

# “THAT YOU MAY HAVE LIFE...”

AN IN-DEPTH STUDY OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN



**LARRY DEASON**

# About The Author

Larry Deason has been proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ for 40 years. He has served the Body of Christ as deacon, elder, preacher, missionary, counselor, teacher and writer.

Larry's seminars have been presented throughout the Northeastern United States, Texas, California, Hawaii, and Florida. He has also presented seminars in Australia, New Zealand, Tonga and the Fiji Islands.

While doing mission work in New Zealand Larry co-founded and taught for four years at the Tauranga Two-Year Bible School. He also co-founded and directed the Northeast School of Biblical Studies where he taught for 12 years. He also consulted in the establishing of the South Pacific Bible College in New Zealand. Larry has been a guest lecturer each year for the past 23 years at the South Pacific Bible College.

Larry Deason has written more than 20 booklets, books and in-depth study guides. These books have been distributed in all the states in the USA and in more than 70 nations worldwide including China, Eastern Europe, and Russia.

Larry and his wife Helen have been married for 50 years. They have two daughters, five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Larry Deason continues to do mission work, present his seminars and distribute his books worldwide.

# **Gospel of John**

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Have Life”**

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Third Printing 1998  
Fourth Printing 2006  
Life Communications™  
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Lady Lake, Florida 32158  
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# Contents

Preface .....	i
Acknowledgements .....	ii
<b>PART I: INTRODUCTION (LESSON ONE)</b>	
Lesson One: Introduction to John .....	3
Authorship and Date .....	5
Purpose and Theme .....	13
Key Words: 'Signs,' 'Believe,' 'Life' .....	15
Logical Organization and Key Passage .....	23
The Documented Evidence For Belief (Outline Of John) .....	27
<b>PART II: THE PROLOGUE (LESSON TWO)</b>	
Lesson Two (John 1:1-18) .....	35
Background of ' <i>Logos</i> ' .....	37
John's Use of ' <i>Logos</i> ' .....	47
Relationships of The ' <i>Logos</i> ' .....	51
Alternatives Regarding Belief .....	67
<b>PART III: THE OBJECT OF BELIEF (LESSONS THREE-FOUR)</b>	
Lesson Three (John 1:19-2:22) .....	75
The Baptizer's Testimony (1:19-51) .....	77
Testimony of the Works of Jesus (2:1-22) .....	89

Lesson Four (John 2:23-4:54) .....	101
Interview with Nicodemus (2:23-3:21) .....	103
Further Testimony from the Baptizer (3:22-36) .....	115
Interview with the Samaritan Woman (4:1-41) .....	119
Interview with the Nobleman of Capernaum (4:43-54) .....	131

#### **PART IV: THE ISSUES OF BELIEF AND UNBELIEF**

Lesson Five (John 5:1-6:71) .....	143
The Healing of the Lame Man (5:1-18) .....	145
The Claims of Jesus (5:19-29) .....	155
Testimonial Evidence of the Claims of Jesus (5:30-47) .....	159
The Issues Demonstrated (6:1-21) .....	163
The Issues Explained (6:22-71) .....	169

#### **PART V: THE CLASH OF BELIEF AND UNBELIEF**

Lesson Six (John 7:1-8:59) .....	189
Conflict with the Brothers of Jesus (7:1-9) .....	191
Conflict with the Bewildered Populace (7:10-52) .....	193
Conflict Concerning the Adulterous Woman (7:53-8:11) .....	197
Conflict with the Pharisees and with the Jews (8:12-59) .....	201
Lesson Seven (John 9:1-10:42) .....	213
Conflict Concerning Healing the Blind Man (9:1-41) .....	215
Conflict About the Good Shepherd Discourse (10:1-21) .....	227
Conflict on Solomon's Porch (10:22-42) .....	235
Lesson Eight (John 11:1-12:50) .....	245
Conflict About the Raising of Lazarus (11:1-53) .....	247
The Declaration of Belief and Unbelief (11:54-12:36) .....	257
From Public Controversy to Private Conversation (12:36-50) .....	271

## **PART VI: THE STRENGTHENING OF BELIEF**

Lesson Nine (John 13:1-15:27) .....	283
Rivalry: Obstacle to Unity (13:1-20) .....	285
Betrayal: Obstacle to Unity (13:21-30) .....	295
Glory, Preparation, and Destiny (13:31-14:11) .....	297
The Coming of the Counselor (14:12-31) .....	309
Relationships of the Disciples (15:1-27) .....	315
Lesson Ten (John 16:1-17:26) .....	327
Revelation of Persecution (16:1-6) .....	329
Revelation of the Spirit (16:7-15) .....	331
Revelation by the Resurrection (16:16-24) .....	337
Revelation by Proclamation (16:25-33) .....	339
Jesus' Conversation with the Father (17:1-26) .....	343

## **PART VII: THE VICTORY OVER UNBELIEF**

Lesson Eleven (John 18:1-19:42) .....	359
Judas and Jesus (18:1-11) .....	361
Annas and Jesus (18:12-27) .....	363
Pilate and Jesus (18:28-19:16) .....	367
The Crucifixion of Jesus (19:17-37) .....	377
The Burial of Jesus (19:38-42) .....	387
Lesson Twelve (John 20:1-31) .....	395
Resurrection: The Proof (20:1-10) .....	397
The Living Lord Confronts a Despairing Disciple (20:11-18) .....	401
The Living Lord Turns Depression into Delight (20:19-23) .....	403
The Living Lord Disperses Doubt (20:24-31) .....	405
The Proven Resurrection and Its Effects .....	409

**PART VIII: THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF BELIEF**

Lesson Thirteen (John 21:1-25) .....417

    Jesus and the Disciples by the Sea (21:1-14) .....419

    Jesus and Peter (21:15-23) .....421

    Conclusion (21:24-25).....425

Bibliography .....427

# Preface

Jesus Christ, the Messiah of prophecy, who was born in Bethlehem, grew up in Nazareth, went about doing good all His life; who was crucified at Golgotha and raised miraculously from the dead on the third day; who appeared to many witnesses, ascended into the heavens and ever lives, is *the Son of the living God!*

The historical significance of this reality is thoroughly presented in this magnificent record which is commonly called "John's Gospel" or "The Fourth Gospel."

Over the years, by increasing degrees of growth in knowledge, I have accepted the evidence of this glorious truth. Very early in my life, I was introduced to the simple, easily memorized statement in John 3:16. At the time, I had no real appreciation of that profound, wonderful, and God-revealed fact. However, my study has caused me to reflect continually on the question, "What do you think of the Christ; whose Son is He?" I have come to a firmly fixed faith, based upon John's irrefutable evidence and testimony that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

I pray that you will grow and increase in belief. My desire is that you will marvel, as I have, in the documented reality and absoluteness of the revelation of God our Father in His Son who invites us into life that is life indeed!

Larry Deason

# ***Acknowledgements***

As in all my previous books, I have been blessed in this effort with the loving cooperation of many beloved brothers and sisters in Christ. I owe a special debt of gratitude to my secretary, the late Norma West, who typed the original manuscript into word processing. Her faithful service to me and to many others in the cause of Christ will always be remembered.

My sincere appreciation also goes to Steve Singleton, whose tireless efforts in researching, refining, and laying out my work have greatly enhanced its usefulness. I also gratefully acknowledge the contributions of Susan Ziomek and Bill Bean, who edited and proofread the manuscript through many stages of development and revision.

Larry Deason



# **The Gospel of John: “That You May Have Life”**

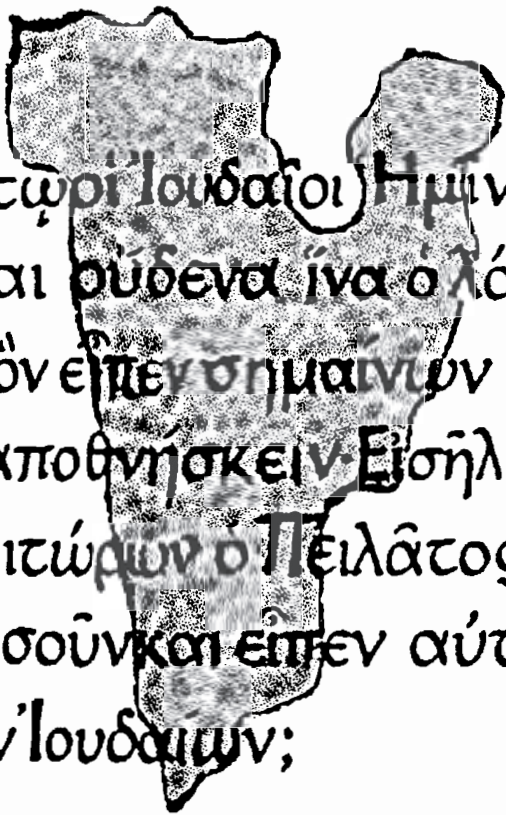
## **Part I**

### ***Introduction***



# Lesson One

## **Introduction**



εἶπον αὐτῷ ῥι'Ιουδαῖοι ἡμῖν οὐκ ἔξεστιν  
ἀποκτεῖναι οὐδὲνα ἵνα ὁ λόγος τοῦ Ἰησοῦ  
πληρωθῇ ὃν εἶπεν σημαίνει ποίῳ θανάτῳ  
ἡμελλεν ἀποθνήσκειν· Εἰσῆλθεν οὖν πάλιν  
εἰς τὸ πραιτώριον ὁ Πειλᾶτος καὶ ἐφώνησεν  
τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ Σὺ εἰ ὁ βασιλεὺς  
τῶν Ἰουδαίων;

The earliest known New Testament manuscript is a fragment of John's Gospel dated to the first half of the second century (some say as early as A.D. 125). Known as the Rylands Fragment (or  $\mathfrak{P}^{52}$ ), this manuscript contains portions of the eighteenth chapter of John on front and back, an amazing confirmation of the authenticity of John's Gospel.

Source: Clifford M. Jones, *New Testament Illustrations* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 95. Reprinted by permission.

# Authorship and Date

- I. Authorship: Nowhere in the text does the author identify himself.<sup>1</sup>
- A. Hints from the text that the author is John the son of Zebedee are the following:
1. The author was probably the unnamed disciple of John the Baptizer who, along with Andrew, left John to follow Jesus (see John 1:37).
    - a. John the son of Zebedee was a fishing partner of Simon and presumably his brother Andrew (see Luke 5:10).
    - b. Not mentioning his own name is parallel to the modesty other New Testament writers display.
      - 1) James calls himself “a servant” of Jesus, not his brother (James 1:1).
      - 2) Jude calls himself the brother of James, but not of Jesus (Jude 1).
      - 3) The only possible self-identification in Mark is the young disciple fleeing naked at the arrest of Jesus (Mark 14:51-52).
      - 4) The “man in Christ” of whom Paul boasts is probably himself (2 Cor. 12:1-10).

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2. The author was also probably the unnamed disciple of Jesus who got permission for Peter to enter the high priest's courtyard (see John 18:15-16).
  - a. This would, at first, seem to rule out John the son of Zebedee as author, for John was from Galilee and may not have been well known to the high priest.
  - b. It must be remembered, however, that since Zebedee was wealthy enough to have servants (see Mark 1:20), his son might be better educated and from a higher social class than some of the other disciples.
  - c. Another possibility is that John (or his father Zebedee) was known to the high priest as a fish merchant.
3. The author was "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (see John 13:23-26; 18:25-27).
  - a. Again, the disciple remains unnamed.
  - b. The phrase, "the disciple whom Jesus loved" need not be a display of sinful pride; it could be the equivalent of "the disciple whose constant failings needed Jesus' constant love."
  - c. This disciple was the one to whom Jesus entrusted His mother.



4. The author was probably the unnamed disciple who was an eyewitness to the crucifixion, especially the piercing of Jesus' side (see John 19:32-35).
  - a. We know that the author records the testimony of an eyewitness at this point in the narrative.
  - b. The most likely interpretation is that he recorded his own testimony.
  - c. This testimony is very much like the one John gives in his first epistle (see 1 John 1:1-3).
5. The author was "this... disciple who testifies to these things," that is, to the Resurrection (John 21:23-25).
  - a. "This disciple" must have been one of the last survivors of the apostolic band (see 21:23).
  - b. "This disciple" was evidently known to his first-century readers by reputation. There are two major clues as to the identity of "this disciple":
    - 1) He was one of a group of seven men who went fishing together. He must have been one of the last four individuals mentioned by the writer in his list of those present on this occasion (John 21:1-2).

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- 2) He was the “disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 21:20).
  - a) This positively identifies him with the disciple at the last supper (John 13:23).
  - b) Therefore, he was of the Twelve, and belonged to the more intimate circle among them.
- 6. The text offers further clues concerning the author’s identity, suggesting John, son of Zebedee and brother of James.
  - a. The vividness of detail used in describing the events recorded in the book suggests reminiscences of an eyewitness (see John 1:39; 2:6; 4:6, 8, 27; 5:2; 6:10, 71;<sup>2</sup> 12:3).
  - b. The author and Peter were close associates (see John 13:23-25; 18:15; 20:8).<sup>3</sup>
    - 1) John is the one disciple closely associated with Peter in the Book of Acts.
    - 2) The reference to “glory” by Peter in 2 Peter 1:16-18 corresponds to the statement in John 1:14. Both references seem to point toward the miracle of the transfiguration of Jesus.

- c. The following are other arguments in favor of John the son of Zebedee as “the [beloved] disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down” (John 21:24):
  - 1) The author was associated with Jesus on intimate terms.
  - 2) He was present at most of the major crises in Jesus’ life.
  - 3) He took care to record such events as had not previously been recorded.
  - 4) His main objective in writing this gospel was the development of belief in those who would read his work.
- B. Those early church “fathers” who speak about the authorship of the Fourth Gospel are unanimous in attributing it to John the son of Zebedee.
  - 1. The second-century witnesses who point to John the son of Zebedee are:
    - a. *The Anti-Marcionite Prologue to John:*

“The gospel of John was revealed and given to the churches by John while still in the body, as one Papias of Hierapolis, a dear disciple of John, recorded... indeed he wrote down the gospel while John faithfully dictated....”<sup>4</sup>

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*Notes:***b. *The Muratorian Canon* (c. A.D. 170):**

This work is mutilated at the beginning; its description of Matthew is lost, along with all of its description of Mark except the last half of the last sentence—"at which however he was present and so he set them down." Luke, it says, was a physician who after the Ascension became a follower of Paul and compiled his Gospel in his own name. "But neither did he [i.e., any more than Mark] see the Lord in the flesh [that is, he was not an eyewitness]." Then it continues: "The Fourth Gospel is [the work] of John, one of the [personal] disciples [of Christ]." We must take this phrase in contrast with what it says about Mark and Luke.<sup>5</sup>

**c. Irenaeus (c. A.D. 130-200):**

"Afterwards [i.e. after the writing of the other gospels] John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon His breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia" (*Against Heresies* 3.1.1; quoted in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.8.4).<sup>6</sup>

**d. Tertullian (A.D. 160-220) (*Against Marcion* 4.2,5):**

After listing the four gospel writers, he refers to the churches founded by John and the succession of bishops derived from John, as evidence for the reception of the Gospels by all Christians.<sup>7</sup>

- e. Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150-215) (as quoted by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.14.7):

“John, last of all, observing that the external facts had been set forth in the existing Gospels, at the urgent request of his friends and by the divine guidance of the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel.”<sup>8</sup>

- f. Papias (A.D. 70-155) (as quoted by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.4):

“[B]ut if ever anyone came who had followed the presbyters, I inquired into the words of the presbyters, what Andrew or Peter or Philip or Thomas or James or John or Matthew, or any other of the Lord’s disciples, had said, and what Aristion and the presbyter John, the Lord’s disciples, were saying. For I did not suppose that information from books would help me so much as the word of a living and surviving voice.”<sup>9</sup>

The distinction Papias apparently makes between the John associated with the apostles and the John associated with Aristion need mean nothing more than that earlier in his life, John was a member of the original group of apostles but lived long enough to become a part of the succeeding generation.<sup>10</sup>

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2. The third-century witness, Origen (A.D. 185-254), concurs with earlier testimony regarding John's authorship of the Fourth Gospel.  
  
"I deem the first fruits of the Gospels to be... the Gospel of John, that which speaks of Him whose genealogy had already been set forth, but which begins to speak of Him at a point before He had any genealogy" (*Commentary on John* 1.6).<sup>11</sup>
- C. Conclusion about authorship: John the son of Zebedee is the most likely candidate.
- II. Date: When and where was "John" written?
  - A. The time of writing may be as late as about A.D. 90,<sup>12</sup> though it could be as early as about A.D. 70.<sup>13</sup>
  - B. The place was probably Ephesus, where, according to ancient tradition, the Apostle John spent his later years.<sup>14</sup>



# Purpose and Theme

- I. Purpose of the book: To sustain the proposition that “*Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.*”<sup>15</sup>
- II. Theme of the book:
  - A. This declaration is clear, showing the author’s intention for writing: “*Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name*” (John 20:30-31).
  - B. The entire book leads up to this statement, finding its goal here.

*Notes:*



## Key words: 'Signs,' 'Believe,' 'Life'

**NOTE:** Used throughout the Gospel, all three of these key words are brought together in the concluding theme: "These [*signs*] are written that you may *believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by *believing* you may have *life* in his name" (John 20:31).<sup>16</sup>

I. 'Signs' (plural form of Gr: *sēmeion*):

- A. There are three other New Testament words (referring to miracles) with much the same meaning (see Heb. 2:4).
  - 1. 'Wonders' (Gr: *teras*) emphasizes the character of the miracle as a "prodigy, portent, omen, wonder";<sup>17</sup> "something outside the usual course of events"<sup>18</sup> (read Acts 2:19; Rom. 15:19; Heb. 2:4).
  - 2. 'Miracles' or 'powers' (Gr: *dunamis*) stresses "the power revealed in the performance of the miracle, and implies the spiritual energy which produced it"<sup>19</sup> (read Matt. 11:20, 21, 23).
  - 3. 'Strange' (Gr: *paradoxos*) pictures "the contradictory nature of the miracle, its incongruity with the order of the natural world, and its strangeness to the usual current of thought"<sup>20</sup> (see Luke 5:26).

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- B. The following remarks are a further discussion of the Greek term *sēmeion* as used by John.<sup>21</sup>
1. *Sēmeion*, when applied to a miracle, implies that the deed is an indication of some power or meaning behind the sign itself. The sign is secondary (see Luke 2:12).
  2. *Sēmeion* is the only word used by John to designate a miracle.
  3. *Sēmeion* therefore, as John uses the term, indicates a miracle viewed as proof of divine authority and majesty.
    - a. It leads the attention of the spectator away from the deed itself, to the doer of the deed.
    - b. It also illustrates a principle in the spiritual realm.
    - c. Thus, 'signs' are absolute *material witnesses* to the underlying *spiritual truths*.
    - d. The 'signs' are "the concrete demonstration of the power discussed in the teaching," and "the teaching attached to each miracle is designed to bring out its spiritual significance."<sup>22</sup> Note for example:
      - 1) The loaves (read John 6:14, 26, 30): *Christ as the bread of life* (compare John 6:35-54)

- 2) The man born blind (read John 9:16): *Christ as the light of the world* (compare John 9:5)
- 3) The raising of Lazarus (read John 11:47; 12:18): *Christ as the giver of life* (compare John 11:23-27)
4. These signs were taken from a larger group that Jesus performed, which were witnessed by the disciples.
5. This suggests that evidence to the *deity* of Christ is well-attested!

II. 'Believe' (Gr: *pisteuō*):

- A. 'Believe' means "believe (in) something, be convinced of something, with that which one believes (in) added; believe in, trust, have confidence."<sup>23</sup>
- B. This verb expresses the purpose and goal of John's method of writing.
  1. "These [signs] are written that you may *believe*."
  2. When signs are present, two reactions are possible: *reception* or *rejection*.
  3. A denial of the miracles is the constant companion of unbelief.
  4. The entire book is an attempt to bring the reader to 'belief.'<sup>24</sup> The Scriptures never demand belief without furnishing adequate reason for commitment.

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C. *Pisteuō* (believe) is used by John over ninety-eight times.

1. "One very interesting fact about the Gospel of John is that the noun form 'faith' (Greek *pistis*) is never used, but the verb form 'believe' (Greek *pisteuein*) is used about a hundred times"<sup>25</sup>
2. It is sometimes translated 'commit' or 'entrust' (see John 2:24; Rom. 3:2; Gal. 2:7).
3. It never means a mere mental assent to a proposition (carefully consider John 3:16 and 3:36).

**NOTE:** Even though faith is more than mental assent, it is not less; it does involve rationality—a reasoned conclusion based on the logical sifting of evidence. This is especially evident in passages where 'believe' is followed by 'that' plus a statement about what is believed (John 4:21; 6:68; 8:24; 11:27, 42; 14:10-11; 16:27; 17:8, 21; 20:31).<sup>26</sup>

The notion that true faith and careful reasoning are mutually incompatible is as unbiblical as it is common. Note, for example, these quotations: "[T]ake out that small computer which is your brain and put it in a little box and shoot it to the moon. Then let God use your heart"; "Don't try to understand it. Just start to enjoy it"; or this counsel about how to speak in tongues: "Put your brain in neutral, put your tongue in high gear, and step on the gas!"<sup>27</sup> This anti-intellectual strain in Christianity goes back at least as far as the Corinthian enthusiasts, to whom Paul gave the rebuke: "Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants,



but in your thinking be adults” (1 Cor. 14:20). Its second-century manifestation was in the Montanist movement.

God is to be loved with “all your mind” as well as with “all your heart” (Mark 12:30; compare Isa. 1:18; 44:19-20). Jesus himself calls on His hearers to “make a right judgment” (John 7:24; compare Luke 7:43; 12:57; Matt. 15:16-17; 16:9, 11; 17:25; 18:12; 21:28; 22:42).

- D. John seeks to lead his readers to a complete personal commitment to “Jesus Christ, the Son of God” by presenting His signs, which display His authority and majesty (i.e., His deity).
1. Evidence is to be weighed in determining whether any proposition or claim is factual or fictitious.
  2. Evidence is judged by the faculty of reason.
  3. Evidence that is sufficiently strong merits acceptance.
  4. Evidence that is accepted causes reason to say, “I believe.”
    - a. If the evidence is weak, by the same honest induction, reason must say “I cannot believe.” (Unbelief is due to ignorance, dishonesty, or weak evidence.)
    - b. Reason’s function is not to determine the plausibility or implausibility of the stated proposition or claim.

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- c. Reason's function is to weigh the evidence or testimony.
- d. When reason has sat in judgment on evidence to determine its worth, it has served its purpose.
- 5. The evidence convinced John and multitudes of others in the first century. (Consider the Book of Acts.)
- 6. Evidence must be examined by an "honest heart" (see Luke 8:15).

III. 'Life' (Gr: *zoë*):

- A. 'Life' is defined as "'life' of life in the physical sense; of the supernatural life belonging to God and Christ, which the believers will receive in the future, but which they also enjoy in the here and now."<sup>28</sup>
- B. Believing is the means to a greater end: 'life.'
  - 1. This word means more than animal vitality or the course of human existence.
  - 2. It is carefully defined by Jesus in John 17:3. Here we have life as a principle; life in the absolute; life as God has it; that which the Father has in Himself, as the "Living One."
    - a. *Zoë* must not be confounded with or defined as mere "existence." (Whatever has life has existence, but many things have existence which have no life.)

- b. *Zoë* is used by John to denote that which is really life:
  - 1) *Zoë* is more than mere animal life.
  - 2) *Zoë* is that which lives *forever*: eternal life (see 1 John 5:13).
  - 3) *Zoë* is not merely motion, activity, or the life principle, but *deathlessness*: eternal life!
- c. John uses the word *zoë* over thirty-five times.
- C. Life, as John presents it, possesses the following elements (carefully consider John 17:3):
  - 1. *Consciousness*: There is no knowledge without conscious existence.
  - 2. *Contact*: One cannot apprehend those things with which one has neither direct nor indirect contact. (This element speaks of a personal relationship to Christ.)
  - 3. *Development*: The knowledge of God cannot remain static; it must be a growing reality.
  - 4. *Continuity*: Knowledge of God presupposes coexistence with Him. (This element speaks of living in fellowship with God.)
- D. Life eternal, man's full and complete destiny, is the objective of John's teaching.
  - 1. Negatively, life is the opposite of 'condemnation' (refer to John 3:17; 5:24).

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- 2. Positively, life is
  - a. Knowledge of God (see John 17:3)
  - b. Satisfaction (see John 6:35)
  - c. Preservation and enjoyment (see John 10:10)
  - d. Eternal duration (see John 12:25)
- E. Life is qualitative as well as quantitative. It is the natural consequence of a complete commitment of oneself to Christ! Jesus Christ is not only an historic reality, but is man's eternal contemporary (see Rev. 1:18).

# Logical Organization and Key Passage

- I. The logical organization of the book is seen in the key words: 'signs,' 'belief,' and 'life' (John 20:30-31).
  - A. The revelation of God is manifested in Christ's *signs*.
  - B. The reaction that the signs ought to evoke is demonstrated in the response of *belief*.
  - C. The result that belief brings is experienced in His gift of *life*.
- II. The key passage of the book explains the content of John's document (John 20:30-31).<sup>29</sup>
  - A. "But *these* [signs] are written": John has been *selective* in his choice of material.
  - B. "In the *presence of his disciples*": The historical record stands *attested* by eyewitnesses.
  - C. "That you may *believe*": The content is *apologetic* in its thrust.
  - D. "That Jesus is the *Christ*": The presentation of Jesus is *interpretive*, as well as objective.
  - E. "The *Son of God*": John's insight into the person of Christ is *definitive*.
  - F. "That by believing you may have *life* in his name": The practical impact of this writing is *effective*.

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# The Seven Signs of the Book<sup>30</sup>

- I. Changing water to wine (see John 2:1-11):
  - A. Jesus effected instantaneously the change that takes the vine months to produce.
  - B. This sign proved Him to be *Master of Quality*.
- II. Healing the nobleman's son (see John 4:46-54):
  - A. The boy was approximately twenty miles away from Jesus at this time. Jesus spoke and the boy was healed at that very moment.
  - B. This sign proved Him to be *Master of Distance or Space*.
- III. Healing the lame man (see John 5:1-9):
  - A. A man, afflicted with a paralyzing sickness for thirty-eight years, was cured instantly at the command of Jesus.
  - B. This sign proved Him to be *Master of Time*.
- IV. Feeding the five thousand (see John 6:1-14):
  - A. From little to much: Jesus multiplied five loaves and two small fish, that it might feed a large multitude.
  - B. This sign proved Him to be *Master of Quantity*.
- V. Walking on the water (see John 6:16-21):
  - A. Jesus revealed His power over the forces of nature.
  - B. This sign proved Him to be *Master of the Elements*.

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VI. Healing the man born blind (see John 9:1-12, 41):

A. This healing deals more with answering the question of the disciples about sin and suffering than with its own inherently difficult nature.

B. This sign proved Him to be *Master of Misfortune*.

VII. Raising Lazarus from the dead (see John 11:1-46):

A. This sign was convincing proof of Jesus' claim, "I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25).

B. This sign proved Him to be *Master of Death*.

**NOTE:** Jesus demonstrated His control over factors beyond human control: quality, space, time, quantity, natural law, misfortune, and death. Christ's superiority over them is proof of His deity!



# The Documented Evidence for Belief (Outline of John)<sup>31</sup>

- I. *Prologue* (1:1-18)
  - A. The *Logos* presented
  - B. The theme stated: *belief*
- II. *The period of consideration*: The presentation of the Object of belief (1:19-4:54)
  - A. The Baptizer's testimony (1:19-51)
  - B. The testimony of Jesus' works (2:1-22)
  - C. Interview with Nicodemus (2:23-3:21)
  - D. Further testimony from the Baptizer (3:22-36)
  - E. Interview with the Samaritan woman (4:1-42)
  - F. Interview with the nobleman of Capernaum (4:43-54)
- III. *The period of controversy*: The issues of belief and unbelief (5:1-6:71)
  - A. The healing of the lame man (5:1-18)
  - B. The claims of Jesus (5:19-29)
  - C. Five witnesses supporting Jesus' claims (5:30-47)
  - D. The issues demonstrated (6:1-21)
  - E. The issues explained (6:22-71)
- IV. *The period of conflict*: The clash of belief and unbelief (7:1-12:50)
  - A. Conflict with Jesus' brothers (7:1-9)
  - B. Conflict with the bewildered populace (7:10-52)

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- C. Conflict concerning the adulterous woman (7:53-8:11)
- D. Conflict with the Pharisees and with the Jews (8:12-59)
- E. Conflict concerning healing the blind man (9:1-41)
- F. Conflict about the Good Shepherd discourse (10:1-21)
- G. Conflict on Solomon's Porch (10:22-42)
- H. Conflict about the raising of Lazarus (11:1-53)
- I. The declaration of belief and unbelief (11:54-12:36)
- J. From public controversy to private conversation (12:36-50)
- V. *The period of conference*: The strengthening of belief (13:1-17:26)
  - A. Rivalry: obstacle to unity (13:1-20)
  - B. Betrayal: obstacle to unity (13:21-30)
  - C. Glory, preparation, and destiny (13:31-14:11)
  - D. The coming of the Counselor (14:12-21)
  - E. Relationships of the disciples (15:1-27)
  - F. Revelation of persecution (16:1-6)
  - G. Revelation of the Spirit (16:7-15)
  - H. Revelation by the Resurrection (16:16-24)
  - I. Revelation by proclamation (16:25-33)
  - J. Jesus' conversation with the Father (17:1-26)
- VI. *The period of consummation*: The victory over unbelief (18:1-20:31)

- A. Judas and Jesus (18:1-11)
- B. Annas and Jesus (18:12-27)
- C. Pilate and Jesus (18:28-19:16)
- D. Crucifixion of Jesus (19:17-37)
- E. Burial of Jesus (19:38-42)
- F. Resurrection: The proof (20:1-10)
- G. The living Lord confronts a despairing disciple (20:11-18)
- H. The living Lord turns depression into delight (20:19-23)
- I. The living Lord dispels doubt (20:24-29)
- VII. *Epilogue*: The responsibilities of belief (21:1-25)
  - A. Jesus and the disciples by the sea (21:1-14)
  - B. Jesus and Peter (21:15--23)
  - C. Conclusion (21:24-25)

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>For detailed discussions in favor of Johannine authorship, see Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*. 3rd rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1970), pp. 241-271 (hereafter cited as Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*); J. B. Lightfoot, *Biblical Essays* (orig. ed.: London: Macmillan & Co., 1893; repr. ed. with intro. by Philip E. Hughes: Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), pp. 3-198 (hereafter cited as Lightfoot, *Essays*). For arguments against Johannine authorship, see Pierson Parker, "John the Son of Zebedee and the Fourth Gospel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 80, 1 (March 1962):35-43. Other scholars argue that much of the information in the Fourth Gospel derives ultimately from John the son of Zebedee, but that the final form of the gospel was written by someone else, perhaps a younger disciple of John (see Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John* [Herder Theological Commentary on the New Testament], 3 vols. [Vol. 1: New York: Herder & Herder, 1968], 1:75-104 [hereafter cited as Schnackenburg]; G. H. C. Macgregor, *The Gospel of John* [Moffatt New Testament Commentary] [New York: Harper & Bros., 1928], pp. xlv-xlii [hereafter cited as Macgregor]).

<sup>2</sup>John 6:71 is the only passage in any of the gospel accounts in which the father of Judas Iscariot is named (R. L. Sturch, "The Alleged Eyewitness Material in the Fourth Gospel," p. 322 in *Studia Biblica 1978: II. Papers on The Gospels* [6th International Congress on Biblical Studies], ed. by E. A. Livingstone [Sheffield, England: Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Suppl. Series 2, 1980]; hereafter cited as Sturch, "Eyewitness").

<sup>3</sup>See S. Agourides, "Peter and John in the Fourth

Gospel," pp. 3-7 in *Studia Evangelica*, vol. 4, ed. by F. L. Cross (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1968); hereafter cited as Agourides, "Peter and John."

<sup>4</sup>C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (London: SPCK, 1960), p. 96 (hereafter cited as Barrett). Compare Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, p. 260.

<sup>5</sup>See p. 98 of "External Evidence for the Authenticity and Genuineness of St. John's Gospel," pp. 45-122 in Lightfoot, *Essays*.

<sup>6</sup>See 1:414 in Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, Allan Menzies, and A. C. Coxe, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, 10 vols. (repr. ed.: Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1979); hereafter cited as *Ante-Nicene Fathers*; 1:454-455 in Eusebius: *Ecclesiastical History* (Loeb Classical Library), 2 vols., trans. and ed. by Kirsopp Lake and J. E. L. Oulton (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926 and 1932); hereafter cited as Eusebius (Loeb). See Barrett, pp. 83-85 for a discussion of this and other passages from the writings of Irenaeus pertaining to the authorship of the Fourth Gospel.

<sup>7</sup>See *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:347, 350; Lightfoot, *Essays*, p. 102.

<sup>8</sup>Eusebius (Loeb), 2:48-49; see also Lightfoot, *Essays*, p. 93.

<sup>9</sup>Eusebius (Loeb), 1:292-293; see also Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, p. 266.

<sup>10</sup>See also Guthrie's discussion (*New Testament Introduction*, pp. 266-268) of this passage from Papias.

<sup>11</sup>*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10:299. See Origen's entire "Commentary on John," *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10:297-408.

<sup>12</sup>"The more extreme theories have been rejected and the majority of scholars are inclined to accept a date somewhere between AD 90 and 100" (Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, p. 283).

<sup>13</sup>Guthrie shows that many of the considerations used as evidence for a late date are inconclusive, while the arguments supporting an early date (pre-A.D. 70) "have not received the attention which they deserve" (*New Testament Introduction*, p. 285). Guthrie ends his discussion of the date of the Gospel without rejecting or endorsing an early date, but he does point out: "[I]t is clear that the earlier the date that can be attached to the Johannine material the greater will its claim to reliability tend to be" (*New Testament Introduction*, p. 287). Leon Morris (*Studies in the Fourth Gospel*, [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1969], pp. 284-285; hereafter cited as Morris, *Studies*) lists eight categories of evidence for a late date: statements of church fathers; the manner of referring to the "Jews" as confirmed enemies of Christianity; John's use of the synoptic Gospels; the absence of a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem explainable as an event long past; a highly developed theology; affinities with First John which some argue is clearly the epistle of an old man; the Fourth Gospel's advanced view of the church; and its references to excommunication from Judaism (relevant to Christians suffering the same thing from Jews of the late first century). Morris is even more insistent than Guthrie that "most of the arguments for a late date are vulnerable" (p. 286). He then proceeds (pp. 286-288) to show the weaknesses in most of these arguments and notes (pp.

288-290) these positive arguments for a pre-A.D. 70 date: John's non-use of what is found in the Synoptics; his omission of any reference to the virgin birth (like Paul, probably the earliest New Testament author); his calling the followers of Jesus "His disciples," rather than "the disciples" or even "the apostles"; his reference to Bethesda in 5:2 as "there is," not "there was" a pool in Jerusalem; the Fourth Gospel's affinities with the Qumran writings, known to have been produced before A.D. 70. Morris concludes (p. 291): "From all this it is plain that the dating of the Fourth Gospel is not easy. It seems to me that there is nothing that demands a date later than AD 70, though I doubt whether we can go beyond that."

<sup>14</sup>Says Irenaeus: "Then, again, the Church in Ephesus, founded by Paul, and having John remaining among them until the time of Trajan, is a true witness of the tradition of the apostles" (*Against Heresies* 3.3.4 [1:416 in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*]; quoted in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.23.4 [Eusebius (Loeb), 1:242-243]); see Barrett, p. 83.

<sup>15</sup>W. C. Unnik complains that this purpose explicitly stated by the author has not been taken seriously enough by scholars or commentators, especially with regard to his purpose to demonstrate that Jesus is the Christ (=Messiah). After showing in detail how this Gospel presents the Messiah, Van Unnik concludes: "[T]he purpose of the Fourth Gospel was to bring the visitors of a synagogue in the Diaspora (Jews and Godfearers) to belief in Jesus as the Messiah of Israel.... John did not write for Christians... except perhaps in ch. 13-17... nor did he envisage pagan readers. His book was not an apology to defend the Christian church, but a mission book which sought to win" ("The Purpose of St. John's Gospel," p. 410 in

*Studia Evangelica*, ed. by Kurt Aland et al. [Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1959]).

<sup>16</sup>For the following discussion of these three key words, see Merrill C. Tenney, *John: The Gospel of Belief* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1948), pp. 28-34; hereafter cited as Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*.

<sup>17</sup>William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, transl. and adapted from the 4th rev. and aug. ed. of Walter Bauer's *Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der übrigen urchristlichen Literatur* (Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1949-1952); 2nd Eng. ed., based on Bauer's fifth ed. (1957-59), rev. by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 812. (Hereafter cited as Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker.)

<sup>18</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 29.

<sup>19</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 29; compare: "of the outward expressions of power: deed of power, miracle, wonder" (Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 208).

<sup>20</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 29; compare: "contrary to opinion or expectation, strange, wonderful, remarkable" (Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 615).

<sup>21</sup>See Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 29; the Greek lexicon defines *sēmeion* as: "a sign consisting of a wonder, an event that is contrary to the usual course of nature" (Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 748).

<sup>22</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 29.

<sup>23</sup>Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, pp. 660-661.

<sup>24</sup>Some assume a distinction between the English words "belief" and "faith" ("BELIEF may or may not imply certitude in the believer whereas FAITH always does

even where there is no evidence or proof" [*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster Inc., 1983), s.v. "be·lief," p. 142]). Throughout this study, however, the two terms are used interchangeably; both are translations of the Greek word *pistis*.

<sup>25</sup>Daniel C. Arichea, Jr., "Translating 'Believe' in the Gospel of John," *Bible Translator* 30, 2 (April 1979):205; hereafter cited as Arichea, "Translating 'Believe' in John"; "The Notion of Faith in the Fourth Gospel," 1:558-575 in Schnackenburg.

<sup>26</sup>See Schnackenburg, 1:561-563.

<sup>27</sup>Mel Tari, Robert Schuller, and a do-it-yourself instruction tape on tongues-speaking quoted in Douglas Jacoby, *The Powerful Delusion: How to Study with Charismatics* (London: Central London Church of Christ, 1987), p. 24; see also Francis A. Schaeffer, *The New Super-Spirituality* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1973).

<sup>28</sup>Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 340.

<sup>29</sup>See Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 34-36.

<sup>30</sup>See Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>31</sup>This outline is adapted from Tenney, *The Gospel of Belief*, pp. 13-16.

# **The Gospel of John: “That You May Have Life”**

## **Part II**

### ***The Prologue***





# Lesson Two

**John 1:1-18**



# Background of 'Logos'<sup>1</sup>

## I. The *logos* existed in Greek thought.<sup>2</sup>

### A. Heraclitus (sixth century B.C.):

1. He said that the primary element from which all things take their rise must be "not water or air as previous thinkers had conjectured, but something more subtle, mysterious and potent—fire."
2. He believed that all things happen according to a law or ruling principle, which he sometimes called 'Justice,' sometimes 'Harmony,' but more frequently 'Logos' (= 'Reason'), and at least twice 'God.'
3. He believed Fire, Logos, and God to be fundamentally the same.

### B. Plato (fourth century B.C.):

1. He also believed in a regulative principle, but he usually called this 'Mind' (Gr: *nous*), not 'Reason' (Gr: *logos*).
2. Three important features of his view:
  - a. He recognized God as the intelligent power who made the world, yet held that matter is in some sense eternal and intractable.

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- b. He did not attribute to reason personality or make it anything other than an attribute of the divine mind.
    - c. His 'ideas' are merely models after which creation is fashioned.
  - C. The Stoics (refer to Acts 17:18):
    - 1. They were the most influential philosophers in the ancient world.
    - 2. They were the first to have a systematic theory about *logos*: "that the entire universe forms a single living connected whole and that all particulars are the determinate forms assumed by the primitive power which they conceived as never-resting, all-pervading fire."
    - 3. They called this the "Seminal Logos."
- II. The *logos* existed in Jewish thought.<sup>3</sup>
  - A. 'Word' as revelation of God in the Old Testament is
    - 1. The creative principle (see Gen. 1:3; Ps. 33:6)
    - 2. The instrument of judgment (Hosea 6:5)
    - 3. The agent of healing (Ps. 107:20)
    - 4. God's active agent (see Isa. 55:11; Ps. 147:15)
  - B. The Old Testament makes hints about personal distinctions within the Godhead.

1. Some maintain that the phrase “Let us make” (Gen. 1:26) suggests a plurality of persons in the Godhead.
    - a. Similar plural “soliloquies” are in Gen. 3:22 and 11:7.
    - b. See also the plural verbs (with God as their subject) in Gen. 20:16 and 35:7.
  2. The priestly blessing (Num. 6:23-26) expresses hope for a threefold blessing from the LORD.
  3. A threefold praise occurs in Isa. 6:2-8.
  4. In some passages, repetitions of the name of God seem to distinguish God from God (see Gen. 18:2-33; Ps. 45:6-7; Ps. 110:1; Hosea 1:7).
  5. Some passages bring together God, His Word, and His Spirit (see Ps. 33:6; Isa. 61:1; 63:9-12; Hag. 2:5-6) as co-causes of whatever effects are under consideration.
- C. Theophanies (manifestations of God) in the Old Testament:
1. Angelic appearances identified with the LORD (see Gen. 16:11, 13; 32:29-31; Exod. 3:2, 6; 13:21)
  2. Angelic appearances distinguished from the LORD (see Gen. 22:15; 24:7; 28:12; Josh. 5:13-15; Judges 6:11-22; 13:9-23; Zech. 1:11-12)<sup>4</sup>

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- D. "Wisdom" in later books of the Old Testament and the Apocrypha:
1. Wisdom is presented as more than just an attribute of man or God; it almost attains a personal identity of its own.
  2. In Job, Wisdom is "the eternal thought in which the Divine Architect ever beholds His future creation" (see Job 28:23-27).
  3. In Proverbs, Wisdom is coeternal with the LORD, and is His partner in the creative acts (see Prov. 8:22-31).
    - a. This may, however, be nothing more than poetic personification of an attribute of God.
    - b. Nevertheless, the New Testament's identification of Jesus with Wisdom (see 1 Cor. 1:31) points back to these passages (compare Col. 2:2-3 with Job 28:1-28; Col. 1:15-20 with Prov. 8:22-31).<sup>5</sup>
  4. Apocryphal wisdom books continue to develop this concept.
    - a. In Sirach, Wisdom exists with God from all eternity (see Sirach 1:4-5; 24:3, 9).
    - b. In Baruch and in Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom is distinctly personal (see Baruch 3:14-37; Wisdom 1:6; 6:12-25; 7:7-11:1).<sup>6</sup>

- E. Targums (popular interpretations and paraphrases of the Old Testament):

Here the three doctrines of the Word, the Angel, and Wisdom are introduced as mediating factors between God and the world. In particular the chasm between the Divine and human is bridged over by the use of such terms as *mē'm'rä'* ("word") and *sh'khinäh* ("glory"). The *mē'm'rä'* proceeds from God, and is His messenger in Nature and history. But it is significant that though the use of this expression implied the felt need of a Mediator, the Word does not seem to have been actually identified with the Messiah.<sup>7</sup>

- F. Rabbinic traditions about the Torah (law of Moses): They endowed it with the same characteristics John attributes to the *Logos*.<sup>8</sup>

1. The Torah was preexistent.
  - a. "Seven things were created before the world was created, namely, the Torah, repentance, the Garden of Eden, Gehenna, the throne of glory, the sanctuary, the name of the Messiah" (*Babylonian Talmud*, Tractate Pesachim, 54, Baraita).
  - b. Compare "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1).
2. The Torah was the companion of God.
  - a. "It [i.e. the Torah] lay on God's bosom, while God sat on the throne of glory" (Midrash on Psalms on 90:3 §12).

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- b. Compare “the Word was with God” (John 1:1) and “who is at the Father’s side [literally ‘in the bosom of the Father’]” (John 1:18).
- 3. The Torah shares God’s divine nature.
  - a. “God spake... My daughter, that is the Torah” (Midrash on Leviticus 20, 10 on 16:10).
  - b. Compare “the Word was God” (John 1:1).
- 4. The Torah was the mediator and means of creation.
  - a. “Through the first-born, God created the heaven and the earth, and the first-born is none other than the Torah” (Midrash on Genesis 1, 1 on 1:1).
  - b. Compare “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:3; see also “firstborn” as a title for Christ in Col. 1:15, 18 and Heb. 1:6).
- 5. The Torah is life.
  - a. “... the words of the Torah are life for the world” (Tannaitic Midrash on Deuteronomy 306 on 32:2).
  - b. Compare “In him was life” (John 1:4).



6. The Torah is light.
    - a. "The world lies in darkness, its inhabitants are without light; for their Law is burned" (4 Esdras 14:20-21).
    - b. Compare "... and that life was the light of men" (John 1:4).
  7. The Torah is truth.
    - a. "Truth, the Torah is meant" (Midrash on Psalms on 25:10 §11).
    - b. Compare "... full of grace and truth" (John 1:14; see also John 1:17).
  8. Can these striking parallels be due to coincidence, in view of the fact that the Torah is called "the Word" over and over again throughout the Old Testament (see for example Ps. 119:11, 16, 17, 25, 28, 38, 41, 42, 43)? No!
- III. Jewish and Greek thought are combined in the teaching of Philo.<sup>9</sup>
- A. Philo (c. 20 B.C. - A.D. 50) was an Alexandrian Jew who sought to make Judaism understandable to those familiar with Greek philosophy.
  - B. He united Greek and Jewish thought about *logos*, using the term some 1300 times.
    1. Following Plato, he conceived of an ideal world existing in the mind of God, with the physical universe as its "visible embodiment."

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2. Based on the double meaning of *logos* as thought and speech, Philo distinguished the *logos* (=reasoning) within the mind of God (Gr: *logos endiathetos*) from the *logos* proceeding from Him (Gr: *logos prophorikos*) which reveals (and accomplishes) His thought.
3. Special features of Philo's *logos* include the following:
  - a. It is distinct from God; it is the instrument while He is the Cause.
  - b. As God's instrument in the creation of the universe, it is necessarily intermediate between God and man.
  - c. Philo's terms for the *Logos Prophorikos* come very close to New Testament terms for Jesus.
    - 1) To Philo, the *logos*, "as the express thought of God and the rational principle of the visible world, ...is 'the Eldest or Firstborn Son of God' " (compare Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:6).
    - 2) It is the "bond" which holds everything together (*De Mundi* 1.592; compare Col. 1:17).
    - 3) He sometimes calls it the "Man of God" or the "Heavenly Man" (compare 1 Cor. 15:46-49; John 3:31).

- 4) Other terms he uses are “the Second God” and “the Image of God” (compare John 1:1; Col. 1:15).
- 5) To express its role as Mediator, Philo calls it “Intercessor” (Gr: *hiketēs*) and “High Priest” (compare Rom. 8:34; Heb. 2:17; 4:14).
- 6) Based on Exodus themes, he calls it “manna” and “bread from heaven” (compare John 6:35), “the living stream” (compare John 4:10-14; 7:37-39), and the “rock” of the wilderness (compare 1 Cor. 10:4).
4. Summary of Philo’s concept of the *logos*:
  - a. He seems to have been torn between a personal Being (following Jewish influence) and an impersonal (following the Greek).
  - b. His *logos* “resolves itself into a group of Divine ideas, and is conceived, not as a distinct person, but as the *thought of God* which is expressed in the rational order of the visible universe.”
  - c. Philo’s understanding of the *logos*, while uninspired and incomplete, nevertheless prepared the world for the acceptance of a divine Savior-Mediator.

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# John's Use of 'Logos'

- I. To John, the *Logos* is not “an idea or thought expressed,” but is rather a *Person* (see John 1:3, 4, 14).
  - A. The *Logos* is not the spoken word, but the Word Himself.
  - B. The *Logos* is not the things revealed, but the Revealer.
  - C. The *Logos* is Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, incarnate. Consider the following passages:
    - 1. John 1:14 (compare Heb. 2:14; 10:5)
    - 2. John 3:16 (compare 1 John 1:1-3)
    - 3. John 1:14 (compare John 1:17-18; 20:30-31)
- II. A comparison of John's *Logos* (the *Logos* of inspiration) as opposed to the *logos* of Greek philosophy and Philo:<sup>10</sup>
  - A. *John*: The *Logos* is religious.  
*Philosophy*: The *logos* is metaphysical.
  - B. *John*: The knowledge of the *Logos* is derived from concrete thought and life and historical fact.  
*Philosophy*: The knowledge of the *logos* is derived from abstract thought.

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- C. *John:* The *Logos* is not intermediate, but is Himself deity. (He is the prime agent of creation.)  
*Philosophy:* The *logos* is the intermediate with which God fashions the world.
- D. *John:* The *Logos* is the Creator of all that is. He is the source of all being, life, and intelligence.  
*Philosophy:* The *logos* is the power which formed the world out of already-existing matter.
- E. *John:* The *Logos* is a Person.  
*Philosophy:* The *logos* hovers between impersonality and personality.
- F. *John:* The *Logos* became flesh.  
*Philosophy:* This concept is an impossibility and is alien to Greek thought.
- G. *John:* The *Logos* is the manifestation of Deity (Christ).  
*Philosophy:* Rationalism affirms the absolute inability of knowing deity.
- H. *John:* The *Logos* manifested is a fact of human history.  
*Philosophy:* The *logos* is never brought into relationship with human history.
- I. *John:* The *Logos* is eternal.  
*Philosophy:* The *logos* was after "eternal matter."
- J. *John:* The *Logos* is the Word and the Messiah promised to Israel.

*Philosophy:* The *logos* is a pure abstraction and is a universal principle (or, in Jewish terms, an archangel).<sup>11</sup>

- III. It can be readily seen that the *Logos* of John is not the *logos* of man's philosophy and theory.
  - A. The biblical concept of the *Logos* is God-originated.
  - B. The *Logos*, the Eternal Word, is Jesus the Christ, made flesh.

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## Relationships of the 'Logos'

- I. The following shows the relationship of the Word to *Deity* (1:1).
  - A. He is eternal.
    1. "In the beginning" (compare Gen. 1:1; 1 John 1:1) does not refer to a particular process, but to the indefinite eternity which preceded all time (compare John 8:58; 17:5; Col. 1:17; 1 Peter 1:20).
    2. The *Logos* did not come into being at any moment. He *always* was.
      - a. This eternal preexistence is the affirmation of Heb. 13:8, John 17:5, and Col. 1:17, in contrast to the view that the *Logos* was the first being created by God, a heresy originating with Arius, a presbyter of the church in Alexandria deposed and excommunicated in A.D. 321.
      - b. On the basis of Col. 1:15 and Prov. 8:22-24 Arianism teaches that Christ was created out of nothing and then became the agent by whom God created all other things. Neither passage, in fact, teaches that the *Logos* was created and not eternal.

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- 1) "Firstborn" (Gr: *prototokos*) of Col. 1:15 does not here have the idea of origination, but refers solely to preeminence (see Exod. 4:22; Ps. 89:27; Jer. 31:9; Heb. 12:23).
- 2) The phrase, "of all creation" does not refer to all created things as the group from which Christ comes (partitive genitive), but to those things as the subjects of the First-born (comparative genitive).<sup>12</sup>
- 3) The picture of Wisdom's birth at the beginning of the creative process (Prov. 8:22-24) surely cannot mean that before creation began, God had no wisdom! It is a poetical picture of the *manifestation* in the created things of the wisdom God had always possessed.
- 4) In a similar way, Christ (the *Logos*) has no origin, but came to be revealed to us in the Incarnation.<sup>13</sup>

B. He possesses personality.

1. The word "with" (Gr: *pros*, with object in accusative) is the same used in Matt. 13:56; Mark 6:3; 11:31; Luke 20:5.<sup>14</sup>
2. It implies association in the sense of free mingling with the others of a community on

terms of equality; thus, the pre-incarnate Jesus, the *Logos*, was on a level with and in communication with God.

C. His nature is Deity.

1. In the Greek text, the *article* is not used in the last clause as in the first.
2. Three alternative explanations have been suggested:
  - a. The *Logos* was God.
    - 1) This is the rendering of the vast majority of English translations, including the King James Version (1611), the American Standard Version (1901), the Revised Standard Version (1945), the New American Standard Bible (1960), Jerusalem Bible (1966), the New International Version (1973), and the New King James Version (1979).
    - 2) This translation assumes that the absence of the article is to be explained by the Greek word order, and does not affect the English rendering.<sup>15</sup>
    - 3) This does not suggest that the *Logos* (the Son) and God (the Father) are identical.<sup>16</sup>

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- b. The *Logos* was divine.
  - 1) See the renderings: “The Word was divine” (Moffatt [1922] and Goodspeed [1931]); “What God was, the Word was” (New English Bible [1961]); “He was the same as God” (Good News Bible [1966]); “The nature of the Word was the same as the nature of God” (William Barclay [1968]).
  - 2) Such a rendering assumes that the absence of the article before ‘God’ suggests that the word ‘God’ should be rendered as if it were an adjective.<sup>17</sup>
  - 3) The Word was Deity; that is, *He possessed and eternally manifested the very nature of God* (read Phil. 2:6-8; Rev. 1:17-18; Heb. 1:1-3).
- c. The *Logos* was a god.
  - 1) This is the rendering of Archbishop Newcome’s translation (1808) and of the New World Translation (1950, rev. 1969).
  - 2) Such a translation is grammatically possible,<sup>18</sup> but “[t]he reason why it is unacceptable is that it runs counter

to the current of Johannine thought, and indeed of Christian thought as a whole.”<sup>19</sup>

- 3) Those who advocate it have doctrinal, not grammatical, reasons for insisting on this rendering: They want to deny the full deity of Jesus Christ.<sup>20</sup>

II. The relationship of the Word to *creation* (1:2-3):

A. Antiquity: The *Logos* existed before creation.

1. “All things *were made*” (the aorist tense is used, thus describing an event, not a process)<sup>21</sup> implies a crisis, a transition from what was not to what is.
2. The use of the aorist emphasizes the fact, rather than the method, of creation.
3. “The *Logos* exists eternally; the material universe temporally.”<sup>22</sup>

B. Agency: The *Logos* is God’s agent of creation.

1. The material creation is the product of the *Logos* (read Heb. 1:2; Col. 1:16).
2. Christ is the medium through whom Deity expresses Himself.

C. Activity: The *Logos* is active in creation.

1. Literally: “and without him became not one thing which has become” (1:3).
2. “Made” (Gr: *ginomai*), translated “made” or “become,” is in the perfect tense; that is,

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- the present state as a continuing result of a previous act.<sup>23</sup>
3. The world in its entirety exists via the agency of the *Logos*, Jesus Christ.
- III. The relationship of the Word to *life* (1:4-5, 9):
- A. The *Logos* is the source of life.
    1. This is not merely conscious existence, but spiritual life, the principle of divine life.
    2. The fount of that life is embodied in the *Logos*, the Christ (John 14:6).
  - B. The *Logos* expresses the significance of life to men.
    1. "That life was the light of men."
      - a. Light is the clear manifestation of God's righteousness (read John 3:19, 20-21; 12:35-36; 1 John 1:7).
      - b. The *Logos*, in its manifestation, brings illumination (see 2 Cor. 4:6).
    2. The world is not readily receptive.
  - C. The *Logos* embodies the strength of life.
    1. "The darkness has not understood [overcome] it" (1:5). "Overcome" (NIV margin—Gr: *katalambanō*)<sup>24</sup> signifies that the darkness cannot "overpower, capture, or overwhelm" the light.
    2. In spite of the continual resistance of darkness by means of hatred and unbelief, light triumphs!

3. The “true light” (1:9) means “true” in contrast to secondary, rather than in contrast to false.<sup>25</sup> (Read John 17:3, where God’s character and ultimate being are emphasized rather than the essential truthfulness of His personality. Compare also 1 John 2:8.)
- D. The *Logos* encompasses the scope of life.
  1. It “gives light to every man....”
  2. From the *Logos* proceeds all spiritual illumination (see John 8:12; 9:5; 12:46).
- IV. The relationship of the Word to the *world* (1:10):
  - A. The Word was present in the world.
    1. “World” (Gr: *kosmos*) is used seventy-seven times by John and here applies to the material and spiritual environment in which men live.<sup>26</sup>
    2. The Word is not separated from the needs that exist in the world.
  - B. The Word was active in the world.
    1. He entered into the framework of life (carefully consider Heb. 2:14).
    2. However, He is not identical with the world: “and the world was made through Him.”

**NOTE:** Here is a prominent distinction in John’s presentation of the Word: “He was,” but “the world was made (or became).”

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- C. The Word was ignored by the world.
  - 1. “[T]he world did not recognize him.”
  - 2. The world, as a system, had no comprehension of the manifested *Logos*, and no place for Him!
  - 3. This ignorance was the basis of the spiritual conflict presented by John: What the world did not appreciate, it rejected, and what it rejected, it hated.
- V. The relationship of the Word to *men* (1:11-13):
  - A. He came to His own (literally, “He came to His own things”).
    - 1. The world was His. He came to visit His own property.
    - 2. The expression, “His own,” is used in John 16:32 and 19:27 referring to personal possessions of the disciples. In John 13:1, it refers to the disciples themselves.
  - B. He was rejected by His own.
    - 1. This idea is graphically portrayed in the parable of the wicked husbandmen (see Matt. 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-16).
    - 2. We will note the rejection of Jesus by “the Jews” throughout the Gospel of John. Christ was accepted by the Samaritans (John 4:1-41), desired by the Greeks (John 12:20-23),



but rejected by the leaders of His own people.

C. He was received by some.

1. The key to receiving the Word: "Believe in his name," as the revelation of the Light that has come into the world (see John 1:12; 3:18; 20:31).
2. The effect of receiving the Word: a new relationship; that is, the obtaining of the right of entrance into God's family (see John 3:1-5; 2 Cor. 5:17).
3. The privilege of receiving the Word: the right (by delegated authority due to consent) to become children of God

**NOTE:** This life is not imparted by biological process. Believers are given the life of God by divine impartation (read carefully John 3:1-6).

VI. The relationship of the Word to flesh (1:14):

A. The act: "The Word became flesh...."

1. The recurrence of *Logos* here connects the subject matter directly with what has gone before (1:1-2). The former passage refers to the eternal nature and relation of the *Logos* to God, and the latter, to a change of relationship to the world of men.
2. He "became flesh."

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- a. He fully shared in our human nature (compare Heb. 1:6; 2:14, 17).
- b. This point was important to offset a growing tendency among early Christians to emphasize Christ's deity to the exclusion of His full humanity.
  - 1) This tendency eventually developed into the Gnostic doctrine called Docetism, which claimed that Christ only seemed to have a human body.<sup>27</sup>
  - 2) John and other New Testament writers refute this theory (see John 4:6; 11:35; 19:28, 34-35; 1 John 4:2; 5:6-8; Matt. 1:1-25; Luke 3:23-37; Matt. 4:2 [parallel: Luke 4:2]; Mark 4:38 and parallels; Gal. 4:4; 1 Tim. 2:5).
  - 3) A variation of this is the claim that Jesus only appeared to have a tangible body after the Resurrection. This also is refuted by New Testament writers (see John 20:26-29; Luke 24:37-43).
  - 4) Ironically, the main problem modern man has is not making Christ too divine to be human, but too human to be divine.

- B. The action: “And lived for a while among us.”
1. “Lived for a while” (Gr: *skēnoō*) literally means “to pitch a tent.”<sup>28</sup>
  2. The invisible, indefinable God descended to the level of daily human life through the Incarnation (see Matt. 1:18-23; Gal. 4:4).
- C. The observation: “We have seen his glory.”
1. This expression denotes the effect which the Incarnation has on finite human senses (see 1 John 3:1-3).
  2. “Have seen” (Gr: *theaomai*) denotes “a careful scrutiny of what is before one in order to understand its significance.”<sup>29</sup>
    - a. All the information that human investigation could produce was made available by His willingness to be questioned and observed.
    - b. The requirements of this kind of observation could not be met by a philosophical argument. A personal self-revelation was required.
  3. This self-revelation of the Word was not limited to only observation (of His body, His person, His character, etc.), but was interpreted to be the exhibition of divine “grace and truth” in all its fullness. This revelation was received by disciples of the incarnate Word (compare John 1:16).

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- VII. The relationship of the Word to *God* (1:16-18):
  - A. The fullness of God, as revealed in Christ, is the source of our many blessings (1:16).
    - 1. “Fullness” (Gr: *plērōma*) means “sum total, fulness, even (super)abundance.”<sup>30</sup>
    - 2. This verse teaches that Christ continually blesses, drawing from an inexhaustible source of grace (see 1 Cor. 10:3-4).
      - a. Christ’s fullness of “grace” (Gr: *kharis*, equivalent to an Old Testament covenant-term for “love”)<sup>31</sup> is the same storehouse from which God has always drawn (see Exod. 20:6; 34:6-7; Num. 14:18-19; Deut. 5:10; Neh. 9:17; etc.).
      - b. We receive from Him “one blessing after another” (literally, “grace for grace”;<sup>32</sup> see Eph. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:20).
  - B. These blessings through Christ are far beyond what the law could bring us (1:17).<sup>33</sup>
    - 1. What is being compared with what?
      - a. The law is being compared with grace and truth.
        - 1) Although the law was at the center of the Jews’ search for eternal life (see John 5:39), it could not provide eternal life.
        - 2) The phrase “grace and truth” (also rendered “love and faithfulness”)

occurs again and again in the Old Testament referring to God's covenant relationship with His people (see Exod. 34:6; 2 Sam. 2:6; 15:20; Ps. 40:11; 57:3; 61:7; 85:10; 86:15; 89:14; 115:1; 138:2).

- b. Moses is being compared with the *Logos*.
  - 1) Moses was only an intermediary involved in the giving of the law.
    - a) God (here understood to be the Giver)<sup>34</sup> was the law's ultimate Source, not Moses.
    - b) Moses merely passed on to the people what God revealed to him (read carefully John 5:39-47 and compare Gal. 3:19-20; Acts 7:35-39).
  - 2) Jesus is *not* presented as an intermediary (see the development of this comparison in John 6:30-59 and Heb. 3:1-6).
- 2. What is the nature of these comparisons?
  - a. Contrast? A contrast is involved, but this verse cannot be denying that the law is an expression of God's grace or God's truth (see Rom. 7:7-20 and Gal. 3:19-25).

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- b. Completion? This is the idea: The law introduces God's grace and truth, but Jesus is the fullest embodiment of God's grace and truth (see Matt. 5:17-20; Rom. 10:4; Col. 2:16-17; Heb. 10:1-10).
- C. The *Logos* has made known the invisible God (1:18).
  - 1. Although the unveiled essence of Deity has never been given to the sight of man, the true character of God can be seen in the Son (see John 10:30; 14:9).
    - a. The Son is the fullest expression of the Father's life and love (see John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9; Col. 2:9; 2 Cor. 4:6).
    - b. This beheld "glory" speaks of a unique relationship that transcends the concept of creation (John 8:58).<sup>35</sup>
      - 1) Several ancient manuscripts establish the preferred reading of the text as "God the one and only."<sup>36</sup>
        - a) This reading, well supported among the early manuscripts, is also more difficult and therefore more likely original, for scribes usually changed the text to make it easier to understand, not harder.

- b) An alternate reading, “the one and only Son,” is probably a scribal change to conform with 3:16, 18 and 1 John 4:9.
    - c) Another reading, “the one and only” (omitting both “Son” and “God”) has too little manuscript support to be considered.
  - 2) “One and only” (Gr: *monogenēs*) does not deal with physical generation,<sup>37</sup> but rather denotes
    - a) “The only One of His kind”<sup>38</sup>
    - b) “The sole representative of being and character of the One who sent Him”
    - c) “Not an event of time, but a fact irrespective of time”
- 2. “[He] has made him known”: The essence of God the Father has been made known by God the Son.
  - a. This has been done by One qualified to do so through kinship and personal understanding.
  - b. “Has made (him) known” (Gr: *exegeomai*) implies that “[t]he interpretation of God given by the Son is complete and final as far as the needs of men are concerned”<sup>39</sup> (see Heb. 1:1-2).

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# Alternatives Regarding Belief

- I. The alternatives are:<sup>40</sup>
  - A. Jesus never lived, but was the product of a human mind; that is, He originated in John's imagination. *But this is unreasonable, since modern advancements in human ingenuity have utterly failed to invent a character superior or even equal to John's "Jesus."*
  - B. He lived, but was simply a great teacher, philosopher, and moralist. *But this alternative must be discarded on the basis of His own explicit claims.*
  - C. Jesus was who He claimed to be: *the Son of God, the Messiah of biblical prophecy.*
- II. The evidence presented by the book of John must be weighed by reason. Reason, unhindered by mental and moral deficiencies, must come to the only logical and believable conclusion: *"My Lord and my God"* (read John 20:24-31).

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Most of the material in this section is from Archibald Alexander, "Logos," 3:1911-1917 (hereafter cited as Alexander, "Logos") in *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, 5 vols., ed. by James Orr et al. (orig. ed.: Howard-Severance Co., 1929; reprint ed.: Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1939).

<sup>2</sup>Direct quotations in part I are from Alexander, "Logos," p. 1912.

<sup>3</sup>Direct quotations in part II are from Alexander, "Logos," p. 1913.

<sup>4</sup>"Who was this angel? The earliest Fathers reply with general unanimity that He was the 'Word' or 'Son of God'" (Alexander, "Logos," p. 1913).

<sup>5</sup>Schnackenburg holds that the "Logos" of John's Gospel is a development from the Jewish concept of Wisdom as the personification of a divine attribute to Wisdom as a personal Being sharing the nature of Deity (see "The Origin and Nature of the Johannine Concept of the Logos," 1:481-493 in Schnackenburg). For the backgrounds to John's concept of the preexistence of the "Logos," see "Pre-existence," 1:494-506 in Schnackenburg.

<sup>6</sup>See Wisdom 9:1: "O God of my father, and Lord of mercy, who has made all things with your word...."

<sup>7</sup>Alexander, "Logos," p. 1913.

<sup>8</sup>The following list comes from G. Kittel, "λεγω," 4:135-136 in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. by G. Kittel, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1967); hereafter cited as *TDNT*. See this source for references to published editions of the rabbinic literature quoted.

<sup>9</sup>Most of the material, and especially direct quotations

in part III are from Alexander, "Logos," pp. 1913-1914.

<sup>10</sup>See Alexander, "Logos," p. 1916.

<sup>11</sup>The idea that the preexistent *Logos* was an archangel has been taken up by the Jehovah's Witnesses (see *Make Sure of All Things* [Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, 1965], p. 288; *Aid to Bible Understanding* [Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, 1971], p. 1152; hereafter cited as *Aid to Understanding*). See Bruce M. Metzger, "The Jehovah's Witnesses and Jesus Christ: A Biblical and Theological Appraisal," *Theology Today* 10 (April 1953):65-85; hereafter cited as Metzger, "Jehovah's Witnesses and Christ."

<sup>12</sup>See A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 6 vols. (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1931), 4:477-479 (hereafter cited as Robertson, *Word Pictures*); F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1957), pp. 193-196.

