



# John

*A COMMENTARY OUTLINE*

JESUS, THE SON OF GOD

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# Outline

## *or “A Bird’s Eye View of the Gospel of John”*

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### INTRODUCTION

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# **I**ntroduction

## or “*The Intent of John’s Gospel*”

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John 20:30-31

### **JOHN’S STATED PURPOSE 20:30-31**

*“Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup>but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”*

These two important verses found near the end of John’s Gospel form one single sentence made up of two coordinate clauses. Each clause makes a significant statement concerning the Gospel of John. The first statement is this: Jesus performed many signs that are not recorded in this book (20:30). The second statement follows: Those signs that are recorded are intended to fulfill a specific purpose (20:31). These verses tell us that John knew more than he wrote but was highly selective in order to achieve a particular purpose. Three pivotal words are found here that are important for understanding the Gospel of John. They are the words *signs*, *believe*, and *life*.

### **JOHN’S SPECIAL WORDS**

#### **THE EVIDENCE PRESENTED: “SIGNS”**

The Greek word *sameion* is the characteristic Johannine word for miracles, though there are three others frequently used in the synoptic Gospels. John, however, uses none of them but describes every miracle with this particular word.

The noun implies that the deed points to some power or reveals something of spiritual significance, with the miracle becoming secondary to that power or meaning. The turning of water to wine, for example, is secondary to what it teaches about Jesus. In Luke 2:12 the child wrapped in a certain way and lying in a manger is called a sign. The truth behind the sign is found in Luke 2:10-11; namely, “There has been born for you a Savior who is Christ the Lord.”

John, in an almost casual way, mentions *many other signs*. This shows that John had no difficulty finding enough of them to make convincing evidence. He did not have to “dig and scratch” in order to have an adequate number of signs. He also notes that these were done in the presence of the disciples, showing there were plenty of witnesses to these unrecorded miracles. An abundance of miracles and attested witnesses were easy to find.

The main body of the Gospel of John contains seven signs. No comment will be made at this point other than listing them.

- The Changing of Water to Wine 2:1-11
- The Healing of the Nobleman’s Son 4:46-54
- The Healing of the Impotent Man 5:1-9
- The Feeding of the Five Thousand 6:1-14
- The Walking on the Water 6:16- 21
- The Healing of the Man Born Blind 9:1-12
- The Raising of Lazarus 11:1-46

### THE RESPONSE DESIRED: “BELIEVE”

This verb occurs ninety-eight times in the Gospel of John, compared to eleven occurrences in Matthew, fourteen in Mark, and nine in Luke. The noun form, however, does not occur in John even once. This shows that John is not viewing faith as a quality but as an activity

Some words are so clear in meaning that attempts to define them do nothing except cloud their meaning; the word *believe* is one of them. When someone asks if one believes something, one does not become confused over what it means to believe. Believing refers to intelligent acceptance of truth.

### THE RESULT ACHIEVED: “LIFE”

The word *life* means more than human existence; it is much more than breathing in and out. *Life* in John has a negative and positive meaning. First, life is viewed as the opposite of condemnation (5:24). Second, life consists in knowing God (17:3).

The order of the three words *signs*, *believe*, and *life* is significant and expresses a logical sequence. First, the *signs* provide the divine revelation of truth. Second, *believe* is the human reaction to truth. Finally, *life* is the result that believing brings.

John 20:30-31 has implications for the entire book. John is a selective Gospel—there are *many other signs*. John is an attested Gospel—these things were done *in the presence of the disciples*. John is a purposeful Gospel—these things are written *that you may believe*. John is an interpretive Gospel, demonstrating that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*. Since John refers to Jesus as the Son of God, we may say his Gospel is universal in that it reaches to Gentiles as well as Jews. John is an effective Gospel because *by believing you may have life in His name*.



# **T**he Prologue

or “*The Doctrinal-Historical Framework*”

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John 1:1-18

## THE PERSON OF JESUS 1:1-5

### TRUTH CONCERNING HIS NATURE 1:1-2

| “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* <sup>2</sup>*He was in the beginning with God.*”

#### The Identity of the Word

| *The Word* occurs three times in verse 1. With verse 2 John changes to a demonstrative pronoun translated *He*. From here through verse 13, pronouns are used; in verse 14 John returns to the expression *the Word*. With verse 17 the name and title *Jesus Christ* is used, leaving no doubt that *the Word* refers to Jesus the Messiah.

| What does the expression mean? First, the word *logos* (*Word*) ordinarily refers to the spoken word, emphasizing meaning, not merely the sound. Second, the Greeks used the term for the controlling principle of the universe. Third, the idea of a living, incarnate communication of the essence and character of God is germane to John’s thinking, as John 1:18 shows.

#### The Character of the Word

##### *The Word Is Eternal*

| John introduces his Gospel with the words *In the beginning* and thus starts at the point of Genesis 1:1. Moses stands at the point of beginning and looks forward into human history, whereas John stands at the point of beginning and looks backward into eternity. As he does, he observes that the Word *was*. The universe came into existence at the beginning, but the Word *was* at the beginning. The verb means *to exist*, and the tense denotes continuing action. It is accurate to say that in the beginning the Word was continually existing. He who existed when all things began antedates time and is eternal.

***The Word Is Distinctive***

The words *with God* assert this truth. The Word is viewed as God but also as *with God*. How can both be true? The answer lies in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. God is one in essence but three in person; thus, we have God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Father is God, but He is not the Son or the Holy Spirit. The Son is God, but He is not the Father or the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God, but He is not the Son or the Father.

***The Word Is Deity***

The proper noun *God* is without the definite article in Greek, focusing on the essence or character of the noun. John is saying, “The Word as to His being, essence, and character is deity.” The designation *God* stands first in the sentence and is therefore emphatic. John 1:2 reiterates the previous concepts and in so doing gives them special emphasis.

**TRUTH CONCERNING HIS WORK 1:3-5****His Work in Respect to Creation 1:3**

*“All things come into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.”*

The first two verbs, translated *came into being*, are in the aorist tense, pointing to a definite and decisive event. The last verb, translated *come into being*, is in the perfect tense and emphasizes the continuance of these created things. Creation finds both its origin and continuance in Christ. This same truth is also taught in Colossians 1:16-17.

**His Work in Respect to Man 1:4-5**

*“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup>And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.”*

The logic is this: If God is the source of all life, then all men innately possess certain light concerning Him. On this thesis Paul builds his case against man in the opening chapters of Romans. All men do not have the word of God, but all men may see the light of God as it is revealed in creation. John adds that the darkness did not comprehend it. The verb translated *comprehend* may also mean *to suppress or overtake*, as in John 12:35 where we read, “For a little while longer the light is among you. Walk while you have the light, that darkness may not overtake you....” Since both verses involve the relationship of darkness to light, it seems that *suppress* would be a better translation in John 1:5. For darkness to comprehend something requires that it be personified, which does not seem natural at this point.

## THE APPEARANCE OF JESUS 1:6-13

### THE PRESENTATION BY JOHN 1:6-8

#### John's Commission 1:6

*"There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John."*

Three words distinguish John from Jesus. John *came* (*ginomai*), whereas Jesus *was* (*eimi*). John was a *man* only; Jesus was both God and man. John was *sent from* God; Jesus was sent from God and also was God.

#### John's Mission 1:7-8

*"He came for a witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light."*

The word *witness* means to bear firsthand testimony concerning what a person has seen, heard, or experienced himself. This word occurs three times in these verses describing John's mission.

The two purpose clauses of verse 7 explain John's mission. The first clause shows John's responsibility to the light, and the second shows John's responsibility to men. The first duty is primary; the second duty is secondary. Faith comes through contact with truth communicated by a human witness.

### THE RECEPTION BY MEN 1:9-13

#### The Setting for the Reception 1:9

*"There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man."*

First, John points to the existence of light. The nature of the light is expressed by the word *true*, meaning *genuine*. Second, the presence of the light is expressed by the word *coming*, which can be treated as a participle showing means or instrumentality. Third, the effect of the light is to prove men responsible because they possess truth.

#### The Statement of the Reception 1:10-13

##### *The Rejection by Many 1:10-11*

*"He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. <sup>11</sup>He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him."*

That He was *in the world* means no one can say He did not appear. He appeared, and we possess written record of the events and words of that appearance. He is rejected especially in His role as

creator. Something is desperately wrong with a creation that does not recognize its creator.

The words *His own* occur twice in verse 11 but differ in meaning. The first is neuter gender and means *His own things*, a reference to the land of Palestine. The second is masculine gender and means *His own people*, i. e., the Jewish nation. These two verses move from the larger circle of rejection, *the world*, to the smaller circle of rejection, *His own people*.

### ***The Acceptance by Few 1:12-13***

*“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, <sup>13</sup>who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”*

The words *as many as* emphasize individual response and tell nothing about the size of the group. From what group do they come? If we refer only back to verse 11, then he is speaking of the Jewish people mentioned there. If, however, we take these words back to both verses 10 and 11, the class from which they come is as wide as the world. While the truth spoken of regarding the reception of Christ is true universally, the strict context seems to have to do with Israel's reception of her Messiah.

The verb *He gave* points to three things. First, it assumes that man is not a child of God by birth. God creates all men, but this does not make all men His children. Second, it shows that salvation is by grace because it is presented as a gift. Third, the aorist tense shows the immediacy of salvation when one believes.

The expression *children of God* shows that salvation is not merely a way of living but is a man-to-God relationship determined by one's attitude toward Jesus Christ.

Verse 13 is an extended statement making one point: Salvation finds its source in God alone. The word *of* occurs four times and is the Greek preposition *ek*, meaning *out of as a source*. That the new birth is *not of blood* means a child cannot inherit it from a parent. The new birth is *not of the will of the flesh*, meaning that while physical life is the result of the desire of parents for children, the same is not true with the new birth. When John writes the expression *will of man*, he uses a word for man that usually means *male*. This sets the new birth apart from physical birth. John 3 will demonstrate that the concept of the new birth was not understood even in the mind of Israel's teacher, Nicodemus. On the positive side, John closes the verse with two vital words. Spiritual birth, he says, is *of God*.

## THE INCARNATION OF JESUS 1:14-18

### THE STATEMENT OF THE INCARNATION 1:14

“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

### The Aspects of the Incarnation 1:14a

#### *The Eternal Aspect*

The first five words of verse 14 should be read in connection with the last four words of verse 1—the Word was God...and the Word became flesh. As the Word, Jesus was still God; but verse 14 adds something new—He is also man. Jesus is perfect humanity and undiminished Deity.

Jesus Christ is the unique person of the universe, and John has a word expressing this truth. It is the Greek word *monogenas*, translated *only begotten* here and in John 3:16. It means *something that is the only example in its class*. Extra-biblical literature speaks of a Greek ornithologist who found a bird like no other he had ever seen, and he applied this word to the bird. No other like Jesus Christ exists among men, angels, or even the Godhead, for neither the Father nor the Spirit have bodies as Jesus does. Taking a body was an eternal act. Jesus Christ took a body, died with a body, was raised with a body, ascended with a body, is now seated at the Father’s right hand in a body, will return in a body, and will reign forever in a body—the incarnation is eternal.

#### *The Temporal Aspect*

The words *and dwelt among us* refer to the time spent by Christ on earth—some thirty-three years. The verb *dwelt* is the word for a *tabernacle* or a *tent*. At Bethlehem, God Himself “pitched a tent” among us.

### The Revelation of the Incarnation 1:14b

The verb *we beheld* is a strong term for careful observation. Our word *gazed* catches its meaning. The sum total of divine attributes is often called *glory*. What is God like? God is like Christ.

### The Character of the Incarnation 1:14c

The words *full of grace* describe Christ as the perfect redemption; the words *and truth* show Him to be the perfect revelation. Verse 16 will show the relationship the believer may bear to the presence of grace and truth in the person of Christ.

### THE PROPHECY OF THE INCARNATION 1:15

*“John bore witness of Him, and cried out, saying, ‘This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’ ’ ”*

Jesus came after John in that He was born six months later than John. Jesus was before John in that He was eternal. Jesus was both John’s predecessor and successor. John makes a clear and emphatic distinction between his rank and that of Jesus. As such, John was the perfect forerunner.

### THE BENEFITS OF THE INCARNATION 1:16-18

*“For of His fulness we have all received, and grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup>For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup>No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.”*

### We May Partake of All that He Is 1:16-17

With verse 16 John begins to include his readers with the word *we*. The *fulness* of which we may partake was described in verse 14 as *grace and truth*. *Grace upon grace* emphasizes our unlimited resources in Christ. The word *upon* is a preposition describing exchange—grace in exchange for more grace. None of this was available under the Law; it comes to us only in the person of Christ.

### We May Know God by Knowing Christ 1:18

Being in the Father’s bosom involves intimate fellowship and knowledge. The word translated *explained* means *to lead out with* the resultant meaning *to interpret, to report, to tell, to describe*.

# Early Testimonies to Jesus' Person

or “*The Son of God, the King of Israel*”

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John 1:19-51

John 1:19 through the end of chapter 11 revolves about the following themes. First, in 1:19-4:54 the claims of Jesus are presented. In this section, John selects the testimonies, the quotations, the events, and the signs that demonstrate who Jesus claims to be. Second, in 5:1-6:71 the claims of Jesus are presented as clashing with the prejudices of most Jewish leaders. In this section, the claims produce controversy. Third, in 7:1-11:53 the controversy leads to confrontation. These chapters reveal the parallel development of belief and unbelief among the hearers of Jesus.

## THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN 1:19-34

### JOHN IDENTIFIES HIMSELF 1:19-28

#### The First Question: “Who are you?” 1:19-21

*“And this is the witness of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, ‘Who are you?’<sup>20</sup> And he confessed, and did not deny, and he confessed, ‘I am not the Christ.’<sup>21</sup> And they asked him, ‘What then? Are you Elijah?’ And he said, ‘I am not.’ ‘Are you the Prophet?’ And he answered, ‘No.’ ”*

#### *The Setting for the Question 1:19a*

The priests and Levites represented the ecclesiastical, or religious, leaders of the nation who were specifically employed in temple service. The reasons for the arrival of the delegation from Jerusalem are not hard to find. John had become very popular with the people. Matthew 3:5 says, “Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea, and all the district around the Jordan.” John, in his preaching, had made some very unflattering remarks about the religious leaders. In Matthew 3:7 he had referred to them as a *brood of vipers*. It is also true that some of the Jews believed him to be the Messiah. Luke tells us, “Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as

to whether he might be the Christ (Luke 3:15).” All of this called for an investigation by the religious leaders.

### ***The Posing of the Question 1:19b***

The question, *Who are you?* carries a slightly different connotation in the Greek New Testament. The pronoun *you* is repeated twice. It could be interpreted as a haughty statement, such as our “Who do you think you are?” It may also be taken as an emphatic focus on John himself like, “As for yourself, who are you?”

### ***The Response to the Question 1:20-21***

The triple verbs point to three aspects of John’s answer. First, the verb *confessed* shows the readiness of John’s answer. Second, the words *did not deny* indicate the completeness of John’s answer. Third, the final *confessed* introduces the content of the answer.

John begins his reply with the emphatic pronoun *I*, which is used heavily in these verses to distinguish himself from Jesus (1:20, 23, 26-27, 30, 31 [twice], 33, and 34). No one had asked John whether he claimed to be the Messiah; but, faithful forerunner that he was, he denied it up front. John read their thoughts and anticipated what they might be thinking.

It was common Jewish belief, supposedly derived from Malachi 4:5, that Elijah would be the forerunner of the Messiah. Some also understood the prophet of Deuteronomy 18:15 to be the Messiah. Verse 21 completes John’s disclaimers.

## **The Second Question: “What do you say about yourself?” 1:22-24**

*“They said then to him, ‘Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?’”<sup>23</sup> He said, ‘I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, “Make straight the way of the Lord,” as Isaiah the prophet said.’<sup>24</sup> Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.”*

The delegation now asks John for a positive statement about himself. His reply shows great humility and reveals how thoroughly he understood his role of forerunner. He identifies himself as a *voice*. He puts himself in the background totally; it also harmonizes with Jesus’ presentation as *the Word*. They ask about John’s person, and he refers them to his office. It is also important to note that John’s self-image was derived from the word of God. He knew who he was because of the words of Isaiah 40:3. The word *way* means *road*, of which there were very few in those days. Because of this, when the king travelled, an “advance team” went before him to repair and build a road so that the chariot could move with ease. This illustrates the relationship of John and Jesus.

## **The Third Question: “Why then are you baptizing?” 1:25**

*“And they asked him, and said to him, ‘Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?’”*



Notice that John does not answer their question concerning his reason for baptizing. The baptism of which the delegation would be familiar was proselyte baptism practiced by the Jews who required it of non-Jews wishing to embrace Judaism. The Jew who baptized the non-Jew apparently was making some sort of a claim to authority. John's baptism was different in that he was baptizing Jews, not non-Jews.

### The Real Issue: Who Is Jesus? 1:26-28

*"John answered them saying, 'I baptize in water, but among you stands One whom you do not know. <sup>27</sup>It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.' <sup>28</sup>These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing."*

John affirms that he baptizes without offering an explanation. He skillfully moves away from his own identity and identifies Jesus whom they did not know. His faithfulness to the duty of a forerunner again manifests itself, and he places himself in strong contrast to Jesus. The unlacing of the sandals was the duty of the lowest household servant.

### JOHN IDENTIFIES JESUS 1:29-34

#### The Identifying Words 1:29-30

*"The next day he saw Jesus coming to him, and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup>This is He on behalf of whom I said, "After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me." ' "*

#### *Jesus' Title*

Jesus is called the *Lamb of God*. The noun translated *lamb* occurs four times in the New Testament (John 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32, and I Peter 1:19). In all four, the sacrificial lamb is in view. The major lamb sacrifice was the paschal lamb (Exodus 12:3-13). John 2:13 shows Passover time to be near, so it is possible that John has the paschal lamb in view. The definite article with *lamb* shows that Jesus is not one among many but is rather the one single saving Lamb. The words *of God* may be understood as possessive—the Lamb that belongs to God; or it may be taken to mean the Lamb that God provides—both are equally true.

#### *Jesus' Work*

Jesus bears the consequence of man's sin so that its guilt may be removed. The present tense of the word *takes* marks that future result as assured, though it has not occurred yet. That the noun *sin* is singular shows that Jesus will deal with sin in its unity and entirely.

### ***Jesus' Superiority***

The words of verse 30 tie the lamb metaphor unquestionably to Jesus. John knew of the saving work of the coming Messiah before he could identify Him as Jesus. How John came to know Jesus as the Messiah is narrated in John 1:31-34.

### **The Identifying Event 1:31-34**

*“ ‘And I did not recognize Him, but in order that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water.’ <sup>32</sup>And John bore witness saying, ‘I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. <sup>33</sup>And I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, “He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.” <sup>34</sup>And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God’ ”*

Twice in these verses John tells us that there was a time when he did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah. John knew two main things about the Messiah before the baptism of Jesus. First, he knew that the Messiah was soon to be manifested to Israel. Second, he knew he was to baptize those who believed this message. This formed a small group of Israelites who were looking for the Messiah to come.

### ***What John Saw 1:32***

It was the Spirit descending and remaining on Jesus that impressed John. In the Old Testament the Spirit came and went on the prophets, but not so with Jesus. That the Spirit would abide on the Messiah was prophesied by Isaiah 11:2.

### ***What John Heard 1:33***

This verse is helpful in understanding the significance of the baptism of Jesus. It is the event that marked Jesus as the Messiah.

### ***What John Concluded 1:34***

The verbs *have seen* and *have borne witness* are in the perfect tense, showing that John had arrived at a permanent and settled conviction concerning the identity of Jesus. This was settled at the scene of baptism and by the words of God the Father.

## **THE TESTIMONY OF THE DISCIPLES 1:35-51**

### **THOSE WHO HEARD JOHN'S WORDS 1:35-42**

#### **The Message Spoken 1:35-36**

*“Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, <sup>36</sup>and he looked upon Jesus as He walked, and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God!’ ”*

John is careful to establish a chronological sequence. First, the committee from Jerusalem had questioned John (John 1:19-28). Second, three days are numbered next. The first day is marked by verse 29; the second day by verse 35; and the third day by John 2:1. Why does John number the days? The probable answer is that this marks them off as never to be forgotten days. The message on day one and day two had been the same. It is worth noting that Andrew and another (perhaps John) responded to truth the second time they heard it.

John 1:35-51 has been called the “Eureka” chapter, which is the English transliteration of the Greek verb *heurisko*, meaning *to find or discover*. The word is found in verses 41 and 45.

### The Message Received 1:37-42

#### *The Response of the Disciples 1:37-39*

*“And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.”<sup>38</sup> And Jesus turned, and beheld them following, and said to them, ‘What do you seek?’ And they said to Him, ‘Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?’<sup>39</sup> He said to them, ‘Come, and you will see.’ They came therefore and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.”*

To this point John had said nothing to his disciples about following Jesus. The actions described in verse 37 show that John had taught well. He had pointed to Jesus; and when the time came, they left John and followed the Lord. As Jesus speaks to them, He does not say “Whom do you seek?” but “What do you seek?” The word *what* shows that Jesus is inquiring into their motivation.

*Come and you will see* reflects a rabbinical formula that invited a disciple to investigate so as to be convinced for himself. It is the nature of true Christianity to invite investigation.

#### *The Witness of the Disciples 1:40-42*

*“One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.”<sup>41</sup> He found first his own brother Simon, and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (which translated means Christ).<sup>42</sup> He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him, and said, ‘You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas’ (which translated means Peter).”*

Every time Andrew appears in the Gospel of John, he is bringing someone to Jesus (here, 6:8-9, and 12:22). The perfect tense verb *we have found* shows that Andrew’s conviction that Jesus was the Messiah was a settled one. The conversation that he had with Jesus convinced him that Jesus was Israel’s promised Messiah.

John develops the truth that Jesus is the Messiah throughout his Gospel. John 1:41 displays the settled conviction of the early disciples that Jesus was the Messiah; and John 1:45 shows the evidence used to arrive at this conviction—the Old Testament Scriptures.

## THOSE WHO HEARD JESUS' WORDS 1:43-51

### Philip 1:43-44

*"The next day He purposed to go forth into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, 'Follow Me.' <sup>44</sup>Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter."*

In contrast to Andrew, Jesus took the initiative in calling Philip. Philip, as we know him from the Gospels, was somewhat weak. At the feeding of the five thousand, it was Philip who asserted that it was impossible to feed the crowd (John 6:7). Later, when the Greeks came seeking Jesus, Philip had to consult with Andrew before doing anything about their request (John 12:20-22). Finally, it was Philip who requested that Jesus show them the Father, not realizing that to see Jesus was to see the Father (John 14:8-9).

### Nathanael 1:45-51

#### *His Contact with Philip 1:45-46*

*"Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.' <sup>46</sup>And Nathanael said to him, 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.' "*

In Philip's assertion about Jesus, the pronoun *Him* is first in the sentence and thus receives emphasis. Philip and Nathanael apparently often dwelt on Old Testament Messianic passages. Nathanael's problem revolved about the fact that Jesus came from Nazareth. This is understandable since Nazareth is not even mentioned in the Old Testament. Philip's response to Nathanael's question is to echo the words of Jesus found in verse 39 saying, "Come. and you will see."

