of the Son. It seems today that we have plenty of singing and preaching in our church gatherings, but not much praying. As we’ve seen here in the teaching of Jesus, asking in His name is the means of accomplishing His work and will on the earth and of bearing good fruit that glorifies His name.

John 16:25-33

"These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father. 26 "In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf; 27 for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father. 28 "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father." 29 His disciples said, "Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech. 30 "Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God." 31 Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe? 32 "Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. 33 "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

Jesus had just used “figurative language” when He talked about the pain of a woman in labor and how it gives way to joy when the child is born. He used “figurative language” when He said that He is the “vine,” the Father is the “vinedresser” and the disciples are the “branches.” He now contrasts this sort of “figurative language” with speaking “plainly” in verse 25. The Greek word for “figurative language” is *paroimia*, “a byword, a parable, an allegory.”⁸⁴ The word is used in John 10:6 when He started talking about being the Good Shepherd and how His sheep will not follow a stranger but will flee from him. John 10:6 says, “This figure of

speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.” What He was saying about shepherds and sheep was a *paroimia*, a figure of speech, and the disciples didn’t fully understand it. Jesus now acknowledges that He’s been speaking in figurative language, but says, “an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father.” It’s interesting to me that seven times in John’s gospel Jesus uses this phrase, “an hour is coming,” and three of those are here in chapter 16 (verses 2, 25 and 32). The time was coming that He would set aside figurative language and speak plainly of the Father. There was a time coming soon when they would be able to understand Him plainly.

Right after saying this Jesus speaks to them plainly in verses 26-28. In that hour and in that day the disciples will ask in His name. They will begin to do what He has urged them to do. Again in verse 26 we have the Greek verbs *aiteō*, “you will **ask**,” and *erōtaō*, “I will **request**.” When He says, “I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf,” He can’t mean that He will stop praying and interceding for them because Hebrews 7:25 says, “Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” As our great High Priest it is the function of Jesus to intercede for His people. He is the one mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5). I think what He means is that the disciples will begin to ask the Father directly themselves for what they need in the name of Jesus and they won’t need to have Him ask on their behalf so much. The International Standard Version translates verse 26, “At that time, you will make your requests in my name, so that I will have no need to ask the Father on your behalf.” I think this begins to get at what Jesus is saying, although I think we definitely still need to have Jesus intercede for us. Jesus explains and gives the reason for this in verse 27, “for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father.” They no longer will have to submit their requests to Jesus and have Him take them to the Father, but they will submit their requests directly to the Father themselves in His name. The Father loves them and cares for them and is attentive to them because they love His Son and have believed in Him.

The thing that the disciples had believed about Jesus was that He “came forth from the Father.” Note that He says this twice in succession in verses 27 and 28. This is one of the big ideas in John’s gospel, that Jesus was sent by the Father and came forth from the Father and came into the world. John 1:14 told us that Jesus is “the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” The disciples had believed that Jesus was more than just an ordinary man or prophet. They had been convinced that He was the Son of God, had come from God and had come down out of heaven into the world. Faith in Jesus is faith in a man who is more than a man, greater than any other man. Faith in Jesus is faith in the one who was sent by the Father, “took on flesh and dwelt among us,” and manifested the glory of God to us. He is not merely a great religious or moral teacher who founded one of earth’s great religions, but is the incarnate God, sent by the Father, who died for our sins.

Verse 28 is the plain declaration of Jesus, “I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.” Finally He plainly answers the question “Where are You going?” He had said as much in “figurative language” in chapter 14 when He talked about going to the Father’s house to prepare a place for the disciples, but apparently they didn’t understand what He was saying. He had said in 14:28, “I go to the Father.” In chapter 16 He had said that He was “going to Him who sent Me” in verse 5, and that He was going away in verse 7, and “I go to the Father” in verse 10. Verse 17 makes it clear that the disciples didn’t understand what He was saying. Finally now He says clearly and plainly where He had come from and where He was going. He had come into the world from the Father and He was departing the world to go back to the Father.

The disciples reacted by essentially saying “Aha! Now we get it!” The word “Lo” is the Greek interjection *ide*, meaning “look!” or “behold!” Strong’s Dictionary says it was “used as interjection to denote surprise.” The light bulb came on in their minds and they saw that Jesus was now speaking plainly and not using a figure of speech. Now they realized that He knows all things. Now they know that He had no need for anyone to question Him. Now they believe that He came from God. One element of this is that He had answered their questions without them asking Him. They had questioned one another (verses 17 and 18), but they hadn’t asked Him about what He meant. They realized that He knew about their confusion and lack of understanding without them expressing it to Him, and He directly and clearly answered the questions. He knew what was on their minds without them saying anything to Him. It was a supernatural demonstration, a “sign” to them that He really had come from God. He was aware of their confusion, knew what they were thinking and addressed it. Only a man from God can know and do such things. It was another proof that He was “from God.”

Jesus questions their claim to believe in verse 31, “Do you now believe?” I think He means, “Do you really believe?” It is just like the question He asked Peter in John 13:38, “Will you lay down your life for Me?” As He warned Peter so He now warns all of them. He tells them about the “hour” had come upon them when they would be scattered and would leave Him alone. The Shepherd was about to be struck down and the sheep were going to be scattered. The word “home” is italicized in the New American Standard, meaning the translators have supplied that word. The literal translation is “each to his own.” They will be scattered to their own place, or to wherever they will go.

Though the disciples would leave Jesus alone to face His prosecutors, He was not really alone because the Father was with Him. They could not and would not follow Him at this point. The scripture had to be fulfilled about the sheep being scattered. He had to face His suffering and death without them.

Finally, in verse 33, Jesus contrasts what the disciples have in Him with what the disciples have in the world. In their world they have tribulation, but in Him they have peace. The word for “tribulation” is *thlipsis*, pressure, a pressing. It is the same word used in verse 21 about the “anguish” a woman experiences in childbirth. Jesus told the disciples that their enemies would “deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name” (Matthew 24:9). Paul and Barnabas used this word in Acts 14:22 as they spoke to the believers in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch. It says they were “strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.’” The word is translated “affliction” in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 when Paul describes it as “momentary” and “light,” “Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” The world will put pressure on the disciples, and they must realize that this will happen. There will be tribulation and affliction and persecution for them, and in the midst of it they must not abandon their faith in Christ. In the midst of it He is there with them and they have His peace. He had told them all these things so that they might have peace in Him. When we experience all the terrible things that the world brings our way, we must recall that Jesus said these things and appropriate His peace. We should not be surprised by the tribulation. We must not think that as believers we shouldn’t face tribulation and that we should be exempt from it.

In the tribulation we can “take courage” because Jesus has overcome the world. The Greek word for “take courage,” *tharseō*, is translated “be of good cheer” in the King James

version. The Contemporary English Version and World English Version translate it “cheer up!” How can we “take courage” or “cheer up” in the midst of tribulation? It is because Jesus has overcome the world. The word for “overcome” is *nikaō* from *nikē*, victory. Jesus has gained the victory over the world; He has conquered the world. The world has already been defeated and conquered by Christ. Facing the tribulation of the world it may not seem like this is true, but He assures us of it. In His victory we have victory. John says in 1 John 5:4-5, “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” The world rejects Jesus and does not believe that He is the Son of God, but we do believe in Him, and in that faith we are born of God and overcome the world.

John 17:1-26

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 have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. 7 "Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; 8 for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. 9 "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; 10 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. 20 "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."

Jesus now turns from instructing the disciples to praying for them, but first He prays for Himself in verses 1-5. He lifted His eyes to heaven and addressed His Father. His primary concern as He prays for Himself is that both He and the Father might be glorified. He already said, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" in John 12:23. Then He said in John 12:27-28, "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." Note that Jesus makes the request in verse 1 and verse 5. In verse 1 He seems to imply that the Son can't glorify the Father unless the Father glorifies the Son, that His ability to glorify the Father depends on the Father glorifying Him. Verse 5 tells us that the glory He was requesting was "the glory I had with You before the world was." Jesus had laid aside this glory to take on flesh and dwell among us, and now the time had come for Him to take up again His glory alongside the Father. He had it from eternity past, and now it was time to be restored to His glory.

The request for a restoration of His glory is based on the fact that the Father had given Jesus authority over all flesh. I think Jesus is saying in verse 2, "glorify Your Son as You have given Him authority over all flesh." The Father gave authority over everything to the Son, and now the Son asks for glorification to be given in the same way.

The authority Jesus has been given over all humanity is the authority to give eternal life to all those whom the Father has given to Him. Note in this great prayer the emphasis Jesus puts on the fact that His disciples had been given to Him by the Father. We see it here in verse 2, also verses 6, 9 and 24. We should recall that He has said this before. In John 6:37-40 He says, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." Then in John 6:44 He says, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day." The Father draws people to the Son and gives them to Him, and the Son gives them eternal life. Jesus had said in His last words to the general public in John 12:50 that the commandment of the Father is eternal life. This is the whole purpose of Jesus coming to this earth, to give His people eternal life.

What is eternal life? Jesus defines it for us in verse 3. We might think that eternal life is merely living forever, but that is not how Jesus defines it. He says, "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." Eternal life is knowing the Father who is the only true God and knowing Jesus Christ whom He sent. The word for "know" is *ginōskō*, and here it is a present-tense active verb, to "keep on knowing." Eternal life is the continual and ongoing knowledge of God and His Son. The Lord wants us to know Him and go on knowing Him for all eternity. To know someone means to be in a relationship with them, to spend time with them and to communicate with them. It is much more than knowing things about them. I know about Abraham Lincoln, but I don't know him. The Lord wants us to have a relationship with Him forever, and so has made it possible through His death and resurrection. This is the gift of Jesus to those whom the Father gives Him.

Jesus glorified the Father on the earth by accomplishing the work the Father had given Him (verse 4). He had said in John 4:34, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work." Jesus completed all the tasks the Father had assigned Him. He had not failed or fallen short in any aspect or detail. He always did what was pleasing to His Father (John 8:29). No one else can say this. When I get to the end of my life on the earth, I won't be able to truly say, "I accomplished everything God wanted me to do." I regret many

things I failed to do I should have done, and regret many things I've done I shouldn't have. This is how it is with sinners, even redeemed sinners. But Jesus fully followed the will of the Father and fully completed the tasks He had been sent to accomplish. He said everything the Father wanted Him to say and did everything the Father wanted Him to do.

Jesus seems to suggest in verses 4 and 5 a sort of transaction, "I glorified You, now You glorify Me." It sounds like He's saying that He did His part, and now the Father must do His part. The Father sent Him into the world to glorify the Father, and now the Father must restore the Son to His former glory again, the glory He had beside the Father before the world even existed. The Father is going to do His part. He is going to raise Jesus from the dead and Jesus is going to ascend to where He was before (John 6:62).

In verses 6 through 8 Jesus tells the Father about what He has done for the disciples. This is probably the primary means whereby He glorified the Father and accomplished His work, by what He did for these men. First we should note again that these men were "the men whom You gave me out of the world." As we've seen before, they were given by the Father to the Son. These men belonged to the Father and were given to the Son. If we have believed in the Son it is because the Father has given us to Him. The Father drew us to the Son and we believed.

Jesus says that He did two things for these men. First, He manifested the name of the Father to them, and second, He gave them the words the Father had given Him. Jesus had made the Father's name visible to the disciples. The biblical idea of a "name" is more than just a label or title for a person. It represents the character or nature of the person. The Contemporary English Version gives the sense of this, I think, when it translates it, "I have shown them what you are like." When the disciples saw Jesus they saw the Father (John 14:7 and 9). If we want to see who the Father is, we must look at the Son. Hebrews 1:3 says that Jesus "is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature." We don't know who God really is apart from the work of the Son in manifesting Him to us. Because of this manifestation of the name of the Father, the disciples had kept His word and had "come to know that everything" given to the Son came from the Father.

Jesus gave to the disciples the words the Father had given to Him, and they received them and as a result understood that Jesus had come forth from the Father and had believed that the Father sent Him. The main thing that Jesus gave them was not His works, but His words. This book began by presenting Jesus as the "Word" of God who became flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus gave us words, that is, He communicated truth from God to us, truth that we must hear, believe and understand. The words He gave us are the very teachings of God the Father Himself. Jesus did many miracles and signs, but primarily He was a speaker, a teacher who communicated God's truth. He was pleased when people would sit at His feet and listen intently to His teaching, as Mary loved to do. We can't keep the word of the Lord unless we hear the word of the Lord. We can't come to know what we need to know apart from the teaching of Christ. Our part in this is to receive His words and then believe them and keep them.

Jesus makes it clear in verses 9 and 10 that He is not praying for the world, but is praying for His disciples, those whom the Father had given Him. He is praying for them because they belong to the Father and what belongs to the Father also belongs to the Son. He was responsible for their welfare, for their protection and provision. When something belongs to you, you care for it in a special way because you are responsible for it. I take care of my cat and look after his well-being, but I don't take care of stray cats or those who belong to someone else. We need to see that as believers in Christ we belong to Him; we are His sheep (John 10). He cares for us and calls us by name and leads us out and goes before us. He has purchased us with His blood (Acts 20:28 and Revelation 5:9). So Jesus brings His

requests before the Father on their behalf. He expresses to the Father what He wants for these men and what they need.

The first request He makes for the disciples is in verse 11. First He makes the point that He is “no longer in the world.” He was leaving the world and would not be in it much longer, and He was coming back to the Father. But the disciples were in the world, and therefore needed protection. He had kept them and guarded them while He was with them (verse 12), but now He was leaving them. So Jesus asks, “Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are.” Jesus had “manifested” the name of the Father to the disciples (verse 6), and now He asks that the Father will keep them in His name. The aim is “that they may be one.” Note that He also mentions this “oneness” in verses 21, 22 and 23. Clearly this is a very important thing and it depends on the disciples being kept in the name of the Father. So it is also important that we try to understand what Jesus means when He asks the Father to “keep them in Your name.”

The word for “keep” is *tēreō*, the same word used in John 14:15-24 where Jesus talked about keeping His commandments. It means “to watch over, to guard, to keep an eye on something.” The disciples needed to be kept in the name of the Father, and note that Jesus says it is the name “which You have given Me” in verses 11 and 12. Jesus had kept them in His name while He was with them and had guarded them, but now that He was leaving He needed to have the Father step in to keep these men in His name. What is this “name”? Is it Yahweh? Jesus? Christ? Philippians 2:9-11 says, “For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” The name of Jesus is the name above every name. I think Jesus is asking that the Father will keep them in their faith in Him, that He will cause them to hang onto their faith and commitment to Jesus Christ the Lord. He is His name; He is the Savior. He is the one who gives eternal life, and we need to be kept in Him. This interpretation fits with what He says next, “I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.” To be kept in the name of Jesus is to be kept from perishing, to be kept from being lost. It’s interesting that the translators of the New American Standard chose to use the word “perdition” to translate the word *apōleia*. It is a good word to use and gives the sense of the Greek word, but it is kind of archaic. “Perdition” means “utter destruction.” Other translations use the word “destruction.” Judas was “the son of perdition” and was lost so that the Scripture might be fulfilled. Marvin Vincent points out that there is a play on words in verse 12, “A play of words: ‘None of them *perished*, but the *son of perishing*’ (Westcott).”⁸⁵ The word translated “perished” is *apollumi*, which means “to destroy.” We could also translate it, “None of them was destroyed but the son of destruction.” So then disciples of Jesus must be kept in His name so that they won’t be destroyed, so that they won’t perish.

Verse 12 says that while Jesus was with the disciples He was keeping them and He “guarded” them. The word used for “guarded” is not *tēreō* but *phulassō*, which also means “to guard, to watch.” The word *phulassō* is related to the word *phulax*, a guard, which is found in Acts 5:23 in reference to the “guards standing at the doors.” Jesus kept them in the name of the Father and acted as a guard, a sentinel, over them. In A Popular Commentary on the New Testament it says, “the latter word points to the watchfulness by which the former is attained (comp. on chap. John 12:47). At the same time the difference of tense in the original is worthy of notice, the first verb expressing *continued* care, the second the *completeness* of the security afforded.” Jesus “kept” the disciples by guarding them. I think an example of how

85 Vincent, M. R., *Word Studies in the New Testament*

Jesus guarded the disciples is revealed in Luke 22:31-32 when Jesus said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." Jesus would allow Satan to "sift" Peter, but He would make sure to guard Peter's faith so that Peter would not fall away permanently. God still guards us in the same way today. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it." God puts limits on the temptations we face so that we are always able to endure them. No temptation will overwhelm us because God is guarding us. He always provides the way of escape for those who belong to Him.

Once again Jesus expresses the desire that His disciples joy might be "made full" in verse 13. In His prayer He says the same thing He said when He was speaking to the disciples in John 15:11, "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full." Now while praying He says, "these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves." Hearing and heeding the words of Christ brings us His joy. He was not speaking to them so that they would be filled with distress and depression, but with hope and joy. The word of the Lord is not meant to give us despair, but joy. The fact that He was going away and they wouldn't see Him for a while distressed them, but His assurance that He would come again for them and receive them to Himself should have given them joy. His assurance that He would not leave them as orphans, but that He and the Father would come to them and make their abode with them should have filled them with joy. His assurance that once He had returned to the Father He would send them the Holy Spirit who would abide with them forever should have given them joy. If we are depressed and downcast, one of the best things we can do is meditate on the promises of our Lord, on His assurances to us that express His care for us.