<sup>13</sup>For an extended discussion of Prov. 8 in relation to Christ, see Ronald B. Allen, *The Majesty of Man: The Dignity of Being Human*, ed. by Rod Morris (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1984), pp. 158-170. Arianism persists today among several pseudo-Christian cults, including the Jehovah's Witnesses, The Way International, and the Unification Church.

<sup>14</sup>See Robert W. Funk, ed., *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, translated and edited from F. Blass and A. Debrunner, eds., *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch* (10th edition: Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht,

1959); English edition: (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), § 239, 1 (p. 124); hereafter cited as Blass-Debrunner-Funk.

<sup>15</sup>E. C. Colwell says, “A definite predicate nominative has the article when it follows the verb; it does not have the article when it precedes the verb.... The opening verse of John’s Gospel contains one of the many passages where this rule suggests the translation of a predicate as a definite noun. The absence of the article [before *theos*] does *not* make the predicate indefinite or qualitative when it precedes the verb; it is indefinite in this position only when the context demands it. The context makes no such demand in the Gospel of John, for this statement cannot be regarded as strange in the prologue of the gospel which reaches its climax in the confession of Thomas [‘My Lord and my God’—John 20:28]” (“A Definite Rule for the Use of the Article in the Greek New Testament,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 52 [1933]:21; the entire article is on pp. 12-21). Since this article in 1933, scholarly discussion has continued (for a summary, see D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984], pp. 86-88; hereafter cited as Carson, *Fallacies*).

<sup>16</sup>Carson (*Fallacies*, p. 61) points out: “Statements of identity are not necessarily identical: ‘a dog is an animal’ does not imply ‘an animal is a dog.’ Thus ‘the Word was God’ does not imply ‘God was the Word.’ It is true that whoever has the attributes of God must be God; but if that person who has the attributes of God also has some other attributes, we cannot say God is that person.... The fourth evangelist certainly gives the impression that although God is one, he is some kind of plural unity; for he does not hesitate to have the incarnate Word addressed as Lord and God (20:28). That same perspective may permit us to let

the second and third clauses of John 1:1 stand side by side without embarrassment.”

<sup>17</sup>See Blass-Debrunner-Funk, §252 (p. 132). Similar is the construction of the Greek text in John’s usage of “man” when referring to the Baptizer: “A human came along, having been sent by God; John was his name.” C. H. Dodd argues for some such translation (see “New Testament Translation Problems II,” *The Bible Translator* 28, 1 [Jan. 1977]:101-104; hereafter cited as Dodd, “Problems”). See also Phillip B. Harner, “Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 92 (1973):75-78.

<sup>18</sup>C. H. Dodd admits: “As a word-for-word translation it cannot be faulted, and to pagan Greeks who heard early Christian language, *θεος ἦν ὁ λόγος* might have seemed a perfectly sensible statement, in that sense” (“Problems,” p. 101). F. F. Bruce calls this “a frightful mistranslation” (*Answers to Questions* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1972], p. 66; hereafter cited as Bruce, *Answers to Questions*).

<sup>19</sup>Dodd, “Problems,” p. 102.

<sup>20</sup>The Jehovah’s Witnesses, for example, *claim* that their rendering “the Word was a god” is based on grammatical considerations, but their consistent rendering of *theos* without the article as ‘God’ (e.g. Matt. 27:46; Mark 12:26, 27; John 8:54; Rom. 8:33; and many, many more [all examples in which *theos* is in the same case as in John 1:1]) betrays their underlying theological motivation to render it ‘a god’ in this verse (see Robert Countess, *The Jehovah’s Witness New Testament* [Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publ. Co., 1982], pp. 41-59, 90, 105-131; Michael Van Buskirk, *The Scholastic Dishonesty of the Watchtower* [Costa Mesa, CA: CARIS, 1976]). The

leader of the cult, The Way International, avoids the plain meaning of John 1:1 by committing a hermeneutical error called “overspecification”: he makes the three occurrences of *logos* in the verse refer to three different things: God himself, Christ, and the written word (Victor Paul Wierwille, *Jesus Is Not God* [New Knoxville, OH: American Christian Press, 1975], pp. 83-124, 159-163 [hereafter cited as Wierwille, *Jesus is Not God*]; for a discussion of overspecification, see Carson, *Fallacies*, pp. 110-115; James Sire, *Scripture Twisting: Twenty Ways Cults Misread the Bible* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980], pp. 62-64, 157).

<sup>21</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 65; This is an example of the complexive (constative) aorist, used “for linear actions which (having been completed) are regarded as a whole” (Blass-Debrunner-Funk, §332 [p. 171]).

<sup>22</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 66.

<sup>23</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 66; see Blass-Debrunner-Funk, §340 (pp. 175-176).

<sup>24</sup>The word *katalambanō* should not be taken to mean “understood,” as in the NIV text. Although it is true that darkness has never understood the light (see 1 Cor. 2:8), yet the context of this passage, as well as that of all of John’s writings (see John 3:19-21; 1 John 2:8-11) suggests the idea of a battle, not a tutoring session, between light and darkness. “But perhaps John intended to include both meanings here” (Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 413). David W. Wead suggests such a practice of intended double meaning is also found in Qumran and the Old Testament, and he discusses numerous instances of double meaning in John’s Gospel (though not 1:5) (“The Johanne Double Meaning,” *Restoration Quarterly* 13, 2 [1970]:106-120; hereafter cited as Wead, “Double Mean-

ing”). See also Morris, *Studies*, pp. 324-325.

<sup>25</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 67.

<sup>26</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 67; compare the Greek lexicon’s definitions: “the world as the earth, the planet upon which we live; the world as the habitation of mankind; the world as mankind; the world as the scene of earthly joys, possessions, cares, sufferings; the world, and everything that belongs to it, appears as that which is hostile to God, i.e. lost in sin, wholly at odds with anything divine, ruined and depraved” (Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 446). F. F. Bruce sees John’s many references to “the world” as his way of setting forth “the permanent and universal significance of the life and work of Christ” (“‘The World’ in the Writings of John,” pp. 179-181 in *Jesus: Lord & Savior* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986]).

<sup>27</sup>See *Gospel of Peter* (1:179-187 in Edgar Hennecke and R. McL. Wilson, eds., *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2 vols. [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963]; hereafter cited as Hennecke, *NT Apocrypha*). See also Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.12.2-6 (Eusebius, [Loeb], 2:40-42).

<sup>28</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 70; compare the Greek lexicon’s definition: “live, dwell” (Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 755).

<sup>29</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 71; compare the Greek lexicon’s definition: “see, look at, behold, come to see, visit” (Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 353).

<sup>30</sup>Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 672.

<sup>31</sup>The Hebrew term is *khesedh* (see Walther Zimmerli, “*חֶסֶד*, B. Old Testament,” 9:376-387 in *TDNT*).

<sup>32</sup>*Kharin anti kharitos*: “With the meaning ‘to follow without ceasing’” (Blass-Debrunner-Funk §208 [p. 112]).



The Greek grammar just cited then gives the following list of passages in which various prepositions are employed to convey the same idea of a seemingly endless succession: of griefs (Phil. 2:27); of death or of life (2 Cor. 2:16); of glories (2 Cor. 3:18); of strength (Ps. 84:7); and of evil (Jer. 9:3).

<sup>33</sup>For a discussion of this important verse, see Severino Pancaro, "Jn 1,17," pp. 534-546 in *The Law in the Fourth Gospel* (Novum Testamentum Supplement #42), (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975) (hereafter cited as Pancaro, *Law*); Gerald Sloyan, *Is Christ the End of the Law* (Biblical Perspectives on Current Issues), ed. by Howard C. Key, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), pp. 114-121.

<sup>34</sup>Using a passive verb and intentionally omitting reference to God as the understood agent of an action (in this case, the giving of the law) was one of several ways the first-century Jews had of avoiding taking God's name "in vain" (see Joachim Jeremias, "Μωυσης," *TDNT* 4:873; Donald S. Deer, "The Implied Agent in Greek Passive Verb Forms in the Gospel of Matthew," *Bible Translator* 18, 4 [1967]:164-167).

<sup>35</sup>Th. C. De Kruijf points out that "glory" in John's Gospel can be nothing other than the witnessing of Christ's death, and suggests that John is recalling the sacrifice of Isaac as a type of Christ's sacrifice ("The Glory of the Only Son [John I 14]," pp. 111-123 in *Studies in John* [Novum Testamentum Supplement #24], [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970]; hereafter cited as De Kruijf, "Only Son").

<sup>36</sup>See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), p. 198; hereafter cited as Metzger, *Textual Commentary*. See also Frank Pack, "Problems in the Translation of the Gospel of John," *Restoration Quarterly*

16, 3-4 (1973):209-210; hereafter cited as Pack, "Problems in John," pp. 209-210.

<sup>37</sup>"The translation 'only begotten Son,' though venerable, fails to capture adequately John's point in his use of *monogenēs huios* (or *monogenēs theos* in John 1:18), particularly because it leaves open the possibility of an etymological emphasis on *genes* (the idea of generation), because it neglects then current usage for the word, and because it fails to set the determination of meaning in the context of John's avowedly heightened christological perspective" (Richard Longenecker, "The One and Only Son," p. 126 in *The NIV: The Making of a Contemporary Translation*, ed. by K. L. Barker [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1986]; hereafter cited as Longenecker, "One and Only Son"); see also Dale Moody, "God's Only Son: The Translation of John 3 16 in the Revised Standard Version," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 72 (1953):213-219 (hereafter cited as Moody, "Only Son").

<sup>38</sup>De Kruijf ("Only Son," pp. 112-114) notes how *monogenēs* is used in the Greek Old Testament and other Jewish literature synonymously with "beloved" (Gr: *agapētos*), usually with reference to an only child. See also Longenecker, "One and Only Son," pp. 119-126; Moody, "Only Son"; John V. Dahms, "The Johannine Use of *Monogenēs* Reconsidered," *New Testament Studies* 29 (1983):222-232.

<sup>39</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 73; the Greek lexicon defines *exēgeomai* as: "explain, interpret, tell, report, describe" (Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 275).

<sup>40</sup>For a discussion of similar alternatives, see pp. 107-113 in Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (San Bernadino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ, 1972); hereafter cited as McDowell, *Evidence*.



# **The Gospel of John: “That You May Have Life”**

## **Part III**

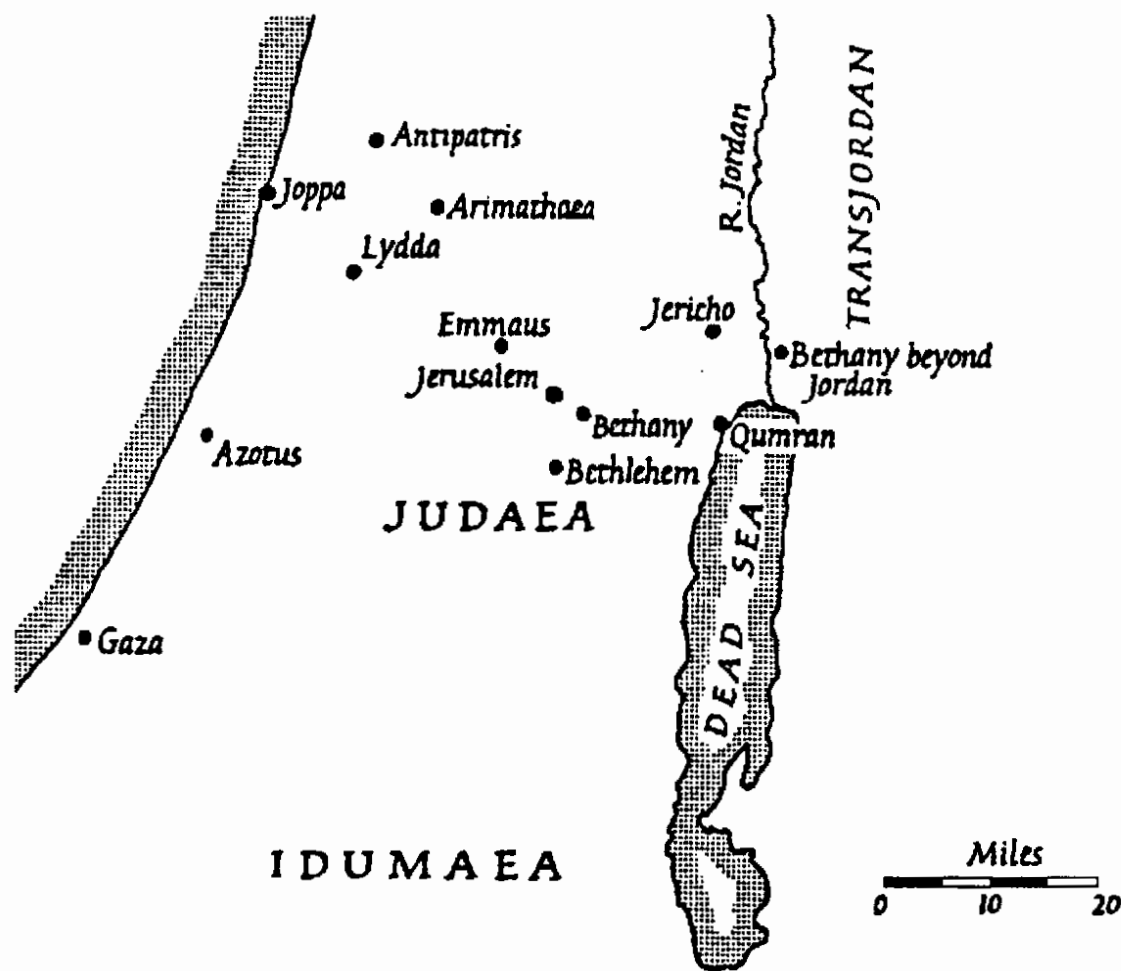
### ***The Object of Belief***





# Lesson Three

**John 1:19 - 2:22**



"This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing" (John 1:28). Some scholars identify this Bethany with Beth-Nimrah, just across the Jordan from Jericho (see map). Pierson Parker<sup>1</sup> suggests it is the Bethany near Jerusalem, claiming the verse should be translated, "This all happened at Bethany, across the Jordan from where John was baptizing."

<sup>1</sup>Pierson Parker, "Bethany Beyond Jordan," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 74 (1955):257-261.

# The Baptizer's Testimony

## —John 1:19-51

- I. John's Testimony: Someone greater is coming... and is now here (1:19-34).

**NOTE:** These events, unrecorded in the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), must have taken place shortly after Jesus' baptism and forty-day wilderness temptations. This is an example of how John's Gospel serves to fill in the gaps in the Synoptics.

- A. John is declared to be a witness (see John 1:6-8, 15).
1. He is described as "a man who was sent from God" (1:6).
  2. He is announced as a witness concerning "the light" (1:7).
  3. He is designated as a subordinate: he pointed to Christ (1:8, 15).
- B. John's declaration as a witness is described (see John 1:19-34).
1. His testimony was in response to questions from priests and Levites sent to him from "the Jews"<sup>1</sup> of Jerusalem.
    - a. "Who are you?" (1:22)
    - b. "What do you say about yourself?" (1:22)
    - c. "Why then do you baptize?" (1:25; see also Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3)

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**NOTE:** These questions regarding John's authority demonstrate the bewilderment of the Jewish leaders concerning the person and ministry of John the Baptist.

2. His answers to their questions (with additional testimony) are as follows:
  - a. Concerning himself, he testified:<sup>2</sup>
    - 1) "I am not the Christ" (1:20).
      - a) "The Messianic Hope,"<sup>3</sup> rooted in a deep-seated desire to recover the golden days of David and Solomon, was cultivated by the prophets' glowing pictures of the coming messianic age (such as Joel 2:28-3:21; Isa. 26-29; Dan. 12; Ezek. 40-48).
      - b) Intertestamental troubles intensified this hope (see the apocryphal Psalms of Solomon 17-18).
      - c) The hope of the coming Messiah took many different forms, but the predominant one was the idea of a Davidic king, who would establish an earthly kingdom for the people of Israel and would banish Israel's enemies.
        - i. The Messiah was to be a political agent, but with a religious bias.

- ii. The concept was a curious mixture of nationalistic and spiritual hopes.”<sup>4</sup>
- d) Such expectations gave rise to many who claimed to be the Messiah, as both Josephus (*Antiquities* 18.3-8, 23-25, 85-87; Slavonic addition, replacing *Jewish War* 1.364-370)<sup>5</sup> and the New Testament itself show clearly (see John 7:26-27, 36, 41-43; Acts 5:36-37).
- 2) “I am not [Elijah]” (1:21).
  - a) Expectation of “Elijah” was great, because Elijah’s coming had been prophesied (Mal. 4:5).
  - b) Intertestamental Jewish literature intensified the anticipation of the people.  
 Sirach 48:4, 10 (Heb. c. 180 B.C., Gr. c. 132 B.C.) says: “How glorious you were, O Elijah, in your wondrous deeds ... you who are ready at the appointed time, it is written, to calm the wrath of God before it breaks out in fury, to turn the heart of the father to the son, and to restore the tribes of Jacob.”<sup>6</sup>
  - c) John was not the reincarnation of Elijah,<sup>7</sup> but he did come “in the

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spirit and power of Elijah” (that is, having a mission and method similar to Elijah’s; see Luke 1:17 and compare Matt. 17:10-13; Mark 9:11-13).

**NOTE:** Rabbinic literature records oral tradition current in the days of John.<sup>8</sup> Sotah 9.15 says: “R. Phineas b. Jair says: Heedfulness leads to cleanliness, and cleanliness leads to purity, and purity leads to abstinence, and abstinence leads to holiness, and holiness leads to humility, and humility leads to the shunning of sin, and the shunning of sin leads to saintliness, and saintliness leads to [the gift of] the Holy Spirit, and [the gift of] the Holy Spirit leads to the resurrection of the dead. And the resurrection of the dead shall come through Elijah of blessed memory. Amen.”

Eduyoth 8.7 says: “R. Joshua said: I have received as a tradition from Rabban Johanan b. Zakkai, who heard from his teacher, and his teacher from his teacher, as a Halakah given to Moses from Sinai, that Elijah will not come to declare unclean or clean, to remove afar or to bring nigh, but to remove afar those [families] that were brought nigh by violence and to bring nigh those [families] that were removed by violence.... R. Judah says: To bring nigh but not to remove afar. R. Simeon says: To bring agreement where there is matter for dispute.<sup>9</sup> And the sages say: Neither to remove afar nor to bring nigh, but to make peace in the world, as it is written, Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet... and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers.”

- d) This same expectation is reflected in the New Testament (see Mark 6:14-15; 8:27-28; 9:11; 15:36).

- 3) "No. [I am not *the prophet*]" (1:21).
  - a) Just as the Jews expected Elijah and the Messiah to come before the dawning of the great golden age, they also expected the prophet whom Moses had predicted (see Deut. 18:15; John 1:25; 6:14; 7:40; possibly 7:52; 8:40 and possibly 8:52 [NIV note]).
  - b) Some of them identified this prophet with Elijah or with the Messiah, but others apparently saw him as a third messianic figure to be expected (compare Mark 9:2-13 and parallels).<sup>10</sup>
- 4) "I am the voice..." (1:23; see Isa. 40:3; Mark 1:3; Matt. 3:3; Luke 3:4-6).
- b. Concerning his baptism, he testified that
  - 1) His authority for this work was given by God and by Christ (1:26, 30)
  - 2) The Holy Spirit had dramatically ratified this work (1:32)
  - 3) The purpose of this work was "that he [the Son of God] might be revealed to Israel" (1:31)

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**NOTE:** G. R. Beasley-Murray<sup>11</sup> discusses these antecedents to the baptism of John: (1) washings in the Old Testament;<sup>12</sup> (2) Jewish baptizers and the Qumran community;<sup>13</sup> and (3) probably Jewish proselyte baptism.<sup>14</sup> Of these, the first is by far the most important. Beasley-Murray goes on to describe John's baptism as having "two focal points: it inaugurated the new life of the converted, so assuring the baptized of forgiveness and cleansing from sin; it anticipated messianic baptism with Spirit and fire, so giving assurance of a place in the Messiah's kingdom."<sup>15</sup>

c. Concerning Jesus, he testified:

- 1) "[This is He,] the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie"; that is, "He is greater than I" (1:27).

**NOTE:** Rabbinical tradition taught: "A disciple might offer any service to his teacher which a slave did for his master, except that of unfastening his shoes, which was counted as a menial's duty."<sup>16</sup>

- 2) "[He is] the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world"; that is, "*He is Savior*" (1:29; compare John 1:36; Acts 8:32; 1 Peter 1:19).

**NOTE:** What Old Testament use of "lamb" is John referring to? There is no lack of possibilities. Leon Morris mentions images which various scholars have suggested: the Passover lamb (Exod. 12); the lamb "led to the slaughter" (Isa. 53); the daily sacrifice (Num. 28); the "gentle lamb" (Jer. 11:19); the scapegoat (Lev. 16); the triumphant sheep of intertestamental apocalypses (e.g. 1 Enoch 90); and the lamb that God provides (Gen. 22).<sup>17</sup> In addition to



listing several of these same possibilities, W. Phillip Keller adds the animal killed for providing a covering for Adam and Eve (Gen. 3) and Abel's sacrifice (Gen. 4).<sup>18</sup> The Baptizer apparently combines many of these images of the lamb from the Old Testament; no one of them seems adequate.<sup>19</sup>

- 3) "He was before me" (literally translated, "first [in comparison] to me"); that is, "He is both preeminent and preexistent."<sup>20</sup>
- 4) "He... will baptize [literally 'baptizes'; the present participle may indicate that this baptizing is characteristic of the Messiah's continual ministry]<sup>21</sup> in the Holy Spirit" (1:33).
- 5) "This is the Son of God" (1:34).
- 6) "He must increase, I must decrease" (3:30).

**II. The testimony of five early disciples: We have found Him (1:35-51).**

**A. First day: Two disciples volunteer, one is recruited (1:35-42).**

1. The Baptizer prompts Andrew and another man (probably John)<sup>22</sup> to follow Jesus (1:35-40).
  - a. The Baptizer again testifies that Jesus is the Lamb of God.
  - b. Two of John's disciples leave him to follow Jesus.

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2. Andrew recruits his brother Simon (1:41-42).
  - a. He testifies to Simon that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ (see John 1:20).
  - b. Jesus receives Simon and renames him "Cephas," that is, "Peter" (compare Mark 3:16; Matt. 16:18; see also Mark 3:17).

*NOTE:* In the Old Testament, names for children were often chosen which expressed the parents' present situation (see, for example, Gen. 29:31-30:24). The naming of a son or daughter could be used as an opportunity to impart a parental blessing or curse on the child, laying out the child's expected character or fortunes (probable examples include Ruth 4:17; 2 Sam. 12:24). In a similar way, God renamed Abram, Sarai, and Jacob (see Gen. 17:5, 15; 32:28; 35:10; compare 2 Sam. 12:25) at a pivotal point in His relationship with each. An extraordinary event in a person's life might cause a name change, either by the person himself or herself, or by others (see Judges 6:32; Ruth 1:20).

The early church apparently continued the practice (see the renaming of Joseph as "Barnabas" in Acts 4:36; and perhaps the renaming of Saul as "Paul" in Acts 13:9). In later times, the names of former pagans would be changed at their baptism to symbolize the radical nature of their conversion.<sup>23</sup>

Jesus used this renaming to point "to his character as 'the rock man.' Peter appears in the Gospels as anything but a rock. He is impulsive, volatile, unreliable. But that was not God's last word for Peter. Jesus' words point to the change that would be wrought in him by God's power."<sup>24</sup> "Rock" was being used to signify "firmness" as early as Homer (*Odyssey* 17.463; see also Ezek. 3:9).<sup>25</sup>

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- B. Second day: One disciple is called, one is recruited (1:43-51).
1. Jesus calls Philip to follow Him (1:43-44).
    - a. After deciding to leave for Galilee, he calls a Galilean.
    - b. Philip is from Bethsaida, the town of Andrew and Peter.
  2. Philip recruits Nathanael (1:45-46).
    - a. Philip testifies to Nathanael that Jesus of Nazareth is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies (compare Luke 24:26-27, 44-49).
    - b. Nathanael is skeptical when he hears Jesus is from Nazareth (see John 7:41-42, 52; and compare Matt. 2:3-6).
  3. Jesus challenges Nathanael and stimulates his faith (1:47-51).
    - a. He reveals miraculous knowledge of Nathanael (1:47-49).
      - 1) He reveals His knowledge of Nathanael's integrity (1:47).
      - 2) Nathanael's response: astonishment (1:48).
      - 3) Jesus reveals His prior knowledge of Nathanael (1:49).

**NOTE:** Why was Jesus' revelation of seeing Nathanael under a fig tree so convincing that Nathanael would immediately abandon his

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skepticism? Perhaps Jesus' words are figurative, alluding to Zech. 3:10 and Ezek. 47:12, passages which associate the fig tree with the dawning of the Messianic Age, when all the trees will bear fruit, even out of season.

In picturing Nathanael as sitting under the fig tree, as if waiting for the fruit to burst forth, Jesus would be saying, "I know you are eagerly awaiting the Messianic Age." These insights of his longings and of his character (only the "true Israelite" was prepared for the coming of the Messiah) would be enough to convince Nathanael that standing before him was the Fulfillment of those longings.<sup>26</sup>

- 4) Nathanael's response: faith (1:50).
- b. Jesus challenges Nathanael with the possibilities of progressive belief (1:50-51).
  - 1) He declares that He embodies the meaning of "Jacob's ladder" (read Gen. 28:10-17).
  - 2) He defines Himself as the messenger of God *to* men and *of* men to God.
  - 3) He describes Himself as both priest and prophet; that is, as both the ultimate link between heaven and earth, and as the new medium of divine revelation.<sup>27</sup>
  - 4) He designates Himself as "Son of Man"<sup>28</sup> and accepts the title "Son of God."<sup>29</sup>

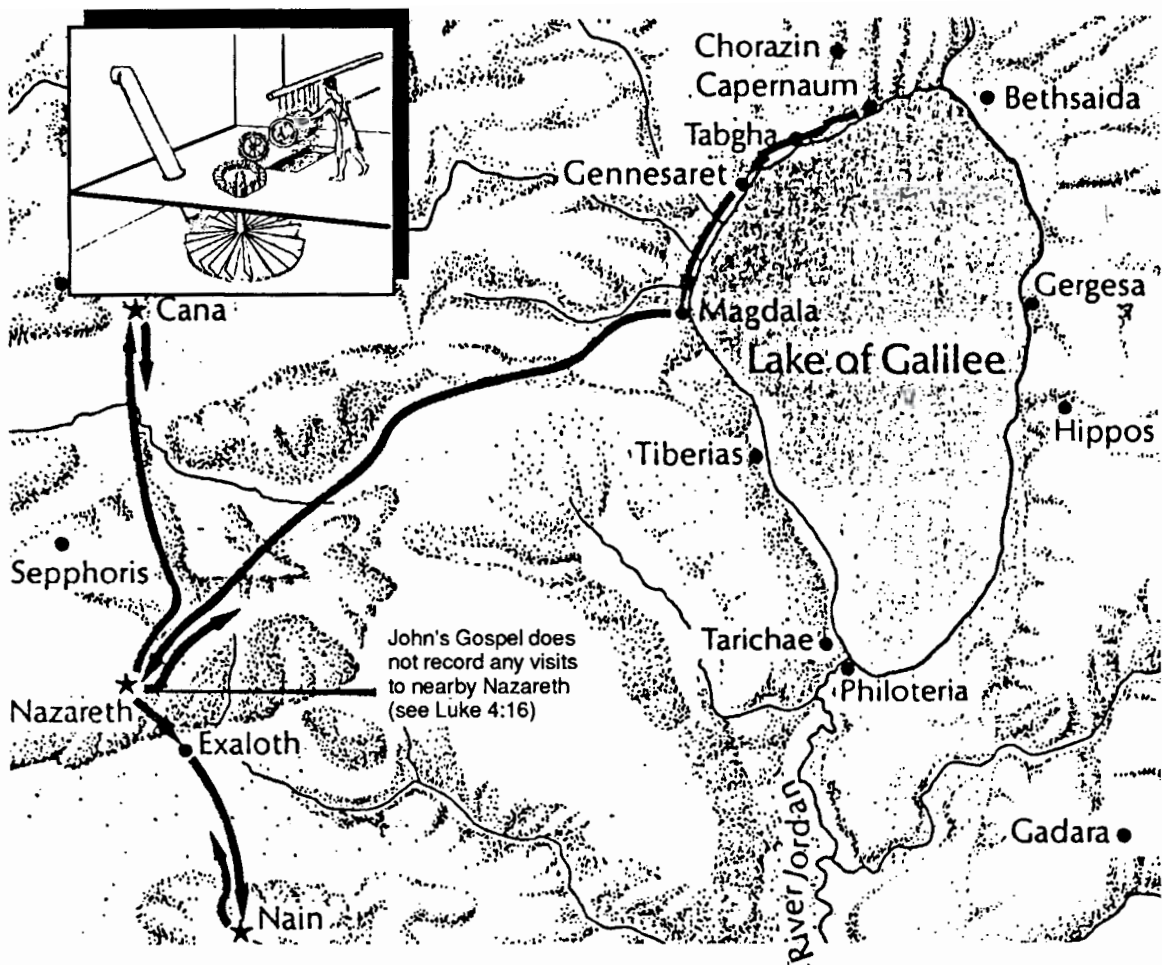
C. These verses record the reactions of some of John's disciples to the witness of his message. The development of their belief is noted as follows:

1. *John's testimony*: "Look, the Lamb..." (1:36-37; see John 1:29).
2. *Andrew's testimony*: "We have found the Messiah" (1:41).
3. *Philip's testimony*: "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law, and about whom the prophets also wrote" (1:45).
4. *Nathanael's testimony*: "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are King of Israel" (1:49).

**NOTE**: "By the end of John chapter one we are well on our way. We meet the Great One as *Logos*, Light, Unique One, Greater than John, Lamb of God, Baptizer in the Holy Spirit, Son of God, Teacher, Messiah, Prophet, King of Israel, and Ladder to Heaven! We have just begun our journey, and already we have discovered so much.

"Yet, we are told, 'You will see greater things than this!' (v. 50). Majestic are the vistas that await us. Most glorious is the panorama when we stand at the very top, hearing the confession of Thomas: 'My Lord and my God!' (John 20:28)."<sup>30</sup>

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*"On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee"* (John 2:1-2). Either of the two possible sites of Cana is only a few miles from Nazareth, and a family from Nazareth could easily have relatives or at least friends so near.

Source: Yohanan Aharoni and Michael Avi-Yonah, *The Macmillan Bible Atlas*, rev. ed. (NY: Macmillan Publ. Co., 1977), 145. Reprinted by permission.

*"Nearby stood six stone water jars... each holding from twenty to thirty gallons"* (John 2:6). Such stone water jars were preferred because they could be cleansed after a ritual defilement. They were made on a lathe powered by water from an aqueduct.

Source: Meir Ben-Dov, *In the Shadow of the Temple* (NY: Harper & Row, Publ., 1982), 159. Reprinted by permission.

# Testimony of the Works of Jesus

## —John 2:1-22

- I. The action of Jesus is seen at a wedding in Cana (2:1-11).
  - A. Jesus' mother prompts Him to action (2:1-5).
    - 1. The occasion is a wedding (2:1).
      - a. The wedding celebrations lasted as long as a week.<sup>31</sup>
      - b. This wedding was held in Cana (a village near Nazareth).<sup>32</sup>
    - 2. Invited were Mary, Jesus, and His disciples (2:2).
      - a. Mary may have been helping with the arrangements in some way.<sup>33</sup>
      - b. Most of the guests were morally obligated to give wedding presents.<sup>34</sup>
    - 3. Mary suggested that Jesus solve the problem of no wine (2:3-5).

**NOTE:** Although some commentators suggest that Mary was making an exclamation about what seemed to be a hopeless situation, others claim she was implying that Jesus and His disciples should leave, while still others say that she may not have been expecting a miracle, but nevertheless was depending on her firstborn to do something to relieve the embarrassment.<sup>35</sup> Not only would the bridegroom suffer a considerable loss of prestige, but a financial loss as well: when his unmarried guests eventually married, they would expect a gift of equal value to the gift they gave, *plus* compensation for the failed wine.<sup>36</sup>

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- a. Jesus politely resisted her implied request.

**NOTE:** His answer, literally, “What to me and to you?” is an idiom with two Old Testament meanings: “(a) when one party is unjustly bothering another, the injured party may say, ...What have I done to you that you should do this to me? What subject of discord is there between us? (Judg xi 12; II Chron xxxv 21; I Kings xvii 18); (b) when someone is asked to get involved in a matter which he feels is no business of his, he may say to the petitioner, ...That is your business; how am I involved? (II Kings iii 13; Hos xiv 8).... [Meaning] (a) implies hostility while [meaning] (b) implies simple disengagement.”<sup>37</sup> It is clear that (b) is the correct one here.

- b. He points out His submission to God’s time schedule (see John 7:6, 30; 8:20; 9:4-5; 12:23, 31; 13:1; 16:32; 17:1).

**NOTE:** The exact meaning of Jesus’ words is uncertain. Fausto Salvoni paraphrases Jesus’ words as: “I must be under the authority of God, not that of my mother...Nevertheless [Salvoni’s suggested rendering of the connective *oupō*], because the hour of my death and glorification has not yet come, I can still accomplish your will.”<sup>38</sup> Mary, understanding His intent, gave directions to the servants accordingly (see also Luke 2:41-51).

- c. Mary’s expectations remained undiminished: “Do whatever he tells you.”

**NOTE:** Even if Jesus’ actual words were wholly negative, Mary’s reaction was positive, because “Mary knew her son and knew from his gaze, his tone and his gestures what he meant. Her mother’s heart told her what his words had not said.”<sup>39</sup>



B. Jesus on this occasion performs His first recorded *sign*: the changing of ordinary water into extraordinary wine! (*Master of quality*)

1. No natural explanation is sufficient to explain this transformation.<sup>40</sup>
  - a. This water *did not come in contact with soil*.
  - b. This water *did not in any manner combine with plant food and minerals*.
  - c. This water *did not come under the influence of the sun's rays*.
  - d. Jesus accomplished in an instant what normally takes the grapevine a whole growing season.<sup>41</sup>
2. Ordinary water was directly and instantaneously changed into "the best wine."

**NOTE:** Some say that the wine supernaturally produced was merely non-alcoholic grape juice.<sup>42</sup> More likely, it was fermented wine,<sup>43</sup> but this does not automatically justify the drinking of modern alcoholic beverages, for "the amount of alcoholic content which could be achieved by fermentation was not high when compared with what can be attained through modern methods of distillation, unknown in the ancient world."<sup>44</sup> In any event, first-century table wine was always diluted with water.<sup>45</sup>

3. This is a supernatural work, a miracle, which one may either accept or deny. No third alternative exists!

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- C. The significance of the sign is seen in the result it produces (2:11).
  - 1. Jesus, the incarnate Word, was revealed to be *Master of quality*.
  - 2. The already-present faith of His disciples was strengthened.
- II. The action of Jesus is seen at the temple in Jerusalem (2:12-22).
  - A. On this occasion Jesus cleansed the temple of corrupt religious commercialism.

**NOTE:** Evidently there were two cleansings of the temple: this one, performed by Jesus in the early period of His ministry, and a second cleansing at the commencement of the week of His passion (see Matt. 21:12-17; Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:45-48). The verbal and incidental differences between the two cleansings are strong proof that the cleansing in John is not the synoptic incident retold in a different historical setting.<sup>46</sup>

- B. Immediately after the cleansing of the temple, the Jews asked Jesus for a *sign* to authenticate His authority (2:18).
  - 1. The “Jews”<sup>47</sup> would be given a sign: the resurrection of His body would be the chief vindication of His ministry (2:19-21).<sup>48</sup>
  - 2. At the time, no one understood what Jesus meant (2:19).
    - a. The Jews thought Jesus was referring to the destruction and rebuilding of the

sanctuary of Herod's temple (see Matt. 26:61),<sup>49</sup> which had already stood for forty-six years.<sup>50</sup>

- b. Jesus' disciples did not understand either, but when later they remembered the saying, it was a stimulus to their faith (2:22; compare John 14:25-26).

C. By means of this temple-cleansing, Jesus

- 1. Attacked the materialistic spirit of the Jews
- 2. Exposed graft and greed

**NOTE:** The temple market, at the very least, was susceptible to abuse. "It was of course a great convenience to the worshippers to be able to procure on the spot all requisites for sacrifice. Some of them might not know what sacrifice was required for their particular offence, and though the priest at their own home might inform them, still the officiating examiner might reject the animal they brought as unfit; and probably would, if it was his interest to have the worshippers buying on the spot."<sup>51</sup> Price gouging in the temple market has actually been documented.<sup>52</sup>

- 3. Attacked the Jews' anti-missionary spirit
  - a. The outer court, where the merchandising took place, was called the court of the Gentiles.
  - b. This was where the nations were invited to seek and to worship Yahweh, the one true God (see Mark 11:17).
- 4. Fulfilled Messianic prophecy (Ps. 69:9; see also Mal. 3:1-3)

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The term “Jews” in John’s Gospel has a variety of meanings. Urban C. Von Wahlde (“The Johannine ‘Jews’: A Critical Survey,” *New Testament Studies* 28, 1 [1982]:33-60; hereafter cited as Von Wahlde, “Johannine ‘Jews’”) has sorted out several categories besides uses where the meaning is fairly obvious. Von Wahlde describes the characteristically Johannine use of ‘Jews’ as referring to those who are: (1) a segment of Jewish society, but which cannot simply be defined as ‘regional’ (i.e. belonging to Judea); (2) consistently hostile toward Jesus; and (3) “unified and monolithic” (p. 47) in their reaction to Jesus (they are not divided in their response to Him, and their antagonism remains static: it neither increases nor decreases). Following these three criteria, Von Wahlde identifies six groups of texts: (1) passages where the “Jews” are clearly authorities and clearly hostile (5:10, 15, 16, 18; 7:13, 15; 9:18, 22a, 22b; 18:12, 14, 36; 19:38; 20:19); (2) one passage (1:19) where the “Jews” are clearly authorities, but are skeptical rather than hostile and that skepticism directed toward the Baptizer, not toward Jesus; (3) passages where the “Jews” are clearly unbelieving or skeptical, but not clearly authorities (2:18, 22; 7:35); (4) passages where the “Jews” are hostile toward Jesus, but not clearly authorities (7:1, 11; 8:22, 48, 52, 57; 10:24, 31, 33; 11:8; 13:33; 18:31, 38; 19:7); (5) passages too brief and too devoid of context to be judged individually (19:12, 14, 31) but which refer to hostile authorities (see 18:12, 14, 31, 36); (6) one passage (6:41, 52) in which the “Jews” are clearly hostile toward Jesus, but the context identifies them as the common people. This leaves only seven passages more difficult to classify: 3:25; 8:31;

10:19; 11:54; 18:20; 19:20; and 19:21 (see Von Wahlde’s discussion of these problematic texts in “Johannine ‘Jews,’” pp. 49-54).

<sup>2</sup>Literally, “he confessed and did not deny and confessed,” emphasizing how freely and openly he dismissed suggestions that he was the Messiah. “He declared without qualification, avowing...” (Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [The Anchor Bible], 2 vols. [Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Vol. 1: 1966], 1:42-43; hereafter cited as Brown).

<sup>3</sup>Most of the material in this note comes from Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1981), pp. 236-238; hereafter cited as Guthrie, *NT Theology*. For an extended study of the messianic hope, see S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1954).

<sup>4</sup>Guthrie, *NT Theology*, p. 237.

<sup>5</sup>*Josephus* (Loeb Classical Library), transl. by H. St. J. Thackeray et al., 9 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926-1965), 9:4-9, 20-23, 60-63; 3:636-638; hereafter cited as Josephus (Loeb).

<sup>6</sup>Bruce M. Metzger, ed., *The Oxford Annotated Apocrypha of the Old Testament: Revised Standard Version* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 192-193; Hereafter cited as Metzger, *Apocrypha*.

<sup>7</sup>John had received no revelation on the subject; Gabriel’s statement... fell short of saying that John would actually be Elijah. Even our Lord’s words in Matt. 11:14 did not mean that John was Elijah reincarnated; they meant that John... was the one who fulfilled the prophecy about

Elijah in Malachi 4:5f. In any case, John was wise to leave it to others to make such claims on his behalf; for himself, he was content to be the 'voice' of Isa. 30:3" (F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1972], p. 67; hereafter cited as Bruce, *Answers*). Compare Robert H. Stein, *Difficult Passages in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), pp. 50-54; hereafter cited as Stein, *Difficult Passages*.

<sup>8</sup>The following quotations, as well as those in note 9, are from Herbert Danby, ed., *The Mishnah: Translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), pp. 306-307; 436-437; 154; 348; hereafter cited as Danby, *Mishnah*.

<sup>9</sup>This expectation is behind other references to Elijah in the *Mishnah*, such as: (1) Shekalim 2.5: "R. Meir says: The surplus of [money collected to pay for the burial of] one dead person must be left until Elijah comes" (in other words, leave it to Elijah to decide what to do with this money); (2) Baba Metzia 1.8: "R. Simeon b. Gamaliel says: ...If a man found a document among his documents and he does not know what is its nature [that is, whether the bond entrusted to him by a borrower or a lender, or whether it was repaid in whole or in part], it must be left until Elijah comes [that is, he may never restore it to either of them]." See the discussion in "We Have Found Elijah," pp. 9-54 in J. Louis Martyn, *The Gospel of John in Christian History: Essays for Interpreters* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979); hereafter cited as Martyn, *John in History*.

<sup>10</sup>Gerhard Friedrich suggests that the expectation of three messianic figures started in Zechariah, in which Zerubabel was the Davidic ruler, Jeshua was the priest, and Zechariah himself was the prophet ("προφήτης: C. Proph-

ecy and Prophets in the Judaism of the Hellenistic-Roman Period," 6:826 in *TDNT*).

<sup>11</sup>G. R. Beasley-Murray, "The Antecedents of Christian Baptism," pp. 1-44 in *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1973); hereafter cited as Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*.

<sup>12</sup>See Exod. 19:9-15; Lev. 8:6; 15:5-11, 13, 17-18, 21-22, 27; 16:4, 24; Num. 19:1-22; 31:19-20. For related metaphorical or prophetic use of cleansing, see Ps. 51:6-7; Isa. 1:18; Ezek. 36:25; Zech. 13:1; Mal. 3:1-3.

<sup>13</sup>The Essene practice of daily baptisms apparently took its cue from the daily sacrifices offered in the temple (Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, p. 11, n. 3). It is important to note, however, that "there is no clear statement that a first ablution had the character of an initiatory rite" (paraphrase of H. H. Rowley's conclusions in Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, p. 15).

<sup>14</sup>Although it was once taken for granted that Jewish proselyte baptism was being practiced before the baptism of John (see, for example, Albrecht Oepke, "βαπτω, βαπτίζω, βαπτισμος, βαπτισμα, βαπτιστης," 1:535-536 in *TDNT*), Beasley-Murray (*Baptism*, p. 19) asks: "If proselyte baptism was a universally accepted institution in Judaism before the Christian era, how are we to explain the fact that there is not one clear testimony to it in pre-Christian writings and its complete absence of mention from the writings of Philo, Josephus and the Bible, particularly the New Testament?" Nevertheless, he recognizes "the probability of its priority in time over Christian baptism" (*Baptism*, p. 31).

<sup>15</sup>Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, p. 39.

<sup>16</sup>J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John* (International

Critical Commentary), 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), p. 41; hereafter cited as Bernard.

<sup>17</sup>See Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1965), pp. 129-143; hereafter cited as Morris, *Apostolic Preaching*.

<sup>18</sup>W. Phillip Keller, *A Layman Looks at the Lamb of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publ., 1982), summarized on pp. 123-124.

<sup>19</sup>Morris says that the term in John 1:29 is too indefinite for any of the images he lists to confine the meaning to any specific lamb, but indicates that the idea of sacrifice is probably involved (*Apostolic Preaching*, p. 141). Barrett (p. 147) calls it John's "amalgamation of Old Testament ideas."

<sup>20</sup>Brown (1:56) says: "the word for 'before,' the adjective *prōtos* ('first') used as a comparative, has temporal significance. It is possible to render this clause as 'he was my superior [*prōtos* as a substantive]'; but such a translation ruins the contrast... The real reason that commentators avoid the temporal reference in the third clause is that it places the theme of the pre-existence of Jesus on the lips of John the Baptist."

<sup>21</sup>John R. W. Stott points to John 1:29, in which "takes away" is also a present participle. He says: "If we put verses 29 and 33 together, we discover that the characteristic work of Jesus is twofold. It involves a removal and a bestowal, a taking away of sin and a baptizing with the Holy Spirit" (*Baptism and Fullness of the Holy Spirit* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1964], pp. 12-14; Robert L. Gibson, *Christian, You Were Baptized in Water and Spirit* [Ft. Worth, TX: Star Bible Publ. Inc., 1987], pp. 47-48).

<sup>22</sup>The incidental detail about the tenth hour (1:39) suggests the testimony of an eyewitness, and the anonymity of this disciple in a narrative which explicitly names every other participant is consistent with the identification of this disciple as the apostle John (see John 13:23-27; 18:15-16; 19:25-27, 34-35; 21:7, 20-24).

<sup>23</sup>See Bernard, 1:60.

<sup>24</sup>Morris, *John*, p. 161.

<sup>25</sup>H. A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-book to the Gospel of John*, 6th Eng. ed., trans. by William Urwick, ed. by Frederick Crombie and A. C. Kendrick (orig. ed.: New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884; repr. ed.: Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publ., 1983), p. 89; hereafter cited as Meyer.

<sup>26</sup>J. Duncan M. Derrett, "Fig Trees in the New Testament," 2:148-163 in his *Studies in the New Testament*, 2 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977 and 1982). See esp. pp. 160-163.

<sup>27</sup>Stein discusses eight interpretations of verse 51, opting for: Christ as the place of God's full revelation of His glory (*Difficult Passages*, pp. 115-118). For a more detailed discussion of this verse, see Jerome H. Neyrey, "The Jacob Allusions in John 1:51," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 44 (1982):586-605. Neyrey understands Jesus as predicting that the disciples, like Jacob, will see a theophany (i.e., Jesus' glory as God-incarnate will be revealed to them). He believes that John intended his readers to understand that the appearances given to the patriarchs were, in fact, appearances of Christ Himself.

<sup>28</sup>The title 'Son of Man' means "one who speaks and acts with divine authority" (Barclay M. Newman, "Towards a Translation of 'The Son of Man' in the Gospels," *Bible Translator* 21, 3 [1970]:141-146). Schnackenburg



(1:530) groups the references to “Son of Man” in John’s Gospel into three categories: the Son of man descended from heaven who ascends there again (John 3:13; 6:62); the ‘exaltation’ of the Son of Man (3:14; 8:28; 12:34c); and the ‘glorification’ of the Son of Man (12:23; 13:31-32). He rejects a Gnostic origin to this title for Jesus and says: “It is much more likely that the Johannine ‘Son of Man’ is connected with Wisdom speculation. As in the Wisdom literature, the ‘Son of Man’ appears on earth (cf. Bar[uch] 3:37f.) and reveals heavenly things (cf. Wis[dom of Jesus ben Sirach] 9:16f.); he moves between heaven and earth, the realm ‘above’ and the realm ‘below’ (cf. Bar[uch] 3:29) and brings men divine revelation for their salvation.... [I]n Johannine Christology, the most diverse impulses and aspects are merged into a consistent composition: along with the notion of the ‘Son of Man’ there is also that of the ‘Son’ who is sent by the Father and returns to him, and that of the Logos of the Wisdom type who was with God and pitched his tent among men. The evangelist may and must be credited with the final amalgamation of the various elements” (1:541-542, 556-57; see Schnackenburg’s entire discussion of “Son of Man” in “Excursus V: The ‘Son of Man’ in the Fourth Gospel,” 1:529-542, and “Excursus VI: The Gnostic Myth of the Redeemer and the Johannine Christology,” 1:543-557).

<sup>28</sup>Guthrie (*NT Theology*, p. 302) lists the various groups in the Old Testament described as “sons of God” (see Gen. 6:1-4; Deut. 14:1-2; Job 1:6; Hosea 1:10; 11:1; etc.). The most important background is sonship of the theocratic king (see 2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7). See his full discussion (*NT Theology*, pp. 301-320).

<sup>30</sup>Steve Singleton, “The Pilgrimage of Discovery,” *Image* 3, 5 (March 1, 1987):31.

<sup>31</sup>For detailed descriptions of first-century Jewish wedding celebrations, see William Barclay, *Ten Commandments for Today* (New York: Harper & Row Publ., 1973), pp. 98-113 (hereafter cited as Barclay, *Ten Commandments*); J. Duncan M. Derrett, “Water into Wine,” *Biblische Zeitschrift* n.f. 7 (1963):80-97; hereafter cited as Derrett, “Water into Wine.”

<sup>32</sup>Identified with Kefr Kenna, 4 miles northeast of Nazareth (R. D. Potter, “Topography and Archaeology in the Fourth Gospel,” p. 330 in *Studia Evangelica*, vol. 1, ed. by Kurt Aland et al. [Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1959]; hereafter cited as Potter, “Topography”) or Khirbet Qana, 9 miles north of Nazareth (Brown, 1:98).

<sup>33</sup>Lenski suggests: “The verb ἦν [“Jesus’ mother was there”] contrasts with ἐκλήθη [“Jesus and his disciples had... been invited”] used regarding Jesus and marks a difference, which is also borne out by what follows. Mary was not present, like her son, as an invited guest but as a friend of the groom or of the bride or of both in order to aid in the feast. This would explain how she knew about the lack of wine and why she took steps in the matter” (R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel* [Orig. ed.: The Wartburg Press, 1942; reprint ed.: Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publ. House, 1961], p. 185).

<sup>34</sup>The poor were exempt from this obligation. The aristocracy and notables of the region were also exempt, but they often presented gifts “for otherwise they would be under obligation to their inferiors, which is not tolerable in the East, if anywhere” (Derrett, “Water into Wine,” p. 83).

<sup>35</sup>See Brown, 1:98-99; Marcus Dods, *The Gospel According to John* (Expositor’s Greek Testament), ed. by W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1980), p. 703; hereafter cited as Dods, *John* [Greek].

<sup>36</sup>Derrett, "Water into Wine," p. 89.

<sup>37</sup>Brown, 1:99.

<sup>38</sup>Fausto Salvoni, "Nevertheless, My Hour Has Not Yet Come [John 2:4]," *Restoration Quarterly* 7, 4 (1963):239. See his entire article on pp. 236-241.

<sup>39</sup>Quotation of J. Keulers in H. Van Der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus* (Novum Testamentum #8), (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), p. 597; hereafter cited as Van Der Loos, *Miracles*.

<sup>40</sup>Van Der Loos (*Miracles*, p. 605) lists two naturalistic explanations: that Jesus brought wine with Him and presented it as a wedding present; and that Jesus used mass hypnosis to make the people believe they were drinking wine when it was really water. Barnabas Lindars mentions the theory that "Jesus set an example of enjoying the water as if it were wine and the steward played up to it splendidly." This and other such explanations, he says, are merely "desperate expedients to save the historicity without the dogma" (*The Gospel of John* [The New Century Bible Commentary], ed. by Matthew Black [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1972], p. 131; hereafter cited as Lindars).

<sup>41</sup>"This miracle proclaims that the God of all wine is present. The vine is one of the blessings sent by Jahweh: He is the reality behind the false god Bacchus. Every year, as part of the Natural order, God makes wine. He does so by creating a vegetable organism that can turn water, soil, and sunlight into a juice which will, under proper conditions, become wine.... God, now incarnate, short circuits the process: makes wine in a moment: uses earthenware jars instead of vegetable fibres to hold the water. But uses them to do what He is always doing. The miracle consists in the short cut; but the event to which it leads is the usual

one. If the thing happened, then we know that what has come into Nature is no anti-Natural spirit, no God who loves tragedy and tears and fasting *for their own sake* (however He may permit or demand them for special purposes) but the God of Israel who has through all these centuries given us wine to gladden the heart of man" (C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* [orig. publ. in 1947; repr. ed.: London: Fontana Books, 1960], p. 140).

<sup>42</sup>See Jim McGuiggan, *The Bible, The Saint, and the Liquor Industry*, 3rd ed. (Lubbock, TX: International Biblical Resources, 1977), pp. 71-122.

<sup>43</sup>See Andre S. Bustanoby, *The Wrath of Grapes: Drinking and the Church Divided* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), pp. 32-43, 75-76; Van Der Loos, *Miracles*, p. 599, especially n. 3.

<sup>44</sup>Everett Ferguson, "Wine as a Table-Drink in the Ancient World," *Restoration Quarterly* 13, 3 (1970):144-145; hereafter cited as Ferguson, "Table-Drink."

<sup>45</sup>Ferguson, "Table-Drink," pp. 141-153.

<sup>46</sup>See Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (New International Commentary on the New Testament) ed. by F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1971), p. 190; hereafter cited as Morris, *John*. See also R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries) (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1960), p. 61; hereafter cited as Tasker. See also Meyer, pp. 110-111, who lists other commentators who support each position: two cleansings, Synoptics right and John wrong, and John right and Synoptics wrong.

<sup>47</sup>That is, Jewish authorities in a "state of unreceptivity toward Jesus which... must be described as scepticism



and unbelief" (see Von Wahlde, "Johannine 'Jews,'" p. 47).

<sup>48</sup>In addition to His prediction of His resurrection, Jesus may have intended here an allusion to the belief that the Messiah would rebuild the temple (see Targum of Isa. 53:5: "He shall build the sanctuary that was polluted because of our transgressions"), based on the statement in Zech. 6:12-13 that the Branch (in the context: Zechariah's contemporary, the high priest Jeshua) would build the temple of the Lord. If such an allusion were intended, this would make more understandable the accusation during the trial about building the temple (see R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982; hereafter cited as France, *Jesus and the O.T.*], pp. 99-100).

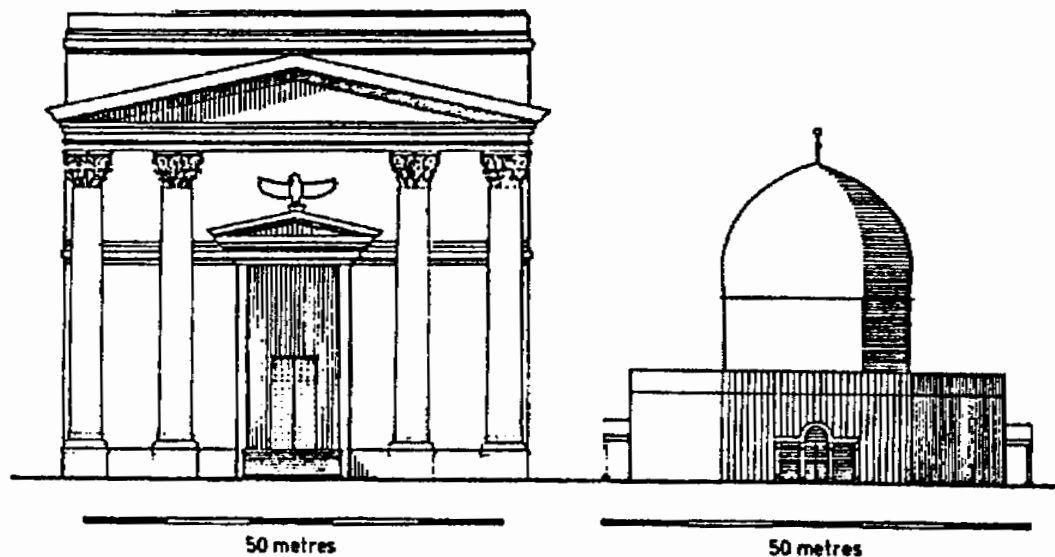
<sup>49</sup>Herod began the temple in the eighteenth year of his reign (c. 20-19 B.C.), according to Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.380 (Josephus [Loeb], 8:184-185), or in the fifteenth year (c. 23-22 B.C.), according to Josephus, *War* 1.401 (Josephus [Loeb], 2:188-189). Perhaps preliminary preparations started in the fifteenth year with the actual building commencing in the eighteenth. (see Josephus [Loeb], 8:185, n. c).

<sup>50</sup>The sanctuary (Gr: *naos*), to which the Jews refer, was completed after eighteen months (c. 18-17 B.C.). Reckoning the forty-six years from that time would put the date of this confrontation at A.D. 29 or 30 (see Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1977], pp. 38-43; hereafter cited as Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects*). Work on the temple courts (Gr: *hieron*) was not completed until the procuratorship of Albinus (A.D. 62-64), according to

Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.219 (Josephus [Loeb], 9:504-505). Like that of most English translations, the rendering of the NIV, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple," is unfortunate; a more literal rendering is, "Forty-six years [ago] this sanctuary was built" (see Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects*, pp. 41-42).

<sup>51</sup>Dods, *John* [Greek], p. 707.

<sup>52</sup>See Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), pp. 32-34, 48-49; hereafter cited as Jeremias, *Jerusalem*.



*"The Jews replied, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple....'"* (John 2:20). The temple complex which Herod the Great built in Jerusalem was the largest of its kind in the ancient world. The size of the sanctuary itself can be realized by comparing it with the Dome of the Rock mosque. To an observer it would have represented twice as much bulk when viewed from any direction.

Source: John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem as Jesus Knew It: Archaeology as Evidence* (London: Thames & Hudson, Ltd., 1978), 87. Reprinted by permission.

# Lesson Four

**John 2:23 - 4:54**



# Interview with Nicodemus

## —John 2:23-3:21

*Notes:*

- I. The character of Nicodemus is portrayed.
  - A. *Theologically*, he was a Pharisee: zealous for the law.
    - 1. Josephus describes Pharisees this way:

The Pharisees... are considered the most accurate interpreters of the laws, and hold the position of the leading sect.... The Pharisees are affectionate to each other and cultivate harmonious relations with the community.<sup>1</sup>

The Pharisees simplify their standard of living, making no concession to luxury. They follow the guidance of that which their doctrine has selected and transmitted as good, attaching the chief importance to the observance of those commandments which it has seen fit to dictate to them. They show respect and deference to their elders, nor do they rashly presume to contradict their proposals.

Though they postulate that everything is brought about by fate, still they do not deprive the human will of the pursuit of what is in man's power, since it was God's good pleasure that there should be a fusion and that the will of man with his virtue and vice should be admitted to the council-chamber of fate. They believe that souls have power to survive death and that there are rewards and punishments under the earth for those who have led lives of virtue or vice: eternal imprisonment is the lot of evil souls,

*Notes:*

while the good souls receive an easy passage to a new life.

Because of these views they are, as a matter of fact, extremely influential among the townsfolk; and all prayers and sacred rites of divine worship are performed according to their exposition. This is the great tribute that the inhabitants of the cities, by practising the highest ideals both in their way of living and in their discourse, have paid to the excellence of the Pharisees.<sup>2</sup>

2. Jesus approved of much of the teaching of the Pharisees (see Matt. 23:2-3).<sup>3</sup>
- B. *Intellectually*, Nicodemus was honest: open to new truth.
1. This is clear by his readiness to accept Jesus as a teacher from God (see John 3:2).
  2. His night-time visit probably says nothing negative about him.<sup>4</sup>
- C. *Socially*, he was a ruler of the Jews: a position of leadership in the nation.
- D. *Politically*, he was a member of the Sanhedrin (see also John 7:50).
- E. *Professionally*, he was an outstanding teacher among the Jews (see John 3:10).<sup>5</sup>
- II. The statements of Nicodemus are presented.<sup>6</sup>
- A. "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God": *Here is an acknowledgment of initial belief* (see John 3:2).
  - B. "How can a man be born when he is old?":

*Here is an appeal to One possessing superior knowledge (see John 3:4).*

- C. "How can this be?": *Here is an admission of ignorance in order that understanding may be received.*

III. The reply of Jesus is recorded (read John 3:3-15).

**NOTE:** Nicodemus is specifically described as a "man of the Pharisees." This observation explains how Jesus can answer his question before he can ask it, for Jesus "knew what was in a man" (read carefully John 2:25-3:1).

- A. The *necessity of rebirth* is made clear for those who desire
1. To see, or perceive, the kingdom (3:3)
  2. To enter the kingdom (3:5)
  3. To possess and enjoy the kingdom (see Rom. 14:17)

**NOTE:** The use of the expression meaning "from above" (as well as "again")<sup>7</sup> indicates that regeneration is the work of God (read John 3:31; 19:11, 23 and compare 1 Peter 1:3; James 1:18; Titus 3:4-7).

- B. The *nature of rebirth* is explained carefully (3:5-8).
1. The birth is not fleshly, but is spiritual; that is, "of water and the Spirit" (3:5).

**Notes:**

*Notes:*

- a. Mistaken understandings of this phrase include
  - 1) The idea that “water” refers to natural birth, while “and the Spirit” refers to the spiritual birth
    - a) “Water” does not refer to the amniotic fluid in the womb.<sup>8</sup>
    - b) “Water” does not refer to semen.<sup>9</sup>
    - c) The phrase must refer to one birth, not two, because the one preposition “of” (Gr: *ek*, with objects in genitive) governs both “water” and “Spirit.”<sup>10</sup>
  - 2) The idea that “water” refers to the word of God<sup>11</sup>
  - 3) The idea that “of water and the Spirit” means “of water, which is the Spirit”<sup>12</sup>
- b. The immediate (pre-Pentecost) significance of the phrase “of water and the Spirit” could refer to the ministries of John and of Jesus.<sup>13</sup>
  - 1) This call to a new birth had to be meaningful to Nicodemus in his present situation as a Pharisee (presumably) unsubmitive to John’s



- baptism (Luke 7:30) and inadequately informed about Jesus.
- 2) “Water” would refer to the baptism of John (see John 1:24-28; Mark 1:4-8 and parallels).<sup>14</sup>
  - 3) “Spirit” would refer to the ministry of Jesus (see John 1:33; Mark 1:8 and parallels).
  - 4) This is confirmed later in the conversation (see 3:9-11; compare John 3:29-32).
- c. The lasting (post-Pentecost) significance of the phrase “of water and the Spirit” is baptism in the name of Jesus Christ.<sup>15</sup>
- 1) The two earlier steps of entering the kingdom before Pentecost (submitting to the cleansing baptism of John and becoming a disciple of Jesus) were combined after Pentecost into a baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:38-39; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:22-23; 3:21-22).<sup>16</sup>
  - 2) “Water” would refer to the waters of baptism—the outward action of the person, expressing penitent faith and seeking a cleansing.

*Notes:*

Notes:

- 3) "Spirit" would refer to the renewal of the Spirit—the inward action of God bringing about new life.

**NOTE:** In Jesus' phrase "of water and the Spirit" there is an inverted correspondence to Paul's expression of salvation: "by grace [the Spirit] through faith [water]" (see Eph. 2:8).

2. The birth cannot be traced to a physical source, but its presence is as real as the blowing of the wind (see John 3:7-8).<sup>17</sup>
- C. The *authority concerning the "rebirth" teaching* is assured (3:9-13).
  1. Jesus chides Nicodemus for his slowness to understand (3:9-10).

**NOTE:** Nicodemus should have known about the possibility of regeneration because of such passages as Deut. 30:6; Isa. 1:16-19, Ps. 32:1-5, Ps. 51:10; Ezek. 11:19-20; and especially Ezek. 36:24-27.<sup>18</sup>

2. He certifies the truthfulness of the testimony (both His own and John's)<sup>19</sup> which the Pharisees have rejected (3:11).
3. He points out the difficulty of going any further in the discussion (3:12).<sup>20</sup>
4. As the only One who has gone into heaven,<sup>21</sup> Jesus has special authority (3:13).<sup>22</sup>

- D. The *basis of rebirth* is explained from the

Hebrew Scriptures: the “lifted up” Christ, as prefigured by the serpent “lifted up” in the wilderness (3:14-15).

*Notes:*

**NOTE:** This historical incident is found in Num. 21:1-9. A comparison of the type (lifted-up serpent) with the anti-type (lifted-up Christ) reveals that both were: provided by God; the only provision available to “cure” the condemnation and affliction of sin; designed to save the people from death (one physical, the other spiritual); offered freely (not forced upon man); appropriated by means of “obedient faith” (not “meritorious works”); accessible to the people; the means of bestowing life (one temporal, the other eternal). The actual transcends the prefiguring in every respect!

1. The “*lifting up*” of the Son of Man is a “*must*” (3:14-15).
  2. “Lifted up” (Gr: *hupsoō*) is the term that John uses to refer to the crucifixion of Christ (see also John 8:28; 12:32, 34).<sup>23</sup>
  3. As surely as one “*must*” be “born anew,” so “*must*” the Son of man be lifted up (3:14).
  4. He must be lifted up so that *believers in Him* “may have *eternal life*” (3:15).
- IV. The reply of Jesus to Nicodemus is summarized: an appeal to belief and a statement of the issues involved (3:16-21).
- A. God’s attitude and purpose toward the world is revealed in “the Christ event” (3:16).

*Notes:*

1. The *character* of “love” (Gr: *agapaō*) describes “an act of the will rather than an emotion, whim or infatuation.”<sup>24</sup>
  - a. The tense of the verb (aorist) shows God’s love in action: one great, central fact.<sup>25</sup>
  - b. The measure, then, of this love is best seen in its results: “He gave his one and only Son.”<sup>26</sup>
2. The *author* of love is “God,” who has co-existed with the Word from all eternity (read again John 1:1). He is the origin, source, and author of *agapaō* (consider 1 John 4:9-10, 19; Rom. 5:8-10).
3. The *object* of love is the world (see John 1:10 and compare John 4:42; 8:12; 1 John 2:2; 4:14).
4. The *gift* of love is the Father’s “one and only Son.”
  - a. The literal translation from the Greek text states emphatically the greatness of the gift: “...the Son, the one and only, He gave....”
  - b. The meaning of the term “He gave” (Gr: *didōmi*) is, “He gave unto death, as an offering for sin”<sup>27</sup> (consider John 15:13; 1 John 3:16; 4:10).

- c. John's "gave" is equivalent in meaning to Paul's "spared not" (see Rom. 8:32).
- 5. The *purpose* of love is the salvation of the believer, by means of and in union with Jesus Christ.
  - a. God's primary desire for all men is salvation (see 1 Tim. 2:3-4).
  - b. However, judgment is the inevitable consequence of unbelief.
- 6. The *breadth* of love includes "whoever believes."
  - a. This is inclusive and indefinite: Salvation is not restricted to any nation, race, color, tribe, or class (read Gal. 3:28-29).
  - b. Not everyone will be saved from eternal doom.
    - 1) "Whoever believes" (present participle, indicating here a continuation in faith)<sup>28</sup> will receive the promise.
    - 2) Their gift is eternal life, which consists of a quality of life, not just a quantity (see Eph. 3:17-19; Rom. 8:35-39).