#### *His Contact with Jesus 1:47-51*

*"Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, 'Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!' <sup>48</sup>Nathanael said to Him, 'How do You know me?' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.' <sup>49</sup>Nathanael answered Him, 'Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.' <sup>50</sup>Jesus answered and said to him, 'Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these.' <sup>51</sup>And He said to him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, you shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.' "*

Jesus greets Nathanael with an observation found in verse 47 that there is *no guile in him*. This suggests that Nathanael had been reading of Jacob's experience at Bethel found in Genesis 28:10-17. Jacob had lied to his father and swindled his brother and, as a result, was forced to leave his home. If Jacob was eligible for a revelation under these circumstances, then surely Nathanael would

qualify! To be without guile means to be honest and frank. The word was used to describe Jacob in the Old Testament.

The expression *I saw you under the fig tree* may denote more than first appears. The fig tree is frequently used as a symbol of home as in Isaiah 36:16, Micah 4:4. and Zechariah 3:10. In rabbinic literature, to be under the fig tree was descriptive of a person meditating in the Law. Considering these things, Jesus was saying, "Nathaniel, I saw you in your home pouring over the Old Testament."

Nathanael responds by describing Jesus in terms of His divine nature by calling Him the *Son of God* and in terms of His Messianic office by calling Him the *King of Israel*. In so describing Jesus, he could not have used any more elevated terms than these. *Messiah* and *King of Israel* are nearly synonymous terms (Mark 15:32). The confession of verse 49 shows what the true Israelite of verse 47 believes.

Jesus' final statements are found in 1:50-51. The words *Truly, truly* have a unique usage in John. First, Matthew, Mark, and Luke report only a single *truly* in their accounts. John, on the other hand, uses the double statement twenty-five times. Second, these words are always used to introduce matters of great weight and importance. The matter of great importance here is the truth that Jesus is the only means whereby the realities of heaven are brought to earth. Jesus alone links heaven and earth. The participle *opened* is perfect tense, showing that Jesus opens heaven once and for all. Third, there is no Jewish parallel of this usage among other teachers; it is uniquely Jesus' mode of expression.

## NOTES

# A Wedding in Cana

## or “The Beginning of Signs”

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John 2:1-11

### THE SETTING 2:1-2

*“And on the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; <sup>2</sup>and Jesus also was invited, and His disciples, to the wedding.”*

These verses imply that Jesus and His disciples were present because of an indirect obligation imposed upon the host. The word *also* conveys the idea that Jesus and the disciples were invited because of their connection with Mary. If so, they represented extra guests, which explains the inadequate supply of wine. This also explains why Mary felt obligated to do something when the supply ran short.

Verse 11 provides the guideline for interpreting this event. It states that the turning of water to wine *manifested His glory*. Since the glory of Jesus is the focal point, John’s narrative is written in such a way that we are not distracted by other details. The town of Cana is so obscure that we do not know for certain where it was located; the family is unknown, and we are not told the names of either the bride or the groom.

In a town such as Cana, a wedding would be a community affair, with the celebration frequently lasting for as long as seven days.

### THE EMBARRASSMENT 2:3-5

*“And when the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, ‘They have no wine.’ <sup>4</sup>And Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, what do I have to do with you? My hour has not yet come.’ <sup>5</sup>His mother said to the servants, ‘Whatever He says to you, do it.’ ”*

## THE SHORTAGE

It is difficult for a western reader to grasp the social significance of this shortage of wine. We have called it an embarrassment, but even this falls far short of expressing the significance of the shortfall. It was a social faux pas of great magnitude— an error that would never be forgotten and could haunt the couple the rest of their days.

There were serious consequences for lacking adequate wine or committing any other social error of this sort. For example, legal action could be taken against a person who did not give an appropriate wedding gift. On the other hand, to run out of wine could lead to pecuniary liability on the part of the host. Lavish entertainment was a must, and anything less was pure insult.

## THE REQUEST

It is not unusual for a statement to imply a request. John 11:3 shows that Mary and Martha sent Jesus a message that Lazarus was sick, but John 11:21 indicates that they expected Him to treat it as a call for His presence. Since Jesus had not yet performed any miracles at the time of the wedding, Mary probably was not expecting one. She did seem to feel that it was within His power to do something about the situation. Mary knew that Jesus was different. The angels had announced His birth to her, and she knew she conceived Him while still a virgin. She knew Him to be the Messiah and doubtless wanted Him to take action that would show Him to be just that.

## THE REPLY

Addressing Mary as *Woman* was not abrupt but courteous. Jesus replies with an idiom literally translated, “What is there to me to you?” First, it may mean What business is this of ours? Second, it may mean What authority do you have over me? Usage of the idiom elsewhere points to the second meaning. In Matthew 8:29 the demons cry out these same words exactly, “What do we have to do with You, Son of God?” It points to divergence of thought and action. The actions of Jesus will be taken independently; His first miracle will not be the result of parental suggestion.

The phrase *my hour has not yet come* points to three things. First, His heavenly Father’s plan directs all His movements. Second, the existence of such a plan conveyed the idea of His Father’s protection from premature death. Third, it points forward to the climactic hour of His death on the cross.

Jesus’ *hour* or *time* is mentioned repeatedly in the Gospel of John (7:6, 8, 30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 16:32; 17:1). Even at the inception of His ministry, Jesus anticipates its completion. Jesus always lived in the shadow of the cross.



## THE PREPARATION 2:6-8

*“Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each. <sup>7</sup>Jesus said to them, ‘Fill the waterpots with water.’ And they filled them up to the brim. <sup>8</sup>And He said to them, ‘Draw some out now, and take it to the headwaiter.’ And they took it to him.”*

An abundance of physical circumstances prove this to be a miracle. First, verse 3 says they had *no wine*. There were no resources from which to derive a little more wine—they had none. Second, according to verse 6, the vessels used were *stone waterpots*, not wine vessels. Third, the quantity Jesus made was enormous. These waterpots would hold about 150 gallons. This would break down to about twenty-four hundred half pint servings! Fourth, the pots were filled *up to the brim*. There was no way to add to their already existing contents. Fifth, verse 9 tells us the one who tasted was an impartial witness, for he *did not know where it (the wine) came from*.

## THE MIRACLE 2:9-10

*“And when the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom, <sup>10</sup>and said to him, ‘Every man serves the good wine first, and when men have drunk freely, then that which is poorer; you have kept the good wine until now.’ ”*

The miracle occurred sometime between the filling of the waterpots and the tasting of the water that had just become wine. Jesus did not touch it; He did not pray over it; He “willed” water into wine. Jesus performed miracles matter-of-factly—His miracles were as routine to Him as walking is to us. The wine was superior as to quality (2:10) and was abundant as to quantity (2:6).

## THE IMPACT 2:11

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

The value of a sign lies in the truth to which it points. The noun *glory* is often used of a person’s character or essence. In the Old Testament it points to all those things that make God, God. The miracle accomplished the same thing in the disciples that John wants it to accomplish in the readers of his Gospel (John 20:30-31).

The term *believed in Him* is John’s favorite construction for saving faith. First, the word *believed* is an aorist tense verb, pointing to decisive and definite action. Second, the preposition *in* is *eis*, the basic meaning of which is *direction toward*. This preposition chan-

nels the action of the verb toward its intended object. Third, the word *Him* is placed in the accusative case, which is the case of the direct object.

The miracle served to confirm what the disciples had already confessed—namely, that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. One of the favorite designations of a miracle in the synoptic Gospels is *dunamis*, which means *power*. John never uses this word, but rather uses *sameion*, which lays stress on what the event teaches about Jesus.

## NOTES

# Tumult in the Temple

or “Cleansing the House of Merchandise”

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John 2:12-25

John presents Jesus’ claims in John 1:19-4:54. These claims lead to controversy displayed in John 5:1-6:71. Finally the controversy over His claims erupts in full-fledged confrontation in John 7:1-11:53.

In John 2:12-4:54 Jesus makes a full circle in His journey through Palestine. First, we see Jesus in Jerusalem with the focus on Nicodemus (John 2:12-3:21). Second, Jesus moves out into Judea with John the Baptist as the focal point (John 3:22-36). Third, Jesus goes north to Samaria where the woman at the well is the central figure (John 4:1-42). Finally, He arrives in Galilee where He encounters the nobleman of Capernaum (John 4:43-54).

## THE INTERLUDE 2:12

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

This verse forms a transition from Galilee to Jerusalem for the Passover. As at Cana, both family and disciples were with Jesus. Capernaum later becomes Jesus’ permanent residence, but now the stay is only for a few days. Later it will serve as the scene of most of His ministry. Saying they went down to Capernaum is geographically accurate since Cana was upland from Capernaum, which was on the sea.

It is most natural to take the word *brothers* as referring to the children of Joseph and Mary. The Gospels never explain the word as meaning anything different from this.

## THE PASSOVER 2:13

*“And the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.”*

The Gospel of John refers to three Passovers (assuming that John 5:1 is not a Passover feast). This is the first and is referred to here in verse 13 and also in verse 23. The second Passover is found in John 6:4; the third is mentioned several times (11:55, 12:1, 13:1, 18:28, 39, and 19:14). This would make the ministry of Jesus almost three years in length. By the Law of Deuteronomy 16:16, each Jewish male was required to attend Passover as one of three obligatory feasts.

## THE TEMPLE 2:14-22

### THE TEMPLE AND ITS CONDITION 2:14

*“And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers seated.”*

The account of the cleansing of the temple is attached to Jesus' last visit to Jerusalem at the time of His death in the synoptic Gospels (Matthew 21:12-17; Mark 11:15-19; Luke 19:45-46). How, then, do we explain John's presentation of a temple cleansing at the opening of Jesus' ministry? This leads to four possible conclusions, the first two of which are unacceptable to one who believes in the accuracy of the word of God. First, one might conclude the synoptics are right and John is wrong; second, John is right and the synoptic writers are wrong. A third possible option says John has placed the account here for theological or topical reasons. It is not unusual for a biblical author to do this. The Gospels are each written to make their own theological statement about Jesus and thus are selective as to the events and their placement. Fourth, and I believe most acceptable, is to say the temple was cleansed on two occasions. There are several arguments used to support this position. Sheep and oxen are mentioned by John, but not the synoptics. The synoptics do not record Jesus words, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up (2:19).” If one compares accounts, there are enough differences in circumstances and wording to make the existence of two cleansings entirely feasible.

There are two distinct words translated *temple* here and elsewhere. The first is the word *hieron*, referring to the whole sacred enclosure including all the courts and porticoes. The second word is *naos*, which refers to the actual sacred building only. The first word is used in John 2:14; the second is used in John 2:19. The word *naos* would designate what we call the “Holy of Holies” in the tabernacle. Interestingly, it is the word used by Paul to remind the Corinthians that their body is the temple (*naos*) of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19).

Since it was difficult to bring offerings such as oxen, sheep, and doves from Galilee to Jerusalem, it was the practice of the high priest to allow concession stands in the temple area where one

could purchase the needed offering. The reference to the changing of money relates to the requirement that each Jew had to bring an offering of one-half shekel to Passover (Exodus 30:13). Coins with the emperor's image on them could not go into the temple treasury; therefore, one had to exchange Roman money for temple money for a fee.

There are two words translated *moneychangers*. The first is *kermatis-tas* found in verse 14, meaning to *change larger coins for smaller ones*. The second is *kollubistas* used in verse 15, which refers to the fee paid for the exchange.

## THE TEMPLE AND ITS CLEANSING 2:15-16

*“And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money-changers, and overturned their tables; <sup>16</sup>and to those who were selling the doves He said, ‘Take these things away; stop making My Father’s house a house of merchandise.’ ”*

### The Actions of Jesus 2:15

The scene is one of wild confusion—cattle bawling, moneychangers scrambling for coins among the debris on the floor, and temple officials and guards aghast! It was probably not the physical force that drove the traders from the temple; certainly it was not a single *scourge of cords*. It was most likely the blazing anger of Jesus' holiness that caused them to cower and flee. Mark focuses on the dishonesty of the traders, calling their activity akin to that which takes place in a “den of thieves.” John does not make this emphasis, but rather focuses on their very presence in the temple.

### The Words of Jesus 2:16

Jesus speaks of *My Father's house*, not *our Father's house*. God was Jesus' Father in a special way that applied only to Him. When we come to John 5:18, His claim that God was *His own Father* is understood to be *making Himself equal with God*. In John 20:17 Jesus speaks to Mary and refers to *My Father and your Father*—He does not say *our Father*.

## THE TEMPLE AND ITS ZEALOT 2:17

*“His disciples remembered that it was written, ‘Zeal for Thy house will consume Me.’ ”*

As the disciples observe Jesus' actions, they are reminded of Psalm 69:9. His actions displayed His burning zeal for the house of God. Jesus was not merely a Jewish reformer; He was the Messiah who fulfilled Old Testament prophecy. Jesus' passion for the honor of the Father and the fulfillment of His will is thematic in John's Gospel.

## THE TEMPLE AND ITS PROPHECY 2:18-19

*“The Jews therefore answered and said to Him, ‘What sign do You show to us, seeing that You do these things?’<sup>19</sup> Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ ”*

### The Request 2:18

The actions, teachings, and miracles of Jesus had two opposite effects. The faith of those who had already believed Him grew (2:11, 17). On the other hand, the hearts of those who did not believe became harder and their blindness more complete.

The demand for fresh evidence when decisive evidence is already present is found several places. It is found in John 6:30, which is spoken in the context of the feeding of the five thousand. The request for a sign in Matthew 12:38 is made in the context of the healing of a man with a withered hand and the demon possessed man who was blind and dumb. In Matthew 16:1 the Pharisees and Sadducees ask for a sign immediately following the feeding of the four thousand.

In almost every instance where a sign is requested, Jesus refuses. There are two possible explanations for this. First, Jesus’ display of power is sovereign—He alone chooses the moment. Second, requests for signs flow from unbelief in the face of abundant evidence.

### The Prophecy 2:19

The words spoken here by Jesus are used twice as basis for an accusation (Matthew 26:61 and Acts 6:14). In each place the words are altered significantly. As Jesus spoke here in John 2, the Jews were to be the destroyers of the temple. As used later in an accusation, Jesus is said to be the destroyer. When used as an accusation, the promise of temple restoration is ignored.

## THE INTERPRETATION 2:20-22

*“The Jews therefore said, ‘It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?’<sup>21</sup> But He was speaking of the temple of His body.<sup>22</sup> When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken.”*

### The Incorrect Interpretation 2:20

Verses 19-22 introduce a pattern that frequently appears in the Gospel of John. The following sequence occurs: a saying of Jesus, a complete misunderstanding of it, then an explanation by Jesus or John. The pattern may be observed in John 3:3-5, 4:10-14, 6:41-44, 11:11-13, 14:7-9.

**The Correct Interpretation 2:21-22**

Verse 21 begins with the emphatic pronoun *He*, which sets what Jesus meant against what they thought He meant. Even for the disciples, truth was unrecognized and misunderstood the first time they heard it. One of the characteristics of prophecy is that it is understood only when it realizes fulfillment.

**THE IMPACT 2:23-25**

*“Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, beholding His signs which He was doing. <sup>24</sup>But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, <sup>25</sup>and because He did not need anyone to bear witness concerning man for He Himself knew what was in man.”*

The opening ministry of Jesus at the first Passover attracted a great deal of attention, both favorable and unfavorable. During His stay in Jerusalem, He performed many miracles. These verses provide an introduction to Nicodemus. Nicodemus is the exception to the general practice of caution concerning men's initial response to Jesus.

**NOTES**

## NOTES



# **T**he Interview with Nicodemus

or “*You Must Be Born Again*”

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John 3:1-21

## THE NATURE OF THE NEW BIRTH 3:1-10

### THE MAN INVOLVED 3:1-2A

“Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; <sup>2</sup>this man came to Him by night, and said to Him...”

#### Nicodemus Was a Pharisee

The two basic Jewish parties were the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees were very rigid; the Sadducees much less so. The Pharisees were very religious; the Sadducees were very political. The former party followed human tradition to the exclusion of the true meaning of Scripture (Matthew 15:1-3). For example, one could swallow vinegar for a sore throat on the Sabbath but could not gargle with it, for that would be work; and a woman should not look in a mirror on the Sabbath because she might see a gray hair and pluck it out—that would also be work.

#### Nicodemus Was a Ruler

The word *ruler* was used for a member of Israel’s high court called the Sanhedrin. Nicodemus was a member of that body.

#### Nicodemus Was a Teacher

This information comes from John 3:10 where Jesus calls him the *teacher of Israel*. The definite article before the noun *teacher* sets Nicodemus apart from other teachers as especially eminent.

## THE CONVERSATION INVOLVED 3:2B-10

### Nicodemus’s Observation 3:2b

“Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”

Nicodemus has been convinced beyond question that the miracles of Jesus were genuine and undeniable. The *signs* that Nicodemus had observed were those that had recently been performed in Jerusalem at the Passover and are spoken of in John 2:23. We have no idea what they were, but they must have been performed in abundance. They were most surely convincing, for no one in Nicodemus's position would be a likely candidate to become a follower of Jesus, and yet Nicodemus calls him *Rabbi*. Nicodemus came to Jesus in a representative capacity. The verb translated *we know* is plural. This is confirmed in verse 7 where Jesus addresses him with the plural pronoun saying, "You (plural) must be born again." Both of the verbs translated *do* are in the present tense, which points to continuous action.

### Jesus' Reply 3:3

*"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' "*

We are told that *Jesus answered*, but what was the question? As is often the case, Jesus does not answer Nicodemus's words, but rather his thoughts. The words *truly, truly* are used to introduce important truth—here the necessity of the new birth. They are also used when an objection or misunderstanding is anticipated. In addition, they serve to emphasize the absolute truthfulness of what is being said.

The word *again* is *anōthen*, and its basic meaning is *from above*. It is used in John 3:31 where we read, "He who comes from above (*anōthen*) is above all...." Jesus used it when replying to Pilate in John 19:11, saying, "You have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above (*anōthen*)...." Since the new birth is in addition to physical birth, it is therefore a second birth, thus, the translation *again*. One must be born both *again* and *from above*.

The verb translated *born* is the normal word used for conception and pregnancy. This is perhaps the reason that Nicodemus initially understands Jesus to be referring to physical birth.

### Nicodemus's Response 3:4

*"Nicodemus said to Him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?' "*

It is characteristic of the Gospel of John to show that hearers often interpreted that which was spiritual as being material (2:19-20, 3:4, 4:11, 6:62).

Nicodemus's response may be understood in one of two ways, neither of which excludes the other. First, he may have been totally materialistic in outlook, thinking that Jesus was advocating a second physical birth. Second, he may have been saying, "How can

anyone whose habits have been fixed by age change radically—physical rebirth is impossible, but is spiritual change any more feasible?”

### Jesus' Answer 3:5-8

#### *His Clarification 3:5*

*“Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.’ ”*

One should keep in mind that verse 5 is an attempt to clarify what was misunderstood in verse 3. The intent of verse 5 is to clarify, not mystify. If there is a reference here to baptism, Nicodemus would not have understood what Jesus was saying. The Jews practiced proselyte baptism but did not baptize themselves. It seems best to take the words *water* and *Spirit* as synonymous for several reasons. First, the term *water* standing alone never refers to baptism. If it does mean baptism, then one must prove it; and there is no proof here. Second, *both* water and Spirit are the source of the new birth—each noun is preceded by the preposition *ek*, which indicates *source*. John 1:13 makes it clear that God is the single source of the new birth, so it would be consistent with the context to make water and Spirit synonymous with God Himself. Third, the word translated *and* is also capable of being translated *even*. Jesus would then be saying that one must be “born of water, even the Spirit...” Finally, water and the Holy Spirit bear a special relationship to one another, as demonstrated by John 7:38-39 where Jesus says, “ ‘He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, “From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.” ’ But this He spoke of the Spirit...” Clearly, water is here conceived to be symbolic of the Holy Spirit.

#### *His Reinforcement 3:6*

*“ ‘That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.’ ”*

John speaks of two separate spheres of existence; there is no evolution from physical life to spiritual life. The statement applies to all, for the term *that which* is neuter gender, not masculine, which would be *he who*. The general terms point to a doctrinal truth.

#### *His Logic 3:7*

*“ ‘Do not marvel that I said to you, “You must be born again.” ’ ”*

At this point Nicodemus is on the verge of a purely emotional response. The words *do not marvel* represent a construction that forbids an action from starting. Jesus is stating logical and sober doctrinal truth. The word *you* is a second person plural pronoun. By using the second person, Jesus excludes Himself from the need

for the new birth. By using the plural number, Jesus includes more than Nicodemus. The verb *must* is a strong term of necessity.

### ***His Illustration 3:8***

“ ‘The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.’ ”

The phrase *blows where it wishes* indicates sovereign movement. The wind obeys its own set of laws. The words *hear the sound of it* point to definite results, and *do not know where it comes from* show invisible source. Like a tree blown by the wind, so a believer has been touched by an invisible yet effective power, namely, the Holy Spirit who brings about the new birth.

## **THE MEANS OF THE NEW BIRTH 3:9-15**

### **THE BRIDGE 3:9-10**

“Nicodemus answered and said to Him, ‘How can these things be?’  
<sup>10</sup>Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not understand these things?’ ”

### **Nicodemus’s Question 3:9**

Up to this point the theme has been the nature and necessity of the new birth. Nicodemus has been given nothing to do; he has rather been given something to understand. His question now focuses on the “how” of the new birth. It is significant that believing is mentioned more than a half dozen times from here through verse 21. The verb *be* is the Greek word *ginomai*, which means *to become*. The question is not one of incredulity; it is a plea for direction and instruction. John 8:37-39 demonstrates how the Jew trusted physical ancestry for his relationship to God. Now Jesus is saying, “It makes no difference who your earthly father is, you must be born from above!”

### **Nicodemus’s Failure 3:10**

The definite article with the noun *teacher* indicates that Nicodemus was a known and eminent teacher. His position in Israel made him doubly responsible to know about the new birth.

### **THE CONCLUSION 3:11-15**

“ ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and you do not receive our witness.  
<sup>12</sup>If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how shall you believe if I tell you heavenly things? <sup>13</sup>And no one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven, even the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup>And as Moses

*lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life' "*

Jesus uses the plural pronoun *we* in verse 11 and then changes to the singular *I* in verse 12. The plural *we* could include the disciples, who also taught. It could also mean that Jesus was referring to Himself as representative of the entire Godhead. In reality, both are true. If the disciples are included in the *we*, it conveys the vital truth that men can be as confident about the new birth as Jesus was.

The reference to *earthly things* could refer to the illustrations that He has just used, such as the wind; or it could refer to things that take place only on this earth, such as the new birth.

The way by which the new birth is experienced is illustrated by the event of Numbers 21:5-9. There is a parallel between the lifted up serpent and the lifted up Son of God. The lifted up serpent illustrates the way of salvation.