Jesus has mentioned "the world" six times between verses 1 and 13. Altogether the phrase occurs eighteen times in this chapter. In verses 14 through 18 Jesus focuses on the relation of the disciples to the world. The first point is, "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." We examined this hatred of the world toward the disciples of Christ at length when we looked at John 15:18-27. He repeats here that as He is not of the world, so the disciples are not of the world either. Note that He says this twice, in verses 14 and 16. They are now the sheep of Jesus and the sons of His kingdom. They are citizens of heaven rather than of earth. Paul points this out in Philippians 3:17-21, "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself." Those who are of the world are hostile toward the cross of Christ, they are on the road to destruction, they worship their appetites, they are proud of things they should be ashamed of, and they set their minds on the things of this earth. Disciples of Jesus love the cross of Christ, are on the road to life, worship the Lord Himself, do not glory in shameful things and set their minds on the things of heaven. For this reason the world hates those who follow Christ. It is important that those who believe in Jesus recognize the truth that they are no longer of this world and that they are to be distinguished from those who are of the world by their beliefs, values and behavior.

Jesus pointed out in verse 6 that the Father had given Him the disciples “out of the world,” and in verse 11 He says that they are “in the world.” Now He makes the point that they are “not of the world,” but His request is not that they should be taken out of the world, but that the Father would keep them from the evil of the world. The word for “keep” is again *tēreō*. The Father must keep the disciples in His name and keep them from the evil of the world. The word for “evil,” *ponērou*, is ambiguous and may mean “the evil man, Satan, or the evil deed.”⁸⁶ The translators of the New American Standard render it, “keep them from the evil one,” which may be correct. Marvin Vincent points out that John uses it in the sense of “the evil one” several times in 1 John. In 1 John 2:13 and 14 he says twice that the young men “have overcome the evil one.” 1 John 5:18-19 says, “We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him. We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” Probably Jesus means the whole thing, that the disciples need to be kept from the evil one and the evil ways and deeds of the world. Followers of Jesus must be guarded and protected from the evils of the world. We are to be distinct from the world. We are to be holy as the Lord is holy, and this requires we be kept by God every moment.

Since the disciples are in the world but are not of the world, Jesus asks in verses 17 through 19 that the Father will sanctify them. They need to be sanctified in the truth, the truth embodied in the word of the Father. What does it mean to “sanctify” someone? What is Jesus asking for these men? The Greek verb is *hagiazō*, and means “to consecrate or set apart persons or things to God.”⁸⁷ It is to make something holy. It is to set something apart for God. Jesus was asking the Father to set these men apart as holy and distinct from the world. Back in John 10:35-36 Jesus said, “If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), 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’?” The Father had set Jesus apart and sent Him into the world as the “holy one of God” (John 6:69). As Jesus was distinct from the world, so the disciples must be distinct from the world, so they must be sanctified.

Often sanctification and cleansing or washing are mentioned together. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 says, “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.” Some of these people had been fornicators, idolaters, adulterers and so on, but in the name of Jesus and in the Spirit of God they had been washed, sanctified and justified. In Ephesians 5:25-27 Paul writes, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.” Christ laid down His life in order to sanctify His people, cleansing them “by the washing of water with the word.” He works to rid them of all spots and wrinkles and make them holy and blameless. Then also in 2 Timothy 2:20-21 he says, “Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.” The believer has some responsibility for cleansing himself from dishonorable things in order to be sanctified and

86 Robertson, A.T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*

87 *ibid*

useful to the Master. We must cooperate with the Lord in this process. We will not be “prepared for every good work” unless we are cleansed and sanctified.

Believers are sanctified in the truth, and Jesus specifies that God’s word is truth. When we think of this thing we call “God’s word,” we usually think of the Bible, and rightly so, because it is the word of God and God has revealed His truth in it and through it. The Bible is the record of what God has said and what He has revealed. But I think we also need to understand that the “word of God” is the speech of God. We’ve seen how Jesus has emphasized His words, His speech, and how the words He gave to the disciples had come from the Father. We are sanctified as we listen to what God has said and put it into practice. It requires more than simply reading the Bible from time to time. It requires actively listening to what the Lord has said, believing it, meditating on it and then practicing it. What God has said must shape our beliefs, our thinking, our commitments, our direction in life and our behavior. The godly and fruitful person delights in the Law of the Lord and meditates on it day and night (Psalm 1). We must hear the words of Jesus and act on them (Matthew 7:24-27). Too often believers allow the world to shape their view of things rather than the word of God. As much as possible we must allow what God has said to determine our views.

I think we get an idea about how Scripture as the word of God helps to sanctify us in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” To be equipped for every good work requires sanctification (2 Timothy 2:20-21) and here we see how Scripture is used to bring that about. Scripture comes from God and provides us with His teaching, enabling us to learn what God wants us to learn. Scripture reproves us when we go wrong. It reveals those things that aren’t right in us that need to be corrected, and then it also corrects us. It shows us the right way and puts us back on the right track. It then trains us in righteousness, helping us to continue walking in righteousness. As God uses His word for these things He equips us for the good works He wants us to do.

As the Father had sent Jesus into the world, so Jesus also had sent the disciples into the world. We’ve seen this word “sent,” *apostellō*, before in reference to John the Baptist and to Jesus Himself. We’ve noted that the noun is *apostolos*, one sent, a “sent one,” the name given to the twelve “apostles” (Luke 6:13). Mark 3:14-15 says that Jesus appointed the twelve for this purpose, “And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach, and to have authority to cast out the demons.” Before Jesus sent them out to preach and heal He gave them instructions in Matthew 10. In Matthew 10:16 He said to them, “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.” The Father had sanctified the Son and sent Him into the world, and now the Son asks that the disciples be sanctified as He sends them into the world. As He was set apart and consecrated as the representative of the Father, so the disciples would be set apart as representatives of the Son and of the Father in the world.

There is a sense in which only the original 12 men chosen by Jesus (minus Judas) were true “apostles” of Jesus, who had seen Him and had been personally sent out by Him. Paul also insisted that he was a true apostle. In 1 Corinthians 9:1-2 he says, “Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.” Apparently one of the marks of a true apostle was having seen the Lord. In 1 Corinthians 15:8 he makes the point that the Lord had appeared to him, but then he says, “For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (1 Corinthians 15:9). In 2 Corinthians 12:11-12 he says, “I have become foolish; you yourselves compelled me. Actually I should have been commended by you, for in no respect was I

inferior to the most eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody. The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles.” It appears that “signs and wonders and miracles” went along with the office of apostle, that the apostles did the kind of miracles that Jesus did.

Many think that the office of “apostle” passed away with the original apostles who personally saw Jesus and were sent out by Him. I think though that possibly the New Testament leaves the door open that others might also be called “apostles” if the Holy Spirit calls them and sends them out. Barnabas is called an apostle alongside Paul in Acts 14:14. Missionaries who are called and sent out to people who have never heard of Jesus might be termed “apostles.” They make disciples and establish congregations of believers where previously Christ was unknown, which is what the apostles were sent into the world to do. 1 Corinthians 12:28-30 seems to indicate that some in the church will be gifted by the Holy Spirit as apostles, “And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?” Similarly, Ephesians 4:11-13 says, “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.” The Lord is still sending us into the world as His representatives. We mustn’t say that it isn’t our task to take the good news of Christ to the nations.

Though Jesus did not need to be sanctified in the sense of being washed and cleansed from sin, still He says that He sanctified Himself for the sake of the disciples. He means He set Himself apart for their sake; He consecrated Himself. He was “sanctified” by the Father (John 10:36) and He also sanctified Himself. It was something done both by the Father to Him and something He did to Himself. He says He did this “that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.” He’s talking in the context about the parallel between Himself and what the Father sent Him to do and the disciples and what the Son sent them to do. As they were sent by the Son into the world they had to be sanctified as the Father had sanctified His Son and sent Him into the world. As we saw from 2 Timothy 2:20-21 the disciples also have a hand in sanctifying themselves. He sets us apart from the world and we also are to set ourselves apart in the truth of God’s word.

In verses 20 through 23 Jesus expands His prayer to include those who would believe in Him through the testimony of the disciples whom He was sending into the world. We who believe in Jesus today have believed in Him through the word of the apostles. We have heard the good news they recorded in the New Testament and have believed in Jesus. The author of Hebrews writes, “For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will” (Hebrews 2:1-4). The word was spoken by the Lord and then “confirmed to us by those who heard” so that we might believe. God Himself testified with them by granting the signs, wonders and miracles that they performed. We must pay close attention to what the apostles have said and not drift away from it.

Jesus had asked the Father in verse 11, “keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as we are.” As He requested that the original disciples should be one, so now He asks that those who believe through their word will be one. We saw that this oneness depends on the Father keeping us in His name, in the name He had given Jesus. It depends on them being guarded and protected so they remain in Christ. The word translated “one” is *heis*, the numeral one. Jesus has made it clear and makes it clear again here that He and the Father are one. The Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father. As the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father, Jesus asks that “they also may be in Us.” He wants believers to be united with Him and with the Father. Believers should be able to say that they are one with the Father and Son and one with each other. This oneness depends on the Father and Son dwelling in us in the person of the Holy Spirit. He is the one who unifies us in Christ. John 11:52 told us that it is God’s purpose to “gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.” Jesus said in John 10:16, “I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.” Believers become one with one another because they all belong to the one Shepherd and all belong to His flock. Paul puts it another way in 1 Corinthians 12:13, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.” By God’s Spirit we are made members of one body, the body of Christ, and we “drink” of one Spirit. Paul also talks about the unity that Christ has brought about between Jews and Gentiles in Ephesians 2:14-16, “For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.” Diverse people from many different groups, races, ethnicities and nationalities are brought together in Christ by His Spirit and made into one body, one flock, one “new man.” Paul explains some more in Galatians 3:26-28, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

In order to achieve this oneness among believers Jesus says in verse 22 that He had given them the glory that the Father had given to Him. This glory consisted of “I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity” (verse 23). The word for “perfected” is *teleioō*, “to bring to an end, to complete, to perfect.”⁸⁸ The word was used in verse 4 when Jesus said, “I glorified You on the earth, having *accomplished* the work which You have given Me to do.” Jesus wanted their oneness to be complete, to be finished, to be full and not partial. This does not happen apart from His presence in us and among us.

The whole aim of this oneness is “so that the world may believe that You sent Me” (verse 21) and “that the world may know that You sent Me” (verse 23). Note the emphasis on the fact that the Father had sent Jesus in verses 8, 18, 21, 23 and 25. The world needed to be convinced and believe this fact, and then continue to know it. This is the thing that is so special about Jesus Christ, one of the things John emphasized at the beginning of this book, that the Word was in the beginning with God and was God, and that He became flesh and dwelt among us. He is no ordinary man who came into being when He was conceived. He pre-existed in glory with the Father and was sent by the Father into the world. To believe that Jesus was sent by the Father is to believe that He is the Son of God and God incarnate.

When believers are perfected in oneness it is a powerful proof that the Father sent the Son and that something supernatural from God has happened to make them one. This is why Satan wants to disrupt the oneness of believers and works hard to do so.

Not only will complete unity among believers enable the world to believe and know that Jesus was sent by the Father, but it is also proof that the Father loves the disciples as He loves His Son. The love of God for His people is seen in their unity. In a fractured world unity is a rare and unique thing, a miraculous thing.

In verse 24 Jesus looks to the future beyond the time the disciples will be in the world to the time when they will join Him in His eternal kingdom and expresses His desire that those whom the Father has given Him will be with Him where He is in order to see His glory. The verb for "see" is *theōreō*, and is the present-tense active form here, "that they may keep on beholding."⁸⁹ Jesus wanted them to keep on seeing, enjoying and sharing in His glory forever. He told them in John 14:1-4 that He was going to the Father's house to prepare a dwelling place for them, and that He would come again and receive them to Himself so that they would be with Him where He is. In His place they will continually see His glory.

Moses got a brief glimpse of God's glory. In Exodus 33:18-23 we read:

Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!" 19 And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion." 20 But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" 21 Then the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock; 22 and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. 23 "Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen."

On this earth it is deadly for us to see the full glory of God. He is too holy for us to gaze upon His face. But there is a sense in which the entire nation of Israel had "seen His glory." Numbers 14:20-23 says, "So the LORD said, 'I have pardoned them according to your word; but indeed, as I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the LORD. Surely all the men who have seen My glory and My signs which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened to My voice, shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who spurned Me see it.'" They had seen the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. They had seen His miracles He had performed as He led them out of Egypt. In this sense they had "seen His glory." In Deuteronomy 5:24 Moses said to the people, "You said, 'Behold, the LORD our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire; we have seen today that God speaks with man, yet he lives.'" Isaiah 49:3 indicates that it is God's purpose to show His glory to His people, "He said to Me, 'You are My Servant, Israel, In Whom I will show My glory.'" God wants His people to see His glory so that they will trust Him, fear Him and obey Him.

We should note again that the disciples had also in a similar sense already seen the glory of the Lord. John 1:14 says, "We saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." John 2:11 says, "This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him." When they saw Him call Lazarus out of the tomb they saw the glory of God (John 11:40). Peter, James and John saw

His glory on the “Mount of Transfiguration” (Luke 9:32). These were all temporary glimpses of the glory of Jesus. In His kingdom His people will always and forever see His full glory. As Moses and Elijah appeared in glory along with Jesus when He was transfigured (Luke 9:31), so we will be with Him in glory as well.

The Father had given glory to the Son because He loved the Son “before the foundation of the world.” It’s interesting to study the other occurrences of this phrase “the foundation of the world” in the New Testament. Matthew 13:35, speaking of the reason that Jesus taught in parables, says, “This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: ‘I WILL OPEN MY MOUTH IN PARABLES; I WILL UTTER THINGS HIDDEN SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD.’” In His teaching Jesus revealed truth that had been hidden from people from the foundation of the world. In Matthew 25:34 it says that at the judgment Jesus will say to those who are His sheep, standing at His right hand, “Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” From the beginning God had prepared His kingdom for those who belong to His Son. Jesus warned the Jews in Luke 11:49-50, “For this reason also the wisdom of God said, ‘I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute, so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation.’” In Ephesians 1:3-4 Paul writes, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.” It’s amazing to think that even before the world was founded, we were chosen by God in Christ so that we would be holy and blameless before Him! Hebrews 4:3 says that God’s “works were finished from the foundation of the world.” 1 Peter 1:20-21, speaking of Christ, says, “For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.” Then finally in Revelation we are told twice that the redeemed have had their names written in the book of life “from the foundation of the world.” Revelation 13:8 says, “All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.” And then Revelation 17:8 says, “The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.” The plan and purpose of God has been in place from before the beginning of our world.

Jesus finishes up His prayer in verses 25 and 26 by talking about knowledge, about what the world does not know, about what He does know, about what the disciples have known and about what He has made known and will still make known to the disciples. First, He points out the world’s lack of knowledge. The world does not know the Father. He told the disciples in John 15:21 that the world would hate them and persecute them “because they do not know the One who sent Me.” This is the root problem in the world, that it has not known the Father. The world is in darkness and is ignorant of the one true and living God. Jesus, on the other hand, has known the Father. He has full knowledge of the Father and in fact is the perfect image of the Father. He is the one who can make the Father known to us.

The disciples have known that Jesus was sent by the Father. They have grasped the fact that Jesus is divine, that He is the Son of God. Nathanael had said, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel” (John 1:49). Martha said, “Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world” (John 11:27). Peter said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). When Jesus replied to

Peter He said that Peter knew this because the Father had revealed it to Him (Matthew 16:17).

We saw in verses 11 and 12 that Jesus asked that the disciple be kept in the name of the Father and said that He had guarded them and kept them in His name. Now Jesus says that He had made the name of the Father known to the disciples and will continue to make it known to them. Note the purpose for this, "so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them." The love of God comes with the name of God and the presence of God. If Christ is in us and the Father is in us, then His love is in us as well.

John 18:1-14

When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, in which He entered with His disciples. 2 Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with His disciples. 3 Judas then, having received the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. 4 So Jesus, 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 He." And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them. 6 So when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground. 7 Therefore He again asked them, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus the Nazarene." 8 Jesus answered, "I told you that I am He; so if you seek Me, let these go their way," 9 to fulfill the word which He spoke, "Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one." 10 Simon Peter then, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave's name was Malchus. 11 So Jesus said to Peter, "Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?"

12 So the Roman cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him, 13 and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. 14 Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people.

As we've seen with other narratives that overlap with material in Matthew, Mark and Luke, John leaves out some details that they include and includes details they leave out. We learn from the other gospels that the garden was called "Gethsemane" (Matthew 26:36 and Mark 14:32). The other gospels tell us about how Jesus agonized in prayer in the garden and urged Peter, James and John to pray with Him (see Matthew 26:36-44, Mark 14:32-39 and Luke 22:39-46). As He prayed there, He said, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done." Perhaps John reasoned that since the other gospels had covered these aspects of the incident he didn't need to mention them.

The ravine of the Kidron is mentioned several times in the Old Testament. It was this ravine that David crossed with his men when he fled from Absalom according to 2 Samuel 15:23. 1 Kings 15:13 says that when Asa became king of Israel he "removed Maacah his mother from being queen mother, because she had made a horrid image as an Asherah; and Asa cut down her horrid image and burned it at the brook Kidron." Josiah also used this area as a place to burn the images that had been brought into the temple (2 Kings 23:4-6). The garden of Gethsemane was on the other side of this ravine opposite the temple area.