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**NOTE:** After a thorough study of 'eternal life' in John's Gospel, J. W. Roberts concludes: "The translation 'everlasting life' is really not accurate, being more quantitative than qualitative.... [T]here has been created in each one of us as God's child a new and glorious life, an existence transcending fleshly and earthly nature, a life

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which is qualitatively akin to the life of God the Father, of his Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>29</sup>

- c. “Believe” (Gr: *pisteuō*) in this context means “to trust that person fully, to have complete confidence in him, to commit one’s whole life to him.... [‘Believe’] includes the idea of a very close relationship, with the person believing recognizing his position as servant and follower, and ascribing to the person he believes in the honor due him as Lord and Master.”<sup>30</sup>

**NOTE:** Beasley-Murray defines faith this way: “The Gospel lays a demand on man, to which an obedient response should be given. It calls for a man to cease from himself, to own allegiance to Christ and repose trust in Him. This conception of faith is set forth with particular clarity in the Fourth Gospel, a book written for the avowed purpose of awaking faith in Christ (20.31).... All this makes it clear that in the New Testament faith is no mere intellectual acceptance of a set of religious propositions. It has the Lord Christ as its object and calls forth a response of the whole man to Him.... To confess Christ is...to make of obedience the total surrender of the self. Mind, heart and will are involved in the faith that turns to the Lord, even as the Lord redeems the whole man in his ‘spirit and soul and body’ (I Thess. 5.24).”<sup>31</sup>

- B. God’s judgment of the world is revealed in “the Christ event” (3:17-21).

**NOTE:** In this section, John uses two different (though related) Greek words to express the meaning of the coming of Christ into the world. We will examine them under two distinct categories.

1. “God did not send his Son into the world to *condemn* the world.... Whoever believes in Him is not *condemned*, but whoever does not believe stands *condemned* already...” (3:17-18). The verb “condemn” (Gr: *krinō*) here means “to separate, select, choose; hence, to determine, and so to judge, pronounce judgment.”<sup>32</sup>
2. “This is the *verdict*....” This noun, “verdict,” (Gr: *krisis*) here means “condemnation” (3:19).<sup>33</sup>

**NOTE:** The basis of God’s condemnation of the world is that its people deliberately hate, and refuse to submit to, the presence of God (light) in their midst. They prefer to remain incorrigibly in their evil state. Hence, they are truly self-condemned (read Eph. 5:7-14).

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## Further Testimony from the Baptizer—John 3:22-36

- I. The occasion for this testimony was a dispute over ceremonial washing (3:22-26).
  - A. Jesus and His disciples were baptizing<sup>34</sup> in Judea.
  - B. John was also baptizing nearby.
    - 1. John chose Aenon near Salim<sup>35</sup> because of its abundance of water.<sup>36</sup>
    - 2. His disciples were having a dispute with a “Jew”<sup>37</sup> about purification.
    - 3. The rising popularity of Jesus somehow became involved in the dispute.
- II. John’s expression of faith and confession is given in reply (3:27-30).
  - A. *John’s contentment* is realized in being the “friend of the Bridegroom”: the Bride belongs to Jesus.

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**NOTE:** From as early as the second millennium B.C. the legal obligations and duties of the best man to the bridegroom had been spelled out. In both the code of Lipit-Ishtar and the Code of Hammurabi, the “companion” of the bridegroom acted as the bridegroom’s agent in making negotiations with the father-in-law to contract the marriage. Both laws prohibited the “companion” from marrying the woman himself if her father refused to accept the betrothal gift of his friend. Such a law prevented the best man from stealing his friend’s prospective wife by talking her father out of

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the betrothal. Similar marriage laws (or at least traditions) lie behind the trouble over Samson's aborted marriage (Judges 14-15) and the Baptizer's statement here.<sup>38</sup>

The Baptizer is denying any interest in taking the "bride" (the nation of Israel) away from the "bridegroom" (the Messiah). "There was a tendency to oppose the Baptist to Christ, to kindle a kind of rivalry between them. They could be described as two rivals, two contendants for the same bride, viz., the people of God. Against these suggestions the Baptist compares himself to the [companion of the bridegroom]: he had some part in the preparation of the marriage, but his task does not go further than that.... The best man is the last who could compete with the bridegroom, for under no circumstances is he allowed to marry the bride."<sup>39</sup>

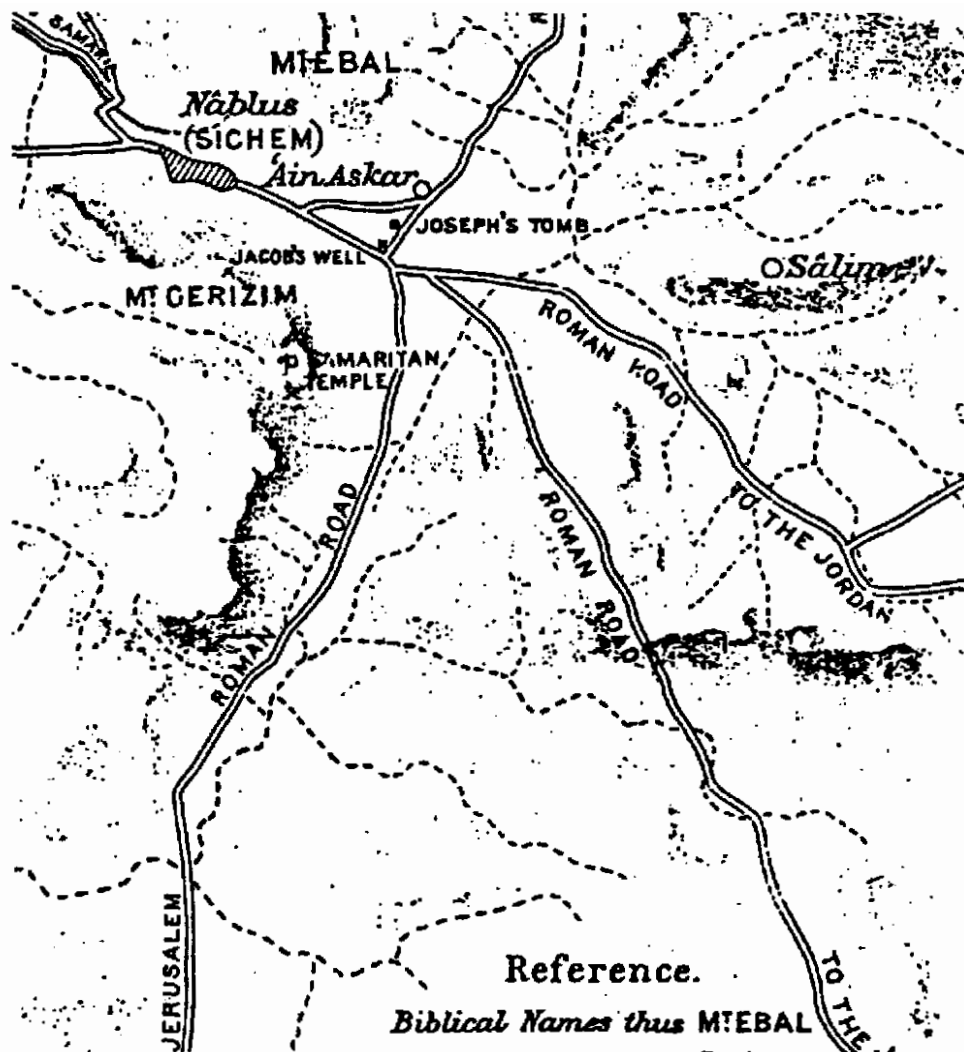
B. *John's joy* is fulfilled in hearing the Bridegroom's voice (3:27).

**NOTE:** According to J. D. M. Derrett, the business of the agents for both bride and groom went beyond contracting the marriage and seeing it solemnized in the wedding; it was not finished until they were sure the marriage had been consummated. This was signified by the bridegroom's reciting the Shema (Deut. 6:4, which was recited daily by all Jews). The bridegroom was exempt from reciting it "from the evening of the wedding until that time [when the consummation of the marriage] had been reached—to pronounce it earlier was misleading, even in one of established piety!"<sup>40</sup> The Baptizer here says (in effect) that his greatest joy will be, not in stealing the nation from the Messiah, but in making sure that the nation's union with the Messiah is complete.

C. *John's humility* is evident in his statement: "He must become greater; I must become less."

- III. John makes concluding remarks (3:31-36).<sup>41</sup>
- A. He carries further his previous appeal to belief (read again John 3:16-21).
  - B. He praises the majesty and authority of the heavenly Witness.
    - 1. The Man of heaven (Jesus) speaks with heaven's authority, not the earth's (3:31-32).<sup>42</sup>
    - 2. His testimony is largely rejected (3:32).
    - 3. The man from the earth (John the Baptist)<sup>43</sup> has certified the testimony of the Man from heaven (3:33).
    - 4. The Man from God is God's Spokesman (3:34-35).
      - a. He was sent by God to speak God's words.
      - b. God gives Him the Spirit without limit.<sup>44</sup>
      - c. God loves Him and puts everything under His control.
  - C. The consequences of belief and unbelief are laid down in stronger terms (3:36).<sup>45</sup>
    - 1. For the believer, eternal life is a present possession, and not merely a reward given at death.
    - 2. For the unbeliever, wrath is a present reality; he is already under condemnation (see Rom. 2:4-5; 8:1).
    - 3. Belief and obedience to the utterance of God are equated in this section (3:36).<sup>46</sup>

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"He came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there" (John 4:5-6). Sychar (probably modern Askar) lay at the foot of Mount Gerezim, site of the Samaritan temple. Although in Jesus' day the temple lay in ruins, the Samaritans still worshipped there on feast days—and still do in modern times.

# Interview with the Samaritan Woman—John 4:1-42

- I. Jesus had no desire to compete with the Baptizer (4:1-3).
  - A. The Pharisees were monitoring the ministries of both the Baptizer and Jesus.
  - B. Jesus' ministry began to overshadow John's.
    - 1. What the Baptizer hoped for was being realized (see John 3:30).
    - 2. The baptism of Jesus was actually performed by His disciples.

**NOTE:** This baptism, like John's, was only preparatory; it cannot have been full-blown Christian baptism, which could attain its death-burial-resurrection symbolism (see Rom. 6:1-7; Col. 2:12-13) only after the cross and the empty tomb. Even the first call for baptism (Acts 2:38) assumes that those who respond admit to the murder of the Messiah and through this cleansing align themselves with His followers. None of this symbolism could have resided in either of the earlier baptisms.

Yet, there was a difference between John's baptism and that of Jesus' disciples: to submit to John's baptism was to prepare oneself for the coming kingdom of God; to submit to Jesus' baptism was to swear allegiance to the King Himself.<sup>47</sup> Many other questions about the relationship between these three baptisms must remain unanswered due to lack of evidence.

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C. When Jesus heard this, He left Judea for Galilee.

1. This action would avoid any appearance of rivalry with the Baptizer.<sup>48</sup>
2. It would also avoid an early confrontation with the Pharisees.<sup>49</sup>

II. Jesus has a private conversation with a Samaritan woman (4:4-26).

A. The occasion for this conversation: Jesus' stopping to refresh Himself from His tiring journey (4:4-6)

1. He *had* to go through Samaria (4:4).

**NOTE:** In 4:4 the word "had" (Gr: *dei*) is emphatic.<sup>50</sup> This expresses neither geographical<sup>51</sup> nor sociological necessity, but rather an internal pressure that compelled Jesus to seek out the lost sheep of Samaria.<sup>52</sup>

- a. The Samaritans were a mixed race, descendants of peoples imported by the Assyrians (see 2 Kings 17:24-41; Josephus, *Antiquities* 9.288-291)<sup>53</sup> to replace the Israelite upper classes that were taken into exile after the fall of Samaria (721 B.C.).<sup>54</sup>
- b. These evidently intermarried with the Israelites remaining in the land, and the religious traditions of the two groups apparently merged.<sup>55</sup>

- c. By the time of Nehemiah (c. 445 B.C.), the Samaritans, rejected from having any part in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, became bitter opponents of the project (see Neh. 4-6).

**NOTE:** According to Josephus (*Antiquities* 11.321-325)<sup>56</sup> a Samaritan ruler named Sanballat obtained from Alexander the Great permission to build a temple on Mt. Gerezim (332 B.C.). When Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163 B.C.) was trying to convert all of Palestine to the Greek religion, the Samaritans complied, even dedicating their temple to Zeus (*Antiquities* 12.257-264).<sup>57</sup> This clearly set them in opposition to Jews faithful to the law, whose revolt against Antiochus was led by the Maccabees. In c. 128 B.C., Maccabean leader John Hyrcanus ultimately conquered the Samaritans, destroyed the temple on Mt. Gerezim, and forced the Samaritans to embrace Judaism (*Antiquities* 13.254-256).<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, the Samaritans continued to offer sacrifices atop Mt. Gerezim. In about A.D. 6-9 they showed their contempt for the temple in Jerusalem by scattering human bones around the temple courts during Passover (*Antiquities* 18.29-30).<sup>59</sup>

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2. At noon<sup>60</sup> He rested by Jacob's well at Sychar (4:5-6).<sup>61</sup>
- B. The woman's character, as compared with that of Nicodemus, is a study in *contrasts*: She was all that Nicodemus was not (4:1-6).<sup>62</sup>
  1. He was a *Jew*; she was a *Samaritan*.
  2. He was a *man*; she was a *woman*.



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3. He was *educated*; she was *ignorant*.
  4. He was *morally upright*; she was *immoral*.
  5. He was *wealthy*; she was *poor*.
  6. He *recognized* Jesus' merits and went in search of Him; she viewed Jesus as a curious traveler, and was *indifferent* to Him.
  7. He was *serious and dignified*; she, *flippant and possibly boisterous*.
- C. The Lord's approach to meeting and conversing with this woman is *instructive* (4:7-26).<sup>63</sup>
1. He began on the basis of her kindness by *appealing to her sympathy*: "Jesus said to her, 'Will you give me a drink?' " (4:7-8).
    - a. We are not explicitly told whether this woman honored His request for a drink of water, but it appears as if she could not resist the opportunity to be sarcastic and have a bit of fun with this unlikely situation.
    - b. The implication of her reply to Jesus could be stated thus: "To you Jews, we Samaritans are the scum of the earth—except when you are thirsty" (4:9).<sup>64</sup>
  2. Jesus takes no offense, but *appeals to her curiosity*: "Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God...he would have given you living water' " (4:10).



**NOTE:** Jesus probably intended to make a play on the usual meaning of the expression, “living water,” as referring to a spring of water in contrast to cistern water (see Gen. 26:19; Lev. 14:5; Zech. 14:8) (stagnant water was called ‘dead’). Yet Jesus is pointing to a ‘water’ infinitely better than spring water: “the water that mediates life,” “the water of life” (see John 7:38).<sup>65</sup>

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- a. *Her reaction* to Jesus’ offer of “living water” is a mixture of both curiosity and skepticism: “‘Sir,’ the woman said, ‘you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep.’<sup>66</sup> Where can you get this living water?’ ” (4:11).
- b. *Her response* to Jesus’ unconventional approach is a mixture of both seriousness and sarcasm: “Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well...?” (4:12).
- c. *Her understanding* is limited, but she is now sober and ready for serious conversation.
3. Having raised this woman’s level of interest higher than that of mere skeptical inquiry, Jesus now *appeals to her desire*: “Jesus answered, ‘Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst...’ ” (4:13-14).

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**NOTE:** From Genesis to Revelation the Bible uses water to signify God's blessing. The depth of emotional impact this symbolism carries is largely lost to those who do not live in a semi-arid region like Palestine. Although its destructive potential (such as in the Great Flood, see Gen. 6-9) provided a wealth of negative symbolism (see Isa. 8:6-8; Jer. 46:7-8; 47:2), its positive potential is even more often exploited in symbolism. The Garden of Eden was well-watered (Gen. 2:10-14), and its rivers provide the symbolism for the life-giving waters of the Psalms (1:3; 36:9; 65:9-10), Proverbs (10:11; 14:27; 18:4), Ezekiel (47:1-12), and Revelation (21:1-2). Water can symbolize peace and security, as well as life (see Pss. 23:2; 46:4; Isa. 66:12). Jeremiah's denunciation of the people for rejecting God's provision of Himself as a "spring of living water" to dig for themselves "broken cisterns that cannot hold water" (Jer. 2:13; see also 17:13; 18:14-15) seems particularly relevant to Jesus' use here.<sup>67</sup>

- a. *Her reaction* to this startling claim of Jesus shows that she was still thinking in terms of physical water: she failed to see that He was speaking of spiritual water.
  - b. *Her reply* shows that she desired an easy way out of her job of water-drawing: "The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty, and have to keep coming here to draw water'" (4:15).
4. Jesus, having brought her to an expression of genuine desire (elementary and earthly

though it was) *appeals to her ambition and conscience*: “He told her, ‘Go, call your husband and come back’” (4:16).

**NOTE:** Jesus knew that if her desire for this wonderful water of life had been sufficiently awakened, she would willingly exert herself in the prescribed manner in order to obtain it.

- a. *Her reaction* to the two-fold command of Jesus is a sullen response of resentment, a “smoke screen” designed to conceal her sin and protect her personal conscience: “‘I have no husband,’ she replied” (4:17).
- b. *His revelation* of her sinful circumstances turned this woman’s life inside out before her very eyes: “Jesus said to her, ‘You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband...’ ”<sup>68</sup> (4:17-18; read John 2:24-25; Rev. 1:14; 2:18).
- c. *Her response* to Jesus’ painful (though necessary) exposé of her life was a predictably human defensiveness, and a desire to change the subject of discussion to something less “personal,” such as an abstract point of religion: “‘Sir,’ said the woman, ‘I can see that you are a

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prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem' ” (4:19-20).

**NOTE:** The question of God's designated place of worship had been a major point of division between Jews and Samaritans for many years, as it is among many religious people today.

5. Jesus skillfully answers her question and meets the deeper personal need of this sinful woman by *appealing to her sense of religious responsibility*: “Jesus declared, ‘...the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks’ ” (4:21-26).

- a. *Faithful Jews* possessed the covenant promises, the divinely revealed religion, and the fullness of the revealed prophetic Scriptures.

**NOTE:** The Samaritans, as a racially mixed nation, could no longer lay claim to the title and privileges of the people of God (read 2 Kings 17; Ezra 4:1-3).

- b. *True worshippers* of the Father are such as worship Him “in spirit and truth.”
  - 1) They render homage to God with the entire heart and in full harmony

with the revealed truth of His will, as it is found in the divinely inspired Scriptures.

- 2) *True worship* is not bound by such material structures as “the mountain” or “Jerusalem.”<sup>69</sup>
- 3) The condition of heart and mind is half of it, and the doctrinal content is the other aspect of it—making true worship a whole and complete unity.

**NOTE:** The absolute necessity of true and spiritual worship is because of the fact that “God is Spirit.” He cannot be physically confined. Therefore, true worshippers not only *will* worship God in spirit and truth: they *must* do so!

- c. *Her reaction* to these challenging words of Jesus reveals sincerity and hope: “The woman said, ‘I know that Messiah... is coming...’ ” (4:25).

**NOTE:** The Samaritans cherished this hope, even though they only accepted the law of Moses (Genesis to Deuteronomy) as inspired scripture. “The Coming One was called by them Taheb, He who returns, or He who restores. We have little evidence to show what was believed about this Taheb, and none that is contemporary with Jesus, or even with John [the author].”<sup>70</sup>

- d. *Jesus reveals* Himself more openly to her than He did Nicodemus, presenting

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to her a direct challenge to believe:

"Then Jesus declared, 'I who speak to you am he [the Messiah]' " (4:26).<sup>71</sup>

D. The woman's development of faith is *informative*.<sup>72</sup>

1. Initially she sees Jesus as merely "*a Jew*" (read John 4:9).
2. She is then willing to consider whether He might be "*greater than Jacob*" (read John 4:12).
3. She gradually begins to perceive Him as "*a prophet*" (read John 4:19).
4. She finally understands that Jesus could well be "*the Christ*" (read John 4:29).
5. Her faith culminates in her desire to *bring others* to Christ (4:28-29).

III. Many Samaritans believe as the result of *personal investigation* (4:27-42).

A. The astonishment of the disciples upon discovering their "rabbi" speaking with a woman is understandable in light of the cultural traditions and taboos then prevailing.

1. Many considered conversation with a woman to be not only foolish, but irreverent.
  - a. According to the Mishnah (*Aboth* 1.5): "Jose b. Johanan of Jerusalem said: Let thy house be opened wide and let the

needy be members of thy household; and talk not much with womankind. They said this of a man's own wife: how much more of his fellow's wife! Hence the Sages have said: He that talks much with womankind brings evil upon himself and neglects the study of the Law and at last will inherit Gehenna."<sup>73</sup>

- b. Beruriah, wife of Rabbi Meir, once was asked, "What way must we go to Lydda?" She answered, "O you foolish Galilean, have not the wise men taught 'Do not multiply discourse with a woman'? You ought only to have said, 'Which way to Lydda?'"<sup>74</sup>
  - c. Another saying was, "Let no one talk with a woman in the street, no not with his own wife."<sup>75</sup>
2. Certain ancient rabbinical writings forbade men to discuss the Law with women.

*Kiddushin* says: "Samuel says, They do not salute a woman at all." When a certain woman asked Rabbi Eleazar a question about the golden calf, he answered, "A woman ought not to be wise above her distaff" [in other words, You need know nothing but how to spin]. Hyrcanus said to him, "Because you did not answer her a word out of the law, she will keep back from us three hundred measures of tithes

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yearly.” He replied, “Let the words of the law be burned rather than committed to a woman.”<sup>76</sup>

- B. The fact that the woman left her water pot at the well may indicate that she, too, was aware of the impropriety of this situation, but more likely reflects her growing preoccupation with the person of Christ (4:27-29).<sup>77</sup>
- C. The ministry of Jesus among the Samaritans was characterized by selfless service (4:30-38).
- D. The manifestation of belief by the Samaritans was the impressive result of what God can accomplish through one human being whose only qualification was a willingness to listen to Jesus (4:39-42).

**NOTE:** John gives us no hint that miracles were performed in Samaria on this occasion. The Samaritans’ faith arose in response to Jesus’ teaching alone. This makes their faith all the more remarkable.

- IV. The patient love of Jesus had to overcome many obstacles in bringing this woman to the initial stage of active faith, including
  - A. Ignorance
  - B. Indifference
  - C. Indecision
  - D. Materialism
  - E. Selfishness
  - F. Religious prejudice
  - G. Moral indifference



# Interview with the Nobleman of Capernaum—John 4:43-54

**NOTE:** This section makes an implicit reference to signs by mentioning those which the Galileans had seen. A deficiency in the depth of Galilean belief in Jesus is suggested by the fact that their belief was based on the works he did. Their faith was not grounded in a knowledge of His person; that is, in who He was. Evidently the meaning of Jesus' works as signs had not been perceived.

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- I. The situation of the nobleman and his son is presented (4:46-54).<sup>78</sup>
  - A. The usage of the verb “begged” (Gr: *erötaō*)<sup>79</sup> in the imperfect tense means that the nobleman “persistently requested” the help of Jesus (4:47).<sup>80</sup>
  - B. The nobleman’s earnestness is evident in the phrase, “before my child dies” (4:49).
    - 1. To him, this encounter with Jesus was for no mere academic discussion concerning Jesus’ ability.
    - 2. It was a matter of life and death!
- II. The brief response of Jesus is instructive (4:50).
  - A. Unlike many modern “faith healers,” Jesus did not desire to be known simply as a “miracle-worker” while His person was being rejected.<sup>81</sup>
    - 1. Jesus did not “go down” to the nobleman’s house, since it was a matter of words, and not miles!

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2. The relevant question at this point was, "Who is this Jesus?"
3. The issue at hand was to believe or not to believe.
- B. We can appreciate the nobleman's dilemma:
  1. If he stayed, he would insult the very One from whom he had asked help.
  2. If he left, he had no other assurance of the life of his son than Jesus' spoken word.
- C. With His brief and pointed statement, Jesus places the man in a position to show *real* belief, if indeed he had any faith at all!
- III. The nobleman's progression in *belief* is outlined (4:50-54).
  - A. Belief is due to *necessity*. (There was no alternative source of help to which he could appeal.) (4:50)
  - B. He shows a belief of *gratitude* in Jesus Christ, as a person. (He appreciated who Jesus was as well as what He did.) (4:53)
  - C. Upon seeing that *his son* could be entrusted to Christ, the nobleman commits *himself* and his whole *household* to Christ. (There was a growth of belief.) (4:53)
- IV. The conclusion of this incident is unmistakable: This sign proves Jesus to be *Master over space and distance*, since the distance separating Jesus from the dying boy was approximately twenty miles.<sup>82</sup>

**NOTES**

<sup>1</sup>See also *Jewish War* 2.162-163, 166 (Loeb, 2:384-387). It must be noted that this characterization is not objective, for Josephus himself was a Pharisee (see *The Life* 12 [Josephus (Loeb), 1:6-7]).

<sup>2</sup>*Jewish Antiquities* 18.12-15 (Josephus [Loeb], 9:10-13).

<sup>3</sup>See Harvey Falk, *Jesus the Pharisee: A New Look at the Jewishness of Jesus* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985; hereafter cited as Falk, *Jesus the Pharisee*). Falk, a rabbi, claims that much of what Jesus opposed in the Jewish teaching of His day was Pharisaic teaching of the "School of Shammai," but that He endorsed what agrees with Pharisaic teaching of the "School of Hillel." While this may generally be true, Jesus opposed divorcing "for any and every cause," an action approved by the "School of Hillel" (see Matt. 19:3-9; *Mishnah*, Gittin 9.10 [Danby, *Mishnah*, p. 321]). Falk sidesteps this point by claiming (wrongly) that Jesus' teaching concerns only marriages between Gentiles (pp. 154, 160).

"Night" has negative spiritual connotations elsewhere in John's Gospel (see John 9:4; 11:9-11; probably 13:30; compare the symbolism of "darkness" in John 1:5; 3:19; 8:12; 12:35, 46), but here it may mean nothing more than that nighttime was reserved by rabbis "as especially suitable for the study of the law" and an appropriate time "to secure solitude in order to converse with Jesus about the deep things of religion" (Edwyn Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, ed. by Francis Noel Davey, rev. ed. [London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1947], p. 211; hereafter cited as Hoskyns). Many commentators suggest that John intended

both meanings (see Wead, "Double Meaning," pp. 118-120). The idea that Nicodemus chose night because of cowardice (the position of Westcott, see Wead, "Double Meaning," p. 120) seems to be refuted by later references to him in John's Gospel (see John 7:50-52; 19:39-42).

<sup>5</sup>Jesus describes him as "the teacher of Israel": "The article emphasizes the status of Nicodemus: the great, universally recognized, teacher" (Barrett, p. 176).

<sup>6</sup>For further discussion of points under section II, see Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 85-88.

<sup>7</sup>Both meanings are probably intended (see Wead, "Double Meaning," pp. 106-108; his conclusion is: "Thus *anōthen* comes to emphasize not only what may be visibly happening, a birth in water, but also what happens unseen, a birth from above through the Holy Spirit" [p. 108]).

<sup>8</sup>A. T. Robertson mentions this interpretation (*Word Pictures*, 5:46).

<sup>9</sup>According to Barrett, semen is called "drop" in some rabbinic and pseudepigraphical works. Barrett, however, says "the evidence does not seem to be sufficient to support an interpretation of this kind" (p. 175).

<sup>10</sup>"Neither noun has the article and the one preposition governs both" (Morris, *John*, p. 216; see A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 4th ed. [orig. ed.: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923; repr. ed.: Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1934], p. 566; hereafter cited as Robertson, *Grammar*).

<sup>11</sup>See Irving L. Jenson, *Do-It-Yourself Bible Studies: John* (San Bernadino, CA: Here's Life Publ., 1983), p. 27;

Bob L. Ross, *Acts 2:38 and Baptismal Remission* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publ., 1976), pp. 60-61. Jenson lists this interpretation among several possibilities, but Ross definitely rejects it.

<sup>12</sup>Such was Calvin's interpretation, "forced on him because he could not endure the idea that baptism was necessary to salvation...; but that deduction from the words does not necessarily follow and they must be allowed their proper force without prejudice" (Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, p. 228).

<sup>13</sup>"'Water' stands for purification.... If this is the correct explanation there is probably a backward look at the baptism of John.... The meaning then will be that Nicodemus should enter into all that 'water' symbolizes, namely repentance and the like, and that he should also enter into the experience which is summed up as 'born of... the Spirit', namely the totally new divine life that Jesus would impart.... The Pharisees refused John's baptism (Luke 7:30), and they consistently opposed Jesus. It was asking a lot that Nicodemus should accept both" (Morris, *John*, pp. 215-216; see also Macgregor, p. 72; Dods, *John* [Greek], p. 713; Hoskyns, p. 214; Barrett, p. 174).

<sup>14</sup>John 1:32-34 is the only place in John's Gospel before 3:5 in which the words "water" and "Spirit" are brought together and should be regarded as the lead-in context for Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. The following passage (John 3:22-36) continues this theme of John's testimony.

<sup>15</sup>"This implied reference to the Christian rite of baptism, though strictly speaking an anachronism on Jesus' lips, comes naturally enough from the pen of one who consistently writes with the conditions of the Church of his

own time in view" (Macgregor, p. 72; compare Barrett, p. 174).

<sup>16</sup>Marcus Dods says: "These then are the two great incidents of the second birth—the pardon of sin, which is preparatory, and which cuts our connection with the past; the communication of life by the Spirit of God, which fits us for the future. Both of these are represented by Christian baptism because in Christ we have both; but those who were baptised by John's baptism were only *prepared* for receiving Christ's Spirit by receiving the forgiveness of their sins" (5:141 in *The Expositor's Bible*, 6 vols., ed. by W. R. Nicoll [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1947]). See also Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, pp. 230-231.

<sup>17</sup>On the debate about whether the Greek word *pneuma* should be translated "Spirit" or "wind," see J. D. Thomas, "A Translation Problem—John 3:8," *Restoration Quarterly* 24, 4 (1981):219-224; Wead, "Double Meaning," pp. 1116-1117.

<sup>18</sup>For more on regeneration in the Old Testament, see Arthur H. Lewis, "The New Birth under the Old Covenant," *Evangelical Quarterly* 56, 1 (1984):35-44.

<sup>19</sup>"Our [plural, not "my," singular] testimony" would refer to the testimony of both Jesus and John (see John 1:6-8, 32-34).

<sup>20</sup>John's account of the discussion with Nicodemus may end after verse 12, with verses 13 to 21 being John's commentary. Some, however, believe the discussion with Nicodemus ends after verse 16, while others hold that it continues to the end of verse 21 (see Merrill C. Tenney, "Footnotes in John's Gospel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 117, 468 (1960):361 [hereafter cited as Tenney, "Footnotes"]; William C. Grese, "'Unless One is Born Again': The Use of a



Heavenly Journey in John 3," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 107, 4 [1988]:677, 692; hereafter cited as Grese, "Journey"). A similar difficulty is in John 3:27-30,31-36.

<sup>21</sup>If Jesus is speaking here (see previous note), it is hard to understand why he would say this, for His ascension would still be future. If this verse is part of John's commentary, written after the ascension, the difficulty vanishes (see Stein, *Difficult Passages*, pp. 93-97).

<sup>22</sup>Unlike the many false claims of pagan and Jewish apocalyptic writers to be able to reveal mysteries about the spiritual world because they had taken a heavenly journey, Jesus alone was qualified to reveal "the things of heaven" (see verse 12). In 3:14-21, John (or Jesus) "offers to those able to receive the heavenly things the revelation which Nicodemus sought... [T]he vision of God, eternal life, the revelation of heavenly secrets—the kind of benefits that others expected to gain via heavenly journeys—are to be found in Jesus" (Grese, "Journey," pp. 689, 692).

<sup>23</sup>Wead suggests, however, that the Cross is always viewed in John's Gospel with glorification in mind (see Wead, "Double Meaning," pp. 108-110).

<sup>24</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 89.

<sup>25</sup>William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, 2 vols. in 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), 1:139; hereafter cited as Hendriksen.

<sup>26</sup>On the meaning of "one and only" and why it is translated this way instead of the traditional "only begotten," see comments and note on John 1:18; Pack, "Problems in John," pp. 215-216; and R. L. Roberts, "The Rendering 'Only Begotten' in John 3:16," *Restoration Quarterly* 16, 1 (1973):2-21.

<sup>27</sup>Hendriksen, 1:141.

<sup>28</sup>See Blass-Debrunner-Funk, §318 (p. 166), §339 (p. 174).

<sup>29</sup>J. W. Roberts, "Some Observations on the Meaning of 'Eternal Life' in the Gospel of John," *Restoration Quarterly* 7, 4 (1963):193; see also J. C. Davis, "The Johannine Concept of Eternal Life as a Present Possession," *Restoration Quarterly* 27, 3 (1984):161-169.

<sup>30</sup>Arichea, "Translating 'Believe' in John," p. 207; hereafter cited as Arichea, "Believe." Arichea notes instances of this meaning of 'believe' in more than thirty verses in John's Gospel.

<sup>31</sup>Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, pp. 267-268.

<sup>32</sup>W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, 4 vols. in 1 (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1965), 2:280; hereafter cited as Vine. Compare Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 452.

<sup>33</sup>Vine, 1:223; see also Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 453.

<sup>34</sup>Jesus Himself was not doing any of the actual baptizing (see John 4:2), no doubt recognizing the ease with which those baptized would attach too great an importance on who baptized them rather than on why they had been baptized (compare 1 Cor. 1:13-17). Such a tendency persists today when people attempt to extract prestige or proof of spiritual soundness from the fame of the one who baptized them.

<sup>35</sup>At least two sites have been suggested by modern scholars: Salumias, having seven springs on the west bank of the Jordan seven and a half miles south of Beth-Shan (Potter, "Topography," p. 333) and Sâlim, three miles southeast of Shechem (in the middle of Samaria) near the headwaters of Wadi Far'ah, with "many springs in the

neighborhood" (W. F. Albright, "Recent Discoveries in Palestine and the Gospel of St John," pp. 153-171 in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology*, ed. by W. D. Davies and D. Daube [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964], p. 159; hereafter cited as Albright, "Discoveries"). The first is more likely, affording non-Samaritans easier access to baptism (for other arguments against Sâlim and in favor of Salumias, see Bernard, 1:128).

<sup>36</sup>This incidental note has long been used as a proof that the mode of baptism was immersion, not sprinkling. The uncertainty of the actual site (see note 34 above), the ambiguity of the phrase "there was plenty of water" (Gr: *hudata polla ên ekei*—literally "many waters were there"), and the name of the place ("Aenon," Aramaic for "little fountain" [Albright, "Discoveries," p. 159]) all reduce to nil the force of such an argument. At the same time, neither can it be said, as Jay Adams does, "[I]t looks as though the Baptist 'fort' of John 3, not only has collapsed, but has turned its guns upon its defenders" (*The Meaning and Mode of Baptism* [Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publ. Co., 1975], p. 14). Adams' arguments depend on the site's identification with Sâlim, and he assumes that no provision for immersion was available in the area. Archaeologists have discovered ritual baths in numerous first-century sites (see Meir Ben-Dov's descriptions of ritual baths in *In the Shadow of the Temple*, transl. by Ina Friedman [New York: Harper & Row, Publ., 1982], pp. 151-153).

<sup>37</sup>Whether "Jew" in this verse refers to a member of the Jewish authorities (assumed to be hostile to both John and Jesus) or to some other Jew is uncertain (see Von Wahlde, "Johannine 'Jews,'" pp. 49-50).

<sup>38</sup>A. Van Selms, "The Best Man and Bride—from Sumer to St. John," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 9, 2 (1950):65-75; hereafter cited as Van Selms, "Best Man."

<sup>39</sup>Van Selms, "Best Man," pp. 74-75.

<sup>40</sup>J. D. M. Derrett, "Water into Wine," p. 81.

<sup>41</sup>As pointed out above (in note 20; see the references there) in reference to 3:13-21, scholars disagree about whether the Baptizer is speaking in verses 31-36 or whether these verses are a commentary the Apostle has added to John's dialogue with his disciples (which seems more likely).

<sup>42</sup>John may be described here as "the one from the earth," but this would seem to deny that John was "a man sent from God" (1:6), proclaiming a divine message. It is more likely that John intends to contrast Jesus' authoritative teaching with anyone whose perspective is limited to this world (see Schnackenburg, 1:385-386).

<sup>43</sup>"The man who has accepted it" probably refers to the Baptizer, based on the correspondence between the phrase, "has certified," and the testimony the Baptizer gives in John 1:30-34, which is certainly a certification of Jesus as God's Messiah. This would agree with Jesus' earlier statement that "we [referring to both Jesus and the Baptizer] speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony" (John 3:11).

<sup>44</sup>This understanding (found, for example, in KJV, Charles B. Williams, and Simple English Bible) makes God the subject of "gives" and Christ the implied indirect object, reflected by the rendering, "For God gives Him the Spirit without limit." This would refer to Christ's inspiration to speak for God (see Bernard, 1:125; Barrett, p. 189; Morris, *John*, pp. 246-247; Hoskyns, pp. 230-231). An

alternative understanding (found in RSV, NASB) looks forward to the time when the Spirit would be poured out “on all flesh” (Acts 2:33; compare John 7:37-39; 16:7; 20:22). The Greek words used (*ou gar ek metrou didōsin to pneuma*) allow either meaning (Hoskyns [pp. 230-231] and Schnackenburg [1:386-387] claim John intended both), and either is equally true (Brown [John, 1:162] leaves the question undecided), but the context seems to demand the first.

<sup>45</sup>See Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>46</sup>The antithetical parallelism between “believes” (Gr: *pisteuō*) and “rejects” (Gr: *apeithō*), also rendered “disobeys” (ASV, NASB) and “believeth not” (KJV), demonstrates that John sees a synonymy between “believe” and “obey” (Gr: *peithō*, which is *apeithō* without the *a-* privative which negates the meaning of *peithō*, just as “atheist” is the opposite of “theist”). Further examples of this same synonymy between *pisteuō* and *peithō* are found in Acts 28:24; Rom. 11:20, 23, 30-32; Heb. 3:18-19; 4:3, 6; 1 Peter 2:7-8 (see Rudolf Bultmann, “πεῖθω, κ.τ.λ.,” 6:10-11 in *TDNT*).

<sup>47</sup>See Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, pp. 67-72.

<sup>48</sup>See Macgregor, p. 93.

<sup>49</sup>See Bernard, 1:133.

<sup>50</sup>The Greek lexicon defines *dei* as “it is necessary, one must or has to, denoting compulsion of any kind” (Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 172).

<sup>51</sup>Jews traveling between Judea and Galilee sometimes avoided going through Samaria by crossing the Jordan into Decapolis and Perea (see Schnackenburg, 1:422; Brown, 1:169). Their motives were varied: the Samaritans were hated as half-Jews and were feared as openly hostile to Jews (see Josephus, *War* 2.232-246 [Josephus (Loeb), 2:414-419]; *Antiquities* 20.118-136 [Josephus (Loeb),

9:450-461]). On Jesus’ final trip to Jerusalem he tried to pass through Samaria, but Samaritan hostility forced Him to take the usual route across the Jordan (see Luke 9:51-56; 17:11; Matt. 19:1; Luke 19:1, 28).

<sup>52</sup>“Elsewhere in the Gospel (iii 14) the expression of necessity means that God’s will or plan is involved” (Brown, 1:169).

<sup>53</sup>Josephus (Loeb), 6:152-155.

<sup>54</sup>After suffering attacks from lions, they received a priest from the exiles who “taught them how to worship the LORD” (2 Kings 17:28). Nevertheless, they continued to worship their own gods, just adding the LORD to their pantheon. Even if they had rejected their gods and followed the priest’s instructions explicitly, they still would have fallen short of conversion to Judaism, for the priest was from the northern nation of Israel, and as such would have been non-levitical, apostate, and perhaps even idolatrous himself (see 1 Kings 12:26-33; 2 Kings 17:7-17; Hosea 4:6-13).

<sup>55</sup>See F. F. Bruce, *Israel and the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1969), pp. 66-67.

<sup>56</sup>Josephus (Loeb), 6:468-471.

<sup>57</sup>Josephus (Loeb), 7:132-137.

<sup>58</sup>Josephus (Loeb), 7:354-357.

<sup>59</sup>Josephus (Loeb), 9:24-27.

<sup>60</sup>Some attach symbolic significance to the hour when Jesus meets the woman—that this is the zenith of His popularity or of the common people’s faith in Him (see B. P. Robinson, “The Meaning and Significance of ‘The Seventh Hour’ in John 4:52,” pp. 255-263 in *Studia Biblica 1978: Papers on The Gospels* [6th International Congress on Biblical Studies], ed. by E. A. Livingstone [Sheffield, England: Journal for the Study of the New Testament,

Suppl. Series 2, 1980], p. 260; hereafter cited as Robinson, "Seventh Hour"). A better understanding of the reference to the hour is to provide an explanation of why Jesus would stop to rest at the well.

<sup>61</sup>This site has always been known and can be visited today. The well still yields water, though from about A.D. 400 on it has been covered by three successive churches. It is now covered by an unfinished Greek Orthodox church begun early in the twentieth century (see F. F. Bruce, *Jesus and Paul: Places They Knew* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publ., 1983], p. 36; hereafter cited as Bruce, *Jesus and Paul*).

<sup>62</sup>See Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 92. In fact, all of chapters 2-4 is a study in contrasts: a section on the faith of Jews opens with an account of the complete faith of a Jewish woman (Jesus' mother—2:1-12), then contrasts no faith (2:13-22) with partial faith (3:1-21) and complete faith (3:22-36); a contrasting section on the faith of non-Jews again contrasts no faith (4:1-15) with partial faith (4:16-26) and complete faith (4:27-42); ending with the complete faith of a Gentile man (the nobleman of Capernaum—4:43-54). The orderly progression of these scenes cannot be coincidental; they must be a part of John's conscious structuring of his Gospel (see Francis J. Moloney, "From Cana to Cana [John 2:1-4:54] and the Fourth Evangelist's Concept of Correct [and Incorrect] Faith," pp. 185-213 in *Studia Biblica 1978: Papers on The Gospels* [6th International Congress on Biblical Studies], ed. by E. A. Livingstone [Sheffield, England: Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Suppl. Series 2, 1980]; hereafter cited as Moloney, "Cana to Cana").

<sup>63</sup>For points under section C see Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 92-96.

<sup>64</sup>A proper rendering of the last clause of verse 9 would be, "Jews and Samaritans... do not use vessels in common" (NEB). John Bligh points to the rabbinic tradition, codified at about A.D. 66, that "the daughters of the Samaritans are menstruants from the cradle." In other words since a Jew could never be sure that a Samaritan woman was not in a state of uncleanness, the only safe practice was to avoid all contact with a Samaritan woman, including using any vessel she had touched ("Jesus in Samaria," *Heythrop Journal* 3 [1962]:333-334; hereafter cited as Bligh, "Samaria"). Jesus "does not appear to have troubled about the risk of incurring ritual pollution" (F. F. Bruce, *Jesus and Paul*, p. 36).

<sup>65</sup>Leonhard Goppelt, "ὕδωρ," *TDNT*, 8:326. See also Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 337; Wead, "Double Meaning," p. 111.

<sup>66</sup>"Even today it is said to be about 130 feet deep, and it was probably deeper then.... Jacob's Well is fed by an underground stream, and in Jesus' time was also a cistern to collect rainwater" (Bruce, *Jesus and Paul*, pp. 36-37).

<sup>67</sup>See Leonhard Goppelt, "ὕδωρ," *TDNT*, 8:317-322.

<sup>68</sup>The distinction Jesus makes here between the woman's former husbands and her present partner demonstrates that for Jesus, cohabitation does not automatically constitute marriage.

<sup>69</sup>This had long been recognized (see 1 Kings 7:22-53; Isa. 66:1-2; Jer. 7:1-20).

<sup>70</sup>Barrett, p. 200. According to H. M. G. Williamson: "Since the main theological writings of the Samaritans (e.g. *Memar Marqah*, the Samaritan liturgy known as the *Deftar*, and a number of Chronicles) come from only the 4th century AD, and often much later, it is impossible to reconstruct in detail their beliefs in the NT period.... [The



elements of their creed] must date back to early times: belief in one God, in Moses the prophet, in the law, in Mt Gerezim as the place appointed by God for sacrifice (which is made the tenth commandment in the S[amaritan] P[entateuch]), in the day of judgment and recompense, and in the return of Moses as *Taheb* (the 'restorer' or 'returning one') ("Samaritans," *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 3 vols., ed. by J. D. Douglas et al. [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publ., 1980], 3:1378; hereafter cited as *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*).

<sup>71</sup>Moloney ("Cana to Cana," p. 198) claims the rendering of *egō eimi* should be, "I am" (recalling the name of God in Exod. 3:14), but the woman's challenge to her fellow Samaritans was not, "Could this be 'I AM,'" but "Could this man be the Messiah?" Moloney suggests that the woman is unwilling to accept Jesus' self-revelation as God in the flesh, and "she remains within her partial categories.... [T]he Samaritan woman provides the Evangelist with a model of *partial faith*" ("Cana to Cana," p. 198). This same ambiguity (between "I am" [a claim to deity], and "It is I" [identification to known acquaintances] or "I am he" [that is, the Messiah]) is involved in the interpretation of John 6:20; 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19; 18:5, 6, 8. Note, however, that the phrase (without a predicate nominative) does not automatically constitute a claim to deity; the blind man's *egō eimi* (John 9:9) is clearly nothing more than an open admission of personal identity. See "The Origin and Meaning of the *ἐγώ εἰμι* Formula," 2:79-89 in Schnackenburg.

<sup>72</sup>See Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 95-96.

<sup>73</sup>Danby, *Mishnah*, p. 446.

<sup>74</sup>John Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*, 4 vols. (orig. ed.:

*Horae Hebraicae Et Talmudicae*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1859; repr. ed.: Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 3:286; hereafter cited as John Lightfoot.

<sup>75</sup>John Lightfoot, p. 287; see Barclay, *Ten Commandments*, pp. 105-107.

<sup>76</sup>John Lightfoot, p. 287. Some rabbis, however, took exception to these traditions. The daughter of Rabbi Channa ben Teradion, who married Rabbi Meir, was a scholar of rabbinic law. The Talmud records one rabbinic saying of Rabbi Gamaliel's daughter, and Barclay notes: "In the house of Rabbi Judah the Patriarch even the maids knew biblical Hebrew and could enlighten scholars on the meaning of words..." (Barclay, *Ten Commandments*, p. 105). Nevertheless, the dominant opinion is summarized in the saying, "If any man gives his daughter a knowledge of the Law it is as though he taught her lechery" (*Sotah* 3.4 [Danby, *Mishnah*, p. 296]).

<sup>77</sup>Another possibility is that she left her waterpot at the well to assure Jesus that she would return shortly.

<sup>78</sup>For points covered under sections I, II, and III, see Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 97-99.

<sup>79</sup>The Greek lexicon's definition is "ask, ask a question, request, urge" (Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, pp. 311-312).

<sup>80</sup>This is probably an example of the iterative imperfect (see Robertson, *Grammar*, p. 884).

<sup>81</sup>In fact, He often carefully avoided the publicity healings would otherwise bring (see Mark 1:25, 44; 3:12; 5:40, 43; 7:33, 36; 8:23, 26; John 9:7). In arranging that the miracle take place miles away from where the crowds could have seen it, He once more avoids publicity.

<sup>82</sup>After listing and rejecting various naturalistic explanations for this miracle, Van Der Loos says: "...the laws

of time and space, such as we know them in this aeon, can be interrupted when in the 'event of Christ' something enters our world from the other Aeon. In healing at a distance, too, the 'coming' of Jesus Christ as the One of Authority and the Bringer of salvation is manifest, and 'something' of the other Aeon penetrates our world: the Kingdom of God functions in its own immediacy" (*Miracles*, p. 547).

# **The Gospel of John: “That You May Have Life”**

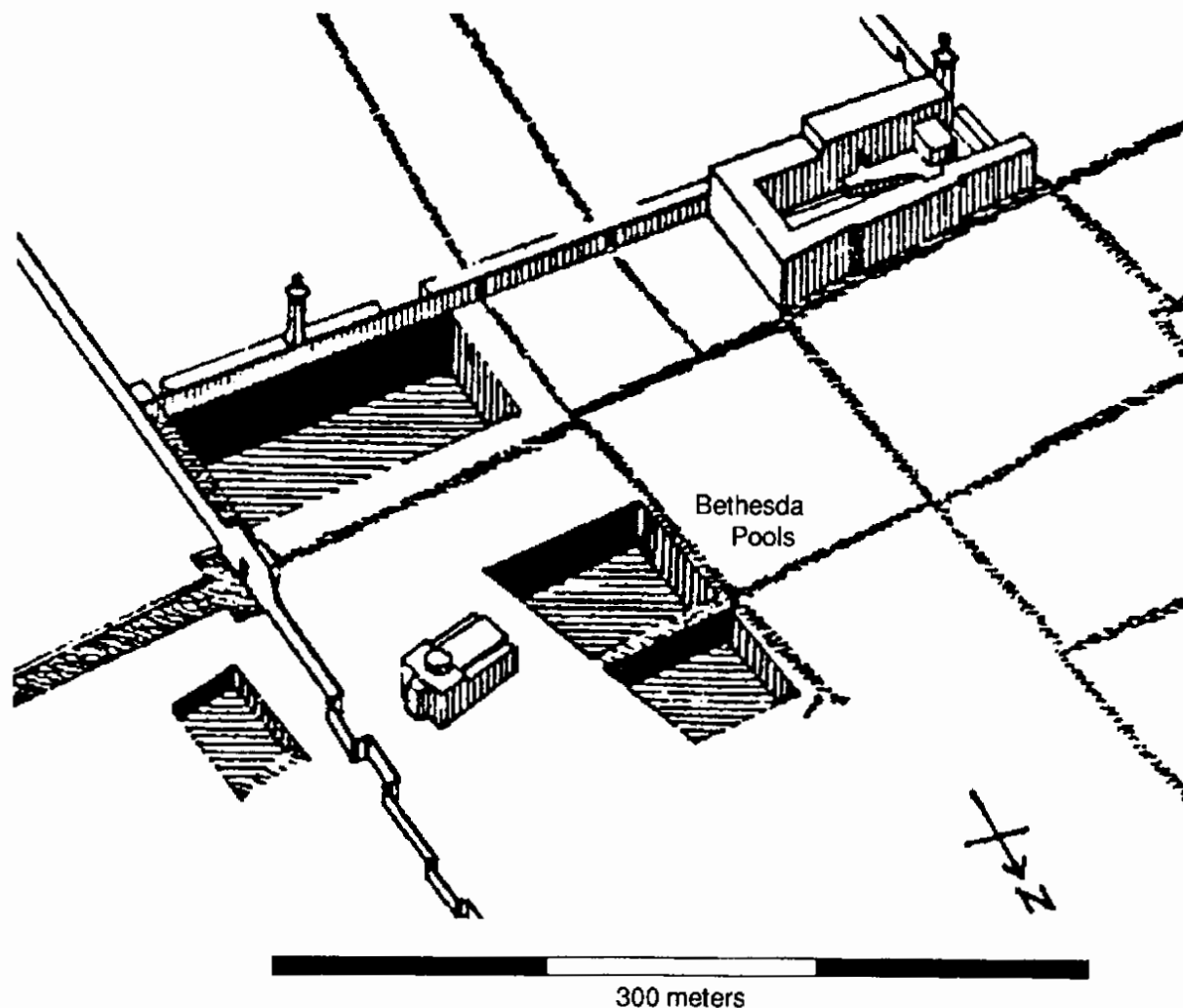
## **Part IV**

### ***The Issues of Belief and Unbelief***



# Lesson Five

**John 5:1 - 6:71**



*"Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda...."* (John 5:2). The pool where the lame man was healed has been identified in an area just north of the Dome of the Rock enclosure. The entire double-pool, however, has not been fully excavated.

Source: John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem as Jesus Knew It: Archaeology as Evidence* (London: Thames & Hudson, Ltd., 1978), 96. Reprinted by permission.

# The Healing of the Lame Man—John 5:1-18

**NOTE:** The pool of Bethesda was located north of the temple enclosure just outside the city walls of the Jerusalem of Jesus' day. Archaeologists have partially excavated two pools (one about 165 x 130 feet, the other about 200 x 160 feet) divided by a causeway 21 feet wide. From pagan votive offerings found at the site, it is clear that in the second-century city, Aelia Capitolina, the pools were a part of a healing sanctuary dedicated to the healing god, Aesculapios. Based on what is known from other similar sites (such as healing baths in Tiberias and Gadara), it is probable that Bethesda was a healing sanctuary established during or even before the reign of Herod the Great and operated by Jews (probably rejected by some as unorthodox) until the destruction of the city in A.D. 70 and converted to a pagan sanctuary when the city was rebuilt.<sup>1</sup>

The manuscripts disagree about the spelling of the place: Bethesda (to be rejected as a scribal assimilation to the Galilean town mentioned in John 1:44), Bethesda (the singular form of the Aramaic word for "House of Mercy," an appropriate title for a place of healing), and Bethzatha (emphatic plural form of the same Aramaic word and "the name of the northern extension of the city, which may give a hint as to the location of the pool").<sup>2</sup> Because of a reference to a pool at "Bethesdathayim" in the Copper Scroll of Qumran, "Bethesda" is probably the original reading.<sup>3</sup>

- I. The restoration by Jesus is complete, as seen in His instructions:
  - A. "Do you want to get well?" ("Do you have the will to be cured?") (5:6)

*Notes:*

*Notes:*

**NOTE:** The story of the angel's troubling of the water seems to be a scribal addition attempting to explain the cause of the troubling of the waters of verse 7. It is absent in the earliest and best witnesses and in many where it is present it is marked with special symbols scribes reserved for passages regarded as spurious. It contains several words or phrases not found elsewhere in John's Gospel, and the manuscripts which contain this verse disagree widely about the exact wording. All of these are tell-tale signs that the verse was not a part of the original text.<sup>4</sup>

- B. "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk" (5:8).<sup>5</sup>
- C. "Stop sinning..." (5:14).
  - 1. Jesus seeks the man out: the physical healing is not the end of the matter.
  - 2. Jesus warns him of the ultimate consequences of sin: His concern is for the soul as well as for the body (read Matt. 10:28-29; Luke 12:4-5).

**NOTE:** Although all physical healing and well-being should be regarded as the gracious working of God, it should be understood that the healing effected by Jesus was immediate and instantaneous, unlike many which are alleged to be done by the same miraculous power today, as the following examples demonstrate. (1) A girl's leukemia went into remission after intercessory prayer was continually offered for her, but she relapsed when the group became careless about fasting, then relapsed again when the family's church had a change of pastors and regular, weekly communion became impossible. When the family was welcomed at a nearby Episcopal church "the little girl's disease has been in remission ever since."<sup>6</sup>



(2) Louis Rose reports of a case of tuberculosis of the spine in which "two days after being touched... her deformity disappeared.... Afterwards, although not completely cured, the sufferer was reported as being able to lead a normal life."<sup>7</sup> Later in his book, Rose tells of a boy dying of meningitis for whom a faith healer prayed while holding his hand. "A few days later" the boy's father was told by a Christian Science friend (whose convictions the father did not share) that she had received guidance that his son had "turned the corner." Rose concludes, "This proved to be true, and though recovery was slow it was complete."<sup>8</sup>

(3) Edgar Sanford tells of a boy with epilepsy who had another attack less than a week after the "healing" was first attempted. Sanford says the boy came for prayer "every once in a while" and "about a year and a half after his first visit" had his last attack of epilepsy (so far as Sanford knows, for the boy moved away).<sup>9</sup>

(4) J. Cameron Peddie says of one of his subjects: "I gave her weekly services for three months before the pain began to lessen. She had faith and patience and she persisted in coming. Within one year her suffering was greatly relieved; within two she was completely cured."<sup>10</sup>

*Notes:*

II. The response of the lame man is pathetic.

A. "Sir, I have no one to help me into the pool..." (5:7).

1. He places the blame for his continuous state on someone (anyone!) else; that is, he believed that what people had not done for him accounted for his miserable condition.
2. He was bound by his condition and could offer nothing but complaint.

*Notes:*

3. His will was (partially) paralyzed, as was his body which had been afflicted for thirty-eight years.<sup>11</sup>
  4. He had resigned himself to complete and utter helplessness, both in body and spirit.
  5. The very word 'sin' (Gr: *hamartanō*) is in the present tense, showing that he was complacent about his present spiritual condition (5:14).<sup>12</sup>
- B. The personal presence and powerful pronouncement of the "Great Physician" enables the man to fulfill three previously impossible commands:
1. "Get up": The aoristic use of the present tense indicates a single, absolute act.<sup>13</sup>
  2. "Pick up your mat": The aorist again denotes "point action."
  3. "Walk": The present tense describes the commencement of a process.<sup>14</sup>

**NOTE:** At that point, the man did not know who his benefactor was (5:13).

III. The reaction of "The Jews"<sup>15</sup> is vicious.

- A. They chide the man for carrying his mat on the Sabbath (5:10-12).
  1. Sabbath-keeping was commanded and practiced in the Old Testament.

- a. Although Gen. 2:3 tells of the divine blessing of the seventh day immediately after creation, no biblical evidence exists to demonstrate that the Sabbath was observed before it was introduced through Moses as one of the Ten Commandments<sup>16</sup> (see Exod. 20:8-11; 31:12-17; 35:1-3; Lev. 23:3; repeated at the end of the forty years in Deut. 5:12-15).
  - b. How strictly God intended the prohibition of work on the Sabbath to be interpreted was quickly established: a man caught gathering wood on the Sabbath was stoned according to God's own command (see Num. 15:32-36).
  - c. The Old Testament prophets denounced those who broke the Sabbath laws (Isa. 56:2, 6; Jer. 17:21-27) and urged that the Sabbath not only be obeyed, but obeyed with the right attitude (see Amos 8:4-6; Isa. 58:13).
  - d. Nehemiah restored Sabbath observance among those who had returned from the exile, though he did not treat it as a capital offense (see Neh. 13:15-22).
2. The following examines Sabbath-keeping from the close of the Old Testament to the time of Christ.

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- a. Because the Jews no longer had the prophets to provide them with an authoritative word from God, they came to rely ever increasingly on prominent teachers (based on Deut. 17:8-13; see the reference to “Moses’ seat” in Matt. 23:2) who interpreted the Scriptures and developed guidelines for conduct, often based on inference from Scripture.
- b. The gradual accumulation over many generations of these oral pronouncements eventually became memorized and invested with as much authority as the written Torah.<sup>17</sup>
- c. The “oral law” was codified by Akiba (c. A.D. 50-135) and finally committed to writing in the *Mishnah* by Judah the Patriarch (c. A.D. 135-220).
- d. Tractate Shabbath<sup>18</sup> details what may and may not be done on the Sabbath:
  - 1) A tailor could not carry a needle, nor a scribe his pen.
  - 2) A man may not search himself for fleas just before the Sabbath starts (Danby explains: “He may, forgetful of the Sabbath, tilt the lamp to make the oil flow into the wick more abundantly to give a brighter light”).<sup>19</sup>

- 3) Bread could not be put into the oven unless there was time before the Sabbath to take it out again.
  - 4) A lamp could not be snuffed out on the Sabbath except in certain exceptional cases, for that would be making charcoal.
  - 5) One whole chapter of the tractate describes what animals may and may not carry on the Sabbath.
  - 6) A man was not allowed to go out of his house with his sandals on if they were shod with nails.
  - 7) Most articles of women's jewelry could not be worn on the Sabbath, and only one rabbi allowed men to carry weapons of war.
  - 8) And on and on it goes: "A cripple may go out with his wooden stump. So R. Meir. But R. Jose forbids it."<sup>20</sup>
- e. Tractate Shabbath lists thirty-nine main classes of work, all forbidden on the Sabbath, of which the last was "taking aught from one domain into another."<sup>21</sup> Later on this is further defined as what may and may not be carried, and how:

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*Notes:*

- 1) "If a man took aught in his right hand or in his left hand, in his bosom or on his shoulder, he is culpable.... If [he took it out] on the back of his hand, or with his foot or with his mouth or with his elbow, or in his ear or in his hair or in his wallet [carried] mouth downwards, or between his wallet and his shirt, or in the hem of his shirt, or in his shoe or in his sandal, he is not culpable since he has not taken it out after the fashion of them that take out [a burden]." <sup>22</sup>
- 2) Although these strange ways of carrying something are apparently listed to exempt from culpability any accidental burden bearing, they do open up the possibility of being able to carry almost anything on the Sabbath—if one tries hard enough.
- f. "Ridiculous!" we say. <sup>23</sup> Yet most of the Jews were serious about being obedient to these traditions—dead serious.
  - 1) During the Maccabean revolt, only after a thousand chose death rather than defend themselves on the Sabbath, did the leaders decide that

- fighting on the Sabbath was preferable to suffering the extermination of the Jewish race.
- 2) Devising this exemption made them even more diligent to keep the rest of the Mosaic laws (see 1 Macc. 2:31-48).
  - 3) In fact, the Sabbath came to be so highly regarded that the pseudepigraphical book of Jubilees could claim that even the angels and God Himself keep the Sabbath!<sup>24</sup>
3. Jesus confronts the Sabbath traditions.
- a. Truly the Sabbath traditions had become a “heavy load” which the teachers of the law tied on men’s backs (see Matt. 23:4). Yet there is not one recorded confrontation about the Sabbath<sup>25</sup> in which Jesus argues that his healing is not “work.”
  - b. His response always assumes or explicitly states (as here) that he is working on the Sabbath. Yet He claims His Sabbath work is just as guiltless as the work of the priests (Matt. 12:5) or the work involved in circumcising a boy if the required eighth day should happen to fall on the Sabbath (John 7:22).

*Notes:*

*Notes:*

c. It is work, all right, but work so important, so holy, that its performance is more important than the keeping of the Sabbath law. The Sabbath was important, but it was not Lord over man; the Son of Man was Lord of the Sabbath.<sup>26</sup>

d. We could also say that in carrying his mat on the Sabbath, this man was obeying the Lord of the Sabbath, thus confirming the truth taught by the miraculous 'sign' of the healing.

B. They question him concerning his "desecration of the Sabbath," but care nothing about the restoration of the poor creature's health! (Their deficiency of true spirituality is glaringly obvious by their utter lack of compassion.)

C. They persecute Jesus, eventually to the point of death.

**NOTE:** The Jews' question (5:12), which could not be answered then because of the man's ignorance, is now specifically answered: "...it was Jesus who had made him well" (5:15).

IV. In conclusion, this third sign recorded by John shows Jesus to be *Master of time*.



# The Claims of Jesus

## —John 5:19-29

- I. The claims of Jesus are stated boldly in response to persecution (read John 5:17).
  - A. He claims to be *equal with God* (5:17-18).
  - B. He regards Himself to be the *Son of God* (5:18).
  - C. He describes Himself as the *workman and revealer of the Father* (5:19-20).
  - D. He conceives of Himself as the *giver of life* (5:21).
  - E. He asserts that He is the *judge of all mankind* (5:22-25).
  - F. He affirms that He possesses *life in Himself* (5:26).
  - G. He testifies that He is the *authorized executive of divine judgment* (5:27-29).
- II. The relationship of the Father and the Son is brought out vividly during the course of this confrontation.
  - A. *The Father*
    - 1. Stands in peculiar relationship to the Son (5:17; read John 1:18)

Notes:

**NOTE:** In John, Jesus says either “My Father” or “your Father,” but never “our Father.” In verse 18, the personal pronoun “His” (Gr: *idios*) denotes: “His own peculiar possession”<sup>27</sup> (see John 20:17).

**Notes:**

2. Originated the works of the Son (5:19)
3. Loves the Son (5:20)
4. Shows His works to the Son (5:20)
5. Committed all judgment to the Son (5:22, 27)
6. Shares equally His honor with the Son (5:23)
7. Has endowed inherent life upon the Son (5:26)

**NOTE:** F. F. Bruce explains the meaning of the phrase “has life in himself” in this verse: “All living beings apart from God receive life from Him; they have no life in themselves.... But the life of God is underived and unoriginated; He alone has life in Himself. And within the unity of the Godhead it is the Father who is the Source from which the Son eternally draws.”<sup>28</sup>

8. Has granted to the Son authority to execute judgment (5:27)

**B. The Son**

1. Is dependent on the Father (5:19)

**NOTE:** This dependency is one consciously chosen by the Son (see Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 5:7-9; 10:5-10) and should not be understood to suggest the Son’s intrinsic inferiority to the Father, as Arianism suggests.<sup>29</sup>

2. Has perfect knowledge of the Father (5:20)
3. Possesses and gives life (5:21)
4. Is equal in honor with the Father (5:23)

5. Is the means of salvation (5:24)
6. Will raise the dead (5:28)

*Notes:*

**NOTE:** Jesus here discusses two resurrections: one figurative (present: “a time is coming and has now come....”) and one literal (future: “a time is coming....”). The present resurrection is the result of His ministry of saving sinners (compare John 3:36). The future resurrection is the general resurrection at the end of the age. This teaching that a “time” (literally “hour”) will be the occasion of the resurrection of “all who are in their graves... those who have done good... [and] those who have done evil” clearly refutes the dispensational teaching of multiple resurrections: (1) the New Testament saints before the Great Tribulation; (2) the Old Testament saints and the tribulation saints after the Great Tribulation; (3) all the wicked after the millennium (see also Dan. 12:2; Acts 24:15).<sup>30</sup>

- C. In conclusion, we may summarize the complementary nature of the Father-Son relationship.
  1. The *Father* (who is the source of all life) has fully bestowed Himself upon the *Son*.
  2. The *Father* has revealed His purpose to the *Son*, and committed into His hands both power in salvation, and authority in judgment.
  3. The *Son* personally and carefully follows the model set by the *Father*.
- III. The claims of Jesus were given in response to the unbelief and hatred of the Jews. Essentially Jesus is telling the Jews:

*Notes:*

- A. "In attacking Me, you are attacking the Father."
- B. "If you honored the Father, you would honor Me."
- C. "My judging is based on the Father's grant and on My nature as a son of man" (see also Acts 17:31).

# Testimonial Evidence of the Claims of Jesus—John 5:30-47

*Notes:*

- I. The testimony of “another” is cited.
  - A. “Another” (Gr: *allos*) witness means “another of the same sort,” that is, of the same “kind” as Jesus.<sup>31</sup> The context indicates that Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit, who also shares the nature of Deity (5:30-32; read John 14:16).
  - B. The harmony of this passage with John 8:12-14 is seen by comparing their respective applications:
    - 1. The meaning of Jesus in the present context concerns the legal rule that a man’s testimony about himself is inadmissible as evidence in court, due to the obvious factor of personal prejudice and self-interest. Jesus had no such bias (5:30-31).
    - 2. In a different context, Jesus uses the word “true” to describe His own personal competency to speak concerning Himself, since He knew more about Himself than others knew about Him. Thus, Jesus’ testimony, being “true” in the sense of “factual,” would not be “true” in the estimation of the Jews who challenged its validity as a legal defense (read John 8:14).