#### **SERPENT**

Necessitated by sin

Symbol of salvation

Divine provision for physical salvation

Salvation by looking

#### **SON**

Necessitated by sin

Reality of salvation

Divine provision for spiritual salvation

Salvation by believing

### **THE MEDITATION ON THE NEW BIRTH 3:16-21**

Though many translations continue the red letters through verse 21, most commentators agree that the words of quotation from Jesus end at verse 15. We should remember that while helpful for reading, red letter editions should not be understood to imply that the words of Jesus are any more authoritative or inspired than any other words in Scripture, though it is understandable that one might think so.

#### **THE NATURE OF JOHN'S MEDITATION**

From time to time throughout the Gospel of John, we encounter the meditations of John. In the first century there were no devices to show the limitations of quoted speech. Jesus begins to speak in verse 10, but John does not tell us where His speech ends—we must sense this for ourselves. Sometimes this is easy to see; other times it is much more difficult. It seems that the dialogue with Nicodemus ends with verse 15. Three things lead to this conclusion. First, the phrase *Son of Man* is a self-designating expression used only by Jesus in the four Gospels. Second, the expression *only begotten* found in verse 16 is used three times in the New Testament and always by John himself (John 1:14, 18; I John 4:9). Third, verse

16 begins with the word *for*, which is the way John introduces his own commentary.

John's meditation is triggered by Jesus' remark that He *must be lifted up*. Being lifted up is used consistently to refer to crucifixion. John 12:32-33 makes this clear. John 3:16-21 pursues the following three ideas: First, Jesus' death is God's gift to deliver men from perishing. Second, if men do perish, it is because they prefer darkness to light. Third, men who perish bring it on themselves.

## THE CONTENT OF JOHN'S MEDITATION

### God the Father Is the Initiator of Salvation 3:16-17

*"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him."*

John 3:16 well qualifies to be called "The Golden Text of the Bible." It is the heart of John's explanatory meditation. These explanations are given to interpret or apply what Jesus has just taught. These two verses may be divided into four parts on the basis of the Greek connective particles.

#### *The Starting Point: The Love of God 3:16a*

While Jesus Himself is God, the reference here is to God the Father. The Son is the one given, and the Father is the giver. God the Father initiates salvation; the Son executes salvation; the Holy Spirit applies salvation. The verb *loved* is an aorist tense, referring to a single definite act. John does not say that God loves (present tense) the world; he says God loved (aorist tense) the world. The measure of God's love is the cross. *Love* is a favorite word of John, occurring thirty-six times in this Gospel, twice the number of times it is found in any other New Testament book except I John. The first use of a word is always significant, and John 3:16 is no exception. The love spoken of is not love of man to man or of man to God, but rather of God to man.

The direct object of the verb *loved* is *the world*. This refers to the world of humanity viewed in a hostile and perishing condition.

#### *The Resulting Action: The Gift of God 3:16b*

John selects the verb *gave*, not the word *sent*. He does use the word *sent* in verse 17, but not in verse 16. *Gave* brings out the idea of sacrifice, shown by a precious offering. The words *only begotten* translate the Greek word *monogenas*, which means *unique, the only example of something in its class*. Jesus, the God-man, was the only one of His kind; and He was given by the Father to provide our salvation.

***The Saving Purpose: The Life of God 3:16c***

The word *whoever* is *pas*, which means *all*. All who believe will be saved; none of them will perish. God is never passive toward faith. God's love is universal, and His saving purpose is universal. God's purpose is as wide as His provision. The words *in Him* remind us that the value of faith is always in its object. We are saved by faith that is properly directed. The phrase *should not perish* is a clause that denies a possibility. The word *perish* is aorist tense and refers to a definite, decisive, and final event.

The word *but* is a strong adversative used to mark contrast; and the verb *have* is present tense, meaning *have now and continuously*.

***The Reiterative Statement: The Intent of God 3:17***

There are two words in Greek that mean *to send*. The first is *pempo* and refers to simple sending. The one used here is *apostello* and means *to send on an authoritative and representative mission*. The noun *apostle* transliterates this word. *Son* is a designation showing dignity, whereas the term *only begotten Son* is a designation showing affection. Judgment is a subject that interests John. The Greek word is *krino* and is used by John nineteen times, compared to six times in Matthew and Luke and none in Mark.

The sun comes to cast light; but in the casting of light, shadows are created. Christ came to save; but in coming to save, those who fail to believe come to judgment.

It is clearly the desire of God that men do not perish. This means the unbeliever is disobedient to the will of God in his conduct, and he is also disobedient to the will of God in his condition of being lost. To be lost is rebellion because it is a condition in which God does not wish one to be. It is a sin to be lost!

**Man the Sinner Is the Responder to Salvation 3:18-21*****The Reason for Condemnation 3:18***

*"He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."*

First, justification is by believing. The words *in Him* consist of a preposition (*eis*), indicating direction of the action of the verb. Second, condemnation comes through not believing. The difference between the saved and the perishing does not lie in the guilt or innocence of either; it lies in their different attitudes to light. The verb *has been judged* is a perfect tense, showing the state of condemnation in which the unbeliever lives. His condemnation is not presented as a future event but a present condition. The word *because* is important since it shows why he is condemned. The verb *believed* is a perfect tense, pointing to a definite and distinct act of faith. Christ died for men, but this does not automatically bring

salvation. Judgment was not the object of Jesus' mission; but it is, in fact, the necessary result of it.

***The Process of Condemnation 3:19-20***

*"And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup>For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."*

The word *judgment* is *krisis* and denotes the process of judging, not the sentence of judgment. This verse rests on a premise: Faced with the light, men usually prefer darkness. Men choose darkness, and their condemnation lies in that very fact. Why do men choose darkness? Because men refuse to be shaken out of their comfortable sinfulness. Man does not pursue truth because of his moral condition (3:20). The usual metaphorical meaning of *light* is *good over against darkness*, which means *evil*. In the Gospel of John, however, Christ is the light (1:9, 8:12, 9:5).

***The Avoidance of Condemnation 3:21***

*"But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."*

The man John has in mind here is the one who responds to the gospel invitation. His words are descriptive, not prescriptive. Coming to the light defines what practicing truth is. John does not view his works as meritorious; he views his works as reflecting the hand of God.

**NOTES**



# The Rural Ministry of John

or “*He Must Increase, but I Must Decrease*”

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John 3:22-36

## THE SETTING 3:22-24

*“After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He was spending time with them and baptizing. <sup>23</sup>And John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and they were coming and were being baptized. <sup>24</sup>For John had not yet been thrown into prison.”*

These words introduce the expanding ministry of Jesus. His ministry begins in Jerusalem with the masses (2:23-25): it then reaches to Nicodemus (3:1-21). John 3:22-24 records the expansion of His ministry into Judea. These verses tell of that short period of time when John’s and Jesus’ ministries were contemporary.

## THE QUESTION 3:25-26

*“There arose therefore a discussion on the part of John’s disciples with a Jew about purification. <sup>26</sup>And they came to John and said to him, ‘Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have borne witness, behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him.’ ”*

Both John and Jesus were baptizing, and the question arose over the respective merits of both teachers. John’s popularity was waning and Jesus’ was increasing. Why? The reference to *purification* probably has to do with baptism. The avoidance of the mention of Jesus’ name, indicated by the words *He who was with you beyond Jordan*, points to the jealousy of those who approach John.

## THE ANSWER 3:27-36

### JOHN THE BAPTIST'S REAFFIRMATION 3:27-30

#### By Statement 3:27-28

*"John answered and said, 'A man can receive nothing, unless it has been given him from heaven. <sup>28</sup>You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.' ' "*

John is near the end of his ministry, but his understanding of his mission is the same as when he began. He came on the scene as Jesus' forerunner, and he leaves the scene in the same capacity.

#### By Illustration 3:29-30

*" 'He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. And so this joy of mine has been made full. <sup>30</sup>He must increase, but I must decrease.' "*

The identity of the bride is not germane to the passage. Both Israel, to whom Christ came, and the church are called His bride (Hosea 2:19-20, Ephesians 5:31-32). The relationship focused upon is that of Jesus and John, not Jesus and Israel or the yet-to-be-born church. The reference to increasing and decreasing is not a statement of humility but focuses on the increasing popularity of Jesus and the decreasing popularity of John.

### JOHN THE APOSTLE'S INTERPRETATION 3:31-36

*"He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. <sup>32</sup>What He has seen and heard, of that He bears witness; and no man receives His witness. <sup>33</sup>He who has received His witness has set his seal to this, that God is true. <sup>34</sup>For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure. <sup>35</sup>The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. <sup>36</sup>He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."*

This paragraph is similar to John 3:16-21 in that both are reflections and commentary on what John has just written. If this is true, these words are not those of John the Baptist but of John the apostle. Four major assertions about Jesus are found here. First, Jesus came from heaven and spoke with an authority beyond that of the earth. Second, He spoke from personal observation, not theory. Third, His words were, in fact, the very word of God. Fourth, the Father's love had enabled Him to act and speak with such authority.

The Son is not only the revealer of truth but is the sole object of saving faith. A dividing line is drawn in terms of men's relation-

ship to Jesus. Those who believe in the Son have eternal life; those who do not are not only devoid of life but exist under the wrath of God. This is the only place in John's Gospel where the word wrath occurs. It refers to the permanent displeasure of God against sin; it is the reaction of righteousness to unrighteousness. Men's failure to believe on the Son seals their eternal destiny under God's wrath.

## NOTES

## NOTES

# The Woman at the Well

or “The Water of Life”

John 4:1-42

## THE HISTORICAL TRANSITION 4:1-6

### FROM JUDEA 4:1-3

*“When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John <sup>2</sup>(although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were), <sup>3</sup>He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee.”*

The word *therefore* takes us back to John 3:22. John mentions the Pharisees but never the Sadducees. The issue in John is the parallel development of belief and unbelief. The Pharisees were the true representatives of the unbelieving nation.

Jesus’ entire life was lived with regard to His coming hour or His coming time. Two lines of truth flow from this fact. First, He was sovereignly protected for this hour (John 7:30, 8:20). Jesus could not be touched before His time. Second, He exercised care to insure that it did not come prematurely (John 4:1-3; 7:1, 6, 8). As John 4 opens, we have an example of the care Jesus exercised to avoid an early confrontation with the Jewish leaders.

### TO SAMARIA 4:4-6

*“And He had to pass through Samaria. <sup>5</sup>So He came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; <sup>6</sup>and Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.”*

The necessity to pass through Samaria was not geographical. Because the Samaritans were the result of intermarriage with non-Jews, they were detested by the orthodox Jews. Strict Jews, like the Pharisees, therefore crossed over Jordan enroute from Judea to Galilee. This made the trip considerably longer, demonstrating: how much they despised the Samaritans. How then do we explain the words *had to pass* in verse 4? The necessity lay in the nature of

the mission of Jesus. The universal scope of His mission demanded that He exclude none. The word *must* is often connected to the mission of Jesus, as found in John 3:14, 9:4, 10:16, 12:34, and 20:9.

Jesus had just spoken with Nicodemus, a prominent representative of orthodox Judaism; and John now records the account of Jesus' contact with one who was thoroughly despised by orthodox Judaism. Why would John so arrange his Gospel? Because Nicodemus and the woman at the well vividly illustrate the words of John 3:16—"For God so loved the world...."

That Jesus was weary points to the reality of His human nature. Apart from sin, what may be said of our humanity may also be said of His. This includes the limitations of human nature.

## THE CONVERSATION 4:7-26

### THE REQUEST 4:7-9

*"There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, 'Give Me a drink.' <sup>8</sup>For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. <sup>9</sup>The Samaritan woman therefore said to Him, 'How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?' (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)"*

It is not unusual that Jesus should ask a woman for a drink, but He did more than this. He asked her to use her own utensil to draw the water. One of the major taboos of Judaism concerned the use of utensils for eating and drinking. Verse 11 makes it clear that Jesus had no utensil with which to draw water. Travelers almost always carried a skin bucket for drawing water. Since the disciples had gone to town for food, they would have had it with them. The comment in parentheses is that of John, not the woman.

The Rabbis had strict rules concerning conversation with women. This may be why the disciples registered such surprise upon their return from buying food (4:27).

The comment of John concerning *no dealings with Samaritans* refers to social and personal intercourse, not business dealings. Jews and Samaritans did not socialize. As is true of much Jewish tradition, Jesus disregards it.

### THE DIALOGUE 4:10-26

#### Jesus Speaks 4:10

*"Jesus answered and said to her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, "Give Me a drink," you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.'"*

Jesus now transitions from the subject of physical water to that of spiritual water. The word *if* introduces a second class conditional sentence. To bring out its meaning, we could translate “If you knew the gift of God, but you do not....” She was ignorant of what Jesus offered and who He was. By the end of the conversation, she will acknowledge Him as the Messiah.

The word *gift* has a special emphasis on freeness. Though by nature a gift is free, it would not be going astray to translate this particular word as *free gift*. The heart of the word used here is bounty. The pronoun *you* used in addressing the woman is emphatic—“If you knew what I have to offer, *you* would be doing the asking, not I.” The expression *living water* was ordinary usage for any water that flowed.

### The Woman Speaks 4:11-12

*“She said to Him, ‘Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water?’<sup>12</sup> You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?’ ”*

The woman missed the meaning of Jesus’ words. To her, *living water* meant nothing more than fresh water from the well of Jacob. Her comprehension was limited to the earthly and the material.

Jesus was sometimes understood as claiming to be greater than the patriarchs of Israel. Here He is compared to Jacob, and in John 8:53 His opponents say, “Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died?” The woman’s words imply at least a slight sense of outrage on her part.

### Jesus Replies 4:13-14

*“Jesus answered and said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again;<sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.’ ”*

#### ***Jesus Gives a Warning 4:13***

The contrast of the drinking of verse 13 and that of verse 14 is established by the tense of each. The verb *drinks* in verse 13 is present tense and conveys the idea that those who drink of Jacob’s well will return to drink over and over again. On the other hand, the one who *drinks of the water that I shall give him* will drink once and for all and be satisfied. Water from Jacob’s well could quench thirst but could never stop it from rising again.

#### ***Jesus Makes a Promise 4:14***

There is probably some contrast between the way each type of water is appropriated. That from the well is drawn up with great effort; that which Jesus promises to give springs up like a fountain.

The word *never* translates an emphatic double negative in the Greek text. The words *into the ages* (eternally) are also present but not translated. The word *well* means *spring* and should be translated this way because a well is man-made, whereas a spring is not. Spontaneity is conveyed by the word *springing*, which means *to leap*.

### The Woman Responds 4:15

*“The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty, nor come all the way here to draw.’ ”*

The woman’s interest was still material and self-centered. If Jesus could help her avoid the hot journey to the well, she would be satisfied. The words *all the way here* indicate that relief from the effort of the journey is her main concern.

### Jesus Challenges the Woman 4:16-18

*“He said to her, ‘Go, call your husband, and come here.’<sup>17</sup> The woman answered and said, ‘I have no husband.’ Jesus said to her, ‘You have well said, “I have no husband”;<sup>18</sup> for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly.’ ”*

Jesus was proper socially for asking for her husband’s presence since extended conversation without him would be subject to question. Even more than this, the Lord was bringing her to the point of admitting her need. When Jesus repeats her words concerning having no husband, He gives it a slightly different emphasis with the stress on the word *husband*. The conversation that had started with a request for a drink of water has now advanced to the personal level, and we begin to see faith being born.

### The Woman Perceives 4:19-20

*“The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.’<sup>20</sup> Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.’ ”*

Jesus’ words concerning her five husbands bring her to the conviction that He is no ordinary person but is, in fact, a prophet. While a prophet was one who proclaimed a message that was divine in its source, there was also the conception that a prophet had special insight into one’s personal condition. In Luke 7:39 the Pharisee said, “If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner.”

Moses was the only prophet acknowledged by the Samaritans. Moses, they believed, would be succeeded only by the Messiah. This being the case, the woman’s remark has Messianic overtones.



The Samaritans worshiped at Mt. Gerizim. The Jews and Samaritans had an ancient debate over the proper place to worship, and her interest in the subject might be sincere. On the other hand, it is possible that she is trying to change the subject to something less personal than discussion of her marital history.

The Samaritan argument for Mt. Gerizim was supported by some Old Testament passages. First, altars were built in this region by Abraham and Jacob (Genesis 12:7, 33:20). Blessing was seen to flow from Mt. Gerizim according to Deuteronomy 11:29. Some of the significant events in the lives of the patriarchs occurred around this mountain. The Samaritans believed there were more than a dozen names for the mountain; and wherever they found them in Scripture, they understood them to be a reference to Mt. Gerizim.

The Jews believed there could be only one proper place for worship. This was based on Deuteronomy 12:5 which says, "But you shall seek the LORD at the place which the LORD your God shall choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come." The books of Moses do not specifically name Jerusalem as this place, but other passages do (II Chronicles 6:7, 7:12). Since the Samaritans acknowledged only the Pentateuch to be sacred writing, other passages meant nothing.

#### Jesus Answers 4:21-24

*"Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father. <sup>22</sup>You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup>But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. <sup>24</sup>God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.' "*

To avoid argument, Jesus raises the question to a higher level. He does not compromise, however, and asserts that Samaritan worship was indeed confused. The Samaritan beliefs were syncretic and included foreign deities along with the true God. The Samaritan concept of God was limited and twisted because they rejected the Psalms (a key book concerning the nature of God), the historical books, and the writings of the prophets.

The word *salvation* is preceded by a definite article. The particularizing of salvation points to the only true salvation there is, which is Jewish in the person of the Messiah.

The *hour coming* points to the new day that He would inaugurate. It is something that had not been introduced before and points to an imminent crisis of change. Worshiping in spirit and truth ties attitude and doctrine together. Worship is not merely being at the right place; it is not outward but inward.

Verse 24 introduces one of the four “God is” statements of the New Testament. “God is spirit” speaks of His incorporeal nature, meaning God is not bound to places or things. The others are: “God is love” (I John 4:8, 16), “God is light” (I John 1:5), and “God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:29).

When Jesus says the *Jews worship that which we know*, He uses a neuter pronoun *that which* rather than the masculine *Him whom*. The reference, then, is to the Jewish worship system as revealed to them in the Old Testament.

The verb *must* in John 4:24 indicates something that is of absolute necessity in true worship. The verb is *dei* and is used to express the necessity of the new birth in the words “You must be born again” in John 3:7. The same verb is used in John 4:20 and is translated *ought*. The Jews connected worship with being in the right place; Jesus connected it with the right attitude.

### Jesus Identifies Himself 4:25-26

*“The woman said to Him, ‘I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us.’  
<sup>26</sup>Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you am He.’ ”*

Here Jesus makes His most direct claim prior to His trials to be the Messiah. He usually avoided making these direct claims for two reasons—first, in order to avoid premature conflict with the Jewish authorities and, second, because of the false political aspirations that comprised the Jewish idea of what the Messiah would do when He came. Evidence of His Messiahship is abundant, but direct claims such as found here are rare.

### THE OUTCOME 4:27-42

#### The Woman’s Witness 4:27-30

##### *The Surprise of the Disciples 4:27*

*“And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He had been speaking with a woman; yet no one said, ‘What do You seek?’ or, ‘Why do you speak with her?’ ”*

The verb *marveled* is quite strong and points to incredulous surprise. The first unspoken question was directed to the woman; the second toward Jesus.

Asking a woman for a drink might have been unusual but not necessarily considered wrong. In the view of the rabbis, to carry on a conversation with a woman would be out of the question. The rabbis held an absurd view concerning male-female relationships. A sample statement of this runs as follows: “A man shall not be alone with a woman in an inn, not even with his sister or his daughter, on account of what men may think. A man shall not talk

with a woman in the street, not even with his own wife, and especially not with another woman, on account of what men might say.”

### ***The Abandoned Waterpot 4:28***

*“So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city...”*

We should keep in mind that the woman had come to the well to draw water. How do we explain that she went back to town and left the waterpot at the well? The answer is found in the tremendous impression Jesus had made on her. If she had not filled it, her excitement is emphasized all the more. She could not wait to tell the men of the city who she had met. The Lord set aside His need for a drink of water, and the woman set aside her purpose in coming to the well.

### ***The Testimony to the Men of the City 4:29-30***

*“...and said to the men, <sup>29</sup>‘Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?’ <sup>30</sup>They went out of the city, and were coming to Him.”*

Her exaggeration points again to how greatly she was impressed with Jesus. Her question is so constructed as to expect a “no” answer, but her hope longed for a “yes.” There is an interesting contrast between the woman and the disciples: They came bringing food; she came bringing men. The verb *were coming* is a continuous action verb. For the sake of vividness, we could translate *they were streaming to Him*. Her enthusiasm must have been overwhelming, as indicated by the immediate and massive response of the men of the city.

## **The Lord’s Food 4:31-38**

### ***The Confusion of the Disciples 4:31-33***

*“In the meanwhile the disciples were requesting Him, saying, ‘Rabbi, eat.’ <sup>32</sup>But He said to them, ‘I have food to eat that you do not know about.’ <sup>33</sup>The disciples therefore were saying to one another, ‘No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?’ ”*

Jesus established a contrast between Himself and the disciples by using the emphatic pronouns *I* and *you*. The woman did not understand the *living water* (4:11), and the disciples were no more perceptive than she for they did not understand the nature of the food about which Jesus spoke.

### ***The Clarification of the Lord 4:34-38***

*“Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work. <sup>35</sup>Do you not say, “There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest”? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. <sup>36</sup>Already he who reaps is*

*receiving wages, and is gathering fruit for life eternal; that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.* <sup>37</sup>*For in this case the saying is true, "One sows, and another reaps."* <sup>38</sup>*I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.'* "

Once again, using the emphatic personal pronoun *My*, Jesus establishes a contrast between Himself and the disciples. A repeated theme in the teaching of Jesus is that the work He does is that which the Father sent Him to do (John 5:30, 6:38, 7:18, 8:50, 9:4, 10:37, 12:49-50, 14:31, 15:10, 17:4).

The words *to accomplish* come from the same word spoken on the cross when Jesus said, "It is finished." The cross was a grand climax of all that God the Father sent Jesus to do. Verse 35 quotes what was apparently a current proverb. The reference to harvest being in *four months* may be taken in one of two ways. First, if a proverb, then the time is probably not literal but simply points to a period of time. Second, if this is an actual statement of conditions at the moment, the four months is literal, placing the event sometime in January. These words teach that the Lord's work is accomplished by many workers over a period of many years. The sowers are comprised of every person who communicated the word of God or bore a personal testimony in Samaria.

The grain fields are a symbol of the spiritual harvest that Jesus is calling the disciples to see by telling them to lift up their eyes. The fields *white for harvest* refer to the Samaritans who are streaming out to see Jesus.

## The Samaritans' Faith 4:39-42

### *Their Initial Faith 4:39*

*"And from that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, 'He told me all the things that I have done.'* "

It is the Holy Spirit who opens minds to the truth, but this does not diminish the importance of a human testimony. Here the word of the woman is stated to be the cause of their faith. The word *testified* is a present tense feminine participle, pointing to the woman's continuous and persistent testimony concerning Jesus.