Having left Jesus and the disciples while they were still in the upper room observing the Passover, how did Judas know they would be in the garden? John says that Judas "knew the place" where they had gone because Jesus had often met there with His disciples. Luke

22:39 says that it was the custom of Jesus to go to this place on the Mount of Olives. It was a routine of Jesus to go to this place. I suppose it's also possible that Jesus had mentioned the plan before dismissing Judas. It was a perfect setup for Judas and the authorities because Jesus was alone with His disciples and wasn't surrounded by crowds. It was night and they were by themselves in the garden. The other gospels reveal that Jesus made an issue of this. In Luke 22:52-53 it says, "Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders who had come against Him, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs as you would against a robber? While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me; but this hour and the power of darkness are yours.'" They did not attempt to arrest Jesus publicly as they would with a true criminal, but they were doing it secretly and stealthily because they feared the crowds.

It is perhaps not a profound observation or anything unusual, but I find it interesting that Jesus had routines. He often met in the garden with His disciples. He had a custom of coming to this place and hanging out with people. It was His routine, His way of doing things. Routine, custom and following daily patterns can be a godly thing. Jesus was not always spontaneous and unpredictable.

I find it interesting also to reflect on the fact that it seems God likes gardens. Genesis 2:8 tells us that God "planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed." God put the man into the garden to "cultivate it and keep it" (verse 15). After Adam and Eve sinned they were driven out of the garden in order to bar them from the tree of life (Genesis 3:22-24). One might say that gardening was the first vocation of man and is perhaps what we are best fitted for. There is something very satisfying about planting and growing your own fruits and vegetables.

Judas got together a force to arrest Jesus. The NASB says he "received the Roman cohort." The Greek term translated "Roman cohort" is *speira*, which means "a coil, anything wound up or coiled."⁹⁰ A. T. Robertson explains, "No word for 'of soldiers' in the Greek, but the Latin *spira* (roll or ball) was used for a military cohort (Polybius 11, 23, 1) as in Matthew 27:27; Acts 10:1, etc., here for a small band secured from the Tower of Antonia."⁹¹ The King James Version translates it "a band of men," and the English Standard Version says, "a band of soldiers." Along with the Roman band there were officers representing the chief priests and Pharisees. Apparently they anticipated resistance because along with the lanterns and torches they took their weapons with them. They knew that Jesus had claimed to be the Messiah and thought He and His followers might not surrender easily.

Jesus knew all that was going to happen to Him. John 13:1 said, "Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end." Jesus had said "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me" (John 13:21). Jesus had told the disciples what was going to happen. In Matthew 17:22-23 He says, "The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day." As they approached Jerusalem He said, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day" (Matthew 20:18-19). Then just before the Passover He said to them, "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified" (Matthew 26:2). Jesus knew what was going to happen and when it would happen, and He submitted to it because it was the command of His Father.

90 *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance*

91 Robertson, A. T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*

Verses 4 through 9 here give us details not covered by the other gospels. John reveals that Jesus “went forth” to them and asked, “Whom do you seek?” When they answered “Jesus the Nazarene,” He replied, “I am” (the word “He” is supplied by the translators). He was in no way surprised when Judas and his men showed up, but knew they were coming. One difficulty here is that the other gospels say that Judas indicated who Jesus was with a kiss. In Matthew 26:48-49 it says, “Now he who was betraying Him gave them a sign, saying, ‘Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him.’ Immediately Judas went to Jesus and said, ‘Hail, Rabbi!’ and kissed Him.” Luke says that Jesus reacted by saying, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?” (Luke 22:48). In light of John’s narrative, I’m not sure when the kiss took place, possibly before Jesus asked “Whom do you seek?” The kiss of Judas confirmed the identification of Jesus.

When Jesus said “I am,” the men “drew back and fell to the ground.” John does not explain any more about how or why this happened. Was this a demonstration to them of His power? Did the power of His word bowl them over? Were they afraid of an imminent attack? Did they think they had walked into an ambush? They could tell that Jesus was ready and waiting for them with His eleven men. When soldiers walk into an ambush, this is often what they do, they fall back and regroup. Maybe they thought Jesus had more men waiting to overwhelm them. But we don’t really know and can only speculate about the reason for this effect.

Again Jesus asked, “Whom do you seek?” and again they answered “Jesus the Nazarene.” Then He said, “I told you that I am; so if you seek Me, let these go their way.” John explains that Jesus said this to fulfill His words, “Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one.” He had said this as He prayed in John 17:12, “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.” We should also recall His words from John 6:37-40, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.” We see again that the disciples were given by the Father to the Son, and so the Son was responsible for them and would not lose them. I think when Jesus said, “so if you seek Me, let these go their way,” He was not making a request, but was issuing an order. He would protect them if His opponents tried to arrest or kill them. He would yield Himself to them, but He would not yield them. They had to remain in order to carry out His work in the world.

All four gospels tell us about Peter striking out with his sword, although only John tells us it was Peter. It appears at this point that Peter was going to fulfill his promise to stand by Jesus to the death. He will do what he can to keep Jesus from being apprehended, and he will go down swinging if he has to. I think it’s important at this point to note what the other gospels tell us about this incident. First, in Luke 22:35-38 we find Jesus saying the disciples should procure swords, and that they pointed out they had two swords among them, and Jesus seems to say that they were “enough”:

And He said to them, "When I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?" They said, "No, nothing." 36 And He said to them, "But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one. 37 "For I tell you that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, 'AND HE WAS NUMBERED WITH

TRANSGRESSORS'; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment." 38 They said, "Lord, look, here are two swords." And He said to them, "It is enough."

It seems strange that Jesus would tell them to get swords, in light of how He handled Peter when he actually used his sword. Matthew says, "And behold, one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. 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? How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?'" (Matthew 26:51-54). Note that Jesus did not tell Peter to get rid of his sword, but to put it away. This was not a time when Peter should use his sword; it was not time to fight, but it was time for Jesus to submit to the plan of the Father. If it had been time to overthrow His opponents, Jesus could have called on more than enough angelic support to do the job. Apparently, though, it was not inappropriate for Peter to own and carry his sword. At this time, when Jesus was arrested, it was not time for Him or His followers to resist.

So when should Peter use his sword? When is it appropriate for a believer to use his weapon? Is there ever a time when it is time to strike? Clearly it is difficult to say in light of Luke 22 that believers must never arm themselves or possess weapons. But also we must recognize that Jesus said things like, "But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also" (Matthew 5:39). And Paul says in Romans 12:17-21:

Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. 19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. 20 "BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

If this requires that we hold to a strict policy of non-violence, then why have a sword? Let us note that Jesus employed violence when He made a scourge and drove the merchants out of the temple area (John 2:13-17). I don't know if He actually injured anyone, but He certainly used force to clean up His Father's house. When He talked about how He cast out demons, He said, "Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house" (Matthew 12:29). Jesus was saying He was doing this to Satan, binding him and plundering his house, but it also tells us that this is what we expect of strong men. They are expected to protect their families and homes. A man has a responsibility to protect his home, and so it may be appropriate for him to possess a weapon. It is difficult to see how Jesus would tell them to buy swords, but then teach that they should never use them under any circumstances. Carrying a weapon, though, could lead to misuse, as in Peter's case.

The impulsiveness of Peter is seen in Luke 22:49-51, "When those who were around Him saw what was going to happen, they said, 'Lord, shall we strike with the sword?' And one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus answered and said, 'Stop! No more of this.' And He touched his ear and healed him." Peter did not wait for Jesus to answer the question, but immediately struck out and cut off the ear of Malchus. Probably Peter was aiming for his head, but Malchus ducked. Jesus immediately ordered Peter to

sheath his sword and then healed Malchus. He would undo what Peter had done. Jesus asked, "The cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" The cup had not passed from Him, but He knew He had to drink it, and He would drink it. It had been given to Him by His Father, and He would not turn from it. He would not rescue Himself; He would not resist.

Jesus allowed the cohort and the officers to arrest Him. The Greek term for "arrest" means to take or to seize. They took Him and bound Him and led Him off to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas. Why Annas? Adam Clarke explains, "It is likely that Annas was chief of the Sanhedrin, and that it was to him in that office that Christ was first brought. Some think that Annas was still high priest, and that Caiaphas was only his deputy, though he did the principal part of the business, and that it is because of this that he is called high priest. But see the notes on Matthew 2:4, and Luke 3:2."⁹² John reminds us that Caiaphas was the one who had said "that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people." It was after Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead that Caiaphas had said this as we read in John 11:49-53:

But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, 50 nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish." 51 Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, 52 and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. 53 So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.

Finally these men gained the opportunity to kill Jesus they had been looking for and seized Him.

When they seized Jesus the other gospels tell us that the disciples left Him and fled. Mark adds another little detail, "And they all left Him and fled. A young man was following Him, wearing nothing but a linen sheet over his naked body; and they seized him. But he pulled free of the linen sheet and escaped naked" (Mark 14:50-52). This suggests that perhaps the authorities had intended to take those with Jesus into custody as well, but failed. Who was this young man? Some commentators think it may have been Mark himself, since none of the other gospels mention this detail. A. T. Robertson says, "This incident alone in Mark. It is usually supposed that Mark himself, son of Mary (Acts 12:12) in whose house they probably had observed the passover meal, had followed Jesus and the apostles to the Garden. It is a lifelike touch quite in keeping with such a situation. Here after the arrest he was following with Jesus."⁹³

John 18:15-18

Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest, 16 but Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in. 17 Then the slave-girl who kept the door said to Peter, "You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." 18 Now the slaves and the officers were standing there, having made a charcoal fire, for it was cold and they were warming themselves; and Peter was also with them, standing and warming himself.

⁹² Clarke, Adam, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*

⁹³ Robertson, A. T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*

Though the disciples all fled, John tells us that Peter and “another disciple,” most likely John himself, followed after Jesus and those who had Him in custody. Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us that Peter followed “at a distance” (Matthew 26:58, Mark 14:54 and Luke 22:54). The other gospels don’t mention that John followed Jesus along with Peter, but John was there and played a key role in what was going to take place. They did not go along right with the band that had arrested Jesus, but followed along behind them. John was known to the high priest, and so gained entry into his court, but Peter was barred from entry. John was recognized, but Peter wasn’t. One wonders how John had gained this status, but we just don’t know. John went out and spoke to the slave girl who was the doorkeeper on Peter’s behalf, and she allowed Peter to come in. As she admitted Peter, she said, “You are not also one of this man’s disciples, are you?” A. T. Robertson says she was “expecting the negative answer, though she really believed he was.”⁹⁴ The other gospels depict her as making a strong assertion that he was a disciple of Jesus. Matthew 26:69 has her saying, “You too were with Jesus the Galilean.” Luke 22:56 says, “This man was with Him too.” There seems to be an implication that she knew John was a disciple of Jesus, and that Peter must also be one of them.

Peter, caught off guard, answered, “I am not.” The other gospels give us a more detailed look at this first response of Peter. Matthew 26:70 has him saying “I do not know what you are talking about.” In Mark 14:68 he says, “I neither know nor understand what you are talking about.” And in Luke 22:57 it is, “Woman, I do not know Him.” The point is that he denied he was a disciple of Jesus and pretended he couldn’t understand what she was saying. His response was like saying, “No, I’m not His disciple, what are you talking about?” He tried to act incredulous, like what she was saying was preposterous.

It was a cold night and the slaves and officers made a charcoal fire and were standing around it to warm themselves, and Peter joined them. Luke says they sat around the fire (Luke 22:55). Perhaps some were standing and some were sitting. Where was John? He doesn’t tell us, but John knew where Peter was. The slaves and officers may have been the same men who had come with Judas to arrest Jesus, who had seen Peter strike out with his sword. This was probably a big factor in Peter’s fear at this point; here he was, right in the midst of the men who had seen him try to kill one of them! Luke 22:56 says the servant-girl saw him “as he sat in the firelight and looking intently at him, said, ‘This man was with Him too.’” The light of the fire allowed her to see him and his features clearly.

John 18:19-24

The high priest then questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching. 20 Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret. 21 "Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; they know what I said." 22 When He had said this, one of the officers standing nearby struck Jesus, saying, "Is that the way You answer the high priest?" 23 Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?" 24 So Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

Annas was the first to interrogate Jesus, asking about His disciples and about His teaching. John does not specify beyond this what he asked or why. When we see the word “disciples” we should think “students,” because a disciple is a student or pupil. Annas knew that Jesus had acted as a rabbi, a teacher, and had disciples, students. He knew that Jesus

was a traveling teacher and that many had believed in Him and followed Him, so he wanted to know more about His students and what He was teaching them.

In response, Jesus said He had taught publicly and not in secret. He “spoke openly to the world,” and “spoke nothing in secret.” He taught in the synagogues and in the temple openly. Judging from the response of Jesus, it appears that Annas primarily wanted to know what Jesus had been teaching. Was Jesus teaching His students that He was the Messiah? Albert Barnes thinks that Annas was trying to ascertain the number and power of His disciples because they wanted to charge Jesus with sedition or rebellion against Caesar. It could be that he wanted to show that Jesus had raised up a force dedicated to overthrowing the Romans and installing Jesus as king. We have seen in John’s gospel that the Jews often debated among themselves about whether Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah or not. We’ve seen that some argued that He must be the Christ because of the signs He was performing (John 7:31 and 9:16). The leaders who did not believe in Him argued that He could not be the Messiah because He did not keep the Sabbath and because He was from Galilee (John 9:16 and 7:41 and 7:52). I think it likely that Annas was probably still pursuing this question. Would Jesus state plainly that He is the Messiah? Would He speak what they considered blasphemy? They will eventually get Him to do this.

Jesus asked, “Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; they know what I said.” What Jesus had said was common knowledge. Many had heard Jesus teach in the synagogues and in the temple. Just prior to this day, Jesus had been teaching in the temple and debating with the Jews. The chief priests, scribes and elders had questioned Him about His authority to do what He was doing in the temple. He told them the parable of the vine growers who killed the son of the vineyard owner that showed clearly who He was and what they were going to do (see Mark 11:27 through 12:12). They tried to trip Him up by asking about paying taxes to Caesar (Mark 12:13-17). The Sadducees tried to put Him on the spot by posing a ridiculous problem about marriage in the resurrection (Mark 12:18-27). He had answered a question about which of the commandments is the foremost (Mark 12:28-34). Jesus had asked them a question about how the Christ could be the Son of David if David calls Him “Lord” (Mark 12:35-37). Matthew covers much more of the activity and teaching of Jesus in Jerusalem, devoting chapters 21 through 25 to the events leading up to the Passover. Included in Matthew is Jesus’ strong denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees in chapter 23. If Annas had not personally heard Jesus teach, then there were men all around him who could tell him, if they were truthful, about what Jesus had said. They had heard Him.

One of the officers standing there thought that Jesus was being disrespectful to the high priest and struck Jesus, saying, “Is that the way You answer the high priest?” He wanted Jesus to straighten up and answer the questions. Jesus replied, “If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?” Jesus had said nothing inappropriate or wrong. It was true that He had spoken and taught openly, and that many there at that time had heard Him. The officer had no justification for striking Jesus and for objecting to how He had answered the high priest. Since he got nowhere with Jesus, Annas sent Him to Caiaphas.

John 18:25-27

Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said 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, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?" 27 Peter then denied it again, and immediately a rooster crowed.

Now the focus shifts back to Peter, standing with others and warming himself. Luke 22:59 says that Peter had stood warming himself with the others for about an hour. Again the same question was posed, "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?" Again the question assumed that he would give a negative answer, which he indeed did. John, apparently knowing who some of these people were, tells us that a man who was a slave of the high priest and a relative of Malchus, said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?" Peter had made himself conspicuous in his attempt to kill Malchus, and so this man recognized him. Now Peter was in real trouble, and he felt things closing in on him, so again he denied that he was the man, and immediately the rooster crowed. With that John concludes his version of the story, but the other gospels tell us much more. All four gospels tell us of three denials by Peter. Matthew Mark and Luke tell us that Peter was recognized as a disciple of Jesus because of his Galilean accent. According to Matthew 26:73 one of the bystanders said, "Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away." According to Mark 14:70, one said, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean too." I think we can account for the differences in the statements and questions by recognizing that there were several people there who all spoke up at this point.

The other gospels tell us that Peter did not just say, "no I'm not His disciple," but that he also denied it with an oath and with cursing and swearing (Matthew 26:72 and 74, and Mark 14:71). After his third denial, Luke 22:61-62 says, "The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, 'Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly." Peter did not fulfill his word to Jesus that he would never deny Him. Jesus was right, as He always is. Peter did not only deny that he was a disciple of Jesus, but he denied even knowing "the man." Peter left and wept bitterly. He had done what he said he wouldn't do. He had denied the Lord he loved. He had let Jesus down. Peter was "sifted" by Satan, probably the greatest test of his life, and he had failed. But his faith would not fail. He would be restored. Jesus would reach out to him in a special way after His resurrection. Even if we deny the Lord we can be restored; our faith can be renewed. Peter will become a bold advocate for Jesus and will not deny Him again.

John 18:28-40

Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover. 29 Therefore Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?" 30 They answered and said to him, "If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him to you." 31 So Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your law." The Jews said to him, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death," 32 to fulfill the word of Jesus which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die.

33 Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" 34 Jesus answered, "Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?" 35 Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?" 36 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 release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?" 40 So they cried out again, saying, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." Now Barabbas was a robber.

John just told us that Annas sent Jesus to Caiaphas, and now Jesus is being led into the Praetorium to appear before Pilate. John leaves out the trial of Jesus before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. Here is what Matthew says about that trial in Matthew 26:57-68:

Those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together. 58 But Peter was following Him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and entered in, and sat down with the officers to see the outcome. 59 Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death. 60 They did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward, 61 and said, "This man stated, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.'" 62 The high priest stood up and said to Him, "Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?" 63 But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God." 64 Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN." 65 Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; 66 what do you think?" They answered, "He deserves death!" 67 Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him, 68 and said, "Prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?"