*Notes:*

- II. The testimony of John the Baptist is cited (5:33-35).
  - A. Temporarily, the Jews had rejoiced to have a genuinely prophetic voice in their midst again (5:35).
  - B. The logical conclusion of their acknowledgment of John demanded that they believe his (John's) verdict concerning Jesus (read Matt. 21:23-32).
- III. The testimony of Jesus' own works is cited (5:36).
  - A. This witness constitutes a greater testimony than John's.
  - B. The author uses "works" throughout his writing to refer to action as illustrative of character (read John 3:2; 14:11).
  - C. The end result of His "works" was the endorsement of His person (read carefully John 9:3-4; 10:37).
- IV. The testimony of the Father is cited (5:37-38).
  - A. The Father spoke words of *revelation* at Jesus' baptism (see Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22).
  - B. The Father spoke words of *confirmation* at the transfiguration (see Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35).
  - C. The Father spoke words of *reassurance* following the triumphal entry (see John 12:28).

V. The testimony of the Hebrew Scriptures is cited (5:39-47).

A. Searching the Scriptures was a public fact of Jewish life (see Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 3:15).

B. Zealous application of the commands of the Torah (law) was the duty of every Jew (read carefully Deut. 4:1-2; 5:1, 32, 33; 6:1-3; 11:18-19).

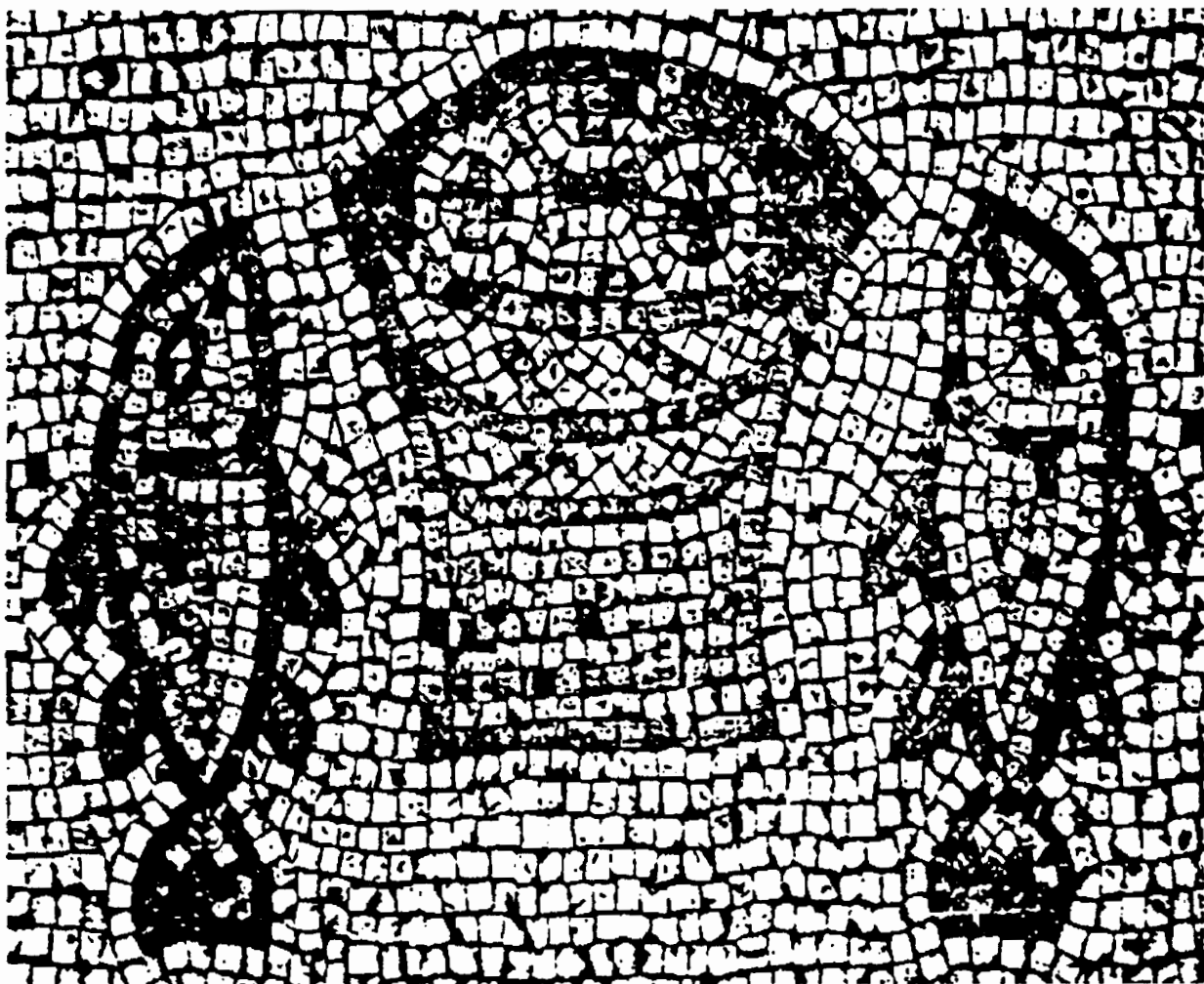
C. Jesus shows their inconsistency of professing to study the law while rejecting Him, for the Mosaic Scriptures spoke of Him (read Luke 24:27, 44-47; Acts 3:22-23).

**NOTE:** Whether Jesus used the indicative (describing what they do: "You search the Scriptures...") or the imperative (ironically commanding them: "Go ahead: Search the Scriptures! [But it will do you no good]") is left to the interpreter. The spelling of the Greek word involved would allow either. Some even believe that the ambiguity was intentional to provide a double-truth.<sup>32</sup>

D. Jesus makes a definite claim to be the object of Old Testament prophecy.

**NOTE:** A seven-fold witness is realized by adding two sources of testimony not explicitly mentioned in this section: The witness of the Holy Spirit (who would be given only after Jesus had been glorified), and that of the disciples from the day of Pentecost and beyond (read John 15:26; Acts 1:8).<sup>33</sup>

*Notes:*



*"Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish" (John 6:11). Beside the Sea of Galilee stands the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes, built over the remains of an earlier church of Byzantine times. On the floor of this church, visitors may see the well-preserved remains of the earlier church's mosaic floor, which depicts birds and flowers of the area, as well as the above commemoration of the miraculous feeding.*

Source: Sonia Halliday and Laura Lushington, *High Above the Holy Land*, text by Tim Dowley (NY: Thomas Nelson, 1986), 35. Reprinted by permission.



# The Issues Demonstrated

## —John 6:1-21

- I. The demonstration of the feeding of the five thousand is presented (6:1-15).
  - A. The singular importance of this sign is noteworthy.
    - 1. It is recorded by all four accounts (see Matt. 14:13-21; Mark 6:32-44; Luke 9:10-17).
    - 2. It is outstanding in John's account, because
      - a. It tested the personal reactions of the disciples (read also Matt. 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-29; Luke 9:18-20)
      - b. It was the peak of Jesus' popularity, as seen by the desire of the people to "make him king by force" (6:15)
    - 3. It is a spectacular miracle, demonstrating the sufficiency of Jesus amid the deficiency of human and material resources (6:14).
      - a. The fish were not the main part of the meal, but rather were of a small sardine-like quality.<sup>34</sup>
      - b. The bread was like "pita," about the size of a small pancake.<sup>35</sup>
  - B. The occasion for this miracle is a trip across the Sea of Galilee (6:1-4).
    - 1. Even though He crosses the lake, a great crowd follows Him (6:1-3).

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- a. Jesus seems to be trying to avoid the crowds (compare Mark 6:30-31).
  - b. They are following Him because of the miraculous signs (see 6:26-27; 4:48; Mark 8:12).
- 2. This happens shortly before Passover (6:4).
  - a. This calls attention to certain aspects of the incident which parallel the events of the Exodus (such as: a prophet like Moses, 6:14; a path through the water, 6:19; bread from heaven, 6:30-31; Christ as redemptive sacrifice, 6:53-58).
  - b. The miracle may have been an object lesson for a sermon on a Passover text, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat" (Exod. 16:4 or Ps. 78:24).<sup>36</sup>
- C. The sign reveals insights into the personal faith and character of Philip and Andrew<sup>37</sup> (6:5-9).
  - 1. Philip was a statistical pessimist.<sup>38</sup>
    - a. The denarius was worth about seventeen cents,<sup>39</sup> which was a man's average daily wage (read also Matt. 20:2, 9, 13).
    - b. Philip, in his calculations, concluded that it would take two-thirds of the average annual wage to buy enough bread "for each one to have a bite" (6:7).
    - c. Philip thought only negatively: He was certain of what could *not* possibly be done.

2. Andrew was an ingenious optimist.
  - a. Andrew volunteered what information he had.
  - b. Andrew brought *food*, whereas Philip brought *figures*!
  - c. His faith was wavering (“...but how far will they go among so many?”),<sup>40</sup> yet he *had faith* (6:8-9).
- D. This, the fourth sign, proves Jesus to be *Master over quantity* (6:10-15).
  1. Jesus did not *create* the bread out of nothing, but *changed* bread into more bread.<sup>41</sup>
  2. Whenever He gives, He gives abundantly and lavishly.<sup>42</sup>
  3. The meaning of the sign was not appreciated in its true character.
    - a. They viewed Him as an earthly prophet.<sup>43</sup>
    - b. They desired to make Him king by force, reasoning, “Anybody who can feed an army can surely deliver us from our enemies.”
- II. The demonstration of walking on the water is presented (6:16-21).
  - A. The sign centers on the *relationship* of Jesus and the disciples,<sup>44</sup> the passage portraying
    1. Jesus *apart from* the disciples (6:17)
      - a. Apart from Him, they were making little or no headway.

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- b. Apart from Him, they were in danger of drowning.
- 2. Jesus *appearing to* the disciples (6:19)
  - a. They mistake Him for a ghost.
  - b. He reassures them by calling out, "It is I" (literally, "I am").<sup>45</sup>
- 3. Jesus *received by* the disciples (6:21)
  - a. Their reception of Him proves their confidence in Him.
  - b. Their reception of Him is an example for us, who are tossed by "the storms of life."

**NOTE:** The parallel accounts of this incident should be compared in order to fully appreciate the scope of the sign (read Matt. 14:22-36; Mark 6:45-54).

- B. The consideration of this sign as a *miracle*<sup>46</sup> is essential.
  - 1. There was no contradiction of the law of gravity; there was simply a greater power at work on the sea that evening. (The same gravity which Jesus defied was pulling Peter down only a short distance away) (read Matt. 14:29-30).
  - 2. The law of gravity is not set aside when the magnet collects metal filings; it is simply a matter of the superior force of magnetism overcoming the gravity, at a particular point

of space and time. Consider also the superseding of gravitational law that occurs in modern space flight.

3. Jesus did not suspend the laws of gravity—He controlled them!<sup>47</sup>

C. The consideration of the miracle as a *sign* is also essential.

1. “The scene... is strongly reminiscent of Ps 77:19-20, where the psalmist is meditating on the crossing of the Red Sea:

Thy way was through the sea,  
thy path through the great waters;  
yet thy footprints were unseen.  
Thou didst lead thy people like a flock,  
by the hand of Moses and Aaron.”<sup>48</sup>

2. What happened on the sea that stormy night was a demonstration of Christ’s omnipotence (read carefully John 1:1-3; Heb. 1:1-3; Eph. 1:15-16).

D. This sign, really four miracles in one, portrays

1. Jesus walking upon the water
2. Jesus causing Peter to walk upon the water (see Matt. 14:28-31)
3. Jesus causing the storm to cease (see Matt. 14:32; Mark 6:51)
4. Jesus conquering space, in that the boat reaches the shore “immediately”<sup>49</sup> from “the middle of the lake” (see Mark 6:47)<sup>50</sup>

E. Jesus thus proves Himself to be *Master of the elements*.<sup>51</sup>

*Notes:*



# The Issues Explained

## —John 6:22-71

**NOTE:** The discourse on the Bread of Life is Jesus' explanation of the sign of feeding the five thousand. It naturally divides itself into three parts, corresponding to the variety of hearers in the audience: the multitude; the Jews; the disciples of Jesus (of two distinct varieties).

*Notes:*

- I. The curious multitude makes a disappointing response to Jesus' sign (6:22-40).
  - A. Their search for Jesus is wrongly motivated (6:22-25).
    - 1. They know that Jesus did not leave with His disciples in the only boat available.
    - 2. When they find Him in Capernaum, they ask how He got there.
      - a. This is the wrong question, for it is merely to satisfy their curiosity.<sup>52</sup>
      - b. The right question would be: "Who are you?"
  - B. Their materialistic motive for following Jesus must be rebuked (6:26-27).
    - 1. He tells them to realize that *physical* food cannot fill the void in their hearts: "Do not work for food that spoils...."
      - a. Material food *perishes*; it has *no abiding value*!

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- b. The miracle of the previous day was intended as a *sign*, pointing to something more significant than physical food: His supernatural identity.
- 2. He tells them to seek *permanent* food: "...but [work] for food that endures [abides] to eternal life...."
  - a. Spiritual food *produces life!*
  - b. Spiritual food *sustains life!*
- 3. He claims that He (the Son of Man) is the Giver of that spiritual food: "...which the Son of Man will give you...."
- 4. He affirms the certification of this fact: "On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval" (read again John 3:33).
- C. Their materialistic motive blinds them to two great facts:
  - 1. The ultimate end of life must be a matter of spiritual possession, and not material (carefully consider Matt. 6:23-33).
  - 2. The One who miraculously fed them is divinely certified, and reliable as the Nourisher of their spirits.

**NOTE:** The quality of this miracle as a sign never occurred to them at all! Its meaning was lost upon them.

- D. Their legalistic methodology in approaching God is exposed by Jesus (6:28-29).



1. They immediately interpret Jesus' use of the word "work" within a legalistic frame of reference (read carefully Rom. 10:3).
  2. Jesus' reply destroys their concept of the achievement of righteousness based on "works of merit": "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."
    - a. The work of God is *faith* (see Col. 2:12).
    - b. That faith is *trust in a Person* (Jesus Christ).<sup>53</sup>
- E. Their memorial requirement for belief in Jesus is transcended by Him (6:30-33).
1. Their basic assumption is that, since Moses gave them bread "from heaven," anyone claiming to represent God should perform a similar confirming sign (see Ps. 78:24).<sup>54</sup>
    - a. The intent of their demand was: "If you are to be believed in, you must perform a sign. However, we demand a sign *greater* than that of Moses when he gave us bread out of heaven."
    - b. This emphasis may account for their apparent lack of memory concerning the greatness of the sign which had motivated them to seek Jesus initially: "You gave us earthly bread which you made from a small amount of bread, but

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Notes:

Moses gave us heavenly bread: bread straight out of heaven! *Can you top that?"*

2. Their assumption is annihilated by Jesus' reply: "...it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven...."
  - a. Moses was merely God's agent, who gave directions concerning the manna. The *Father* in heaven was (and still is) the *Real Giver* (see Exod. 16; John 3:16).
  - b. The bread (manna) given then was not "true bread."
    - 1) It was not the "true bread," for it was not *lasting*. It vanished when they entered Canaan.
    - 2) *The True Bread is Jesus*. He is the "substance" of which the manna was the "shadow" (see Josh. 5:12; Col. 2:17; Heb. 10:1).

**NOTE:** Manna was from the beginning (Deut. 8:2-3) closely associated with God's word (= the law of Moses or Torah) and was recognized by later Jewish writers as a symbol of the Torah and of Wisdom (see Wisdom 16:20, 26; Philo, *Who Is the Heir* 79 and 191; *Allegorical Interpretation* 2.86, 3.169 and 175; *The Worse Attacks the Better* 118).<sup>55</sup> By identifying Himself with the manna, Jesus is continuing the theme John began in the prologue, that He is the Word (Torah) made flesh.

*Notes:*

- 3) Like the manna, Jesus has come down from heaven.

**NOTE:** One of John's most basic themes, which he vividly introduces in his prologue, is the idea of "the great descent." It is expressed in terms of God coming into the world in the Person of Jesus, and bestowing life upon "His own" community of believers (6:33; read John 1:9-18).<sup>56</sup>

- c. The manna provided *physical nourishment*: the true Bread gives *life* (Gr: *zoē*). The manna of tradition was temporary. The real Manna is lasting in its effect (read again John 1:4; 3:16).

- F. Their literalistic misunderstanding of the teaching of Jesus is shattered by Him (6:34-40).

**NOTE:** They desire a continual supply of this bread, which (in their understanding) will sustain their physical lives: "Sir, from now on give us this bread" (6:34; read again John 4:15).

1. Jesus appeals to the multitudes for belief: "...I am the Bread of Life...." (It is as if He says to them, "Why don't you believe? You have seen Me") (6:35-36).
2. Jesus asserts that
  - a. Those who "believe" shall never "hunger and thirst" (6:35)

*Notes:*

- b. Those given to Him by the Father shall come to Him (6:37)
  - c. Those who come will be certain of welcome and fellowship (6:37)
  - d. His reason for appearing before men was to do the Father's will (6:38)
  - e. The Father's will is the security and preservation of those who would come (6:39; see John 10:27-29)
  - f. The Father's will is that they who come to Him should have eternal life, and be raised up at the last day (6:39-40; see John 10:10; 5:28-29)
3. Jesus affirms two magnificent facets of truth concerning the will of the Father:
- a. The choice and will of the Father is carried out by the Son.
    - 1) Their mutual work is done from all eternity, though made manifest in space and time.
    - 2) No persuasion is needed to convince the Father to save believers, nor to convince the Son to do the Father's will.
  - b. The choice and will of every individual person who "beholds, believes on, and comes to" the Son is real and significant, but it is God's choice (regarding

the bestowal of grace) that makes *ours* both possible and meaningful (compare Acts 18:9-10 with Rom. 9:16; 11:5-7; Eph. 1:3-7; 1 Peter 2:9).

4. Jesus attempts to awaken the self-satisfied legalist, who felt he had placed God under obligation by his own righteousness. The sincere seeker of spiritual benefits is assured of welcome by mercy and grace (read carefully Luke 18:9-14).
- II. The “Jews”<sup>57</sup> react to Jesus’ teaching with discord and contention (6:41-59).
- A. Their first point of contention concerned the origin of Jesus (6:41-51).
1. They objected to His claim to be “the Bread of Life that came down from heaven,” because they knew His biological family (6:41-42).
  2. Jesus’ reply to their grumbling<sup>58</sup> and protest implied that their reaction was due to ignorance. (They had not been drawn by the Father; therefore, they did not come to Him.)
  3. Consider the meaning and order of the following qualifications, without which “no one can come” to Christ (6:43-45):
    - a. *Drawn* (“by the Father”)
    - b. *Taught* (“by God”)

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*Notes:*

- c. *Listened* ("to the Father")
  - d. *Learned* (compare Matt. 11:25-30)
- 4. This self-disclosing response of Jesus to the multitudes reveals that
  - a. He is the objective of all seeking for true spiritual teaching (6:45, a quotation of Isa. 54:13)<sup>59</sup>
  - b. He is distinct from all others in that He had seen the Father (6:46)
  - c. He is the source and sustainer of spiritual life which banishes death (6:50)
  - d. He would give His life for the world: The "true bread" was His flesh (6:51)
- B. Their second point of contention concerned the concept of "eating His flesh" (6:52-59).
  - 1. The Jews "began to argue sharply among themselves" concerning the meaning of this concept.
  - 2. Jesus expands its literal expression without explaining its figurative nature (read carefully Matt. 13:10-13).

**NOTE:** The Jews, being contentious, are non-receptive toward Jesus and His teaching. Jesus is not eager to force upon them truth that they would refuse or reject. John's Gospel is characterized by Jesus' communication of spiritual truth in terms of natural or physical phenomena. This communication is often misunderstood, even by His disciples (see John 2:19-21; 3:1-6; 4:10-15, 31-34).

3. Jesus' figure of "blood" would have been repulsive to the literalistic Jew (read Lev. 17:10-14 and compare Gen. 9:4; Lev. 3:17).
4. "Eating and drinking" is the best possible figure to express the assimilation of one body by another, whereby *life* is transferred from the eaten to the eater.
  - a. Mutual *abiding* is the meaning (6:56; read John 15:1-10; 14:10).
  - b. Complete *dependence* upon Him is the emphasis (6:57).
- C. The critical disciples dissent from the "hard saying" of Jesus (6:60-65).<sup>60</sup>
  1. It was not the hardness of the discourse that caused the disciples to find fault; rather, it was the hardness of their hearts.
    - a. They were evidently displeased with the whole sermon.
    - b. Therefore, being the literalistic materialists that they were, they rejected Him.
    - c. They grumbled against Him.<sup>61</sup>
  2. Jesus tells them plainly that His words are spiritual in their source and their application (6:63).<sup>62</sup>
  3. Jesus repeats His previous explanation of the unbelief among them. Their faithlessness came as no surprise to Him (6:64-65; read again John 6:44).

*Notes:*

Notes:

4. Upon this, many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him (6:66).
  - a. They “grumbled,” expressing *dissatisfaction* (6:60-61; see 1 Cor. 10:10).
  - b. They “turned back” in *unbelief* (6:66).
  - c. They “no longer followed him,” expressing *abandonment* (6:66).
- D. Jesus reveals a disturbing truth concerning the certainty of the Twelve (6:66-71).
  1. The question of Jesus is heart-searching: “You do not want to leave too, do you?”
  2. Peter’s reply shows a sturdy faith: “Lord, to whom shall we go?”
    - a. His reply showed<sup>63</sup>
      - 1) Faith’s *exclusiveness*: There was no other source of eternal life
      - 2) Faith’s *fixity*: The verb “believe” is in the perfect tense, indicating an existing state resulting from and continuing a completed act
      - 3) Faith’s *finality*: The disciples were convinced that, in Jesus, they had indeed encountered “the Holy One of God”
    - b. Peter’s confession was a courageous act, for it committed him and the other disciples to One whose popularity was declining.<sup>64</sup>



- c. In spite of the trust His closest disciples show as demonstrated by Peter's confession, Jesus warns them: "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!"

**NOTE:** Judas the Traitor<sup>65</sup> is here first introduced in John's Gospel. Only John's Gospel reveals that his father's name was Simon (6:71; 13:2). He is further identified as "Iscaiot" (Gr: *Iscarioth*)<sup>66</sup> which probably is a transliteration of the Aramaic *'ish kerioth* ("a man of Kerioth"), identifying a village in Judea as his place of origin.<sup>67</sup> This identification of Judas as the only Judean among the group of Galilean disciples may partially help explain why he pulled away from the devotion the others gave to their Lord, for Judeans often looked down on Galileans (see John 7:52 and perhaps Mark 14:70).<sup>68</sup>

A less likely alternative explanation<sup>69</sup> connects "Iscaiot" with "Sicari" (Gr: *sikarios*, meaning "assassin" from the Latin *sica*, a curved dagger),<sup>70</sup> the name for the desperate assassins who tried for decades and finally succeeded in fomenting rebellion against the Romans (see Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.186-188; *War* 2.254-257).<sup>71</sup> This explanation would also help us to understand Judas, for then his betrayal may have been due, at least in part, to his attempt to force Jesus to use His miraculous power to defend Himself against the Romans.

Judas' greed, deceit, and pilfering will be noted later (see John 12:6; 13:29).<sup>72</sup>

Notes:

NOTES

<sup>1</sup>John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem as Jesus Knew It: Archaeology as Evidence* (London: Thames & Hudson, Ltd., 1978), pp. 95-104 (hereafter cited as Wilkinson, *Jerusalem*); Richard M. Mackowski, *Jerusalem: City of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1980), pp. 79-83 (hereafter cited as Mackowski, *City of Jesus*). For a thorough discussion, see Joachim Jeremias, *Rediscovery of Bethesda* (New Testament Archaeology Monograph #1), (Louisville, KY: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1966); hereafter cited as Jeremias, *Bethesda*.

<sup>2</sup>Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 140.

<sup>3</sup>See the discussion of these readings (ending in acceptance of Bethzatha) in Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, p. 208; Wilkinson, *Jerusalem*, pp. 95-96; Jeremias, *Bethesda*, pp. 12, 35; Pack, "Problems in John," pp. 210-211.

<sup>4</sup>See Pack, "Problems in John," p. 211; Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, p. 209.

<sup>5</sup>For naturalistic explanations of this miracle, see Van Der Loos, *Miracles*, pp. 454-457.

<sup>6</sup>Emily Gardiner Neal, *Where There's Smoke: The Mystery of Christian Healing* (New York: Morehouse-Barlow Co., 1967), p. 167.

<sup>7</sup>Louis Rose, *Faith Healing*, ed. by Bryan Morgan (London: Victor Gollanz Ltd., 1968), p. 74; hereafter cited as Rose, *Healing*.

<sup>8</sup>Rose, *Healing*, p. 79.

<sup>9</sup>Edgar Sanford, *God's Healing Power* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1959), p. 24.

<sup>10</sup>J. Cameron Peddie, *The Forgotten Talent: God's Ministry of Healing* (London: Oldbourne Book Co., Ltd., 1961), p. 53.

<sup>11</sup>Some commentators believe that the thirty-eight years are symbolic of the years the Israelites wandered the

wilderness in unbelief. Others take the number as describing the man's age, making the emphasis that the man was in the prime of life (see Van Der Loos, *Miracles*, p. 454).

<sup>12</sup>"[In the present imperative,] something already existing is to continue (in prohibitions: is to stop)" (Blass-Debrunner-Funk, §336, p. 172); see Tenney, *John*, p. 105.

<sup>13</sup>Hendriksen, 1:192.

<sup>14</sup>While the aorist imperative of this very verb (Gr: *peripateō*) is usually used for the beginning of walking, yet the present imperative is used here, and the context demands that it mean "Start walking," although probably with the implication "and continue to do so" (see Blass-Debrunner-Funk, §337 [1], p. 173).

<sup>15</sup>As in John 1:19 and elsewhere in John, "Jews" here means "the Jewish leaders" (see Von Wahlde, "Johannine 'Jews,'" pp. 33-60).

<sup>16</sup>In fact, the wording of the Levites' prayer ("You made known to them your holy Sabbath and gave them commands, decrees and laws through your servant Moses"—Neh. 9:14) is strong proof that no Sabbath practices existed among God's people before Sinai. See Olan Hicks, "The Hebrew Sabbath," *Restoration Quarterly* 3, 1 (1959):23-35.

<sup>17</sup>"Torah," as understood by the first-century Jews, not only referred to the written law Moses received from God on Mount Sinai, but also to the "rules of Jewish life and religion which in the course of centuries had come to possess a validity and sanctity equal to that of the Written Law, to be of divine origin and therefore consonant with and, for the most part, deducible from the Written Law" (note on Aboth 1:1 [Danby, *Mishnah*, p. 446, n. 2]).

<sup>18</sup>Pp. 100-121 in Danby, *Mishnah*.

<sup>19</sup>Danby, *Mishnah*, p. 100, n. 6.

<sup>20</sup>Shabbath 6.8 (Danby, *Mishnah*, p. 105).

<sup>21</sup>Shabbath 7.2 (Danby, *Mishnah*, p. 106).

<sup>22</sup>Shabbath 10.3 (Danby, *Mishnah*, p. 109).

<sup>23</sup>Modern Sabbatarians such as the Seventh-Day Adventists have developed similar traditions in an attempt to define in minute detail what could and could not be done, precisely when the Sabbath begins and ends, and so on. "The *Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White* lists about 500 things either to do or not to do on the Sabbath" (Robert D. Brinsmead, "Applying the Letter of the Sabbath Law," *Verdict: A Journal of Theology* 4, 4 [1981]:46, n. 4; see his entire article, pp. 44-47). Other modern Sabbatarians include the Worldwide Church of God, Seventh-Day Baptists, and Church of God (Seventh Day).

<sup>24</sup>Jubilees 2:17-33 (2:57-58 in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols., ed. by James H. Charlesworth [Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1985]; hereafter cited as Charlesworth). This claim of a celestial sabbath is contrary to the word of Jesus in John 5:17.

<sup>25</sup>The incidents are: Mark 1:21-28 (=Luke 4:31-37); Mark 2:23-28 (= Matt. 12:1-8; Luke 6:1-5); Mark 3:1-6 (=Matt. 12:8-14; Luke 6:6-11); Mark 6:1-6a (=Matt. 13:54-58; Luke 4:16-30); 13:10-17; 14:1-6; Matt. 24:20; John 5:1-18 (our text); 7:19-24; 9:1-41.

<sup>26</sup>For a full discussion of each of these texts plus other material in the four Gospels about Jesus' relationship with and teaching concerning the law of Moses, see D. A. Carson, "Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels," pp. 58-97 in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation*, ed. by D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1982); hereafter cited as Carson, *Sabbath to Lord's Day*. See also Robert D. Brins-

mead, "Jesus and the Sabbath," *Verdict: A Journal of Theology* 4, 5 (1981):6-16.

<sup>27</sup>See Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 106, n. 4; Blass-Debrunner-Funk §286 (pp. 149-150). Some scholars believe that Jesus spoke of God so often as his Father that He came to be known as Bar Abba ("Son of the Father") (see Stevan L. Davies, "Who is Called Bar Abbas?" *New Testament Studies* 260 [Jan. 1981]:260-261; hereafter cited as Davies, "Bar Abbas").

<sup>28</sup>Bruce, *Answers*, p. 68.

<sup>29</sup>Note the following from a Jehovah's Witness booklet as a modern example of this Arian argument: "Jesus... always put himself below God rather than on an equality with God. He put himself in the position of a disciple of God.... The very fact that he was sent proves he was not equal with God but was less than God his Father.... [E]ven in heaven Jesus was less than his Father. During what time he had for it Jesus kept constantly at the work of his Father, his Sender.... All this gives added proof that Jesus was not God whose will was to be done, but was lower than God, doing God's will" ("*The Word*": *Who Is He? According to John* [Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, 1962], pp. 40-41; hereafter cited as "*The Word*": *Who Is He?*).

<sup>30</sup>For the dispensational position, see John Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (orig. ed.: Dunham Publ. Co., 1959; repr. ed.: Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1973), pp. 276-295. For its refutation, see Jim McGuiggan, *The Kingdom of God and the Planet Earth* (Lubbock, TX: Montex Publ. Co., 1978), pp. 129-139.

<sup>31</sup>Robertson, *Grammar*, p. 746.

<sup>32</sup>See Wead, "Double Meaning," p. 117.

<sup>33</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 111.

<sup>34</sup>“ὄψαριον is a diminutive of ὄψρον, ‘cooked food’, with the special meaning of pickled fish” (Barrett, p. 229).

<sup>35</sup>“Leavened bread was usually in the form of round, flat loaves, and unleavened in the form of thin cakes” (W. J. Martin, “Bread,” *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1:206).

<sup>36</sup>“[T]he discourse is a ‘Passover haggadah’, that is a non-moralizing exposition (or midrash) of a Passover text (Exod. 16:4 or Ps. 78:24).... [I]t is likely that a Passover discourse spoken by Jesus in a synagogue would be recalled at paschal suppers in the early Church” (John Bligh, “Jesus in Galilee,” *Heythrop Journal* 5 [1964]:14; hereafter cited as Bligh, “Galilee”).

<sup>37</sup>“Philip was of Bethsaida (14), and presumably he knew the neighborhood; he was thus the natural person of whom to ask where bread could be bought. This is one of the reminiscences which suggest the testimony of an eyewitness” (Bernard, 1:175; compare R. L. Sturch, “Eyewitness,” pp. 319-320).

<sup>38</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 113.

<sup>39</sup>This modern equivalent is misleading, for a day’s wage at today’s hourly rate would be about forty dollars. A denarius could purchase twenty-four quarts of barley or eight quarts of wheat (calculated from statistics in Morris, *John*, p. 343, n. 17).

<sup>40</sup>“[P]erhaps Andrew’s reply was meant to be slightly humorous: ‘There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two small fishes, but they wouldn’t go far, would they!’” (Bligh, “Galilee,” p. 15).

<sup>41</sup>Van Der Loos (*Miracles*, pp. 627-631) once more lists and rejects some of the naturalistic ways of explaining away this miracle: (1) Jesus set an example which the others followed in sharing out of their bread; (2) “Jesus was standing at the secret entrance to a cave, from which

intimates kept on handing Him bread which had been stacked in the cave beforehand, whilst the apostles distributed the food among the multitude” (p. 628); (3) pious rich women provided bread and fish for the crowds; (4) the food was not multiplied—everyone got only a small piece of the little boy’s lunch. Van Der Loos concludes: “It is without doubt a fascinating business how human ingenuity reaches new heights in its efforts to eliminate the supernatural from the story of the feeding” (p. 630). Explanation (1) seems to be that favored by William Barclay (*The Gospel of John* [Daily Study Bible], 2 vols. [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956], 2:206-207; hereafter cited as Barclay, *John*).

<sup>42</sup>Compare John 2:6-10, in which Jesus not only produces wine from water, but 120-180 gallons of wine! His spiritual gifts are just as lavish (“...one blessing after another” [John 1:16]).

<sup>43</sup>“The Prophet who is to come into the world” probably refers to the prophet “like Moses” predicted in Deut. 18:15, 18-19 (see John 7:40, 52 and the note on John 1:21 above). The expected prophet Elijah is another possibility, especially in view of Jesus’ likeness to Elijah (see Mark 6:15; 8:28 and parallels) because of his miracles (especially compare John 2:1-11 with 1 Kings 17:7-16; John 4:46-54 with 1 Kings 17:17-23; see Martyn, *John in History*, pp. 16-25). Yet this miracle of Jesus closely resembles one performed not by Elijah but Elisha (see 2 Kings 4:42-44). Although no end-time expectation associated with Elisha has been documented, the identification of Jesus with Elisha would be a natural one, since Jesus was apparently the successor of the Baptizer (the expected “Elijah”), just as Elisha was the successor of Elijah. In addition, “we may also allow for a degree of coalescence



in light of the extremely close connection between the two, signaled by Elisha's receiving a double portion of Elijah's spirit....[There were] numerous points of overlapping between the two figures in Jewish tradition" (Martyn, *John in History*). In his speech in the Nazareth synagogue, Jesus compares Himself to both prophets (Luke 4:24-27).

<sup>44</sup>"John seems content to mention the disciples' readiness to receive Jesus precisely as he presents himself, and to depict the miraculous effect partly in consequence of this acceptance" (Charles H. Giblin, "The Miraculous Crossing of the Sea [John 6. 16-21]," *New Testament Studies* 29 [1983], p. 98; hereafter cited as Giblin, "Crossing").

<sup>45</sup>If the two Greek words rendered "It is I" should instead be rendered "I am," then Jesus is making a claim to deity similar to that found in John 8:58 and perhaps elsewhere (see John 4:26; 8:24, 28; 13:19; 18:5, 6, 8), claiming the divine title revealed at the burning bush (Exod. 3:14) (see Giblin, "Crossing," p. 98).

<sup>46</sup>Van Der Loos lists naturalistic explanations: (1) Jesus walked along the shore, high enough to be described as "over" (not "on," the usual rendering of ἐπὶ) the water; (2) Jesus walked along the shore, but an optical illusion made the disciples *think* he was walking on the water; (3) the disciples had an hallucination which they later interpreted to be Jesus walking on the water and entering the boat with them; (4) Jesus floated out to his disciples on a large beam just below the water, unseen by the disciples (*Miracles*, pp. 658-660). Even parapsychologists have offered explanations: levitation or astral phantom (*Miracles*, pp. 660-661). Barclay favors explanation (1) (*John*, 2:211-212).

<sup>47</sup>See Hendriksen, 1:227.

<sup>48</sup>Bligh, "Galilee," p. 16.

<sup>49</sup>Giblin points out that the same word rendered "immediately" is used in John 5:9: "and immediately the man became whole" ("Crossing," p. 101, n. 9).

<sup>50</sup>"Besides the actual walking on the water, the way in which the last part of the voyage is effected appears to be miraculous: 'They were just going to help him on board, when all at once the boat reached the place they were making for'" (Bligh, "Galilee," p. 16, n. 3).

<sup>51</sup>"The whole story is probably intended to show that the body of Christ is not bound by the laws of nature or to the ordinary conditions of presence in space and time" (Bligh, "Galilee," p. 16).

<sup>52</sup>They are "eagerly seeking Christ for the wrong reason and asking the wrong question when they find him" (Bligh, "Galilee," p. 17).

<sup>53</sup>See L. Deason, *Galatians: The Truth of the Gospel* (Clifton Park, NY: Life Communications, 1984).

<sup>54</sup>The wording of the quotation "appears to be a combination of Ex 16:4 and Ps 78:24 and contains elements from both the Heb. and Gr. texts. It also shows some affinity to the Targum of Ex 16:15" (Edwin D. Freed, *Old Testament Quotations in the Gospel of John* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965], p. 118; hereafter cited as Freed, *Quotations*).

<sup>55</sup>Bligh, "Galilee," p. 6, n. 2.

<sup>56</sup>The theological term for this doctrine is "kenosis" (emptying), grounded in Paul's grand statement of Phil. 2:5-11 and basic to our understanding of the Christ. Although in His earthly existence He was an accurate representation of the Father, the fullness of His glory remained unseen because of limitations self-imposed for our sake (see Ralph P. Martin, *Carmen Christi* [orig. ed.: London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1967; repr. ed.: Grand Rapids:

Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1983], pp. 99-228).

<sup>57</sup>"Jews," in this case, refers to the people, not the authorities (see Von Wahlde, "Johannine 'Jews,'" pp. 38, 41, 43-46, 49).

<sup>58</sup>John refers to the Jews "grumbling" (vv. 41-42) and to the disciples "grumbling" (vv. 60-61), using the same word the Greek version of the Old Testament uses for those who were "grumbling" against Moses and Aaron (Bligh, "Galilee," p. 118). Just as the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, even though they had provided manna from heaven, so these people grumbled against Jesus who had provided them with bread and fish the day before and had offered them the true bread from heaven which brought eternal life.

<sup>59</sup>"The main source of the quotation is Is. 54:13, but it is impossible to tell whether Jn used the Heb. or Gr. text. The context seems to indicate that Jn also had in mind several other O. T. passages, especially Jer 31:31-34" (Freed, *Quotations*, p. 118).

<sup>60</sup>Kikuo Matsunaga notes that John is the only one of the four gospel writers who describes drop-outs among Jesus' disciples, and he suggests that Judas is portrayed as the representative of the whole group. He suggests that this point was being made to encourage the first recipients of John's Gospel when some of their fellow Christians were dropping out. The message of John's Gospel would be: "Even one of the Twelve betrayed Jesus! Don't be shocked when some of the 'disciples' in John's church betray him! They are 'sons of the devil!'" ("Is John's Gospel Anti-sacramental?—A New Solution in the Light of the Evangelist's Milieu," *New Testament Studies* 27 [1981]:517-521; hereafter cited as Matsunaga, "Anti-sacramental").

<sup>61</sup>See note 58 above.

<sup>62</sup>The first half of the verse does not refer to the meaning of the Lord's Supper (as if it meant "The Spirit gives life through the Supper; the actual flesh [of Christ] is of no value"), as some have supposed, but to the power behind faith: "God is the One Who gives life by His Spirit, human beings (= the flesh) cannot accomplish it" (see Bligh, "Galilee," pp. 23-24; Gerhard Krodel, "John 6:63," *Interpretation* 37 [1983]:283-288).

<sup>63</sup>The following three points are based on Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 124.

<sup>64</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 124.

<sup>65</sup>For an extended discussion of the following points, see William Barclay, *The Master's Men* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1959), pp. 68-81; hereafter cited as Barclay, *The Master's Men*.

<sup>66</sup>Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, pp. 380-381.

<sup>67</sup>In agreement with this interpretation is the variant reading "from Keruot" occurring in some manuscripts as an alternative to "Ischariot" in John 6:71; 12:4; 13:2, 26; 14:22 (Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, pp. 380-381). The village of Kerieth has been tentatively identified with Khirbet el-Qaryatein, a ruin located about 35 miles south of Jerusalem in the Negev (see J. Monson, et al., eds., *Student Map Manual: Historical Geography of the Bible Lands* [Jerusalem: Pictorial Archive, 1979], Map 1-14, Mini-archive reference #533; Yohanan Aharoni and Michael Avi-Yonah, eds., *Macmillan Bible Atlas*, rev. ed. [New York: Macmillan Publ. Co., 1977], Map 130, p. 83).

<sup>68</sup>"The people of Judea despised the Galileans as backward provincials who spoke such an accent that there was no difference between their pronunciation of *immar* (lamb), *hamar* (wine) and *hamor* (ass). They were also

suspected of being far from rigid in their observation of the Law” (Henri Daniel-Rops, *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus*, transl. by Patrick O’Brian [New York: Hawthorn Books, 1962], p. 49; hereafter cited as Daniel-Rops, *Daily Life*). Also see Nedarim 2.4 and 5.5 in Danby, *Mishnah*, pp. 266, 271.

<sup>69</sup>See Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 381.

<sup>70</sup>Josephus (Loeb), 2:423, note d.

<sup>71</sup>Josephus (Loeb), 9:488-491; Josephus (Loeb), 2:422-423.

<sup>72</sup>See Ralph P. Martin, “Judas Iscariot,” *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 2:830-831.





# **The Gospel of John: “That You May Have Life”**

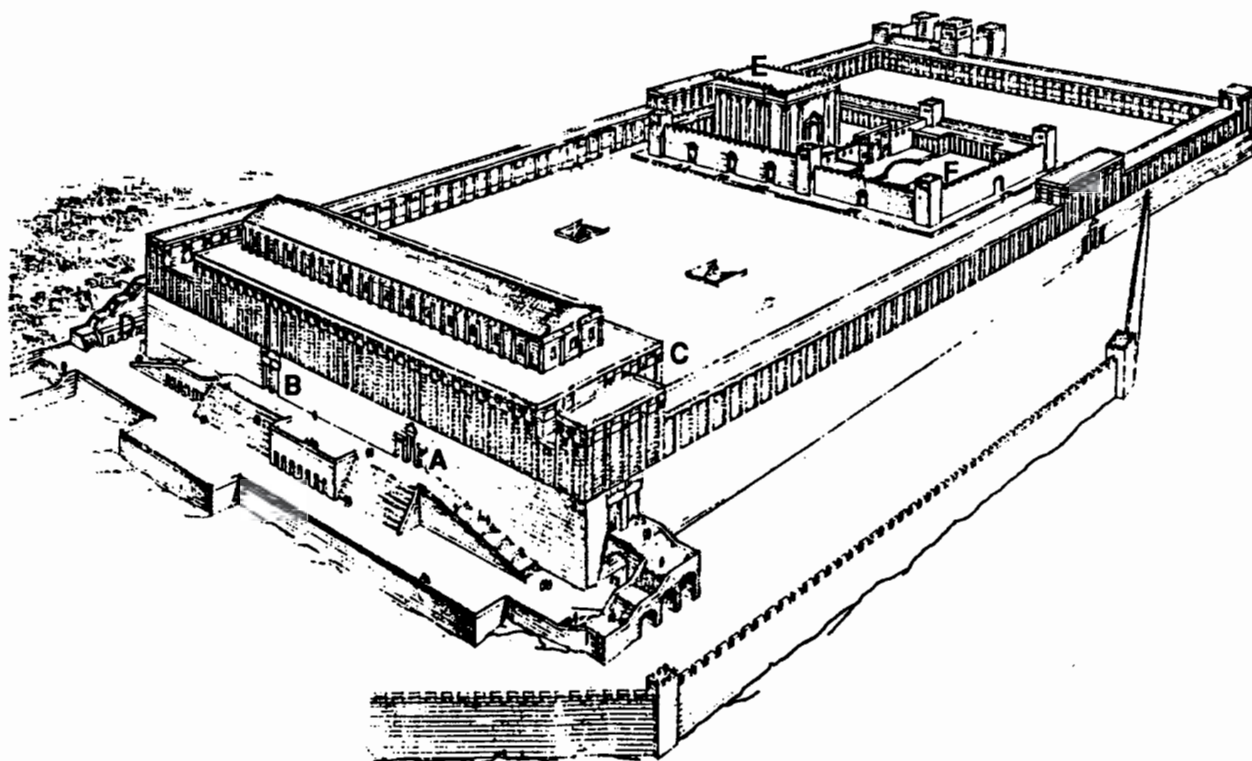
## **Part V**

### ***The Clash of Belief and Unbelief***



# Lesson Six

**John 7:1 - 8:59**



*"Not until halfway through the Feast did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach" (John 7:14). Above is a sketch of the latest reconstruction of the temple complex. Worshippers entered through the triple doors of the southern wall, "going up" to the temple through a long tunnel similar in size and length to the concourse of a modern major airport. They left through the other tunnel, emerging to the shop-lined streets of the lower city through the double doors of the southern wall. Citizens did their banking and other business transactions in the Royal Portico, the large building at the southern edge of the temple mount, accessible by means of the large overpass at the southwest corner (left).*

Source: Meir Ben-Dov, *In the Shadow of the Temple* (NY: Harper & Row, 1982), 98-99. Reprinted by permission.

# Conflict with the Brothers of Jesus—John 7:1-9

**NOTE:** This “period of conflict” covers the last six months before our Lord’s death.

## I. The attitudes of Jesus’ brothers are presented (7:1-5).

**NOTE:** The view that the “brothers of Jesus” were actually His step-brothers (sons of Joseph by a previous marriage—the theory of Epiphanius)<sup>1</sup> or His cousins (sons of Mary’s sister—the theory of Jerome,<sup>2</sup> or sons of Joseph’s brother)<sup>3</sup> has no historical foundation. These theories represent the efforts of church leaders with vested theological interests in upholding the “perpetual virginity of Mary,” in spite of the obvious meaning of Luke’s remark that Jesus was Mary’s “firstborn” (Luke 2:7) and Matthew’s assertion that Joseph “had no union with [Mary] until she gave birth to [Jesus]” (Matt. 1:25). The simplest explanation is that these were Jesus’ half-brothers: children of Mary not by the Holy Spirit (as Jesus was), but by Joseph.<sup>4</sup>

- A. They are *sarcastic*, as may be inferred from the nature of their advice (7:3).
  - B. They are *worldly*, as may be deduced from the basis of their logic (7:4).
  - C. They are *unbelieving*, as we are explicitly informed by John (7:5).
- II. Jesus’ reply is given (7:6-9).
- A. He regards His life, not as a quest for public or personal glory, but as a carefully planned mission.

*Notes:*

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- B. His motivations are disclosed in His conversation concerning the feast (Feast of Tabernacles).
1. Any time would be suitable for his brothers to go, for they regarded their lives as their own: The world could not hate them, since they lived by the principle of *worldliness* (7:6-7; see John 15:19).
  2. It was not yet [noting the marginal reading]<sup>5</sup> time for Him to go, for He regarded His life as the accomplishment of God's will: The world could not but hate Him, since He was the very antithesis of worldliness (7:7-9; see John 4:34).

**NOTE:** Two distinct terms are used by John in this chapter which describe the time of the action of Jesus; but it is important to notice the difference in their applications. The word "time" (Gr: *kairos*) refers to the public manifestation of Jesus at the feast (7:6). The word "hour" (Gr: *hōra*) refers to: His "destiny," the "lifting up" of crucifixion and glorification appointed Him by the Father (7:30).<sup>6</sup>

- C. In summary, Jesus went up to the feast by "appointment of the Father."
1. Jesus urged His brothers to go, for it made no difference when they went (read James 4:13-17).
  2. They were concerned (and content) with worldly environment and opportunism. He was content only with the Father's will.

## Conflict with the Bewildered Populace—John 7:10-52

- I. The division of the multitude is portrayed (7:10-13).
  - A. "...Some said, 'He is a good man'" (7:12).
  - B. "...Others replied, 'No, he deceives the people'" (7:12).

**NOTE:** "The Jews" were seeking to kill Him. (The imperfect verb tenses denote that this was continuous.)<sup>7</sup> Jesus was now considered a "public enemy" by the unbelieving leadership (7:1, 11).

- II. The public appearance of Jesus is presented: His mission is to teach (7:14-19, 21-24, 33-34).
  - A. His teaching was (7:14-19)
    - 1. *Authoritative:* His enemies admitted their amazement (7:14-15)
    - 2. *Subordinate:* His teaching did not originate from Himself, but from "him who sent" Him (7:16)
    - 3. *Verifiable:* Its source could be confirmed by application and experience (7:17-18; read Matt. 5:8)
  - B. His Sabbath healing of the lame man was still a point of unforgettable controversy and conflict (7:20-24; read again John 5:1-16).
- III. The popular response is pluralistic (7:20, 25-32, 35-36).

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**NOTE:** Such a mixed response to Jesus is usual; He came, not to bring peace, but “a sword” (Matt. 10:34=“division” in Luke 12:51; compare John 9:39). Again and again in John the sword divides those who hear Jesus into believers and unbelievers (see John 6:41-42, 60, 66-70; 7:40-52; 9:8-12; 10:19-21).

- A. Some accused Jesus of insanity (7:20).
  - B. Others kept seeking to arrest Him (7:30, 32).
  - C. Another group believed on Him (7:31).
  - D. Amidst the confused populace, Jesus is very sure of Himself (7:28, 29, 33, 34).
- IV. The climactic claim and call of Jesus are proclaimed (7:37-52).
- A. The setting of this claim is crucial to a proper understanding of its impact.
    - 1. The claim was made on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, a celebration of God’s mercies and providence toward His people since the days of the Exodus. This feast lasted for eight days and centered in the temple at Jerusalem (see Deut. 16:13-15; Lev. 23:33-36).<sup>8</sup>
    - 2. On each day of the feast, except the last, the priest would take a golden vessel full of water from the pool of Siloam and sing: “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation” (quoting Isa. 12:3). The drink offering was then poured out by the priest.<sup>9</sup>



B. The claim itself was spectacular and dramatic: "...If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink" (7:37).

1. There was no water ceremony on the last day, providing Jesus with a wonderful opportunity to offer a greater water from a greater Rock.<sup>10</sup>
2. Instead of physical water, Jesus offered *spiritual water!*
3. In place of ritual, He offered *reality!*

**NOTE:** Jesus, rather than referring to any specific passage ("as the Scripture has said"), probably refers to the concept of living water throughout the Old Testament (for example, read Isa. 44:3-4).<sup>11</sup>

C. The call referred to a blessing that had been promised and prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures: the indwelling Holy Spirit (7:38-39; see Joel 2:28-32).

1. The Holy Spirit would be given to those who "come" and "believe."
2. The promise is for future fulfillment, for "the Spirit had not been given" to indwell all believers at this time.
3. This was due to the fact that Jesus had "not yet been glorified." It was only through the death of Christ that the Spirit could begin His full work (see John 14:16-17; Acts 2:38; 5:32; Rom. 8:9, 14-16; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:12-13; 2 Tim. 1:14).

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4. The perfection of the ministry of Jesus lay beyond the cross. What Jesus "*began* to do and to teach" in His earthly ministry (see Acts 1:1), He *continues* through the Spirit-empowered ministry and writings of His first century apostles and prophets. Also, as He *redeemed* us by His death and resurrection, we are now *sanctified* through the indwelling Spirit of God, who represents Christ (read 1 Cor. 6:11; 1 Peter 1:2).
- D. The reactions to this claim and call of Jesus were
1. *Superficial applause* from those who identified Jesus with the obscure personage called "*the prophet*"<sup>12</sup> (7:40; read Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:22-26)
  2. *Division* among those who believed Him to be the *Messiah* and those who believed that He could not be (7:41-44)
  3. *Hostility* on the part of those whose prejudice and willful ignorance had blinded them. Yet, "no one ever spoke the way this man does" (7:45-49; read Micah 5:2 and compare Matt. 2:1-6)
  4. *Hesitant faith* on the part of Nicodemus. Here is a growth in belief in response to the stubborn unbelief of the prejudiced leaders (7:50-52; read 2 Kings 14:25)

# Conflict Concerning the Adulterous Woman —John 7:53-8:11

**NOTE:** The earliest and most important manuscripts (including, among many others, the Bodmer Papyri and codices Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Alexandrinus, and Ephraemi Rescriptus) omit this passage. Of those which have it, the earliest (Codex Bezae) is dated around the middle of the sixth century. Even when it occurs in the traditional place, manuscripts often have asterisks or other marks showing its authenticity was regarded as doubtful. This does not mean it is a late scribal addition, for Eusebius says the incident is mentioned by Papias, whose work is adapted at about A.D. 130.<sup>13</sup>

Other manuscripts omit it here but have it at the end of John's Gospel, while in others (notably family 13) it occurs at the end of Luke 21.<sup>14</sup> This Lukan placement is intriguing, for the passage fits the context, style, vocabulary, and theological interests of the Gospel of Luke better than John's Gospel, and its original placement there is perhaps more likely than here in its traditional position.<sup>15</sup>

Regardless of where it should be placed, many scholars have endorsed its historical authenticity.<sup>16</sup> Both the content of the teaching and the action of Jesus are in complete harmony with other like incidents and situations in His life.

- I. The act of the scribes and Pharisees is callous and insensitive (read John 8:1-5).
  - A. Their question indicates a deliberate plot.
  - B. Their action was viciously mean and its significance unmistakable.
  - C. Their victim was "caught red-handed," (according to them!), undeniably guilty according to law (if actually "caught... in the very act,"

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- NASB), and beyond the consideration of public opinion (see also Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22-23).
- D. They attempted to hang Jesus on the horns of a dilemma (compare also Matt. 22:15-22).
    - 1. He could consent to law. (Then the multitude would feel He no longer cared for "tax collectors and sinners" and He could be accused before the Romans as a rebel for denying their monopoly of jurisdiction in capital cases).<sup>17</sup>
    - 2. Or He could oppose the scribes and Pharisees. (Then He would be reviled as law-breaker and an enemy of Moses.)
  - E. Their action was motivated by jealousy, envy, hatred, and malice.
    - 1. Their main desire was to trap Jesus, not to purge Jerusalem of immorality.
    - 2. This sinful woman was merely the bait with which they hoped to hook Jesus.
  - II. The action of Jesus is curious and inscrutable (read John 8:6-9).
    - A. He stooped down and wrote on the ground. (This is the only record we have of Jesus Himself ever writing anything) (8:6, 8).
    - B. His simple statement was a searching judgment to the scribes and Pharisees (8:7).

**NOTE:** Jesus was not suggesting that only sinless persons (and therefore no one) could administer the death penalty. This would

abolish all judicial procedures, even non-capital cases, and would contradict the Law of Moses. He was calling for a scrupulous keeping of the law of Moses by focusing on the impartiality of each witness/executioner. To qualify as a witness against the adulteress, a man should be completely unbiased in the case, and stand nothing to gain by her condemnation (see Exod. 23:1-3, 6-8; Deut. 19:16-19).

These men were biased, for the lack of a male participant strongly suggests a case of entrapment, and what they stood to gain by her condemnation was a public-relations coup over Jesus. Yet, when Jesus challenged the validity of their standing as witnesses against her, not one (much less two or three) remained whose conscience permitted him to carry out the execution, for their motives were impure. Had there been any legitimate witnesses, Jesus' command to them ("throw a stone at her") was exactly what the law commanded.<sup>18</sup>

- C. Their reaction showed them guilty and unable to judge in the matter (8:9; see Matt. 7:1-2).
- III. The acquittal of the woman is complete and irrefutable (read John 8:10-11).
  - A. The case was dismissed for lack of executioners!
  - B. The righteousness of Jesus is contrasted with the "righteousness of the Pharisees and teachers of the law" (see Matt. 5:20):
    1. *They* brought the woman in as a captive; *He* questioned her as a free person.
    2. *They* regarded her as an instrument to their evil ends; *He* respected her as a human being.

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3. *They* saw only the blackness of her past (“the very act”). *He* thought in terms of the future (“leave your life of sin”).
4. *They* were eager to stone her; *He* was ready to save her.

**NOTE:** The text nowhere says that Jesus forgave the woman, for she nowhere demonstrates repentance<sup>19</sup> or asks forgiveness. He simply refuses to condemn her, for the law would not allow this. Jesus Himself “was not an eyewitness, and He could only be one witness in any case. Given the circumstances, Jesus could not have condemned the woman.... He was required by the law of Moses to release her, and His parting admonition to ‘sin no more’ must be understood for what it is—excellent advice!”<sup>20</sup>

# Conflict with the Pharisees and with the Jews —John 8:12-59

**NOTE:** Jesus' use of the personal pronoun is emphatic.<sup>21</sup> He contrasts Himself with His enemies and their claims.

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- I. Jesus confounds the Pharisees in their ignorance (8:12-30).
  - A. This discourse grew out of Jesus' assertion that He is the Light of the World. The Pharisees challenged this on the basis of legal grounds (8:12; read again John 1:4-5; 3:19 and compare John 5:31).
    - 1. Jesus' previous argument concerning "true witness" had been on the basis of abstract legality: The law would not permit a man's testimony on his own behalf to stand alone (as admissible legal evidence).
    - 2. His argument is now shifted from abstract legality to the principle of His personal competence to testify concerning Himself: Light needs no witness; it demonstrates its own reality by its radiance!
  - B. Consider the following contrast of Jesus and the Pharisees concerning His "witnessing" (8:13-20):
    - 1. *Jesus* (whose confidence was due to self-knowledge) (8:14):

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- a. "I know" (8:14).
- b. "I pass judgment on no one" (8:15).
- c. "I am from above" (8:23).
- d. "I am not of this world" (8:23).
- 2. *Pharisees* (whose unbelief was due to ignorance) (8:19):
  - a. "You have no idea" (8:14).
  - b. "You judge by human standards" (8:15).
  - c. "You are from below" (8:23).
  - d. "You are of this world" (8:23).
- C. The contrast (as seen in the text) shows the superiority of Jesus.<sup>22</sup>
  - 1. He has perfect self-consciousness.
  - 2. His estimate of man is based on omniscience.
  - 3. His origin was heavenly.
- D. Jesus issues a grave warning to the Pharisees regarding their unbelief (8:21-30):
  - 1. "You will die in your sin" (8:21).
  - 2. "Where I go, you cannot come" (8:21).
- E. In this section, Jesus claims to be
  - 1. Life-bringer (8:12)
  - 2. Reliable witness (8:14)
  - 3. Going to the Father (8:21)
  - 4. Sent by the Father (8:25-27)
  - 5. Savior (8:28)
  - 6. Ever accompanied by the Father (8:29)



- F. The result of this conversation: “Many put their faith in him” (see John 9:16).
- II. Jesus confronts the “Jews”<sup>23</sup> in their stubborn unbelief (8:31-59).
  - A. Jesus addressed His warning to those “who had believed him” (8:31).
    - 1. An important distinction is being made here between “put their faith in him” (8:30) and “had believed him” (8:31).
      - a. Although “had believed” is in the perfect tense, which usually would indicate that their past decision to believe had an ongoing result, the context suggests it means that they once believed but did so no longer.<sup>24</sup>
      - b. An alternative explanation would be to see a distinction between (literally) “they believed into him” (meaning they entrusted themselves to Him, 8:30)<sup>25</sup> and “[the ones who] had believed him” (possibly meaning they were convinced He was telling the truth, 8:31).<sup>26</sup>
    - 2. Being convinced that Jesus is telling the truth is only a first step; such conviction must lead to obedience (the meaning of “hold to my teaching”).<sup>27</sup>
    - 3. Although these people “had believed him,” they are not believers (that is, His disciples).

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- a. They do not know the truth (8:31).
  - b. They are not “really” His disciples (8:31).
  - c. They are not free (8:31).
  - d. They are still slaves to sin (8:34).
  - e. They are ready to kill Jesus (8:37).
  - f. They have no room for Jesus’ word (8:37).
  - g. They are not Abraham’s children (8:39).
  - h. They are determined to kill Jesus (8:40).
  - i. They do not love Jesus (8:42).
  - j. They are unable to hear what Jesus says (8:43).
  - k. They are children of the devil (8:44).
  - l. They do not believe Jesus (8:45).
  - m. They do not belong to God (8:47).
  - n. They call him a Samaritan<sup>28</sup> and demon-possessed<sup>29</sup> (8:48, 52).
  - o. They dishonor Jesus (8:49).
  - p. They do not know God (8:55).
  - q. They are liars (8:55).
  - r. They try to stone Jesus (8:59).
- B. Jesus’ statement concerns three concepts of major importance in all human thinking (8:31-32).
1. “Know” (Gr: *ginōskō*) speaks of knowledge

“gained from experience,”<sup>30</sup> implying a transition *from ignorance to knowledge* (read again John 7:17).

2. “Truth” (Gr: *alētheia*) denotes “revealed reality which is centered in the person of Christ Himself,”<sup>31</sup> implying a transition *from error to truth* (read also John 14:6; 17:17).

**NOTE:** Jesus did not come just to interpret the truth of the law of Moses (as the Essenes and the Pharisees would have wished), nor to reveal hidden truths about God (as the Gnostic heretics claimed). He came to teach the truth, but especially to *be* the truth, to embody it in His person. “God’s reality becomes manifest in him, manifest as will and power to save.”<sup>32</sup> Obeying His teachings, and thus truly becoming His disciples, these Jews would, at last, come to know Him, who is the truth (see Col. 2:17; John 1:14, 17; 14:6).

3. “Make... free” (Gr: *eleutheroō*) means absence of constraint or restriction, implying a transition *from slavery to freedom*<sup>33</sup> (8:32, 36; read also Gal. 5:1-2).

- C. Jesus’ statement is conditional, its literal force being: “...if you take up your dwelling in My Word...” (8:31).
- D. Consider the following contrast of the estimate of the Jews about themselves and that of Jesus concerning them.
  1. The Jews’ estimate of themselves was: “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone” (8:33).

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**NOTE:** What about Egypt? What about the period of the Judges? What about Babylon? What about the Seleucids and the Ptolemies? What about the present Roman occupation? Had they suddenly forgotten these humiliating experiences of national enslavement? Pride is usually blind to truth! (However, the "bondage" which Jesus here addresses is of a deeper and deadlier sort than political or physical slavery!) Slavery to sin is every bit as real as the slavery of a sick man to his disease, and is ultimately even more deadly. The sinner is a slave to sin, and unless the power of sin is broken, the sinner is doomed (8:35; read Rom. 6:1-23).

2. Jesus' estimate of the Jews was: "You belong to your father, the devil..." (8:44).

**NOTE:** The Jews had assumed that physical descent was equivalent to spiritual character. Jesus makes it plain that their actions proved otherwise, for they: harbored hate and murder in their hearts (8:40); despised truth (8:40); did not love God's Messenger (8:42); did not believe His word (8:46); dishonored the Son of God (8:49); knew not God (8:55); were of their "father, the devil" (8:44; read Matt. 3:7-10).

- E. Jesus' claims in this section are an implied "I Am"
  1. Truth to set men free (8:31-36)
  2. Revealer of God (8:38)
  3. Sinless (8:46)
  4. The Prince of Life (8:50-51)
  5. Eternal Deity (8:58)
- F. John's rendition of the force of Christ's words could literally be translated: "...before Abraham

came into being, I am” (8:58; read again John 1:1, 14).

1. This is more than just a claim equivalent to “Before Abraham was, I was”:<sup>34</sup> “Am” means *timeless being*.
2. There was *never* a time when He “was not.”
3. He could *always* assert “I am.”

**NOTE:** Three times in this context Jesus uses the absolute “I am” formula (8:24, 28, 58; see Exod. 3:14).<sup>35</sup>

G. The Jews’ response proves that they understood this to mean nothing else, save a claim to deity (8:59; read carefully Lev. 24:10-16).

III. The conflict of the Pharisees, the Jews, and Jesus can be thus summarized:

- A. It began with *contradiction*: “I am the Light of the World”; “your testimony is not valid” (8:12-13).
- B. It progressed with *insinuation*: “Where is your father?” (This may be an insult intended to cast doubts upon His parentage) (8:19, 41).
- C. It continued with *flat denial* of their need of freedom (8:33).
- D. It deteriorated into *deliberate insult*: “You are a Samaritan and demon-possessed”; that is, “*You’re crazy!*” (8:48; compare also John 7:20; 10:20).

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- E. It ascended to the *height of sarcasm* as seen by the intent of their question to Jesus: "Are you greater than our father Abraham?"; that is, "*Who do you think you are, anyway?*" (8:53)
- F. It reached a pinnacle of intensity in the *final display of hostility* on the part of the Jews: "They picked up stones..." (8:59).
  - 1. Violence is the last resort for defeated men.
  - 2. When reason, logic, Scripture, and common sense fail, try stones! Kill your opponent!

**NOTE:** This conflict shows the degeneration of a shallow kind of belief into an active, vicious unbelief! Jesus withdraws from those who so decisively oppose Him.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See J. B. Lightfoot, "The Brethren of the Lord," pp. 247-282 in his *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan & Co., 1866), hereafter cited as Lightfoot, "Brethren"; John McHugh, "The Brothers of Jesus (II): The Epiphanian Theory," pp. 208-222 in *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament* (London: Dartman, Longman & Todd, 1975); hereafter cited as McHugh, *Mother of Jesus*.

<sup>2</sup>See Jerome, "On the Perpetual Virginity of the Blessed Mary Against Helvidius," pp. 11-43 in *Saint Jerome: Dogmatic and Polemical Works*, transl. by John Hritz, ed. by Roy J. Deferrari et al. (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1965) discussed in detail (but rejected) by McHugh ("The Brothers of Jesus [III]: St Jerome's Theory," pp. 223-233 in *Mother of Jesus*) and Lightfoot, "Brethren."

<sup>3</sup>This is the position of McHugh, "The Brothers of Jesus (IV): Conclusion," pp. 234-254 in *Mother of Jesus*.

<sup>4</sup>This position was first defended by one Helvidius (c. A.D. 382) whose small book has perished, but its arguments are known from Jerome's refutation of his position (see note 2 above). See R. V. G. Tasker, "Brethren of the Lord," 1:207-208 in *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*; McHugh, "The Brothers of Jesus (I): The Helvidian View," pp. 200-207 in *Mother of Jesus* (though McHugh rejects this position). Catholic scholar John McKenzie admits: "There is no question that the word 'brother' is often used in the Bible to designate other members of a kinship group beyond those who are children of at least one common parent; it designates members of the same clan, tribe or even nation.... But the use of 'sister' to designate more remote kinswomen is much rarer. And there is no instance of the use of 'brothers' or 'sisters' for more remote kinsmen and kinswomen when the words accompany an enumeration of names.... Of [James] and of Josés, Judas, and Simon (Mark 6:13) the more probable meaning (and of the sisters mentioned *ibid.*) is children of at least one common parent; and so it would be understood for anyone else" ("The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament," p. 6 in *Mary in the Churches*, ed. by Hans Küng, Jürgen Moltmann, and Marcus Lefébure [New York: Seabury Press, 1983]). McKenzie goes on to say (p. 7) that the arguments for the perpetual virginity of Mary are all arguments of theological propriety, summed up in the saying, "God could have done it, he should have done it, therefore he did it." Human beings should be very reluctant to impose on God their notions of what He ought to do (see Job 38:1-41:34; Rom. 9:20).

<sup>5</sup>"Not" is probably the correct reading; "not yet" "was introduced at an early date... in order to alleviate the inconsistency between ver. 8 and ver. 10" (see Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, p. 216). The inconsistency, however, is only apparent, for Jesus' statement to His brothers that He is not going up to the feast need not be taken absolutely.

<sup>6</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 130.

<sup>7</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 131; see Blass-Debrunner-Funk §324 (p. 169).