### *Their Expanding Faith 4:40-41*

*"So when the Samaritans came to Him, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days.* <sup>41</sup>*And many more believed because of His word..."*

Here the word of Jesus is stated to be the cause of their faith. Truth on the lips of the woman and on the lips of Jesus was equally effective. The words *many more* imply a large number.

***Their Deepened Faith 4:42***

*“And they were saying to the woman, ‘It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world.’ ”*

The emphasis in this verse is on the quality of their faith. Deepened faith consisted of deepened convictions. The verb *we know* is a perfect tense and indicates settled opinion and conviction. The deepened faith consisted of deepened knowledge, as seen in the words *this One is indeed the Savior of the world*. It is interesting to note that the truth of the universal saviorhood of Jesus is first expressed by a Samaritan, not a Jew. These words occur again in I John 4:14 but nowhere else in the New Testament.

**NOTES**

## NOTES

# Healing a Nobleman's Son

or "Go Your Way, Your Son Lives"

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John 4:43-54

## THE INTERLUDE 4:43-45

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

As Jesus' Galilean ministry begins, John gives a general account of His reception followed by the second sign of the Gospel. Reference to a prophet's *own country* would, in the case of Jesus, mean Judea. The lack of *honor* given to Jesus in Judea is evidenced by the rejection of His Messianic claims; He did not trust Himself to the Jews at the feast (2:24), and He was forced to retire from there (4:1-3). The saying concerning a prophet's reception is noted by all four Gospels (Matthew 13:57, Mark 6:4, and Luke 4:24).

His reception in Galilee was different, for we are told they *received Him*. The verb is *dechomai* and means *to welcome someone*. It is the verb used in John 1:12, which speaks of "as many as received Him." It is also used of welcoming guests into one's home.

## THE SETTING 4:46-47

*"He came therefore again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a certain royal official, whose son was sick at Capernaum. <sup>47</sup>When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him, and was requesting Him to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death."*

## THE ROYAL OFFICIAL 4:46

It is possible that the *royal official* was a Gentile and a member of Herod's court. If so, John has shown Jesus in contact with

Nicodemus, a Jew; with the woman at the well, a Samaritan; and now with the royal official, a Gentile. These three would portray the world that He came to save.

### THE URGENT REQUEST 4:47

The verb *was requesting* is an imperfect tense showing continuous and persistent activity. The request was not casual, it was insistent. The father believed that Jesus' personal presence was necessary in order to heal. This is important to note because this miracle is to be one of healing at a distance. The healing word was spoken in Cana; the healing act took place in Capernaum! The words *at the point of death* are literally *he was about to die*. The verb *die* is *apothnasko* and is found more times in John than in any other book of the New Testament. This accords with the purpose of John—namely, to show how to have life (20:30-31).

## THE CONVERSATION 4:48-50

### JESUS' OBSERVATION 4:48

*"Jesus therefore said to him, 'Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe.' "*

In light of the child's dying condition, this remark seems harsh. Two things should be noted, however. First, the pronoun *you* is plural, not singular. These words are not directed at the man specifically. Second, the words are not directed so much at the man's request as at the occasion of the request. Jesus is speaking of a typical Galilean attitude. The word *wonders* refers to that which dazzles. The Galileans liked the excitement and wonder produced by Jesus' miracles. This was more appealing to them than truth about His person. At the same time, it is true that Jesus often accepted people who came only because of His miracles (6:26, 14:11).

### THE MAN'S PERSISTENCE 4:49

*"The royal official said to Him, 'Sir, come down before my child dies.' "*

The noun *child* is a diminutive form and is not the same as the word translated *son* in verses 46 and 47. It means *little boy* and conveys the tender love and affection of the father. The father's concern for his son is seen in the absence of any defense of himself.

The infinitive *dies* is an aorist tense in contrast to the present tense with the infinitive *death* in verse 47. Verse 47 is looking at the process that is taking place, whereas verse 49 looks at the inevitable outcome of that process. Verse 49 breathes with desperation.



**JESUS' PRONOUNCEMENT 4:50**

*"Jesus said to him, 'Go your way; your son lives.' The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he started off."*

This reply from Jesus must have been totally unexpected. The man had been urging Jesus to come to Capernaum, evidently believing that His presence was necessary for healing. Jesus' words, however, give him a test. Jesus leaves the man with nothing but His word on which to depend. The man is placed in a dilemma, for he must choose between insisting on evidence, and thus manifesting unbelief, or exercising faith with no tangible evidence to encourage him. The man chose the latter and believed the word that Jesus spoke to him. He learned faith under the compulsion of necessity—about the only way any of us ever learn it!

**THE MIRACLE 4:51-54**

*"And as he was now going down, his slaves met him, saying that his son was living. <sup>52</sup>So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better. They said therefore to him, 'Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.' <sup>53</sup>So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said to him, 'Your son lives'; and he himself believed, and his whole household. <sup>54</sup>This is again a second sign that Jesus performed, when He had come out of Judea into Galilee."*

The father took what men often call chance and interpreted it as divine sovereignty. It was not chance but God that he saw in the timing of the words and the timing of the healing. The man related the words of Jesus to a time and space event. It is the purpose of John to record events such as this one so that we, his readers, will come to the same conviction about the identity of Jesus. Here is a sign miracle that accomplished its purpose—faith in the person of Jesus.

## NOTES

# The Healing of a Lame Man

*or “Arise, Take Up Your Pallet, and Walk”*

John 5:1-18

## THE HEALING 5:1-9

### THE SETTING 5:1-5

*“After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes. <sup>3</sup>In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, [waiting for the moving of the waters; <sup>4</sup>for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.] <sup>5</sup>And a certain man was there, who had been thirty-eight years in his sickness.”*

Prior to John 5 Jesus had dealt almost exclusively with individuals. The healing of the lame man leads directly into conflict with the Pharisees, the religious leaders. From the human standpoint, it may be said that the healing of the lame man on the Sabbath cost Jesus His life, for the Pharisees never forgave this healing. The words of John 5:18, “seeking all the more to kill Him,” introduce a motif for the rest of the book.

The portion of the text within brackets is textually uncertain and is found in no manuscript before the fourth century. It is certainly absent from the earliest and best witnesses. In *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* by Bruce M. Metzger, note is made that there are some seven phrases or words that are non-Johannine, which argues against his authorship.

One can view the pool of Bethesda today since it lies beneath the church of St. Anne in the northwest corner of Jerusalem. Fragments of stone piping have been found near the pool suggesting that it may have been fed from the temple. The site has been well excavated.

After being bedfast for thirty-eight years, one would be unable to walk or even stand for any length of time. The thirty-eight years shows that the illness was well established and well known. Within this setting, the healing is more obvious.

## THE CONVERSATION 5:6-8

### Jesus' Question 5:6

*"When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, 'Do you wish to get well?' "*

How are we to understand Jesus' question to the man concerning his desire to get well? Does it not stand to reason that a man in this condition would desire to be well? Apparently the man was resigned to his condition and had lost the will to be well. Jesus' question, then, would be designed to excite hope in the man. It is worth noting, however, that an Eastern beggar often loses a good living by being cured of his disease. With the exception of the healing of the nobleman's son, Jesus takes the initiative in all the sign miracles recorded by John.

We are not told how Jesus knew how long the man had been in this condition. It is possible that bystanders told Him; on the other hand, it may be a demonstration of Jesus' omniscience. It could be similar to the incident with the woman at the well where Jesus knew of her marital history without being told.

### The Man's Reply 5:7

*"The sick man answered Him, 'Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me.' "*

### The Lord's Command 5:8

*"Jesus said to him, 'Arise, take up your pallet, and walk.' "*

Each of the three verbs calls upon the man to do something that either he could not possibly do or had never been able to do. The Lord focuses on the man's inability in order to prepare him for the display of His power.

### THE MIRACLE 5:9

*"And immediately the man became well, and took up his pallet and began to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day."*

The word *immediately* indicates the instantaneous nature of Jesus' miracle. It is important to note that the healing was in no way dependent upon the man's obedience to Jesus' command found in verse 8. The action of rising, taking up his pallet, and walking occurs after he has been healed, not before. The healing power was

in Jesus' word, not the man's faith. Taking up his pallet and walking about shows the permanency of the cure. The miracles of Jesus are all easily verifiable by those who witnessed them.

John has good reason for telling his readers that this happened on the Sabbath. This notation shows that the incident had two results: It healed the man, and it created great controversy. The Pharisaic rulings on what constituted work on the Sabbath are both numerous and absurd. Jesus ignored these and came into violent conflict with the religious leaders, eventuating in His death.

## THE DISPUTE 5:10-18

### THE JEWISH OBJECTION 5:10-13

*"Therefore the Jews were saying to him who was cured, 'It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet.' <sup>11</sup>But he answered them, 'He who made me well was the one who said to me, 'Take up your pallet and walk.' ' <sup>12</sup>They asked him, 'Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your pallet, and walk'?' <sup>13</sup>But he who was healed did not know who it was; for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place."*

The objection was lodged by the legalistic Jews. Legalism knows only one god—its traditions. No matter how much good is done, it all goes unnoticed if tradition is violated. Jewish hatred of Jesus reaches its climax in this chapter. This has been preceded by a sequence. First, in John 2:18 they question Jesus. Second, in John 4:1-3 there is an implied threat to Him. Now, with this Sabbath healing, they are ready to kill Him.

It is worth noting that at no point do they question the reality of the healing; that it was not genuine was never considered. A miracle had occurred, and they knew it.

When the man is told that it was not permissible to carry his pallet, they may have in mind Jeremiah 17:21. Legalistic activity always thinks it has the support of Scripture.

Four times John notes that Jesus removed Himself from the scene of conflict with the Jews over His claims (John 5:13, 8:59, 10:39, and 12:36). Jesus was immune to danger until His hour came; but at the same time, He did what was reasonable to avoid premature conflict.

### THE WARNING OF JESUS 5:14

*"Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, 'Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse may befall you.' "*

That Jesus *found* the man assumes that He searched for him. John 5:14 shows the search was prompted by Jesus' concern for the

man's spiritual condition. That he is told to stop sinning implies that the man's physical condition was due to his own sin.

## THE JEWISH PERSECUTION 5:15-18

### Linked to Jesus' Actions 5:15-16

*"The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. <sup>16</sup>And for this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath."*

The verb *doing* is present tense, which calls attention to Sabbath healing as a continuous practice of Jesus, not an isolated event.

### Linked to Jesus' Words 5:17-18

*"But He answered them, 'My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.' <sup>18</sup>For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God."*

Jesus replies to their criticism concerning His Sabbath action by noting that God observes no Sabbath and neither does He. Jesus' claim is obvious. God observes no Sabbath, and I observe no Sabbath for I am God!

The Jews understood clearly what He was saying and, as a result, were determined to kill Him. Verse 18 is tied very closely to verse 17 by the words *for this cause* and *therefore*. The single charge of verse 16 now becomes a double charge. The verb phrase *were seeking* involves more than desire; it stresses urgent effort. It involves the search for the time and method by which they could kill him. Such attempts are recorded in John 7:19, 25; 8:37, 59.

The first charge leveled at Jesus is that of *breaking the Sabbath*. The word for *breaking* is *luo*, which means *to loose*. It does not so much express a Sabbath violation as a Sabbath abrogation. Jesus wanted to do away with the Sabbath, so they believed. The present tense shows they believed this was a fixed habit. The second charge was that He was *calling God His own Father*, which they clearly understood as a claim to deity. The term *His own* is *idios* and refers to something that belongs to an individual in contrast to belonging to everyone. The sense in which God was Jesus' own Father is that of divine equality. From this, Jesus begins a discourse on His nature and His prerogatives as the Son of God.

# **T**he Status of the Son

or “The Deity of Jesus”

John 5:19-47

## THE PREROGATIVES OF THE SON 5:19-29

### IN RELATION TO THE FATHER 5:19-23

#### Their Works Compared 5:19-20

*“Jesus therefore answered and was saying to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. <sup>20</sup>For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and greater works than these will He show Him, that you may marvel.’ ”*

#### *Works Compared as to Their Nature*

Jesus, in speaking of Himself, does not say *I*, but rather identifies Himself as the *Son*. This serves to make the issue doctrinal. The Jews knew that the Father had a Son; they did not know the Son was Jesus. Jesus is pointing out the major feature of sonship. Perfect sonship involves complete identity with the will and action of the Father. In these words Jesus lays claim to that sonship. The words *can do nothing of Himself* are not a limitation of His power but are a description of His power. His actions and the actions of deity are identical. Strength can be described in terms of inability. Hebrews 6:18 says *it is impossible for God to lie*, stating His truthfulness in terms of inability. Notice that Jesus does not say He *does not* act independently of His Father but that He *cannot* act independently. Separate action is not possible; the Son can act only as God. This teaches that Jesus is impeccable—He did not and could not sin.

#### *Works Compared as to Their Manner*

Jesus does what His Father does in exactly the same way the Father does it. John often refers to the intimate relationship Jesus sustains to the Father (John 6:57; 7:16; 8:26, 38; 10:30, 14:9).

### ***Works Compared as to Their Extent***

The love relationship of the Father and the Son extends to every conceivable work; the Father holds back nothing. The words *greater works than these* point in two directions. The *greater works* point forward to the things described in verses 21 and 22. The words *than these* look back to the miracles they had already seen.

## **His Works Described 5:21-23**

### ***Life Is in the Sovereign Control of the Son 5:21***

“ ‘For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.’ ”

This statement could be nothing less than stunning to the hearers. God Himself speaks in Deuteronomy 32:39 saying, “See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides Me; it is I who put to death and give life....” Other passages such as I Samuel 2:6 and II Kings 5:7 show the power of life and death to be that of deity alone. There was a rabbinic saying, “Three keys are in the hand of God and they are not given into the hand of any agent, namely that of the rain, that of the womb, and that of the raising of the dead.”

### ***Judgment Is in the Sovereign Control of the Son 5:22-23***

“ ‘For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son,<sup>23</sup> in order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.’ ”

Verse 22 states the fact and verse 23 the implications. The Son is to be honored as deity. The verb *may honor* is present tense and describes a continuous and ongoing activity. The word *all* is emphatic, telling us the honor is to be universal. This verse eliminates the possibility of a unitarian belief by stating the Father cannot be honored if the Son is not equally honored.

## **IN RELATION TO MEN 5:24-29**

### **Because Jesus Is Deity, He Can Give Spiritual Life 5:24**

“ ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.’ ”

What Jesus says and who God is, is treated as the same—those who hear Jesus are those who believe God. The verb *has* in the present tense points to eternal life as something that is ours now. John 17:3 teaches that eternal life is not to be thought of merely in terms of duration but in terms of the quality of life that knows God. The verb *has passed* in the perfect tense shows that eternal life is obtained instantly, not progressively. Luke 10:7 uses it in a literal sense for the change of one’s residence. The words *out of death* and



*into life* are very forceful. Both *life* and *death* are preceded by a definite article, meaning *out of the death realm and into the life realm*. The words *out of* translate the preposition *ek*, which indicates a total removal. The word *into* shows the exact direction taken.

### Because Jesus Is Deity, He Can Give Physical Life 5:25-29

#### *The Resurrection Predicted 5:25-27*

“ ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live.<sup>26</sup> For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself;<sup>27</sup> and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man.’ ”

All resurrection is linked to the voice of the Son. The verb *is coming* points to the future aspect of resurrection. Verses 26 and 27 show that life is part of the Son’s very nature—it is not merely what He gives but what He is. This is conveyed by the words *in Himself*. That the Father gives these things to the Son does not mean they are not part of His essential nature.

#### *The Resurrection Described 5:28-29*

“ ‘Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice,<sup>28</sup> and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.’ ”

Verse 28 begins by noting the emotional state of the hearers. The words prohibit an action that is presently in progress. Verse 28 corrects three errors about death. First, it refutes the error that this life is all there is. Second, it corrects the belief that there is no judgment after death. Third, it denies that the unbeliever is annihilated.

The resurrected ones are viewed with reference to their conduct. Jesus is not telling how man is saved, nor is He showing the basis of salvation. He is simply using one word to describe each class of people. The believer is the one who does good, and the unbeliever is the one who does evil. Guilt and judgment always find their basis in works. Salvation, on the other hand, always finds its basis in grace.

## THE WITNESSES TO THE SON 5:30-47

### THE NEED FOR WITNESSES 5:30-32

“ ‘I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.<sup>31</sup> If I alone bear witness of Myself, My testimony is not true.<sup>32</sup> There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the testimony which He bears of Me is true.’ ”

The truth stated in verse 30 takes us back to where we began in verse 19. The Son acts and judges in perfect harmony with the Father. The need for witnesses to the nature of the Son is stated in verse 31. Jesus is speaking of the response that will be given to the words of self-description He has just given. By Hebrew, Greek, and Roman law, self-testimony was not regarded as adequate. The external witnesses about to be introduced are not for the benefit of Jesus but for the benefit of the hearers. The second witness spoken of in verse 32 is doubtless God the Father, though unnamed. The tense of the verb *bears witness* in verse 32 is present: the tense of the verb *has borne witness* in verse 33 is perfect. The Father bears a continual witness to the Son; John's witness was a past historical event.

## THE PRESENTATION OF WITNESSES 5:33-47

### The Witness of John 5:33-35

“ ‘You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. <sup>34</sup>But the witness which I receive is not from man, but I say these things that you may be saved. <sup>35</sup>He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.’ ”

#### *The Event 5:33*

Verse 33 refers to John 1:19 and following. The tense of both verbs is perfect. John's witness was a past completed act with abiding impact. The hearers had received light, but they rejected it and will be described in verses 39 through 47.

#### *The Aside 5:34*

Jesus explains why He refers to John's witness. Jesus did not learn anything about Himself from the testimony of John. John's testimony was for the sake of the salvation of men, not for the sake of the Son.

#### *The Lamp 5:35*

The past tense *was* may mean John is now dead or at least in prison where his public ministry cannot continue. The lamp is an appropriate metaphor for two reasons. First, it was a common piece of household furniture, and all would be familiar with it. Second, a lamp is exhausted by shining; its illuminating power is temporary. John expresses this in John 3:30, speaking of his decrease and Jesus' increase in popularity.

### The Witness of Works 5:36

“ ‘But the witness which I have is greater than that of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish, the very works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.’ ”

In what sense was Jesus' witness greater than that of John? Certainly not in the sense of truthfulness. Two considerations help us answer the question. First, Jesus' witness may lead to a more obvious conclusion. John witnessed with words; Jesus with both words and miracles. Second, John's witness was past; Jesus' was present and continuous.

### The Witness of the Father 5:37-38

*“ ‘And the Father who sent Me, He has borne witness of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form.’<sup>38</sup> And you do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent.’ ”*

The witness of the Father and the witness of the Son are identical. The deity of Jesus could be established even if our only evidence was derived from His relationship to God the Father. To disbelieve Jesus is to disbelieve the Father. It is interesting to note that faith is the prerequisite for knowing truth.

### The Witness of Scripture 5:39-47

#### *The Presence of Truth 5:39-40*

*“ ‘You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me;’<sup>40</sup> and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life.’ ”*

The expression *the Scriptures* always refers to the written word of God. The verb *think* conveys the idea of an opinion, whether true or false. The correctness of the opinion is determined by the context. The words *in them* mean they thought they would be saved by the possession of Scripture. Romans 2:17 and following refers to this false security. Hillel said, “The more study of the Law the more life...if he has gained for himself words of the Law he has gained for himself life in the world to come.” Their hope was false because they failed to see Jesus as the Messiah of whom the Scriptures spoke. It is possible to possess the book of truth and never know truth.

#### *The Rejection of Truth 5:41-47*

ITS CAUSE 5:41-44

*“ ‘I do not receive glory from men;’<sup>42</sup> but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. <sup>43</sup>I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another shall come in his own name, you will receive him. <sup>44</sup>How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another, and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God?’ ”*

The Jews reject Jesus because they do not love God (5:41-42). In 5:34 Jesus disclaimed receiving witness from men; here in 5:41 Jesus disclaims receiving glory from men. The words *love of God*

may point to God as the author of love or the object of love. Both are true, but the latter seems to fit this context best. The Jew did not love God; the Jew loved his own ideas about God. Second, they reject Jesus because they love man (5:43-44). Another will be received because he will come from their world, speaking the things of man. The glory of man versus the glory of God is the age long battleground; it is the dividing line between Christianity and humanism.

ITS CONSEQUENCE 5:45-47

*“ ‘Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. <sup>46</sup>For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me. <sup>47</sup>But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?’ ”*

Ironically, the Jew had placed his hope for salvation in his accuser. The Law was that which exposed man as a sinner and pronounced him under God's wrath. Trusting the Law for salvation was like taking poison as medicine in the hope of getting well. The misuse of the Law of Moses was rooted in unbelief.

## NOTES

# **T**he Heavenly Origin of Jesus *or “I Am the Bread of Life”*

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John 6:1-71

John 6 is a watershed in the life of Jesus. It is the point at which, viewed from the human standpoint, the opposition to Jesus begins to win. It is in this chapter that Jesus makes His first allusion to His coming death (6:51). This chapter also records the abandonment of Jesus by a large number of his followers (6:66). The chapter may be divided into three parts: first, two sign miracles (6:1-21); second, the discourse on the bread of life (6:22-59); third, the outcome of the discourse (6:60-71).

## **THE TWO SIGNS 6:1-21**

### **THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND 6:1-15**

#### **Observations**

This event occurs between six months and a year after chapter 5 and one year prior to the cross. In this chapter Jesus goes from a peak of popularity to a significantly diminished following. The feeding of the five thousand is the only miracle mentioned in all four Gospels. It also provides the occasion upon which the loyalty of Jesus' disciples is tested (6:67).

#### **The Setting 6:1-4**

*“After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias). <sup>2</sup>And a great multitude was following Him, because they were seeing the signs which He was performing on those who were sick. <sup>3</sup>And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. <sup>4</sup>Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.”*

The verbs *following*, *seeing*, and *doing* are continuous action verbs. They describe the day in day out environment in which Jesus worked. The word *because* calls attention to the superficial interest of the crowds. He was supplying physical needs, and this was really all they cared about.

In almost all instances when Jesus retired to a mountain, it was for the purpose of praying. The Passover mentioned here is not the final one at which He was crucified.

### The Test 6:5-9

#### *For Philip the Logistical Pessimist 6:5-7*

*“Jesus therefore lifting up His eyes, and seeing that a great multitude was coming to Him, said to Philip, ‘Where are we to buy bread, that these may eat?’<sup>6</sup> And this He was saying to test him; for He Himself knew what He was intending to do.<sup>7</sup> Philip answered Him, ‘Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little.’ ”*

Philip was very slow in grasping Jesus’ teaching concerning the identity of His nature with that of the Father. Even as late as chapter 14 as they are walking toward Gethsemane, Philip asks to see the Father (14:8-9).