Jesus gave these men what they were looking for when He affirmed that He is the Christ, the Son of God. He quoted Daniel 7:13 which says, "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him." Verse 14 of Daniel 7 goes on to say, "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed." No doubt Caiaphas and the men of the Sanhedrin were very familiar with the passage. Caiaphas was quick to declare that this truthful statement of Jesus was blasphemy, and the counsel concluded that Jesus was worthy of death. They were looking for an excuse to put Jesus to death and they seized upon His "blasphemy" as grounds to condemn Him.

Luke tells us about how Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin brought Jesus to Pilate the next morning, what charges they brought against Him, and how Pilate sent Jesus to Herod:

Then the whole body of them got up and brought Him before Pilate. 2 And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King." 3 So Pilate asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And He answered him and said, "It is as you say." 4 Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this man." 5 But they kept on insisting, saying, "He stirs

up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee even as far as this place."

6 When Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. 7 And when he learned that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time. 8 Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him. 9 And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing. 10 And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently. 11 And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate. 12 Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been enemies with each other. (Luke 23:1-12)

So we find the reason Pilate asked Jesus if He was a king was because the Jews told him that Jesus had made this claim.

The Praetorium was the place where Pilate lived and had his headquarters as the Roman governor of Judea, probably the palace built by Herod the great. The Jewish authorities led Jesus to Pilate in the Praetorium, but would not go into it themselves so that they would not be "defiled" by entering a dwelling occupied by Gentiles. We find in Acts 10:28 that even Peter held to this doctrine when he said to Cornelius the Roman centurion, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean." So then, since the Jews would not come into the Praetorium, Pilate went out to them to find out what was going on. He asked, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?" They replied, "If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him to you." It's like they were saying, "Trust us, this guy is a guilty criminal." I guess they thought Pilate should just say, "Okay, fair enough, I will have Him crucified." I think they wanted to have Jesus put to death as quickly as possible that day since the next day was the Sabbath. They didn't want a drawn out trial before Pilate, they wanted swift condemnation.

Since they had already judged and condemned Jesus, Pilate said, "Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your law." Pilate will not just rubber-stamp their verdict, at least not initially. He will not submit to their attempt to force the issue. Mark 15:10 says that Pilate "was aware that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy." He knew there was more to the situation than the false accusations of the Jews. He knew they were envious of Jesus and His following.

The Jews replied to Pilate, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death." They had judged Jesus worthy of death, but they were not allowed to carry out the death penalty. They had to come to the Romans to have a sentence of capital punishment carried out. John comments that their statement fulfilled "the word of Jesus which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die." No doubt this is a reference to John 12:32, where Jesus said, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." Then in 12:33 John said, "But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die." The kind of death, the manner of death by which He was to die, was crucifixion. The Jews stoned people who were condemned to death, but the Romans crucified the worst criminals. It was God's intent that Jesus should die by crucifixion. Paul, quoting from Deuteronomy 21:23 says, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, 'CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE'— in order that in Christ Jesus

the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Galatians 3:13-14).

Having heard the Jews charge Jesus with claiming that He was Christ, a king, Pilate asked Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" All four gospels reveal that Pilate asked this question. In Matthew, Mark and Luke Jesus replies, "It is as you say," but John tells us more. Back in John 1:49 Nathanael had said, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel." When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the donkey, the people shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel" (John 12:13). So yes, Jesus is "the King of the Jews," but as we've seen and as Jesus points out here, He had not come as an earthly king to overthrow the Romans. He had not come to lead an insurrection. Jesus asked, "Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?" We have no way of knowing how much Pilate knew or had heard about Jesus. As the governor of Judea it seems likely to me that he had heard something about this influential rabbi who was stirring things up, but we just can't know how much, if any, attention he had paid to the situation. So Jesus was asking, "Are you wondering about this yourself, or have others put this to you?" Was Pilate accusing Him or were others accusing Him and Pilate had picked it up from them? Did Pilate really think Jesus was a threat to Rome, or did he think it merely an issue of Jewish religious questions? Pilate has clearly expressed annoyance with the Jews for bringing Jesus to him, and has indicated that he felt it was a problem they should deal with themselves. Jesus knew Pilate asked the question because others had told him about Him.

When Pilate says, "I am not a Jew, am I?" I think he's saying that he is ignorant of these Jewish disputes and questions. He's not all that familiar with their traditions and questions. He essentially admits that others had told him about Jesus. He says, "Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me." Maybe there was something to their accusations, so Pilate gave Jesus a chance to tell His side of things and answer the charges.

Instead of confessing to any crimes or wrongdoing, Jesus said, "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." He admitted to being a king, but clarified that His kingdom is not a kingdom of this world and not of this realm. The word translated "realm" in the NASB is *enteuthen*, and basically means "from here." The kingdom of Christ is not a kingdom of the earth. The fact that His servants were not fighting was proof that His kingdom is not of this world. He had not raised up an insurrection against Rome and against the ruling Jews. In His prayer in John 17:16, Jesus had said of His disciples, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." This is something we need to recognize if we follow Christ. We are members of a heavenly kingdom and not an earthly kingdom. We do not follow an earthly king but a heavenly King, and we are to concern ourselves with those things which concern His kingdom, His rule and reign. Jesus taught us to pray, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" in Matthew 6:10. Jesus urged us to "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness" in Matthew 6:33. Too many believers are too wrapped up in earthly things. Too many believers are more concerned about the United States than they are about the kingdom of Christ. Too many believers are putting their hope in presidents and legislators than in the Lord.

Having heard Jesus affirm that He had a kingdom that is not of this world, Pilate then asked, "So You are a king?" The answer of Jesus is a positive affirmation that this was true, "You say correctly that I am a king." The word "correctly" is supplied by the translators, but gives the sense of the affirmation. But then Jesus is quick to add, "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." Though His kingdom is not of this world, still He had come into the world with the purpose of testifying to the truth. His purpose was not to overthrow the Romans and

to rule on earth, but to tell the world the truth. Jesus hinted at His divine origin as He spoke about coming into the world. He had existed outside of the world and before the world, but He came into the world to be a witness to the truth. Jesus was doing it at that moment, and Pilate was privileged to hear the truth that Jesus was revealing to him. If Jesus says it, it is the truth, and we are wise if we listen and pay heed. His statement, "Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice," is key. He told us that it is a characteristic of His sheep that they hear His voice and follow Him (see chapter 10, verses 3, 4, 16 and 27). John 3:21 says something similar, "But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God." People who really are "of the truth" and who "practice the truth" listen to Jesus, believe in Him and come out of the darkness into the light.

Instead of pursuing honestly the subject of truth, Pilate responded cynically, "What is truth?" and then went out. The one who is The Truth (John 14:6) was standing before him, but Pilate dismissed his words as nonsense. Pilate is very much like many intellectuals in our day. They love to ask questions and say that they seek for truth, but when someone claims they know the truth and can reveal the truth they scoff and turn away. They say they seek truth, but they have already concluded that there is no final, objective and universal truth. They don't truly care about truth and they are not truly open minded. They only want to hear what affirms their presuppositions.

Pilate's verdict was that Jesus was innocent. He said to the Jews, "I find no guilt in Him." The word translated "guilt" means cause or reason. Pilate could find no basis in Jesus for condemning Him. He should have released Jesus immediately, but he was afraid of the Jews. They knew they could intimidate him and force him to give in to their demands.

Pilate then said, "But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?" Matthew 27:15 puts it this way, "Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the people any one prisoner whom they wanted." And in Mark 15:6 it says, "Now at the feast he used to release for them any one prisoner whom they requested." John's version seems to say that it was the custom of the Jews to do this, but the other gospels seem to say it was Pilate's practice or custom. Perhaps it was a practice suggested to him by the Jews, and probably not something he decided to do on his own. It doesn't seem to be in the interest of Rome to release criminals they had arrested and condemned, particularly men like Barabbas. John says Barabbas was a robber, but Mark says that he "had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection."

Pilate suggested that he should release for the Jews the "King of the Jews." He knew that they wanted Jesus put to death, so why did he bother to ask them if they wanted him to release Jesus? I think one of the things going on at this point was that more people had gathered to see what was going on besides the chief priests and Sanhedrin. A crowd had formed. Matthew 27:20 says, "But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to put Jesus to death." Mark 15:11 also says, "But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to ask him to release Barabbas for them instead." A crowd had gathered and the chief priests had persuaded them to opt for Barabbas instead of Jesus. Maybe Pilate thought that the crowd would overrule and intimidate the chief priests and elders. We've seen how the leaders feared the crowds who acclaimed Jesus. Maybe the Jewish leaders argued that Jesus was obviously not the Messiah because He had surrendered Himself to the Romans rather than destroying them. Jesus was not proving to be the leader that Barabbas had been.

There are a couple of ironies here. First, the name Barabbas means "son of a father." The word "abba" is Hebrew and means "father," or even "daddy." Of course Jesus is the only begotten Son of the heavenly Father. Barabbas was the son of a father, but Jesus was the

true Son of the true Father. Second, the Jews had essentially charged Jesus with fomenting an insurrection against Rome, claiming that He was a king, but Barabbas was a true insurrectionist, and they wanted him released. If they were really opposed to insurrection against Rome, then they should not have asked that Barabbas be released.

John 19:1-16

Pilate then took Jesus and scourged Him. 2 And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him; 3 and they began to come up to Him and say, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and to give Him slaps in the face. 4 Pilate came out again and said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him." 5 Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold, the Man!" 6 So when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out saying, "Crucify, crucify!" Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him." 7 The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God." 8 Therefore when Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid; 9 and he entered into the Praetorium again and said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. 10 So Pilate said to Him, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?" 11 Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin." 12 As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, 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." 13 Therefore when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. 14 Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold, your King!" 15 So they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." 16 So he then handed Him over to them to be crucified.

We must wonder why, if Pilate thought that Jesus was innocent, he would have Him scourged and abused by the soldiers. Marvin Vincent says, "Scourging was the legal preliminary to crucifixion, but, in this case, was inflicted illegally before the sentence of crucifixion was pronounced, with a view of averting the extreme punishment, and of satisfying the Jews. (Luke 23:22). The punishment was horrible, the victim being bound to a low pillar or stake, and beaten, either with rods, or, in the case of slaves and provincials, with scourges, called *scorpions*, leather thongs tipped with leaden balls or sharp spikes. The severity of the infliction in Jesus' case is evident from His inability to bear His cross."⁹⁵ I suppose Pilate thought that if the Jews saw that he had punished Jesus so severely they would relent and decide it was enough. Luke records that as he argued with the Jews Pilate said two times that he had not found Jesus guilty of doing anything that demanded the death penalty and said, "therefore I will punish Him and release Him" (Luke 23:16 and 23:22). John clearly tells us that the scourging occurred before Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified, and that after the scourging "made efforts to release Him" (verse 12). But in Matthew and Mark the scourging occurs after Pilate orders Him to be crucified. Matthew 27:24-26 says, "When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, 'I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that

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yourselves.' And all the people said, 'His blood shall be on us and on our children!' Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified." Mark 15:15 says, "Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified." I guess we could say that in each account the scourging happened before Pilate officially handed Jesus over to crucifixion, so maybe there is no real problem here, but it is clear in John's account that there was more discussion between the scourging and sentencing. Maybe John was trying to clarify the order of events.

The soldiers who mocked Jesus and slapped Him were probably the same ones who carried out the scourging. They put the crown of thorns and the purple robe on Him and kept saying "Hail, King of the Jews!" I speculate that the purple robe was probably the same "gorgeous robe" that Herod had put on Jesus (Luke 23:11), but we can't know for sure. To the soldiers it was absurd that this Jew would consider Himself to be a king, and they acted in ignorance in their brutality. Little did they know that they were abusing the one who truly had "authority over all flesh" (John 17:2).

With Jesus beaten and bloody, with the crown of thorns on His head, Pilate said, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him." His purpose in bringing Jesus out after having Him scourged was to demonstrate that he had made an attempt to find guilt in Him, but had found none. We find in Acts 22:24 that when Paul was taken into Roman custody as the Jews were about to kill him, it says, "the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, stating that he should be examined by scourging so that he might find out the reason why they were shouting against him that way." Apparently the scourging was a form of torture used to extract confessions from accused criminals, and apparently Jesus did not confess to any crime despite the scourging. This is why Pilate said after the scourging that he found no guilt in Jesus. From what I've read about the brutality of Roman scourging it seems that a man might say anything to get it to stop, but Jesus said nothing.

Pilate went out to address the crowd before he brought Jesus out. He told them why he was bringing Jesus out before them, and then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, and Pilate said, "Behold the Man!" I think Pilate was saying, "Look, here's this guy you are so afraid of, beaten, mocked and humbled by the Romans." Pilate could see that He was no threat to them. It was absurd to think that this man was any kind of threat.

The chief priests and officers cried out, "Crucify, crucify!" They probably knew that men condemned to crucifixion were first scourged as Jesus had been, and the next step was to nail them to a cross and crucify them. They insisted that the next step must be taken. Pilate will not even at this point give in to their demand. He said, "Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him." I don't think that Pilate was authorizing them to crucify Him. If they crucified Him themselves, they would be liable to judgment for murdering an innocent man. They would be ignoring the verdict of the Roman governor, which would be a dangerous thing to do.

The chief priests and officers then made the case from their own law for why Jesus ought to die. They said, "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God." Other versions translate it more literally, "He made Himself Son of God." John 5:18 told us that the reason the Jews sought to kill Jesus was "because not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but He also called God His own Father, making Himself equal to God." So what was this law Jesus had violated by making this claim? Caiaphas had said that Jesus had spoken blasphemy when He affirmed that He was the Christ and the Son of God (Matthew 26:63-65). Leviticus 24:16 says, "Moreover, the one who blasphemes the

name of the LORD shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him. The alien as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death." Since these men rejected the idea that Jesus might actually be the Christ and the Son of God, His words were condemned as blasphemy. In actual fact what they were saying was blasphemy. He had spoken the truth and they had spoken falsehood.

Hearing that Jesus had "made Himself the Son of God," Pilate was made "more afraid." Apparently he was already fearful, and now he became more afraid. Why was he afraid? For one thing, he was convinced that Jesus was innocent. He knew the Jews had delivered Him up because of envy, and knew their accusations were false, and so he was fearful of the consequences of condemning an innocent man to death. At the same time he was fearful of the Jews and the trouble they could cause for him if he didn't condemn Jesus. Add to that the warning he had received from his wife. Matthew 27:19 says, "While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him a message, saying, 'Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him.'" Jesus had affirmed to Pilate that He was a king, but that His kingdom was not of this world, and now the Jews were saying that He claimed to be the Son of God. Pilate was at least entertaining the idea that Jesus may not simply be an ordinary man. Abusing a divine being would definitely be a dangerous thing to do. He was stuck in a very difficult position.

Pilate went back inside with Jesus and asked, "Where are You from?", but Jesus did not answer. He knew Jesus was from Galilee and from Nazareth (Luke 23:6), so in asking this question he meant something more like, "What is Your origin?" He was asking if Jesus was a divine being. If Jesus had answered, He might have said the same thing He said to the Jews in John 8:23, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world." Frustrated, Pilate said, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?" Pilate was the authorized representative of the emperor and of the Roman empire in Judea and had absolute civil and legal authority. He could condemn or acquit as he pleased. In His response, Jesus revealed that there was a higher authority involved in the situation, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin." The authority Pilate had over Jesus was given to him by God, and not by Caesar. Pilate was an actor in God's drama, and he had to play his part. The judgment upon Pilate would be less severe than that of Caiaphas and the Jews who had delivered Jesus over to Pilate. Pilate's sin was not as severe as theirs.

Romans 13:1 tells us that all governmental authority ultimately comes from God, "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God." This may seem difficult to accept when a government is hostile toward the Lord and His people, but we must see that the Lord uses governments to achieve His ends. Scripture gives us examples of how God used evil nations to discipline His own nation.

Prior to this the Jews had asked Jesus about His authority as He was teaching in the temple. Matthew tells us about it in Matthew 21:23-27:

When He entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him while He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?" 24 Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. 25 "The baptism of John was from what source, from heaven or from men?" And they began reasoning among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Then why did you not believe him?' 26 "But if we say, 'From

men,' we fear the people; for they all regard John as a prophet." 27 And answering Jesus, they said, "We do not know." He also said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

The funny thing is that right after this Jesus gave them two parables, the parable of the two sons and the parable of the tenants, that illustrated clearly that John had come to them "in the way of righteousness" and that Jesus was the Son of God (Matthew 21:28-46). Matthew 21:45 says, "When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them." Though Jesus said that He would not tell them where His authority came from, the parables clearly revealed the answer. The authority of Jesus did not come from the men who were challenging Him, but it came "from heaven," from above, from God. He is the King, He is the Son of God. He was only subjecting Himself to Pilate because it was the Father's will.

After hearing Jesus' answer, Pilate tried to release Jesus. He knew it was the right thing to do, and tried to do it, but the Jews issued a threat he couldn't ignore, "If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar." The implication was clear – if Pilate released Jesus, who made himself out to be a king, then he would be in trouble with Caesar. The Jews would see to it that Caesar would hear that Pilate released a man who claimed to be a rival to Caesar. This threat decided the issue for Pilate. He brought Jesus out, sat on his judgment seat in this place called The Pavement, and had one final exchange with the Jews. John tells us that the Hebrew word for this place was Gabbatha, which [Thayer's Lexicon](#) says means "elevated or a platform."