<sup>8</sup>See D. Freeman, "Tabernacles, Feast of," 3:1511-1512 in *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*; Alfred Edersheim, "The Feast of Tabernacles," pp. 268-287 in *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services as They Were at the Time of*



*Christ* (repr. ed.: Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1979); hereafter cited as Edersheim, *Temple*; Tractate Sukkah, pp. 172-181 in Danby, *Mishnah*.

<sup>9</sup>The water-libation is described in Sukkah 4.9-10 (Danby, *Mishnah*, p. 179).

<sup>10</sup>According to F. F. Bruce, "Our principal source of information is the tractate *Sukkah* in the Babylonian Talmud, from which we gather that the ceremony of the water-pouring was enacted on the first seven days of the feast, but not on the eighth day.... If our Lord's proclamation was made on the day when there was no water-pouring, His point would be that, while no material water was poured on that morning yet spiritual and life-giving water was available to all who would come to Him. His announcement might be regarded as a repetition of that in Isa. 55:1-3; whereas there it is the God of Israel through His prophet who says 'come to me' (verse 3), here it is the Son who says so in person" (*Answers*, p. 69).

<sup>11</sup>"Several ideas influencing Jn are found in passages like Is 12:3; 43:19f; 44:3; 55:1f; 58:11; Zech 14:8; Jer 2:13; 17:13; Prov 18:4; and several from the Qumran Scrolls. The quotation in Jn is best explained as a combination of several O.T. passages in a creative way.... The thought and language of Jn show influence from the wisdom literature of the O.T. The chief passage here is Prov 18:4 in its LXX [Septuagint] form" (Freed, *Quotations*, pp. 118-119).

<sup>12</sup>According to Frank Pack, accepting the reading of the Bodmer Papyrus (P<sup>66</sup> has the article before "prophet," while P<sup>75</sup> leaves a space for the article) would make this a reference to the prophet of Deut. 18. Without the article ("a prophet"), the council members opposing Nicodemus would be making a false claim that no prophet arose from

Galilee, when in fact it was known that the prophet Jonah was from the Galilean town of Gath-Hepher. Frank Pack concludes, "This reading has much to commend it in the context of this passage, and it is surely an early reading. It may very well be that here we have preserved the original reading of John and later scribes may have misunderstood the Messianic significance of this particular term" (Pack, "Problems in John," pp. 212-213). It is also worth noting that the Galilean town, Capernaum, means "Village of Nahum" (J. P. Kane, "Capernaum," 1:245 in *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*).

<sup>13</sup>See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.17 (Eusebius [Loeb], 1:298-299). This and other points demonstrating the antiquity of the account are discussed in Fausto Salvoni, "Textual Authority for John 7:53-8:11," *Restoration Quarterly* 4, 1 (1960):12; hereafter cited as Salvoni, "John 7:53-8:11."

<sup>14</sup>For a discussion of the manuscript evidence, see Earle McMillan, "Textual Authority for John 7:53-8:11," *Restoration Quarterly* 3, 1 (1959):18-22; hereafter cited as McMillan, "John 7:53-8:11"; Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, pp. 219-223.

<sup>15</sup>The details of this correspondence to Luke are set forth in Salvoni, "John 7:53-8:11," pp. 13-15.

<sup>16</sup>McMillan ("John 7:53-8:11," pp. 21-22) records statements by various authorities: "Yet this spurious section reports quite correctly an actual occurrence in the life of Jesus. Every feature of it bears the stamp of probability, although we are unable to say at what point in the story of Jesus it should be inserted" (Lenski). "[T]here is no reason to doubt that we have an authentic piece of evangelical tradition" (Moffatt). McMillan himself agrees and suggests that keeping it in its traditional position in John "is as good



as any, if one is familiar with the problem involved" (p. 22). Metzger says "[T]he account has all the earmarks of historical veracity" (*Textual Commentary*, p. 220).

<sup>17</sup>See A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), p.42; hereafter cited as Sherwin-White, *Roman Law*.

<sup>18</sup>See Stephen James, "The Adulteress and the Death Penalty," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 22, 1 (March 1979):45-53; hereafter cited as James, "Adulteress."

<sup>19</sup>This is true unless by calling Jesus "Lord" (Gr: *kurios*), she was expressing her faith in and submission to Him. The word *kurios*, however, often has the meaning of "Sir" (see Matt. 25:11; John 12:21; 20:15; Acts 16:30; Rev. 7:14; Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 459) and such is probably true in this case.

<sup>20</sup>See James, "Adulteress," p. 52.

<sup>21</sup>"The use of the first personal pronoun in this section [8:12-30] is particularly noteworthy. It recurs no less than twenty-three times." (Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 143-144).

<sup>22</sup>See L. Deason, *Hebrews: The New and Living Way* (Clifton Park, NY: Life Communications, 1984).

<sup>23</sup>It is difficult to determine whether "Jews" here refers to the authorities (as usual), or to the people, or both. Most commentators, however, believe it refers to the authorities (see Von Wahlde, "Johannine 'Jews,'" p. 39).

<sup>24</sup>"Just as the present participle may suggest antecedent action and so be a sort of 'imperfect' participle (past time), so the perfect participle is sometimes used where a sort of past perfect sense results. The action was finished and is now no longer the fact, though the state represented

by the perfect once existed" (Robertson, *Grammar*, p. 1117). Robertson lists John 8:31 as an example of this exception to the normal meaning of the perfect tense.

<sup>25</sup>See Arichea, "Believe," p. 207.

<sup>26</sup>The object of "believe" is in the dative case, just as in John 14:11, where the context is clear that "Believe me" means "Accept that I am telling you the truth."

<sup>27</sup>Literally, "remain (or abide) in my word," meaning that they allow it to be the guide for life (compare John 8:52). See the rendering of Charles B. Williams ("If you live in accordance with what I teach...") and Twentieth Century New Testament ("If you remain constant to my Message...") and compare similar expressions using this same verb (Gr: *menō*) in 1 Tim. 2:5; 2 Tim. 3:14; and 2 Macc. 8:1 (Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 504).

<sup>28</sup>They are making a racial slur. Jesus labored to overcome such racial prejudice in His hearers (see Luke 10:25-37; 17:11-19; John 4:4-42).

<sup>29</sup>"In John the people's estimate of Jesus is expressed in the phrase: *δαίμονιον ἔχει* ['he has a demon']...., 7:20; 8:48, 49, 52; 10:20, 21. If this is in the first instance a kind of popular reproach, there lies behind it the fact that on Jewish soil (as distinct from Hellenistic) it contains a most radical rejection on religious grounds. A man who has a *δαίμονιον* [demon] should not be heard.... From the NT standpoint the reproach implies total rejection and dishonouring" (Werner Foerster, "*δαίμων*, κ. τ. λ.," 2:19 in *TDNT*).

<sup>30</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 147; compare Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 160.

<sup>31</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 147; compare Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 36.

<sup>32</sup>Schnackenburg, 2:228. See his discussion, "The

Johannine Concept of Truth," in Schnackenburg, 2:225-237.

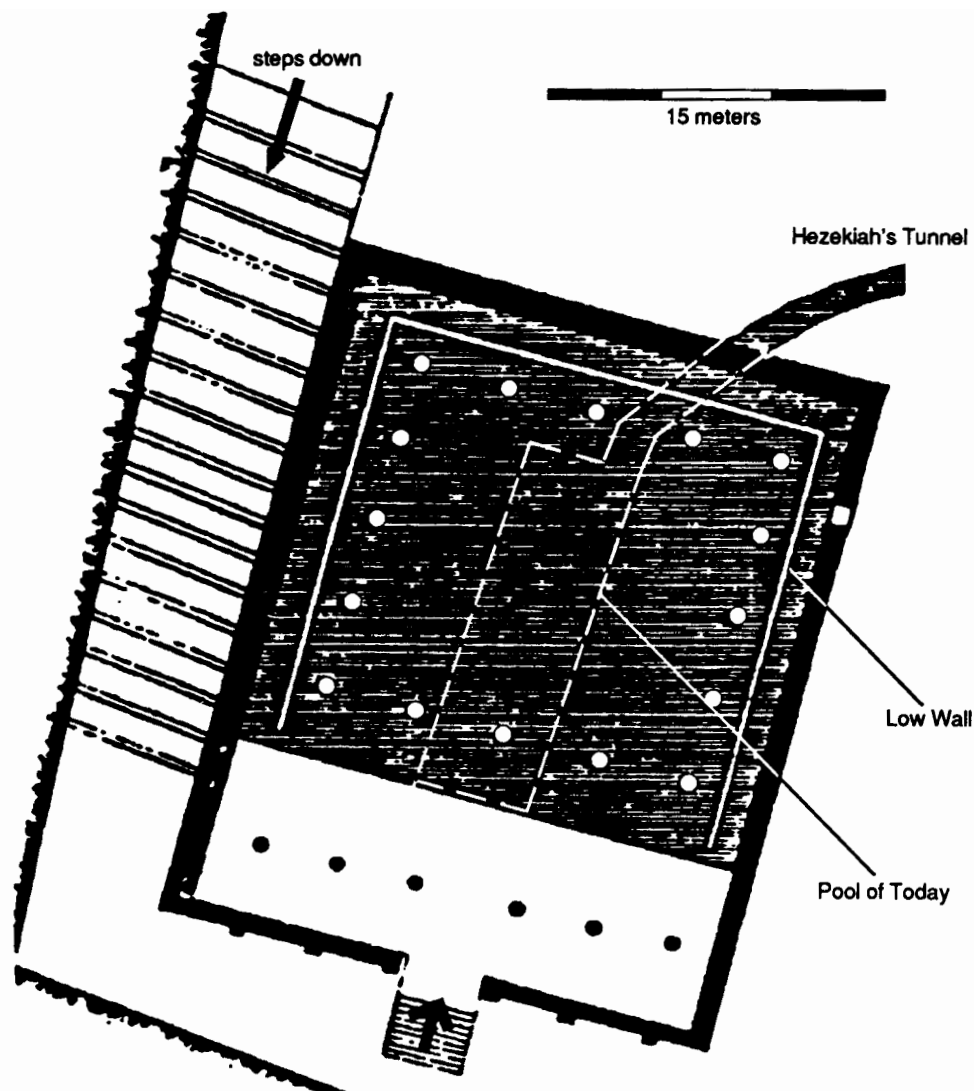
<sup>33</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 147; compare Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 250-251.

<sup>34</sup>Jehovah's Witnesses claim that it means this or "I am he" (see "'The Word': Who Is He?" pp. 34-38). But "I am he" does not fit the context, for there is no personage for the "he" to correspond to (such as John 9:8-9: "Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?" "...I am he"). If Jesus had meant to say, "Before Abraham was, I was," He would have used *egö ĕmĕn*, not *egö eimi*.

<sup>35</sup>See "The Origin and Meaning of the  $\epsilon\gamma\omega\ \epsilon\iota\mu\iota$  Formula," (2:79-89 in Schnackenburg).

# Lesson Seven

**John 9:1 - 10:42**



*"He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see"* (John 9:11). Fed by the Spring Gihon through a tunnel bored through solid rock during Hezekiah's reign (c. 700 B.C.), the ancient pool was much larger than what remains in use today (see dotted line). A peristyle roof, open to the sky in the middle, was supported by sixteen columns. A low wall kept the larger inner pool from being muddied by those entering.

Source: John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem as Jesus Knew It: Archaeology as Evidence* (London: Thames & Hudson, Ltd., 1978), 106. Reprinted by permission.

# Conflict Concerning Healing the Blind Man—John 9

- I. The case is *revelatory* (9:1-5).
  - A. The question of the disciples *revealed their narrow outlook* (9:1-2).
    - 1. The prominent theology of the day taught that every particular suffering or woe was connected with a particular sin (consider the Book of Job and Luke 13:1-5).<sup>1</sup>
    - 2. Jesus' answer makes it plain that He did not subscribe to the prevailing viewpoint.
  - B. The answer of Jesus *revealed His broad insight* (9:3-5).
    - 1. The purpose for which this sign would be done was to *glorify* God; that is, to manifest the works of God in a needy human life (compare John 1:14; 5:19-20).
    - 2. Jesus was going to do the Father's work "as long as it is day..."; that is, "as long as I am in this world." Jesus teaches the importance of acting upon the revealed will of God while we yet have opportunity (9:4-5; see Gal. 6:10).
    - 3. This particular *claim* of Jesus ("I am the light of the world") is of special significance in view of the *sign* He is about to perform.

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- C. The helplessness of this man (upon whom the “work” would be done) *revealed God’s glory*.
  - 1. The nature of the case was unusual in that it is the only recorded miracle done by Jesus on one afflicted from birth.
  - 2. The plight of the man was humanly hopeless.
  - 3. The case was a favorable opportunity for a “work of God” because of the great physical difficulties involved (born blind), and because of the disciples’ question (Is “fate” the master of man?). *The Lord is Master of misfortune.*<sup>2</sup>
- II. The cure is *remarkable* (9:6-7).
  - A. Jesus’ action of anointing the man’s eyes with saliva and clay was an ingenious way to evoke hope and expectation<sup>3</sup> upon the part of the man. Such a practice was similar to what was occasionally done among medical practitioners of that day.<sup>4</sup>
    - 1. Touch and hearing would be the man’s two chief contacts with the outside world.<sup>5</sup>
    - 2. The weight of the clay on his eyes and the command of Jesus could not fail to have meaning for him.
  - B. The reaction of the man would be a test of *faith’s obedience*. Three brief statements record the result of the command and cure:

1. "The man went."

**NOTE:** We often fail to appreciate the significance of this trip to Siloam. Each step was taken in the absolute darkness. Was he being sent across town on a cruel "wild goose chase"? The man apparently was not thinking in this direction, being convinced that his sight awaited the end of his trip.

2. "[He] washed."
3. "[He] came home seeing."

III. The controversy among the neighbors is *radical* (9:8-9).

A. The opinions among those who knew of the "blind beggar" were divided. The imperfect tense (literally, "they were saying") indicates that there was an ongoing process of discussion.<sup>6</sup>

1. Some were questioning: "Isn't this the same man...?"
2. Others were sure.
3. Still others were doubtful: "No, he only looks like him."

B. The controversy of theories was ended by the man's confession of facts.

IV. The confession of the blind man is *resolute* (9:9-12).

A. "I am the man." (The imperfect tense behind "he insisted" carries the meaning: "He kept declaring" that he was the one.)<sup>7</sup>

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- B. His account of the actual incident is true in every detail; he is not repeating the experience of someone else, but of himself!
  - 1. "The man they call Jesus *made some mud*, and *put it on my eyes*. He *told me to go to Siloam and wash...*" (9:10-11).
  - 2. "So *I went and washed*, and then *I could see* (9:11-12).
- C. The cure was an undeniable event.
- V. The contentiousness and callousness of the Pharisees is *religious* in nature, as demonstrated in the "battle of syllogisms" (9:13-16).

**NOTE:** The confrontation with the Pharisees and the retelling of the miracle are presented in this section (9:13-15).

- A. The majority of the Pharisees were proposing the following "logical" argument<sup>8</sup> (9:16):
  - 1. *Major premise:* All men from God keep the Sabbath.
  - 2. *Minor premise:* This man (Jesus) does not keep the Sabbath.
  - 3. *Conclusion:* This man is not from God.

**NOTE:** The weakness of the syllogism is not in its structure. It is good logic, but the facts of the syllogism are not true. The major premise is false, because they were evaluating Sabbath observance solely on the basis of their rabbinical traditions, and because they were ignoring the possibility that the Messiah, as Lord of the



Sabbath, could do His work on the Sabbath without incurring guilt. The minor premise is also false, because again they are actually judging Him by their own traditional Sabbath regulations. Human religious tradition had become so elevated in their thinking that they had equated it with the very law of God (read also Matt. 15:1-9).

B. “But others” among the Pharisees argued from a different perspective<sup>9</sup> (9:16):

1. *Major premise:* Only people who are from God and are not “sinners” can do such signs as giving sight to one born blind.
2. *Minor premise:* This man has done such a sign.
3. *Conclusion:* This man is from God and is not a “sinner.”

**NOTE:** This logical argument was not a statement of faith, but merely a question setting forth a possibility (read John 15:24).

C. The second syllogism (as put forth by “others” from among the Pharisees) was improved by the precise statement of Jesus<sup>10</sup> (read again John 9:3).

1. *Major premise:* Only people who are from God can open the eyes of those born blind, “that the work of God might be displayed.”
2. *Minor premise:* This man (Jesus), *with that purpose in mind*, opened the eyes of one born blind.

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3. *Conclusion:* Therefore, this man (Jesus) is from God and is not a “sinner!”

**NOTE:** The intention of the callous Jews is to destroy the above conclusion by rejecting the minor premise, as seen throughout the remainder of the narrative.

- VI. The confusion of the Pharisees is *redundant*, as displayed in their further interrogations (vv.17-23).
  - A. “Finally they turned again to the blind man, ‘What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened’” (9:17).
  - B. They asked the blind man’s parents (9:18-23):
    1. “Is this your son? ...Is this the one you say was born blind?” (Reply: “We know he is our son... and we know he was born blind”)
    2. “How is it that now he can see?” (Reply: “We don’t know.”)

**NOTE:** This sign could not be explained as a case of “mistaken identity.”

3. The attitude of the parents was due to their being “afraid of the Jews” who could “put” them “out of the synagogue.”

**NOTE:** The religious community and its external expressions were profoundly precious to the Jews. To be excluded from public religious life had come to be considered as the equivalent of exclusion from fellowship with God. To be “cut off from among the people”

meant to be “accursed of God” (read also Gen. 17:14; Exod. 30:33, 38; 31:14; Lev. 7:20-21, 25, 27; 17:4, 9-10, 14; John 12:42; 16:2; Luke 6:22).<sup>11</sup>

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- C. It was one thing to admit the cure of this hereditary handicap, and quite another to ascribe the cure to Jesus. To consent to the veracity of the sign, they would have to
  - 1. Admit that the man was cured of congenital blindness<sup>12</sup>
  - 2. Agree that Jesus cured him
  - 3. Conclude that God’s power through Jesus had brought about the cure
  - 4. Confess, therefore, that Jesus was indeed “a man of God” (recall John 3:2)

VII. Consider the following contrast of the contentious and callous Pharisees with the clear-headed, previously blind man (9:24-34).

A. The Pharisees were *prejudiced* and *hostile*.

- 1. “Give glory to God. We know this man [Jesus] is a sinner” (9:24).
  - a. The phrase, “Give glory to God,” is a Hebrew expression meaning “speak the truth” (read Josh. 7:19 and compare Ezra 10:11 [Greek version]; 1 Esdras 9:8).<sup>13</sup>
  - b. The contrast of God and “this man,” throughout the chapter emphasizes the issue at stake in the *acceptance* or

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*rejection* of the sign and the claim of Christ (see John 9:16, 24, 29, 33).

2. Defeated in argumentation, they return in complete desperation to the miracle: "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" (9:26)
3. The clear, deliberate reply of the blind man brings wrath from the Pharisees (9:28-29).
4. The experience of the once-blind man, totally supported by factual evidence, leaves the biased, contentious Pharisees in a rage.
  - a. They insult him and "un-synagogue"<sup>14</sup> him: "They threw him out" (9:34).
  - b. By their response of slander, intimidation, and banishment, the Jews implicitly admit that they have been defeated on rational grounds.

**NOTE:** Of a Jewish practice of excommunication from the synagogue before the destruction of Jerusalem we know nothing beyond what we find in John's Gospel (here in chapter 9, plus 12:42 and 16:2). Neither the Jewish ban,<sup>15</sup> nor accounts in Acts<sup>16</sup> of Christian conflicts with Jews, echoes what happened to the blind man.

Later on (c. A.D. 85),<sup>17</sup> Jewish authorities meeting in Jamnia rewrote one of the benedictions of the standard synagogue prayer<sup>18</sup> to create a test-benediction: "For the apostates let there be no hope, and let the arrogant government be speedily uprooted in our days, and the Nazarenes [Christians] and the Minim [heretics] be destroyed in a moment and let them be blotted out of the Book

of Life and not be inscribed together with the righteous. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who humblest the proud.”<sup>19</sup>

Of course, no Jewish Christian could recite or add his “Amen” to such a “benediction,” and the widespread adoption of this change in the synagogue service inevitably led to the expulsion of Christian Jews. Anyone suspected of being a “closet” Christian would be called on to recite the prayer at the synagogue service. If he stumbled during the recitation of the test-benediction, he was disqualified from continuing the prayer (and presumably expelled from the synagogue for life).<sup>20</sup>

Such was probably the situation at the time John wrote his Gospel. Yet, even in Jesus’ day, there were some who “already... had decided” (9:22) that followers of Jesus should be expelled from synagogues. What was apparently temporary and local during Jesus’ ministry became permanent and universal at the end of the century: Jewish Christians were no longer welcome in synagogues. John is using what happened to the blind man to encourage the persecuted Christians of his day to “go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore” (Heb. 13:13).

**B. The blind man was *candid* and *honest*.**

1. He is an extraordinary man in that he is not easily shaken!
  - a. He boldly places his testimony, “I do not know” (about Jesus being a sinner) and “I do know” (that he himself has been blind but now sees) over against the Pharisees’ assertion, “We know” (that Jesus is a sinner).
  - b. He knew that objective facts are more powerful than unsupported biased opinions (9:25).

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2. His next reply is irony and satire at its best: "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?" (9:27)
3. His next statement really "rubs it in": "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes" (9:30).

**NOTE:** The Pharisees were used to saying "we know," but now they were actually saying "we don't know" (see John 6:42; 7:27; 9:24, 29).

4. His concluding remarks are in the form of a syllogism<sup>21</sup> (9:31-33):
  - a. *Major premise*: "...[God] listens to the godly man who does [God's] will."<sup>22</sup>
  - b. *Minor premise*: "Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind."
  - c. *Conclusion*: "If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."
5. The blind beggar defeats the Pharisees with their own weapons: logic and Scripture ("We know that God does not listen to sinners") (see Job 27:9; Isa. 1:15; 59:2; Jer. 11:11; Micah 3:4).

VIII. Although excommunicated by the bigoted Pharisees, the man who was once blind enters into fellowship with the “Son of Man,” Jesus Christ, who is the “Son of God” (9:35-38).

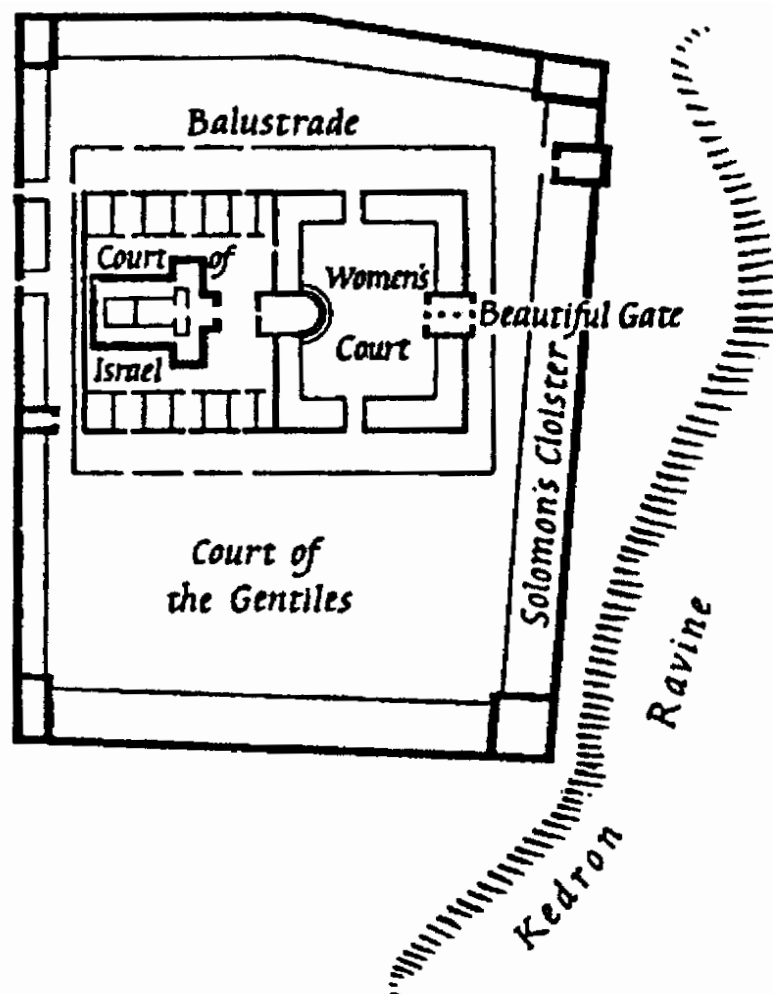
- A. Jesus finds him.
- B. Jesus asks: “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”
- C. Jesus reveals Himself to him.
- D. Jesus is “worshipped” by the healed beggar.

**NOTE:** The verb “worship” (Gr: *proskuneō*), as used by John, always indicates divine worship; that is, its object is invariably Deity (read John 4:20; 21, 22, 23, 24; 12:20).<sup>23</sup>

IX. The concluding remarks of Jesus are an ironic rebuke of Pharisaic self-righteousness and unbelief (9:39-41).

- A. Jesus came into the world for the purpose of “judgment” (Gr: *krima*, that is, “separating”<sup>24</sup>).
- B. The question of the Pharisees is sarcastically premeditated: “What? Are we blind too?”
- C. The reply of Jesus is devastating! (9:41)
  - 1. Humble confession of blindness would have led to removal of sin and bestowal of spiritual illumination.
  - 2. Instead, they lapsed into complete darkness!<sup>25</sup>

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*"Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade"—John 10:23.* The platform artificially constructed by Herod the Great was 280 x 460 x 315 x 485 meters, an area of 144,000 square meters. Such an area easily accommodated the usual 200,000 worshippers on feast days. All along the eastern edge of this enclosure was a covered walkway called "Solomon's Colonnade" (also known as "Solomon's Porch" or "Solomon's Cloister," as in the map above).

Source: Clifford M. Jones, *New Testament Illustrations* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 165. Reprinted by permission.



# Conflict About the Good Shepherd Discourse

## —John 10:1-21

- I. The Old Testament provides the background and basis of the symbolism in this section.<sup>26</sup>
  - A. Yahweh is portrayed as the Shepherd of Israel (read carefully Ezek. 34:15 and compare Pss. 23; 79:13; 80:1; 95:7; Isa. 53:6).
  - B. The Shepherd of Israel is portrayed as a loving Shepherd (read carefully Isa. 40:11; Matt. 18:12-14; Luke 15:1-6).
  - C. The evil shepherds are portrayed as a terrible and destructive reality (read Jer. 23; Ezek. 34; Zech. 11:17).
  - D. The son of David (the Messiah) was to be the one Shepherd of the sheep in the days of the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel (read carefully Ezek. 34:22-24; Jer. 23:1-6 and compare 1 Peter 2:25; 5:4; Heb. 13:20; Rev. 7:17).
- II. The immediately preceding narrative concerning the excommunication of the once-blind man explains the general scope and aim of the discourse.
  - A. Jesus is asserting His authority as the Shepherd of both Israel and the nations, in contrast with the presumptuous action of the Jewish "leaders" (read again John 9:22, 34 and compare Matt. 23:1-3).

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1. The “sheep” (Israelites) are the chosen spiritual remnant—the true people of God (see Rom. 11:1-5).
  2. The “other sheep” are the “chosen,” the true people of God from among the nations; that is, Gentile believers (see Rom. 11:11; 15:8-12).<sup>27</sup>
  3. All the “sheep,” the true people of God from among Jews and Gentiles, comprise the “one flock” which is the church, or body, of Christ (see Eph. 2:12-22; 1 Peter 5:4).
- B. The teaching was directed to Jewish ears, but was not limited to them in its application. The various characters are
1. The Shepherd (Jesus)
  2. The watchman (appointed ministers of the Spirit)<sup>28</sup>
  3. The thieves and robbers (false messiahs or leaders)<sup>29</sup>
  4. The sheep (the Lord’s people)
  5. The hired hand (possibly the priests and other appointed officials)
- III. The specific statements of the discourse deal with the relationships between Christ and His people.
- A. The identity and work of the Shepherd are described.<sup>30</sup>
1. He enters through the door (10:2).<sup>31</sup>
    - a. In contrast to the secretive approach of

the predators and thieves, the shepherd intentionally makes his presence known as he approaches, so that the sheep will not be frightened.

- b. The shepherd enters the sheepfold with a boldness; he has a right to be there.
  - c. Christ is sensitive to our fear and reassures us; He does not force Himself into our lives without our permission (see Rev. 3:20).
- 2. He receives cooperation from the watchman (10:3).
  - 3. He receives the obedience of the sheep (10:3).
  - 4. He calls His own sheep by name (10:3).<sup>32</sup>
    - a. The shepherd knows each sheep well; he does not see them as a flock, but each sheep is viewed individually.
    - b. He appeals to each sheep according to its own uniqueness.
    - c. Christ knows each of us fully and calls each of us specially (see John 1:48-49; 2:24-25).
  - 5. He leads His own sheep out (10:3).<sup>33</sup>
    - a. The shepherd must get the sheep to pasture early in the morning.
      - 1) They need the dew that is on the grass for their moisture.

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- 2) The insects are semi-dormant at that time and will allow the sheep to graze undisturbed.
- b. Early morning is often the best time of the day for communion with our Shepherd in prayer, Bible study, and meditation (see Mark 1:35; Ps. 5:3).
- 6. He precedes His sheep (10:4).
- 7. His sheep follow Him (10:4).<sup>34</sup>
  - a. The relationship that the shepherd develops with his sheep makes them confident to follow him wherever he leads, assured that all is well.
  - b. We can respond to His call (see Matt. 16:24), confident that following Him will only benefit us.
- 8. He is the door of the sheep (10:7).<sup>35</sup>
  - a. The sheepfold provides safety without food, while the pasture provides food without safety; the door mediates between the two, creating a healthful balance.
  - b. Christ helps the Christian balance his or her inner spiritual life with the necessary contact with the outer world.
- 9. He is the only true Shepherd (10:8).
- 10. He is the avenue of safety and sustenance (10:9).<sup>36</sup>

- a. The relationship between sheep and shepherd quickly becomes a friendship in which the shepherd expresses kindness and affection, reassuring the sheep by his mere presence.
  - b. Since Christ is ever-present, we can be ever-confident and content.
11. He brings about abundant life for His sheep (10:10).<sup>37</sup>
- a. The shepherd's one, all-consuming goal is to make his flock flourish.
  - b. If the sheep are thriving, the shepherd can devote himself to improving their environment: abundant pasturage, clean water supplies, better shelter, more adequate protection from predators, and so on.
  - c. A thriving flock is the result of countless hours of the shepherd's diligent efforts on their behalf.
  - d. The richness of our spiritual lives is only because Christ has poured Himself out fully for us, and continues to do so (see Rom. 8:34).
  - e. Christ's ability to bring His flock an abundant life has just been demonstrated in the healing of the man born blind.

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12. He sacrifices His life for His sheep (10:11).<sup>38</sup>
  - a. The shepherd is willing to risk storm and blizzard for the joy of finding his lost lambs and saving their lives.
  - b. Not only did Christ *give* His life for us; He *devoted* (and now devotes) His life to our care.
13. He “knows” the sheep (10:14).<sup>39</sup>
  - a. The shepherd has an incredible intimacy and deep, personal awareness of the special traits of each sheep.
  - b. None of us can say to Christ, “You just don’t understand,” for He has known each of us from the womb (Ps. 139:1-14).
14. He has “other sheep” of other folds (10:16).<sup>40</sup>
  - a. One shepherd has one flock (consisting of all the sheep he owns), but these are often distributed into many folds.
  - b. All who belong to Christ are in His flock (Christ’s church, the body of Christ), but they are grouped together in local congregations.<sup>41</sup>
15. He “must” (of necessity) bring other sheep (10:16).
16. He sacrifices Himself voluntarily (10:18).

17. He possesses power over His own life (10:18).
18. He provides security for the sheep (10:28).<sup>42</sup>
- B. These further claims and characteristics of Jesus may be deduced.<sup>43</sup>
  1. Jesus is the one key to Jewish history. He is the only one authorized to command the allegiance of the spiritual remnant of Judaism (10:7-11).
  2. Jesus claimed the power to provide safe pasture for His sheep; that is, nourishment for their souls (10:9; compare Ps. 23:3; Eph. 5:29).
  3. Jesus predicted that His coming death would be a voluntary, vicarious act: an offering for the sheep which would be confirmed by His resurrection (10:17-18).
  4. Jesus claimed other sheep besides the "Jewish" sheep, and all sheep (from every fold) would be "one fold" with "one Shepherd" (10:16; compare John 17:20-21).
- C. The characteristics and identity of the sheep are summarized.<sup>44</sup>
  1. They recognize and are familiar with the voice of the Shepherd (10:3).
  2. They follow the Shepherd (10:4).
  3. They refuse to follow strangers (10:5, 8).<sup>45</sup>

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- a. Because they know and love the shepherd so well, a stranger cannot attract them.
  - b. None of these “isms” need attract us: humanism, materialism, scientism, atheism, religionism, spiritism, destructive<sup>46</sup> biblical criticism.
4. Their safety and sustenance is in the Shepherd (10:9).
  5. They are not all from one fold (10:16).
- D. The characteristics and motivations of the hired hand are discussed.<sup>47</sup>
1. He is carelessly indifferent and irresponsible (10:12).
  2. He is cowardly and selfish (10:12).
  3. He cares not for the sheep (10:13).
  4. He is concerned for his pay only (10:13).

**NOTE:** That this description probably refers to the priests and the Pharisees is seen by their self-centered motivation and reaction to Jesus, which are later unveiled. The stated order of their concerns is particularly instructive (read carefully John 11:47-53).

5. The crisis over the healing of the blind man recurs in the division among the Jews “at these words” (10:19-21; compare John 9:16).



# Conflict on Solomon's Porch

## —John 10:22-42

- I. The question to Jesus was direct and menacing: “If you are the Christ, tell us plainly” (10:22-24).
- II. The answer from Jesus was distinct and manifest: “You do not believe because you are not my sheep” (10:25-28).
  - A. True believers (“My sheep”) are characterized by<sup>48</sup>
    - 1. *Sensitivity*: They hear His voice (10:27)
    - 2. *Fellowship*: They are known by Him (10:27)
    - 3. *Obedience*: They follow Him (10:27)
    - 4. *Life*: They are given eternal life (10:28)
    - 5. *Assurance*: They “shall never perish” (10:28)
    - 6. *Safety*: They shall not be snatched out of His hand (10:28)
  - B. Unbelievers (“You do not believe”) are characterized by<sup>49</sup>
    - 1. *Stubbornness* instead of sensitivity
    - 2. *Alienation* instead of fellowship
    - 3. *Rebellion* instead of obedience
    - 4. *Death* instead of life
    - 5. *Danger* instead of assurance
    - 6. *Perdition* instead of security

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**NOTE:** These unbelievers had the same opportunity to believe as did the believers: They heard the same truths and saw the same works (10:25, 26, 38).

III. The claim of Jesus was dynamic and monumental: "I and the Father are one" (10:29-33).

- A. The use of the neuter gender in the predicate nominative (the numeral "one") indicates that Jesus was not representing Himself and the Father as one and the same person.<sup>50</sup>
- B. The context shows that there is a common bond of unity (oneness) between Him and the Father. Hence, Jesus refers to *inward unity of function*<sup>51</sup> (10:28-30; see John 17:20-23; 1 Cor. 3:8).
- C. However, the remark was considered by His hearers to be a claim of Deity, and was not denied by Jesus (10:33).
- D. Jesus carefully shows the diversity of the Persons and the unity of the Essence. Literally, His words could be rendered: "I and the Father, one we are" (read carefully John 1:14, 18; 5:17-18).
- E. Though the Father and the Son are two Persons, they are one "Substance":<sup>52</sup> equality is implied and is understood (10:30, 33; compare Deut. 6:4; Heb. 1:1-3).

**NOTE:** The Jews "again... picked up stones," charging Jesus with the sin of blasphemy "because you, a mere man, claim to be God" (10:31, 32, 33).

IV. Jesus supports His claim reasonably and scripturally (10:34-39).

A. The logic of Jesus' argument is unanswerable.<sup>53</sup>

1. The authority of Scripture is assumed: "The Scripture cannot be broken."<sup>54</sup>
2. The words of Scripture are cited: "Is it not written in your law<sup>55</sup> [Scripture], 'I have said you are gods'?" (Read Ps. 82:6.)
3. Their acceptance of scriptural words is implied: "You have never said that God (or Asaph, the writer) was wrong in calling even these unjust judges of the people 'gods.' "
4. Their inconsistency is exposed: "Therefore, you (all the more) should not protest My calling Myself the Son of God."
5. The conclusion is inevitable: "Your accusation of blasphemy is unjust and unscriptural."

**NOTE:** The methodology of Jesus' logic is known as the "argument from the lesser to the greater":<sup>56</sup> If those "to whom the word of God came" may rightly be referred to as "gods,"<sup>57</sup> how much more is it proper to call Him "the Son of God," who comes into the world as "the Word of God!" For He does not come without credentials (10:38; see John 1:1-14; 14:11).

B. The alternatives concerning the claim of Jesus are clear-cut:<sup>58</sup>

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1. He was joking and not serious (but the entire conversation is in a serious vein).
2. He was lying for the sake of effect (but lying is completely out of keeping with the known character of Jesus) (see John 8:45, 46, 55).
3. He was insane, and not responsible for His claims (but His balance of mind, finely-adjusted discernment, constant emotional control, and well-ordered career rule out the verdict of insanity).
4. He was misunderstood by His disciples.
  - a. It is completely unlikely that men reared in strict Jewish monotheism would ascribe equality with God to a man, no matter how much they revered him!
  - b. His enemies believed such a claim to be blasphemous.
5. *He told the truth!* (This is the only alternative commended by the evidence) (10:32, 37, 38).

**NOTE:** Jesus, at this point, returned beyond the Jordan, and many (who knew John the Baptizer) believed on Him because of His signs and because of John's testimony (10:40-42).

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See Philip Yancey, *Where Is God When It Hurts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1977), pp. 61-77. Other helpful books on the causes of human suffering include: C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (orig. ed.: London: Geoffrey Bles, 1940; repr. ed.: London: Fontana Books, 1957); John Wenham, *The Goodness of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1974).

<sup>2</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup>Jeremias believes, says Van Der Loos, that “[t]he treatment with the clay served as a means of arousing belief” (Van Der Loos, *Miracles*, p. 428). Second century church leader Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 5.15.2-3 [1:543 in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*]) believed that Jesus was pointing to His role in the original creation of man, while many early “church fathers” claimed that in imitation of the original creation of man “from the dust of the ground” (Gen. 2:7), Jesus actually created new eyeballs for the man out of the clay (see Van Der Loos, *Miracles*, pp. 426-427, n. 5).

<sup>4</sup>“The Talmud mentions various peculiar remedies against blindness: a scorpion prepared in a certain way, the spleen of animals, etc., whilst the following causes of blindness, among others, are mentioned: combing the hair while it is dry; putting on shoes while the feet are still wet” (Van Der Loos, *Miracles*, p. 415, n. 3). For pagan healings of blindness, see Van Der Loos, *Miracles*, pp. 415-417.

<sup>5</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 157.

<sup>6</sup>Hendriksen, 2:77.

<sup>7</sup>Hendriksen, 2:77.

<sup>8</sup>Hendriksen, 2:81.

<sup>9</sup>Hendriksen, 2:82.

<sup>10</sup>Hendriksen, 2:83.

<sup>11</sup>Many commentators believe that John’s interest in the question of excommunication from the synagogue in this story was aroused because of the practice (current at the time of the writing of John’s Gospel) of expelling Jewish Christians from synagogues (see also Heb. 10:32-39; 13:12-14; Rev. 2:9-10; 3:9; Brown, 1:LXXXIII-LXXV; Martyn, *John in History*; and J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 2nd ed., [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979] hereafter cited as Martyn, *History and Theology*).

<sup>12</sup>For naturalistic explanations of this miracle, see Van Der Loos, *Miracles*, pp. 427-429.

<sup>13</sup>The book of 1 Esdras is apocryphal but still illustrative of this usage of the phrase.

<sup>14</sup>The word *aposunagogos* (meaning “an excommunicate from the synagogue”) “has not yet been found in any document other than the Fourth Gospel” (Martyn, *History and Theology*, p. 39).

<sup>15</sup>Neither the more serious ban (the *kherem*) nor the less serious (the *niddui*) corresponds to what is happening to the blind man, for they were both means of tying a person closer to the synagogue, not severing his ties from the synagogue (Martyn, *History and Theology*, pp. 43-44). In addition, Martyn notes that the *niddui* usually applied to scholars dissenting from the majority in a scholarly court, and the *kherem* remains undocumented before the third century (p. 44).

<sup>16</sup>It is conceivable that Paul’s withdrawal from the synagogue in Corinth (Acts 18:7) and his later withdrawal

in Ephesus, this time taking the disciples with him (Acts 19:9) could have been at the request (demand?) of the synagogue rulers, but no accusation that he is in a state of excommunication arises at any of his trials (see Martyn, *History and Theology*, pp. 49-51).

<sup>17</sup>See Martyn, *History and Theology*, p. 56. Arguments for a somewhat later date are given on pp. 56-57, n. 75.

<sup>18</sup>This prayer is known as the *Amidah* (standing, the posture in which it was prayed) or the *Sh'moneh 'Esreh* ("Eighteen Benedictions," even though the benediction here discussed, added as number twelve, made the total number nineteen). The wording of this prayer evolved over many decades (see Raphael Posner, Uri Kaploun, and Shalom Cohen, eds., *Jewish Liturgy: Prayer and Synagogue Service Through the Ages* [New York: Leon Amiel Publ., 1975], p. 81). C. K. Barrett provides translations for eight of the benedictions (including the all-important twelfth) in *New Testament Background: Selected Documents* (New York: Harper & Row Publ., 1961), pp. 162-163, 167; hereafter cited as Barrett, *Background*. For the entire text of the *Amidah*, see any Jewish prayer book or a *Passover Haggadah*.

<sup>19</sup>Following the wording given by Martyn (*History and Theology*, p. 58). Compare the rendering of Barrett (*Background*, p. 167), who notes that this benediction has been edited over the centuries and claims that the rendering given is "probably very close to the original wording." He does suggest, however, that the phrase "and the Nazarenes" may not have been part of the original text. Martyn (*History and Theology*, p. 58) believes that the original benediction had to do with Jewish apostates to Greek idolatry during Maccabean times, and that the later addi-

tion of the phrases about the Nazarenes and the Book of Life "seems to have been to make an old benediction... relevant to the contemporary situation by specifying the new sources of danger... : Christian Jews and other heretics."

<sup>20</sup>This is based on a passage in the Babylonian Talmud (*Berakoth* 28b-29a), together with discussions of Jewish rejection of Christians found in Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* (16, 95, 110, 133 [1:202-203, 247, 253-254, 266 in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*]). All of this is brought together in Martyn, *History and Theology*, pp. 57-60.

<sup>21</sup>Hendriksen, 2:91.

<sup>22</sup>This verse, taken out of context, has been used to suggest that God hears only the prayers of saved believers. This idea cannot stand the light of such passages as 1 Kings 8:41-43; Jonah 1:14-16; Acts 10:4. At the same time, God rejects the prayers of the arrogant, wicked person (see the discussion in Hendriksen, 2:91).

<sup>23</sup>Hendriksen, 2:93. Compare Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker (pp. 716-717): "fall down and worship, do obeisance to, prostrate oneself before, do reverence to. This reverence or worship is paid... to Jesus, who is revered and worshipped as Messianic King and Divine Helper."

<sup>24</sup>Hendriksen, 1:142, 2:94. Compare Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker (p. 451): "In J[ohn] κρ[ιμα] shows the same two-sidedness as the other members of the κρινω family ('judgment' and 'separation'...) and means the judicial decision which consists in the separation of those who are willing to believe fr[om] those who are unwilling to do so."

<sup>25</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 161.

<sup>26</sup>See Hendriksen, 2:98-99. For a thorough discussion



of 'shepherd' and 'flock' in the Old Testament, see Joachim Jeremias, "ποιμήν, κ.τ.λ.," 6:485-490, 499-500 in *TDNT*.

<sup>27</sup>Different identifications of the "other sheep" have come from importing ideas foreign to the immediate context of John and even to the remote context of Jesus' teaching and ministry. The Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, claim that the "other sheep" are exactly 144,000 spiritual Israelites who alone have a heavenly inheritance ("The Fine Shepherd and 'This Fold' of His," *The Watchtower* [Feb. 15, 1984]:10-20, esp. pp. 16-17). The *Book of Mormon* (in 3 Nephi 7:20-28) teaches that the "other sheep" are the Nephites of the New World (see Walter Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, 2nd ed. [Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publ., 1985], p. 180). The fact that the Israelites were regarded as "the flock of God" would identify them with "this sheep pen," leaving non-Jews to be the "other sheep." Adding Gentile "sheep" to God's flock is in keeping with Jesus' clear intention to bring salvation to the Gentiles, a "whosoever" theme prominent in John's Gospel (see John 1:12-13; 3:3-5, 17; 4:21-24, 42; 5:24; 6:51; 7:37-38; 8:12; 11:25-26, 51-52; 12:19-32; 13:35; 17:20-21), as well as in the Synoptics (see Luke 2:32; 3:6, 8-9; Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 8:10-12; 13:38; 21:43; 28:19-20; Luke 14:21-24). Although Jesus limited the apostles to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" when he first sent them out (see Matt. 10:6), this does not contradict a Gentile mission, but conforms to the intention of God's eternal purpose and plan for the Good News to go "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16; 2:10; compare Gen. 12:3). In Matt. 25:31-46 Jesus pictures a judgment of "all the nations [including Israel]" as a dividing of

sheep and goats, the division being made, not on the basis of one's nationality, but of one's personal service to the Messiah through service to His people. In other words, Jesus is saying that there are some "sheep" among the nations as surely as there are some "goats" among the Israelites. The apostle Paul continues this theme of making one new people of God out of the old divisions of Jew and Gentile (see Eph. 2:11-22; compare Gal. 3:26-4:9a; 6:12-16). Peter also echoes Jesus on this point (see 1 Peter 2:9-10).

<sup>28</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 162, n. 41. Another possible identification of the porter is John the Baptizer (compare John 3:25-30).

<sup>29</sup>In Acts 5:36-37, Gamaliel refers to false messiahs who arose and brought only death or disappointment to their followers. See also Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.269-285 (Josephus [Loeb], 8:496-505); 18.4-10 (Josephus [Loeb], 9:4-9); 20.97-99 (Josephus [Loeb], 9:440-443); *War* 2.118 (Josephus [Loeb], 2:366-369); 7.253-274 (Josephus [Loeb], 3:576-583). In summary, Josephus says: "And so Judea was filled with brigandage. Anyone might make himself king as the head of a band of rebels whom he fell in with, and then would press on to the destruction of the community, causing trouble to few Romans and then only to a small degree but bringing the greatest slaughter upon their own people" (*Antiquities* 17.285 [Josephus (Loeb), 8:504-505]).

<sup>30</sup>This list is adapted from Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 163-164.

<sup>31</sup>The following points are from Phillip Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at the Good Shepherd*, large print ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1978), chapter 2

(pp. 29-37); hereafter cited as Keller, *Good Shepherd*.

<sup>32</sup>The following points are all from Keller, *Good Shepherd*, chapter 3 (pp. 39-50).

<sup>33</sup>The following points are from Keller, *Good Shepherd*, chapter 4 (pp. 51-58).

<sup>34</sup>H. V. Morton relates this incident: "Early one morning I saw an extraordinary sight not far from Bethlehem. Two shepherds had evidently spent the night with their flocks in a cave. The sheep were all mixed together and the time had come for the shepherds to go in different directions. One of the shepherds stood some distance from the sheep and began to call. First one, then another, then four or five animals ran towards him; and so on until he had counted his whole flock" (quoted in Morris, *John*, p. 502, n. 17). The following points are from Keller, *Good Shepherd*, chapter 5 (pp. 59-68).

<sup>35</sup>The following points are from Keller, *Good Shepherd*, chapter 7 (pp. 81-91).

<sup>36</sup>The following points are from Keller, *Good Shepherd*, chapter 8 (pp. 93-102).

<sup>37</sup>The following points are from Keller, *Good Shepherd*, chapter 9 (pp. 103-110).

<sup>38</sup>The following points are from Keller, *Good Shepherd*, chapter 13 (pp. 143-151).

<sup>39</sup>The following points are from Keller, *Good Shepherd*, chapter 11 (pp. 121-131).

<sup>40</sup>The following points are from Keller, *Good Shepherd*, chapter 12 (pp. 133-141).

<sup>41</sup>For a definition of "church" (in its universal and local senses) and "congregation," see L. Deason, *The Love of Christ in the Local Congregation* (Clifton Park, NY: Life Communications, 1987), pp. 4-28.

<sup>42</sup>See Keller, *Good Shepherd*, chapter 15 (pp. 165-173).

<sup>43</sup>The following deductions come from Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 164.

<sup>44</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 165.

<sup>45</sup>See Keller, *Good Shepherd*, chapter 6 (pp. 69-78).

<sup>46</sup>Not all biblical criticism is destructive; biblical criticism is destructive only when it undermines the inspiration, authority, or historicity of the Scriptures. Note, for example, D. A. Carson's description of Rudolf Bultmann's work: "[T]he least defensible elements of form criticism combine with the most speculative historical reconstruction to form critical judgments absolutely devoid of substantive evidence" (*Fallacies*, p. 133; see Carson's description of uncontrolled historical reconstruction on pp. 131-133). For a description of constructive biblical criticism, see George Eldon Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1967).

<sup>47</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 165. Keller's discussion of the hireling is in *Good Shepherd*, chapter 10 (pp. 111-120).

<sup>48</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 167.

<sup>49</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 167.

<sup>50</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 167. Compare Blass-Debrunner-Funk §138, 1 (p. 76): "The neuter is sometimes used with reference to persons if it is not the individuals but a general quality that is to be emphasized." See also Hendriksen, p. 126: "Jesus does not say, 'We are one person' (εἷς), but he says, 'We are one substance' (ὅν). Though two persons, the two are one substance or essence. It has well been said that εὐ frees us from the



Charybdis of Arianism (which denies the unity of essence), and εσμεν ["we are"] from the Scylla of Sabellianism (which denies the diversity of persons). Thus in this passage Jesus affirms his complete equality with the Father."

<sup>51</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 167.

<sup>52</sup>The debate about whether Christ's nature is "like substance" (*homoi-ousia*) or "same substance" (*homo-ousia*) with the Father became fierce enough to cause brothers in Christ to anathematize each other when, in fact, the New Testament affirms His deity without defining it in theologically precise terms. Later attempts at such definitions are, unfortunately, uninspired (see A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. in 1 [London: Pickering & Inglis Ltd., 1907], pp. 326-352; Dale Moody, *The Word of Truth: A Summary of Christian Doctrine Based on Biblical Revelation* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1981], pp. 408-415; hereafter cited as Moody, *Word of Truth*).

<sup>53</sup>See Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 168-169.

<sup>54</sup>This statement expresses the authority of the Scriptures in the strongest possible terms: "[T]he meaning of the declaration is that it is impossible for Scripture to be annulled, its authority to be withstood, or denied.... What we have here is, therefore, the strongest possible assertion of the indefectible authority of Scripture" (Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, ed. by Samuel G. Craig [Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publ. Co., 1948], pp. 139-140 [hereafter cited as Warfield, *Inspiration and Authority*]; see Warfield's entire discussion of this text on pp. 138-140).

<sup>55</sup>Warfield points out that in using the description 'law' to refer to the Book of Psalms, Jesus "ascribes legal

authority to the entirety of Scripture" rather than just to the Pentateuch (*Inspiration and Authority*, pp. 138-139).

<sup>56</sup>This form of argumentation, known to the Jews as *qal wakhomer* ("light to heavy"), is the first of the seven rules of interpretation ascribed to Hillel (president of the Sanhedrin from 30 B.C. to A.D. 10) and used by rabbinic scholars in their exegesis of the Scriptures (see Richard Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1975], pp. 34-35, 69).

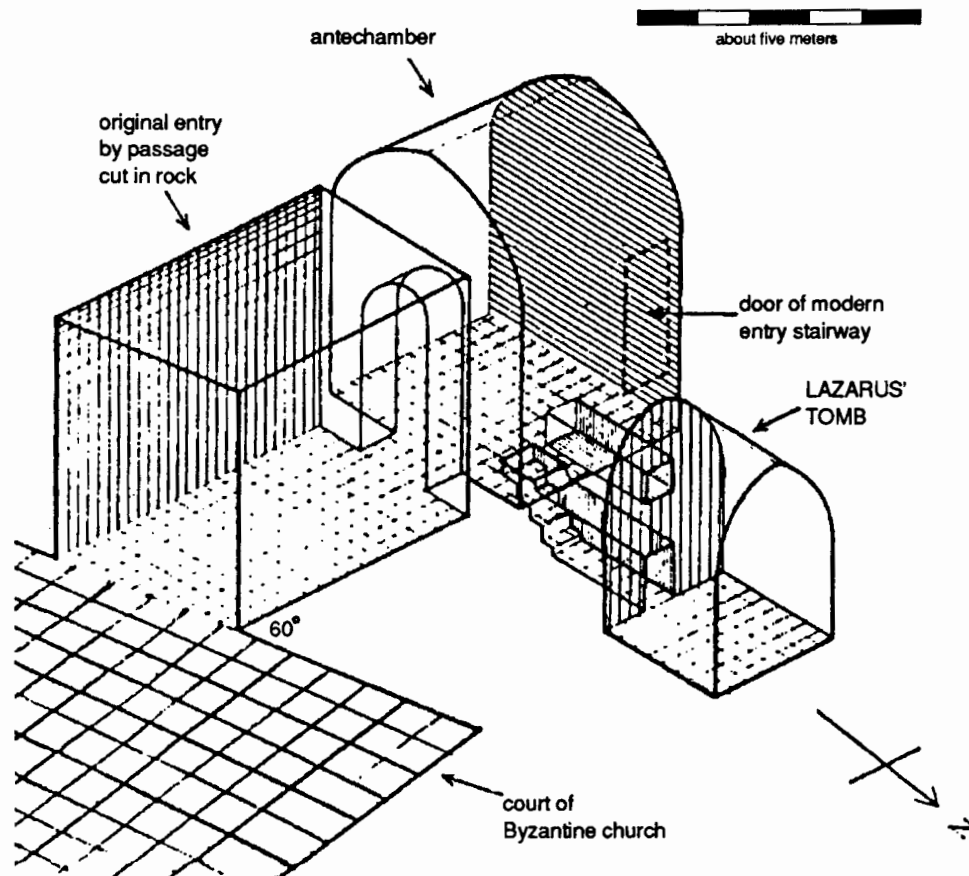
<sup>57</sup>For a discussion of "gods" as a description of human beings, see Ethelbert Stauffer, "Θεός: C. The Early Christian Fact of God and Its Conflict with the Concept of God in Judaism," 3:96 in *TDNT*.

<sup>58</sup>See Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 168.



# Lesson Eight

**John 11:1 - 12:50**



*"Jesus... came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance"* (John 11:38). The fact that the lines of the present-day mosque (following the lines of the ruins of a fourth-century church on which it was built) are offset from the tomb entrance at a 60° angle suggests that the church was built after the tomb was already being venerated as the site of the raising of Lazarus. Because through the centuries layer after layer of rotting limestone has fallen from the ceiling of the anteroom, the original floors of the tomb and its anteroom may have been the same level. This means that the manhole leading to the burial chamber may not be the original entrance, and the arguments that a stone laid "upon" the entrance (as the literal rendering says) may be of no help in authenticating the site.

Source: John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem as Jesus Knew It: Archaeology as Evidence* (London: Hudson & Thames, Ltd., 1978), 110. Reprinted by permission.

# Conflict About the Raising of Lazarus—John 11:1-53

- I. This sign was strategic in its importance.
  - A. This was the last and greatest of Jesus' public signs as recorded by John; it took place after the last winter of Jesus' earthly life, after His ministry "beyond the Jordan," but prior to the week of Passover (see John 10:22).<sup>1</sup>
  - B. It was His final demonstration of His mastery of human problems: *He is Master over death*, the "last enemy" of man (see 1 Cor. 15:26).
  - C. It was convincing proof of His claim to be "the resurrection and life" (11:25).
  - D. The narrative concludes with the chief priests and Pharisees in full agreement, committed to their task of putting Jesus to death.
- II. The specific breakdown of the narrative reflects the flow of events relating to this sign (11:1-53).
  - A. The report concerning Lazarus reaches Jesus and His disciples (11:1-16).
    - 1. The sisters regarded their brother's sickness as the logical occasion for Jesus' intervention, since *life* was being threatened and *love* was a consideration (11:3).
    - 2. Jesus regarded this as another opportunity for the manifestation of divine power and the progression of belief (11:4, 15, 25-26).<sup>2</sup>

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**NOTE:** In delaying His return to Judea, Jesus considered that God must be glorified through people coming to belief (and increased faith) in the Son. Such a faith would be brought about by a sign of unparalleled power and magnificence. Restoring life to a dead man would be a much greater sign than preventing his death. Therefore, Lazarus had to die (11:4; read again John 9:1-3).

3. The disciples were bewildered over both the decision and the timing of Jesus: Why go back to Judea (where the “Jews”<sup>3</sup> were seeking to kill Him), and why wait until His friend is dead before going? (11:8, 13)
4. John’s gospel presents a strong moral contrast between ‘light’ and ‘darkness,’ ‘day’ and ‘night’<sup>4</sup> (see John 1:4-5; 3:19-21; 8:12; 9:4-5, 39-41; 12:35-46).
  - a. This contrast speaks of the spiritual warfare between the forces of belief and unbelief.
  - b. The conflict is represented by the obedient (Jesus and His followers) versus the unbelieving “Jews.”
5. The disciple, Thomas, expressed an attitude of pessimism. This despondency was what Jesus wanted to cure. *He desired to educate His disciples in a faith that would transcend death* (11:15-16, 25-26).
6. Notice what death is to the faithful Christian: a mere “sleep”<sup>5</sup> (11:11-14).

- B. The return of Jesus to Judea is occasioned by the will of God (11:17-37).

**NOTE:** The return to the home of Martha and Mary at Bethany results in conversation centered around these two sisters. The usage of the names “Martha,” “Mary,” and “Lazarus” among the Jews of first-century Palestine has been verified by archaeology,<sup>6</sup> bolstering our favorable assessment of John’s historical reliability.

1. The similarity of the sisters is seen in their response to the tragedy: both were equally grieved and both addressed the same reproachful words to Jesus (11:21, 32).

**NOTE:** Some commentators have regarded the grammatical differences in the sisters’ lament as John’s way of conveying the differing emphases of Martha and Mary, and their dissimilar personalities. Martha’s statement ends with “my” (in the Greek construction), emphasizing her aggressive, possessive personality. Mary’s comment concludes with “brother,” showing her tender nature in that she had lost the object of her love and affection (11:21, 32).<sup>7</sup>

2. The contrast of the sisters is seen in their reaction to the arrival of Jesus: *Martha* was active in going to meet Jesus, while *Mary* remained in the house in emotional grief. *Martha* was talkative, whereas *Mary* was tearful (11:20, 21-27, 31-33).
3. The comparison of the sisters is seen in regard to their expressions of belief: *Martha* expressed a general assent to the resurrection in the last day, and *Mary* fell at

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Jesus' feet, saying nothing concerning a future hope (11:24, 32).

- a. Despite her great sorrow, Martha retained faith in Jesus (11:21-22).
- b. Martha did not immediately comprehend Jesus' response to her expression of belief (11:23-24).<sup>8</sup>
- c. "It is not to the article of faith of the resurrection that Martha should cling, but to him who realized in his person the resurrection and the life"<sup>9</sup> (11:25).

**NOTE:** The action and attitudes of "the Jews" who had gathered at the home of the deceased Lazarus are, generally, commendable. They tried to comfort the two sisters and were faithful in expressing their concern for the family (11:19, 31). They also sympathized with Jesus in His uninhibited expression of grief (read carefully Heb. 5:7). But even they, who represented Judaism at its best, could offer nothing more than human compassion in the midst of the tragic reality of death. They had no clear testimony to eternal life, for only Jesus Christ "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (see 2 Tim. 1:10). The boundaries of their belief are seen in their remark: "Could not he [Jesus]... have kept this man [Lazarus] from dying?" (11:36-37)<sup>10</sup>

- C. The raising of Lazarus from the dead is recounted in simple but compelling language (11:38-44).
  1. *The concern and sorrow* of Jesus are emphasized by certain key words in this section (11:38; see John 11:33).



- a. “Weeping” (Gr: *klaiō*), describing Mary, expresses “an unrestrained paroxysm of grief; loud crying, wailing”<sup>11</sup> (11:33).
- b. “Deeply moved in spirit” (Gr: *embri-maomai*), describing the reaction of Jesus, literally meant to “snort like a horse,”<sup>12</sup> connoting indignation (rather than sorrow) (11:33, 38).
- c. “Troubled” (Gr: *tarassō*), further describing the response of Jesus, means to “stir up, disturb, unsettle,”<sup>13</sup> as in John 5:7; 14:1 (11:33).
- d. “Wept” (Gr: *dakruō*), describing the emotional expression of Jesus at the tomb, literally means to “burst into tears”;<sup>14</sup> an “intensity of feeling rather than uncontrollable wailing”<sup>15</sup> (11:35; see Luke 19:41).

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**NOTE:** Jesus, able and willing to “sympathize with our weaknesses” (Heb. 4:15), was not unmoved by the spectacle of death. He not only shared in the human experience of personal grief over the death of a close friend, but also expressed anger and indignation at this unnatural tragedy which sin had introduced into God’s “good” creation. To Jesus, death was not an impassable barrier, nor was it “God’s will.” Rather, it was the greatest enemy of man, representing a call to battle. In fighting against death, sickness, and other human tragedies and misfortunes, we follow Jesus in doing the will of God<sup>16</sup> (read carefully 1 Peter 5:7; Heb. 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 5:7; 1 John 3:8).

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2. *The challenge to believe* which was spoken by Jesus stands as a revelation of the difference between theoretical belief and active faith: Martha, though protesting, met the challenge of obedience (11:39-40).
3. *The calling upon the Father* in Jesus' prayer stands as the model "prayer of faith": He offered thanks confidently before seeing the outcome, knowing that He had prayed unselfishly and according to God's will (11:41-42).
  - a. Some have doubted the historical authenticity of this prayer, believing it to be contrary to the example and teaching of the Jesus of the synoptic Gospels (see Matt. 6:5-8; Mark 12:40; Luke 18:9-14).
    - 1) Twentieth-century prejudices prevent some from seeing that godly Jews of the first century could pray while indirectly involving those present, in order to address their spiritual needs (see 1 Cor. 14:17-19; Matt. 11:25-30; Luke 10:21-24).
    - 2) The spiritual need of the onlookers at the grave of Lazarus was that they should come to believe in Jesus; therefore, the answer to Jesus' prayer is ultimately realized, not in the raising of Lazarus, but in the

belief which this sign engendered (see John 11:42, 45).

- b. Jesus' prohibitions against making a public show of prayer (see Matt. 6:5-14; Luke 11:2-4) have nothing to do with the situation at Lazarus' tomb; the prayer was offered, not out of hypocritical or self-serving motives, but in order to glorify the Father.
- c. Jesus' prayer was probably a type of Jewish thanksgiving hymn (*hodayoth*) which had developed into a standardized form by the first century.<sup>17</sup>
  - 1) God's name was gratefully acknowledged: "Father, I thank you...."
  - 2) God's faithfulness was recalled and applied to the current situation: "...that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here...."
  - 3) Petition was made: "...that they may believe that you sent me."

**NOTE:** Jesus, true to character, had not asked Martha to place greater faith in Him than He had placed in the Father! Unlike the Pharisees, Jesus refused to "say, and do not" (see Matt. 23:1-3).

4. *The commanding call* was a shout of authority from the *Master of death*, restoring

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life to the dead as easily as it had restored calmness to the turbulent sea (11:43; see John 1:1-4; Rev. 1:17-18).

**NOTE:** This sign was a graphic example (on a small scale) of the meaning of His earlier prophetic utterance regarding “resurrection.” It also sheds light on Paul’s prophecy in 1 Thess. 4:16, where the “voice of the archangel” that will accompany the return of Christ and the resurrection of the saints could be read literally: “in an archangel’s voice” (emphasizing not the source of the voice, but the kind of voice). The quality of the resurrection of Lazarus differed from that which is yet to come, in that he was not raised to eternal glory, but resumed a state of mortality and vulnerability (read again John 5:25, 28-29).

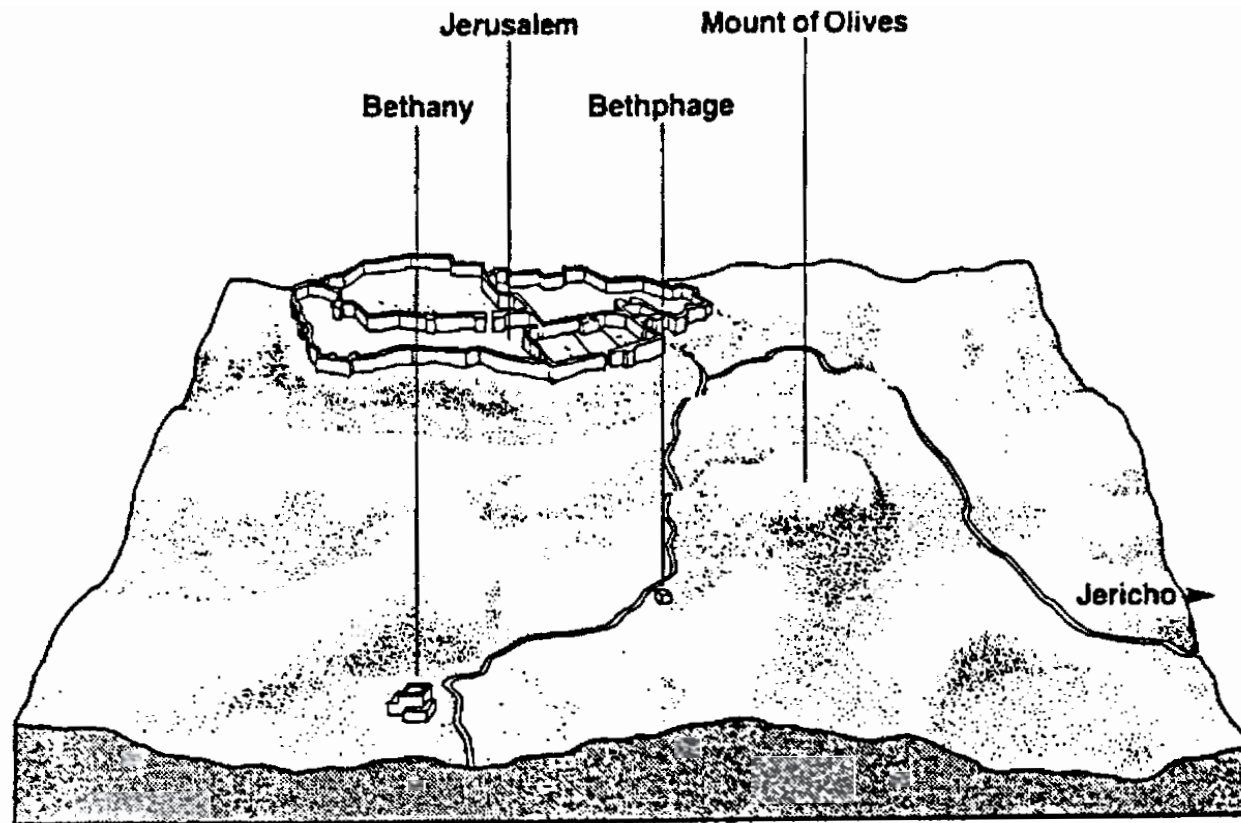
5. *The climactic conclusion* of the narrative reveals the glory of Jesus as “the resurrection and the life”: Lazarus was resuscitated, the process of decay reversed, and his body revitalized (see Rom. 1:4).
- D. The results of this sign mark the consummation of the “period of conflict” as the forces of *belief* and *unbelief* are catapulted into the “period of crisis” (11:45-53).
  1. Many of the Jews *believe* (11:45).
  2. An acute *bitterness* is realized on the part of the Pharisees towards Jesus (11:46-48).<sup>18</sup>
  3. This increased resentment reveals Jesus to be the Messiah by the unwitting *prophecy* of Caiaphas, the high priest (11:49-52).<sup>19</sup>
    - a. The high priest could occasionally

discern the mind of God regarding the nation from the use of the Urim and Thummim; here, the divine purpose is expressed extemporaneously through Caiaphas (see Exod. 28:30).