Why did Jesus ask Philip where to find food? First, because he was a resident of nearby Bethsaida (John 1:44). Second, we are plainly told that Jesus wanted to test him (6:6). Philip was apparently able to come up with two hundred denarii. Even in so doing, Philip does not suggest a solution but rather focuses on an impossibility. The test was to determine whether Philip would believe Jesus was sufficient to meet a need without human assistance. The continual performance of miracles did not seem to carry a message for Philip. Jesus will demonstrate that He is not limited by logistical impossibilities.

#### *For Andrew the Optimistic Pessimist 6:8-9*

*“One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to Him,<sup>9</sup> ‘There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?’ ”*

Philip had said there was no hope at all, whereas Andrew says there is not much hope, but there is a little. The word translated *lad* is a double diminutive—a “little tyke.”

### The Miracle 6:10-13

*“Jesus said, ‘Have the people sit down.’ Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.<sup>11</sup> Jesus therefore took the loaves; and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted.<sup>12</sup> And when they were filled, He said to His disciples, ‘Gather up the leftover fragments that nothing may be lost.’<sup>13</sup> And so they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves, which were left over by those who had eaten.”*

That Jesus gives thanks shows the miracle is performed in connection with God the Father. It shows that the works of Jesus are in

reality the works of the Father. Verse 11 focuses on liberality, for all *had as much as they wanted*. Verse 12, on the other hand, focuses on frugality, for they gathered into baskets all that was left over.

### The Results 6:14-15

*“When therefore the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, ‘This is of a truth the Prophet who is to come into the world.’<sup>15</sup> Jesus therefore perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force, to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.”*

#### ***The Correct Insight 6:14***

The *Prophet* of whom they spoke shows their understanding of Deuteronomy 18:15. The passage is a Messianic prediction, and Jesus in truth fulfilled it.

#### ***The Incorrect Application 6:15***

The masses had no concept of the spiritual nature of Jesus’ mission. Even Jesus’ sympathetic followers tempted Him to avoid the road to glory via the suffering of the cross.

### THE WALKING ON THE WATER 6:16-21

#### **Jesus Absent from the Disciples 6:16-18**

*“Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea,<sup>17</sup> and after getting into a boat, they started to cross the sea to Capernaum. And it had already become dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.<sup>18</sup> And the sea began to be stirred up because a strong wind was blowing.”*

The feeding of the five thousand and the walking on the water show Jesus in two different relationships. The former stresses His relationship to the masses; the latter His relationship to the disciples. The *evening* could be any late afternoon time before sunset. The disciples had probably planned to make the trip in the remaining hours of daylight.

The separation of the disciples from Jesus was not a chance event nor was it one of the disciples’ own choosing. The words of Matthew 14:22 show that Jesus deliberately separated the disciples from Himself. Matthew says, “And immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.” The separation had been one commanded by Jesus. Why did Jesus do this? Since Jesus knew exactly what was about to happen, we may say that He wanted to teach the disciples that their very lives depended upon Him. It is not at all unlike God to let us sink in order to learn we cannot swim.

The stirred up water of the Sea of Galilee was a common phenomenon. The sea is six hundred feet below sea level and is surrounded

by hills. The air cools at sunset, and the wind blows down the hillsides from the west and churns up the waters. The disciples were going west into the wind and were making little progress.

### Jesus Coming to the Disciples 6:19-20

*“When therefore they had rowed about three or four miles, they beheld Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat; and they were frightened. <sup>20</sup>But He said to them, ‘It is I; do not be afraid.’ ”*

The absence of Jesus’ presence did not mean the absence of His awareness. The words translated *it is I* are *ego eimi*, which literally rendered is “I am.” They are a means of emphatic identification. The same expression may be seen in John 4:26; 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19; 18:5, 6, 8.

### Jesus Present with the Disciples 6:21

*“They were willing therefore to receive Him into the boat; and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.”*

The details are sparse, but this sudden arrival at land may be a miracle. If so, we have in this and the walking on water a demonstration of Jesus’ sovereignty over gravity and space.

## THE DISCOURSE 6:22-59

### THE CROWD GATHERS 6:22-27

#### Their Persistence 6:22-25

*“The next day the multitude that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other small boat there, except one, and that Jesus had not entered with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples had gone away alone. <sup>23</sup>There came other small boats from Tiberias near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks. <sup>24</sup>When the multitude therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats, and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. <sup>25</sup>And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, ‘Rabbi, when did You get here?’ ”*

At first glance the information contained in these verses seems to be needless detail. It simply informs us that the masses were pursuing Jesus everywhere He went. Nothing in the word of God is without significance, and we should seek it here as we would elsewhere. The reason for pointing out their feverish activity in pursuing Jesus is to expose their motives. He says, “You will pursue Me with great effort, but only because I have met your physical needs.” This provides a setting for His discourse on the bread of life. The crowd set out for Capernaum because it was Jesus’ Galilean home.



**Their Motivation 6:26-27**

*“Jesus answered them and said, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves, and were filled.’<sup>27</sup> Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man shall give to you, for on Him the Father, even God, has set His seal.’ ”*

***Their Motivation as It Was 6:26***

Two things show that Jesus is “going for the jugular vein” in exposing their motives. First, He ignores the question of the crowd recorded in verse 25. Second, His use of the verb *were filled*, a different word than that used in John 6:12 saying that those fed were filled. It is the word *chortazo*, which was commonly used in connection with animals and means *to stuff with fodder*. Here is an example of a miracle that did not accomplish the intended purpose of miracles. The defect was not, however, in the miracle but in the observers. The crowd had carnal reasons for pursuing Jesus.

***Their Motivation as It Should Have Been 6:27***

The negative command forbids a practice that is going on. They are told to “stop working for the food which perishes!” The command is not absolute but comparative. They needed to stop putting all of their efforts into gaining the material and physical. The contrast is between what *perishes* and what *endures*.

**THE CROWD RESPONDS 6:28-34****With a Question About the “Works of God” 6:28-29**

*“They said therefore to Him, ‘What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?’<sup>29</sup> Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.’ ”*

Verse 28 reveals how the crowd misunderstood the words of Jesus in verse 27. First, they understood the *works of God* in terms of activity. They inquire what they should *do*, using a present tense verb denoting ongoing action. Second, the plural noun *works* shows they were thinking of many activities, not just one.

Jesus’ reply does two things. First, Jesus shifts from the plural *works* to the singular *work*. Second, He interprets the word *work* to mean *believe*. One works for God by believing God.

**THE CROWD (6:28)**

Works

Do

**JESUS (6:29)**

Work

Believe

**With a Question About a “Sign” 6:30-33*****The Question Asked 6:30-31***

*“They said therefore to Him, ‘What then do You do for a sign, that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform?’<sup>31</sup>Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.’”*

The question seems to be very strange since it is asked in connection with the feeding of the five thousand. Were they naive or extremely forgetful? It is necessary to understand what they were asking from a Jewish perspective. Their reasoning is this: If Jesus is the Messiah, He is greater than Moses; and it therefore follows that He will have signs greater than Moses’. To this it must be added that the feeding of the five thousand was not as great as what Moses had done. Jesus fed five thousand once; Moses fed a whole nation for forty years! From this perspective, the crowd feels they need a greater abundance of signs.

***The Question Answered 6:32-33***

*“Jesus therefore said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven.’<sup>33</sup>For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.’”*

Jesus replies by showing a series of contrasts between Himself and Moses. First, Moses was the distributor of the bread; Jesus is the bread. Second, Moses’ bread was a type; Jesus is reality (*true bread*). Third, Moses’ bread met a physical need; Jesus meets a spiritual need.

These verses begin an emphasis on the heavenly origin of Jesus. This may be noted in John 6:33, 38, 41, 42, 50, 51, 58. The preposition *ek* with the noun *bread* makes a strong statement about Jesus’ heavenly origin.

**With a Request for “this Bread” 6:34**

*“They said therefore to Him, ‘Lord, evermore give us this bread.’”*

This request tells several things about the crowd. First, it shows they did not identify the bread of God with Jesus. It was taken to be something external to Him. Second, the request of the crowd is much like that of the woman at the well (John 4:15). Third, we are explicitly told in verse 36 that the crowd is made up of those that *do not believe*.

## THE CROWD INSTRUCTED 6:35-40

### The Promise to All Who Come 6:35-36

*“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. <sup>36</sup>But I said to you, that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe.’ ”*

Verses 35 through 40 are a discourse uninterrupted by questions from the crowd. They contain a direct, clear, and emphatic statement of truth. At this point Jesus shifts to the first person emphatic pronouns *I* or *Me* and uses them about thirty-five times through the end of this discourse.

The expression *I am* followed by a metaphor is used numerous places to describe Jesus’ work. In John 6:35 He is *bread*; in 8:12 He is *light*; in 10:7 He is the *door*; in 10:11 He is the *good shepherd*; in 11:25 He is the *resurrection and the life*; and in 15:1 He is the *true vine*. These statements are all peculiar to the Gospel of John. Each one shows how Jesus relates to the needs of man.

### The Character of Those Who Come 6:37-40

*“ ‘All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. <sup>38</sup>For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. <sup>39</sup>And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. <sup>40</sup>For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.’ ”*

#### ***All Who Come Are a Gift from God the Father to God the Son 6:37a***

The word *all* views believers as a whole in their relationship to the Father; the words *the one* view believers as individuals in their relationship to God the Son.

#### ***All Who Come Are Received 6:37b***

No one who comes to Christ is ever rebuffed by His saying, “You must turn away for you are not among the given ones!”

#### ***All Who Come Are Kept 6:38-39***

Verse 38 makes it clear that the security of the believer lies in the work of the Son, whereas verse 39 roots security in the will of the Father. Both are true since the Son always executes the will of the Father perfectly.

#### ***All Who Believe Have Eternal Life 6:40a***

#### ***All Who Have Eternal Life Have a Complete Salvation 6:40b***

The *last day* is a reference to the resurrection. A complete salvation is one that touches the whole person—body, soul, and spirit.

## THE JEWS COMPLAIN 6:41-42

*“The Jews therefore were grumbling about Him, because He said, ‘I am the bread that came down out of heaven.’<sup>42</sup> And they were saying, ‘Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, “I have come down out of heaven”?’ ”*

The Jews know only the Jesus of their own ideas; they did not know the true Jesus that was revealed in His own words. The true God is the God of the Bible—only and exclusively. The word *grumbling* denotes discontent and centers about His claim to be from heaven. The word *now* shows that they believe this to be a recent claim.

## THE CORRECTION OF JESUS 6:43-51

### Perspectives on Coming to Jesus 6:43-46

*“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Do not grumble among yourselves.<sup>44</sup> No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.<sup>45</sup> It is written in the prophets, “And they shall all be taught of God.” Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me.<sup>46</sup> Not that any man has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father.’ ”*

Jesus begins by commanding them to stop murmuring—why? Because discussion among themselves is not the way to learn truth; they will learn truth only if they listen to Jesus.

Coming to Jesus may be viewed two ways. First, it may be viewed from the divine side—the drawing of the Father. Second, it may be viewed from the human side—the choice to believe. The mention of the Old Testament in verse 45 shows that the Scriptures are the means whereby the Father draws men to Himself. The invitation to salvation is extended by the word of God.

### Reaffirmation of the Way to Eternal Life 6:47-51

*“ ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.<sup>48</sup> I am the bread of life.<sup>49</sup> Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.<sup>50</sup> This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.<sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh.’ ”*

Note the various words used to describe proper relationship to Jesus. We are to *believe* in 6:47; to *come* in 6:35; to *eat* in 6:51; and to *drink* in 6:53. Each of them requires an object of some sort; not one of them can stand alone. Jesus is to whom we come, what we eat or drink, and the one in whom we believe.

## THE CONTROVERSY ERUPTS 6:52-59

*“The Jews therefore began to argue with one another, saying, ‘How can this man give us His flesh to eat?’ <sup>53</sup>Jesus therefore said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. <sup>54</sup>He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. <sup>55</sup>For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. <sup>56</sup>He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. <sup>57</sup>As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me. <sup>58</sup>This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate, and died, he who eats this bread shall live forever.’ <sup>59</sup>These things He said in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum.”*

Many interpreters take this passage to be a reference to the Lord’s supper. In Roman Catholic theology, these verses are the basis of the sacrament of communion, and it is here that the concept of transubstantiation is supposedly built. Transubstantiation is the teaching that the bread and wine turn into the body and blood of Christ literally. This is believed to occur when the priest elevates the host between earth and heaven. If the mass is in Latin, he will say, “Hoc corpus meus est.” At this moment, transubstantiation occurs. In Roman Catholic theology, this is a “must believe doctrine.”

At the back of this commentary under “Transubstantiation” is an argument as to why this passage is not related to the sacrament of communion and does not teach transubstantiation.

## THE RESULTS OF THE DISCOURSE 6:60-71

### THE DISCIPLES STUMBLE 6:60-65

*“Many therefore of His disciples, when they heard this said, ‘This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?’ <sup>61</sup>But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, ‘Does this cause you to stumble? <sup>62</sup>What then if you should behold the Son of Man ascending where He was before? <sup>63</sup>It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. <sup>64</sup>But there are some of you who do not believe.’ For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. <sup>65</sup>And He was saying, ‘For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father.’ ”*

While the word *disciples* often refers to the twelve, the circle is much wider than that here and includes a large number of Jesus’ followers. Jesus’ teaching concerning the absolute necessity of eating His body and drinking His blood draws a strong response. The word translated *difficult* means *hard to accept, harsh and offensive*. The word *this* refers back to Jesus’ entire discourse. The most

dominant note in the discourse is His words about coming down from heaven. This truth is mentioned seven times. A crisis arises at the end of this discourse because Jesus had demanded more confidence in Himself than they felt they could supply. When the crowd mentions listening to Jesus' teaching, they mean listening sympathetically and with faith. They had heard all they cared to take in. It was not the part they did not understand that bothered them; it was rather the part they did understand that they found offensive.

The word *stumble* was used for a trigger on a trap. Jesus created a crisis, and His followers want no more of Him. Verse 62 tells them that they know only half. If they cannot believe He came out of heaven, what will they say when He returns to heaven? In referring to the ascension, the Lord assumes it to be the culmination of all the events that will be initiated by His crucifixion—"If you stumble at My words in this discourse, how much more will you stumble at My work on the cross!"

The words of verse 63 help us understand what Jesus meant by eating His flesh and drinking His blood. First, Jesus points to the Holy Spirit as the one who gives life. Second, it is the word of Jesus that brings this life. Literal eating and drinking is not what He means.

### THE DISCIPLES WITHDRAW 6:66

*"As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore."*

The *grumbling* of verse 61 now eventuates in turning away from the teaching of Jesus permanently. The words *as a result of this* are both temporal (from that day) and causal. These disciples not only gave up future contact with Jesus but apparently gave up all they had gained from Him.

### THE DISCIPLES REMAIN 6:67-71

#### Peter's Confession 6:67-69

*"Jesus said therefore to the twelve, 'You do not want to go away also, do you?' <sup>68</sup>Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup>And we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.'"*

Peter is a refreshing contrast to the crowds. The masses were drawn by Jesus' miracles, Peter by His words. Jesus' question is directed to the twelve, but Peter acts as their representative in giving the answer. The expression *words of eternal life* do not refer to any specific way of stating things, but rather to the nature of all of Jesus' teaching. The emphatic plural personal pronoun *we* marks off the faith of the disciples from the unbelief of the people. The verbs *believed* and *have come to know* are perfect tense, pointing to settled convictions. The designation of Jesus as the *Holy One of God* will be

used by Peter in his sermon on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:27 and again in Acts 3:14. It resembles the expression “the Holy One of Israel” in places such as Isaiah 41:14, 43:3, 47:4, and 48:17. The pronoun *You* of verse 69 is emphatic—*You and You alone* is the idea.

### **Jesus’ Pronouncement 6:70-71**

*“Jesus answered them, ‘Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?’ <sup>71</sup>Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him.”*

Jesus makes it clear that the activity of Judas is no surprise and that he had been deliberately chosen to be among the twelve.

### **NOTES**

## NOTES



# **D**ivisions Over Jesus

*or “Some Said...Others Said...Still Others Said”*

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John 7:1-53

The theme of this chapter is found in verse 43 where we are told “there arose a division in the multitude because of Him.” This chapter records at least twelve varied opinions concerning Jesus. The setting of the chapter is important. The opening verses tell us it was the time of the Feast of Tabernacles (Booths). This was one of the three yearly feasts that required all Jewish males twelve and over to go to Jerusalem. The feast occurred in the fall just after harvest, and the pilgrims all carried a palm branch or some symbol of the earth’s fruitfulness. The temple was the focal point and was illuminated at night with lamps used only on this occasion, making a dramatic setting for the Lord’s word identifying Himself as the light of the world (8:12). The pilgrims stayed in tents for seven days, and each day a priest carried a golden pitcher from Siloam to the temple commemorating God’s provision in the wilderness. The sacrifices made at the feast were more numerous than at any other feast (Numbers 29:12-34). At this particular feast, Jesus was very much the topic of discussion.

## **THE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM 7:1-13**

### **THE JOURNEY DELAYED 7:1-9**

#### **The Setting 7:1-2**

*“And after these things Jesus was walking in Galilee; for He was unwilling to walk in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill Him. <sup>2</sup>Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths; was at hand.”*

The words *after these things* follow chapter 6 by about six months. The verb *walking* is a continuous action tense and points to the itinerant, place-to-place ministry of Jesus. The Jews had sought to kill Jesus for about a year and a half. It had stemmed from His healing of the paralytic on the Sabbath (5:18). With chapter 7 the desire to kill Him is intensified and reaches a crescendo when He is finally crucified. See John 7:19, 30, 32, 44; 8:59; 10:39; 11:8, 53.

## The Discussion 7:3-9

### ***His Brothers 7:3-5***

#### THEIR SUGGESTION 7:3-4

*“His brothers therefore said to Him, ‘Depart from here, and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may behold Your works which You are doing. <sup>4</sup>For no one does anything in secret, when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world.’ ”*

The word *therefore* goes back to the statement of verse 2. The feast was near, and attendance was obligatory. The encouragement to seek publicity probably finds its basis in the large defection of followers that had occurred in chapter 6. Their suggestion was logical: If He wishes to be known, He should do His miracles in Jerusalem, the center of Jewish religion—the “Big Apple” of Judaism.

#### THEIR UNBELIEF 7:5

*“For not even His brothers were believing in Him.”*

Jesus received pressure from those who hated Him, and He received pressure from those who were supposedly His friends. Many men have faced fierce public opposition but received support from their families—not so with Jesus.

### ***His Reply 7:6-9***

*“Jesus therefore said to them, ‘My time is not yet at hand, but your time is always opportune. <sup>7</sup>The world cannot hate you; but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil. <sup>8</sup>Go up to the feast yourselves; I do not go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come.’ <sup>9</sup>And having said these things to them, He stayed in Galilee.”*

In essence Jesus is saying, “I live by my heavenly Father’s calendar, not man’s.” There are two words for time in Greek. First, there is *chronos*, which emphasizes sequence of events or chronological order. Second, there is *kairos*, which emphasizes the suitable and appropriate period in which something happens. This is the word used here. Jesus lived out the will of God the Father with perfect precision. Jesus’ refusal to go up to the feast is not absolute; for He goes later. The issue is timing. Jesus shows that He is atuned to His Father’s will in three ways. First, He refuses to go to the feast at His brother’s suggestion. Second, He refuses to go to the feast at His brother’s time. Third, He refuses to go to the feast in His brother’s manner.

## THE JOURNEY ACCOMPLISHED 7:10-13

*“But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as it were, in secret. <sup>11</sup>The Jews therefore were seeking Him at the feast, and were saying, ‘Where is He?’ <sup>12</sup>And there was much grumbling among the multitudes concerning Him; some were*

saying, 'He is a good man'; others were saying, 'No, on the contrary, He leads the multitude astray.' <sup>13</sup>Yet no one was speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews."

Travel was normally done in large caravans, each caravan being greeted with great fanfare and attention. Deuteronomy 16:16 requires that the male Jews twelve and over attend the feast. Jesus fulfilled the requirement of the word of God but did so discreetly, going in secret.

It is important to be aware of the attitudes that existed as Jesus attended this feast. First, there was utter disrespect on the part of the religious leaders. Their question, "Where is He?" is anything but kind. The word translated *He* is *ekeinos*, which means *that*. The tone of the question is "Where is that guy?" Second, among the crowd there was an undercurrent of discussion. The designation *multitudes* refers to the uninformed majority. It may be said that they wanted to do the right thing but were not sure what it was. Hysteria created by the leaders will eventually sway them. Third, there was highly polarized opinion about Jesus, as the last part of verse 12 indicates—some believing He was good and some taking Him to be a deceiver. Fourth, verse 13 makes it clear that there was ecclesiastic domination of the people.

## THE MID-FEAST DEBATE 7:14-36

### THE JEWS AND THEIR RESPONSE TO JESUS 7:14-19

#### The Effect of Jesus' Teaching 7:14-15

"But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach. <sup>15</sup>The Jews therefore were marveling, saying, 'How has this man become learned, having never been educated?' "

The words *become learned* translate a verb and its object. Literally, it says *know letters*. The word *letters* is *grammata* and denotes Scripture. II Timothy 3:15 uses the same word, saying of Timothy that from childhood he had known the *sacred writings*. The implication of their criticism is that His teaching is good and interesting, but not accredited. The words *this man* are contemptuous. This is supreme irony—man meets God incarnate and calls Him uneducated!

#### The Source of Jesus' Teaching 7:16-17

"Jesus therefore answered them, and said, 'My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. <sup>17</sup>If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself.' "

Jesus' teaching was not learned from a rabbi but came directly from God the Father. Jesus claims that His teaching can be identi-

fied as from God only by those who have positive volition toward the will of God. Assurance about the source of His teaching is only for those who have a love for God. The principle is this: Positive volition toward the will of God is followed by knowledge and assurance.

### The Character of Jesus' Teaching 7:18-19

*“ ‘He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the one who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him. <sup>19</sup>Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you carries out the law? Why do you seek to kill Me?’ ”*

This is a practical test of Jesus' teaching that rests in a principle. The man whose message originates with himself seeks his own advancement. He who speaks from himself speaks of himself and for himself. It is important to note that their attitude toward Jesus reflects their attitude toward the word of God.

## THE MULTITUDE AND THEIR RESPONSE TO JESUS 7:20-31

### The Charge of Demon Possession 7:20-24

*“The multitude answered, ‘You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?’ <sup>21</sup>Jesus answered and said to them, ‘I did one deed and you all marvel. <sup>22</sup>On this account Moses has given you circumcision (not because it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and on the Sabbath you circumcise a man. <sup>23</sup>If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath that the Law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath? <sup>24</sup>Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.’ ”*

The words of the crowd show that the decision of the religious leaders to kill Him was not widely publicized, though known by some (7:25). The *one deed* refers to the healing of the paralytic on the Sabbath recorded in John 5. At that healing they marveled, not so much at the miracle as at when He performed it. John 7:22-24 shows two major characteristics of Jewish legalism. First, legalism strains at a gnat and swallows a camel. The Jews circumcised on the Sabbath, treating part of the body, and counted themselves righteous. Jesus healed on the Sabbath, treating the whole body, and was counted unrighteous. Second, legalism always focuses on appearances, not on inner reality.