We've seen John translate some Hebrew or Aramaic words for us previously. In John 1:38 he told us that "Rabbi" means "Teacher," and in John 1:41 that "Messiah" means "Christ," and in the next verse that the name "Cephas" means "Peter." Here he gives us the Hebrew name of the place of judgment. In John 20:16 he again explains that "Rabboni" means "Teacher." Coming up in 19:17 he will tell us that the place where Jesus was crucified was "called in Hebrew Golgotha." This is important because it tells us that this gospel really was written by a man who was Jewish and knew the Hebrew language and felt it necessary to translate and explain some things for his Greek speaking readers. It is internal evidence of the authenticity of John's gospel and proof that it wasn't some fictional piece written centuries later.

When Pilate brought Jesus out before the Jews and said, "Behold, your King!" it was the "day of preparation for the Passover" and it was "about the sixth hour." It was Friday of Passover week and the day before the Sabbath. As we noted when we considered John 1:39, which mentioned "the tenth hour," the Romans counted the hours of the day beginning at midnight, and the Jews counted them from sunrise, or about 6 am. If John is speaking of the sixth hour according to the Roman system, then this happened about 6 am. If he is using the Jewish method it was about 12 noon. So which is it? Mark says that the Jewish authorities had brought Jesus to Pilate "early in the morning" (Mark 15:1), and then Mark 15:25 says, "It was the third hour when they crucified Him." No doubt Mark was using the Jewish reckoning of time and means then that Jesus was crucified at about 9 am. We must conclude that in John 19:14 he is using the Roman reckoning of time since it could not have been as late as noon. This makes sense because John was writing for a Gentile audience who would have followed the Roman method.

As Pilate presented their King, the Jews cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" The word *airō*, translated "away with," primarily means "to lift," and by implication means "to take up or away."⁹⁶ They wanted Him to be picked up and hauled away.

Sarcastically, Pilate replied, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests then repudiated their King and His kingdom and said, "We have no king but Caesar." They claimed loyalty to an earthly king and rejected the heavenly King. The chief priests are now advocates of Caesar, claiming to be his friends and claiming allegiance to him. Surely this was disingenuous, but they were saying what they thought they needed to say to achieve their ends. Even if they weren't really sincere about their love for Caesar, still they were rejecting the one who really is their Messiah, their true King. Jesus is the "stone which the builders rejected" which has become "the chief corner stone" (Matthew 21:42 and Psalm 118:22). Because they rejected Him Jesus warned them, "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing the fruit of it" (Matthew 21:43).

At this, Pilate finally gave in and handed Jesus over to be crucified. He issued the sentence. Matthew tells us that Pilate tried to absolve himself of responsibility by washing his hands. Matthew 27:24-26 says, "When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, 'I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves.' And all the people said, 'His blood shall be on us and on our children!' Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified."

John 19:17-27

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. 19 Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, "JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS." 20 Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek. 21 So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews'; but that He said, 'I am King of the Jews.'" 22 Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written." 23 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. 24 So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be"; this was to fulfill the Scripture: "THEY DIVIDED MY OUTER GARMENTS AMONG THEM, AND FOR MY CLOTHING THEY CAST LOTS." 25 Therefore the soldiers did these things. But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" 27 Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" From that hour the disciple took her into his own household.

When they took Jesus out to crucify Him, He was required to carry His own cross. Apparently Jesus was too weak to make it all the way and so the soldiers made a man named Simon of Cyrene carry the cross for Him (Mark 15:21, Matthew 27:32 and Luke 23:26). Mark says that Simon of Cyrene was "the father of Alexander and Rufus." Apparently these people were known to Mark and others and probably became believers in Jesus. Paul mentions a man named Rufus in Romans 16:13, and a man named Alexander is mentioned in Acts 19:33, but we can't know if they are the same men.

Jesus was crucified at "the Place of a Skull," and John tells us that in Hebrew the word is "Golgotha," which means "skull." Often the place is called "Calvary," which apparently is from the Latin word for "skull." There they crucified Jesus along with two other men, who were

placed on either side of Jesus. In fulfillment of His words, Jesus was “lifted up” on the cross (John 3:14-15, John 8:28 and John 12:32).

Above the head of Jesus on the cross, Pilate wrote an inscription, “the charge against Him” (Matthew 27:37), which said, “Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews.” If we compare John 19:19 to the other gospels we find that apparently the full inscription was “This is Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews.” The other gospels do not include the detail that Jesus was “the Nazarene.” Pilate had discovered that Jesus was from Nazareth in Galilee and perhaps knew that one of the reasons the Jews had rejected Him as Messiah was because He came from Galilee. In John 7:52 they said to Nicodemus, “You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee.” The other gospels tell us the fact that this inscription was posted on the cross, but John tells us that Pilate wrote the inscription himself. It was a dig at the Jews; he was mocking them. Nazareth was a small hamlet, off the beaten track and insignificant. Recall that Nathanael had said, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46). So Pilate was saying, “Here is Jesus, an insignificant man from an insignificant little place, who is King of the Jews.” The Jewish leaders were all in a dither about this little man from this little place, who was now nailed to a cross by the Romans.

Pilate wrote the inscription in Hebrew, Latin and Greek so that everyone would be able to read it, and “many of the Jews” did read it because Jesus was crucified near the city. The chief priests read it and objected to what Pilate had written. They wanted him to re-write it and clarify that Jesus was not actually the King of the Jews, but that He had claimed to be the King of the Jews. They understood what He had claimed about Himself, that He had claimed to be the Messiah. They understood also that Pilate was mocking them. Pilate would not give in to the demand that he change the inscription. On this point he would have a backbone and would be firm about it.

Matthew and Mark tell us that before they crucified Jesus the soldiers took the purple robe off of Him and put His own clothes back on Him (Matthew 27:31 and Mark 15:20). Verse 23 indicates that there were four soldiers who crucified Jesus who divided up His outer garments into “four parts.” Marvin Vincent explains the four pieces that were divided among the soldiers:

The four pieces to be divided would be, the head-gear, the sandals, the girdle, and the *tallith* or square outer garment with fringes. Delitzsch thus describes the dress of our Lord: “On His head He wore a white *sudar*, fastened under the chin and hanging down from the shoulders behind. Over the tunic which covered the body to the hands and feet, a blue *tallith* with the blue and white fringes on the four ends, so thrown over and gathered together that the gray, red-striped undergarment was scarcely noticeable, except when the sandal-shod feet came into view” (“A Day in Capernaum”).⁹⁷

One piece went to each soldier, but the tunic presented a problem. It was a unique piece because it was seamless and woven in one piece. It could not be taken apart at the seams, and to tear it up would make it useless, so the soldiers decided to cast lots for it. I wonder if one of the women who followed Jesus may have woven it for Him as a special gift? There is no particular reason why Jesus should not have had some nice clothing.

Certainly as they cast lots for the tunic, the soldiers would not have said, “Hey! Let’s fulfill Scripture by casting lots for this tunic!” They had no idea they were fulfilling a prophecy, but

this is exactly what is said in Psalm 22:18, "They divided My outer garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots." Prophetic scripture will be fulfilled whether people are conscious of it or not.

I think it's important to note here the significance of Psalm 22. According to Matthew and Mark Jesus quoted from Psalm 22 when He cried out "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which means, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" (Mark 15:34). This comes from Psalm 22:1. Matthew also alludes to Psalm 22:7-8 as he writes about the abuse people aimed at Jesus when He was on the cross:

And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads 40 and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." 41 In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying, 42 "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. 43 "HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET GOD RESCUE Him now, IF HE DELIGHTS IN HIM; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" 44 The robbers who had been crucified with Him were also insulting Him with the same words. (Matthew 27:39-44)

Psalm 22:7-8 says, "All who see me sneer at me; They separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying, "Commit yourself to the LORD; let Him deliver him; Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him." In Psalm 22 David also prophetically describes the experience of crucifixion in verses 14-18:

I am poured out like water, And all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It is melted within me. 15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And my tongue cleaves to my jaws; And You lay me in the dust of death. 16 For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and my feet. 17 I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; 18 They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots.

We see why it was necessary for Jesus to die by crucifixion in order to fulfill the prophecy of Psalm 22. It does not describe stoning or any other form of execution. So then about 1,000 years before Jesus came, David described His crucifixion. How is this possible? Only because God is in the middle of it and behind it. The apostles did not make this stuff up, but they saw how the coming of Christ and His death on the cross fulfilled the things that God had said would take place.

When most of the disciples had scattered there were women who stayed beside Jesus, "standing by the cross." His mother, Mary, was there, along with her sister, Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene. Apparently Mary was a very popular name at that time, as it still is today. Probably there were other women there as well, perhaps standing farther away. Matthew says, "Many women were there looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee while ministering to Him. Among them was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee" (Matthew 27:55-56). Mark says, "There were also some women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and there were many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem" (Mark 15:40-41). Luke does not name any of the women, but simply says, "And all His acquaintances and the women who accompanied

Him from Galilee were standing at a distance, seeing these things” (Luke 23:49). W. F. Boyd, writing in Hastings Bible Dictionary, says that Salome was, “One of the women who were present at the crucifixion (Mark 15:40) and who afterwards visited the sepulchre (Mark 16:1). By comparing Mark 15:40 and Matthew 27:56 it has been almost certainly concluded that Salome was the wife of Zebedee, who also figures in the incident in Matthew 20:20-23. The conjecture that Salome was the sister of Mary the mother of Jesus has no adequate support.” The “incident in Matthew 20:20-23” was when Salome came to Jesus and requested that her sons, James and John, should sit at His right and left in His kingdom. She was obviously a committed follower of Jesus herself and ambitious for her sons.

One disciple was there with the women, the “disciple whom He loved,” likely John himself, the son of Salome. Jesus saw His mother and John standing there, and said to His mother, “Woman, behold your son!” Then to John He said, “Behold, your mother!” Then John took Mary into his own household. They both understood that Jesus was indicating that John was to care for Mary as for his own mother. I don’t know if this was an awkward moment for John and Salome, but John took on the responsibility of caring for Mary. By this time apparently Joseph had died and Mary was a widow, though she had other sons and daughters. Her sons are named and daughters are mentioned in Matthew 13:55-56, “Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?” So we must ask why Jesus gave John this responsibility rather than leaving it to His brothers and sisters to care for their mother? I suppose it has to do with the fact that His brothers did not believe in Him, as we saw in John 7:1-8. John was a devoted follower of Jesus when His brothers were not. In fact at one point His family said, “He has lost His senses” (Mark 3:21). The English Standard Version translates it, “He is out of His mind.” They tried to “take custody of Him.” You might say they tried to do an intervention. I suppose they meant well, but they were not on the same page as Jesus. They didn’t believe in Him or support what He was doing. Mary was there at the cross, but none of her other children were there, so Jesus passed her care on to John. In the midst of His great suffering, Jesus still saw to it that His responsibility to honor His mother and care for her was covered.

John 19:28-30

After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, "I am thirsty." 29 A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth. 30 Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

This is the fourth time in the gospel that John says that Jesus did something because He knew something. Before He washed the disciples feet he says in John 13:1, “Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.” And then John 13:3 says, “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.” Jesus knowing these things, got up from supper and washed the disciples’ feet. In John 18:4 we read, “So Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and said to them, ‘Whom do you seek?’” Knowing all that was going to happen, Jesus went forth and gave Himself up to those who came to arrest Him. Now we see that Jesus knew “that all things had already been accomplished.” Everything that the Father had sent Him to do He had now accomplished.

Accomplishing the work of the Father was His “food,” His sustenance (John 4:34). The Father had given Him works to accomplish that gave testimony that He had been sent by the Father (John 5:36). He said as He prayed that He had accomplished the work the Father had given Him (John 17:4).

As He hung on the cross He knew that He had brought to a completion all that the Father had given Him to do. There was just one more thing. One prophecy about His death on the cross still had to be fulfilled, so He said, “I am thirsty.” The prophecy is in psalm 69:21, “They also gave me gall for my food And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” (Parts of Psalm 69 are quoted five times in the New Testament.) There was a jar of sour wine (vinegar) there, so someone filled a sponge with it and put it on a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth so he could drink it. Earlier the soldiers had tried to give Jesus wine mixed with gall (Mark 15:23 says myrrh), but Jesus would not drink it (Matthew 27:34). It is thought that this “gall” or myrrh was added as a drug that would help blunt the suffering of crucifixion for the victim, and probably this is the reason Jesus rejected it. He would experience the full suffering of the cross. He would not turn to drugs to ease His pain as so many do today. The vinegar He was given was not mixed with gall, and so He received it.

We may think it odd that people would drink vinegar like a beverage, but a little quick research online reveals that it was common in ancient Rome to drink vinegar mixed with water. Wikipedia says this about the beverage called Posca:

Posca was an Ancient Roman drink made by mixing wine vinegar and water. Bracing but less nutritious and palatable than wine, it was typically a drink for soldiers, the lower classes, and slaves.

The widespread use of posca is attested by numerous mentions by ancient sources ranging from the natural histories of Pliny the Elder to the comedies of Plautus. When on campaign, generals and emperors could show their solidarity with common soldiers by drinking posca, as did Cato the Elder (as recorded by Plutarch) and the emperor Hadrian, who according to the *Historia Augusta* “actually led a soldier’s life...and, after the example of Scipio Aemilianus, Metellus, and his own adoptive father Trajan, cheerfully ate out of doors such camp-fare as bacon, cheese and vinegar.” A decree of AD 360 ordered that lower ranks of the army should drink posca and wine on alternate days.

Girolamo Cardano, in his *Encomium Neronis* of 1562, attributed the superiority of the Roman armies to only three factors: the great quantities of levies, their sturdiness and ability to carry heavy weights due to training, and good foods such as salted pork, cheese, and the use of posca as a drink.⁹⁸

Apparently posca has been rediscovered by some today and recipes for making your own can be found online and some vendors are selling their versions of it.

Once He had fulfilled the prophecy from Psalm 69, Jesus said, “It is finished!” and “bowed His head and gave up His spirit.” According to Luke 23:46 Jesus said, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit” and then “breathed His last.” This was a quote from Psalm 31:5, “Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have ransomed me, O Lord, God of truth.” He surrendered or gave up His spirit, and did it deliberately. He had said, “For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it

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away 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 received from My Father” (John 10:17-18). His work on the cross was finished. He had borne the sin of humanity in His body there, and all was accomplished, and so He yielded up His spirit and died. Matthew and Mark tell us that when the centurion guarding Jesus saw how He died and the events surrounding His death, He said, “Truly this was the Son of God!” (Matthew 27:54 and Mark 15:39). His death was no ordinary death of an ordinary criminal on the cross.

John 19:31-42

Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. 32 So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with Him; 33 but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. 34 But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. 35 And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe. 36 For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, "NOT A BONE OF HIM SHALL BE BROKEN." 37 And again another Scripture says, "THEY SHALL LOOK ON HIM WHOM THEY PIERCED."

38 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. 41 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. 42 Therefore because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

It was a Friday, the “day of preparation” for the Sabbath, and it was a special Sabbath because it was Passover. The Jews did not want these men hanging on their crosses on the Sabbath. Dealing with a dead body on the Sabbath would be a violation of the Sabbath, and if they died on the Sabbath they did not want the bodies to remain there until the next day. They wanted them to die that day so that their bodies might be taken away before the Sabbath. This is why they asked Pilate that their legs might be broken. We might wonder why this would expedite death, and the answer is because people on the cross had to use their legs to support themselves and enable their breathing. As I understand it, the cause of death for many who were crucified was asphyxiation. An article titled “How Did Crucifixion Kill” in The Guardian in 2004 explains:

Someone nailed to a crucifix with their arms stretched out on either side could expect to live for no more than 24 hours. Seven-inch nails would be driven through the wrists so that the bones there could support the body's weight. The nail would sever the median nerve, which not only caused immense pain but would have paralysed the victim's hands.

The feet were nailed to the upright part of the crucifix, so that the knees were bent at around 45 degrees. To speed death, executioners would often break the legs of their victims to give no chance of using their thigh muscles as support. It was

probably unnecessary, as their strength would not have lasted more than a few minutes even if they were unharmed.

Once the legs gave out, the weight would be transferred to the arms, gradually dragging the shoulders from their sockets. The elbows and wrists would follow a few minutes later; by now, the arms would be six or seven inches longer. The victim would have no choice but to bear his weight on his chest. He would immediately have trouble breathing as the weight caused the rib cage to lift up and force him into an almost perpetual state of inhalation.

Suffocation would usually follow, but the relief of death could also arrive in other ways. "The resultant lack of oxygen in the blood would cause damage to tissues and blood vessels, allowing fluid to diffuse out of the blood into tissues, including the lungs and the sac around the heart," says Ward.

This would make the lungs stiffer and make breathing even more difficult, and the pressure around the heart would impair its pumping.⁹⁹

Broken legs on a crucified man would probably cause him to die within minutes rather than hours or even days. I guess it was sort of a merciful thing, though the whole thing was very cruel and brutal.

Pilate granted their request and so the soldiers came and broke the legs of the other two men, but when they came to Jesus they discovered that He was already dead and it was not necessary to break His legs.