- b. Prophets often uttered more than they themselves understood, especially about the Messiah (see 1 Peter 1:10-12).
  - c. Isolated acts of prophetic utterance are recorded in Scripture (see Num. 11:25).
  - d. C. H. Dodd says: "The idea that the great Eschatological event (however conceived) includes the gathering of the people of God (Israel, or the elect) has deep roots; Is. xi 12, xliii 5 *et passim*, Ezek. xxviii 25, etc.... but the close connection of this with the death of Christ is specifically Johannine."<sup>20</sup>
4. The intensification of the conflict culminates in a concerted Jewish plot "to take his life" (11:53; recall John 10:17-18).

**NOTE:** The general commotion surrounding the raising of Lazarus caused great excitement to the Passover crowds and strengthened Mary, Martha, the apostles (and surely Lazarus!) in their belief (see John 11:54-12:11).

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*"Six days before Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany...." (John 12:1). During religious festivals, the City of Jerusalem was crowded with visiting worshippers, and accommodations were at a premium. In such a situation, it pays to have hospitable friends, and Jesus apparently spent the nights of His last week at the house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in Bethany (see Matt. 21:17). Bethany was just over the Mount of Olives from Jerusalem, a distance of about three miles.*

Source: F. F. Bruce, *Jesus and Paul: Places They Knew* (NY: Thomas Nelson Publ., 1981), 48. Reprinted by permission.

# The Declaration of Belief and Unbelief—John 11:54-12:36

- I. The period of crisis is seen in the response of belief and unbelief.
  - A. For *belief* to be stable and remain *belief*, it must become definite, genuine, and committed.
  - B. *Unbelief*, unable to tolerate Jesus' exposure and condemnation of its position, thickens the plot in devising means to put Jesus to death.
  - C. Chapter 12 records the turning point in this scheme: This is the crucial hour! (See John 12:23.)
  - D. After this, the narrative of the gospel moves speedily to its conclusion.
- II. The period of crisis is outlined (read John 11:54-12:36).
  - A. The *intensity* of unbelief is seen in the portrayal of *Jesus and His enemies* (see John 11:54-57).
    - 1. Jesus withdraws to Ephraim to ensure an undisturbed period with His disciples.
    - 2. The tension is seen in the expectation of His enemies and the general anticipation of His coming to the Passover.
    - 3. The populace wonder whether He will risk coming and being captured by the Pharisees (11:56-57).

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B. The *intimacy* of belief is seen in the portrayal of *Jesus and His friends* (see John 12:1-11).

1. Jesus returns to Bethany (for the last time) and dines with His friends.<sup>21</sup>
  - a. “*Martha served*”: as was characteristic of her (read Luke 10:38-42).
  - b. “*Lazarus* was one of those reclining at the table with him”: alive and well, and (probably) profoundly grateful.
  - c. “*Mary* took a pint of pure nard... poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair.”
2. The anointing of Jesus’ feet is an incident that stands out vividly in the memory of John (read again John 11:2 with Mark 14:3-9; Matthew 26:6-13).
  - a. Most of the differences between the synoptic accounts of the anointing and John’s are superficial.
    - 1) Matthew and Mark mention that the banquet took place in Bethany at the house of Simon the Leper, while John does not say where in Bethany the banquet took place but portrays Jesus as the guest of Lazarus and his two sisters.
      - a) Perhaps their house was inadequate to accommodate the guests they wished to invite.



- b) This is especially likely in view of the recent resuscitation of Lazarus.
- 2) Matthew and Mark do not name the woman who anointed Jesus, while John reveals that it was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus.
- 3) Matthew and Mark do not name the kind of ointment; John tells us it was pure nard.
- 4) Matthew and Mark indicate that the disciples, or at least some of them, were indignant at the woman, while John mentions the outrage only of Judas Iscariot.
  - a) Judas apparently was the first to criticize her.
  - b) His example likely influenced others to join in.
- b. Two major differences remain: What was anointed, and when?
  - 1) Matthew and Mark say that the ointment was poured on Jesus' head, while John says that Mary anointed His feet and then wiped them with her hair.
    - a) Could not both have happened?
    - b) Apparently the synoptic writers

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- concentrates on the messianic implications of the anointing.<sup>22</sup>
- c) John focuses on the more humble and personal expression of love involved in attending to Jesus' feet.<sup>23</sup>
- 2) Matthew and Mark have the anointing after the triumphal entry; John has it before.
- a) It is possible that two anointings took place (one before the triumphal entry and one after) but it is not likely because
- i. Both anointings took place in Bethany
  - ii. Both involved ointment worth the same amount, 300 denari
  - iii. In both, the woman was criticized for "wasting" the ointment
- b) If only one anointing took place, either John or the synoptic writers have the anointing out of chronological sequence.
- i. The order could be topical rather than chronological.
  - ii. Mark's account seems to reveal the reason for the

displacement of the story of the anointing: to provide a rationale for the betrayal by Judas.<sup>24</sup>

- iii. This suggests that John's is the proper chronological sequence.
- 3. Mary's gift is presented as the embodiment of *belief in action*.
  - a. It was prompted by love.
  - b. It was unique in understanding (12:7-8).
  - c. It was a rich and lavish gift (representing three hundred days of labor) (12:5).
  - d. It was perfect in its timing (12:7-8).
  - e. Some said it was a waste (12:5).
  - f. Jesus said it was a good work (12:7).
- 4. A contrast of the characters of Mary and Judas provides a striking study of *progress in belief and unbelief*.
  - a. Mary was self-sacrificing, while Judas was self-seeking.<sup>25</sup>
  - b. Mary gave a costly gift, but Judas gave cheap sarcasm.
  - c. Mary served Jesus, whereas Judas criticized Jesus.
  - d. Mary manifested spiritual discernment, while Judas lacked tact and discernment.

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- e. Mary is always remembered for her love and loyalty, even as Judas is remembered for his disloyalty as a traitor.

**NOTE:** The natural result of unbelief is rejection. Since he refused to submit himself to Jesus, Judas was forced to go in the opposite direction!

- 5. The convincing evidence of the raised Lazarus served to further polarize the forces of belief and unbelief (12:9-11).
  - a. “[F]or on account of him [Lazarus] many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him” (12:11).
  - b. In the shadow of the Cross, Jesus’ friends increase, both in number and in strength.
- C. The *infatuation* of belief is portrayed in this enthusiastic reception involving *Jesus and the populace* (see John 12:12-19; compare Mark 11:1-11; Matt. 21:1-11; Luke 19:28-40).
  - 1. Jesus re-enters Jerusalem (for the last time).
    - a. Two multitudes are presented as encountering each other and surging together into one great throng (12:17-18).
      - 1) One group had come to meet Him because of *what they had heard*.

- 2) The other group accompanied Him to testify concerning *what they had seen*.
- b. The significance of the entry into Jerusalem is three-fold.
  - 1) It emphasizes that Jesus laid down His life voluntarily.
  - 2) It presents Him as the Messiah sent by God to His people.<sup>26</sup>

**NOTE:** The meaning of the word "Messiah" ("Christ" in Greek expression) is literally "anointed One." In Hebrew thought, there were three great offices to which a man might be "anointed," according to God's selection: prophet (one who speaks for God), priest (one who approaches God on behalf of others), and king (one who rules for God on behalf of His people.)

The concept of "Messiah" encompassed all of these offices, with special emphasis on the third: "Messiah" was one who ruled for God and enacted deliverance and judgment on behalf of God's people. The term "hosanna" was transliterated from a messianic psalm which was sung during the Passover season, in expectation of an even greater "deliverance" of God's people through their promised Messiah. The term meant, "Save now."<sup>27</sup> The use of the term with reference to Jesus on this occasion probably represents another attempt to make Him "King," although perhaps not for the materialistic reasons which had motivated their previous attempt (read carefully Ps. 118:22-26; John 6:15).

- 3) It presents Him as "The Messiah of Peace."

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**NOTE:** The donkey was used by judges and kings on errands of peace. The horse was used mainly as a charger for battle. By acting out Zechariah's prophecy,<sup>28</sup> Jesus demonstrated to the people which kind of king he would be. He offered Himself as a King of peace, not as a warrior. He asserted royal claims, but not in a carnal military manner (read John 18:36 and compare Zech. 9:9; Micah 5:5; Rom. 5:1-2; Eph. 2:14-18).

2. Not until after the resurrection did the disciples come to a full understanding of their Messiah-King's mission (12:16).
3. The Pharisees are disturbed concerning this event: "Look how the whole world has gone after Him" (12:19).
- D. The *insistence* of belief is seen in the portrayal of *Jesus and the Greeks*<sup>29</sup> (see John 12:20-36).
  1. Jesus' mission now manifests itself as *world-wide* in its outreach (12:23).
    - a. The prediction of Jesus had spoken of "other sheep" (read John 10:16).
    - b. The prophecy of Caiaphas had encompassed "the children of God that are scattered abroad" (read John 11:52 and compare John 12:19; Eph. 2:14-16; Acts 10).
    - c. This interest among Gentiles was in keeping with the mission of the Servant of the LORD to be a "light for revelation to the Gentiles" (see Luke 2:32; Isa. 49:6).

- d. The prayer of Jesus will include “those who will believe in me through their [the apostles’] message” (read John 17:20).
- 2. A new covenant was needed to implement this world-wide outreach.
  - a. The principle involved in this new covenant was the basic reason for the Cross: the abolition of satanic rule in the hearts of men and women through their fear of the power of death (read carefully Heb. 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8; Col. 2:13-15).
  - b. This new covenant was the means of salvation for all mankind, Jews and Greeks (read carefully Rom. 4:1-25; Gal. 3:1-29).
  - c. The death of Jesus can produce its abundant harvest throughout the world only through the agency of disciples who cooperate with His mission in being “lifted up” before the world (John 12:23-33).
  - d. The means of validating the new covenant was blood; that is, the death of Jesus (12:24; read Heb. 9:15-17).
    - 1) The result of Jesus’ death explains

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its necessity: It would glorify God (as the death of Lazarus had done).

- 2) The uniqueness of Jesus' death is explained by its purposed significance: It would glorify the Father in the saving of human souls (as the death of Lazarus could never do) (read Heb. 8:1-10:39).

**NOTE:** Read Jer. 31:31-34, a prophecy of the new covenant.

3. Jesus' realization of the need to accomplish the desired effect resulted in distress for our Lord. Two alternatives occurred to Him (12:27):
  - a. He could ask to be delivered from this, the hour of His death (read Matt. 6:9; Heb. 5:7-9; Luke 12:49-50).
  - b. He could go through with it. (This expressed the committed will of Jesus) (read Heb. 12:2-4).

**NOTE:** The agony of Jesus in the anticipation of going to the Cross, and His deliberate submission to the Father's will in so doing, are presented in a more complete and dramatic way by the synoptic accounts of the Gethsemane passion (see Matt. 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46).

4. The Father's witness<sup>30</sup> to Jesus' obedience was spoken for the sake of the multitude (12:28-30).



- a. In Luke's account of the encounter of Saul of Tarsus with the glorified Jesus, Saul's companions heard a "sound" when Jesus spoke (see Acts 9:7).
  - b. In Paul's own account of this meeting with Jesus, he states that the "voice" which he heard was not understood by his companions (see Acts 22:9).
  - c. So here, "the bystanders" heard an indistinct "sound," but only the intended Receiver of the divine revelation understood the significance of the "Voice."
5. The "crisis of the world" was signified by the Father's testimony concerning the Son and affected by the world's treatment of the Son (12:31).
- a. The attitude of Jesus' obedience to the Father was a "judgment" (Gr: *krisis*) of the world<sup>31</sup> because the Cross *showed the obedience of Christ, and manifested the rebellion of mankind.*
  - b. The Cross of Jesus Christ presents a crisis (*krisis*) to every person!
6. The prince of this world would be cast out through Jesus' "obedience to the point of death" (read Phil. 2:5-11).

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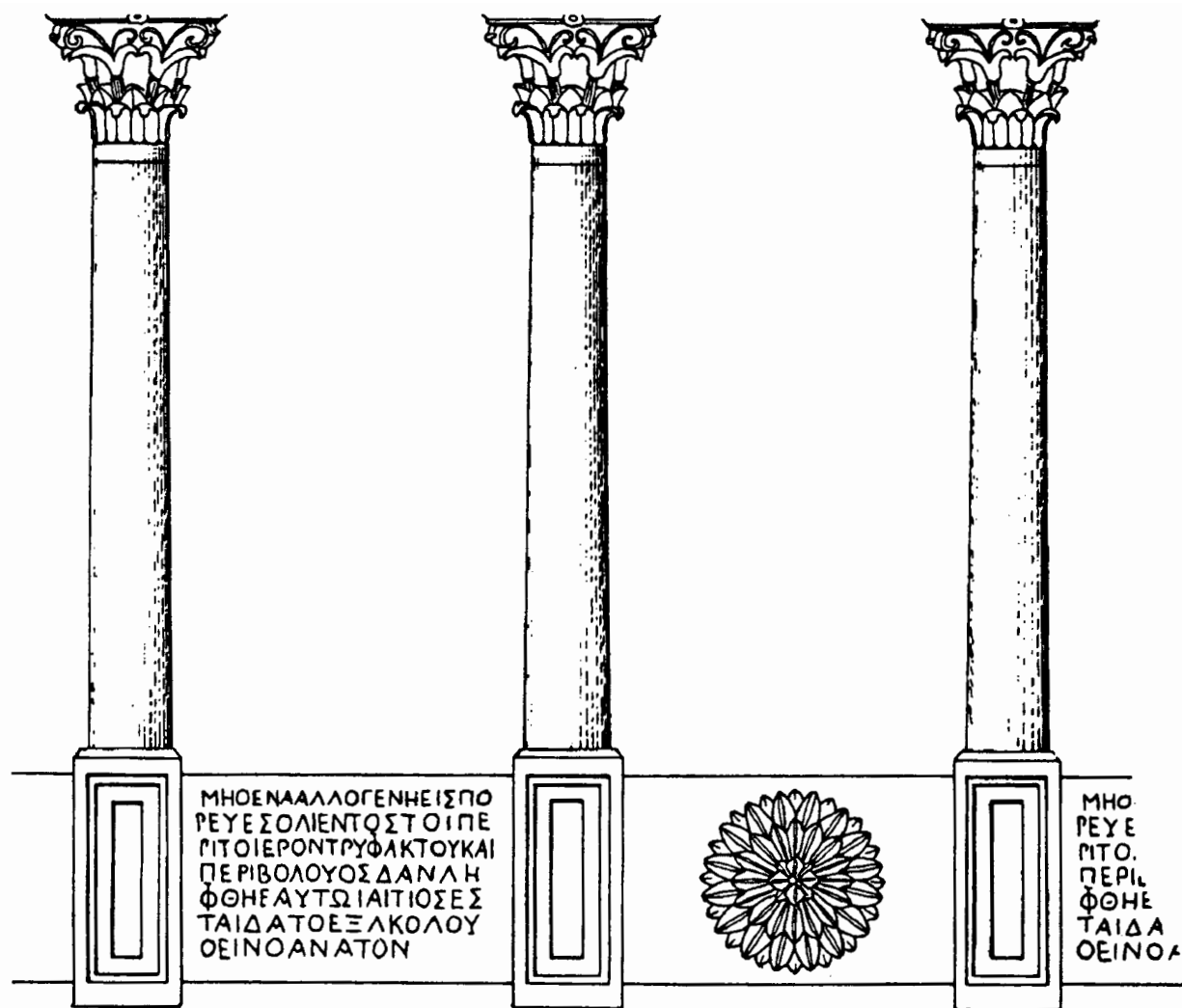
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- a. Jesus destroyed satanic power through *the forgiveness of sins* (see Col. 2:14-15; Gen. 3:15-16).
- b. Jesus destroyed satanic power through *the conquest of death* (see Heb. 2:14-15 and Rev. 1:17-18).
- c. Jesus destroyed satanic power through *opposition to evil* (see 1 John 3:8).
- 7. The lifted-up Christ is the totality of all spiritual illumination (12:34-36).
  - a. To “lift up” (Gr: *hupsoō*) has multiple meanings in John’s Gospel.<sup>32</sup>
    - 1) It means the glorification of the Son in His resurrection.<sup>33</sup>
    - 2) It means the crucifixion by means of which the unbelieving Jews (acting as agents of the devil) would bring this about (see John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32-34).
  - b. “The cross is the complete manifestation of the obedience of Christ to the will of the Father and thus the revelation of his origin. Through the crucifixion the Jews should finally be able to see the glorification of the Son of Man and know that Jesus is God’s Son and their Lord.”<sup>34</sup>
- E. In summary, all the forces of belief and unbelief which influenced Jesus converged in this brief “period of crisis.”

1. There was the hatred of the Jews.
2. There was the jealousy of Judas.
3. There was the loyalty and devotion of Mary.
4. There was the expectation of the Greeks.
5. There was the purpose for which Jesus had called the disciples.
6. There was the conquest over Satan.
7. There was the will of the Father.

**NOTE:** This ends Jesus' public ministry. He walked faithfully toward the Cross.

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“...some Greeks were among those who went up to worship at the Feast. They came to Philip... with a request. ‘Sir,’ they said, ‘we would like to see Jesus’ ” (John 12:21). While the outer courts of the temple were accessible to people of every nation, the inner courts were reserved only for Jews and proselytes. Surrounding these inner courts was a low wall with a warning every few feet: “No man of another nation to enter within the fence and enclosure around the temple. Whoever is caught will have himself to blame that his death ensues.”

Source: Meir Ben-Dov, *In the Shadow of the Temple: The Discovery of Ancient Jerusalem*. (NY: Harper & Row, Publ., 1985), 102. Reprinted by permission.

# From Public Controversy to Private Conversation—John 12:36-50

- I. *John's parenthesis* has an apologetic thrust: He seems to feel compelled to explain the phenomenon of Jewish unbelief (see John 12:36-43).
  - A. John introduces this parenthetical phrase to show the meaning of the crisis in terms of *belief* and *unbelief*.
    - 1. "...they still would not believe in him" (12:37).
    - 2. "Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him..." (12:42).<sup>35</sup>
  - B. John sets forth three features of Jewish national unbelief.<sup>36</sup>
    - 1. In the *first* place, unbelief was *preposterous* (12:37).
      - a. John desires to impress his readers with the astounding fact that men did not believe in spite of all that Jesus did.
      - b. Unbelief was *illogical!* Evidence ('signs') supported rational belief. (This unbelief is attributed to stubbornness and "insanity"; that is, a willful denial of rationality causes unbelief!)
      - c. Unbelief itself seemed *unbelievable* in light of all the "many signs" that Jesus did!

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2. In the *second* place, unbelief was *predicted* (12:38).
  - a. The passage quoted discusses the substitutionary sacrifice of God's Servant (ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ),<sup>37</sup> and takes the death of Christ out of the realm of accident, since it was specifically predicted seven hundred years before Jesus' death! (See Isa. 53:1 and compare Acts 8:26-35.)
  - b. The rhetorical question of Isaiah was quoted to show that there was a prophetic utterance concerning these unbelievers and their attitude toward Jesus. John's intent is to emphasize the inexcusable nature of Jewish unbelief, while affirming that the purposes of God are the primary consideration in His dealings with man.
3. In the *third* place, unbelief was *predetermined* (12:39-40).
  - a. Unbelief was a direct result of God's revelation: "The same sun that melts the ice also hardens the clay; the same Son who melts the hearts of some hardens the hearts of others."
  - b. Isa. 6:10 is cited from a context stating that the more Isaiah preached, the less

response he would receive. The very message which was intended to call them to repentance would drive them further from God!

- c. John states that the ministries of Isaiah and Jesus were paralleled in their disappointing outcomes: The same principle at work in both cases was the stubborn rebellion of the unregenerate heart against the word (Word) of God.
- d. John further comments that Isaiah said these things when he saw the “glory” of Jesus Christ.

**NOTE:** The interpretation of Isaiah’s experience is significant. The original text of Isaiah shows that the “glory” of Isaiah’s vision was Yahweh’s. John in this way identifies the incarnate Word (Jesus) with the Yahweh of the Old Testament. The Word incarnate was Jesus, and the Word pre-incarnate was Yahweh. Therefore, Jesus was (and is) Yahweh (read Isa. 6:1-5; Heb. 13:8 and compare Isa. 42:8; 48:11; John 17:5).

- e. John’s criticism of the “believing” (yet unconfessing) rulers was that their “faith” was timid and spineless: They loved “the glory of men” rather than “the glory of God.” Only a bold public confession of belief would suffice (read Matt. 10:32-33).

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- II. *Jesus' plea* presents His thinking on belief and unbelief (see John 12:44-50).
  - A. His evaluation of *belief* is as follows:
    1. *Belief* in Jesus involves a *trusting confidence* in God (12:44-45; compare John 1:18; 14:1, 7-9).
    2. *Belief* in Jesus results in *light*, not darkness (12:46).
      - a. *Belief* is not intellectual and spiritual complacency.
      - b. *Belief* is not knowledge resting on fixed conclusions which have long ceased to be vital and vibrant!
      - c. *Belief* is abiding in the light: It is *assurance*, the opposite of uncertainty; it is *purpose*, the opposite of aimlessness; it is *affirmation*, the opposite of negation!
      - d. *Belief* in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the *only way* out of the darkness of sin which engulfs all men (read John 14:6 and compare Acts 4:12; 1 John 5:11-12).
      - e. *Belief* is the believer's hope (12:50).
  - B. His evaluation of *unbelief* is as follows (12:48):
    1. *Unbelief* is not a polite dismissal to assent, but it is the flat refusal to
      - a. Listen to His truth
      - b. Consider His signs and claims
      - c. Look to Him and acknowledge His Person



**NOTE:** The words of Jesus in John 12:48 precisely define unbelief: It is the rejection of the Person of Jesus, and the refusal of His words.

2. *Unbelief* faces certain and impending judgment by everlasting truth (12:48-50).
  - a. This judgment is proclaimed by Christ.
  - b. This judgment was given Him by the Father.
  - c. This judgment will be neither inconsistent nor partial (read Rom. 2:1-16).
  - d. This judgment will reveal the condemnation of the unbeliever (read John 3:19; 5:27; Acts 17:30-31; Jude 15 and compare Matt. 25:46).

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<sup>1</sup>See the discussion of chronology in Hendriksen, pp. 136-137.

<sup>2</sup>Jesus' answer [to the message from Martha and Mary]: 'This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby,' demonstrates that Lazarus' illness was a matter of great concern to Jesus, whilst it may also be deduced from it that a special event was imminent, in which the Father and the Son would be glorified. And yet Jesus remained two days in the place where He was.... Jesus' work is done at His 'hour'; it is guided by a divine 'must' " (Van Der Loos, *Miracles*, pp. 578-579). It cannot be ruled out that Jesus knew Lazarus was already dead by the time the messenger arrived.

<sup>3</sup>Von Wahlde regards the unbelieving and hostile "Jews" of John 11:8 as a distinctively Johannine stereotype, probably descriptive of the Jewish authorities ("Johannine 'Jews,'" p. 48). John's broad and sometimes overlapping usages of *Ioudaioi* ("Jews") may in part be understood in light of the fact that the Jewish authorities were acting (theoretically) as the legal representatives of the whole nation (see John 11:45-53).

<sup>4</sup>Concerning the symbolic meaning of *nux* ("night") in John's gospel, Wead notes: "...the double meaning does not rely upon a secondary meaning but upon a symbolic interpretation. The emphasis of this symbolic interpretation varies throughout the book.... As one works only when it is day and rests during the night, so Jesus can work only while he lives. His coming death will end his mission on earth from his Father" ("Double Meaning," pp. 117-118).

<sup>5</sup>"In 11:11-14, speaking of the death of Lazarus, *kekoimētai* may mean both 'to sleep' and 'to die.' But the double meaning cannot apply here. Rather, through the misunderstanding of the disciples Jesus shows that he refers only to the death of Lazarus" (Wead, "Double Meaning," p. 120).

<sup>6</sup>Albright, "Discoveries," p. 158.

<sup>7</sup>So Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 174. But Lenski says: "The position of μου ['my'], in Mary's word before, in Martha's after the noun, is without significance and is apparently due to the writer's choice.... Those who in this point see in Mary a deeper feeling for her brother are—straining a point" (Lenski, p. 807). See also Blass-Debrunner-Funk §473 (p. 249): "Closely related elements in the sentence... are usually placed together in simple speech. Poetic language and that rhetorically stylized in any way frequently pulls them apart in order to give greater effect to the separated elements by their isolation.... Such a word torn out of its natural context and made more independent, is emphatic even when placed at the end of the sentence...."

<sup>8</sup>Harvey Falk considers the raising of Lazarus to be one of only two occasions on which Jesus elicits, from a Jew, belief in Himself as 'Son of God.' He recognizes that Jews would ordinarily regard such a confession as idolatrous, but adds: "I believe then that Jesus may be introducing an halakhic concept here, namely, that *Shittuf* (Trinitarianism) is permitted in order to save a Jewish life" (*Jesus the Pharisee*, pp. 34-35). But why would Jesus (a godly Pharisee, according to Falk) seek a blasphemous confession from a fellow Jew?

<sup>9</sup>Ubbink, quoted in Van Der Loos, *Miracles*, p. 581.

<sup>10</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 174.

<sup>11</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 175.

<sup>12</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 175; compare Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 254.

<sup>13</sup>Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 805.

<sup>14</sup>Hendriksen, p. 155

<sup>15</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 175.

<sup>16</sup>"Jesus, standing in front of the tomb of Lazarus, was angry at death and at the abnormality of the world; the destruction and distress caused by sin" (Francis Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1968], p. 107; hereafter cited as Schaeffer, *God Who Is There*).

<sup>17</sup>See W. Bingham Hunter, "Contextual and Genre Implications for the Historicity of John 11:41<sup>b</sup>-42," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 28 (1985):53-70.

<sup>18</sup>Falk's attempt to explain the Sanhedrin's decision to execute Jesus as an astute measure to prevent the murder of innocent Jews by Gentile Christians raises more problems than it solves (*Jesus the Pharisee*, pp. 130, 133). The "Roman backlash" feared by the Sanhedrin was a political reaction to the acclamation of Jesus as Messiah (king of the Jews), not a religious persecution of Jews by Gentile Christians.

<sup>19</sup>C. H. Dodd sees evidence of a very early Jewish-Christian source behind this account of Caiaphas' unwitting prophecy, since only a pious Jew would recognize genuine prophetic potential in the Jerusalem priesthood, and only a Christian would recognize the redemptive significance of Jesus' death ("The Prophecy of Caiaphas," *Neotestamentica Et Patristica* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962],

pp. 134-143; hereafter cited as Dodd, "Caiaphas").

<sup>20</sup>Dodd, "Caiaphas," pp. 2-3.

<sup>21</sup>J. D. M. Derrett offers several tantalizing hypotheses concerning the life setting of this incident, but they are all based on the dubious assumption that this anointing is identical with that reported by Luke (7:36-50), involving a "sinful woman" at the house of Simon the Pharisee ("The Anointing at Bethany," *Studia Evangelica*, vol. 4, ed. by F. L. Cross [Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1968], pp. 174-182). Leon Morris presents a brief but adequate discussion of the historical problems involved in identifying John's account with the reports found in the synoptic Gospels (*John*, pp. 571-574). Morris concludes: "There is no reason for equating Mary of Bethany with Luke's 'sinner.' Though the anointing is of the feet, and the hair is used to wipe them, the time, the circumstances, the discussion are all different.... It is difficult to escape the conclusion that Matthew, Mark and John all refer to the same incident. But Luke's story appears to be different" (pp. 572, 574).

<sup>22</sup>Of the synoptic anointing T. W. Manson states: "It may well be that the woman in Bethany thought that she was anointing the Messianic King. Whether she thought so or not, the news that Jesus had been anointed in Bethany would be a serious matter if it leaked out; and once it came to the ears of the authorities, it could easily be a hanging matter" (*The Servant Messiah* [orig. ed.: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953; repr. ed.: Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977], pp. 84-85).

<sup>23</sup>See Tasker, pp. 144-145.

<sup>24</sup>If the story of the anointing (Mark 14:3-9) is passed over, the story of the plot by the authorities (14:1-2) is followed immediately by the deal they made with Judas Iscariot (14:10-11). Even though (surprisingly) Mark does

not name Judas as the leading critic of the woman, the placement of the anointing story between the two halves of the plot strongly suggests that this event was the moment of decision for Judas. Mark, already narrating events only two days before the Cross, provides his readers with a flashback to the anointing which took place several days before (see Dods, *John* [Greek], p. 805).

<sup>25</sup>John (in 12:6) deliberately used an ambiguous Greek word when he noted that Judas “carried” (Gr: *bas-tazō*) the contents of the community money bag, for this word was evidently a euphemism for “stole,” as when we say that someone “lifted” an item (Wead, “Double Meaning,” p. 108).

<sup>26</sup>Throughout John’s gospel, the identity of Jesus is vividly expressed in lofty terms and dramatic circumstances. He is known among the disciples as “Messiah” and “Son of God” almost immediately, and presents Himself with staggering claims to the wider community at large. “For John, therefore, it is not the Person of Jesus as represented in the title Son of God which is the great secret, but the Passion of Jesus. Its nature is not revealed beforehand even to His most intimate friends” (J. Coutts, “The Messianic Secret in St. John’s Gospel,” *Studia Evangelica*, vol. 3, ed. by F. L. Cross [Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1964], p. 54).

<sup>27</sup>Edwin Freed argues that “hosanna” is a Christian adaptation of the original Hebrew for “save now” in Ps. 118:25-26, transliterated so as to avoid overt emphasis on an appeal for deliverance or help, but to express joy and praise at the acclamation of the king of Israel (see “The Entry into Jerusalem in the Gospel of John,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 80 [1981]:329-338; also Freed, *Quotations*, pp. 120-121).

<sup>28</sup>See France, *Jesus and the O.T.*, p. 205.

<sup>29</sup>Andrew and Philip (not the Philip of Acts 6:5), as the only two disciples bearing Greek names (being also from the “Greek” city of Bethsaida in Galilee—John 1:44), were the disciples through whom the Hellenistic world-at-large first approached Jesus (Robert Grant, “The Fourth Gospel and the Church,” *Harvard Theological Review* 35 [1942], p. 115). The “Greeks” mentioned by John are probably not Hellenistic Jews, but either proselytes or pagan inquirers (see H. B. Kossen, “Who Were the Greeks of John XII 20?” pp. 97-110 in *Studies in John* [Novum Testamentum Supplement #24], [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970]; Bauer-Armdt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 252).

<sup>30</sup>Craig A. Evans has pointed out that since the Servant Song of Isa. 52-53 seems to provide the theological background of John’s presentation of Jesus in John 12:23-38, we may understand the “voice from heaven” in the light of the promise: “Therefore my people will know my name” (Isa. 52:6). See “The Voice from Heaven: A Note on John 12:28,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43 (1981): 405-408.

<sup>31</sup>The glorification of Jesus through his obedience unto death (John combines these thoughts under the single word *hupsoō*, “lift up”) will simultaneously accomplish divine judgment on the world and the defeat of the prince of this world—a deliverance strikingly similar to that described in Heb. 2:14-15 (see C. J. A. Hickling, “John and Hebrews: The Background of Hebrews 2:10-18,” *New Testament Studies* 29 [1983]:113-114).

<sup>32</sup>See Wead, “Double Meaning,” pp. 108-110.

<sup>33</sup>A third possible meaning is the world-wide gospel proclamation.

<sup>34</sup>Wead, “Double Meaning,” p. 110.

<sup>35</sup>“From the point of view of the evangelist, such belief is no different from the unbelief of others (vv. 37-41). Furthermore, such belief, like unbelief, is really a failure to love Jesus” (Fernando F. Segovia, “The Love and Hatred of Jesus and Johannine Sectarianism,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43 [1981]:258-272; hereafter cited as Segovia, “Love and Hatred”).

<sup>36</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 194-195. On the basis of the many editorial comments and three extended notes in the Fourth Gospel (3:16-21, 31-36; 12:37-43), Tenney concludes that the author of this gospel “...was himself a Jew by birth although he did not share the current national attitude to Jesus... and that he also knew how their thinking operated both before and after the resurrection” (Tenney, “Footnotes,” p. 362).

<sup>37</sup>“For In the word ‘report’ is indicative of the words of Jesus and the ‘arm’ of his deeds, both of which were rejected by the Jews” (Freed, *Quotations*, p. 122).





# **The Gospel of John: “That You May Have Life”**

## **Part VI**

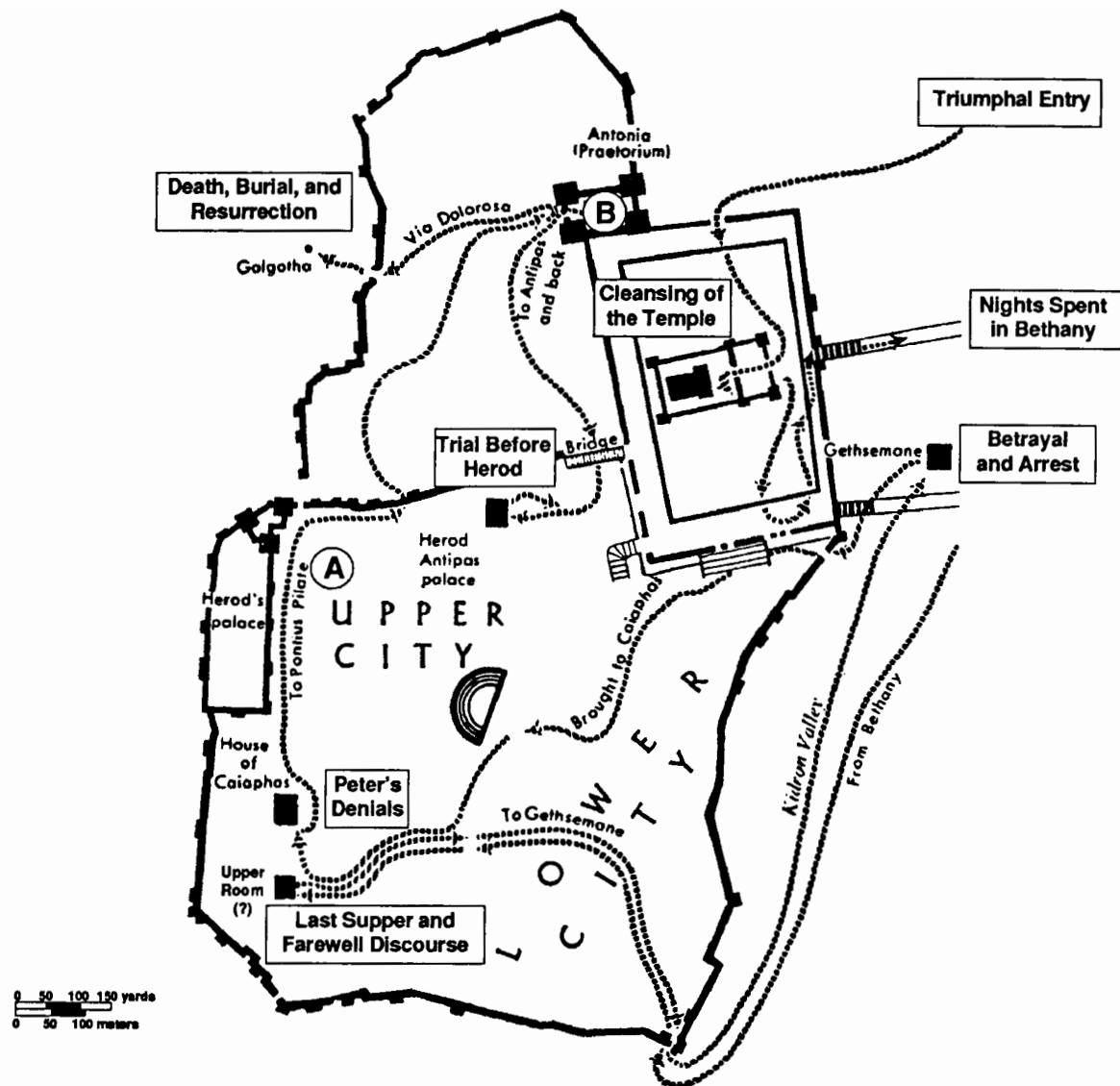
### ***The Strengthening of Belief***





# Lesson Nine

**John 13:1 - 15:27**



*"It was just before the Passover Feast..."* (John 13:1). All through the last week before the Cross, Jesus was constantly traversing the City of Jerusalem. In the twenty-four plus sleepless hours before He died, he probably walked more than twenty miles. The two possible sites for the Stone Pavement (Gabbatha) are: (A) in front of Herod's Palace, which served as Pilate's Jerusalem residence; (B) in the courtyard of the Fortress Antonia.

Source: Yohanan Aharoni and Michael Avi-Yonah, *The Macmillan Bible Atlas*, rev. ed. (NY: Macmillan Publ. Co., 1977), 149. Reprinted by permission.

# Rivalry: Obstacle to Unity

## —John 13:1-20<sup>1</sup>

- I. The parallel passages should be studied, especially Luke's account in connection with this event, which supplies the insight of the disciple's quarrel concerning greatness in the kingdom of God (read Matt. 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-30).

**NOTE:** Although all four gospel accounts agree that Jesus was crucified on a Friday (see Matt. 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:31, 42), a discrepancy seems to exist as to whether the Last Supper was a Passover meal. Mark 14:13 and Luke 22:8, 11, 13, 15 imply that it was, while John 18:28 and 19:14 seem to imply that it was not. Conservative students of Scripture should avoid any view that sets one biblical text against another, or charges any Bible writer with error.

Stein lists five ways to reconcile John's account of the Last Supper with those of the Synoptics: (1) If the Passover fell on a Sabbath that year, the Pharisees may have celebrated Passover a day earlier than the Sadducees, who celebrated at the regular time. The Synoptics used the Pharisaic reckoning, while John followed the Sadducean method. (2) A dispute as to the precise beginning of the Passover month (Nisan) in that particular year may have led the synoptic writers to follow the Pharisees in setting the Passover celebration a day earlier than that set by the Sadducees, followed by John. (3) To accommodate the great number of sacrifices that would be necessary for the Passover feast, the Galileans may have slaughtered all of their lambs at the temple a day earlier than the Judeans. The Synoptics reflect the Galilean practice, and John the

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Judean. (4) Jesus and His disciples may have followed a solar calendar (such as was used at Qumran), while other Jews used a lunar calendar. A one-day discrepancy between the two calendars could easily occur. The Synoptics reflect the solar and John the lunar. (5) Some Jews (including Jesus and the synoptic writers) may have reckoned each day from sunrise to sunrise, while others (including the Judean priests, as recorded in John) may have reckoned it from sunset to sunset. In that case, both Thursday night (as we would call it) and Friday until sunset could be regarded as the fourteenth of Nisan.

Concerning the above possibilities, Stein notes that “[s]ome appear to have a rather low probability of being correct.... [I]t is doubtful that any of the explanations has a particularly high degree of certainty.... [T]here are instances where a satisfactory explanation is not available. The truthfulness of the Bible remains even if its teachings cannot be understood or explained perfectly.”<sup>2</sup>

- II. The key statement is John 13:1, where John prepares the reader to understand the point of his account by stressing the *knowledge* of Jesus (read 1 Cor. 8).<sup>3</sup>
  - A. The stress *is not* upon the new covenant (as in the synoptic accounts).
  - B. However, the emphasis *is* upon Jesus’ personal love for “His own”; that is, His disciples (read John 1:11-12; 17:6).
  - C. John 13:1 literally means: “He loved them to the uttermost degree” (read John 15:13 and compare 1 John 3:16-18).
  - D. The ensuing “lesson of the towel” is a touching and dramatic exposition of this love.

- III. In its practical demonstration, Jesus' love was<sup>4</sup>
- A. Unquenched by evil (13:2)
    - 1. The deliberate action of Jesus is dramatized by the verbs "got up," "took off," and "wrapped...around his waist."<sup>5</sup>
    - 2. Jesus expressed His loving care for the disciples in spite of His full knowledge of His impending *betrayal* by Judas Iscariot's treachery and *denial* by Simon Peter's cowardice.
    - 3. Undaunted, Jesus loved them freely and spontaneously.
  - B. Given in full awareness of His own exalted position and power (13:3)
    - 1. He deliberately lowered Himself.
    - 2. He voluntarily and willingly gave Himself in service (and sacrifice)!
  - C. Impartial to social status (13:3)
    - 1. He was fully conscious of His divine origin and destiny.
    - 2. Yet, He humbled Himself to minister to those who were His natural inferiors.
    - 3. Love leaped the walls of class distinctions and the "Lord of Glory" ("Immanuel") became the servant of men (read Matt. 1:23; Luke 1:35; John 1:14; Rom. 8:3-4; 2 Cor. 8:9; Gal. 4:4-5; Phil. 2:5-8).

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**NOTE:** The disciples were ready to fuss and fight for the best seat, and for a throne of power and recognition, but they were not ready to fight for the towel of humility! Jesus apparently gave them time to volunteer for this menial task; but in their pride, not one of them would “rise from supper” and pick up the towel.<sup>6</sup>

D. Active through humility (13:4)

1. The disciples, rather than humiliate themselves, were reclining with dirty feet!
2. Jesus waited in vain for one of His disciples to take the place of a *servant*.
3. *Love* took the initiative and did the disagreeable work.

E. Cleansing in its effect (13:7-8)

1. Peter’s protest (“Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”)<sup>7</sup> called forth Jesus’ prophecy (“...later you will understand”) (13:7).
2. Peter’s “double negative” (“Never, no never” is the literal force of the Greek construction)<sup>8</sup> is met with Jesus’ firm affirmation (“Unless I wash you, you have no part with me”) (13:8).
3. Peter’s extremism (“Then, Lord, not just my feet but my head and my hands as well”) is patiently corrected by the *spiritual*, rather than physical, emphasis in Jesus’ reply (13:9-10).
4. Peter is thinking only of the moment, while Christ is thinking of His full and total humiliation: If Peter could not humbly accept

Christ's exemplary humiliation in washing his feet, how would he ever submit to the infinitely greater "washing" which Jesus would accomplish for him at Calvary?

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**NOTE:** Thus, the deeper spiritual meaning of this incident is understood in light of what would happen later:<sup>9</sup> His suffering humiliation on the cross would make men and women clean by the shedding of His blood. John characteristically recorded the teachings of Jesus in which spiritual realities were described in natural terms (spiritual rebirth, John 3; spiritual water, John 4; spiritual nourishment, John 6; and spiritual cleansing, John 13).

If this understanding of the teaching is incorrect, then He is speaking literally of physical cleanness, and is merely saying: "I see some dirt on Judas' face" ("You are not all clean"). This interpretation is absurd. Thank God that, because of the humiliation of Jesus, we all can have a "part with Him" as partakers of His redemption (13:8; read Titus 3:4-7; Heb. 3:14; Rom. 8:17).

**F. Unfailing and constant in its cleansing effect (13:9-10)**

1. There is no need of "bathing" the *entire* body when only a *part* of the body needs to be "washed."
2. To show the distinction which Jesus intended to convey in describing these two actions, John employs two Greek terms: "bathed" (Gr: *louō*)<sup>10</sup> and "wash" (Gr: *nīptō*).<sup>11</sup>

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3. The removal of *essential uncleanness* is accomplished “once for all” (justification) but the *incidental defilements* of day-by-day living are in need of continuous cleansing (sanctification) (read carefully 1 John 1:7; Heb. 12:14 and compare Rom. 3:1-5:20 with Rom. 6:1-8:17).
- G. A demonstration of spiritual truth (13:11)
  1. The uncleanness of Judas was not his feet, but his heart (read carefully Matt. 15:17-20).
  2. Judas was not spiritually clean: He needed his heart “cleansed by faith.” The sin of *unbelief* was his problem (read Acts 15:9 and compare Heb. 3:12; 10:26-29).
  3. The physical act of foot-washing set forth an *essential element* in Christ’s humiliation, as well as a *symbol* of that humiliation and an *example* of humility: Peter was to eventually learn this lesson (read Phil. 2:5-11; 1 Peter 2:21-25 and compare 1 Peter 5:5-6).
- IV. The summary of this section and “lesson from the towel” may be expressed in the following way:
  - A. Jesus and the disciples are presented in contrast.
    1. Jesus took the place of humility, while the disciples were self-seeking.
    2. Jesus set the example of service, while the disciples set an example of strife.



3. Jesus was self-abased, while the disciples were self-exalted.
- B. The “lesson of the towel” sums up the true and actual picture of the entire life and mission of Jesus (read Phil. 2:6-8; Luke 22:19-20).
- C. Jesus’ humility was a necessity for the removal of spiritual uncleanness.
- D. Jesus’ example with the towel is to teach His followers to devote their energy to
  1. Serving one another and not elevating self
  2. Exhorting each other toward daily sanctification and spiritual cleansing
- E. Jesus is “Master,” “Lord,” “Example,” “Bondslave,” and “Apostle” (13:14-15; read Phil. 2:7; 1 Peter 2:21-25; Heb. 3:1).
  1. For His *servants*, He has established forever the standard and measure of service.
  2. As His *messengers* (generic definition of “apostles”)<sup>12</sup> we are bound to follow in His footsteps (read carefully Rom. 1:1, 14-16; 15:1-7; 1 Cor. 9:19-23).
- V. The meaning and application of the lesson of the towel is clarified by Jesus Himself ( 13:12-17).
  - A. The Servant “returned to His place” as Host and Lord of the Passover Supper (13:12).
    1. The position of lordship is not incompatible with the practice of service (read John 13:1-5 and compare Phil. 2:5-8; Luke 22:24-27).

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2. The God revealed in Jesus Christ is a God who selflessly serves the unworthy.
- B. The Teacher's question emphasizes to His disciples the supreme importance of His lesson: Did they "get the point"? (13:12-17)
  1. This is an argument from the greater to the lesser: That which is fitting for the Teacher and Lord is also fitting for the disciple (13:13-14, 16).
  2. "Teacher" emphasizes Jesus' superiority of function in knowing and embodying the way of God. "Lord" stresses Jesus' superiority of nature and status in relationship to the disciples.
  3. The Teacher answers His own question to ensure that the point is not lost on the disciples: "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (13:15).
  4. The love of God in Christ is practical and active, not abstract and passive: It discerns the loved ones' needs, and meets them.
  5. Jesus said that disciples are blessed in the *doing* of His example, not in the admiration of it (13:17; read James 1:22-25).

**NOTE:** Three models of service can be observed at work in the world. First, an inferior serves a superior, which is an expression of oppression. Second, a superior serves an inferior, which often involves a subtle expression of domination. Third, service is

performed, not because the server is dominated or seeks subtly to dominate, but because of friendship, which is based on equality. The nature of the relationship renders irrelevant whatever inequality there may be.

To explain the meaning of His coming death, Jesus did not choose an act of service which would reinforce His superiority and their inferiority. He chose a duty even slaves could not be forced to do, but which disciples might readily perform for their master as an act of loving devotion. By washing the feet of His disciples, Jesus was sweeping away inequality and expressing his self-gift, not in terms of a redeemer's setting free unworthy slaves, but in terms of friendship. Peter was unwittingly trying to preserve the inequality which had to be transcended in order for genuine friendship to be established.<sup>13</sup>

- VI. Jesus distinguishes between true and false disciples in the application of His teaching (13:18-20 and compare John 6:60-71; 8:31-47 and compare John 15:16-20; 17:11-12).
- A. Jesus makes application from a Davidic psalm concerning the disloyalty of David's close friend, Ahithophel (13:18; read Ps. 41:9 and compare 2 Sam. 15:31-37; 16:15-17:23).
1. As Ahithophel had joined Absalom's rebellion against King David,<sup>14</sup> so now a close associate of the greater Son of David had turned against Him.
  2. Both Ahithophel and Judas were to end their lives in self-destruction by hanging.
  3. The sharing of bread was, from ancient

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- times, an act representing a bond of friendship and unity<sup>15</sup> (compare 1 Cor. 10:14-22).
- B. The prophetic word of Jesus is for the purpose of strengthening and encouraging true disciples (13:19; see John 2:22; 16:4).
  - C. Jesus encourages the true disciples with the assurance that they represent Him to the world, even as He represents the Father (13:20).

# Betrayal: Obstacle to Unity

## —John 13:21-30

- I. Jesus was “troubled” because of the disunity He had recognized earlier among the apostolic group (13:21; read again John 13:10).<sup>16</sup>
  - A. This shows the pain which Judas caused Jesus by his defection and progression in unbelief.
  - B. Jesus is said to have been “troubled in spirit” on two other occasions.
    - 1. At the tomb of His good friend Lazarus, Jesus experienced this emotional upheaval (read John 11:33).
    - 2. When the Greeks’ attempted to see Him, Jesus knew that “His hour” was at hand (read John 12:27).
  - C. All three of these instances applied to the *struggle with death* that was confronting Him (read Luke 12:50).
- II. Jesus’ announcement of the coming betrayal served as a warning to all the disciples (13:22-25).<sup>17</sup>
  - A. The question of the disciples was initially vocalized by Peter through “the beloved disciple”: “Lord, who is it?”
  - B. Jesus’ announcement was so explosive that the question could not be confined to only two disciples (see Mark 14:19).
- III. Jesus’ answer is both precise and merciful (13:26).

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- A. Only the author, who wrote of this incident in such detail, knew the answer.
- B. Judas now knows that Jesus has known of his duplicity and unbelief; he leaves immediately to plot against Jesus.
- IV. Judas' plight and progress in unbelief personify the antithesis of love: *selfishness* (13:28-30).
  - A. Jesus had long known him to be a *devil* (adversary)(read John 6:70-71).
  - B. John had earlier noted that he was a *thief* (read John 12:4-6).
  - C. The devil had previously placed the betrayal plot into his heart (read John 13:2).
  - D. Satan, having gained a foothold, now "entered into him" (read John 13:27).

# Glory, Preparation, and Destiny

## —John 13:31-14:11

- I. The following observations concern the *discourse in general* (13:31-16:33):<sup>18</sup>
- A. This is Jesus' farewell message and dialogue with His disciples.
  - B. The following passages show that Jesus is making a conscious effort to give the apostles final instruction.
    - 1. "All this I have spoken *while still with you*" (see John 14:25).
    - 2. "I have told you this so that...*your joy may be complete*" (see John 15:11).
    - 3. "All this I have told you *so that you will not go astray*" (see John 16:1).
    - 4. "I have told you this... *you will remember that I warned you*" (see John 16:4).
    - 5. "*Because* I have said these things, *you are filled with grief*" (see John 16:6).
    - 6. "I have told you these things, *so that in me you may have peace*" (see John 16:33).
  - C. The aforementioned passages state the *purpose, result, and method* of His farewell discourse.
    - 1. The *purpose* of the teaching was
      - a. That they might *possess joy* (see John 15:11)

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- b. That they might *be prepared* for “future shock” (see John 16:1)
    - c. That they might *remember His words* in the time of coming crisis (see John 16:4)
    - d. That they might *have peace within* when turmoil was without (see John 16:33)
  - 2. The *result* of the teaching was
    - a. A lack of comprehension (see John 16:17)
    - b. A sorrow that filled their hearts (see John 16:6)
  - 3. The *method* of the teaching was figurative language: “dark sayings” (see John 16:25, ASV).
- II. Concerning *readiness* for His departure, Jesus taught extensively (13:31-14:31).<sup>19</sup> Consider the following:
  - A. Christ’s discourse containing His announcement of glory is interrupted by Peter’s question and Jesus’ reply (read John 13:31-38).
  - B. Christ’s discourse concerning the disciples’ preparation and destiny is interrupted by Thomas’ question and the Lord’s reply (read John 14:1-7).
  - C. Philip’s question and reply prolongs the interruption of Christ’s discourse, but instruction concerning the “Comforter” is resumed (read John 14:8-21).



- D. The question of Judas (not Iscariot) leads into the conclusion of Christ's discourse concerning *readiness* (read John 14:22-31).
- III. Christ's announcement of glory and departure are recorded (13:31-35).<sup>20</sup>
  - A. The *key word* "glorify" (Gr: *doxazō*) means "to magnify or extol, to exalt to a position of honor"<sup>21</sup> (13:31-32).
  - B. The *critical time* for glorifying God had come.
    - 1. His death would be the means of glorifying God.
    - 2. This is implied by the words: "*Now* is the Son of Man glorified... and [God] will glorify him *at once*" (13:31-32).
  - C. The *crucial concept* is John's application of the word "glory" to the saving death of Jesus Christ and how it affects all true believers.

**NOTE:** Like the expression "lifted up," the word "glory" includes and also points beyond the cross, to the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. In John 7:39, the phrase "...Jesus had not yet been glorified" pointed to a definite historical event: the sending of the Spirit of God by the risen and ascended Christ. All other usages of the term "glory" (in its various forms) have a definite historical emphasis (read carefully John 1:14; 12:16, 23; 13:32; 17:1).

- D. The *central concern* in Christ's glorification is that the Father be magnified among men and Jesus exalted as Savior (read Acts 3:13).

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- E. The *seeming contradiction* (irony, paradox) is that the hour of Jesus' greatest humiliation would be the hour of His supreme glory! (Consider the many paradoxical teachings of Jesus regarding *discipleship* and *the kingdom of God*.)

**NOTE:** Jesus' announcement regarding His departure left His disciples unprepared for this viewpoint of death; that is, that His death was both necessary and also a means to greater glory. He had not misinformed them nor left them uninformed concerning this matter (read carefully John 2:20-21; 3:14; 6:51; 10:11).

- F. The *calculated purpose* of this farewell discourse is a final attempt to prepare His disciples for the effect which the crucifixion would inevitably have upon them.

**NOTE:** He must go alone on this venture, as the forerunner, or pioneer of this "walk of faith." The Shepherd must prepare the way for the sheep; then later, after preparations are made, the sheep can follow (see John 13:36-38; 21:18-19). However, the disciples must remain united after His departure. This self-seeking band of disciples needed something to keep them together. Disunited, they would fall easy prey to opposition and thwart His consequent plans (read carefully Heb. 2:8; 5:8-9; 6:19-20; 12:1-2; 13:20-21).

- G. The *comprehensive commandment* was needed, that they "love one another," even as He loved them.
1. This mutual ("one another")<sup>22</sup> love would be

the permanent badge of discipleship before the watching world.

2. It would serve as the basis and foundation of unity among them (1 Peter 1:7).

**NOTE:** The newness of the commandment to “love” was not in its expression as such, for this command was expressed in the law of Moses (see Lev. 19:18). Rather, it is new in its loftiness and clarity, because the example of Jesus has taken it to new heights (read 1 John 3:16, 18; 4:11).

IV. Peter’s question and Jesus’ reply are recounted (13:36-38).<sup>23</sup>

- A. Peter’s question (“Lord, where are you going?”) implied the greatest questions of humanity: “Where *am* I going? Is there anything after death?” These are the questions of *human destiny*, as alluded to by Jesus’ answer (“...you will follow later”) (13:36).
- B. Peter’s response to this postponement from Jesus (“Lord, why can’t I follow you now?”) reveals a “communication gap” between the Teacher and the disciple: To Jesus, “now” meant “the present period,” whereas Peter’s “now” meant “this very moment” (13:37).
- C. Peter’s impulsive spirit moved him to declare to Jesus: “I will lay down my life for you.”

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- D. Jesus' foreknowledge is seen in His prophecy of Peter's denial: The remaining hours of the night would be more terrible than Peter could have dreamed! (See also Luke 22:54-62; Mark 14:30.)
- E. Peter was known better by the Master than by himself!
- V. Christ's discourse is continued on the subject of preparation and destiny (14:1-4).<sup>24</sup>
  - A. *Faith* is the cure for fear: The first counsel (love) was to correct *disunity*. This command to believe was an exhortation to correct a troubled, *doubtful heart* (14:1).
  - B. *Faith* in a personal God, as revealed in Christ, is the correct approach in regard to the "fearful" question of human destiny: If a personal God exists (and He does) who is Judge and Redeemer (and He is), there must be something beyond the grave for man. *The expectant hope of immortality is grounded and founded upon a personal relationship with a living God* (read Matt. 22:31-32; John 11:24-25; 2 Tim. 1:10).
  - C. "Faith in God" is something which Jesus' disciples, being Jews, already had. He now asks them to have a *personal* faith in Him!

**NOTE:** By stating, in such terms, His commandment to "believe," Jesus connects Himself with God, asks them to believe in Him equally with God, and asks them to believe in Him against all

apparent odds! He was doomed to death, and He told them so. Yet, He had “the audacity” to demand that they make Him an object of faith! (Read carefully Deut. 6:4 and compare Heb. 6:1; 11:6; 12:1-2.)

- D. Jesus made Himself the key to their destiny question: He clearly stated that their future depended on His work which was about to be fulfilled. (He promised to prepare a place for them, and He promised to return and claim them.)
- E. Jesus referred to the future “place” for His disciples as having many “mansions” (Gr: *monē*) meaning “staying; tarrying; dwelling (-place), room, abode”<sup>25</sup> (14:1-2).

**NOTE:** Jesus sets forth the idea that in the Father’s house, there is room for all. Jesus had to prepare (“make ready”) the place for the future destination of His disciples; hence, the necessity of Him being “lifted up” (read again John 8:34-36).

- F. Two thoughts stand out in Jesus’ statement concerning destiny: a *place* (the Father’s house), and a *person* (the Lord Jesus Himself), whose presence makes the place glorious!
- G. Jesus’ statement secures the expectation of eternal fellowship with Him and with all the saved in the presence of the Father: He never would have promised a place for His disciples had He been unable to prepare such a place.

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- H. His absolute confidence of His arrival at the Father's house is expressed in His three phrases: "I am going there to prepare a place"; "I will come back"; and "[I will] take you to be with me."

**NOTE:** Belief in Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, was their key to hope and security!

- VI. Thomas' question and Jesus' reply are narrated (14:5-7).<sup>26</sup>
- A. The question of Thomas contradicted Jesus' last statement: His faulty reasoning was based upon his skepticism ("...Lord, *we don't know* where you are going, *so how can we know* the way?") (14:5).
1. His problem is like all expressions of human agnosticism.
  2. It is answered by an affirmation of faith, not by pessimistic doubt.
- B. The reply of Jesus ("I *am* the way and the truth and the life") gives Thomas a *positive declaration* upon which to base his thinking.
1. Jesus made one of the greatest philosophical statements of all time.
  2. He did not say that He *knew* the way (although He did).
  3. He did not say He *taught* about the truth and life (although He did).

4. He did not make Himself the exponent of some new *system*.
5. Rather, He declared *Himself* to be the final key to all mysteries.

**NOTE:** The center of Christianity is not a dead system (although Christianity does deal with doctrinal content), but a living Person! (See Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21; 2 Tim. 1:12.)

C. Jesus is "*the Way*."

1. Because of God's future designs for man, there seems to be an unbridgeable gap between God and man; Thomas recognized this and despaired.
2. Jesus is the Way by whom man is brought back to God—man's true fulfillment and divinely intended destiny (read carefully Heb. 10:20; Isa. 35:8-10 and compare Acts 4:12; 9:2; 19:23; 22:4, 7-8; 24:14, 22).

D. Jesus is "*the Truth*": Truth is the rarest commodity in the world.

**NOTE:** The quest for "truth" makes up a large portion of the content of human history. All the philosophers have sought for it. No one mind has been great enough to grasp it, and no one has been righteous enough to receive it by meritorious conduct. "Truth" is both reality and morality expressed in a Person: Jesus Christ! "Truth" is unchanging and consistent, because He is constantly the same.<sup>27</sup> Jesus Christ is the perfect expression of "truth," because He is the perfect expression of God (read Heb. 13:8; Mal. 3:6;

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John 8:58 and compare 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 4:21; John 1:17; 8:32-47). Man fails to find "truth" because he refuses to submit to Jesus (carefully consider 1 Cor. 1:18-2:8; Col. 2:1-23).

**E. Jesus is "*the Life*."**

1. Throughout the gospel of John, "life" (Gr: *zoē*) is described as the principle of spiritual vitality that originates with God and lifts men out of sin and into fellowship with Himself.
2. Jesus is the Source and Giver of all life (read John 1:4; 3:16-17; 6:68; 10:10; 11:25).

**NOTE:** Christianity is not a mere system of philosophy, ritual, or legalism. It is the impartation of a divine vitality (read John 14:23 and compare Col. 1:27; 2 Peter 1:4).

**F. Jesus is the only way to the Father, which excludes all other possible routes to fellowship and union with God (14:6),<sup>28</sup> including**

1. Legalism
2. Human philosophy and religious tradition
3. Moral attainment
4. Mere assent to certain doctrine
5. Upward evolution
6. Any other means (read Matt. 11:28-30; Acts 4:12)



**NOTE:** Man is completely dependent upon Christ for “truth,” the “life,” and “the way.” Without the Way, there is no going! Devoid of the Truth, there is no knowing! Apart from the Life, there is no living! Not one of many offered systems of thought has been able to bridge the gap between God and man; but the proven and declared God-Man embodies the union of the human and the divine (read again John 1:51).

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- VII. Philip’s request is reported: “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us” (14:8).<sup>29</sup>
- A. Philip was a “practical” man.
1. He was at a loss when Jesus stopped speaking materially and began to speak spiritually!
  2. As a “down-to-earth pragmatist,” Philip was baffled by intangible realities (read John 6:5-7).
- B. Philip wanted to see the Father as plainly as he could see Jesus (read Job 23:3; Exod. 33:17-23; John 1:17-18).
- C. “The human longing for a tangible God, coupled with a complete rejection of the real God whose demands of righteousness are unwelcome, lies at the root of all idolatry.”<sup>30</sup>
1. Wood and stone can never represent God, but flesh and blood may incarnate Him!
  2. The Son has expressed the Person of God in human flesh.

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3. Where man could not transcend, God has condescended (read Rom. 1:18-23 and compare John 1:1-3, 14; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:1-3; Col. 2:9; Phil. 2:6-9).

VIII. Jesus' reply is presented: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (14:9-11).

- A. Jesus claimed absolute unity with the Father (read again John 10:30).

*NOTE:* Philip's certainty of the Father's existence was assured by the actual living Christ standing before Him! Was Jesus real? So was the Father (read carefully 2 Cor. 4:6).

- B. Jesus asks Philip to believe because of the undeniable impact of His personality and on the basis of objective evidence: "the words I say" (14:10; read also John 3:34; 7:46; Matt. 7:28).
- C. He also adds the testimony of His works which were performed for the purpose of glorifying the "Father in the Son."

*NOTE:* "Greater works" (that is, quantitatively greater)<sup>31</sup> would be done by His disciples, which would witness to the continual presence of the Father and would demonstrate the unfailing truthfulness of the Son (read John 14:12-14).

# The Coming of the Counselor

## —John 14:12-31

- I. The continuation of God's work (in Christ) will be based on the disciples' love for Christ (14:12-15).<sup>32</sup>
  - A. *Love for Him* was to be the new motive in their lives.
  - B. *Obedience to Him* was to be the new standard for their activity (see John 14:15; 1 Cor. 13:1-3; 16:14; 2 Cor. 5:14; Gal. 5:6).
  - C. *Answer to prayer* was to be the new power for their ministry.

**NOTE:** Some have claimed that God will grant any request for those who have enough faith. For example, Kenneth Hagin's popular sermon, "How to Write Your Own Ticket With God," suggests four steps—say it, do it, receive it, and tell it—which will enable "anybody anywhere" to "always receive what he wants" from God.<sup>33</sup>

Neither this passage, nor any other offers disciples a blank check from God, for "the words 'in my name' define the framework of prayer. Asking 'in my name' means to be concerned for his concerns, to glorify the Father by making him known and making his life available to those who believe."<sup>34</sup>

- II. They would not be left as "orphans": Jesus would send the "Counselor" (14:16-17).
  - A. "Counselor" (Gr: *paraklētos*) means "one who appears on another's behalf; mediator; intercessor; helper."<sup>35</sup>

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**B. He is the Holy Spirit of Truth.**

**NOTE:** There are several assertions in this section concerning the Counselor (14:16-17, 29). He is sent from the presence of God to the disciples in response to the prayer of Jesus. Jesus refers to Him as "Another" (Gr: *allos*), meaning "another of the same kind [as Jesus; see 1 John 2:1]."<sup>36</sup> Although He was "with" (Gr: *para*, with object in dative—v. 17a), meaning "near, beside,"<sup>37</sup> the disciples in the person of Jesus, soon He would dwell permanently "with" them (Gr: *meta*, with object in genitive—v. 16), meaning "'among,' 'in company with' someone, 'in the midst' of them; of close association."<sup>38</sup> Also called "the Spirit of truth," He is unknown to the "world" but will soon dwell "in" (Gr: *en*, with object in dative—v. 17b, "to indicate the state of being filled w[ith] or gripped by someth[ing]: 'in'"<sup>39</sup>) the believers. He would vitalize their memories and teach them "all things" necessary for the continuation of His ministry through them.<sup>40</sup> The Holy Spirit is the token of difference between the believer and the unbeliever (read carefully John 7:37-39 and compare Rom. 8:9; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Gal. 4:6-7; Eph. 1:12-14).

**III. Jesus' promise of return has three possible meanings.**

- A. The appearance after the resurrection
- B. The coming of Jesus (as "another" Counselor) in the person of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost
- C. The second coming of Christ (on "the last day")

**NOTE:** Consider the following logical eliminations and the remaining probable deduction: The "second coming" theory is least probable, for Jesus is discussing further contact with His disciples, not His final coming. The presence of Jesus through the Holy Spirit

depended upon His physical departure into heaven. The promise that the disciples will rejoice to behold Him alive (14:19) causes a confusion of terms when this is applied to the coming of the Spirit.