### The Two Parts of the Multitude 7:25-31

#### *The Jerusalem Dwellers 7:25-30*

#### THEIR REASONING 7:25-26

*“Therefore some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, ‘Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill? <sup>26</sup>And look, He is speaking publicly,*

*and they are saying nothing to Him. The rulers do not really know that this is the Christ, do they?’ ”*

The city dwellers know Jesus is the one the leaders are seeking to kill. However, no one has laid a hand on Him. Does this mean they believe Him to be the Messiah? The following verses show they make this suggestion only to abandon it. The religious leaders are walking a very fine line. If they move too quickly, there might be an uprising of the people. If this happens, the Romans will move quickly to quell it. This could be disastrous for them and the nation as well.

THEIR ERROR 7:27

*“ ‘However, we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from.’ ”*

The people know only the Jesus of their own judgment. They did not listen to His claims. Their opinion that no one would know from where the Messiah would come was not grounded in anything found in the Old Testament. They were relating only to tradition, not truth.

THEIR ANSWER 7:28-29

*“Jesus therefore cried out in the temple, teaching and saying, ‘You both know Me and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. <sup>29</sup>I know Him; because I am from Him, and He sent Me.’ ”*

Jesus answered them with an ironic statement. We could paraphrase it saying, “So you know me and where I am from, do you?” Both His origin and His mission are heavenly in nature. They are forced to one of two conclusions about Jesus. If His claims are false, then He is guilty of blasphemy like no man has ever uttered. If His claims are true, He can be described as nothing less than God incarnate. We must accept Him fully or reject Him absolutely—there is nothing between these two options.

THEIR ATTEMPT 7:30

*“They were seeking therefore to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.”*

While always seeking to avoid confrontation and premature conflict, Jesus was, at the same time, sovereignly protected by the Father until His hour to die came.

### ***The Out-of-Town Pilgrims 7:31***

*“But many of the multitude believed in Him; and they were saying, ‘When the Christ shall come, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?’ ”*

The multitudes become polarized in their opinion of Jesus. That many of them were convinced that He was the Messiah is testimo-

ny to the reality of His miracles. They were obvious to all and brought many to faith in Jesus.

## THE PHARISEES AND THEIR RESPONSE TO JESUS 7:32-36

### The Intention 7:32

*“The Pharisees heard the multitude muttering these things about Him; and the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to seize Him.”*

The favorable reaction of some of the multitude prompted the Pharisees to action. Two things should be observed at this point: the utter desperation of the leaders and the calm control of Jesus.

### The Statement 7:33-34

*“Jesus therefore said, ‘For a little while longer I am with you, then I go to Him who sent Me. <sup>34</sup>You shall seek Me, and shall not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come.’ ”*

Here is an intimation of His coming death. Later in John 13 at the last supper, He will tell the disciples the same thing. Peter responds by insisting there is no place they would not follow Him. Jesus tells him that he cannot go with Him now but will go later. This becomes the setting for the teaching of John 14—what will happen between His departure and His return.

### The Confusion 7:35-36

*“The Jews therefore said to one another, ‘Where does this man intend to go that we shall not find Him? He is not intending to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks, is He? <sup>36</sup>What is this statement that He said, “You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come”?’ ”*

The pattern of response often found in the Gospel of John continues. Spiritual reality is always missed by a materialistic interpretation. For Jesus to go away must be material and geographical. That He was heavenly in origin and would return via the cross to His Father is unthinkable.

## JESUS' CLIMACTIC APPEAL 7:37-44

### THE SETTING

The place of this appeal is the temple, and the time is “the last day, the great day of the feast....” According to the Law, the feast was held for seven days. It was a memorial to the wilderness wandering during which water and food were scarce. The celebration included a daily procession of priests coming from the pool of Siloam where they had drawn water to pour out at the altar in the

temple. As they came they recited Isaiah 12:3, “Therefore you will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation.” The rabbis said, “He who has not seen these festivities knows not what Jubilee is.”

Leviticus 23:36 prescribes an eighth day on which there was no pouring out of the water. This gives great significance to the words spoken by Jesus in the temple on that day, “If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.”

### THE INVITATION 7:37-38

*“Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.’<sup>38</sup>He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.’”*

The verbs *stood* and *cried out* are both continuous action and give us the dramatic setting for the words spoken by Jesus. The posture is unusual since rabbis always sat when they taught their students.

Jesus’ statement is simple: All one must do is recognize his need and go to the right source. The verbs *come* and *drink* are present tense imperatives—keep coming and keep drinking. Jesus repeated the words over and over.

Jesus frequently takes the figures of the Exodus and applies them to Himself—the serpent (Numbers 21:9 and John 3:14), the manna (Exodus 16:4 and John 6:31-35), the water (Exodus 17:2-6 and John 7:37), the pillar of fire (Exodus 13:21-22 and John 8:12).

The verb *believe* in verse 38 explains the metaphor of drinking in verse 37. Doctrinal order is preserved with regard to one’s relationship to God. First, there is salvation (verse 37). Second, comes the life of faith (verse 38). Third, from this life flows service. The word *rivers* is *potamos* and is distinct from a stream or a creek. It is used of the Jordan, the Euphrates, and the Tigris. It is first in the clause and therefore emphatic. It is plural to show great abundance—our word *torrents* would convey the right idea.

### THE EXPLANATION 7:39

*“But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”*

The *living water* of verse 38 is interpreted as a symbol of the Holy Spirit who indwells believers. This is a concise description of the nature of the Christian life—the outward expression of the invisible God.

The word *believed* is an aorist tense and looks to the future. We could translate *those who will come to believe*. The word *were* is *mello* and refers to something that has not occurred yet but is very near. The words *the Spirit was not yet given* anticipate the day of

Pentecost. The word *glorified* in some form is a favorite word of John. This is the first time he uses it and will repeat it twenty-two more times. The most it is found in the other Gospels is in Luke, where it occurs nine times. John invariably uses it of the glorifying of the Father or the Son. Even the cross is seen as the glory of the Son. What men would call shame, God calls glory. It often refers to the establishing of status or enhancing of a reputation. See John 8:54; 12:28; 13:32; 14:13; 15:8; 16:14; 17:1, 4, 5, 10, and 21:19. It is also used of Jesus' passion and surrounding events (John 7:39, 12:16, 23; and 13:31-32).

### THE DIVERSITY 7:40-44

*"Some of the multitude therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, 'This certainly is the Prophet.' <sup>41</sup>Others were saying, 'This is the Christ.' Still others were saying, 'Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He? <sup>42</sup>Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?' <sup>43</sup>So there arose a division in the multitude because of Him. <sup>44</sup>And some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him."*

## THE ABORTIVE ATTEMPT TO ARREST JESUS 7:45-53

### THE OFFICER'S FAILURE 7:45-49

*"The officers therefore came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, 'Why did you not bring Him?' <sup>46</sup>The officers answered, 'Never did a man speak the way this man speaks.' <sup>47</sup>The Pharisees therefore answered them, 'You have not also been led astray, have you? <sup>48</sup>No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he? <sup>49</sup>But this multitude which does not know the Law is accursed.' "*

The officers mentioned here are those of verse 32 that had earlier been sent to seize Jesus. The officers were extremely impressed with the manner in which Jesus spoke. The emphasis is not on the content of His words but on His manner of presentation. Failure to make the arrest could easily have brought the wrath and the discipline of the Sanhedrin on themselves. That they made no excuse for themselves shows the extent to which Jesus impressed them. Irritated at the officers' words, the Sanhedrin notes that no one of academic or religious status believed in Jesus—only the foolish multitude.

### NICODEMUS'S ADVICE 7:50-53

*"Nicodemus said to them (he who came to Him before, being one of them), <sup>51</sup>'Our Law does not judge a man, unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?' <sup>52</sup>They answered and said to him, 'You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee.' <sup>53</sup>[And everyone went to his home.]"*



It is interesting to note that at the very moment the Sanhedrin condemns the multitude as foolish, Nicodemus speaks up and points out that the crowd may be ignorant of the Law, but the Sanhedrin is guilty of disregarding the Law. It is ironic that in stating that no prophet came from Galilee, they do not recall Jonah.

## NOTES

## NOTES

# ontroversy to Confrontation

*or “He Who Is of God Hears the Words of God”*

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John 8:1-59

John 7:53-8:11 is the longest section of the Bible where the textual authority is in question. Are these verses part of the word of God, or are they not? Did John actually write these words, or were they added by someone else later? Almost any translation you may be using notes the problem. The NASB says John 7:53-8:11 is not found in most of the old manuscripts; RSV simply omits the verses from the main body of the text and footnotes them saying, “Most of the ancient authorities either omit 7:53-8:11, or insert it, with variations of the text, here or at the end of this gospel or after Luke 21:38.” The KJV defends its inclusion saying, “Christ’s declaration, ‘I am the light of the world’ seems clearly to have its occasion in the conviction wrought in the hearts of the Pharisees as recorded in 8:9, and also helps to explain the Pharisees’ words in 8:41. It is therefore to be considered a genuine part of the Gospel.” The NIV says, “The earliest and most reliable manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have John 7:53-8:11.”

John 8 is a series of exchanges between Jesus and the Pharisees and is difficult to outline. Note the exchanges in 8:12, 13, 14, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25, 28, 33, 34, 39, 42, 48, 49, 52, 54, 57, and 58.

## THE SETTING 8:1-2

*“But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. <sup>2</sup>And early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them.”*

Jesus had spent the night on the Mount of Olives, the reason for which is given in 7:44. The words *early in the morning* translate a single word meaning *dawn*. Jesus, by sitting down, assumed the position taken by a rabbi in teaching his students (Matthew 5:1, 23:2; Mark 9:35). Sitting to teach was in itself a claim to authority much like a judge “sits” over a certain court.

During the closing days of Jesus’ life, it was His habit to teach in Jerusalem during the day and then retire outside the city to spend the night (Luke 21:37, 22:39).

## THE TEST 8:3-5

*“And the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the midst, <sup>4</sup>they said to Him, ‘Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. <sup>5</sup>Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?’ ”*

The scribes and the Pharisees form a group that John will hereafter call *the Jews*. The scribes devoted their entire lives to making rules; the Pharisees devoted their entire lives to keeping them. The words *in the very act* stress that her guilt was undisputed. Leviticus 20:10 is clear in saying that the punishment for such sin is death for both the man and the woman, though the method of death is not stated. The Talmud, however, prescribes strangulation. The whole incident seems to be contrived. They brought in the woman, but where is the man? If she was taken in the very act, there should have been two sinners brought to Jesus, not one. The term *such women* is feminine gender, which manipulates the Old Testament text that includes the man also. The pronoun *You* is emphatic—“The Law is clear, but what do *You* say?” The attempt was to pit Jesus against the Law.

## THE RESPONSE 8:6-11

### OF THE JEWS 8:6A

*“And they were saying this, testing Him, in order that they might have grounds for accusing Him....”*

John wants us to know that they were not seeking guidance but instead were setting a trap. The word translated *testing* signifies putting one to a test with a view to failing. In what way was this a test for Jesus? If He says to stone her, He could be charged with counseling action contrary to Roman law. If he does not say to stone her, He would be flying in the face of Jewish law. Jesus handled accusations in three ways. First, He may give a barbed reply, as in John 18:20-22. Second, He may respond with silence, as in Luke 23:9. Third, He may give a straightforward statement of the truth, as in John 18:37.

### OF JESUS 8:6B-11

*“But Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground. <sup>7</sup>But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, ‘He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.’ <sup>8</sup>And again He stooped down, and wrote on the ground. <sup>9</sup>And when they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she had been, in the midst. <sup>10</sup>And straightening up, Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?’ <sup>11</sup>And she said, ‘No one, Lord.’ And Jesus*

| said, ‘Neither do I condemn you; go your way. From now on sin no more.’ ”]

### His Writing

| Jesus’ first response is to ignore the accusers, showing disdain. We are not told what Jesus wrote on the ground. If, however, we note the effects it had on those who were observing, we may come to some conclusions. First, He makes their innocence the prerequisite for throwing the first stone. If the words *without sin* are taken in a general sense, then any sin could be involved. If, on the other hand, we take them to be defined by the context, then the reference is to the sin of adultery. Second, what He wrote on the ground was sufficient to silence each of the accusers. They presented no argument; they simply left the scene. The act of writing is described by a continuous action verb, and their departure was one-by-one. This would lead one to think that each line said something about each scribe and Pharisee that they did not care to deal with.

### His Words

| In speaking to the woman, Jesus neither condemns nor condones. The verb *condemn* refers to the outward punishment, not the moral guilt. He calls her action sin but does not wish to pronounce judgment upon her.

## THE DIALOGUE 8:12-59

### ABOUT HIS FATHER 8:12-20

#### The Testimony of Jesus 8:12

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

| Jesus’ claim is emphatic. This is indicated by the verb *am* plus the addition of a separate personal pronoun. The metaphor of *light* conveys the idea of illumination. Possession of light is not a natural condition of man; it is obtained only by following Christ. Light is not a separate entity that may be possessed apart from Him. Jesus makes it clear that the only alternative to light is darkness, with no middle ground. The expression *light of life* means *light which illumines life*. The words of *the world* show that the light is not parochial, but universal—not for the Jew only, but for all.

#### The Objection to Jesus 8:13

| “The Pharisees therefore said to Him, ‘You are bearing witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true.’ ”

For a discussion of the problem of self-testimony, see the comments on John 5:31-47. Jewish, Greek, and Roman law did not regard one's own testimony as adequate.

### Jesus' Reply 8:14-19

#### *Their Ignorance 8:14*

*"Jesus answered and said to them, 'Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true; for I know where I came from, and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from, or where I am going.' "*

The objectors take a typical Pharisaic approach. First, they do not address the issue of His claim to be light of the world at all—nothing is said of it. Second, they focus on legal technicality only. Their ignorance is three-fold: They know nothing of His past, nothing of His future, and nothing of His present. Ignorance, as is often the case, was no deterrent to dogmatic opinion.

#### *Their Standards 8:15-16*

*" 'You people judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone. <sup>16</sup>But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and He who sent Me.' "*

The words *according to the flesh* introduce the Pharisees' standard of judgment. Their conclusions about Jesus were based on external, superficial, and imperfect examination. When Jesus says He is not judging anyone, He does not mean He is not capable of doing so (8:16); nor does it refer to the future (John 5:22, 27-28). Jesus means that judgment is not the purpose of His first coming. He did not come to judge; He came to save (John 12:47).

#### *Their Law 8:17-19*

*" 'Even in your law it has been written, that the testimony of two men is true. <sup>18</sup>I am He who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me.' <sup>19</sup>And so they were saying to Him, 'Where is Your Father?' Jesus answered, 'You know neither Me, nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also.' "*

Verse 17 states the requirement of the law, and verse 18 states its fulfillment. The oneness of Jesus with God the Father is demonstrated by the statement that to know Jesus is to know the Father, and to know the Father is to know Jesus.

### A Historical Note 8:20

*"These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come."*

Jesus was not arrested at this time, and John wants us to know it was not due to lack of desire or absence of opportunity. The ene-

mies of Jesus were powerless over Him until His hour came; until that moment, He was fully protected by God the Father.

## ABOUT HIS DEPARTURE 8:21-31

### The Departure Statement 8:21

*“He said therefore again to them, ‘I go away, and you shall seek Me, and shall die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come.’ ”*

This statement introduces the theme of the opposite destinies of Jesus and His opponents. He will return to His Father, and they will die in their sins. The verb *I go away* is *hupago* and is used by John seventeen times to speak of Jesus’ return to His Father’s presence in heaven. That the word *sin* is singular, not plural, is significant. The singular number serves to concentrate attention on the sin of all sins—the rejection of Jesus Christ. To die in one’s sins is to die under the guilt and the associated penalty of sin.

### The Departure Misunderstood 8:22

*“Therefore the Jews were saying, ‘Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, “Where I am going, you cannot come.”?’ ”*

The Jews could think of only suicide as a means of departure, and this option was unthinkable to them. Josephus tells of the Jewish attitude toward suicide saying, “But as for those who have laid mad hands upon themselves, the darker regions of the nether world receive their souls, and God, their father, visits upon their posterity the outrageous acts of the parents.”

### Jesus’ Person Distinguished 8:23-24

*“And He was saying to them, ‘You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. <sup>24</sup>I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins.’ ”*

The twice repeated *from* and twice repeated *of* translate the preposition *ek*, which points to source or origin. In verse 22 the gap separating men is seen to be death. Jesus now reminds them that there is something other than death that separates men. The only way to avoid their fate of dying in sin is to *believe*. The tense of the verb is aorist, pointing to a definite act of faith in Christ; and this faith must be based on a right estimate of Jesus’ person.

## Jesus' Person Disdained 8:25-30

### *The Question 8:25a*

*"And so they were saying to Him, 'Who are You?' "*

The pronoun *You* is scornfully emphatic—"You, who are you to be saying these things?"

### *The Reply 8:25b-26*

*"...Jesus said to them, 'What have I been saying to you from the beginning? <sup>26</sup>I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world.'* "

The reply points to their willing ignorance. Their problem was not lack of information, but rather refusal to believe plain teaching. The harmony of Jesus' thoughts and actions with those of God the Father is a theme of the Gospel of John (John 6:57; 7:16; 8:26, 38; 10:30; 14:9).

### *The Climactic Event 8:27-30*

*"They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father. <sup>28</sup>Jesus therefore said, 'When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. <sup>29</sup>And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.' <sup>30</sup>As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him."*

John 12:32-33 makes it clear that the lifting up of Jesus refers to the manner of His death. Other biblical writers use the expression to refer to His exaltation. Four times in this discourse Jesus states that He was sent by the Father (8:16, 18, 26, 29).

## ABOUT ABRAHAM 8:31-47

### The Foundation 8:31-32

*"Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; <sup>32</sup>and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'* "

Jesus focuses on discipleship in verse 31. It is important to distinguish between discipleship as set forth in the teaching of Jesus in the Gospels and the doctrine of justification as set forth primarily in Paul's writings. Justification knows only one condition—faith. Discipleship, on the other hand, knows many conditions, all of which involve committal.

The Greek word for *disciple* is *mathatas* and refers to a pupil, an apprentice, a learner, a student. The word itself says nothing of the conditions of being a disciple nor does it show anything about the quality of the disciple. The disciples spoken of in John 6:66



*withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore.* The demands placed on a true disciple are extremely severe and are directed toward those who have shown a positive response to truth. The condition described in verse 30 precedes the condition found in verse 31. This statement made by Jesus triggers the confrontation of the rest of John 8. It revolves about the implication that arises from promising them freedom. The promise of freedom assumes their slavery.

### The Objection 8:33

*“They answered Him, ‘We are Abraham’s offspring, and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, “You shall become free”?’ ”*

The objections of the Jews to the claims of Jesus are of two kinds. The first three press their claims of religious privilege. They claim to be *Abraham’s offspring* in 8:33; they say *Abraham is our father* in 8:39; and say *we have one father, even God* in 8:41. The second set of objections pass decisive judgment on Jesus’ character. They say *You are a Samaritan and have a demon* in 8:48; *surely you are not greater than our father Abraham, who died* in 8:53; and *You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?* in 8:57.

The Jews misinterpret the meaning of freedom. The freedom spoken of by Jesus is freedom from sin; the freedom the Jews think of is purely political. Spiritual blindness causes them to disregard obvious facts. The history of the Jewish race is very much a history of slavery. They were enslaved in Egypt for four hundred years, then to Babylon, to Syria, and as Jesus spoke to them, they were in slavery to Rome.

### The Correction 8:34-47

#### *Correction Concerning Their Slavery 8:34-36*

*“Jesus answered them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. <sup>35</sup>And the slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. <sup>36</sup>If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.’ ”*

Sin enslaves because it alienates one from God and establishes a trend of disobedience that makes escape impossible. The phrase *everyone who commits sin* is a participial construction in the present tense, referring not to an act of sin but a continuous pattern of sin.

A slave has no security because he has no family ties; the son, however, has a permanent status and family ties that have obligation to him. A son has family privileges, but only *the Son* can confer them. Freedom is found in Christ, not in Abraham.

**Correction Concerning Their Heritage 8:37-41**

*" 'I know that you are Abraham's offspring; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. <sup>38</sup>I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father.' <sup>39</sup>They answered and said to Him, 'Abraham is our father.' Jesus said to them, 'If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. <sup>40</sup>But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. <sup>41</sup>You are doing the deeds of your father.' They said to Him, 'We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.' "*

Verses 37-38 establish that the Jews with whom Jesus is talking lay false claim to Abraham. Two facts prove their claim to be Abraham's seed as false. First, their intentions toward Jesus were murderous. Their hatred of Jesus shows they have only physical connection to Abraham. Second, their refusal to respond to truth shows they are not akin to Abraham. Blood relationship does not establish spiritual connection to God through Abraham. Abraham's true children are those who exercise faith.

Three things should be observed about Abraham's seed. First, Christ is *the* seed of Abraham in a physical sense (Galatians 3:16). Second, all believers are Abraham's seed in a spiritual sense (Romans 4:9, 12). Third, Israel is the seed of Abraham in two ways: physically by descent and spiritually by faith (Romans 9:6-8).

Asserting that they were *not born of fornication* may be a sneering remark concerning the birth of Jesus.

**Correction Concerning Their Father 8:42-47**

WHO IS NOT GOD 8:42-43

*"Jesus said to them, 'If God were your Father, you would love Me; for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. <sup>43</sup>Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word.' "*

Love for God is a family affair and entails loving those sent by the Father. Since Jesus is the Father's beloved representative, love should be directed toward Him. Their desire to kill Jesus is a complete contradiction of this reality.

WHO IS THE DEVIL 8:44-47

*" 'You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies. <sup>45</sup>But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. <sup>46</sup>Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? <sup>47</sup>He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God.' "*

The discourse of John 8 reveals truth about Satan. First, the objective existence of Satan is assumed by Jesus. He manifests all the elements of true personality, such as desire and ability to speak and act (8:44). Second, we are told of the relationship that Satan bears to the unbeliever. When Jesus tells the unbelieving Jews that they are *of the devil*, He uses the preposition *ek*, which indicates source and origin. Ephesians 2:2 shows this is true of all unbelievers.

When Jesus refers to Satan as a murderer, to what murder is he referring? Genesis 4:8 tells of the murder committed by Cain, and I John 3:12 says Cain was of the evil one who is Satan. John 8:44 speaks of *the lie*, which points to Satan's murder weapon. Satan stands as the antithesis to all truth, and man's relationship to him is proved by his response to God's word and the person of Jesus Christ.

## ABOUT DEMONS 8:48-59

### The First Accusation and Reply 8:48-51

#### *The Accusation 8:48*

*"The Jews answered and said to Him, 'Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?' "*

The words *do we not say rightly* strongly imply that this accusation was frequently leveled against Jesus and that recent events only confirm its truthfulness. It asserts the popular opinion of Jesus. The emphatic pronoun *we* makes this point. The Samaritans differed with the Jews in their interpretation of the Pentateuch. Since Jesus also differed with the Jews, it is natural that common opinion would associate Him with the Samaritans. Demon possession was attributed to Jesus on three occasions as recorded in John 7:20, 8:52, and 10:20. While the Gospels treat demon possession as an objective reality, the opinion of the Jews recorded here probably means they believe He is crazy. Demon possession involves a totally disordered mind coupled with evil influence.