One of the soldiers pierced His side with his spear and John says, "immediately blood and water came out." The soldier apparently did this to assure that Jesus was really dead. His spear pierced the pericardium, the sack around the heart, and so the blood and water around the heart flowed out. Some think that this indicates that His death was caused by a ruptured heart, that is, that Jesus died of a literally broken heart. Some also see symbolic or spiritual significance in the blood and water, the blood symbolizing the blood of the eucharist, the blood of the new covenant, and the water symbolizing baptism. It does appear from what John says in verse 35 that there may have been something remarkable or unusual about this. John assures his readers that he himself witnessed this and has given truthful testimony so that they may believe. John mentions the "water and blood" again later, in 1 John 5:6-8, "This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement." I don't think we can be sure that he was referring to the piercing of Jesus' side in 1 John 5, but I suppose it is a possibility.

What I think is probable here is that John explains his saying in verse 35 in verses 36 and 37. He explains, "For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, 'Not a bone of Him shall be broken.' And again another Scripture says, 'They shall look on Him whom they pierced.'" The first quote may have reference to what was commanded regarding the Passover lambs in Exodus 12:46, "It is to be eaten in a single house; you are not to bring forth any of the flesh outside of the house, nor are you to break any bone of it." Jesus is the true and ultimate Passover lamb, whose blood saves us from death. Probably also in view is Psalm 34:20, "He keeps all his bones, Not one of them is broken." The second quote is from

99 <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2004/apr/08/thisweekssciencequestions>

Zechariah 12:10, "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn." John is saying that he was there and saw these things personally. He saw these prophecies fulfilled right before his eyes, prophecies which Jesus could not have fulfilled deliberately, and he testified about them so that his readers might believe in Jesus. Specifically fulfilled prophecies like this are powerful proofs that Jesus really is the Son of God and the Messiah. We mustn't dismiss them as if they don't matter. God has given us supernatural proof of who Jesus is so we may believe. There is no excuse for unbelief once we have heard these things.

Joseph of Arimathea is described as "a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews." He was probably one of those John mentions in John 12:42-43, "Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God." Matthew tells us that Joseph was a rich man and that the tomb was "his own new tomb" in Matthew 27:57-60. Mark 15:43-46 tells us that He was a member of the Sanhedrin, and that Pilate was surprised that Jesus was already dead:

Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. 44 Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead. 45 And ascertaining this from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. 46 Joseph bought a linen cloth, took Him down, wrapped Him in the linen cloth and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.

Luke also says Joseph was "a member of the Council, a good and righteous man (he had not consented to their plan and action), a man from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God; this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus" (Luke 23:50-52). Joseph was in the minority on the Sanhedrin in his opposition to putting Jesus to death.

Though he was afraid of the Jews and his fellow council members, Joseph "gathered up courage" and went to Pilate to ask for the body of Jesus. None of the apostles came to take care of the body of Jesus, nor any of His family. This man had the courage and the resources to do what needed to be done. This was another fulfillment of prophecy, though oddly none of the gospels mentions it. Isaiah 53:9 says, "His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth." Peter quotes the last part of this verse in 1 Peter 2:22 when he talks about the suffering of Christ, but does not mention that He was "with a rich man in His death."

Nicodemus, another member of the Sanhedrin, whom we have encountered previously, stepped up to help Joseph. John reminds us that Nicodemus was the one "who had first come to Him by night." He's talking about the discussion Jesus had with Nicodemus about being born again in chapter 3. John 3:2 says, "this man came to Jesus by night." He came to Jesus secretly and privately to ask his questions. Now he came out of the shadows to help Joseph bury Jesus, bringing myrrh and aloes. Apparently he brought enough to cover the entire body of Jesus with these aromatics according to the "burial custom of the Jews."

Joseph and Nicodemus wrapped the body of Jesus with linen wrappings along with the spices. It's interesting that the Greek word translated "spices" is *arōma*. The tomb was right

there near the place where Jesus was crucified. There was a garden there and a new tomb, Joseph's tomb, where no one had yet been laid. After putting the body of Jesus in the tomb, they rolled a large stone against the entrance and left. The other gospels tell us that Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph were there and saw where He was buried (Matthew 27:61 and Mark 15:47). Luke says, "Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment" (Luke 23:55-56). Since there were a number of people who saw where Jesus was buried, there could be no confusion about where His tomb was.

John 20:1-10

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb. 2 So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him." 3 So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb. 4 The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first; 5 and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in. 6 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. 10 So the disciples went away again to their own homes.

Jesus was crucified and died on Friday and was apparently placed in the tomb before the Sabbath began at sundown, so He was in the tomb for part of the day on Friday, all day on Saturday, and then rose before sunrise on Sunday. Since the Jews reckoned part of a day as a "day," Jesus was in the grave for three days, though not for three 24 hour periods. As John tells us of the resurrection and the appearances of Jesus to the disciples there is again much in the other gospels that John leaves out. But John does give us his first-hand account of his experience. It is very difficult to harmonize the four accounts of the gospels regarding the sequence of events on this day, and I'm afraid we have to be content with some uncertainty regarding precisely what happened when.

John says that Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early in the morning, "while it was still dark." Matthew says she came with "the other Mary" and it was "as it began to dawn" (Matthew 28:1). Mark says that the other Mary was "Mary the mother of James" and that Salome came as well, and that it was "very early" (Mark 16:1-2). Luke says they came "at early dawn" (Luke 24:1). Why does John only mention Mary Magdalene and not the others? I'm not sure. Maybe the women had planned to meet at the tomb at dawn and Mary Magdalene got there earlier than the others while it was dark. Maybe John had only interacted with her and didn't think it was important to mention the others. Since she is always mentioned first, she was probably the leader of the group.

When Mary got to the tomb she saw the stone had been taken away from the tomb. The tomb had been opened and she assumed that someone had come and taken away the body. Apparently she didn't do a thorough investigation. She ran and said to Simon Peter and to John ("the other disciple"), "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him." Note that she says "we" and not "I," indicating that she had

not been alone at the tomb, but that the other women had also seen that the tomb had been opened. She was very distressed that someone had broken into the tomb and had taken the body of Jesus. She did not think, "Hey! He has risen from the dead as He said!"

From Matthew's gospel we learn that the chief priests and Pharisees had gone to Pilate on the Sabbath day and had asked him to post a guard at the tomb. They remembered that Jesus had said He would rise after three days (Matthew 27:62-66). Matthew also tells us how the stone was rolled from the entrance to the tomb, that an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and rolled away the stone and sat on it. The guards were so afraid that they shook with fear and passed out (Matthew 28:2-4). When the stone was rolled away from the tomb we are not told that Jesus then emerged from the tomb. I don't think the stone was rolled away to let Jesus out, but to let the women and the disciples in so they could be witnesses of the empty tomb and the linen wrappings. I think Jesus had already passed out of the tomb. It wasn't like the resurrection of Lazarus where the stone had to be removed to let him out.

Peter and John immediately went out and ran to the tomb, and John outran Peter and got there first and looked into the tomb. He stooped down to look into the tomb and saw the linen wrappings lying there. When Peter arrived he went right into the tomb and also saw the wrappings and took note that the face-cloth which had been on the head of Jesus was lying "rolled up in a place by itself." We have three different Greek words translated "saw" in verses 5, 6 and 8. When John looked into the tomb and "saw" the linen wrappings the word is *blepō*, to see, to look at. It is more of a glance than an examination. When Peter "saw" the linen wrappings the word is *theōreō*, "to be a spectator of, that is, discern."¹⁰⁰ Peter made a more thorough and careful examination of the wrappings. In verse 8 when John entered the tomb he "saw and believed." The word in verse 8 is *horaō*, "to stare at, that is, (by implication) to discern clearly."¹⁰¹ A. T. Robertson says, "Peter saw more after he entered than John did in his first glance, but John saw into the meaning of it all better than Peter. Peter had more sight, John more insight. John was the first to believe that Jesus was risen from the tomb even before he saw him. According to Luke 24:12 Peter went away 'wondering' still. John was evidently proud to be able to record this great moment when he believed without seeing in contrast to Thomas (John 20:29). Peter and John did not see the angels."¹⁰² John discerned what had taken place. He saw that the body had not been taken away by someone, but that the body of Jesus had passed out of the linen wrappings and left them behind. The wrappings were not left on the floor as if Jesus had gotten up and unwrapped them Himself. The wrappings were still lying on the shelf where His body had been laid, but His body had vanished from inside them or passed through them, and they collapsed where He had been. It was proof that no one had broken in and removed His body, since they surely would have taken the wrappings as well. It is proof also that the body of Jesus had been raised and His resurrection was not just a "spiritual" thing. John, then, was the first to realize and believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. What he saw in the tomb convinced him.

Peter, John, Mary and the others came to the tomb expecting that Jesus was still dead. They did not expect to find what they found. The reason John gives for this is in verse 9, "For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead." Luke puts a strong emphasis on this in Luke 24. When Jesus appeared to the two disciples walking to Emmaus He said to them "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" Then Luke says, "Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (Luke 24:25-27). When

100 *Strong's Greek Dictionary*

101 *ibid*

102 Robertson, A. T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*

Jesus later appeared to all the disciples, Luke says, "Now He said to them, 'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.' Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem'" (Luke 24:44-47). I wish I had a recording of the message Jesus gave to them as He "opened their minds to understand the Scriptures." I think we get an idea of some of the Old Testament references He pointed to as we look at the passages the apostles quoted as they preached the resurrection of Christ. In Acts 2:25-32 Peter quotes from Psalm 16:8-11 which says:

I have set the LORD continually before me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. 9 Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely. 10 For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. 11 You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

Then in Acts 2:34-35 he quotes Psalm 110:1, "The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.'" And then Paul also, as he preached in the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch quoted from Psalm 2:7, Isaiah 55:3 and Psalm 16:10 as he said:

"And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, 33 that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU.' 34 "As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: 'I WILL GIVE YOU THE HOLY and SURE blessings OF DAVID.' 35 "Therefore He also says in another Psalm, 'YOU WILL NOT ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY.' 36 "For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay; 37 but He whom God raised did not undergo decay. 38 "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, 39 and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses" (Acts 13:32-39).

The lights went on for the disciples when Jesus explained the Scriptures to them. They saw the necessity of the death and resurrection of Jesus. They finally understood that this had been God's plan all along. They didn't understand it before He rose from the dead, but now it is revealed to them.

Peter and John "went away again to their own homes," the Greek text says literally "to themselves." They went back to their own places.

John 20:11-18

But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; 12 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. 13 And they said to her, "Woman, why are

you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." 14 When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, 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.

Mary returned to the tomb, probably after Peter and John had left, and stood outside the tomb weeping. Probably the other women were also there with her. She "stooped and looked into the tomb," indicating that the tomb had a low entrance that had to be entered by stooping down. She saw not only the grave clothes lying there, but two angels in white sitting at the head and the foot where Jesus' body had been. They asked, "Woman why are you weeping?" I think they were trying to get her to see the truth that John had seen. Here is the place where the body of Jesus was, and here are the linen wrappings, but notice that His body is not here. She should not have been weeping, but rejoicing. The truth should have dawned on her, but still she believed that someone had taken Him away. She replied, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." She had said the same thing to Peter and John in verse 2. She couldn't see any other explanation.

Whether Mary heard Jesus approach or whether the angels looked up as He appeared, we don't know, but Mary turned around and saw Jesus standing there with her, but she didn't recognize Him. Maybe she didn't recognize Him because of the tears that filled her eyes. Jesus asked her the same question the angels had asked, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" She was seeking the Lord, "my Lord," as she put it. Thinking this man speaking to her was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away." She was thinking of Jesus as a corpse that would need to be carried from place to place by someone. She was determined to find Him and care for His body.

If we don't believe in the resurrection and attempt today to find the remains of Jesus Christ we will waste our time. Luke records that the angels asked the women, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead?" (Luke 24:5). It was vain for them to think that they would find Jesus still there dead in the tomb. He had risen. He is "the living One" and will not be found among the dead.

When Jesus spoke her name, Mary recognized Him. She recognized His voice speaking her name. His sheep know His voice (John 10:1-5). When He spoke her name she "turned." Apparently she had not fully faced Him until this point. She was completely surprised and cried, "Rabboni!" Again John points out that this is a Hebrew word that means "Teacher." Why "Rabboni" and not "Rabbi"? A. T. Robertson says it means "my Teacher" and is "practically the same as Rabbi."¹⁰³ Not only did she speak, but she also embraced Him or clung to Him in some way. Matthew says the women "came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him" when He appeared to them (Matthew 28:9).

The words of Jesus in response to Mary seem almost cold and harsh, "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.'" I think "clinging" is a good

and important translation of the word *haptō*, which means “to fasten to or adhere to” something. I think Mary’s response was to fasten herself to Jesus and not let go. She had found Him alive and would not let Him go again. I don’t think this was a momentary thing, but I think Jesus allowed her to cling to Him for a while. I think it is unfortunate that the King James Version translates it as “Touch Me not.” I think Jesus was saying to her, “Okay, Mary, that’s enough. There will be lots of time to cling to Me after My ascension, but now I have other things to do.” She could not in this life physically cling to Him and hold Him for herself permanently. She had to let Him go to attend to others. She will continue to have fellowship with Him in the Spirit after His ascension. At times an embrace can become awkward if one of the parties does not break it off. I don’t think Jesus did this in a harsh way, but in a gentle way.

Another reason Jesus needed to break off the embrace was because He had an errand for Mary. He told her to go tell His “brethren” that He was ascending His Father and their Father. He did not at that time go with her to see them, but sent her to inform the disciples that He had risen and was going to ascend. It’s not often in scripture that the disciples of Jesus are called His “brethren,” brothers, but we find it here and in Hebrews 2:11-13, “For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, ‘I WILL PROCLAIM YOUR NAME TO MY BRETHREN, IN THE MIDST OF THE CONGREGATION I WILL SING YOUR PRAISE.’ And again, ‘I WILL PUT MY TRUST IN HIM.’ And again, ‘BEHOLD, I AND THE CHILDREN WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN ME.’” As children of God through faith in Him, we are the brothers and sisters of Jesus. His Father is our Father. His God is our God. Yes, we are His “disciples,” His students, and we are His sheep and His servants, but also we are His brothers and sisters. He is the Son of God, the Savior and Lord, but also is our Brother. There is a family relationship with Him and not merely a Master to servant relationship.

Jesus emphasized that the next thing for Him was His ascension to the Father, but this would not happen immediately. Acts 1:1-3 says, “The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.” So Jesus did not ascend to the Father until forty days after His resurrection. This gave plenty of time for many to see Him and hear Him speak of the kingdom of God. He continued to teach the disciples the things they needed to hear. He had said to them in John 16:12, “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.” After His resurrection they would be able to “bear” more of what He had to say to them, and so would be able to better grasp His plan and program and to understand more about His rule in His kingdom.

Mary carried out her errand and went to the disciples and told them, “I have seen the Lord” and told them what He had said. She gave them His message, “I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.” Mark and Luke tell us that the disciples did not believe the report of Mary and the other women (Mark 16:11 and Luke 24:11). Luke 24:11 says, “But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them.” It wasn’t that they couldn’t believe the women, but that they wouldn’t. Jesus rebuked the two disciples to whom He appeared as they were walking to Emmaus. They said to Him, “But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. 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” (Luke 24:22-24). Jesus then said, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” (Luke 24:25-26).

Their unwillingness to believe was foolish. What Mary and the others reported was not nonsense, but the fulfillment of the prophetic word and the words of Jesus. They should have all been standing outside the tomb early in the morning waiting for Jesus to emerge!

John 20:19-23

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. 21 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."

Jesus waited until the evening to appear to the assembled disciples. Luke tells us that the men to whom He had appeared on the road to Emmaus returned to Jerusalem, to "the eleven and those who were with them." When they arrived they were told, "The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon." Then they "began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread." (See Luke 24:33-35.) So now we see that Jesus has appeared to Mary, to Peter, and then to the two men who went to Emmaus. We don't know exactly when Jesus appeared to Simon Peter, but clearly He made a point of appearing to Peter privately, perhaps soon after appearing to Mary. Jesus needed to see Peter and reassure him of His love. Peter needed to know that he was forgiven for denying Jesus and that he still had a place among the apostles. The Lord would not allow Peter's faith to fail. He would not allow Peter to think that he had been cast out by the Lord for his denial.

The disciples were gathered together and had shut the doors because they were afraid of the Jews. Apparently they feared that the Jewish authorities were after them as well. The men who had gone to Emmaus had been allowed to come in, but then the doors were shut again. Verse 19 says, "Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, 'Peace be with you.'" Does this imply that Jesus suddenly appeared among them in a miraculous way, not entering through the closed doors? The Contemporary English Version Bible seems to take it this way as it translates the sentence, "Suddenly, Jesus appeared in the middle of the group." Luke says that the appearance of Jesus was a startling thing to the disciples in Luke 24:36-37, "While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, 'Peace be to you.' But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit." I think it is probable that Jesus appeared among them suddenly without walking through the door. We are told in Luke 24:31 that when the two disciples in Emmaus recognized that it was Jesus who had been with them, "He vanished from their sight." We've also seen that when Jesus rose from the dead He left the grave clothes behind, His body having passed right through them. I also think He passed out of the tomb without having to remove the stone. I think the implication here is that Jesus appeared among them even though the doors were shut.

Since they were startled and frightened by His appearance, Jesus said, "Peace to you." This was a common greeting or salutation among the Jews. Jesus had instructed the disciples to use this salutation when they entered someone's house to stay with them in Matthew 10:12-13. After His greeting of peace, of "shalom," Jesus showed them His hands and His side so they would see that it was really Him, really His resurrected physical body

that they were seeing. He was not a ghost, but it was really Jesus in His glorified but still physical form. Luke 24:38-43 tells us more:

And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." 40 And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. 41 While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" 42 They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; 43 and He took it and ate it before them.