This leaves the possibility that Jesus meant that they would see Him personally after His resurrection. By comparing John 14:18-19 with John 16:16-22, 28-29, it is evident that He had in mind His post-resurrection appearances to His disciples (see John 20:1-21:25).

IV. The question of Judas (not Iscariot) and the reply of Jesus are described (14:22-24).<sup>41</sup>

**NOTE:** This “Judas” is called “son of James” by Luke and is usually identified with the disciple “Thaddaeus” (see Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13 and compare Mark 3:18; Matt. 10:3).<sup>42</sup>

- A. *Judas’ question* was concerned with “revealing”: “Why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?” (14:22; read also John 14:16-17, 25-26).
- B. *Jesus’ reply* emphasized love as the condition of the manifestation of the Father and the Son: The attitude of the person is the determining factor in Jesus’ self-disclosure and spiritual indwelling (14:23-24; see also 1 John 3:24).

**NOTE:** The manifestation of Jesus to “the world” was impossible because of its hatred of the light. Those who refuse to see must, of necessity, remain blind. However, He could deal with the disciples on the basis of love. Love engenders obedience, and obedience

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makes possible progressive “revelation” or manifestation. Lack of love produces disobedience, and to disobey the Son is to disobey the Father (read carefully John 7:17 and compare John 12:48-50; 14:25-26).

- V. Christ resumes His discourse concerning their preparation for His departure (14:25-28).<sup>43</sup>
  - A. The active Agent in revelation is the Counselor, the Holy Spirit. Jesus outlines the work of the Spirit in making the revelation a reality (14:25-26).
  - B. The Spirit has authority, because He is an adequate and accredited Representative of Jesus (14:26).
    - 1. As a capable Teacher and Interpreter, the Spirit also guarantees *clarity* of revelation.
    - 2. He assures the disciples of the *continuity* of revelation (read John 16:13-15).
  - C. Jesus, the “Prince of Peace,” defines and bestows *His* “peace.”
    - 1. It is not *freedom from* toil and suffering (He still had Gethsemane and the Cross before Him).
    - 2. It is *tranquility and confidence* amid the storms of life (14:27-28; see Isa. 9:6; Micah 5:5 and compare Mark 14:33; John 12:27).

**NOTE:** True and lasting peace (Gr: *eirēnē*, behind which is the Heb: *shalōm*, meaning “harmony, welfare, health,”)<sup>44</sup> is to be realized only in the Person of Jesus Christ. To be “in Christ” is to be at

“peace with God,” which results in enjoying the “peace of God” (read carefully John 16:33; Rom. 5:1 and compare Phil. 4:6-7). This is an eternal possession which a worldly person, place, or thing could never give, and so cannot take away. Worldly peace is characterized by compromise, complacency, and temporal, external circumstances. The peace of Jesus is characterized by outgoing concern for others, commitment to doing the will of God, and internal confidence and tranquility amid turmoils and crises (read carefully Col. 3:15; Rom. 8:35-39; John 17:15).

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3. It is a peace unlike any which the world can give.<sup>45</sup>
  - a. The world’s peace is shallow, His peace penetrates to the soul.
  - b. The world’s peace is temporary, His peace is eternal.
  - c. The world’s peace is static, His peace is dynamic.<sup>46</sup>
- VI. Jesus’ death is summarized in the conclusion of this section in terms of its effect on various relationships (14:29-31).<sup>47</sup>
  - A. Its effect on the *disciples* was to be a severe *crisis of belief* (14:29).
  - B. Its effect on *Satan* (“the prince of this world”)<sup>48</sup> was that of a defiant “farewell” from “the Prince of Peace.”
    1. Jesus crossed over into the “enemy territory” of death.
    2. He emerged *free and victorious!*

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3. Satan had no claim on Him (read Acts 2:24-32; Rev. 1:17-18).

C. Its effect on the *world* was to provide the clearest possible demonstration of His love to the Father.

**NOTE:** The attitude of the unbelieving world was exactly the opposite of the mind of Jesus concerning the meaning of the Cross. Men saw it as evidence of divine displeasure, and proof that Jesus was "stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted" (see Isa. 53:4). To Jesus, however, it was the ultimate display of His love for the Father and faithfulness to His will (see Mark 15:29-32 and compare Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 5:7-9).

D. The readiness of Jesus to do the will of God is expressed even as Judas Iscariot is making his "deal." Jesus has other words yet to speak to His disciples and to His Father.



# Relationships of the Disciples

## —John 15

**NOTE:** “Come now; let us leave” (14:31b) suggests that the following conversation may have taken place as Jesus and His disciples were walking from the house of the Last Supper to Gethsemane.<sup>49</sup> They might have stopped in the courtyard of the house which could well have had vines,<sup>50</sup> or they might have gone to the temple, which had above its entrance a golden vine, continually growing from added golden tendrils contributed by worshippers.<sup>51</sup> Their walk would necessarily take them across the Kidron Valley, the western slopes of which were terraced and planted with grapevines.<sup>52</sup> Jesus may have used the physical objects in view to bring spiritual truths more clearly to his disciples.

If they did not leave the upper room at this point in the narrative, the wine of the Supper<sup>53</sup> or even the bodies of the disciples themselves as they “clustered” around Jesus<sup>54</sup> may have stimulated a Mind self-trained to see such analogies between the physical and the spiritual worlds.

- I. Their *relationship to Jesus* is described (15:1-11).<sup>55</sup>
  - A. This is the first and foremost relationship to be maintained by the disciples: The figure of the *vineyard* had been descriptive of God’s relationship to His people from ancient times (see Ps. 80:8-16; Isa. 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21; Ezek. 17; 19:10-14 and compare Matt. 21:33-46; Luke 13:6-9).
  - B. There are several symbols being used.
    1. Jesus is the True (genuine, real) Stock.

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2. The Father is the Husbandman, the Expert.
3. Disciples are the fruitbearing branches.

**NOTE:** The means of accomplishing growth and fruitfulness is by contact with the Vine (15:4, 7, 9-10). Productivity is realized as a progression (“...every branch that does bear fruit he trims clean so that it will be even more fruitful.... If a man remains in me [Vine] and I in him [branch], he will bear much fruit”) (15:2, 5).

- C. The “fruit bearing” of which Jesus speaks is the growth of *love*<sup>56</sup> which results in *joy* (15:11-12; read Gal. 5:22; John 13:34-35).
  1. The qualities of love are seen in the disciples’ lives in their
    - a. Conduct towards others
    - b. Sense of inner joy and peace
    - c. Spontaneous obedience to Christ
    - d. Prayers to the Father
  2. The “joy” that springs from love is convincing proof of the reality of the life of God in the spirit of a man (consider Matt. 7:16).
- II. Their relationship to one another is defined (15:12-17).<sup>57</sup>
  - A. The commandment is: “Love one another” (15:12).
  - B. The standard is: “As I have loved you” (15:12-14; read again John 13:34-35).
    1. Jesus’ love is *sacrificial* (15:13).
      - a. Men may (on rare occasions) give their

- lives for the welfare of their *friends*.
- b. Jesus gave His life for the salvation of His *enemies* (read carefully Rom. 5:8).
- 2. Jesus' love is *intimate* (15:14-15).
  - a. His disciples are personal "friends," not mere "slaves."
  - b. He shared with them the secrets of heaven and His Father's counsel; a master does not do this with a servant!
- 3. Jesus' love is *initiating* (15:16).
  - a. He did not wait to be invited.
  - b. He was outgoing; He chose them!
- 4. Jesus' love is *productive*: This love proved to be the secret of the disciples' effectiveness (15:16; read 2 Cor. 5:14 and consider the entire Book of Acts).

**NOTE:** They made convincing witnesses for Jesus because of the love of (and for) Jesus which they possessed. They bore this "much fruit" of love and "turned the world upside down" (read Acts 17:6, ASV).

III. Their *relationship to the world* is discussed (15:18-27).<sup>58</sup>

- A. The world is hostile toward the disciples.<sup>59</sup>
  - 1. Hostility is seen by the sharp line that separates the disciples of Christ and the world.
  - 2. "The world" is made up of the mass of humanity.

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3. Jesus did not want the apostles to become disillusioned concerning this relationship. They were to *expect it* (read also Matt. 5:10-12).

B. The causes of the world's hatred toward the Lord's disciples include

1. The difference in their *natures* (15:18-20)
  - a. This is the enmity of the carnal mind against God (who is Spirit) and against His spiritual kingdom.
  - b. If the world hates their Master (and it does), it will hate those who serve and imitate Him (read 1 John 2:15-17; 3:1).

**NOTE:** The very fact that Jesus has "chosen them out of this world" places disciples into a different category than others (see Col. 1:13-14; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1). The "natural" tendency is to dislike any individual who differs from the "average" type ("average" meaning those who share our opinions, habits, tastes, and culture). Christians have a new nature, a new aim, purpose and goal. They are not of this world, nor are they understood by the world. Indeed, the world *hates them* (read carefully 2 Cor. 5:17; John 17:16; James 4:4; 1 Peter 4:12-14 and compare Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 4:16-24).

2. The difference in their *Masters* (15:20-21)
  - a. The inevitable consequence of following Christ and His way is persecution (read 2 Tim. 3:12).

- b. The real source of the affliction is the “god of this world” (Satan) (read 2 Cor. 4:3-4; 10:3-5; Eph. 6:11-12, 16; Rev. 12:7-17).
- 3. The lack of difference in their *location* (15:21-25)
  - a. The arena of spiritual conflict is “in the world” (John 17:15; 1 Cor. 5:9-10).
  - b. This is where Jesus has exposed the world’s sin.

**NOTE:** The impact of Jesus upon the world was twofold: First, He had spoken, leaving them with no excuse for their continuation in sin (15:22). Second, He had worked signs, removing all possible justification for the specific sin of unbelief (15:24). The very presence of Jesus made the world’s sin deliberate and inexcusable.

Ignorance could not vindicate guilt, for the world was consciously choosing darkness over light (read John 3:19).

- 4. The *close identification and relationship* among the objects of their hatred
  - a. In hating and rejecting Christ, the world hated the Father (read John 15:21, 23-24).
  - b. They would hate the Lord’s disciples for this very same reason (“for His name’s sake”) (read Matt. 10:16-42).

**NOTE:** The Gospel of John characteristically speaks of “their law,” emphasizing the pride with which the Jews regarded the law

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of Moses, even as they rejected the One who embodied and fulfilled it (read John 7:19, 51; 8:17; 10:34; 15:25; 19:7 and compare Rom. 2:17-29; 2 Cor. 3:1-18). At this point, Jesus quoted a Davidic psalm in which a godly man pleads with God for judgment upon his ungodly enemies, and for vindication of his righteous life. In this psalm, it was the haters of God who hated the godly man. In applying this passage to Himself, Jesus again stresses that He is the perfect revelation of the Father. Those who hate Jesus also hate God, His heavenly Father (15:25; read Ps. 35:19).

- C. Nevertheless, the disciples are to bear witness concerning Christ in the face of the world's hatred (15:26-27).
1. The Spirit would bear witness through the ministry of Christ's apostles and prophets (read carefully Acts 1:1-8; 2:1-47; 5:32; Eph. 3:1-12; 1 Peter 1:10-12).
  2. The apostles and all believers were to bear witness to that which God has done in Christ (see Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-47; Mark 16:15-20; compare Heb. 2:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:14-21; 12:12).
  3. Here, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the world meets its living refutation; their hatred is contrasted with God's love!

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See Jim McGuiggan, *The God of the Towel* (Lubbock, TX: Montex Publ. Co., 1984), pp. 70-78; hereafter cited as McGuiggan, *God of the Towel*.

<sup>2</sup>Stein, *Difficult Passages*, pp. 54-58. Hoehner reveals flaws in several of the above explanations and makes a detailed (though not convincing) argument for Stein's explanation #5 (*Chronological Aspects*, pp. 76-93). Gleason Archer takes a completely different approach, suggesting that the animals about to be sacrificed were not those used for the private celebrations of the Passover meal, but those offered for the whole nation, in accordance with Num. 28:17-23. Archer fails, however, to explain how this can be harmonized with John 18:28 (*Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1982], pp. 375-376). Perhaps the words "eat the Passover" could be taken to refer to all the meals of the week-long festival. According to Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, "Passover" (Gr: *paskha*) refers to "[a] Jewish festival, celebrated on the 14th of the month Nisan, and continuing into the early hours of the 15th.... followed immediately by the Feast of Unleavened Bread... on the 15th to 21st. Popular usage merged the two festivals and treated them as a unity, as they were for practical purposes" (p. 633).

<sup>3</sup>The points under section II are from Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 197.

<sup>4</sup>The points under section III are from Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 198-201.

<sup>5</sup>Sandra M. Schneiders points out that Jesus' preparations are elaborate—almost priestly ("The Foot Washing

[John 13:1-20]: An Experiment in Hermeneutics," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43 [1981]:81; hereafter cited as Schneiders, "Foot Washing").

<sup>6</sup>"There were thirteen men in the upper room that night. Twelve lords and one servant" (McGuiggan, *God of the Towel*, p. 71).

<sup>7</sup>Emphatic placement of the pronouns indicates the emphasis should be, "Lord, do *you* wash *my* feet?" (Schneiders, "Foot Washing," p. 83).

<sup>8</sup>Robertson, *Grammar*, pp. 1174-1175.

<sup>9</sup>"Both the action over the bread and wine [in the synoptic gospels] and the foot washing [in John's Gospel] serve as prophetic gestures revealing the true significance of the death of Jesus...." (Schneiders, "Foot Washing," p. 81, n. 22).

<sup>10</sup>See Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, pp. 480-481.

<sup>11</sup>See Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 540. "Νίπτειν and λουεῖν... express the washing of living persons; although with this difference, that νίπτειν... and νίφασθαι, almost always express the washing of a part of the body... ; while λουεῖν, which is not so much 'to wash' as 'to bathe,' and λουεσθαι, 'to bathe oneself,' implies always, not the washing of a part of the body, but of the whole" (Richard C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, [repr. ed.: Grand Rapids: Associated Publishers and Authors, n.d.], p. 151; hereafter cited as Trench, *Synonyms*. Trench discusses this passage on pp. 152-153).

<sup>12</sup>See Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 99 (def. 1).

<sup>13</sup>See Schneiders, "Foot Washing," pp. 84-87.



<sup>14</sup>That Ahithophel was the grandfather of Bathsheba (see 2 Sam. 11:3; 23:34) helps to explain—if not justify—both his treachery and his offer to lead personally the military attack against David (see 2 Sam. 17:1-4). It should not need to be said that Judas had no such grievance against the Son of David.

<sup>15</sup>“[A]ccording to Pythagoras the *εἰς ἄρτον* [one bread]... has served as a symbol of the union of the *φίλοι* [friends] from time immemorial to the present. Partaking of the same bread and wine... [was] proof of the most intimate communion” (“*ἄρτος*,” Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 110).

<sup>16</sup>The following points under section I are from Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 201.

<sup>17</sup>See Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 202 for most of the points under sections II, III, and IV.

<sup>18</sup>The following points under section I are from Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 203-204.

<sup>19</sup>All of the following is laid out in tabular form in Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 206-208.

<sup>20</sup>The following points under section III are from Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 210-211.

<sup>21</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 210; compare Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 204.

<sup>22</sup>For a more extensive study of “one another” relationships within the Body of Christ, see Gene Getz, *Building Up One Another* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1976); L. Deason, *The Life of Christ We Share: Members One of Another* (Clifton Park, NY: Life Communications, 1988).

<sup>23</sup>The following points under section IV are from Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 211-212.

<sup>24</sup>The following points under section V are from Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 212-214.

<sup>25</sup>Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 527.

<sup>26</sup>The following points under section VI are from Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 214-216.

<sup>27</sup>The background to understanding ‘truth,’ as used throughout John’s Gospel, is Judaism, particularly indebted to ideas developed in the first century, especially those of Qumran. In this understanding, “the Torah is present in written form in the books of the Old Testament, but it requires further explanation and contemporary application.... The evangelist uses the term *ἀληθεια* to interpret the event of revelation in Jesus Christ. Everything God revealed in the Old Testament, i.e., for the Jews of his time, in the Torah, is transcended and brought to final fulfillment by the revelation of the Son, who is ‘grace and truth’ (1:17)” (Schnackenburg, 2:236).

<sup>28</sup>No other expression could make Jesus’ role as sole Redeemer for all humanity more emphatic. In Him is full salvation; apart from Him, none (see Eph. 1:3; Acts 4:12). In other words, contrary to modern popular thinking, no such thing exists as multiple ways to God, multiple (contradicting) truths about Him, and multiple sources of eternal life. Not all, in fact, only a few, will be saved (see Matt. 7:13-14 and passages about “the remnant” from Genesis to Revelation). Universalism, as taught by John A. T. Robinson, among many others, does not take seriously either of the biblical doctrines of man’s freedom or of eternal punishment (see Moody, *Word of Truth*, pp. 513-514).

<sup>29</sup>The points under sections VII and VIII are from Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 216-219.

<sup>30</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 217.

<sup>31</sup>“[H]is disciples are to bring the revelation and life of God to an ever-broadening circle. Thus these ‘greater



works' have in view the 'other sheep' of 10:16, those 'who believe in me through their word' (17:20). That this is John's understanding is made certain by the purpose clause in verse 13, 'so that the Father might be glorified in the Son' (Gordon D. Fee, "John 14:8-17," *Interpretation* 43, 2 [1989]:173; hereafter cited as Fee, "John 14:8-17").

<sup>32</sup>The points under sections I, II, and III are from Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 219-221.

<sup>33</sup>Kenneth Hagin, *Exceedingly Growing Faith* (Tulsa, OK: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 1983), p. 76, quoted in Bruce Barron, *The Health and Wealth Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), p. 105. Barron points out (p. 105) that Hagin does define 'anything' as "anything that the Bible promises you now," but charges that "even if unintentional, Hagin's message is capable of causing readers to treat God as giver only and not as Lord of their lives."

<sup>34</sup>Fee, "John 14:8-17," p. 173.

<sup>35</sup>Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 618.

<sup>36</sup>Robertson, *Grammar*, p. 746.

<sup>37</sup>Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 610. Compare E. H. Riesenfeld's definition: "'beside,' 'by,' of the intellectual sphere, or the sphere of influence of a person or group" ("παρά," 5:731 in *TDNT*).

<sup>38</sup>Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 508. Compare Walter Grundmann's description: "the... sense of 'to be or act in fellowship with...' usually takes a plur[al] (one is always among many)" ("σύν - μετά, κ. τ. λ.," 7:772 in *TDNT*). It is important to note that little, if any, distinction should be made between the meaning of *para* and that of *meta* in vv. 16 and 17; both mean "with" or "among" (see M. J. Harris, "Appendix: Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament," 3:1176 in *New International Dic-*

*tionary of New Testament Theology*, 3 vols., ed. by Colin Brown, et al. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1978]; hereafter cited as Harris, "Prepositions and Theology"). Such stylistic variation is known to be a feature of the author of this Gospel (see Morris, "Variation—A Feature of the Johannine Style," *Studies*, pp. 293-319, esp. p. 317).

<sup>39</sup>Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 259 (definition 5-a). Despite the warning against making *every* variation significant, we must also avoid the opposite danger, that of ignoring probable distinctions (see Harris, "Prepositions and Theology," p. 1176). In this case, the use of the preposition *en* (with object in dative) seems to mark a change between the relationship the Spirit has had with the disciples in the past ("with," expressed by either *para* [with object in dative] or *meta* [with object in genitive]) and the new relationship Jesus foresees in the future ("in," expressed by *en* [with object in dative]).

<sup>40</sup>This promise, like many in chapters 14-16, was made to the apostles as the uniquely qualified and specially commissioned leaders of the new community of faith Jesus was establishing. Because of the exceptional nature of this discourse (commencement address of the school of apostleship), twentieth-century Christians should be very cautious about laying claim to these promises. This "rule of thumb" should be helpful: any promise which would seem to help the apostles in a supernatural way to fulfill their function of leading the early church is probably uniquely for them (see 2 Cor. 12:12), while those promises of a more general or ethical nature probably have application for all Christians.

<sup>41</sup>The points under section IV are from Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 221-222.

<sup>42</sup>For more information and insight on Judas Thaddeus, see Barclay, *The Master's Men*, pp. 120-124. According to legend, Thaddeus took the gospel to Edessa and later was killed with arrows at Ararat.

<sup>43</sup>The points under section V are from Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 222-225.

<sup>44</sup>Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 227. Compare I. J. Hesselink's comment: "[W]hat Christ promises his disciples here is an assurance, a tranquility, an inner strength which they will enjoy from the resurrection onwards, first in his postresurrection appearances and then more fully after Pentecost" ("John 14:23-29," *Interpretation* 43, 2 [1989]:175; hereafter cited as Hesselink, "John 14:23-29").

<sup>45</sup>This is the meaning of the text, rather than "It is given by Jesus in a way other than the way the world gives it," although it is also true that the world "does not know such peace and hence cannot give it" (Hesselink, "John 14:23-29," p. 177).

<sup>46</sup>Paul's inclusion of 'peace' in the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) suggests that this peace is alive and that it grows within the life of the Christian.

<sup>47</sup>The points under section VI are from Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 225-226.

<sup>48</sup>Michael Green believes that a possible reason why Satan is called "the prince (or ruler) of this world" is that he might have been "assigned some special task of oversight of the world by God in the beginning before his fall" (*I Believe in Satan's Downfall* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1981], p. 47; see pp. 42-48 for a discussion of all of the biblical titles of Satan).

<sup>49</sup>This is only one of many interpretations of 14:31b and perhaps not the most likely (see 18:1, although that

verse could mean "they left" the city rather than they left the house). Some say 14:31b is rhetorical, roughly equivalent to a preacher's "let us go on" after getting off on a tangent. Others (such as Brown, 2:656-657; Barrett, p. 392; Bernard, 2:557) claim that the arrangement of the text as it presently stands is more topical than chronological, and that chronologically 14:31 should come immediately before 18:1, or at least before 17:1. In the latter arrangement, Jesus would call on his disciples to leave the Upper Room, whereupon they stood up, and Jesus led them in prayer before they departed. A likely explanation seems to be that in 14:31 Jesus exhorted His disciples to leave, but they didn't actually get around to going until after the prayer of chapter 17. This explanation leaves the text in its present order (see Hoskyns, pp. 464-465, for reasons for rejecting a rearrangement), takes both 14:31 and 18:1 in their most natural sense of physical departure, and accommodates the natural human tendency to be slow to leave a place of special intimacy and communion (see Morris, p. 661; Hendriksen, p. 290).

<sup>50</sup>Bengel's suggestion quoted in Dods, p. 828.

<sup>51</sup>Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, p. 24.

<sup>52</sup>Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, p. 44.

<sup>53</sup>Hendriksen, p. 294; Lindars, pp. 486-488; see the arguments against this position in Morris, *John*, p. 668, n. 1.

<sup>54</sup>Dods, p. 828.

<sup>55</sup>The points under section I are from Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 226-229.

<sup>56</sup>The idea that the fruit represents more disciples is refuted by the fact that disciples have already been represented as branches of the vine. More disciples, therefore, would be pictured as more branches. Love is in the context

both before (John 13:34-35) and after (John 15:9, 12) this extended metaphor, and Paul depicts love as among the “fruit” of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

<sup>57</sup>The points under section II are from Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 229-230.

<sup>58</sup>The points under section III are from Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 230-233.

<sup>59</sup>See Segovia, “Love and Hatred.” Segovia believes that the author of the Fourth Gospel used the issue of love or hatred toward Jesus “to separate an elect community, the chosen brethren, from an unbelieving ‘world,’ the parent synagogue [and] ...to strengthen the separated brethren in the midst of a very hostile ‘world’” (p. 272).



# Lesson Ten

**John 16:1 - 17:26**



# Revelation of Persecution

## —John 16:1-6<sup>1</sup>

- I. Jesus shows further the vividness of that persecution (16:1-2).
  - A. It would involve the public shame of *expulsion* from the local synagogues.
    - 1. Persecution in the synagogues started during Jesus' ministry and continued throughout the thirty-five years covered in Acts (see Matt. 10:17; 23:34; Mark 13:9; Luke 12:11; 21:12; John 9:22, 34; Acts 13:44-48; 14:1-7; 18:6-7; 19:8-9).
    - 2. General expulsion of Jewish Christians from synagogues took place after the Jewish revolt in A.D. 67-70.<sup>2</sup>
  - B. It could extend to the ultimate price of *execution* for the name of Christ (see John 21:18-19).
    - 1. Formal trials conducted or instigated by Jews against Christians brought about executions (see Acts 6:9-7:60; 26:10).
    - 2. By mob violence and by political influence, they brought about other deaths (see Acts 12:1-3; 14:19-20; 1 Thess. 2:14-16).
- II. Persecution of believers would be the logical course for unbelief to follow (16:3).
  - A. This is because of the stubborn, rebellious nature of unbelief.

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- B. This is due to self-willed ignorance concerning the Father and the Son.
- III. Jesus forewarns and gives assurance and comfort (16:4-6).
  - A. His purpose is that they may not stumble.
  - B. His hope is that they may remember that He told them of this hour.
  - C. His concern is that they be comforted rather than distressed.



# Revelation of the Spirit

## —John 16:7-15<sup>3</sup>

**NOTE:** Even in the face of such adversity, Jesus continues to reveal to His disciples that His departure was “profitable” for them. It was a necessity for the progression of the work and would enlarge His ministry through the agency and activity of the Holy Spirit. “Greater works” were yet to be done (16:7; read carefully Acts 1:1-2 and compare John 7:37-39; 14:26; 15:26).

- I. The three-fold relationship of the Spirit to *the world* is presented in terms of the verb “convict” (Gr: *elegkhō*) which means “bring to light, expose, set forth, convince, point something out to someone, reprove, correct”<sup>74</sup> (16:8-11).

**NOTE:** Every instance of authentic preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ since the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost constitutes a true fulfillment of this statement of Jesus. From Pentecost forward, apostolic preaching invariably included the subjects of sin (see Acts 2:23), righteousness (see Acts 2:22), and judgment (see Acts 2:35-37).

- A. The Spirit will convict the world about *sin*, “because men do not believe in me” (16:9).
  1. Unbelief is the ultimate sin, in view of the nature of Jesus’ claims and the evidence of His works.
  2. Unbelievers reject Christ because they

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choose to! (Read John 3:36; Heb. 10:39; 12:25 and compare Acts 13:46.)

**NOTE:** Conviction of sin demands a standard. There can be no transgression where there is no law, no darkness where there is no light, and no pollution where there is no holiness (righteousness).

- B. The Spirit will convict the world about *righteousness*, “because I am going to the Father where you can see me no longer” (16:10).
1. Righteousness is not founded on a legal system nor in the best of moral men.
  2. True righteousness is found and established in a person, Jesus Christ.
  3. It is exemplified in His words and way of life (read Acts 3:14; 1 John 2:1; 1 Cor. 1:30).

**NOTE:** The “righteousness” of Christ is the verdict of God, as expressed in His resurrection (read Rom. 1:4). His return to the Father was absolute proof of His divinely accepted righteousness. The ugliness of the scene at Golgotha was the world’s verdict concerning Jesus, but God the Father placed the stamp of divine approval upon Him by raising Him from the dead and restoring His former glory at the Father’s own right hand. (Carefully consider 1 Tim. 3:16; Acts 2:23, 33; Heb. 1:1-4; Phil. 2:9-11 and compare Rom. 3:21-26; 4:24-25; 5:21.)

On the other hand, in declaring the righteousness of Christ, God established the guilt of the world, which had judged Him to be an evildoer and had claimed “He ought to die” (see John 18:30; 19:7). Therefore, the Cross was the condemnation of the world in

all its pride, hatred, rebellion, and unbelief (see Gen. 3:15 and compare Col. 2:15; John 12:31-32; 13:30).

- C. The Spirit will convict the world about *judgment* “because the prince of this world now stands condemned” (16:10): Whenever sin and righteousness meet there must be judgment.

**NOTE:** The Father’s vindication of Christ as the incarnate righteousness of God was at the same time His rejection of the prince of this world as the personification and ultimate source of all that is evil.

- II. The relationship of the Spirit to *the apostles* is presented in terms of the word “guide” (16:12-13).
- A. He is the Holy Spirit of truth: “He will *guide you into all truth*. He will *not speak on his own* ...and he will tell you *what is yet to come*.”
- B. He will be Christ’s Agent in telling them “much more” that Jesus desired to tell them.
1. The Holy Spirit of Truth would reveal many things to them.
  2. He would prevent them from making errors.

**NOTE:** This is a text essential for understanding the authority of the apostles in the primitive church. From the Day of Pentecost on, the church was guided by “the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42), which was recognized by their followers and by the apostles themselves to be “the Lord’s command” (1 Cor. 14:37). Although their

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practice continued to be faltering (see Gal. 2:11-21), their teaching was authoritative, for they spoke “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” (that is, by His authority and in His place) (see 2 Thess. 3:6).

Because the apostles committed their teachings to writing, their authoritative teaching ministry continues down to the present day. The Church has never lost its “foundation of the apostles and prophets” (Eph. 2:20).<sup>5</sup> Through their writings they continue to build up the church in the most holy faith; though they are dead, yet they speak (see 2 Peter 1:12-15).<sup>6</sup>

- III. The relationship of the Spirit *to Christ* is presented in terms of the word “glorify” (16:14-15).
  - A. The Spirit’s chief mission will be to *glorify* Christ. He promotes Another’s cause: that of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (read 1 Cor. 12:3).
  - B. Consider the functioning in the Godhead: The *Father* plans and purposes; the *Son* perfects and executes; and the *Spirit* reveals and glorifies.
  - C. The Father sent the Son and the Son sent the Spirit. The Spirit represents the Son even as the Son represents the Father.
- IV. A summary of what this entire discourse says about the Spirit is as follows:
  - A. The Spirit’s identity: a Person, not a force.<sup>7</sup>
    - 1. Although the Greek term for “Spirit” (*pneuma*) is neuter, Jesus uses a masculine pronoun, “that One”(Gr: *ekeinos*),<sup>8</sup> to refer to the Spirit (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7-8, 13-14).

2. Could an impersonal force do these things?<sup>9</sup>
  - a. *Live with* the disciples (see John 14:17)
  - b. *Teach* the disciples (see John 14:26)
  - c. *Testify* about Christ (see John 15:26)
  - d. *Convict* the world (John 16:8-10)
  - e. *Guide* the apostles into all truth (John 16:12)
  - f. *Take* what belongs to Christ and *make it known* (John 16:15)
- B. The Spirit's emphasis: Christ,<sup>10</sup> not the Spirit.<sup>11</sup>
  1. The Spirit comes because of love for (that is, faith in) *Christ* (see John 14:15-16).
  2. The Spirit's coming is the result of *Christ's* prayer (see John 14:16).
  3. The Spirit's activity is identified so closely with *Christ* that *Christ* Himself comes when the Spirit does (see John 14:17-18).
  4. The Spirit is sent by the Father in *Christ's* name (14:26).
  5. The Spirit's work was to remind the apostles of what *Christ* had said (see John 14:26).
  6. The Spirit's work is to convict the world of sin, and therefore of the need for *Christ* (see John 16:7-11).
  7. The Spirit will reveal the future based on what He is given (by *Christ*) to speak (see John 16:13).

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8. The Spirit will glorify *Christ* by declaring the things of Christ to His followers (see John 16:14).
9. To emphasize the Spirit to the neglect of Christ is to pervert Christianity into something misshapen and grotesque, and lacking in any redemptive value whatsoever.<sup>12</sup>

## Revelation by the Resurrection —John 16:16-24

- I. *The enigmatic words of Jesus* provide the key to the next portion of Jesus' discourse (16:16-19).
  - A. This statement (surprisingly!) was puzzling to the disciples (16:17; read again John 2:19-22; 10:11-18; 12:7, 32-33; 14:19).
  - B. They argued its meaning, yet they hesitated to ask Jesus the meaning (16:18-19; compare Mark 9:9-10; Luke 9:43-45).
- II. *The explanatory words of Jesus* make it clear that He is speaking of His resurrection (16:19-24).
  - A. Both joy and sorrow would be expressed at the time of Jesus' death.
    - 1. There was to be joy on the part of the world—His murderers.
    - 2. There was to be sorrow among those who loved Him—His disciples (read Mark 16:10; Luke 24:17).
  - B. However, the sorrow of the disciples would be turned into joy (16:21-22).
    - 1. "I will see you again" (*Christ raised!*).
    - 2. "...and you will rejoice" (*the empty tomb*).
    - 3. "...and no one will take away your joy" (*faith established*) (read Matt. 28:8; John 20:20).

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C. Jesus used the figure of a woman in the pangs of childbirth to illustrate this transition from grief, to rejoicing, to lasting joy (see Isa. 21:3; Hos. 13:13; Micah 4:9).

III. *The encouraging words of Jesus* concerning “that day” (the post-Resurrection period) assure the disciples of a new clarity and intimacy in their relationship to the Father and the Son (16:23-24).

A. The disciples would ask Christ nothing.

1. The revelation of the Resurrection and the Spirit would be plain.

2. They would no longer need to ask any questions concerning His teaching or ministry (read again John 14:26).

B. They “in that day” shall not ask Him (as they had done directly while He was on earth); but “my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name” (16:23; read 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 8:4; 1 John 2:1).

C. The conditions of prayer, as set forth by Christ, are these:

1. *Ask.*

2. *Ask the Father.*

3. *Ask the Father in the name of the Son.*



# Revelation by Proclamation

## —John 16:25-33<sup>14</sup>

- I. This section offers the following insights into Jesus' new relationship to His disciples:
  - A. Jesus would speak "plainly," rather than figuratively, about the Father.
  - B. Jesus proclaimed that because they are loved by the Father, they may personally approach the Father in His name.
- II. Jesus' discourse concerning His ministry is summarized in the text, as follows:
  - A. Jesus' relationship with the Father is expressed by three prepositional phrases.
    - 1. Jesus came forth "from" (Gr: *para*, with object in genitive, meaning "from [the side of]")<sup>15</sup> the Father, which speaks of His *authority*.
    - 2. Jesus came forth "from" (Gr: *ek*, with object in genitive, meaning "out of")<sup>16</sup> the Father, which speaks of His *nature*.
    - 3. The disciples believe that Jesus came forth "from" (Gr: *apo*, with object in genitive, meaning "away from")<sup>17</sup> the Father, which implies *preexistence* in the Father's presence (16:27, 28, 30; read carefully John 1:1-18).

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- B. "[I] entered the world" speaks of *Christ incarnate*, "*God with us*" (*Immanuel*) (16:28; read John 1:1-14; Isa. 7:14; Gal. 4:4; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:3, 8 and compare Matt. 1:21-23).
- C. "I leave the world" focuses attention on the *necessity of His death* (16:28; read Matt. 26:28; Heb. 2:9; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; compare John 3:14-15).
- D. "I go to the Father" brings to mind the *resurrection and ascension of Jesus* (16:28; read Phil. 2:9 and compare Acts 2:30-33; Luke 24:51-52; Acts 1:7-11).
- III. This revelation, given in the midst of Jesus' discourse, brought *belief* to the disciples (16:29-33).
  - A. This definite response of faith exceeds any declaration of belief heretofore recorded, including Peter's statement (read again John 6:69).

**NOTE:** Jesus had previously acknowledged their faith in His authority, but now they affirm their faith in His origin and nature (16:27, 30).

- B. Jesus' reply ("You believe *at last!*") was realistic (16:31-32).
  - 1. He knew that it is far easier for people to *profess* belief than to *possess* it.
  - 2. His hour of greatest revelation would be the hour of their greatest failure.

- C. Jesus' faith in the Father as a continual source of strength, sustenance, and encouragement is confidently expressed.
  - 1. Although the sheep would be scattered, the Shepherd would faithfully go on alone—"yet not alone!"
  - 2. Every man would go to his own home, and Jesus would go to His Cross (see Zech. 13:7; Matt. 26:31; Mark 14:27).
- D. Jesus' concluding words of encouragement remind them that this whole discourse was spoken that they might have "peace."

**NOTE:** Jesus said: "In me you may have peace." There is an emphasis of contrast: "In the world" disciples experienced trouble, but "in Christ" they enjoy peace (see Phil. 4:6-7; Rom. 5:1-2). As He overcame the world through the Cross, we overcome the world through belief in Him (read Rev. 3:21; 12:11 and compare 1 John 5:4).

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# Jesus' Conversation with the Father —John 17:1-26

- I. Consider the following *general comments* concerning this “high priestly” prayer of Jesus.<sup>18</sup>
  - A. This intercessory prayer is explained by Jesus’ concern for the security of the disciples during the despairing events ahead (see Luke 22:31-32).<sup>19</sup>
  - B. The general outline of Jesus’ prayer may be visualized as three circles of divine concern.<sup>20</sup>
    1. He prayed for *Himself* as the central figure of God’s eternal purpose (17:1-5).<sup>21</sup>
      - a. “Glorify your Son” (17:1).
      - b. “Glorify me” (17:5).
    2. He prayed for His *apostles* as His immediate successors in the continuity of divine revelation (17:6-19).
      - a. “Protect them” (17:11).
      - b. “Sanctify them” (17:17).
    3. He prayed for *future believers* as those whose relationship in the family of God would depend upon the apostles’ testimony (17:20-26).
      - a. “I pray also for those who will believe... that all of them may be one” (17:20-21).

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- b. "I want those... to be with me where I am" (17:24; compare John 12:26).
  - II. The following are the *specific elements* within Jesus' prayer:
    - A. *First*, the theme is *glorification* (Jesus prays for Himself) (17:1-5).<sup>22</sup>
      - 1. Jesus *desires* that, as Son, He might be glorified by the Father
        - a. That the Father may be glorified by the Son (17:1)
        - b. That the authority of the Son to give eternal life might be demonstrated to all (17:2-3)
        - c. That the Son might be glorified with the Father's own Self, which glory He had before the foundation of the world (17:5)
      - 2. Jesus *describes* His messianic work, throughout this prayer, as
        - a. Glorifying God
        - b. Exercising His authority
        - c. Giving eternal life to God's chosen community of *believers* (see John 3:16 and compare Acts 13:48; Eph. 1:3-14; Rom. 8:28-30; 1 Peter 1:1-2)
        - d. Accomplishing the Father's work
      - 3. Jesus *defines* "eternal life" (17:3).

- a. It is not mere “endless existence” (see Rom. 2:7).
- b. Eternal life is to “know” God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.
  - 1) ‘Know’ (Gr: *ginōskō*) means “living contact, rather than imparted knowledge.”<sup>23</sup>
  - 2) John’s usage of the present tense implies that eternal life means *striving after a growing knowledge*<sup>24</sup> (read Rom. 11:33; 2 Peter 3:18).

**NOTE:** The Hebrew concept of “knowledge” suggests the experiential and relational. It is both personal and intimate, and also results in the bearing of fruit (read carefully Gen. 4:1 and compare John 15:1-8; 13:34-35; Rom. 7:4-6). Experience is the sum total of man’s contact with his environment. The highest experience is the result of one’s highest contact. Experiences and relationships in this world are inherently temporal. This includes the entire spectrum of human social relationships. Only experiential contact with God “in Christ” can give full and enduring salvation. The experience of God’s eternal being is eternal life (read Phil. 3:8-10).

- c. The objects of this knowledge are *personal*: People must come to know “the only true God” and “Jesus Christ,” whom He has sent (17:3).
  - 1) Jesus described the Father as “true” (Gr: *alēthinos*), meaning “genuine, real.”<sup>25</sup>

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- 2) The usage of this word 'true' establishes God's verity, His actuality.
- 3) Eternal life (knowledge of God and Jesus Christ) is the end of the philosopher's hunt for "ultimate reality" and of the scientist's search for "truth" (see John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 2 Tim. 1:12).
4. Since life is best understood by its privileges and effects, Jesus *depicts* eternal life as
  - a. *Enlightenment* through the words of Christ, which they *received* (acceptance of His testimony), *knew* (experiential realization of its truth), and *believed* (personal commitment to Christ Jesus) (17:8)

**NOTE:** This enlightenment is the gateway to life (see John 1:4; 14:6; 10:10).

- b. *Preservation and deliverance* from any internal peril that might threaten spiritual assurance and security (17:11-12; see John 10:24-25; 1 Thess. 5:23-24; Jude 24-25)
- c. *Joy* that comes from being in perfect accord with the Father and with His will—a joy which is independent of



circumstances (17:13; see John 14:27; 15:11; 16:22, 33; Matt. 5:3-12; Phil. 4:4-9)

- d. *Sanctification* in the truth of the Word of God (17:17-19)
  - 1) The word 'sanctify' (Gr: *hagiazō*) has both negative and positive emphases.
    - a) Negatively, it means to purify; to separate from all evil.
    - b) Positively, it signifies to dedicate and to consecrate.<sup>26</sup>
  - 2) The basis of sanctification is the finished work and ongoing life of Jesus Christ (see Heb. 10:10, 14). He sanctified Himself (dedicated His life to the doing of God's will, even to the point of death).
  - 3) In so doing, He also accomplished sanctification for believers.
  - 4) *Sanctification*, though graciously given to believers in Christ (see 1 Cor. 1:30), must be appropriated by the believer (see Heb. 12:14 and compare John 13:8-10; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; Rom. 8:13; Gal. 5:14-24).
- e. *Unity* modeled upon the oneness within the Godhead (17:20-22)

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**NOTE:** Unity is not to be confused with unanimity (absolute concord of doctrine or opinion within a group of people), uniformity (complete similarity of organization and order of method), or union (political affiliation without necessarily including individual agreement; “agreeing to disagree agreeably!”). Unity requires oneness of inner heart and mind; oneness of essential purpose through the possession of the same interest and the same life. The cause of Christian unity is well served when we remember: “In doctrine—unity; in opinions—liberty; in all things—love” (see Eph. 4:1-6; 1 Cor. 1:10-12).

This kind of loving cooperation is what exists between the members of the Godhead. “The Father glorifies the Son and makes himself available to him, the Son glorifies the Father and defers to him, and the Holy Spirit seems almost to make himself anonymous in serving Father and Son, while they in turn appear to refer to the Spirit with loving equality and deference by sending him to carry on the work of the divine Family. Inwardly in interpersonal communion and outwardly in redemptive servanthood for the world, the Triune Community exemplifies availability and servanthood, each for the other.... On this pattern of personality in the Triune Community, Jesus prays to the Father that the new society of believers may be one as the Triune Family is one. Servanthood and generosity are the key to life in the divine Community.”<sup>27</sup>

f. *Fellowship*, that the world may believe that the Father sent the Son (17:23-26; see 1 John 1:3-7; 2 Cor. 13:14)

B. *Second*, the themes are *preservation* and *sanctification* (Jesus prays for His apostles) (17:6-19).<sup>28</sup>

1. His plea is for their *unity* (17:6-12).

- a. Outwardly, they have every reason to splinter: the socio-economic and political differences between them are potentially explosive.
- b. They have just demonstrated their quarrelsome nature (see Luke 22:24-27).
- c. His prayer will be answered; after the Resurrection they will all join together (see Acts 1:14; 2:1, 44; 4:26).<sup>29</sup>
2. His purpose has been their *joy* (17:13).
  - a. The arrest and trial will bring them shame (see Mark 14:50-52, 66-72).
  - b. The crucifixion will bring them unbearable grief (see Luke 23:48; Mark 16:10).
  - c. His prayer will be answered; after the resurrection they will be filled with joy (see Luke 24:41, 52).
3. His prayer is for their *safety* (17:14-16).
  - a. They are vulnerable to physical attack (see Matt. 10:25; John 12:10).
  - b. They are also spiritually weak (see Matt. 26:40-41, 43-46).
  - c. His prayer will be answered; they will not be attacked in the Garden, and none of the Eleven<sup>30</sup> will fall beyond recovery (see John 18:8-9; Luke 22:31-32; Acts 1:13-14).

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4. His petition is for their *sanctification* (17:17-19).
  - a. Until now their interests have been divided (see Luke 5:1-11; Matt. 16:21-28; Luke 9:46-55; Mark 10:35-45; Luke 22:24-27; John 13:37-38).
  - b. His prayer will be answered; after the Resurrection they will be devoted to His cause (Acts 1:14; 2:14; 4:33-35; etc.).
- C. *Third*, the theme is *interrelation* (Jesus prays for future believers) (17:20-26).
  1. His prayer is for their *unity* (17:20-23).
    - a. Unity's *definition*: "that all of them may be one" (read Acts 2:44-47; 4:32; 9:31).
    - b. Unity's *description*: "just as you are in me and I am in you" (read John 10:30; 14:10-11).
    - c. Unity's *determination*: "so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (read 1 Cor. 1:10-12; 6:1-6; Rom. 15:1-7).
    - d. Will this prayer go unanswered in our generation?
      - 1) The Ecumenical Movement is not the answer to this petition: In its attempt to have union based on "the lowest common denominator,"<sup>31</sup> it

has abandoned the scriptural basis for unity.

- 2) Restoration movements, in praiseworthy zeal to restore scriptural externals, run the risk of degenerating into a legalism that leaves the heart unconverted.<sup>32</sup>
- 3) What is needed is an obedience that not only is careful to be scriptural in doctrine and practice, but that treats matters of the heart as the heart of the matter.<sup>33</sup>

**NOTE:** Under the headship of one Lord, Jesus Christ, Christians are “members one of another” (read carefully Eph. 1:22-23; 4:1-6; 1 Cor. 12:13).

2. His purpose is their *salvation* (17:24-26).
  - a. The Christian’s destiny is to “be with the Lord” (read John 14:1-6; Phil. 1:21-23; 2 Cor. 5:6-8).
  - b. The Christian’s hope is the return of Jesus Christ for “His own” (read Col. 3:4; 1 John 3:2; Phil. 3:20-21; Titus 2:13-14; Heb. 9:28).
- III. The course of divine love is the foundation of unity and fellowship in the Spirit, as seen in Jesus’ prayer of intercession (read again John 17:1-26).

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- A. The sequence of the fellowship of love is as follows:
  - 1. The Son loves the Father (17:4).
  - 2. The Son loves the disciples (17:6).
  - 3. The Father loves the Son (17:26).
  - 4. The Father loves the disciples (17:26).
  - 5. The disciples love the Son (17:8).
  - 6. The disciples love the Father (17:6).
  - 7. The disciples love one another (17:26).
- B. Wherever the above sequence is a reality, there will be unity of believers
  - 1. In *faith*
  - 2. In *fellowship*

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The points under section I are from Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 233.

<sup>2</sup>See Martyn, *History and Theology*, pp. 42-62, and notes in Lesson Seven.

<sup>3</sup>The points under section II are from Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 233-239.

<sup>4</sup>Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 249.

<sup>5</sup>This refutes the claim of the Mormons that the church collapsed when the apostles all died.

<sup>6</sup>See Warfield, *Inspiration and Authority*, pp. 163-164, 188-189.

<sup>7</sup>The teaching that the Spirit is not a personal being is held by the Jehovah's Witnesses and by members of the Way International, among others (see *Aid to Understanding*, p. 1543; Wierwille, *Jesus is Not God*, pp. 129-134).

<sup>8</sup>"It is more evident therefore in this passage [John 16:13] that John is insisting on the personality of the Holy Spirit, when the grammatical gender so easily called for *ἐκεῖνο* ['that,' neuter gender]" (Robertson, *Grammar*, p. 709).

<sup>9</sup>See also Isa. 63:10; Acts 5:3, 32; 7:51; 8:29; 9:31; Eph. 4:30; 1 Cor. 2:10; James 4:5; Rev. 2:3; 21:17.

<sup>10</sup>"The Paraclete sayings of the Gospel of John contain the most concentrated New Testament witness to the doctrine of the evidence of the Holy Spirit and serve, therefore, as a useful summary. When one arranges the several sayings the most pervasive mark is Christocentricity. The Holy Spirit appears to have as not only the center but as the circumference of his mission the witness to Jesus" (Frederick D. Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co.,

1970], p. 277 [hereafter cited as Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*]).

<sup>11</sup>"There... appears at times a tendency in Pentecostal expression to ascribe an outward work to Jesus Christ but an inward work to the Holy Spirit, sometimes to the seeming, but of course unintentional, disparagement of the former.... It cannot, in fact, be said that Pentecostal preaching and evangelism place more stress on the Spirit than on Christ—though in Pentecostal literature this is very nearly the case" (Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, pp. 72-73). Bruner sees a need for Pentecostalism to become "responsibly christocentric" (p. 319). For all points under section B, see Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, pp. 277-280.

<sup>12</sup>Some in Corinth were so enamoured with the Spirit that they actually may have been saying, "Jesus be cursed! The Spirit is all we need" (see 1 Cor. 12:3). Paul's antidote is an epistle thoroughly Christ-centered (see especially 1 Cor. 1:4-9, 10, 13-17, 23-24, 30; 2:2; 15:1-4).

<sup>13</sup>The points under section III are from Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 239-241.

<sup>14</sup>The points under this section are from Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 241-243.

<sup>15</sup>Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 609.

<sup>16</sup>Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 234.

<sup>17</sup>Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 86.

<sup>18</sup>The points under section I are from Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 243-244.

<sup>19</sup>"In both [the Farewell Discourse and the High Priestly Prayer], Jesus presents to His disciples His forthcoming death, not as a tragic fate, but as His free choice and as part of the divine dispensation... for the salvation



of the world....Will the disciples accept Jesus' interpretation of His forthcoming death? Will they wait to see Him alive 'after the Passion'? And will the world accept, through the disciples, this interpretation of His death? Or will the world consider His Cross as σκανδαλον [a stumbling block] or μωρία [folly]? Everything said by Jesus in chapters 13-17 turns on this" (S. Agourides, "The 'High Priestly Prayer' of Jesus," p. 139 in *Studia Evangelica*, vol. 4, ed. by F. L. Cross [Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1968]; hereafter cited as Agourides, "Prayer").

<sup>20</sup>After a careful comparison of the wording in Greek between Jesus' prayer in John 17 and what is commonly called "The Lord's Prayer" (Matt. 6:9-13; compare Luke 11:2-4), William O. Walker concludes: "It would seem that verses 1 through 8 are, for the most part, a midrashic expansion of the three 'thou' petitions [Matt. 6:9-10] in the Lord's Prayer, while verses 9 through 19 relate primarily to the three 'we' petitions [Matt. 6:11-13]; thus far, the structure of the High Priestly Prayer reflects that of the Lord's Prayer. Verses 20 through 26, then, are essentially a recapitulation of the themes developed earlier in the prayer and, as such, include elements from both the 'thou' and the 'we' petitions" ("The Lord's Prayer in Matthew and John," *New Testament Studies* 28 [1982]:248).

<sup>21</sup>See Martyn Lloyd-Jones's expository sermons on verses 1-5 in: *Saved in Eternity: The Assurance of Our Salvation*, ed. by Christopher Catherwood (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988).

<sup>22</sup>The points under section A are from Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 244-250.

<sup>23</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 245; compare Lenski (p. 1121): "[T]he verb γινώσκειν, ...when the object is a

person as here, means, 'to have intimate personal experience' and nothing less."

<sup>24</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 246.

<sup>25</sup>Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 37.

<sup>26</sup>Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, pp. 8-9.

<sup>27</sup>Royce G. Gruenler, "John 17:20-26," *Interpretation* 43, 2 (1989):179.

<sup>28</sup>See Martyn Lloyd-Jones's series of expository sermons on verses 6-19 in: *Safe in the World: The Assurance of Our Salvation*, ed. by Christopher Catherwood (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988). Agourides suggests that the Farewell Discourse is similar to the farewell address of Moses (Deut. 32:1-44) and that the High Priestly Prayer is similar to the blessing Moses gave to the tribes of Israel (Deut. 33:1-29), for His apostles are the leaders of the new Israel ("Prayer," p. 141).

<sup>29</sup>For a study of their post-Resurrection unity, see Everett Ferguson, "'When You Come Together': *Epi To Auto* in Early Christian Literature," *Restoration Quarterly* 16 (1973):202-208.

<sup>30</sup>It must be remembered that Judas Iscariot has already defected to Satan and has gone to arrange the betrayal (see John 13:27-30).

<sup>31</sup>"The ecumenical movement is built, I believe, in organizational oneness on the basis of a lack of content" (Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Church Before the Watching World* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1971], p. 68, n. 2).

<sup>32</sup>"[I]t is possible to focus on the Bible without focusing on Christ. Legalistic Christianity does this very thing. However, abuse of the scriptures in this way does not invalidate the restoration principle when properly applied"



(Monroe Hawley, *The Focus of Our Faith: A New Look at the Restoration Principle* [Nashville, TN: 20th Century Christian, 1985], p. 20; hereafter cited as Hawley, *Focus*; see also pp. 1-21, 99-109 and Rubel Shelly, *I Just Want to Be a Christian* [Nashville, TN: 20th Century Christian, 1984], pp. 77-117; hereafter cited as Shelley, *Christian*).

<sup>33</sup>See Hawley, *Focus*, pp. 79-97, 111-153; Shelley, *Christian*, pp. 35-74, 107-117, 121-136.



# **The Gospel of John: “That You May Have Life”**

## **Part VII**

### ***The Victory Over Unbelief***



# Lesson Eleven

**John 18:1 - 19:42**



## Judas and Jesus—John 18:1-11

- I. Jesus' willing surrender is chronicled by John and the synoptic gospel writers.
  - A. In spite of Jesus' agony and anticipation, He voluntarily gave Himself into the hands of sinful men (read carefully John 10:17; Acts 2:23 and compare Matt. 26:36-56; Mark 14:32-52; Luke 22:40-62).
  - B. Jesus' surrender is characterized as one of
    - 1. Awareness (17:4)
    - 2. Willingness (17:5)
    - 3. Substitution (17:8-9)
    - 4. Love for His *Father*, His *disciples*, and His *enemies* (17:11; read Luke 22:51)
- II. Judas' willing betrayal is contrasted to Peter's active loyalty (read also Matt. 26:47-50; Mark 14:43-45; Luke 22:47-48).
  - A. *Judas* came with arms to capture Jesus, while *Peter* drew arms to defend Him.
  - B. *Judas* apprehended Christ treacherously, while *Peter* defended Him openly.
  - C. *Judas* betrayed Him "in cold blood," while *Peter* attacked Jesus' enemies.
  - D. *Judas*' crime was deliberate throughout, while *Peter*'s blunder was prompted by an impulsive (though misguided) display of loyalty.

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## Annas and Jesus—John 18:12-27

- I. Jesus' trial before the Jewish authorities involved two preeminent priests (18:12-24).

**NOTE:** John's presentation of both Annas and his son-in-law, Caiaphas, as Jewish high priests has raised some critical questions. The older man, Annas, had served as high priest from A.D. 4-14 and at this time still retained the honorary title, as well as considerable influence. It seems somewhat scandalous that, though Annas was apparently alive and well, his son-in-law, Caiaphas, was now the "official" high priest. (The high priesthood was supposed to be held by one man until his death.)

Since intertestamental times, the Jewish high priestly office had been plagued with the scandal, intrigue, and corruption of political favoritism. John seems to refer to this disgrace in a sarcastic way when (tongue in cheek?) he writes that Caiaphas was "high priest *that year*" (18:13, 19, 24; read John 11:49, 51; Heb. 7:23; Num. 35:25, 28).<sup>1</sup>

- A. Jesus was initially interrogated by Annas (18:12-14, 19-24; read Matt. 26:59-68; Mark 14:55-65; Luke 22:66-71 and compare Luke 3:2; Acts 4:6).
1. The procedure was *routine*: Annas asked Jesus about His disciples and His teaching. Jesus' reply directed Annas to the testimony of public knowledge. (Jesus would not tes-

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tify for Himself in an obviously biased case!) (18:19-21)

2. The procedure was *unethical*: Jesus' second reply pointed out that if He had done wrong the "judge" should prove it legally. Unbelief had already judged Jesus and was simply seeking justification for its attitude.
3. The procedure was *illegal*: According to the codified Jewish law, capital punishment trials were not allowed to take place at night.<sup>2</sup> In further violation of their own legal system, there was only ~~one~~ man sitting to judge the case, and *he* a deposed high priest.<sup>3</sup>

**NOTE:** Although John does not note in detail the trials, we will notice some points concerning Jesus before Caiaphas, and then before the Sanhedrin.

- B. Jesus was then investigated by Caiaphas (18:13-14, 24, 28; read also Matt. 26:59-68; Mark 14:55-65).
  1. The *setting* of the trial involved a definite *place* (the house of the high priest), certain *people* (Caiaphas, chief priests, elders, scribes), a specific *time* (3:00 a.m.) (read Luke 22:54, 60-61; Mark 14:53).
  2. The *strife* during the trial included disagreement of witnesses; misapplication of testi-

mony; absence of incriminating testimony; emotional involvement of the “judge”; condemnation of the Defendant on the basis of His presumed blasphemy and perjury (read Mark 14:55-64).<sup>4</sup>

3. The *errors* in the trial were ensured by prejudice on the part of the judge, and lack of a legal indictment (18:14; read Mark 14:60; John 11:50).
- C. Jesus was examined before the Sanhedrin (read Luke 22:66-71).
  1. The Sanhedrin was the Jewish “Supreme Court,” composed of the high priest and seventy other prominent Jews. They handled all the more important cases, but could not mete out the death penalty under Roman law (see John 18:31; and compare John 8:1-5).<sup>5</sup>
  2. The Sanhedrin assembled to make the pre-determined verdict “legal” (according to their own dictates).
  3. The Sanhedrin’s “trial” was brief. First they *questioned* Jesus; then they *condemned* Jesus (see Luke 22:66-23:1).
  4. The Sanhedrin’s technical illegalities were numerous, including
    - a. Assembly before the morning sacrifice
    - b. Completion of a capital case in one day

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- c. Conviction of the accused on the same day as the trial
- d. Improper voting procedure (the high priest voted first, rather than the ballot being taken from the youngest to the eldest)
- e. Prohibition of the defendant to prove his claim
- 5. The earliest Christian preachers boldly proclaimed that the trial, though a miscarriage of justice due to ignorance, was an unwitting fulfillment of God's purpose as predicted by the prophets (read Acts 2:23; 3:17; 4:28-29; 13:27-28; 1 Cor. 2:6-8 and compare Mark 14:63-64).
- II. Peter's denial is recorded by all four gospel writers (read John 18:25-27; Matt. 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-62).
  - A. This is in fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy (read again John 13:37-38 and compare 1 Cor. 10:12).
  - B. Peter's denial began with "cursing" but ended with "crying."

# Pilate and Jesus

## —John 18:28 - 19:16

- I. Consider the following general comments concerning this section.
- A. The parallel passages should be consulted in the synoptic gospel accounts (read Matt. 27:1-26; Mark 15:1-15; Luke 23:1-25).
  - B. John gives more space concerning the confrontation of Jesus with Pilate than any of the other writers; however, John omits
    - 1. The initial accusation presented to Pilate (read Luke 23:2)
    - 2. The repeated accusations of the priests (read Matt. 27:12; Mark 15:3)
    - 3. The hearing before Herod (read Luke 23:4-12)
    - 4. The priests' agitation for Barabbas' release (read Matt. 27:20; Mark 15:11)
  - C. John presents this trial in vivid and full detail, bringing Jesus and Pilate into sharp contrast. (It was actually a trial of Pilate before Jesus rather than of Christ before Pilate.)

**NOTE:** The trial reveals Pilate's true character. He was not a good-hearted, sympathetic but weak-willed victim of circumstance. He was a tyrannical, manipulative, contemptuous figure, malevolent toward the Jews and their concerns. Pilate was seeking

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only to humiliate the Jews into a position of absolute subjection to Caesar.<sup>6</sup> In this he succeeded, provoking from their lips the shocking blasphemy, "We have no king but Caesar" (contradicting such passages as Deut. 33:5; 1 Sam. 8:7; 12:12; Ps. 10:16; 24:8-10; etc.).

II. The first contact between Pilate and the Jews (18:28-32)

A. Pilate asks for their indictment, and the Jews deliberately ignore the request (18:28-30).

1. They indignantly insinuate that their competence and motives are *above suspicion*.
2. In fact, they changed the charge against Jesus from a *religious* to a *civil* offense (read Luke 23:2 and compare John 18:36; Matt. 17:24-27; 22:17-22).
3. In desperation, they later revert to a "religious" charge against Jesus (read John 19:7).

B. Pilate sarcastically attempts to evade the situation, but the Jews' reply to him implies the enormity of the "crime" (18:31).

III. The first contact between Pilate and Jesus (18:33-38)

A. The curtness and cynicism of Pilate contrast sharply with the compassion and integrity of Jesus (18:33-35).

B. Jesus explains to Pilate the manner, methods, and motivations of His kingdom (18:36).

C. Pilate's second question concerning Jesus'

“kingdom” suggests his concern for “the truth,” but Jesus’ challenging reply reveals the shallowness of Pilate’s request.

- D. Pilate’s third question (“What is truth?”) brings the interrogation to an end. Pilate was facing the opportunity of a lifetime, for “Truth Personified” was standing there before him (see John 14:6 and compare Col. 2:8-10).

**NOTE:** Luke records that Pilate sent Jesus to Herod, who proclaimed Him innocent and sent Him back to Pilate in mockery (read Luke 23:4-16).

#### **IV. The second contact between Pilate and the Jews (18:38-40)**

- A. Pilate announces his belief in the innocence of Jesus, seeking His acquittal (18:38).
- B. Pilate (ever the compromiser) tries to appease the mob (18:39).
  - 1. His desire is to release Jesus.
  - 2. His strategy is to offer to the crowd Barabbas in place of Jesus.
    - a. The name Barabbas ironically means “Son of the father” (or “son of the teacher,” the title, “father,” often being bestowed on highly esteemed rabbis, a practice condemned by Jesus in Matt. 23:7-10).<sup>7</sup>
    - b. His crime was that of which they falsely

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accused Jesus: insurrection against the state (see Mark 15:7).

- c. He stands as a fitting symbol of us all: deserving death for his crimes.<sup>8</sup>
- 3. They desired exactly the opposite.
  - a. In effect, they said: "Don't release Jesus! Release Barabbas!"
  - b. The exchange of sinner for Savior is a fitting display of the basic meaning of the substitutionary atonement of Christ. As Spurgeon says:

Have we not here, first of all, in this act of the deliverance of the sinner and the binding of the innocent, a sort of type of that great work which is accomplished by the death of our Saviour? You and I may fairly take our stand by the side of Barabbas. We have robbed God of his glory; we have been seditious traitors against the government of heaven: if he who hateth his brother is a murderer, we also have been guilty of that sin. Here we stand before the judgment-seat; the Prince of Life is bound for us and we are suffered to go free. The Lord delivers us and acquits us, while the Saviour, without spot or blemish is led forth to crucifixion.... It comes to this, Barabbas must die or Christ must die; you the sinner must perish, or Christ Immanuel, the Immaculate, must die. He dies that we may be delivered. Oh! have we all a participation in such a deliverance today? and though we have been robbers,



traitors, murderers yet we can rejoice that Christ has delivered us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us?"

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4. Pilate then asked, "What shall I do, then, with Jesus...?" (See Matt. 27:22.)
  5. Pilate's reasons for desiring to set Jesus free included the plea of his wife, the voice of his own conscience, and his knowledge of the envious motivations of the antagonistic mob (read carefully Matt. 27:19, 24; Mark 15:10).
- V. The second contact between Pilate and Jesus (19:1-3)
- A. Pilate authorized the scourging of Jesus (19:1; read Isa 53:5).
    1. Jesus was beaten *after* the clear declaration of His innocence!
    2. Pilate was still trying to "play politics"!
  - B. Pilate's soldiers "crown" Jesus and mock Him (19:2; read Matt. 27:29; Mark 15:16-19).
- VI. The third contact between Pilate and the Jews (19:4-8)
- A. Pilate declares for the second time: "I find no basis for a charge against him" (19:4).
  - B. Pilate announces: "Here is the man!" (19:5).
    1. Jesus' pitiful bleeding, tortured, and beaten condition must have stirred even the hardened heart of Pilate.

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2. Pilate presents this “pathetic spectacle” to the Jews, appealing to a presumed sense of human sympathy, asking by implication: “Is this not enough punishment for one who has committed no crime?”
- C. The response of the Jews is far from sympathetic (19:6).
- D. In his *third* declaration of Jesus’ innocence, Pilate futilely attempts to evade personal responsibility for Jesus’ fate by saying to the Jews: “You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him” (19:6).
- E. The Jews now acknowledge their true charge: “He claimed to be the Son of God” (19:7).
- F. Pilate becomes afraid, having been sufficiently indoctrinated in the mythology surrounding the Grecian and Roman gods and goddesses to consider seriously the implications of such a claim (19:8).
- VII. The third and final contact between Jesus and Pilate (19:9-11)
  - A. Pilate asks Jesus: “Where do you come from?” (19:9)
  - B. When Pilate seeks to intimidate Jesus into answering him by asserting his power over Jesus’ destiny, Jesus replies that a higher Power has placed both Himself and Pilate into their present situation (19:10-11).

- C. Pilate, again, seeks to release Jesus (19:12).
- VIII. The fourth and final contact between Pilate and the Jews (19:13-16)

**NOTE:** This scene transpires at a place called "The Stone Pavement" or, in Aramaic, "Gabbatha." At least two sites in Jerusalem have been suggested. One is the courtyard of the Fortress Antonia, just north of the temple courts. It is a large stone-covered courtyard in part of which grooves have been cut to make it less slippery for horses during a rain. At one point, a game board has been scratched into the stone, presumably by bored Roman soldiers. Recent archaeology, however, has proven that this pavement was laid too late to have been the one John mentions.<sup>10</sup> A more likely site is in front of Herod's palace, across the ancient city to the west from the temple mount. It is known that the procurator used Herod's palace as a residence when in Jerusalem (the provincial capital being at Caesarea).<sup>11</sup> Whichever judgment place was used, it was only a short walk to Golgotha.

- A. Pilate succumbs to political pressure (19:13):  
He had come to this "moment of truth" because of his past blunders in dealing with the Jews.
1. Pilate had tried to bring images into Jerusalem.<sup>12</sup>
  2. He also had attempted to fund an aqueduct for Jerusalem with money from the temple treasury.<sup>13</sup>
  3. He had refused to remove shields from Herod's Palace in Jerusalem until forced to do so when Tiberius responded to an appeal of the Jews.<sup>14</sup>

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4. Pilate's eventual downfall occurred after his cavalry slaughtered many among a crowd of Samaritans who had assembled to climb Mount Gerezim at the call of a Samaritan religious pretender.
  - a. The Samaritans called on Vitellius, the legate of Syria, to depose Pilate for murdering their compatriots.
  - b. Desiring to win the favor of the Jews, Vitellius replaced Pilate and sent him to Rome to face Tiberius.
  - c. The emperor died before Pilate arrived in Rome, however, and Pilate probably escaped the inquisition he would have faced.<sup>15</sup>
  - d. About his later history nothing reliable is known; several fictitious literary works about or supposedly written by Pilate circulated in the first few centuries A.D.<sup>16</sup>
- B. The Jews were bitter and arrogant toward Pilate's query ("Shall I crucify your king?"), as seen in the unlikely reply of their chief priests: "We have no king but Caesar" (19:14-15).
- C. Pilate's final decision ("Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified") was as firm and fixed as was his utter disgust and contempt toward the Jews who had used him (19:16; read John 19:19-22).