#### *The Reply 8:49-51*

*"Jesus answered, 'I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. <sup>50</sup>But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges. <sup>51</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.' "*

The aim of Jesus was to honor His heavenly Father; theirs was to bring Jesus to disgrace. The assertion that those who keep His word would never see death is the negative side of a positive statement He makes in John 10:10 saying, "I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly." It summarizes the object of His ministry, which is to undo the penalty for sin pronounced in the garden of Eden. It also anticipates the words spoken to Martha

saying, “He who believes in Me shall live even if he dies (John 11:25).” Death is not conceived of as an event but a state of isolation from God.

### The Second Accusation and Reply 8:52-56

#### *The Accusation 8:52-53*

*“The Jews said to Him, ‘Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, “If anyone keeps My word, he shall never taste of death.”’<sup>53</sup> Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?’ ”*

The Jewish hearers now believe Jesus is transparently false in His claims, confirming their assertion of demon possession. Abraham and all the prophets have died, and now this obscure Galilean offers life—how absurd! Abraham and the prophets had kept God’s word, and yet they died. Who is this man Jesus who claims a word more powerful? The words *taste of death* are a significant misinterpretation of Jesus’ words in verse 51 concerning *seeing* death. To see death is to experience all of its implications brought about by the sin of Adam, such as guilt, separation from God, and eternal judgment.

#### *The Reply 8:54-56*

*“Jesus answered, ‘If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, “He is our God”;<sup>55</sup> and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I shall be a liar like you, but I do know Him, and keep His word.<sup>56</sup> Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.’ ”*

Jesus rests His defense in the hands of His heavenly Father. As one has put it—the relationship of the Jews to God was formal, while that of Jesus was familial. There is no contrast between Jesus and Abraham as the Jews believe. These words help us understand what Abraham envisioned when God said, “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Abraham saw the fulfillment of this promise as consummating in a Messianic day ushered in by Jesus Himself.

### The Third Accusation and Reply 8:57-59

#### *The Accusation 8:57*

*“The Jews therefore said to Him, ‘You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?’ ”*

Fifty years of age represented the climax and completion of ministry (Numbers 4:3). Jesus’ words are completely misinterpreted—He had not claimed to see Abraham; He rather said Abraham had seen Him.

***The Reply 8:58***

*“Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am’ ”*

This is a clear and unmistakable claim to deity. The verb *was born* is *ginomai*, which means *to come into being*. The same verb is used in John 1:14 in reference to the incarnation of Jesus. The present tense *I am* indicates continuous existence—Jesus already existed when Abraham appeared. *I am* was a title of deity and was given in response to the question of who God was in Exodus 3:13-14.

***The Finale 8:59***

*“Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple.”*

Beyond question, the crowd knew what Jesus was saying; and it was understood to be blasphemy. Stoning was the only recourse. Jesus did not defend himself by saying they had misunderstood his words—He simply withdrew.

**NOTES**

## NOTES

# The Man Born Blind

*or “Displaying the Works of God”*

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John 9:1-41

With the beginning of John 9, the conflict between those who believed Jesus' claims and those who did not reaches a crisis. Many of Jesus' disciples have now abandoned His cause. As Jesus teaches concerning His heavenly origin in chapter 6, John informs us that “many of His disciples withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore (John 6:66).” The religious authorities were becoming actively hostile. In chapter 7, John tells us “the Pharisees heard the multitude muttering these things about Him; and the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to seize Him (John 7:32).”

With John 9 we enter the last six months of Jesus' earthly life. The theme of this chapter is the healing of a man born blind. John describes the event in great detail and then emphasizes the impact of the miracle.

## THE MIRACLE 9:1-12

### ITS UNIQUENESS

No account of giving sight to the blind exists in the Old Testament; and yet, the Gospels record more miracles of Jesus giving sight to the blind than any other type of healing He performed. Such miracles are found in Matthew 9:27-31, 12:22, 15:30, 20:29-34; Mark 8:22-26, 10:46-52. The miracle of John 9 is unique because the blindness was congenital.

In the Old Testament the giving of sight was always treated as a divine activity, as in Exodus 4:11 and Psalm 146:8, or a Messianic activity, as in Isaiah 29:18, 35:5, and 42:7. John uses this miracle to make his point—Jesus is deity and the prophesied Messiah.

### THE DISCIPLES' QUESTION 9:1-2

“And as He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup>And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?’ ”

Theological curiosity, not compassion, prompted the disciples' question. All they could see was an unsolved riddle. The assumption that either the man or his parents had sinned may be based on the Jewish interpretation of Exodus 34:7. It was widely held that suffering, especially blindness, was due to sin.

### JESUS' ANSWER 9:3-5

*"Jesus answered, 'It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him. <sup>4</sup>We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work. <sup>5</sup>While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.' "*

Jesus provides a practical lesson in how to answer "either-or" questions. The question leaves Jesus with only two options. He answers the "either-or" question with "neither," rejecting both options and presenting a third.

The blindness was neither punishment nor without purpose; it was for the glory God. The blindness was a challenge and an opportunity for Jesus to display His divine power. The disciples ask about the cause of the blindness; Jesus responds by stating its purpose.

Jesus speaks of the works of God, not the miracles of God. What is considered a miracle by man is an ordinary work to God. The verb *must* indicates that Jesus is not doing what is merely advisable or expedient; He was acting under the direction of God the Father. The plural pronoun *we* shows that the disciples were also to act under divine direction. All four Gospels remind us that Jesus is now working under the shadow of the cross (Matthew 16:21, Mark 8:31, and Luke 9:22).

### JESUS' ACTION 9:6-7

*"When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes, <sup>7</sup>and said to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which is translated, Sent). And so he went away and washed, and came back seeing."*

Applying spit to the eyes was considered salutary by the ancient world. History records an incident of a blind man who sought a cure from Emperor Vespasian by means of his spit.

Jesus' action on the Sabbath was expressly forbidden by Jewish tradition, and Jesus violated it in several ways. First, making the clay violated the prohibition about kneading, which was one of the thirty-nine classes of work forbidden in the Mishnah. Second, placing it on the eyes would come under the class of prohibited anointings. One could not anoint on the Sabbath unless it was his habit to do so every other day of the week. Third, healing on the Sabbath was forbidden unless a life was in danger.



The action of placing clay on the man's eyes was unusual. To cover the eyes seems to work against the end for which help was needed. Jesus sealed what He designed to open! Apparently Jesus did this in order to make the man especially aware of his condition. Since he had known nothing but blindness, he could well have come to accept this as his normal state. Jesus underscored the man's need. It is worth noting that Jesus sent him away to Siloam with no promise of healing—the man had nothing but a command to obey. The drama of the healing is conveyed by understatement. Very simply, John says he *came back seeing*.

## THE IDENTITY CRISIS 9:8-12

*“The neighbors therefore, and those who previously saw him as a beggar, were saying, ‘Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?’<sup>9</sup> Others were saying, ‘This is he,’ still others were saying, ‘No, but he is like him.’ He kept saying, ‘I am the one.’<sup>10</sup> Therefore they were saying to him, ‘How then were your eyes opened?’<sup>11</sup> He answered, ‘The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, “Go to Siloam, and wash”; so I went away and washed, and I received sight.’<sup>12</sup> And they said to him, ‘Where is He?’ He said, ‘I do not know.’ ”*

For the crowds to see the man walking around seeing was so incredible that many thought it must be a case of mistaken identity. No one, not even Jesus' bitterest enemies, ever denied the reality of His miracles. The repeated use of the word *how* stresses the manner of healing, rather than the fact of healing (John 9:10, 15, 18-19, 24-26). As we will see later, the man's awareness of Jesus' identity grows throughout the chapter, climaxing with the exclamation, “Lord, I believe.”

## THE CONSEQUENCES 9:13-41

### THE PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION 9:13-17

#### The Time Established 9:13-14

*“They brought to the Pharisees him who was formerly blind.<sup>14</sup> Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.”*

The identity of *they* who brought the man is not stated. It would seem to fit the context best to understand them to be the disputants of verses 8-12. Neither are we told why they brought the man to the Pharisees. It was probably because of their dispute over his identity. If this is true, then they are seeking the opinion of the religious leaders. The leaders cared little that he was healed but were incensed that the healing had occurred on the Sabbath, a very important consideration in the rest of the narrative.

### The Claim Repeated 9:15

*“Again, therefore, the Pharisees also were asking him how he received his sight. And he said to them, ‘He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see.’ ”*

In these verses, lines are drawn. First, the time of the healing was clearly the Sabbath. Second, the man’s claim is indisputable. The verb *were asking* is present tense, meaning they asked him repeatedly. We would say that they “grilled him.” The man’s reply shows he has a gift of “succinct statement.” He gave all the facts he knew in a few words.

### The Division Develops 9:16

*“Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, ‘This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.’ But others were saying, ‘How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?’ And there was a division among them.”*

The man’s statement divides the Pharisees into two camps. The noun *sinner* occurs four times in this chapter but nowhere else in the Gospel of John (9:16, 24, 25, 31). The group who leaned in favor of Jesus must have been very small for we hear nothing of them past this verse. The rest of the narrative proceeds as though the first group was the only one to be considered. The Pharisees’ reasoning that a sinner cannot perform such signs is not wholly true. Pharaoh’s magicians duplicated the signs of Moses. The warning of Deuteronomy 13 concerned a false prophet who would perform “a sign or wonder” to lead men astray; the “man of lawlessness” spoken of in II Thessalonians 2 comes performing miracles, signs, and wonders.

### The Claim Restated 9:17

*“They said therefore to the blind man again, ‘What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?’ And he said, ‘He is a prophet.’ ”*

The Pharisees’ action is highly unusual, for they would not normally even entertain the idea of putting a question on a religious issue to such a man as this. The question shows the measure of the embarrassment. The man’s reply is the highest compliment he could pay to Jesus. His increasing understanding of Jesus’ significance begins in verse 11 where He is called *the man*; now in verse 17 He is a *prophet*; in verse 27 deserving of allegiance; viewed as *from God* in verse 33; and finally proclaimed *Lord* in verse 38.

Maimonides attests a common Jewish belief that a prophet had authority even over the law of the Sabbath. If that belief was held as early as this event, the man’s statement becomes even more significant.

## THE FOCUS ON THE MAN'S PARENTS 9:18-23

### The Pharisees' Questions 9:18-19

*"The Jews therefore did not believe it of him, that he had been blind, and had received sight, until they called the parents of the very one who had received his sight,<sup>19</sup> and questioned them, saying, 'Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?' "*

The Pharisees' reasoning never changes. Their major premise is that Jesus is not from God. The minor premise follows, which says one who is not from God cannot perform miracles. The conclusion therefore is that the miracle did not occur. They are attempting to prove that the man was not born blind.

### The Parents' Answer 9:20-21

*"His parents answered them and said, 'We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind;<sup>21</sup> but how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he shall speak for himself.' "*

The parents were of a different character than their son. Their answer is characterized by timidity and a complete willingness to submit to the authority of the Pharisees. Religious fear overruled parental love and loyalty. The pronouns *we*, *him*, and *he* are each emphatic. It is clear that they discerned danger and had no intention of getting caught up in this with their son.

### John's Explanation 9:22-23

*"His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed, that if anyone should confess Him to be Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.<sup>23</sup> For this reason his parents said, 'He is of age; ask him.' "*

This issue is clear—Jesus or Judaism! The man chose Jesus; the parents chose Judaism.

## THE MAN REEXAMINED AND EXCOMMUNICATED 9:24-34

### The Second Examination 9:24

*"So a second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, 'Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner.' "*

The Jewish approach assumes piety. The exhortation to give God the glory may derive its meaning from Joshua 7:19 where Achan is told to confess his sin giving God the glory by telling the truth. The man is to give God the glory by telling the truth. The Jews imply that he has been dishonest about the healing. It is also possible that they are saying, "All Jesus did was put clay on your eyes and tell you to wash; no glory is due him for that. Glory is due rather to

God who wrought the miracle; Jesus had nothing to do with it.” They wish to convince the man that by giving credit to Jesus, he is dishonoring God. They offer no reason for their belief that Jesus is a sinner. Not atypical of religion, their approach is “take our word for it.”

### The Spirited Dialogue 9:25-34

#### *The Healed Man Speaks 9:25*

*“He therefore answered, ‘Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.’ ”*

His first words echo what the Pharisees have just said. His next words simply say his knowledge can neither confirm nor deny what they have just said. The blind man’s character is marked by his courage and independence. His determination to stick with the facts is obvious in the whole narrative.

#### *The Jews Speak 9:26*

*“They said therefore to him, ‘What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?’ ”*

The Jews apparently abandon their efforts to deny the miracle and return to the “how” aspect of it. They now hope to find grounds to accuse Jesus in the manner in which He healed. That circumstance will be the Sabbath day.

#### *The Man’s Exasperation 9:27*

*“He answered them, ‘I told you already, and you did not listen; why do you want to hear it again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?’ ”*

The word *too* indicates that the healed man now regards himself as a disciple of Jesus. His courage is obvious, as well as his frustration with the stubborn Pharisaic resistance to Jesus.

#### *The Jews Speak 9:28-29*

*“And they reviled him, and said, ‘You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. <sup>29</sup>We know that God has spoken to Moses; but as for this man, we do not know where He is from.’ ”*

The uneducated man’s response to Jesus was insulting to the Jewish leaders who considered themselves to be the ones faithful to Moses. The tone is haughty—“You are only a follower of Jesus; we are the followers of Moses!” The verb *has spoken* is perfect tense, meaning Moses has spoken and his word stands.

***The Man's Retort 9:30-33***

*"The man answered and said to them, 'Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes. <sup>31</sup>We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing, and does His will, He hears him. <sup>32</sup>Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. <sup>33</sup>If this man were not from God, He could do nothing.' "*

Verse 30 shows that the man's spiritual eyes are now beginning to open. These words are a good example of a miracle accomplishing its purpose—to teach who Jesus was. The word *amazing* has a definite article with it. The force of it is to say, "Here is the really amazing thing—your ignorance of who Jesus is!" The pronoun *you* is emphatic and adds force to the man's words—"You, of all people, should know," he says.

The courageous man matches *we know* with the leaders' ignorance. That Jesus was from God was incontestable. His conclusion was remarkable for a man who had been a beggar all his life.

***The Jews React 9:34***

*"They answered and said to him, 'You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?' And they put him out."*

The Jews' reaction is two-fold: character assassination and excommunication. They disregard the man's argument and concentrate on the man who presumed to teach them. Excommunication from the synagogue had serious repercussions. First, it meant exile from his family; and second, it barred him from trade.

**THE MAN RECEIVES HIS SPIRITUAL SIGHT 9:35-38****The Conversation 9:35-37**

*"Jesus heard that they had put him out; and finding him, He said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' <sup>36</sup>He answered and said, 'And who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?' <sup>37</sup>Jesus said to him, 'You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you.' "*

John frequently notes how the coming of Jesus divides men (1:11-12; 6:66-69; 7:43; 9:38-41). The man was being persecuted for his attitude toward Jesus, and Jesus is not indifferent to this fact. Jesus inquires of the man's relationship to Himself with a question and, with the emphatic pronoun *you*, makes it personal. The verb *believe* is in present tense, pointing to abiding belief.

The designation *Lord* occurs in both verse 36 and 38 but with entirely different meaning. The word is *kurios* and may range in meaning from a courteous *sir* to the full meaning of deity. In verse 36 it probably means *sir*, but in verse 38 it conveys the sense of deity. The man's question contains the verb *believe* in aorist tense and refers to a definite event wherein he comes to believe.

**The Conversion 9:38**

*“And he said, ‘Lord, I believe.’ And he worshiped Him.”*

This is the only place in the Gospel of John where anyone is said to worship Jesus. The man has arrived at the point of faith and honors Jesus as deity by worshiping Him.

**THE PHARISEES CONDEMNED 9:39-41**

*“And Jesus said, ‘For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see; and that those who see may become blind.’ <sup>40</sup>Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things, and said to Him, ‘We are not blind too, are we?’ <sup>41</sup>Jesus said to them, ‘If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, “We see,” your sin remains.’ ”*

We have been shown the effect of light upon one who was ready to receive it. In these closing verses, we see the effect of light upon those who refuse to see it. The sight spoken of in these verses is spiritual, not physical. Jesus is not saying that blindness means innocence. He is saying they have enough truth to be held responsible for rejecting Him.

**NOTES**

# The Good Shepherd

or “Jesus’ Final Public Address”

John 10:1-42

## THE PARABLE OF THE SHEEPFOLD 10:1-18

### THE PARABLE PRESENTED 10:1-6

#### Its Relationship to John 9

The discourse of chapter 10 is closely linked to the event of chapter 9. The closing words of chapter 9 are directed toward the Pharisees, the religious leaders of Israel. If one reads the last words of chapter 9 and continues immediately on to chapter 10, no apparent break is discerned. The connection of the two chapters is reinforced by the reference to the opening of the blind man’s eyes in John 10:21. What happened to the blind man in chapter 9 is explained by chapter 10. John 9 shows how the blind man is attracted to Jesus and ultimately addresses Him as *Lord* and worships Him. As a result, he is excommunicated from the synagogue by the religious leaders. The blind man is one of the sheep referred to in chapter 10; the false shepherds are the Pharisees; and the true shepherd is Jesus. The close connection of the chapters is also indicated by the words *truly, truly* that open chapter 10. These words are never used to open a discourse, but rather serve to provide follow-up teaching on a previous subject.

#### The Imagery and Its Meaning

##### *The Sheepfold 10:1-2*

“ *Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber.*  
<sup>2</sup>*But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep.* ”

The word *fold* is the normal word for a courtyard. When used for sheep, it was an enclosure located near a town, with an entry way on one side only. Its primary purpose was to contain sheep at night.

What does the sheepfold represent? It cannot refer to heaven for two reasons. First, heaven can be entered only by the door. The sheepfold spoken of here may be entered by the door, or thieves and robbers may climb over the walls. Second, the true shepherd is seen in the role of leading sheep out of the fold, not into the fold (10:3). This activity could have no conceivable relationship to heaven. For the same two reasons, the sheepfold cannot represent the church.

The sheepfold represents Israel. Within the nation, there was a mixture of true sheep and false sheep. Jesus is the true shepherd, and true sheep hear His voice and follow Him. As a result, they are ostracized from the apostate nation. This explains what happened in chapter 9. A true sheep, the blind man, heard the voice of the true shepherd; and as a result, he was excommunicated by the false shepherds who were the Pharisees.

### ***The Means of Entry 10:3-6***

*“To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out. <sup>4</sup>When he puts forth all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. <sup>5</sup>And a stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.’ <sup>6</sup>This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.”*

The shepherd stood at the entrance to ward away thieves or wild animals, he himself serving as the door. The only way to enter the sheepfold other than through the door was to scale the high walls. Only a thief or robber would enter in this manner. The *thief and robber* is a reference to the religious leaders of Israel. A thief does all he can to avoid detection—deception and violence are his game. The Pharisees, likewise, had entered and controlled Israel by deception and force.

## **THE PARABLE APPLIED 10:7-18**

### **Jesus as the Door 10:7-10**

*“Jesus therefore said to them again, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. <sup>8</sup>All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. <sup>9</sup>I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. <sup>10</sup>The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.’ ”*

The door image is based on the sheepfold explanation offered earlier. The fold had ten to twelve foot walls with an opening on one side only. It provided the only way for the sheep to enter the fold. The sheepfold was interpreted to be Israel in verses 1-6; its imagery is now advanced to include the idea of salvation. The



personal pronoun *I* is emphatic—Jesus is the exclusive way of salvation. This truth is reflected in John 14:6 where Jesus claims to be “the way, the truth, and the life” by whom all who approach the Father must come.

In verse 8 Jesus contrasts Himself with all His predecessors. The primary reference is to the religious leaders of His day, as indicated by the use of the present tense *are*, not the past tense *were*. The true shepherd came to the fold first thing in the morning; all who came later were thieves and robbers.

### ***The Shepherd Provides Freeness of Access 10:9***

The words *through Me* come first in the sentence, giving them special emphasis. The universal nature of the invitation is found in the word *any*. The verb *enters* is aorist tense, indicating a definite and decisive entering—an act, not a process. Freedom of access is expressed by the words *go in and out*, illustrated by Moses’ words to Israel saying he is no longer able to “to come and go,” meaning he was restricted in his movements by age—thus, a new leader is needed. The words *find pasture* point to abundant supply.

### ***The Shepherd Provides Fullness of Life 10:10***

The word *life* does not refer to physical life but to spiritual life—eternal life. This verse has been frequently misused as though Jesus were promising a special kind of excitement in the daily experiences of living.

## **Jesus as the Shepherd 10:11-18**

### ***The Sacrifice of the Shepherd 10:11-13***

“ ‘I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup>He who is a hireling, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, beholds the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees, and the wolf snatches them, and scatters them. <sup>13</sup>He flees because he is a hireling, and is not concerned about the sheep.’ ”

The noun *shepherd* as applied to Jesus is modified by three different adjectives in the New Testament. First, John 10:11 calls Him the *good shepherd*. His goodness is displayed and proved by His death for us. The word *good* does not mean *skillful*, such as a good baseball player. It means good in the sense of beauty and excellence. Second, Hebrews 13:20 designates Jesus as the *great Shepherd*. Context shows that His greatness is demonstrated by His resurrection from the dead. Third, I Peter 5:4 calls Him the *Chief Shepherd*, and this superiority is to be displayed by His return. Jesus Christ is *good*, for He died for the sheep; He is *great* in that He lives for the sheep; and He is *chief*, for He will return for His sheep.

The verb *lays down* is active voice. His life is to be laid down voluntarily, a theme prominent in the Gospel of John. The preposition *for* is *hyper*, which in this Gospel means *sacrifice on behalf of*. It is used

by Paul in I Corinthians 15:3 to interpret the meaning of the death of Christ. Since the verb *lays down* is present tense, the emphasis is not so much on the act but on the predominant characteristic of the good shepherd.

The Palestinian shepherd serves, not only as a standard of comparison for the good shepherd, but also provides a contrast. The following chart illustrates this.

#### THE PALESTINIAN SHEPHERD

Death for the sheep would be an accident.

The shepherd's death meant disaster for the sheep.

The shepherd's purpose was to live for the sheep.

#### THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Death for the sheep was a plan.

The Shepherd's death meant life for the sheep.

The Shepherd's purpose was to die for the sheep.

The mercenary shepherd is viewed as to his motive. The word *hireling* means that his only motivation is money—his pay. Since the sheep are not his, he does not care for the sheep. This presents great danger to the sheep since their security is dependent upon the shepherd.