Not only did Jesus let them see His body, but He invited them to touch Him and see that He was not a spirit, but He had flesh and bones. The wounds from the crucifixion were still there in His flesh. The same Jesus who had been nailed to the cross and pierced with the spear was standing there before them, and He wanted them to see that it was really Him.

The disciples' fright gave way to rejoicing when they saw that it was the Lord. The appearance of the Lord is at first frightening, but the fear gives way to joy for those who know Him. When He appears in the future for judgment it will be a very frightening time for those who have rejected Him.

A second time Jesus said to them, "Peace be with you" (literally, "peace to you"), and then said, "as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." Remember that Jesus said as He prayed in John 17:18, "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world." This is the form of the "Great Commission" in John's gospel. Jesus was sending them into the world as His representatives as He was sent into the world to represent the Father. As He did the will of the Father, so His disciples are to do His will and accomplish His work.

Jesus then breathed on the disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Of course it was not at this time that the Holy Spirit came upon them; the Spirit would not come upon them until the day of Pentecost after Jesus had ascended. He had told them that He would send the Holy Spirit after He had gone away back to the Father (John 16:7). Here Jesus is probably foreshadowing what He is going to do, and again telling the disciples that they will need to receive the Holy Spirit in order to carry out their mission on earth. He told us that unless we are "born of the Spirit" we can't enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5-6). John 7:37-39 says, "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, "From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water."' 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." It was necessary for Jesus to be glorified before the Spirit was given. Shortly before He ascended, Jesus told the disciples to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which would happen "not many days from now" (Acts 1:4-5). So it was not on the day that Jesus rose from the dead that they received the Holy Spirit, but Jesus gave them an illustration and a promise of what would happen later.

Connected with receiving the Holy Spirit is the next statement in verse 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." This is similar to what Jesus said to Peter in Matthew 16:19 "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." And again in Matthew 18:18 He said to all the disciples, "Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." These sayings ignite the debate over the role of the church in the forgiveness of

sins. In the Roman Catholic tradition this forms the basis for the idea that people must come to the church to receive forgiveness and absolution, and that the grace of God is mediated through the church. But is this true? Can't people go directly to the Lord, confess their sins to Him and receive forgiveness from Him? Did Jesus pass the authority to forgive sins to His followers on earth? When Peter spoke to the Sanhedrin about Jesus in Acts 5:31 he said, "He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." It is Jesus who grants forgiveness. Paul and Barnabas said to the Jews in Pisidian Antioch, "Therefore let it be know to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses" (Acts 13:38-39). In 1 John 1:9 he says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Jesus is the one who forgives sins. There is no indication anywhere in the New Testament that people are urged to come to the church in order to receive forgiveness, but rather that it is faith in Christ that results in forgiveness.

So then, how do we understand verse 23? I think the key is in the tense of the verbs "forgiven" and "retained." They are both perfect tense passive mood verbs. The perfect tense means completed action with continuing results. The New American Standard translation brings this out when it says, "they have been forgiven," and "they have been retained." So I think it means that the disciples acknowledge what God has already done in forgiving or retaining sins. A. T. Robertson says, "What he commits to the disciples and to us is the power and privilege of giving assurance of the forgiveness of sins by God by correctly announcing the terms of forgiveness. There is no proof that he actually transferred to the apostles or their successors the power in and of themselves to forgive sins."¹⁰⁴ The Holy Spirit gives the body of believers the ability to discern where forgiveness has been granted and where it hasn't.

One of the things I think we miss in the debate over this passage is that dealing with sin is both the purpose of Jesus and the purpose of His church. Sin is the great problem of mankind. Jesus came to save us from our sins (Matthew 1:21). Jesus died on the cross for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3 and Romans 6:10). When Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven" in Matthew 18 He was talking about dealing with a brother who sins. He was telling the disciples how to recover the sinning brother to faith and righteousness (see Matthew 18:15-20). Remember that Jesus said in John 8:34-36, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." Jesus came to free us from slavery to sin and to grant us forgiveness, and the ministry of the church is the same ministry. We point people to their need for the forgiveness and freedom from sin that comes from faith in Christ. Jesus told Paul that He was sending him to the Gentiles "to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me" (Acts 26:18). Followers of Jesus have a duty to call people to turn from their sins and receive forgiveness through faith in Christ. This is why we must not try to ignore or minimize the reality of sin and what it has done to us. Slaves need to be set free. Those in darkness need to be brought into the light. Those dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1-10) must be made alive.

John 20:24-31

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. 25

So the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "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." 26 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 be with 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.

Thomas is described as "one of the twelve," and "called Didymus." Though Judas was probably dead by this time, having committed suicide, the group of apostles is still called "the twelve." As we noted back in John 11, the word "Didymus" means "twin." Thomas was the one who said, "Let us also go, so that we may die with Him" in John 11:16 when Jesus said that they were returning to Judea to awaken Lazarus. He was the negative pessimist among the apostles.

For some reason Thomas was absent from the others when Jesus appeared to them, and he refused to believe them when they told him they had seen the Lord. We can't know what Thomas thought about the other disciples had seen. Maybe he thought they had seen an impostor. Maybe he thought they all had a mass hallucination or that a spirit had appeared to them. Whatever his reason, he rejected their testimony. He laid down his conditions for belief, "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 is usually called "Thomas the doubter," but at this point he should be called "Thomas the unbeliever." Doubt is hesitating between belief and unbelief; it is not being sure of whether or not something is true. Doubt entertains the idea that something might be true or it might be false. Thomas would not entertain the idea that Jesus had really risen from the dead unless incontrovertible evidence was presented. He insisted that his conditions must be met before he would believe. Belief, faith, is a matter of the will, and Thomas was refusing to believe.

Why was Thomas refusing to believe? Why was he so adamant about it? I think it was because of grief. He was bitterly disappointed and let down by Jesus. He expected that Jesus as the Messiah would take His throne in Jerusalem and rule, but Jesus had given Himself over to the Jews and the Romans and had been crucified. I think Thomas was grieving and depressed. We've already seen that he had a negative, pessimistic view of things. Pessimists have difficulty believing what others say, and depression makes it worse. Depression hinders faith. It short-circuits belief. We become worse skeptics when we are depressed.

Note the conditions he laid down. He insisted he had to both see the imprint of the nails and put his finger into the place of the nails. He insisted that he had to put his hand into the wound in Jesus' side. He wanted to see and actually touch the wounds in the crucified body of Jesus. This is a very important point. Jesus had shown the others His hands and His side and had proven to them that the same body that had been nailed to the cross had been raised from the dead. Now Thomas says he must see the same evidence. To put this in contemporary critical terms, Thomas was insisting that the "Jesus of faith" had to be proven to be the "Jesus of history." The Jesus the other disciples believed they saw had to be the same Jesus who was crucified. Contemporary skeptics make a distinction between these two

versions of Jesus. They claim that the real “historical Jesus” was a man like any other man. He did not do any miracles nor make any claims to divinity. They say He was a popular rabbi who gathered a following and taught about the kingdom of God, but He certainly wasn’t the Son of God and He certainly didn’t rise from the dead. They think the disciples later made Jesus into a divine being as they wrote of Him. They make these assumptions because they hold to a naturalistic world view that doesn’t allow for the divine or supernatural.

Thomas had to wait for eight days before Jesus appeared for him. I suppose its commendable that he stayed with the others and did not leave and go home. Again the doors were shut but Jesus came and stood in their midst and said, “Peace to you.” Turning to Thomas He said, “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.” He invited Thomas to do exactly what Thomas had insisted he must do. Jesus accommodated Himself to the conditions Thomas had laid down. I think He did this because He said He would not lose one of the disciples except the “son of perdition” (John 18:9 and John 17:12). He would not lose Thomas, but would retrieve him. When Jesus said, “do not be unbelieving,” a literal translation would be “stop becoming without belief.” The word for “unbelieving” is *apistos*, “without belief,” and the word for “believing” is *pistos*, “belief” or “faith.” This is the command to Thomas and to everyone. We must cease our unbelief, change our minds and believe.

I don’t know if Thomas carried out his careful inspection of the wounds on the body of Jesus. I like to think that he realized that he didn’t need to, but was so stricken by seeing Him that it was enough. He cried out, “My Lord and my God!” He instantly obeyed the command of Christ and believed. His conditions had been met and so he recognized the truth and believed. He owned Jesus as both his Lord and his God. He could no longer deny the fact that Jesus had risen from the dead bodily. Here truly was the incarnate God standing before him, appearing to him for the express purpose of turning him from unbelief. The confession of Thomas must be our confession as well. We must recognize Jesus as our Lord and our God. We can’t receive Him as anything less. He is not simply our Teacher. He is not simply our Leader. He is not simply the wise Founder of our religion who gave us a good example to follow. He is the Lord and He is God. He has proven it.

Thomas believed because he saw Jesus. In His rhetorical question Jesus pointed to this fact. His faith was based on what he saw. To be fair to Thomas, we have seen a number of times in John’s gospel that people believed in Jesus because they saw His miraculous signs. John 2:23 says, “Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing.” In John 4:48 Jesus said to the royal official who came to ask Jesus to heal his son, “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe.” The man did believe when he saw the evidence that Jesus had healed his son (John 4:51-54). In John 11:45, after Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, it says, “Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him.” Often people saw His signs but still refused to believe in Him. John 12:37 says, “But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him.” We also saw that John believed because of what he saw in the tomb in John 20:8, “So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed.” The miracles of Christ prove His divinity and provide a basis for belief. They prove that He is no ordinary man and that He is the Christ and the Son of God.

Despite the fact that many believed because they saw the miracles of Christ, Jesus still says, “Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.” Those who embrace faith in Christ without insisting on seeing Him and His miracles personally are blessed. Peter echoes this in 1 Peter 1:8-9, “though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.” Since His ascension we do not have the opportunity to see Jesus personally and to inspect His wounds. We haven’t seen Him and do not see Him, so how can we believe? The disciples and the people of Galilee and Judea when Jesus walked the earth had the privilege of seeing Him and hearing Him, but we don’t have that opportunity. What is the evidence and proof for us that provides the foundation for our faith? John tells us in verses 30 and 31.

First, John says Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of the disciples that he did not record in the book. John admits he left things out. The last verse in the gospel points this out as well, “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” (John 21:25). John recorded a sampling of the works and teachings of Jesus and some of His signs. John did not try to give us an exhaustive account of the life and works of Jesus. There are many things Jesus did we will never know about this side of heaven. There was much more he could tell us about.

Second, John says the things he wrote, the signs he did record, are meant to provide a basis for belief in Christ. He addresses the reader in verse 31 and tells us the whole purpose of the book is to enable us to believe in Jesus and receive life in His name. We who have not had the privilege of seeing Jesus must believe in Him on the basis of the testimony of John and the others who saw Him and recorded these things about Him. Jesus talked about the importance of paying attention to the Scriptures and believing them in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31:

"Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. 20 "And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, 21 and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. 22 "Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. 23 "In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 "And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.' 25 "But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. 26 'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.' 27 "And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house— 28 for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' 29 "But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' 30 "But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' 31 "But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"

Abraham said to the rich man that his brothers would have to believe on the basis of “Moses and the Prophets,” that is, on the basis of the Scriptures. If they refused to listen to Moses and the Prophets they would not be persuaded if someone came back from the dead and appeared to them. Unbelievers can be very stubborn in their unbelief and very determined to

deny the truth no matter what evidence they see. If they reject the word of God they will also find a reason to reject the evidence of a miracle.

The phrase “that you may believe” is in the present tense in the Greek and means “that you may keep on believing.”¹⁰⁵ Faith in Christ is an ongoing thing. Some people think it was enough that they “asked Jesus into their heart” when they were six years old and so they are alright now regardless of whether they still believe or not. Faith in Christ must be an ongoing and permanent faith. We are born again through faith in Christ, but that is not the end. Initial faith, if it is true, produces a lifelong walk of faith with the Lord.

What is it that believers believe? It is “that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.” The words “Christ” and “Messiah” mean “anointed One.” Samuel anointed with oil both Saul as the first king of Israel and David as his successor. 1 Samuel 15:1 says, “Then Samuel said to Saul, ‘The LORD sent me to anoint you as king over His people, over Israel; now therefore, listen to the words of the LORD.’” David says in 2 Samuel 2:7, “Now therefore, let your hands be strong and be valiant; for Saul your lord is dead, and also the house of Judah has anointed me king over them.” In 2 Samuel 22:51 we see that the word “anointed” is a synonym for “king,” “He is a tower of deliverance to His king, And shows lovingkindness to His anointed, To David and his descendants forever.” It would be appropriate in an English translation of the New Testament to translate the word *Christos* (Christ) as “Anointed.” We believe that Jesus is the Anointed One, the King of all humanity.

We also believe that Jesus is the Son of God. The phrase “Son of God” occurs 9 times in John’s gospel. We read that John the Baptist said, “I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God” (John 1:34). Nathanael said, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel” (John 1:49). Mary said, “I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world” (John 11:27). The first verse of the gospel of Mark says, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” It is crucial to believe this. John 3:18 says, “He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Faith in Jesus is faith in the only begotten Son of God.

Believing results in life in the name of Jesus. The gift of eternal life is received by faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God. This was John’s whole purpose in writing this book, to enable readers to believe in Jesus and receive eternal life. This is the essential thing for everyone and is not optional. If we want eternal life and an inheritance in God’s kingdom, we must believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

John 21:1-14

After these things Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and He manifested Himself in this way. 2 Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. 3 Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will also come with you." They went out and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing. 4 But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. 5 So Jesus said to them, "Children, you do not have any fish, do you?" They answered Him, "No." 6 And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch." So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish. 7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea. 8 But the other disciples came in the

105 Robertson, A. T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*

little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging the net full of fish. 9 So when they got out on the land, they saw a charcoal fire already laid and fish placed on it, and bread. 10 Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have now caught." 11 Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn. 12 Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples ventured to question Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord. 13 Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and the fish likewise. 14 This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead.

According to Matthew and Mark, the disciples were told to go to Galilee and they would see Jesus there. In Matthew 28:7 the angel says to the women, "Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you." And then in Matthew 28:10 Jesus says to them, "Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they will see Me." so in Matthew 28:16 it says, "But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated." Jesus then appeared to them and gave them the "Great Commission." So here John gives us more information about the appearance of Jesus to some of the disciples in Galilee, at the "Sea of Tiberias." Tiberias was the second emperor of Rome, and a city named after him on the western shore of the sea gave this name to the sea of Galilee. John is the only one who refers to the sea of Galilee as "Tiberias."

Jesus "manifested" Himself to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. Here again the word for "manifested" is *phaneroō*, "to make visible." Jesus made Himself visible to the disciples there. Note that verse 14 says it was the third time Jesus was manifested to the disciples after being raised from the dead. John sets up the rest of the chapter by saying that Jesus "manifested Himself in this way." He says, "Here's how He did it."

Seven of the disciples were together there by the Sea of Tiberias. They were Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James and John (the "sons of Zebedee") and two others who are not named. They had returned home to Galilee after the Passover and after having seen Jesus in Jerusalem, and maybe they were anticipating the fulfillment of the promise of Jesus to meet them there.

Peter said to the others, "I am going fishing," and the other responded that they would come with him. Peter, Andrew, James and John were partners in a fishing business, and so it was natural that Peter would return to doing what he knew. I'm not sure whether Peter meant that he was going back to fishing permanently as his vocation or if he was just going out this one time to catch some fish and make some money. It could be that he was intending to return to fishing full time. Maybe he was thinking that since Jesus had died and had risen and had accomplished the work of the Father in that way it was time to return to normal life. Maybe it had been a number of days since the last time they had seen Jesus and Peter wasn't sure what to do. Jesus will now steer him in a new direction.

The seven disciples got into the boat and fished all night, casting the net into the sea, but caught nothing. As the day dawned and it was time to come ashore, Jesus stood there on the beach, but the disciples didn't recognize Him. They saw a figure on the beach, but maybe it was still too dark to make out that it was Jesus.

I think the question Jesus called out to them in verse 5 is kind of amusing, "Children, you do not have any fish, do you?" First, He called them "children." The word is *paidion*, meaning a young child, and was applied to a little boy or a little girl. Robertson says it was a colloquial expression like "my boys." Second, the way He asked the question implies He expected a

negative answer, as the New American Standard translation brings out. He wasn't asking, "Do you have any fish?" but, "You don't have any fish, do you?" Marvin Vincent says, "The interrogative μή τι indicates that a negative answer is expected: *you have not, I suppose, anything.*"¹⁰⁶ If I had worked hard at fishing all night and had caught nothing, and then some guy on the shore said, "Hey little boys – you haven't caught any fish, have you?" I think I would be a bit annoyed. The terse answer of the disciples, "No," I suspect may indicate some annoyance.

By the way, the word for "fish" (*ichthus*) is not explicitly used here in Jesus' question, but it is implied. The word translated "fish" here is *prosphegion* and is a "neuter of a presumed derivative of a compound of *pros* and *phagō*; something eaten in addition to bread, that is, a *relish* (specifically *fish*; compare *opsarion*): - meat."¹⁰⁷ A typical meal for these men was bread and fish, as we saw when Jesus fed the 5,000 with five loaves and two fish. This was their staple diet.