IX. The following summary is a character sketch of Pilate and Jesus.

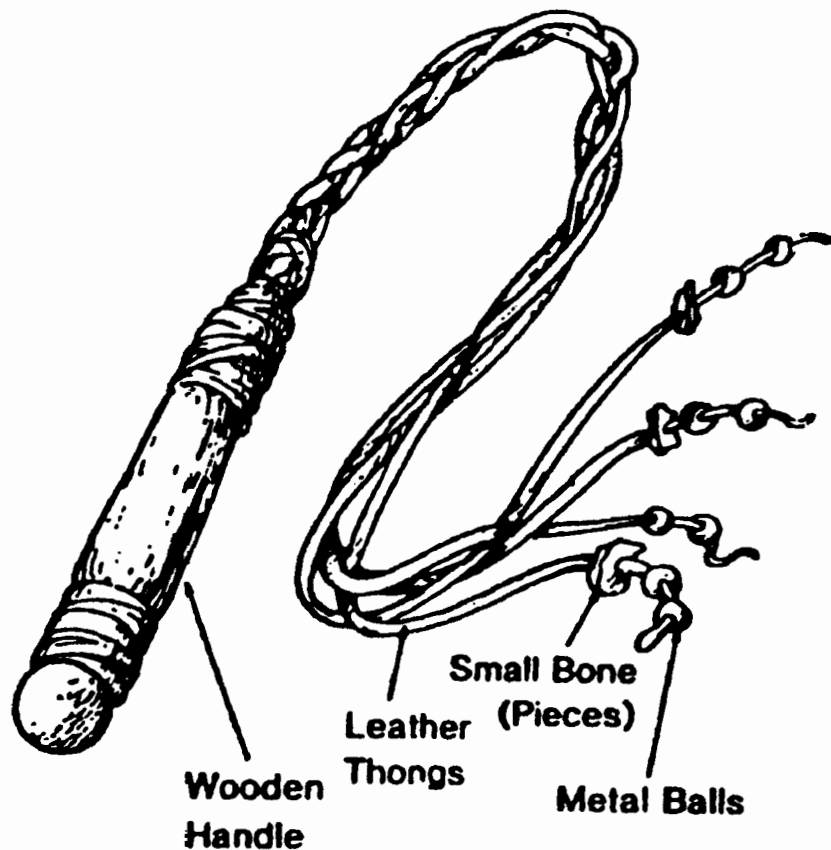
A. Pilate was

1. Reluctant to try Jesus (see John 18:31)
2. Uneasy about the situation (see John 18:28)
3. Ready to hear Jesus (see John 18:33)
4. Indignant (see John 18:35)
5. Curious (see John 18:37)
6. Compromising (see John 18:39)
7. Spineless (Why had Pilate failed to *use* this power, if indeed he had it?) (see John 19:10)
8. Bitter (see John 19:15, 22)

B. Jesus was

1. Meek
2. Calm
3. Truthful
4. Resolved

*Notes:*



*"Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged"—John 19:1.* The flogging was administered by one or two soldiers (licitors) wielding the short whip (*flagrum*), an instrument intentionally designed to inflict severe pain and cause extensive blood loss. The severity of the flogging depended almost entirely on the disposition of the lictors. Often it brought the victim to a state just short of collapse or even death.

Source: William D. Edwards, et al., "On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 255, 11 (March 21, 1986):1457. Reprinted by permission.

# The Crucifixion of Jesus

## —John 19:17-37

- I. The reason for John's narrative of the crucifixion is seen in John 19:35 ("that you also may believe"). The differences in detail among the four accounts must be seen as the result of their differences in purpose and emphasis.
- II. The divisions of this narrative are as follows:
  - A. The *place* of the crucifixion is described (19:17-18).
  - B. The *placard* on the cross is debated (19:19-22).
  - C. The *parting* of the clothes is discharged (19:23-25).
  - D. The *provision* for His mother is delegated (19:25-27).
  - E. The *plaintive words* and *proclamation* from the cross are delivered (19:28-30).
  - F. The *piercing* of the body with the spear is documented (19:31-37).
- III. The following is a detailed outline of the aforementioned divisions (19:17-37).
  - A. The crucifixion was noted in as few words as possible (19:17-18).

**NOTE:** Crucifixion was first practiced by the Persians and was adopted by Alexander the Great, the Carthaginians, and finally the Romans. Various kinds of crosses were used, including a tree

*Notes:*

## Notes:

(*infelix lignum*), an upright post (*crux simplex*, *crux acuta*), and the following variations of the upright post and crossbar (*crux composita*): the low cross (*crux humilis*), tall cross (*crux sublimis*), T-shaped "tau" cross (*crux commissa*), t-shaped "Latin" cross (*crux immissa* or *crux capitata*), and x-shaped cross (*crux decussata*).<sup>17</sup> Which form was actually used to crucify Jesus is uncertain. Recent investigators have concluded: "Although archaeological and historical evidence strongly indicates that the low Tau cross was preferred by Romans in Palestine at the time of Christ..., crucifixion practices often varied in a given geographical region and in accordance with the imagination of the executioners, and the Latin cross and other forms also may have been used."<sup>18</sup>

The widespread use of crucifixion in the ancient world has been thoroughly documented in ancient literature by such diverse authors as Plato, Cicero, Seneca, Tacitus, Philo, Josephus, and many others.<sup>19</sup> The second-century jurist Julius Paulus listed the crimes punishable by crucifixion, including desertion to the enemy, the betraying of secrets, incitement to rebellion, murder, prophecy about the welfare of rulers, nocturnal impiety, magic, serious cases of the falsification of wills, etc. Crucifixion was "almost always inflicted only on the lower class... ; the upper class... could reckon with more 'humane' punishment."<sup>20</sup>

1. The passage merely states the act, the place, and the fact that two others were also crucified on that occasion.
2. John, the only disciple who witnessed the event in detail, said least about it (read carefully Matt. 27:32-56; Mark 15:21-41; Luke 23:26-49 and compare Ps. 22:16; John 1:29; Rom. 5:6-8).



**NOTE:** In glaring contrast to much modern preaching of the Cross, the eyewitness testimony is remarkable for its brevity and lack of “gory detail.” Many today seem to confuse their morbid fascinations with “glorying in the Cross.” The sufferings of our Lord are not to be minimized in attempting to appreciate the depths of His love for us, but our emphasis and perspective in proclaiming the Cross should be biblical.

The New Testament proclaimers always view the Cross in light of the Resurrection. They invariably appreciate the saving significance of Christ’s death on the cross from the perspective of the empty tomb. Without the Resurrection, the death of Christ would have been an unspeakable tragedy (read 1 Cor. 15:12-20). The final affirmation of Christianity is not death, but life! Nevertheless, some physical description of crucifixion is appropriate because of how separated we are culturally and historically from this ancient torture. All that we can describe in gory detail would immediately spring to a first-century mind at the mere mention of the word, “crucify.”<sup>21</sup>

*Notes:*

B. The placard on the cross was the cause of contention between Pilate and the Jews (19:19-22).

1. The inscription was

- a. *Read by many:* It was written in Hebrew (or Aramaic),<sup>22</sup> Latin, and Greek,<sup>23</sup> thus expressing a universal truth
- b. *Ironic:* In his contempt, Pilate refused to concede to the Jews (19:21-22)
- c. *Truth:* Jesus was truly “the Man who was born to be King” (see Matt. 2:2; 27:37; Luke 1:32-33; John 3:5; 12:13; 18:36-37)

## Notes:

2. *Through* His death and resurrection Jesus inherited His “name that is above every name” (“King of kings, Lord of lords”) (see Phil. 2:5-11; 1 Peter 1:11; Luke 24:25-27 and compare Zech. 6:13-14; Acts 2:33-36; 1 Tim. 6:14-15; Rev. 1:5; 19:11-16).
- C. The dividing of the clothes was interpreted as fulfillment of prophecy (19:23-25).
  1. The clothes in any crucifixion became the property of the soldiers who were detailed for the execution.<sup>24</sup>
  2. The importance of this point is that their gambling for the seamless tunic *was prophesied* (see Ps. 22:18).

**NOTE:** John emphasizes that these things happened in fulfillment of prophecy (19:24, 28, 36). Over 332 distinct prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus Christ!<sup>25</sup> Some of the major messianic prophecies are: Gen. 3:15; 49:10; Num. 24:17; Deut. 18:15-19; 2 Sam. 7:11-16; Ps. 2:1-2, 7, 9; 8:5-6; 16:9-10; 22:1-18; 31:5, 13; 34:20; 69:4, 8-9, 25; 89:3-4, 28-29; 110:1, 4; Isa. 7:14; 9:6-7; 11:1-9; 53:1-12; 61:1-2; Jer. 23:5-6; Ezek. 34:23-24; Dan. 7:13-14, 27; 9:24-27; Hosea 3:5; Amos 9:11; Micah 5:2-5; Zech. 9:9; 13:7; Mal. 3:1-5.

- D. The provision for His mother was of great concern to the Lord, even in the midst of His own agony (19:25-27).
  1. Jesus discharged His human obligations.
    - a. He entrusted the care of His mother to “the disciple whom He loved”: John.

**NOTE:** The Greek text of John 19:27 allows for the possibility that Jesus and John (“the beloved disciple”) were cousins. If “his mother’s sister” was indeed the Salome of the synoptic accounts (see Mark 15:40; Matt. 27:56), then Jesus entrusted his mother to the care of her nephew.<sup>26</sup>

- b. He arranged for Mary to be cared for and comforted. He is compassionately concerned “for others.”
- 2. John proved his loyalty by his immediate response.
- E. The plaintive words and final proclamation from the cross speak of *participation*, *paradox*, *prophecy*, and *perfection* (19:28, 30).

**NOTE:** John records only three of the seven sayings of Jesus from the cross.

- 1. “Dear woman, here is your son...” (19:26).
- 2. “I am thirsty” (19:28).
  - a. This shows Jesus’ deep *participation* in human suffering (see Heb. 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 1 Tim. 2:5).
  - b. This is a great *paradox* in that He who offered *living water* now thirsts (see John 4:14; 7:37-39).
  - c. John perceived fulfillment of *prophecy* in this circumstance (Pss. 22:15; 69:21).
  - d. Using a stalk of hyssop to carry a sponge of wine vinegar to Jesus’ lips

**Notes:**

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emphasizes the Passover as one important resource for understanding the Cross.

- 1) The blood of the Passover lamb was splashed on the top and sides of the door-frame using a stalk of hyssop (see Exod. 12:22; Ps. 51:7).<sup>27</sup>
- 2) Two late Greek manuscripts, supported by several Old Latin manuscripts, have “javelin” (Gr: *hyssos*) in place of “hyssop” (Gr: *hyssöpos*), but the reading could easily have arisen due to a scribal error, and is not supported well enough to replace “hyssop” as the original reading.<sup>28</sup>
3. “It is finished” (19:30).
  - a. This marks the achievement of the *perfection* of Jesus as our sin offering. He died with the consciousness that He had finished the work which the Father had given Him to do (see Heb. 5:8-9; John 17:4-5).
  - b. This is not the sob of a defeated martyr, but the cry of a victorious Master!

**NOTE:** “He bowed his head.” “Bowed” (Gr: *klinö*) means “to incline; to bow down.”<sup>29</sup> The word occurs only once in John’s gospel account. It refers, not to the helpless dropping of the head after death, but to the deliberate putting of the head into a position of

rest. (Jesus reversed the natural order. First, He “bowed His head”; then He “gave up his spirit.”)<sup>30</sup>

The use of this same verb in Matt. 8:20 and Luke 9:58 (“The Son of Man has no place to lay his head”) heightens the irony of its usage in this context: The only place appointed for Jesus to lay His head to rest was on the cross! The phrase “gave up his spirit” likewise implies voluntary action, not forced deprivation. It is an historical statement concerning the remarkable character of His death (see Luke 23:46; John 10:11).

*Notes:*

4. The seven sayings of Jesus from the cross (in chronological order) are:
  - a. “Father, forgive them...” (see Luke 23:34).
  - b. “Today you will be with me...” (see Luke 23:43).
  - c. “Dear woman, here is your son...” (see John 19:26-27).
  - d. “My God, my God, why...?” (See Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34.)
  - e. “I am thirsty...” (see John 19:28).
  - f. “It is finished” (see John 19:30).
  - g. “Father, into your hands...” (see Luke 23:46).
- F. The piercing of the body with the spear was an undeniable certification of Jesus’ death (19:31-37).
  1. The request of the Jews that Pilate should order the removal of the bodies from the crosses before sunset was due to their

*Notes:*

- concern to honor the Sabbath laws (read Deut. 21:23).
- a. The Sabbath was approaching. (It began Friday at sunset)<sup>31</sup> (read John 19:14, 42).
  - b. This Sabbath was a “high day” because it was the Sabbath of the Passover Feast, a feast of seven days.
  - c. The “breaking of the legs” was to hasten death. (This would enable the bodies to be removed before the Sabbath.)
2. The Roman soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves, but did not break the legs of Jesus, knowing that He was already dead.
- a. John again found in these events the fulfillment of specific prophecies: Messiah’s bones were not to be broken, but He would be “pierced” (read Ps. 34:20; Zech. 12:10; compare Rev. 1:7).<sup>32</sup>
  - b. Jesus fulfilled the meaning of the Passover event and the Lamb of God (read Exod. 12:46 and compare 1 Cor. 5:7; John 1:29).
  - c. The soldiers obviously regarded Jesus as dead, and they were experts on the subject of death.
3. The piercing of Jesus’ side is particularly noted by John. (He devotes four verses to it.)

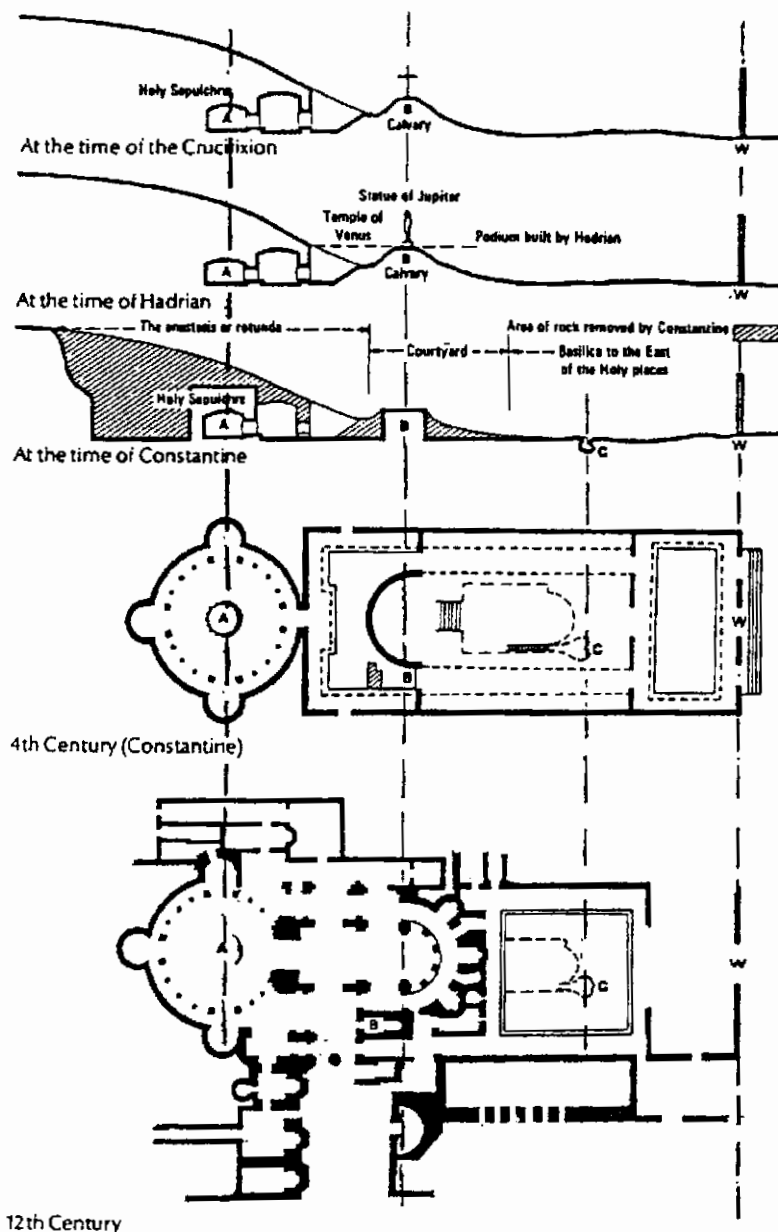
- a. "...bringing a *sudden* flow of *blood and water*" :

- 1) The flowing out of "blood and water" is certain proof that death had already taken place.<sup>33</sup>
- 2) Only "blood" would flow from a living body.
- 3) The death of Jesus was not a mere semblance, but an earth-shaking reality! (Read also 1 John 5:6, 8.)

**NOTE:** The actual cause of death in the case of Jesus of Nazareth has been the subject of much speculation. A favorite theory (one that many preachers subscribe to because of its "preachability") is the "broken-heart theory" (in the sense of a physiological heart rupture). The important thing about the death of Jesus is not so much the "how," but the "what" and the "why": He really did die on the cross, and He did it that you and I might have life!

- b. John testifies that his witness to the "slain Lamb" is true (19:35).
- c. The significance of the "blood that was shed" may be seen by the following passages which speak of Jesus' death: Matt. 26:26; John 1:29; Acts 20:28; Rom. 3:25; 5:9; 6:1-11; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14, 20-22; Heb. 9:22, 28; 10:4; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Rev. 1:5; 5:9-10.

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*"Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha)" (John 19:17). The most likely site for Joseph of Arimathea's new tomb (A) and Golgotha (B) is the place over which the Church of the Holy Sepulcher stands today.*

A small hill just outside the walls of Jerusalem in Jesus' day, it was intentionally chosen for a statue of Jupiter and a temple of Venus in the Roman city Aelia Capitolina (A.D. 135). Under Constantine the Great (A.D. 310) the site was transformed into a shrine of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. Today's church building there has evolved through many centuries.

Source: Christopher Hollis and Ronald Brownrigg, *Holy Places: Jewish, Christian and Muslim Monuments in the Holy Land* (NY: Frederick A. Praeger, Publ., 1969), 164. Reprinted by permission.



# The Burial of Jesus

## —John 19:38-42

- I. The body of Jesus was given to Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus at Joseph's bold request.
  - A. Joseph of Arimathea had been a "secret" disciple of Jesus.
    - 1. It was a secret to the "Jews," but not to John.
    - 2. Jesus was buried in Joseph's "new" tomb, which was "at the place where Jesus was crucified" (19:41; see Matt. 27:57; Mark 15:43; Luke 23:50-52 and compare Isa. 53:9; Matt. 27:60).
  - B. Nicodemus had first come to Jesus by night and had later defended Jesus cautiously in court.
    - 1. Now he comes openly with Joseph to bury the body of Jesus.
    - 2. He gives one hundred pounds of spices for distribution in wrapping the body after the Jewish custom (see John 3:1-13; 7:50-52 and also notice Acts 9:37).

*Notes:*

**NOTE:** The word used by John to denote the burial cloth in which Jesus was wrapped is translated "strips of linen" (Gr: *othonion*), meaning "linen cloth, bandage."<sup>34</sup> Although the Jews did not embalm like the Egyptians, John's use of the word "wrapped" implies a close winding of the body like a mummy (read John 11:44 and compare John 19:40; 20:5, 6, 7).

*Notes:*

- II. The burial in John's account emphasizes his thesis of presenting evidence to aid *belief*, because it adds more witness to the reality of Jesus' death. (Would these men not know, after such a handling, that the body was indeed dead?) (Read John 20:30-31.)
- III. The precautions concerning the burial are described in some detail in Matthew's gospel account (read Matt. 27:62-66 and compare Ps. 2:1-4).
  - A. *The stone* which was placed at the mouth of the tomb was of such size that the three women who had come to anoint the body of Jesus were wondering who would move it. The "seal" was not so much a physical barrier as a legal deterrent. To break the Roman seal was to tamper with government property: a most serious offense.<sup>35</sup>
  - B. *The guards* were Roman soldiers appointed by Pilate according to the request of the Jews. Their lives were forfeit if they failed in their duty (read Matt. 28:11-15; Acts 16:27-28).<sup>36</sup>
- IV. The significance of the burial, certifying that Jesus was indeed dead, is also realized in its value as a tangible witness to the Resurrection.
  - A. Baptism identifies us, not only with the Cross of Christ, but also with His empty tomb (read 1 Cor. 15:1-4 and compare Rom. 6:1-11, 16-18; Col. 2:12; 1 Peter 3:20-21).
  - B. The empty tomb of Jesus stands in history as the guarantee of the coming resurrection of all the

dead (read John 5:28-29 and compare 1 Cor. 15:20-22, 50-58; Acts 17:31; Rom. 8:11-12, 23; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See John Lightfoot, pp. 416-417.

<sup>2</sup>See Tractate Sanhedrin 4:1 (Danby, *Mishnah*, p. 387).

<sup>3</sup>See John Lightfoot, p. 418.

<sup>4</sup>For more information about the illegalities involved in the trial of Jesus, see Walter M. Chandler, *The Trial of Jesus from a Lawyer's Standpoint*, 2 vols. (New York: Federal Book Co., 1925), esp. 1:157-169; Josef Blinzler, *The Trial of Jesus*, trans. by Isabel and Florence McHugh (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1959); Earle L. Wingo, *The Illegal Trial of Jesus* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1962); William R. Wilson, *The Execution of Jesus: A Judicial, Literary and Historical Investigation* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970); F. F. Bruce, "Trial and Execution of Jesus," pp. 195-204 in *New Testament History* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1971) hereafter cited as Bruce, *N.T. History*; Sherwin-White, *Roman Law*, pp. 24-47.

<sup>5</sup>John 18:31 is corroborated by a *baraita* [that is, earlier than A.D. 200] preserved in T[almud] J[erusalem] *Sanhedrin* 1:1; 7:2, to the effect that 'forty years before the destruction of the Temple the right to inflict the death penalty was taken away from Israel'.... said R[abbi] Isaac... [forty years before the destruction of the Temple the Sanhedrin] 'no longer adjudicated capital cases'" (Bruce, *N.T. History*, p. 200). See John Lightfoot, pp. 423-429.

<sup>6</sup>See David Rensberger, "The Politics of John: The Trial of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103, 3 (1984):395-411, esp. pp. 401-406.

<sup>7</sup>See "Barabbas," p. 133 in Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-

Danker. If, as some believe, the few early manuscripts of Matthew (at 27:16-17) are correct that call this man Jesus Barabbas, the irony is heightened so much the more (see Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, pp. 67-68; Davies, "Bar Abbas," p. 260).

<sup>8</sup>See the sermon by Charles Spurgeon, "Barabbas Preferred to Jesus," pp. 323-334 in *The Passion and Death of Our Lord* (A Treasury of Spurgeon on the Life and Work of Our Lord, vol. 6), (repr. ed.: Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), esp. pp. 324-325; hereafter cited as Spurgeon, "Barabbas."

<sup>9</sup>Spurgeon, "Barabbas," p. 324.

<sup>10</sup>See Mackowski, *City of Jesus*, pp. 95-97. Gonzalo Báez-Camargo is less certain that the matter is settled (*Archaeological Commentary on the Bible* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1984], pp. 233-234).

<sup>11</sup>Gaal Yah Cornfeld, *Archaeology of the Bible Book by Book*, ed. by David N. Freedman (New York: Harper & Row Publ., 1976), pp. 270-271.

<sup>12</sup>See Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 2.169-174 ([Loeb], 2:388-391); *Antiquities* 18.55-59 ([Loeb], 9:42-47).

<sup>13</sup>See Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 2.175-177 ([Loeb], 2:390-393); *Antiquities* 18.60-62 ([Loeb], 9:46-47).

<sup>14</sup>See Philo, *Legate to Gaius* 299-305 (10:150-155 in F. H. Colson et al., eds. *Philo* [Loeb Classical Library] 12 vols. [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929-1953]).

<sup>15</sup>See Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.85-89 ([Loeb], 9:60-65).

<sup>16</sup>See "Gospel of Nicodemus" 2.13 (29) (*Anie-Nicene Fathers*, 8:454); "The Letter of Pontius Pilate" (*Ante-*

*Nicene Fathers*, 8:459); “The Report of Pilate the Procurator Concerning Our Lord Jesus Christ” (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 8:460-461); “The Report of Pontius Pilate, Procurator of Judæa, Sent to Rome to Tiberius Cæsar” (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 8:462-463); “The Giving Up of Pontius Pilate” (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 8:464-465); “The Death of Pontius Pilate, Who Condemned Jesus” (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 8:466-467); “Acts of Pilate,” 1:449-470 in Hennecke, *NT Apocrypha*. Other fragments of the Pilate literature may be found in Hennecke, *NT Apocrypha*, 1:477-484.

<sup>17</sup>William D. Edwards, Wesley J. Gabel, and Floyd E. Hosmer, “On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ,” *Journal of the American Medical Association* 255, 11 (March 21, 1986):1458; hereafter cited as Edwards, et al., “Physical Death.”

<sup>18</sup>Edwards, et al., “Physical Death,” p. 1458. This is true despite claims of the Jehovah’s Witnesses that the only possible cross Jesus could have died on was an upright pole (*crux simplex*) (see “Torture stake,” pp. 1608-1609 in *Aid to Understanding*; “Matthew 10:38—‘torture stake,’” pp. 1155-1157 in *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures* [Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible & Tract Society of New York, 1969]). Duane Magnani points out, however, that the wounds in Jesus’ hands were made by “nails” (see John 20:25), indicating that two nails were used to secure Jesus’ hands on the cross. On a *crux simplex*, the hands would have been secured with only one nail (*The Watchtower Files* [Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publ., 1983], p. 260).

<sup>19</sup>See Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion: In the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (Philadel-

phia: Fortress Press, 1977), pp. 22-38; hereafter cited as Hengel, *Crucifixion*.

<sup>20</sup>Hengel, *Crucifixion*, p. 34.

<sup>21</sup>See Edwards, et al., “Physical Death,” pp. 1455-1463.

<sup>22a</sup> ‘Εβραῖσιν [“in Hebrew”] occurs only in Jn. 5<sup>2</sup> 19<sup>13</sup>. 17. 20 20<sup>16</sup> and Rev. 9<sup>11</sup> 16<sup>16</sup>; it signifies not the classical Hebrew of the O.T., but the Aramaic in common use” (Bernard, 1:227). Barrett (p. 457) agrees, pointing out that words in vv. 13 and 17 known to be Aramaic are called Hebrew; compare Walter Gutbrod (“Ἰσραῆλ, κ. τ. λ.: D. Ἰουδαῖος, Ἰσραῆλ, Ἑβραῖοι s in the New Testament,” 3:389 in *TDNT*): “It is worth noting that the terms introduced... in Jn. are almost without exception Aram. The knowledgeable Josephus did not always distinguish between the two in his use of ‘Εβραῖος etc. The same is true of the Rabbis; consistent distinction is not always made in respect of .” What “Hebrew” means here is that it was written in the tongue of the Hebrews, that is, in Aramaic. Hebrew was already becoming the “sacred language,” used only for the reading of the Scriptures (Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, p. 241). George Howard summarizes but rejects the arguments of other scholars that Hebrew was still being spoken (“Hebrew in First Century Palestine,” *Restoration Quarterly* 5, 2 [1961]:57-61).

<sup>23</sup>See Barrett (p. 457) for precedents in the use of a trilingual title. That many of the Jews of both Judea and Galilee could read, write, and speak in Greek has been demonstrated by J. N. Sevenster, *Do You Know Greek? How Much Greek Could the First Jewish Christians Have Known?* (Supplements to Novum Testamentum, Vol. 19) (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), see esp. pp. 176-191.



<sup>24</sup>"The clothes of an executed criminal were a recognized perquisite of the executioners (*Digest* [also called *Libri Pandectarum*] XLVIII, xx, 6)" (Barrett, p. 457).

<sup>25</sup>See McDowell, "The Messianic Prophecies of the Old Testament Fulfilled in Christ," pp. 147-184 in *Evidence*; T. W. Callaway, *Christ in the Old Testament* (New York: Loizeaux Bros., 1950); W. Graham Scroggie, *The Unfolding Drama of Redemption* (3 vols. in 1) (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1972), 1:494-505; Charles A. Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy*, 2nd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893).

<sup>26</sup>See Schnackenburg, 3:277; Brown, 1:900-906.

<sup>27</sup>"Several distinct species of plant are evidently referred to by this name in the Bible, but there is considerable discussion as to their identity.... In the NT the 'hyssop' employed at the crucifixion... was probably a reed or stick, but the reed-like cereal durra (*Sorghum vulgare*) has been considered the most likely suggestion" (F. N. Hepper, "Plants: Hyssop," 3:1238 in *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*).

<sup>28</sup>See Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, pp. 253-254. In spite of its meager documentary support, the reading "javelin" does seem a more fitting way to get a wine-soaked sponge to the lips of a man on a cross, and its historical plausibility has influenced Moffatt, Goodspeed, C. K. Williams, Schonfield, and the New English Bible to accept it as the original reading. The javelin, however, was not used by Roman auxiliary troops but only by legionary troops. It was not until A.D. 66 that legionary troops came to Palestine (Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, pp. 253-254, n. 5).

<sup>29</sup>Vine, 1:143; compare Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, 436.

<sup>30</sup>"Since the bowing of the head came before the giving up of his spirit, and since esp. in the Fourth Gosp. the Passion is a voluntary act of Jesus to the very last, the bowing must not be regarded as a sign of weakness; the Crucified One acted of his own accord" ("κλινω," Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 436).

<sup>31</sup>Based on an assumption that three successive 24-hour periods is the only possible fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy about being in the heart of the earth "three days and three nights" (see Matt. 12:40), some scholars have pushed back the crucifixion to Wednesday, with the resurrection no later than sunset on Saturday. Others who do not insist on a full seventy-two hours, still maintain that Jesus must have been in the tomb for at least three periods of daylight and three periods of darkness, and set the crucifixion on Thursday. The traditional view, that Jesus died on Friday, assumes that Matt. 12:40 should not be taken to demand so punctilious a time-reckoning. First-century references to time were often only rough approximations, as shown by the synonymous use of "after three days" (Matt. 27:63), "in three days" (Mark 14:58), and "(on) the third day" (Matt. 16:21). Hoehner discusses the strengths and weaknesses of each position, himself arguing in favor of the traditional position (Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects*, pp. 65-74).

<sup>32</sup>France points out that of the three times in the New Testament Zech. 12:10 is applied to Christ, John 19:37 looks to the past piercing, while Matt. 24:30 and Rev. 1:7 look to the future mourning (*Jesus and the O.T.*, pp. 207-208).

<sup>33</sup>"[T]he water probably represented serous pleural and pericardial fluid, and would have preceded the flow of blood and been smaller in volume than the blood. Perhaps

in the setting of hypovolemia and impending acute heart failure, pleural and pericardial effusions may have developed and would have added to the volume of apparent water” (Edwards, et al., “Physical Death,” p. 1463).

<sup>34</sup>Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 555.

<sup>35</sup>McDowell has assembled information about the seal from various authorities (see *Evidence*, pp. 217-218).

<sup>36</sup>McDowell has an extensive discussion about the guards, including a discussion about whether the guards were Jewish temple guards or, as he contends, Roman auxiliary troops. McDowell also provides a summary of the military discipline of Roman soldiers (*Evidence*, pp. 218-224).





# Lesson Twelve

**John 20:1-31**



# Resurrection: The Proof

## —John 20:1-10

- I. The following comments place the events of chapter twenty in their proper perspective.
  - A. This is the climax of John's book: The resurrection of Jesus dramatically demonstrates that He is *Messiah, Lord, and God*.
  - B. Were there no Resurrection, the unbelief which culminated in the Cross would remain forever unsolved.
    1. Evil would have conquered good, and at best Jesus' death would have been a futile gesture.
    2. In that event, faith in a "good" God would be irrational.
    3. The concept of a moral universe would be impossible (read 1 Cor. 15:32).
    4. In that case, stark pessimism would be the only reasonable philosophy.<sup>1</sup>
  - C. John's account of the Resurrection<sup>2</sup> is
    1. *Compact* (It does not indulge in embellishment as works of fiction are prone to do.)
    2. *Historical* (It is tied to space and time by naming specific days, people, and places.)
    3. *Personal* (Its effect upon the individual lives of Jesus' disciples is portrayed vividly.)

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4. *Coherent* (It illustrates the various effects of belief and brings that belief to its highest expression.)
  - a. We have seen the climax of *unbelief*.
  - b. We will now see the zenith of *belief*.
- D. John selects those things concerning the Resurrection that will increase *belief* (read again John 20:30-31).
- E. The synoptic accounts of the Resurrection should be carefully compared (read also Matt. 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-49).
- II. John presents the material evidence of the resurrection of Jesus.
  - A. The open, empty tomb is considered (20:1-2).
    1. It was first discovered by devoted women who intended to anoint the body of Jesus with burial spices.
    2. They found the stone “removed from the entrance.”
      - a. Instead of “rolled away” (Gr: *apokuliō*) as in the Synoptics (see Matt. 28:2; Mark 16:3-4; Luke 24:2), John uses “removed” (Gr: *airō*, meaning “lift up, take up, pick up” or “remove [w(ith) no suggestion of lifting up]”<sup>3</sup>).
      - b. “This seems to imply that the stone was lifted out of the groove in which it ran.”<sup>4</sup>

- c. The fact that “removed” is in the perfect tense suggests that the stone was permanently removed from its former place.<sup>5</sup>
3. Mary Magdalene ran ahead of the others to report her conclusion to the other disciples: “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb.”
4. Upon hearing this disturbing report, Peter and John ran to the tomb.

**NOTE:** In contrast to Luke’s report that Peter visited the tomb, John’s Gospel not only tells of Peter’s running mate, but also significantly adds that the other disciple got to the tomb first, and that he was the one, and not yet Peter, who “saw and believed” (John 20:8). John may have intended for this story (among others, see 1:35-42; 13:23-26; 18:15-16; 21:7) to check a growing tendency for the early Christians to exalt Peter.<sup>6</sup>

- B. The grave clothes were important in their impact on Peter and John (20:3-10; compare Luke 24:12).<sup>7</sup>
  1. The “other disciple” (John), having outrun Peter to the tomb, was the first to see the grave clothes. John’s description of his initial observation is expressed by the verb “looked” (Gr: *blepō*), meaning “to peep, to glance to the side, or just to look”<sup>8</sup> (before entering the tomb).
  2. John records Peter’s perception of the empty burial clothes by using the term

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“saw” (Gr: *theōreō*), meaning “notice, perceive, observe.”<sup>9</sup>

3. John finally entered the tomb and comprehended the meaning of the evidence before him. He reports his experience by saying that he “saw” (Gr: *eidon*), indicating “perception by sight, ‘see,’ ‘perceive’”,<sup>10</sup> that is, he *understood* and “believed.”

**NOTE:** What was it about the grave clothes that provoked such a spontaneous transition to belief? The grave clothes, saturated as they were with myrrh (an ointment with the consistency of honey), probably retained the shape of the body which had left it.<sup>11</sup> The wording (literally, “lying” or “collapsed” and “twirled”) suggests that the winding cloths had not been unwound, but no longer concealed a body. If the body had been stolen, they would have been unwound and left behind in disarray, or they would have been stolen along with the body. The only explanation of their forming an empty shell is a miraculous resurrection in which the transformed body “passed through the graveclothes, as it was later to pass through closed doors, leaving them untouched.”<sup>12</sup>

John’s reference to “Scripture” (“They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead”) may not point to any single passage, but to the whole direction of Messianic prophecy. If a single passage had been in John’s mind, Psalm 16:9-11 is probably the best possibility. Peter later applied this passage to Christ’s resurrection (20:9; read Acts 2:25-32).

# The Living Lord Confronts a Despairing Disciple —John 20:11-18<sup>13</sup>

- I. Mary's misconception and later recognition are dramatically documented by John.
  - A. In her initial depression, she *wept* (20:11).
  - B. Still shocked and bewildered, she *looked* again into the tomb (20:11).
  - C. This time, she *saw* two angels of God dressed in white, but did not seem to comprehend their nature (20:12).
  - D. There follows a *question and answer* exchange between Mary and the angels (20:13).
  - E. In her frustration, she *mistook* the risen Jesus, whom she was not expecting to see, for the gardener of the tomb area, and asked Him about the location of the "missing" body (20:14-15).
  - F. Then came her overjoyed response of adoration, when His mention of her name brought *recognition* (20:16-18).
- II. Jesus' revelation of Himself to Mary Magdalene is personal and profound.
  - A. Jesus *calls* Mary by name (20:16).
  - B. Jesus *commands* Mary: "Do not hold on to me" ("Do not cling to Me"; "Do not keep holding on to Me")<sup>14</sup> (20:17).

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C. Jesus *cautions* her: "I have not yet returned to the Father," implying that He will soon be in the presence of God the Father, and will not stay long among the disciples (20:17).

D. Jesus *commissions* her: "Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning'" (20:17).

III. Mary's transformation involved

A. Activity (a firsthand experience of the empty tomb and risen Lord)

B. Testimony (a message to the disciples concerning that which she had *seen* and *heard*)

**NOTE:** In *becoming* Man, Jesus has elevated the status of all humanity. In Christ, God has descended from heaven into the world of mankind, that He might ascend again into heaven as the *head* of a New Humanity. Those who *believe* in Jesus are destined to follow Him into the presence of the Father, and to share in His glorious inheritance as "children of God," *adopted* in Christ and *born again* into the New Humanity. *His Father has become our Father!* (Read Eph. 1:1-6:24; Rom. 8:1-39; Heb. 2:1-18.)



## The Living Lord Turns Depression into Delight—John 20:19-23

- I. The disciples were meeting on the “evening of the first day of the week” behind doors “locked for fear of the Jews”<sup>15</sup> (20:19; read Luke 24:19-25).
- II. Jesus appeared in their midst (20:19).
  - A. His presence was *real* (read carefully Luke 24:36-43).
  - B. His words brought *peace*. This was not a mere wish or sentiment. The scarred hands, feet, and side were irrefutable proof that Jesus has secured man’s peace and reconciliation with God.
  - C. His *identity* was authentic. The wounds in His body still bore testimony.
- III. The proof of Jesus’ living presence among the disciples turned them from sadness to gladness (20:20; read John 16:19-22).
- IV. The disciples were commissioned by the resurrected Lord (20:21-23).
  - A. His gift to them is “peace” (see the notes on John 16:33).
  - B. His command to them involved a continuation in His own mission (read carefully Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:1-3).
  - C. His promise to them was the reception of the

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Holy Spirit (read carefully John 14:1-16:33; and compare Acts 1:4-5; 2:1-4; Luke 24:49).

*NOTE:* When Jesus “breathed on them,”<sup>16</sup> he symbolized the coming outpouring of the Spirit by an act reminiscent of the creation of Adam (see Gen. 2:7, where the same verb occurs in the Greek version). The symbolism implies the God-given life of the coming new creation (see Ezek. 37:5, 14; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Eph. 2:14-16; 4:20-24; Col. 2:9-11).<sup>17</sup> “Receive the Holy Spirit” does not necessarily imply an immediate impartation of the Spirit on this occasion (as some teach),<sup>18</sup> for Thomas, who was absent, would have been left out.<sup>19</sup> Rather the sending of the Spirit is made as a promise whose fulfillment is so imminent that it can be expressed in terms of a command.<sup>20</sup>

The word “Spirit” can be translated “breath” or “wind” in both Hebrew and Greek. The Holy Spirit of God is the token of *divine sonship*, and is the Agent through whom God restores peace and brings *order out of chaos*. That is why the promise of the Holy Spirit (which was to be given on the upcoming Pentecost day) is closely linked with *forgiveness of sins* (see Gen. 1:1-3; Isa. 11:1-9 and compare John 3:1-8; 7:37-39; Acts 2:37-39; Rom. 5:5; 8:15-17; Gal. 4:6; 5:22-23; Eph. 1:13-14).

- D. His authority was directed toward the forgiveness of sins. (There is a strong connection between the apostles, the Great Commission, and forgiveness of sins.) (See Matt. 16:13-18; 18:18; Mark 2:7; Luke 24:46-48.)

# The Living Lord Dispels Doubt

## —John 20:24-29<sup>21</sup>

- I. The reality of unbelief still existed among the disciples (20:24-25).
  - A. Thomas (absent during Jesus' earlier appearance) explained his unbelief on the basis of *insufficient experience*.
  - B. Thomas had set definite criteria for what he considered to be *sufficient testimony*.
  - C. Disciples today can rejoice that Jesus met this *demand for objective proof* from one who said: "Unless I see... I will not believe it."

**NOTE:** There is probably a tender, untold story here that goes something like this. Thomas earlier was so willing to follow Jesus into the dangers of Judea that he led all the rest (see John 11:16), but is now filled with a grief made worse by a sense of guilt; he had not made good his promise to die with him. "Why should He be dead and I still alive?" he asks himself. And then he learns that they have seen Him alive—all but he. They try to console him, but he cannot share their joy. Day after day that week, one disciple after another tries to convince Thomas to believe. "I believed once," he says. "I believed that He was the Messiah and would deliver the nation from all its woes. But look where it got me. Dashed hope is worse than no hope at all."

One after another tries to describe for him in detail what he saw when Jesus appeared. Finally, Thomas has had enough. To curtail all further attempts to convince him, he shouts out in his

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frustration, "I will not believe unless I myself see His wounds. Unless I myself actually feel the nail prints and put my hand into His side." The other disciples are shocked into silence, and Thomas is finally left alone to his guilt and grief.

Then one day, He stands before them once more. Understanding how deep is the hurt, Jesus does not rebuke or criticize; He meets the challenge and uproots the doubts crushed hope has sown and with His warmest voice consoles, accepts, renews. He touches Thomas's wounds, and, as they had seen so many times before, His touch has healing power.

- II. The refutation of unbelief is undeniably delivered (20:26-27).
  - A. His resurrection power was unquestionable.
  - B. The reality of His physical presence was indisputable.
  - C. His renewal of personal friendship was unqualified.
  - D. His reply to Thomas' challenge was unflinching.
  - E. His rebuke of Thomas' attitude was uncompromising ("Stop doubting and believe").
- III. The renunciation of unbelief by Thomas was climactic and complete (20:28-29).
  - A. Thomas' confession of faith ("My Lord and my God") is unique.
    - 1. It is a confession of the full deity of the resurrected Christ.

- a. Thomas did not address the Son with “my Lord” and the Father with “my God,” as some have erroneously claimed.<sup>22</sup>
  - b. He was not just using a figure of speech to mean “my godly lord.”<sup>23</sup>
  - c. He was not using profanity (akin to “It’s my Lord! Oh my God!”); Jesus would have rebuked him for this (see Exod. 20:7; Jer. 12:2).
  - d. He was not mistaken in his attribution of deity to Christ; Jesus would have rebuked him for this also (see Acts 10:25-26; 12:22-23; 14:11-18; Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9).
2. It stands as the climax of this Gospel, the predicted stairway to heaven in which His full identity is finally revealed (see John 1:50-51).
  3. A careful study of this Gospel ought to evoke a similar confession from every reader.
    - a. Each of us must face two questions.
      - 1) Who is Jesus?
      - 2) What does He want from me?
    - b. This Gospel provides the two answers.
      - 1) He is God (see John 1:1; 8:58).

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- 2) He wants your permission to be Lord (see John 1:43; 8:31-32; 14:15, 21; 15:12-14).
- B. Jesus' evaluation of belief was that "faith on sight" is good, but "faith without sight" is better (see 2 Cor 5:7; 1 Peter 1:8-9; Heb. 11:1 and compare Rom. 4:18-25; 10:14-17).

# The Proven Resurrection and Its Effects<sup>24</sup>

- I. The indisputable evidence of the resurrection of Jesus Christ centers around
  - A. The empty tomb
  - B. The grave clothes
  - C. The appearances of Jesus

**NOTE:** The post-Resurrection appearances of Jesus cannot be explained away as hysterical *hallucination* (the disciples did not expect or believe He would rise), or rationalized as fraudulent *impersonation* (the disciples met in a locked room and allowed only members of their own company to enter). John stressed the *tangible reality* of Jesus. Mary saw, heard, and touched Him; the disciples recognized Him; and Thomas (the “materialist”) believed upon viewing the tangible evidence (read 1 John 1:1-5; John 1:14; 1 Cor. 15:1-9).

- II. The effect that the risen Lord had upon the disciples is the best explanation for the conversion of
  - A. A mourner (Mary) into a missionary
  - B. A penitent (Peter) into a preacher
  - C. A bereaved friend (John) into an apostle of love
  - D. A doubter (Thomas) into a confessor: Faith can rise no higher than when it avows Jesus of Nazareth to be its *Lord and God*

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- E. A timid, shrinking band of disciples into fearless heralds of a new movement that eventually conquered the world

As McDowell says: "On the day of the crucifixion they were filled with sadness; on the first day of the week with gladness. At the crucifixion they were hopeless; on the first day of the week their hearts glowed with certainty and hope. When the message of the resurrection first came they were incredulous and hard to be convinced, but once they became assured they never doubted again. What could account for the astonishing change in these men in so short a time? The mere removal of the body from the grave could never have transformed their spirits, and characters. Time is needed for a process of legendary growth. It is a psychological fact that demands a full explanation.

"Think of the character of the witnesses, men and women who gave the world the highest ethical teaching it has ever known, and who even on the testimony of their enemies lived it out in their lives. Think of the psychological absurdity of picturing a little band of defeated cowards cowering in an upper room one day and a few days later transformed into a company that no persecution could silence—and then attempting to attribute this dramatic change to nothing more convincing than a miserable fabrication they were trying to foist upon the world. That simply wouldn't make sense."<sup>25</sup>



III. The evidence is presented in all its clarity, truthfulness, and actuality. Jesus is declared and proven to be the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Savior of the world!

A. "Do you believe this?" (See John 11:25.)

B. "Stop doubting and believe" (see John 20:27).

C. "*That by believing you may have life in his name*" (see John 20:30-31).

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<sup>1</sup>Nihilism, just such a pessimistic philosophy, has, in fact, become the philosophy of choice of some who deny the historicity of Christ's resurrection. Many others have chosen existentialism, which is irrationally optimistic. See Schaeffer, *God Who is There*, pp. 13-84; James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door. A Basic World View Catalog* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), pp. 77-126.

<sup>2</sup>For points under section C, see Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 272-273.

<sup>3</sup>Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 24.

<sup>4</sup>Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, trans. and ed. by Cleon L. Rogers, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1976), p. 260; hereafter cited as Rienecker, *Linguistic Key*.

<sup>5</sup>See Rienecker, *Linguistic Key*, p. 260.

<sup>6</sup>See Agourides, "Peter and John," pp. 5-6.

<sup>7</sup>See Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, pp. 280-281.

<sup>8</sup>Lenski, p. 1340; compare Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, pp. 143-144.

<sup>9</sup>Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 360.

<sup>10</sup>Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 220-221.

<sup>11</sup>Chrysostom wrote: "John tells us... that [the body] was buried with much myrrh, which glues linen to the body not less firmly than lead" (quoted in Morris, *John*, p. 833, n. 16).

<sup>12</sup>John R. W. Stott, *Basic Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1958), p. 52. See his discussion on pp. 51-53. Morris concedes that the language is compatible with the idea of the winding cloths forming an empty shell, but maintains that the evidence for it is inconclusive (*John*, p. 833).

<sup>13</sup>See Hendriksen, pp. 452-457.

<sup>14</sup>This is an example of a negated present active imperative, with the meaning, "Stop doing what you are already doing" (see Blass-Debrunner-Funk, §336, p. 172). This fine point of grammar corrects the misimpression left by the KJV's translation, "Touch me not," that it was impossible (or at least impermissible) for humans to touch the glorified body of Christ—the very thing Christ challenged Thomas to do!

<sup>15</sup>Once again, "Jews" refers to the Jewish authorities, hostile to Jesus and to His disciples (see Von Wahlde, "Johannine 'Jews,'" pp. 40, 42).

<sup>16</sup>The word rendered "he breathed" (Gr: *emphusaō*) is the word from which comes the English word "infuse." It means "breathe upon or over" (Ethelbert Stauffer, "ἐμφυσᾶω," 2:536-537 in *TDNT*).

<sup>17</sup>The association of the Lord's Day with the first day of creation is also suggestive of a new creation (see Justin, *First Apology* 67 [1:186 in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*]). In the second-century church, Sunday was often called "the eighth day," also suggesting a new age after the eschatological Sabbath rest (see R. J. Bauckham, "Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-Apostolic Church," p. 273 in Carson, *Sabbath to Lord's Day*). Barrett says, "That John intended to depict an event of significance parallel to that of the first creation of man cannot be doubted; this was the beginning of the new creation" (p. 474).

<sup>18</sup>See Lenski, p. 1371; Hoskyns, pp. 546-547; Bernard, 2:677-678; Lindars, p. 612; Morris, *John*, pp. 846-847.

<sup>19</sup>This is true unless the symbolic breath were intended to convey the Spirit to the apostles corporately (see

Morris, *John*, pp. 846-847, though he says in the breath the Spirit was “a collective gift made to the church as a whole”). Macgregor solves the problem of Thomas by following Strachan in placing verses 21-23 after verse 29, with no text-critical justification whatsoever (pp. 361-362).

<sup>20</sup>See Guthrie, *NT Theology*, p. 534. This view was also held by John Chrysostom (“Homily 86,” pp. 446-457 in *Commentary on Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist: Homilies 48-88* (The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation), trans. by Thomas Aquinas Goggin, ed. by R. J. Deferrari, et al. [New York: Fathers of the Church Inc., 1959], esp. p. 453) and Theodore of Mopsuestia, among others (Meyer, p. 532, n. 3). Meyer claims that this is an actual impartation of the Spirit, but only a “firstfruits” (pp. 532-533).

<sup>21</sup>See Hendriksen, pp. 463-467.

<sup>22</sup>The Jehovah’s Witnesses claim that the words “my God” could not have been addressed to Jesus, for then, they say, Thomas would have been calling Jesus “the one and only living, true God, the God whose name is Jehovah” (“*The Word*”: *Who Is He?*, p. 50). Metzger calls this dodge “not permissible” and “a high-handed expedient [which] overlooks the plain introductory words, ‘Thomas said to him [clearly, to Jesus], ‘My Master and my God!’” (“Jehovah’s Witnesses and Christ,” p. 71, n. 13). Once again, the Witnesses make the mistake of assuming that the Father and the Son cannot both be called ‘God’ without thereby being identified as one and the same Person. Metzger discusses how a belief in the triune nature of God is “not contrary to reason but beyond it” and suggests: “A God who would be fully understood by our finite intelligences would be unworthy to be called God” (p. 84).

On the same page he explains that the oneness of God is less like oneness in mathematics and more like aesthetic or organic oneness. He quotes Hodgson with approval: “[T]he degree of unity is to be measured by a scale of intensity of unifying power; if the elements in the Godhead are Persons in the full sense of the word, then the unity of the Godhead must exceed in intensity the lesser unity known on earth. All existent earthly unities are imperfect analogies of the divine” (p. 84).

<sup>23</sup>Cult leader Wierwille claims that Thomas was using the figure of speech called *hendiadys*: “The word ‘lord’ expresses the fact and the word ‘godly’ intensifies ‘lord’ to the superlative degree” (*Jesus is Not God*, pp. 36-37). E. W. Bullinger, however (whom Wierwille cites three times as an authority on figures of speech in the Bible), notes: “It does not follow that in every case where two nouns are thus joined we have only one idea.... And occasionally, even in an undoubted *hendiadys*, the two words may be equally true when taken separately and severally, as when joined together in one. In these cases both letter and figure are correct, and the passage gains considerable additional light and force” (*Figures of Speech in the Bible* [orig. ed.: London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1898; repr. ed.: Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968], p. 658). If the confession of Thomas is a case of *hendiadys*, a question which must remain open to the subjective judgment of each Bible student, it could very well be another case of Johannine double meaning: Jesus is indeed a superlatively exalted Lord, but He is also Lord and God.

<sup>24</sup>See Tenney, pp. 282-284.

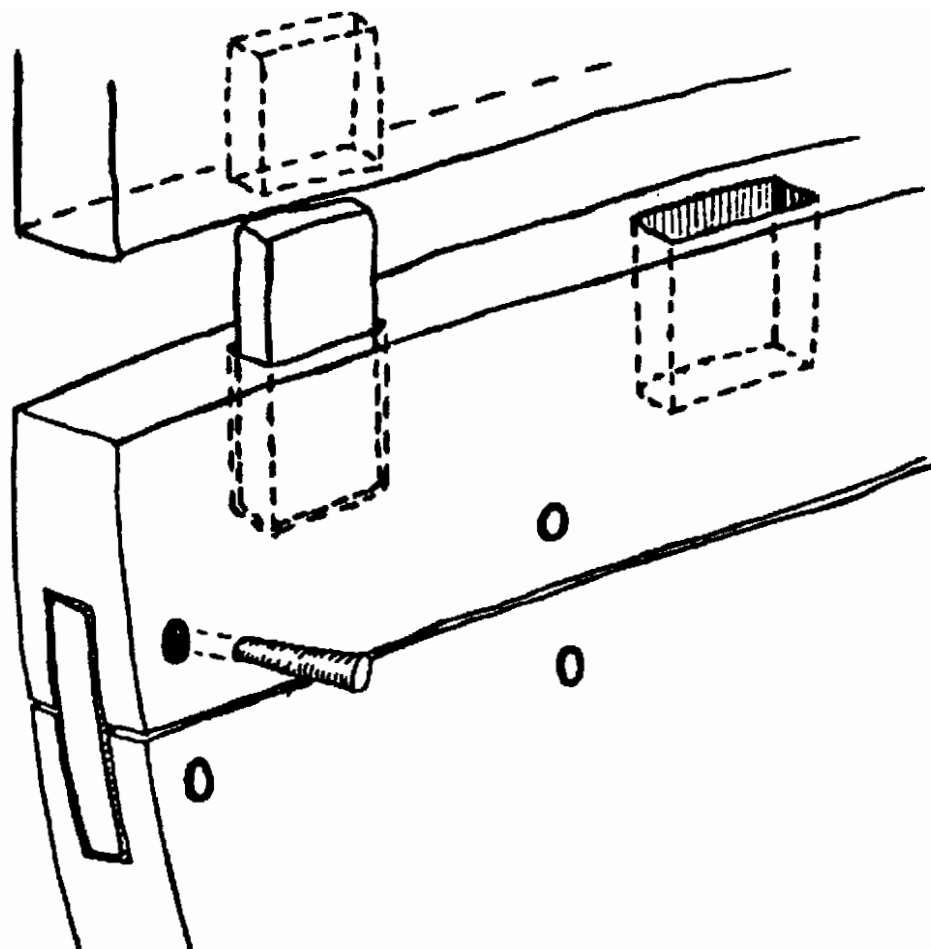
<sup>25</sup>McDowell, *Evidence*, p. 237. See his compilation of the comments of others about the significance of the transformation of the disciples on pp. 236-237.



# **The Gospel of John: “That You May Have Life”**

## **Part VIII**

### ***The Responsibilities of Belief***



When a severe drought struck Israel in 1985 and 1986, nearby farmers pumped water from the Sea of Galilee to irrigate their parched fields, significantly shrinking the lake and exposing large areas of lakebed. Two amateur archaeologists exploring the lakebed discerned in the mud a faint, oval-shaped outline betraying the presence of a sunken boat. Professional archaeologists were notified, and the subsequent excavation revealed an ancient fishing boat probably as old as the first century. Its construction of wooden links (tenons) inserted in slots (mortises) and secured by wooden pegs was a tell-tale sign of the boat's antiquity. The boat is now housed in the Yigal Allon Museum on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, its waters once more covering the excavation site.

Source: Shelley Wachsmann, "The Galilee Boat: 2,000-Year-Old Hull Recovered Intact," *Biblical Archaeology Review* (Sept./Oct. 1988):22. Drawing by Ronny Reich. Reprinted by permission.

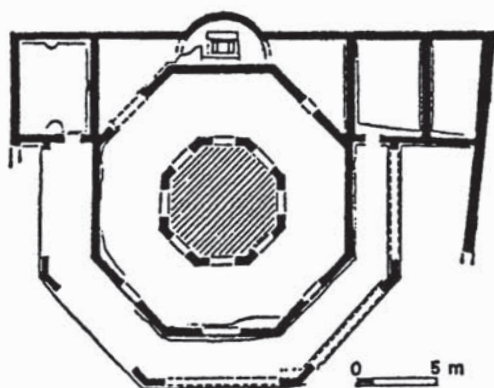
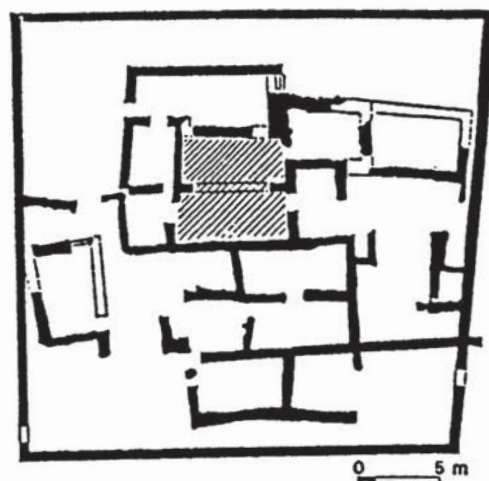
# Lesson Thirteen

**John 21:1-25**



From the first century B.C. to the fourth century A.D., Capernaum was occupied by small houses built around irregular courtyards. One room (shaded) was singled out from the others in that it had plastered walls. Up to the mid-first century A.D., it was in regular family use, as demonstrated by the broken pottery on its floor. After the middle of the first century, however, only storage jars and lamps were in use. That the room was put to some public use at that time is confirmed by the numerous graffiti scratched in the plaster, some of them mentioning Jesus as Lord and Christ.

In the fourth century A.D., this was the central room of a complex cut off from the rest of the town by a wall, with entrances to the south and east. The room was given a more solid roof, supported by an added central archway. This is probably the house-church mentioned by Egeria: "In Capernaum the house of the prince of the apostles has been made into a church, with its original walls still standing...."



About the middle of the fifth century A.D., all the buildings within the enclosure were leveled to make room for the eight-sided church built here. Shortly after construction was completed, a baptistery (?) was added on the east side. This church lasted until the seventh century. It is impossible to be certain of the original ownership of this house, but it was apparently consistently venerated from before the time of Constantine forward as the house of the Apostle Peter.



## Jesus and the Disciples by the Sea—John 21:1-14<sup>1</sup>

- I. The manifestation of Jesus at the Sea of Galilee was the scene of this intimate occasion (21:1-8).<sup>2</sup>
- II. Jesus' appearance and command was a call to a new reality (read Matt. 28:7-18; Mark 14:28).
  - A. Peter's proposal was dangerous; Jesus had trained these men for something more important!
  - B. Therefore, the manifestation of Jesus was a call to renewal and commitment to His commission; He had said to Peter: "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men" (see Luke 5:1-11).
- III. The miraculous catch of fish was not misunderstood (21:3-5, 12).
  - A. There could be no doubt about His voice.
  - B. There could be no doubt about the fish.
  - C. There could be no doubt about His presence.
- IV. Jesus' fellowship with the disciples on this occasion marked "the third time" that He had appeared to them as a group following His resurrection (21:9-14).
  - A. Fellowship which had been interrupted by death "for a little while" was now resumed (read again John 16:16-24).

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- B. Renewal of life with Him was a reality: Personal contact with Him was, and still is, possible only after the Resurrection (see Acts 10:41).
- V. Just like the first miraculous catch, Jesus was teaching His disciples to trust Him to provide their daily necessities (compare Luke 5:1-11).
  - A. The miraculous catch of fish shows His abundant provision.
    - 1. The catch of fish may be symbolic of the later “catch” of people (see Luke 5:10).
    - 2. The catch of fish definitely proved that Jesus could provide for His laborers (compare Matt. 10:9-10).
  - B. He did not need their catch to cook them breakfast.
    - 1. When they reached the shore, a breakfast of fish and bread was already cooking (probably suggesting another miracle of provision).
    - 2. To His breakfast, they added the results of their own labor.
      - a. The fish they caught were large.<sup>3</sup>
      - b. The fish they caught were many—153!<sup>4</sup>

## Jesus and Peter—John 21:15-23

- I. This was the occasion of Jesus' public restoration of Peter and His call of commitment to the cause (21:15-17).
  - A. The disciples' need was a complete love in order that each of them might be committed to the task that lay ahead (read again John 20:21-23; Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16).
  - B. Jesus' interrogation of Peter showed His sensitivity.
    - 1. He asked Peter for three affirmations of love and three demonstrations of service.
      - a. The requests for affirmations of love are as follows:
        - 1) "Do you truly love me...?" (21:15). John conveys the intent of Jesus' question by using a certain word for "love" (Gr: *agapaō*), meaning "the love of intelligence and purpose, the love of whole-hearted devotion."<sup>5</sup>
        - 2) "Do you truly love me?" (21:16). John records the second question of Jesus using the same Greek verb as mentioned above.
        - 3) "Do you love me?" (21:17). Jesus' third question to Peter employs the

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term “love” (Gr: *phileō*), meaning “friendship or fondness.”<sup>6</sup>

**NOTE:** Peter replies with *phileō* each time. John also describes the subtle shades of emphasis in Peter’s reply by a distinction between the word “know” (Gr: *oida*, meaning “a mental process... knowledge by intuition or by reflection”)<sup>7</sup> and a different word for “know” (Gr: *ginōskō*, meaning “knowledge by observation and experience”).<sup>8</sup>

- b. The requests for demonstrations of service are as follows:

**NOTE:** Jesus’ commands speak clearly concerning their new occupation (read again John 10:1-18, 26-29). Jesus did not rebuke Peter for fishing, but He let him know that fishing was not to be the main business of life. Any legitimate labor can be acceptably offered as worship to God, as long as God remains at the center (see Rom. 12:1-2; Col. 3:17, 22-25).

- 1) “Feed my lambs” (21:15).
  - a) The word “feed” (Gr: *boskō*) means “to supply with food; to take to pasture.”<sup>9</sup>
  - b) The word “lamb” (Gr: *arnion*) implies babes in Christ.
- 2) “Take care of my sheep” (21:16).
  - a) The term translated “take care of” (Gr: *poimainō*) signifies “all the care a shepherd would give to his sheep.”<sup>10</sup>

- b) The term “sheep” (Gr: *probation*) includes all believers.
- 3) “Feed my sheep” (21:17).
  - a) Concerning the word “feed,” see above point: “Feed my lambs.”
  - b) Regarding the term “sheep,” see above.

**NOTE:** Peter’s own words in his latter life are a comment on Jesus’ statements in this section (read 1 Peter 5:2-4).

- 2. This request corresponds exactly to the number of times that Peter had denied Jesus.

**NOTE:** The object of comparison to which Jesus refers when He says, “Do you truly love me more than these” is probably His fellow disciples. If Peter loved Jesus more than his fellow disciples did, he could demonstrate this by serving them (21:15; see Matt. 25:40; 26:33).

**II. Jesus’ call is personal and decisive: “Follow me!” (21:18-23).**

- A. Peter’s future death was predicted by Jesus at this time (21:18-19; read 2 Peter 1:13-14).
  - 1. He would live to be old.
  - 2. He would die violently.
  - 3. He would glorify God in his death.<sup>11</sup>
- B. Jesus left Peter (and every disciple) with a final call to commitment and belief: “Follow me!”

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(The Greek text shows clearly that this is an individual summons.)

C. Jesus' reply to Peter's question has the following literal intent: "Peter, it is none of your business what John does. You follow Me" (21:20-23).

1. Jesus alludes to the next and final milepost in His messianic program: His return to earth for "His own."
2. John clearly explained the misunderstood statement of Jesus. Yet, some (especially the Mormons)<sup>12</sup> *choose to believe the error* of John's day, which has been so thoroughly exposed.

## Conclusion—John 21:24-25

- I. John's conclusion consists of a final testimony of assurance and authenticity (21:24-25).
- II. John again reminds us that his presentation of Jesus has been selective (read again John 20:30-31).
- III. John soberly affirms that the greatness of his subject (the infinite God manifested in human flesh) is inexhaustible.

*"Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written."*

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>"The final chapter is thought by many to be an appendix added after the rest had been written. Be that as it may, as G. Appleton says, '...It has the same eyewitness touch about it as the earlier chapters of the gospel'" (Morris, *Studies*, p. 205).

<sup>2</sup>This encounter is one of many appearances Jesus made to his disciples, both in Galilee (see Matt. 28:16-20) and in Judea (see all the appearances in Luke 24; Acts 1:4-5) over a period of some forty days (see Acts 1:3). All of the gospel accounts must be read together to avoid the impressions either that Jesus ascended on Resurrection Day (reading Luke alone) or that Jesus ascended from Galilee (reading Matthew alone).

<sup>3</sup>Based on the typological interpretation, in which the fish represent the community of the saved, some have inferred that none of these fish were discarded (compare Matt. 13:48).

<sup>4</sup>E. W. Bullinger (*Number in Scripture: Its Supernatural Design and Spiritual Significance* [orig. ed. publ. 1894; repr. ed.: Grand Rapids: Kregel Publ., 1967], pp. 273-278) devotes six pages(!) to the history, from Augustine to Bullinger himself, of attempts to arrive at a symbolic meaning to the number 153, variously derived by multiplication, addition, both multiplication and addition, and gematria (adding together the numerical value of various Hebrew or Greek words). Although admitting the ingenuity of these suggestions, we must point out that if John had intended the number to convey any symbolism, he would have pointed to it more clearly (contrast Rev. 13:18; Gen. 40:12, 18; 41:26-27; Dan. 7:17, 24). The best explanation is that the number is an historical reminiscence of the number actually caught—and nothing more.

<sup>5</sup>Hendriksen, 2:487; compare "high and devoted love," Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 5:321.

<sup>6</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 291.

<sup>7</sup>Hendriksen, 1:99.

<sup>8</sup>Hendriksen, 1:99. Some scholars have denied that these interchanges of synonyms for "love" and for "know" possess any exegetical significance (see Carson, *Fallacies*, pp. 51-54; Morris, *Studies*, pp. 293-319). In favor of the distinction between *agapaō* and *phileō*, see Hendricksen's arguments (2:494-500); see also Trench, *Synonyms*, pp. 38-42.

<sup>9</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 292.

<sup>10</sup>Tenney, *Gospel of Belief*, p. 292.

<sup>11</sup>Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.1.2 [Eusebius (Loeb), 1:190-191]) tells of Peter's crucifixion upside down, and a little later (3.30.2 [Eusebius (Loeb), 1:268-269]) Eusebius recounts how Peter's wife was crucified before him while he encouraged her with the words, "Remember the Lord." For a summary of these and other extra-biblical traditions, see Barclay, *The Master's Men*, pp. 25-42.

<sup>12</sup>"Sometimes the *Book of Mormon* seems to want to be just 'one up' on the Bible. An example of this is the story of the three Nephites. Since some people have taken John 21:22-23 to mean that Christ promised John that that apostle would never die (in spite of even Christ's [*sic*] denial of such a thing), the *Book of Mormon* teaches that Christ promised *three* of His American apostles that they would never taste of death" (Latayne C. Scott, *The Mormon Mirage* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1979], p. 76).



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