The stranger on the shore then proceeded to tell them what to do, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch." For some reason they did as He suggested and their net enclosed a "great number of fish." There were so many fish they could not haul the net aboard the boat. Apparently they had to row ashore dragging the net full of fish with them. When this happened John said, "It is the Lord." John knew this was a miracle and the only explanation for this massive catch of fish was that the man on the shore was Jesus. He had experienced this before. This same sort of thing happened when Jesus called these fishermen to follow Him as Luke records in Luke 5:1-11:

Now it happened that while the crowd was pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; 2 and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. 3 And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and began teaching the people from the boat. 4 When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." 5 Simon answered and said, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets." 6 When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break; 7 so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!" 9 For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; 10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men." 11 When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him.

The quantity of fish was so great their nets were beginning to break and both boats were so filled with fish they began to sink. These career fisher men were so amazed they immediately recognized Jesus as the Lord and left everything to follow Him. If you're after fish, Jesus can give you fish; in fact, He can give you more than you can handle! But Jesus said, "from now on you will be catching men."

106 Vincent, Marvin, *Word Studies in the New Testament*

107 *Strong's Greek Dictionary*

Hearing that it was the Lord, Peter put on his outer garment “for he was stripped for work”. The word for “stripped” is *gumnos* and means “naked,” but here probably just means he had his upper garment off, that he was bare-chested. Peter then threw himself into the sea. He immediately left the other men to go to Jesus. This is the great thing about Peter we’ve seen previously, that he always wanted to be with Jesus. Jesus was his priority, not his partners nor the fish nor the boat.

The other disciples stayed with the boat, dragging the net full of fish with them. It wasn’t far, only about one hundred yards from shore. Coming to shore they saw that Jesus had already prepared breakfast for them on a charcoal fire. They would have fresh cooked fish and bread for breakfast. Jesus invited them to bring some more of the fish they had caught to add to what He already had. Before Jesus intervened they had no fish, but now they had, at His direction, caught many fish. Peter helped draw the net to land and they found that it was full of large fish. Someone, perhaps John, counted the fish and found that they had caught 153 fish. I speculate that at the end of a day of fishing this was something they would do. Since they were commercial fishermen, they would concern themselves with accounting. The number and quality of the fish represented the money they could make on their catch. Commercial fishermen want quantity and quality in order to make more money. This is true of farmers and ranchers also; they want quantity and quality in order to make maximum profits, and we should note that Jesus gave these men both quality and quantity – there were many fish and they were all large fish. We saw this when He turned the water into wine back in chapter 2. He not only made a lot of wine, He made good wine.

The “great number” of fish they caught was one miracle, and another was the fact that “the net was not torn.” John expected that with such a large number of fish, the net should have torn, but it didn’t. In Luke 5 the nets did begin to break, but this time the net held. Jesus not only provided the catch, but also made sure their tools remained sound in order to deliver the catch.

After accounting for the fish they had caught Jesus invited them to come have breakfast. It is interesting that John says, “None of the disciples ventured to question Him, ‘Who are You?’ knowing that it was the Lord.” The word translated “ventured” is *tolmaō*, meaning boldness, “to have courage, to be bold.”¹⁰⁸ The English Standard Bible translates it, “Now none of the disciples dared ask him, ‘Who are you?’ They knew it was the Lord.” It may be John is implying here that Jesus had a different appearance than He had previously. Was he implying that there was still some element of doubt as to who this was? I suppose it is possible, since when they saw Jesus on the shore they did not recognize Him. Jesus was glorified and perhaps in His glorified state He may have looked different in some way. Maybe John simply means that they didn’t need to ask who He was because they knew it was Jesus.

Jesus served breakfast to the disciples. He came, took the bread and gave it to the disciples and did the same with the fish. Maybe He was reminding them of the feeding of the 5,000 and of the 4,000. On those occasions He had given them the bread and fish to distribute to the people. He was the source of the bread and fish. What was needed came from Him and went through the disciples to the world.

John remarks that this was the third time Jesus was manifested to His disciples, the first time being John 20:19-23 and the second in John 20:24-29 when Thomas was present. Of course these are not the only times that Jesus appeared to people as Luke tells us in Acts 1:3 and as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:5-8.

Jesus told them in John 15 when He talked about how He is the vine and they are the branches that they must abide in Him in order to bear fruit. He said, “apart from Me you can

do nothing.” When they tried to go back to fishing they were able to catch nothing apart from Jesus, but when He showed up and they followed His directions, they caught this tremendous number and quality of fish. It was an object lesson about how they were to do things going forward. They were to pay attention to Him and do as He directed, and then they would be successful. It was an illustration that their efforts were useless without Him.

Another observation from this story is that we don’t just pray for fish and expect them to appear, but we must do the work also. The disciples had to cast the net where Jesus directed and then haul in the catch. There is a meme going around that pictures a man leaning on a shovel illustrating the quote, “God is in control, but He doesn’t expect you to lean on a shovel and pray for a hole.” Prayer goes hand-in-hand with work. We pray and we work. We ask for what we need and want and then we work for it as well. Faith drives our activity. The disciples had to trust and obey the man on the shore in order to do what He told them to do, and the miracle happened as they worked with Him. If they had failed to do as He said they would have missed the miracle.

We should note also that Jesus can supply far more than we need. His resources are limitless. Ephesians 3:20-21 says, “Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.” As we work with Him in His enterprise we will see amazing things we didn’t dream could happen.

John 21:15-25

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. 18 "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go." 19 Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me!"

20 Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" 21 So Peter seeing him said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?" 22 Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!" 23 Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?" 24 This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true. 25 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.

After breakfast Jesus had some things to say to Peter. Peter had led the others back to fishing, and now Jesus is going to send him in a different direction. He has a new vocation for Peter. Jesus begins by asking, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?” Peter had boasted that he would not abandon Jesus like the others would. He saw himself as an exceptionally devoted follower of Jesus. He had said, “Even though all may fall away because

of You, I will never fall away" (Matthew 26:33). He had said, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny you" (Matthew 26:35). Now that Peter had denied Jesus and had done what he said he would never do, would he still claim to be more devoted than the others? Would he still claim to have an exceptional love for Jesus that was lacking in the other disciples? I think Jesus was asking this to point this out to Peter and to show him his need for humility. The other disciples had left Him, but Peter had denied Him, which the others hadn't done.

As we look at the three times Jesus asks about Peter's love for Him in verses 15-17, we must note that two different Greek words are translated "love" here. The first and second time Jesus asks the question the word *agapaō* is used, and the third time it is the word *phileō*. When Peter replies, the word *phileō* is used each time. This distinction is brought out in the World English Bible translation:

So when they had eaten their breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I have affection for you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." 16 He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I have affection for you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you have affection for me?" Peter was grieved because he asked him the third time, "Do you have affection for me?" He said to him, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I have affection for you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

Though there is a distinction between *agapaō* and *phileō*, I'm not sure how much weight we should give to it in interpreting this passage. If we look at how John uses the terms in the gospel, they almost seem to be used in the same way. The word *agapaō* occurs 37 times in John, including John 3:16, "For God so **loved** the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." But then just three verses later John also uses the word in John 3:19 when he writes, "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men **loved** the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil." If we see *agapē* love exclusively as God's kind of pure and selfless love, then it is hard to see how it can be applied to people's love for darkness and evil.

John uses the word *phileō* 13 times in the gospel, including passages which speak of the love of the Father for the Son and for the disciples. John 5:20 has Jesus saying, "For the Father **loves** the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and the Father will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel." And in John 16:27 He says, "for the Father Himself **loves** you, because you have **loved** Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father." He speaks of the love of the disciples for Him as *phileō* love. I do think that *agapē* love is a higher form of love than *phileō*. It is *agapē* that Paul describes in his great chapter about love, 1 Corinthians 13. I think *agapē* is more of a selfless, pure and giving kind of love while *phileō* is more of a brotherly affection and friendship kind of love.

Though we only have the one word in English for "love," we do sometimes make a distinction between different kinds or levels of love. If you ask me, "Do you love your wife?" I will answer enthusiastically, "Yes, absolutely! I love my wife with my whole heart!" If you ask, "Do you love your best friend?" I will say, "Yes, I love him as a brother!" If you ask, "Do you love ice cream?" I will say, "Yes, I think it's delicious!" I do not mean that my love for ice cream is equivalent to my love for my wife. So in English we have to add modifiers to the word love in order to define what kind of love we are talking about.

To the question, "Do you love Me?", Peter answers in the affirmative all three times. He does not say, "Yes, Lord, I love you more than these other guys," but he does acknowledge

that he has a brotherly affection for the Lord. Peter has abandoned the illusion that his devotion to the Lord was greater than that of others. To the first two instances of the question Peter answers in the same way, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” The third time, when Jesus switches from *agapaō* to *phileō*, Peter is grieved and says, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Peter was saying that Jesus already knew the answer to the question; that He didn’t need to ask about Peter’s love in order to discover the answer. Peter had demonstrated his love for Jesus a few minutes before when he threw himself into the sea to swim ashore and be with Jesus. Peter’s enthusiasm to follow Jesus and be with Him was proof of his love.

Why was Peter grieved the third time Jesus asked the question? Was it because Jesus switched from *agapaō* to *phileō*? It may be. Peter had expressed *phileō* love for Jesus, but did he really even have that kind of love for Jesus? We might argue in all of this that Jesus and Peter were likely speaking in Aramaic or Hebrew and not in Greek, and so they were not using the terms *agapaō* and *phileō* at all, but we must note that as he tells the story John chooses to use the words. I think John made the distinction carefully and deliberately. Jesus was questioning whether Peter even loved Him with the lesser sort of love. It may have come across to Peter as skepticism on the part of Jesus, “Do you really love Me with brotherly love, Peter?” Another reason for Peter’s grief was simply the fact that Jesus asked the question three times. Peter had denied Jesus three times, and there may be a correlation here. Will he affirm his love for Jesus three times? When Peter was pressed by others he had denied Jesus, when pressed by Jesus he affirmed Him. Jesus had made His point.

Since Peter did love Him, Jesus had a new job for him. Jesus tells him, “Tend My lambs,” then, “Shepherd My Sheep,” and then, “Tend My sheep.” If he really loves Jesus then this is what he must do; he must take care of the sheep of Jesus. The word for “tend” in verses 15 and 17 is probably better translated “feed.” A. T. Robertson says the word means “to feed as a herdsman.”¹⁰⁹ Jesus commanded Peter to take care of the little lambs as well as the older sheep. The word for “shepherd” is the verb *poimainō*, to act as a shepherd, and is a present-tense command to Peter, “be shepherding My sheep.” Going forward Peter was no longer to be a fisherman, but a shepherd taking care of the sheep of Jesus. Later, Peter wrote of this responsibility as he addressed the elders of the churches in 1 Peter 5:1-4:

Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, 2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; 3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Peter had learned that this task of shepherding the flock of God must be done willingly, voluntarily, selflessly and eagerly. It was to be done without being dictatorial, but by setting an example. The shepherding sheep must show the shepherded sheep how to be sheep of Jesus and follow Him.

The sheep belong to Jesus. Jesus does not say to Peter, “tend your lambs,” or “shepherd your sheep,” but makes it clear that the sheep he is to care for are His sheep. So Peter also says to the elders that the flock is “the flock of God.” Church leaders must keep this in view as they lead. Believers belong to Jesus and He is the Good Shepherd. The earthly elders

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shepherding local congregations are looking after His sheep. This is why it is a dangerous thing to take advantage of a pastoral position for personal gain or pleasure. In Matthew 18:6 Jesus warned, "whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea." Shepherding the sheep of Jesus is a very serious task!

This command of Jesus to Peter has application for all of us who love Jesus. We are to care for one another and look after one another. Remember that Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35). If we love Him we are to love and care for each other. This is not just the responsibility of the elders and pastors.

In verse 18 we have the last of the 25 "truly, truly" statements of Jesus in John's gospel. What He says to Peter here is a certainty, "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go." John explains, "Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God." The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges says, "That S. Peter was crucified at Rome rests on sufficient evidence, beginning with Tertullian (*Scorp.* xv.), and that he requested to be crucified head downwards is stated by Eusebius (*H. E.* iii. i. 2) on the authority of Origen. Smith's Bible Dictionary says:

The name of Peter as founder or joint founder is not associated with any local church, save the churches of Corinth, Antioch or Rome, by early ecclesiastical tradition. It may be considered, as a settled point, that he did not visit Rome, before the last year of his life; but there is satisfactory evidence that he and Paul were the founders of the church at Rome, and suffered death in that city.

The time and manner of the apostle's martyrdom are less certain. According to the early writers, he suffered at or about the same time with Paul, and in the Neronian persecution, A.D. 67, 68, all agree that, he was crucified. Origen says that Peter felt himself to be unworthy to be put to death, in the same manner as his Master, and was therefore, at his own request, crucified with his head downward.

As a younger man Peter prepared himself and went where he wanted to go and did what he wanted to do, but when he was old, someone else girded him and brought him to where he didn't want to go. The emperor Nero decided his fate on a human level, but Jesus prophesied it. Jesus knew what was going to happen to Peter, and revealed it to him ahead of time. Though he had denied Jesus when he felt threatened, he would deny Him no more. He would fulfill his promise to die for Jesus. In fact Peter would die as Jesus did, only upside-down. Jesus had told Peter ahead of time that he would deny Him, and now tells him ahead of time that he will die a martyr's death. He will be faithful going forward. His death would glorify God as the death of Jesus had glorified God. God is glorified when His servants lay down their lives for the sake of Jesus, when they refuse to deny Him even under the threat of death.

After telling Peter about what was going to happen to him when he was old, Jesus said to him, "Follow Me!" In his death Peter would follow Jesus. He would fulfill the words of Jesus from Matthew 16:24-26 "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" Following Jesus requires

self-denial. It requires that we do what He did and take up our cross and die to self. Peter would follow Jesus knowing it would eventually cost him his life on this earth. If we are unwilling to say no to self we are not following and cannot follow Jesus. In following Jesus to his death the prayer of Jesus for Peter would be answered and Peter's faith would not fail.

The "disciple whom Jesus loved," was following Jesus and Peter. John is careful to specify that this disciple was the same one who leaned on the bosom of Jesus during the supper and asked, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" It is John himself, of course. I suppose that they were walking along as they spoke, and John followed them. John heard the things that Jesus said to Peter. I'm not sure if Peter knew John was following them until he turned around and saw him. Note that it says in verse 20, "Peter, turning around saw the disciple whom Jesus loved," and verse 21 says, "So Peter, seeing him...". Maybe Peter said to himself, "Well, now John knows what Jesus had to say to me, so what message does Jesus have for John?" It's only fair that if John knows Peter's fate that Peter should know John's. So Peter asked, "Lord, and what about this man?" The answer of Jesus implies that Peter wanted to know what Jesus had to say to John about how John would die. Would John also be martyred? But Jesus would not satisfy Peter's curiosity. He said, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!" Peter did not need to know what would happen to John; it was not his business. His business was to follow Jesus faithfully.

Jesus allowed that it was possible He might want John to remain until His return, but John was quick to squash the inference that he would not die. He points out that Jesus did not say he would not die. Jesus was not intending to say that John wouldn't die, but instead was telling Peter it was none of his business to know how or even if John would die. This was a message to Peter. Tradition says that John died a natural death at old age in Ephesus, close to 100 AD. The Lord may disclose His plans for us, but we don't need to know what He has in mind for others.

It is possible, maybe probable, that verses 24 and 25 were added by an editor after John had completed the gospel. In fact, Marvin Vincent suggests that chapter 21 was "composed subsequently to the completion of the Gospel."¹¹⁰ A. T. Robertson says, "The plural here seems intentional as the identification and endorsement of a group of disciples who know the author and wish to vouch for his identity and for the truthfulness of his witness. Probably we see here a verse added by a group of elders in Ephesus where John had long laboured."¹¹¹ It is interesting to note that in John 19:35 John uses the past tense when he says, "And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe." And then here in verse 24 the writer uses the present-tense and says, "This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true." If the elders in Ephesus were affirming the testimony of John, and adding their endorsement to his words, then perhaps this was written while John was still alive and was still "testifying." John says that he knows he is telling the truth, and the elders also say he is telling the truth. It is one thing for someone to claim they are telling the truth, but if others affirm their testimony it gives more credence to their words; they become more believable.

John made a point of emphasizing that his testimony about Jesus was based on what he had personally seen, heard and touched in 1 John 1:1-4, "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life— 2 and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us— 3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have

¹¹⁰ Vincent, M. R., *Word Studies in the New Testament*

¹¹¹ Robertson, A. T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*

fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. 4 These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.” This is the message of the gospel of John, that the Word of Life, the eternal life, was manifested, and that John wrote down his testimony so that we might have fellowship along with all other believers with the Father and the Son.

Verse 25 switches back to the first-person singular (“I suppose’) and again tells us that there were “many other things which Jesus did” which were not mentioned in the book. John did not try to give us an exhaustive and complete account of all that Jesus did. If such an account were compiled it would be so huge that the world might not be able to contain it. No doubt this is hyperbole. In those days “books” were written on scrolls, and scrolls were limited as to the size that could be produced. It took many scrolls to write a large book, and they took up quite a bit of space. The word translated “in detail” is *heis*, the numeral one. If someone tried to write everything Jesus did in one account there would be too many scrolls for the world to handle. It would be very difficult for anyone to read such a complete account.

As we noted at the outset, the gospel of John is meant to lead us to faith in Jesus Christ and life in His name. Jesus was not sent to condemn us but to save us. Over and over we have seen this emphasis on believing in Jesus and receiving eternal life. Through this gospel Jesus invites us, “come to Me so that you may have life” (John 5:40). It would be a great tragedy to study through this gospel in such depth and still refuse to trust in Jesus Christ.