#### *The Knowledge of the Shepherd 10:14-16*

“ ‘I am the good shepherd; and I know My own, and My own know Me, <sup>15</sup>even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup>And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock with one shepherd.’ ”

Full knowledge of the sheep is possible only to Him. To the disciples, Judas looked very much like a sheep; but he was not (John 13:27-29). If one reads Genesis 19:4-8, 15-18 only, one would not conclude that Lot was a sheep; but according to II Peter 2:7, he was a righteous man. Knowledge of sheep implies more than cognizance; it involves intimate and selective relationship (Amos 3:1-2; I Corinthians 8:3). Verse 16 explains another aspect of the purpose of the good shepherd. Salvation extends beyond Israel. The words *other sheep* refer to Gentiles, and the words *this fold* refer to Israel. The single fold anticipates the church (Ephesians 2:11-18).

#### *The Control of the Shepherd 10:17-18*

“ ‘For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. <sup>18</sup>No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.’ ”

Nowhere is the voluntary nature of Jesus' death made more explicit than here. No other person has given their life for another as fully as Jesus Christ did. When we arrive at the final week in the life of

Christ, John will make careful note that these events are from the hand of the Father and fulfill the predictions made by the prophetic Scriptures.

That no hand could touch Him before His time is indicated in places such as John 7:44-45; 8:20, 59; and 11:53-54. John 10:17-18 is the climactic statement of this truth. Jesus' authority lies in two areas. First, He has sovereign authority to lay His life down. Pilate disagreed with this (John 19:10-11), but Jesus immediately corrected him. Second, He has sovereign authority to take it up. In verse 18 these two facts are connected by the word *and*, showing His capability to do both. Verse 17 connects the two facts with the connective *that*, which indicates goal and purpose. Jesus' resurrection was not just "icing on the cake"; it was the purposeful climax of His death. He was raised because death could not hold Him.

## THE RESPONSE OF THE JEWS 10:19-42

### TO THE TEACHING OF JESUS 10:19-21

*"There arose a division again among the Jews because of these words. <sup>20</sup>And many of them were saying, 'He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?' <sup>21</sup>Others were saying, 'These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?' "*

The words of Jesus always create division. The word *again* shows that each time He spoke a new rift was created. This is made the emphatic thought by placing the words *division* and *again* first in the sentence. Jesus had been accused of being demon-possessed on three previous occasions (John 7:20, 8:48. and 52).

### TO THE PERSON OF JESUS 10:22-42

#### The Setting 10:22-23

*"At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; <sup>23</sup>it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon."*

This introduces the final teaching of Jesus about Himself before the passion week. There is a time break indicated by these two verses, but the shepherd metaphor continues.

#### Jesus' Words to Unbelieving Israel 10:24-26

*"The Jews therefore gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, 'How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.' <sup>25</sup>Jesus answered them, 'I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these bear witness of Me. <sup>26</sup>But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep.' "*

The words *how long* stress a particular point of time. They are saying, “When will the dramatic moment arrive?” The words *keep us in suspense* are literally *lift up our souls*. It is similar to our expression “you leave me up in the air.” To the unbelieving Jews there were two problems. First, they felt they lacked information. Second, that lack of information was Jesus’ fault.

Jesus focuses on the real problem: They had adequate light but did not recognize it because of their unbelief. Understanding of spiritual truth is not merely a matter of the intellect; there must be a prepared heart of faith.

### The Security of the Sheep 10:27-30

“ ‘My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; <sup>28</sup>and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. <sup>29</sup>My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. <sup>30</sup>I and the Father are one.’ ”

The sheep-shepherd relationship is repeated three times. The sheep *hear...follow...shall never perish*. The Shepherd *knows...gives...none shall pluck them*.

An additional truth about the life of the shepherd is added in these verses. So far, we have been taught that He lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11, 15). He also takes up His life (John 10:17-18). Now we find that He communicates eternal life to the sheep.

The theme of security is strong in verses 28-29. Jesus designates us as *My sheep*, which means He assumes the duty of caring for the sheep. The sheep have *eternal life*, the very nature of which spells security, for it is a quality of life that knows no termination. We are viewed as a gift from the Father to the Son, which shows both His responsibility and our value. Since eternal life is termed a gift, it is communicated to us without our merit. The words *shall never perish* contain a double negative making them very emphatic. The security of the sheep is further emphasized in that they are held in the hand of the Son and the hand of the Father.

To the Jews, the message of Jesus is clear enough: He claims to be deity; we reject those claims; He is therefore worthy of death.

### The Jews Prepare to Stone Jesus 10:31-39

#### *Jesus’ Question 10:31-32*

“The Jews took up stones again to stone Him. <sup>32</sup>Jesus answered them, ‘I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?’ ”

Stoning was the prescribed punishment for blasphemy (Leviticus 24:16). Since the nearby temple was being built, stones would be

readily available for such an execution of Jesus. Jesus' question is an attempt to show them that their actions and His good works are incongruous. The personal pronoun *Me* is emphatic and encourages them to consider who He is and what He has done.

### ***The Jewish Reply 10:33***

*"The Jews answered Him, 'For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God.' "*

The Jewish reply is evidence that even the bitterest enemies of Jesus knew what He was saying about Himself. They knew He was not claiming to be a good man or a prophet; Jesus claimed deity, and they knew it! They do not deny the quality of His works, but they reject the nature of His claims. Had Jesus not claimed to be deity, He could have told them that they misunderstood Him and closed the debate. Jesus knew what He meant to say; He said it, and they understood it.

### ***Jesus' Reply 10:34-38***

HIS ARGUMENT FROM GOD'S WORD 10:34-36

*"Jesus answered them, 'Has it not been written in your Law, "I said, you are gods"? <sup>35</sup>If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), <sup>36</sup>do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, "You are blaspheming," because I said, "I am the Son of God"? ' "*

Psalm 82:6 represents God as addressing men whom He calls *gods* (*elohim*). If *god* could be applied to mortal men by God Himself, how could Jesus be accused of blasphemy by applying the word to Himself? The verse used by Jesus shows that the Old Testament anticipated the union of God and man, of which Jesus was the fulfillment.

HIS ARGUMENT FROM HIS OWN WORKS 10:37-38

*" 'If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; <sup>38</sup>but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father.' "*

Jesus claims that His works are expressive of His divine nature; and not only this, but they have evidential value. Consideration of the works of Jesus was a first step toward knowing and understanding who Jesus was. Jesus offered pragmatic proof of His relationship to God the Father, but they refused to consider it.

### ***The Jews' Attempt to Arrest Jesus 10:39***

*"Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him, and He eluded their grasp."*

The Father's supernatural protection of Jesus for His coming hour is seen in the futile attempts to seize and arrest Him at this time.

**The Transition 10:40-42**

*“And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing, and He was staying there.”<sup>41</sup> And many came to Him and were saying, ‘While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true.’<sup>42</sup> And many believed in Him there.”*

Jesus retreats to Perea east of the Jordan where He would be safe from arrest. Perea was the domain of Herod Antipas where the Jerusalem leaders had no authority at all. John’s ministry had proclaimed the truth about Jesus, and Jesus’ life and works confirmed John’s message to be true. The believers spoken of in these verses demonstrate how their faith in Christ was preceded by the ministry of another.

**NOTES**

# The Final Miracle in John

or “Lazarus, Come Forth”

John 11:1-57

## THE RAISING OF LAZARUS 11:1-44

This is the final sign miracle in the Gospel of John. Its placement as the last of the seven recorded signs is appropriate because I Corinthians 15:25-26 tells us the last enemy to be destroyed is death. Each miracle illustrates a particular aspect of Jesus’ person. The raising of Lazarus exemplifies His power over the last and most irresistible enemy of man—death.

The miracle is recorded in John 11:43 when Jesus says, “Lazarus, come forth.” The command consists of the proper noun *Lazarus* followed by two adverbs of place. The first is *deuro*, which means *over here*; and the second is *exo*, which means *outside*. All the surrounding verses describe the circumstances both before and after these words were spoken.

## LAZARUS’S DEATH 11:1-16

### The Setting 11:1-3

“Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup>And it was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. <sup>3</sup>The sisters therefore sent to Him, saying, ‘Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.’ ”

Lazarus was an obscure disciple of the Lord mentioned only here in the New Testament. The miracle performed upon him precipitates the convening of the council, the supreme court of Israel (11:47).

The implications of the sisters’ words are clear. If Jesus loves Lazarus, as they believe He does, then He will return to Bethany before he dies. A return to this area would be dangerous; Jesus had just left there because of a threat on His life (10:39). Mary and Martha are calling Him back to a place where a price has been set on His head. Thomas is certain that a return will mean sure death (11:16).

An important lesson is found here. Mary and Martha had decided beforehand what course of action Jesus' love would take. Surely He would come without delay. Not so! Jesus delays two days. The Lord loves His children; but we must not prejudge the course of action that love will take, as Jesus' response to the sisters' request amply illustrates.

### The Response of Jesus 11:4-6

#### *The Verbal Response 11:4*

*"But when Jesus heard it, He said, 'This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it.' "*

The prediction that this sickness was *not unto death* does not mean that Lazarus would not die, for he did. It means that Lazarus's death would not be the final issue. Positively stated, Lazarus's death is for the glory of God. The preposition *for* is *hyper* and carries the meaning of *sacrifice on behalf of*. Here is an unmistakable statement that sickness and death can glorify God.

#### *The Physical Response 11:5-6*

*"Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. 'When therefore He heard that he was sick, He stayed then two days longer in the place where He was.' "*

Before we are told of Jesus' delay, we are told of His love. Why is this reaffirmation needed? It is needed because His actions do not appear to be actions of love. The emphasis is on the individual and personal love of Jesus for the family. The verb *loved* is first in the sentence and thus gains prominence and emphasis. Each of the three names is in accusative case, making them the object of His love. Each is preceded by a definite article, which focuses on each one individually. Jesus is saying, "I love you, Martha; I love you, Mary; and I love Lazarus, also."

To sense how unusual Jesus' response is, one needs to trace the word *therefore* back to verse 3. Lazarus was sick; therefore, Jesus stayed two days longer in the place where He was. We can understand this response only when we recognize that the Lord's visit is timed to give Mary and Martha the most in terms of spiritual growth.

#### *Observations*

- First, we may observe that God's love cannot necessarily be judged by what we see. From the human standpoint, the delay was cruel and discourteous, but not so in reality.
- Second, where human affection would have come running, divine love did not.
- Third, God's love is always wise; it therefore looks at future blessing, not merely at present relief.



- Fourth, the overriding issue here, as always, was the glory of God.
- Fifth, the Lord answered suffering with silence.
- Sixth, the love of the Lord acts at the right moment, not the requested moment.

### The Plan to Return to Bethany 11:7-10

#### *The Proposal 11:7*

*“Then after this He said to the disciples, ‘Let us go to Judea again.’ ”*

Jesus phrases things in a way that will force the disciples to trust Him most. He does not say, “Let us go to Bethany” but instead to Judea, calling attention to the location of the most recent attempt on His life.

#### *The Protest 11:8*

*“The disciples said to Him, ‘Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?’ ”*

Jesus had spoken of *us* (plural) going to Judea again; but when the disciples reply, they say *are You* (singular) *going there again?* The implication of the singular may be that they felt if Jesus went to Judea, He would go alone—they had no plans to go.

#### *The Principle 11:9-10*

*“Jesus answered, ‘Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world.*

*<sup>10</sup>But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.’ ”*

The *day* is the time assigned to each of us in which to work. To work in God’s ordained time is to be impervious to destruction. We should work during that time and not live in fear. This is parallel to Jesus’ *time* and Jesus’ *hour*. He was protected until that time came, and the same may be said of the disciples.

### The Purpose of the Return to Bethany 11:11-16

#### *The Purpose Relative to Lazarus 11:11-13*

*“This He said, and after that He said to them, ‘Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, that I may awaken him out of sleep.’ <sup>12</sup>The disciples therefore said to Him, ‘Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.’ <sup>13</sup>Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep.”*

In the New Testament, death for the believer is characteristically spoken of as sleep. The word is used of literal sleep four times in the New Testament and of death fourteen times.

The disciples display the pattern of response to Jesus' teaching found often in this Gospel. They take what Jesus meant spiritually and interpret it literally. Sleep was meant to be a metaphor for death, but they take it to be literal sleep. The Lord seizes upon this misunderstanding as opportunity for further teaching and clarification.

The word *recover* is *sodzo*, which means *to save*. It may mean to save physically, as here; or it may mean to save spiritually, as in Acts 16:31. The hope that Lazarus would recover could be a conclusion the disciples seized upon because they fear a return to Judea.

### ***The Purpose Relative to the Disciples 11:14-16***

*"Then Jesus therefore said to them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead,'<sup>15</sup> and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him.'<sup>16</sup> Thomas therefore, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with Him.' "*

To appreciate these words, we must feel some of the same shock that the disciples felt. Jesus' words are remarkable: *Lazarus is dead, and I am glad*. These words can be understood only in light of the purpose clause that follows. The development of the disciples' faith takes precedence over everything else. Thomas, however, did not anticipate growth of faith—he expected rather to die.

## **JESUS' MEETING 11:17-32**

### **His Meeting with Martha 11:17-27**

#### ***The Setting 11:17-20***

*"So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days.<sup>18</sup> Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off;<sup>19</sup> and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning their brother.<sup>20</sup> Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him; but Mary still sat in the house."*

When Jesus arrived, Lazarus had been in the tomb four days. This fact establishes the reality of his death—no one could argue a resuscitation. It may be added that many Jews believed that the soul stayed near the grave for three days hoping to return to the body. To the Jewish mind, the only hope for Lazarus would be a divine act of power.

John makes a topographical note that Bethany was near Jerusalem. This explains the presence of *many* Jews noted in verse 19. Its proximity to Jerusalem shows that Jesus was within a stone's throw of the scene for the final week of His life on earth. The hour had arrived.

The presence of the Jews shows that Jesus arrived during the Jewish mourning period. The Talmud says, "Three days for weep-

ing and seven for lamenting and thirty (to refrain) from cutting the hair and (wearing) pressed clothes.”

The two sisters had markedly different personalities. Martha was occupied with hospitality; Mary wished to sit at Jesus’ feet (see Luke 10:38-42). As Jesus approached Bethany, Martha *went to meet Him*, whereas Mary *sat in the house*. That she was sitting in the house has some significance. Edersheim says, “Immediately after the body is carried out of the house all chairs and couches are reversed and the mourners sit (except on the Sabbath, and on Friday for one hour) on the ground or on a low stool.”

### ***The Conversation 11:21-26***

ABOUT THE TIME OF THE RESURRECTION 11:21-24

*“Martha therefore said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup>Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.’ <sup>23</sup>Jesus said to her, ‘Your brother shall rise again.’ <sup>24</sup>Martha said to Him, ‘I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.’ ”*

Mary and Martha share identical convictions concerning Jesus’ absence before Lazarus died (11:21, 32). It is hard to imagine that they had not discussed the matter before Jesus arrived. There are three possible ways the words found in verse 21 may be understood, though each does not exclude the other. First, they may be a sincere expression of faith with no censure involved. Second, they may convey a slight rebuke. Because of man’s make-up, it is hard to believe this might not be involved. At the same time, we should note that they did not say, “Lord, you should have been here.” Third, they may express a regret without blame.

The words of verse 22 are a little difficult to grasp. It is hard to sustain that she is referring to Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. In the first place, her hope for resurrection is in the future, not the present (11:24). Second, Martha was the one to register the objection to removing the stone (11:39). She may be alluding to the words of Jesus in verse 4 that had created hope of some kind in her. It is also possible that they express a faith that she could not maintain when it got right down to removing the stone.

In the midst of sorrow, Jesus turns Martha to doctrine—here the doctrine of the resurrection (11:23). Martha believes the doctrine of the resurrection but sees no present help in it. It is most important to note that her words lead to one of the greatest declarations of the Gospel of John.

ABOUT THE PERSON OF THE RESURRECTION 11:25-26

*“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, <sup>26</sup>and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?’ ”*

Jesus does not say He will *give* resurrection and life. Resurrection and life are so closely associated with Him that He says He *is* the resurrection and the life. What does Jesus mean in saying that the one who believes on Him *shall live even if he dies*? He is teaching that for the believer physical death is not the important thing. The believer only dies in the sense that he goes through the door that we call death, but he never dies in the fuller sense. Physical death is a gateway, an advancement, a promotion into the presence of the Lord. The words *lives and believes* are tied together with one article. The force of this is that one must believe while he is physically alive. It is like saying, “He who believes while he lives.” The words *shall never die* have a double negative, making the statement emphatic.

#### ***The Affirmation 11:27***

*“She said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world.’ ”*

Martha replies with a perfect tense verb, “I have believed,” which indicates a faith displaying conviction and permanency. She also uses an emphatic personal pronoun *I*—“Whatever may be the case with others, I have believed!” Her faith rests on three doctrinal concepts: first, that Jesus is the Messiah (the intent of the Gospel of John had been accomplished in Martha); second, Jesus is the Son of the God (the second intent of the Gospel of John); and finally, Jesus is the one spoken of in the Old Testament as coming into the world.

#### **His Meeting with Mary 11:28-32**

*“And when she had said this, she went away, and called Mary her sister, saying secretly, ‘The Teacher is here, and is calling for you.’ ”<sup>29</sup> And when she heard it, she arose quickly, and was coming to Him. <sup>30</sup>Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met Him. <sup>31</sup>The Jews then who were with her in the house, and consoling her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. <sup>32</sup>Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, ‘Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.’ ”*

The designation of Jesus as the *Teacher* is significant for two reasons. First, it shows what was important to His true followers, i.e., His teaching. It was not Jesus “the miracle man” but Jesus “the Teacher” that was important. Second, to address Jesus as teacher indicated a relationship that the rabbis refused to sustain. The rabbis refused to instruct women; Jesus did not.

**LAZARUS RAISED 11:33-34****A Display of Jesus' Human Nature 11:33-37*****As Displayed by His Emotions 11:33-35***

*"When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her, also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit, and was troubled,<sup>34</sup> and said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to Him, 'Lord, come and see.'<sup>35</sup> Jesus wept."*

Until this point of time, Jesus' response had been calm and dispassionate. Now the deep inner emotion of Jesus is displayed by three words: *deeply moved*, *troubled*, and *wept*.

The first word is the Greek *embriaomai*; the lexical meaning is *to scold, to censure, to warn or charge sternly, to be very angry*. Its literal meaning is *to snort like a horse*. This use is supported by Matthew 9:30 and Mark 1:43 where it is translated *sternly warned*. It is translated *were scolding* in Mark 14:5 as onlookers criticize the lavish gift of Mary in the form of expensive anointing perfume. It is the overriding emotion of Jesus at the grave of Lazarus as seen by its repetition in 11:33. It is probably an expression of resentment against the ravages of death that had entered the world by sin.

The second word is *tarasso*, which means *to agitate*. It is used of both mental and emotional agitation. It is the word used to describe the trouble brought by the legalistic teachers to the churches of the Galatian region.

Finally, we are told that Jesus *wept*. This word should be carefully distinguished from the word *weeping* found twice in verse 33, referring to the wailing routine of the Jews. The word used of Jesus is a form of the Greek word for *tears*. Jesus shed tears on three occasions—here in John 11:35; in Luke 19:41 over Jerusalem; and in Hebrews 5:7 over the prospect of bearing the sin of the world. Tears are not contrary to faith or perfect holiness, as Jesus demonstrates. The tense of the verb is aorist—Jesus "burst into tears!"

***As Interpreted by the Onlookers 11:36-37***

*"And so the Jews were saying, 'Behold how He loved him!' <sup>37</sup>But some of them said, 'Could not this man, who opened the eyes of him who was blind, have kept this man also from dying?' "*

Some interpreted the tears of Jesus to be evidence of human affection. True as this may be, it is not an adequate explanation. Some, on the other hand, took them to be evidence of human frustration. This too fails to account for the power that Jesus had over life and death.

## A Display of Jesus' Divine Nature 11:38-44

### ***The Preparation 11:38-39***

*"Jesus therefore again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. <sup>39</sup>Jesus said, 'Remove the stone.' Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, 'Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days.' "*

The word *deceased* is a perfect tense participle. Emphasis is on the completeness and abiding condition of death. He died and is most certainly dead now. The words *for he has been dead four days* are literally *he is a fourth day man*.

### ***The Promise 11:40***

*"Jesus said to her, 'Did I not say to you, if you believe, you will see the glory of God?' "*

Jesus does not say, "If you believe, you will see your brother." The primary issue here is the display of the glory of God. The glory of God is the big package; the raising of Lazarus is the little package within.

All those present will see Lazarus come forth, but only those with faith will appreciate its significance. The unbelieving will see a man come forth; the believing will see God's glory.

### ***The Prayer 11:41-42***

*"And so they removed the stone. And Jesus raised His eyes, and said, 'Father, I thank Thee that Thou heardest Me. <sup>42</sup>And I knew that Thou hearest Me always; but because of the people standing around I said it, that they may believe that Thou didst send Me.' "*

Jesus addresses God as *Father*, not as *our Father*. He does this because God is His Father in a unique sense. His claim that God was His Father was correctly understood as a claim to deity (John 5:18).

Why does He treat the prayer as though it were already heard and answered? Because He prayed according to the will of God always and therefore could be assured ahead of time that He would be answered.

The prayer was for the sake of the onlookers. The words *may believe* are an aorist tense—that you may decisively and definitely come to believe.

### ***The Performance 11:43-44***

*"And when He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth.' <sup>44</sup>He who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings; and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go' "*

With a proper noun and two adverbs of place, Jesus bids Lazarus come forth. The loud voice with which Jesus speaks shows bold confidence. It serves as a contrast to the mutterings of the magicians and wizards with their incantations and magical formulas spoken of by the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 8:19).

It is instructive to note that Lazarus never says anything of what it was like to be dead. The feelings of those on whom miracles are performed are rarely mentioned. Nothing is said of the joy of Mary and Martha, only their affliction. As always, the power lies in Jesus' word and the revelation is of His glory.

## THE REPERCUSSIONS OF THE MIRACLE 11:45-57

### ON THE PEOPLE 11:45-46

*"Many therefore of the Jews, who had come to Mary and beheld what He had done, believed in Him. <sup>46</sup>But some of them went away to the Pharisees, and told them the things which Jesus had done."*

The words *come to Mary and beheld* are preceded by one article that fuses the actions together. This is a great compliment to Mary's witness—to come to her was to behold Jesus. The words *believed in Him* are John's favorite construction for saving faith. The word *believed* is aorist tense, which points to a decisive and definite act. The preposition *in* is *eis* and carries a basic meaning of *direction toward an object*. It channels the action of the verb in its intended direction. The pronoun *Him* is the object of believing.

While some believed on Him, others were so dependent upon the opinions of the religious leaders that they went to them to tell what Jesus was doing. They certainly had no faith in Him, but we cannot prove that there was malevolence toward Him. They probably went to the religious leaders out of simple perplexity. They show us attachment to religion, the horrible alternative to faith.

### ON THE LEADERS 11:47-53

#### In General 11:47-48

*"Therefore the chief priests and Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, 'What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. <sup>48</sup>If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.' "*

The members of the council observe Jesus' action side-by-side with their inaction. Their words are not, What shall we do? or What are we to do? They are, What are we doing? The answer, so far, is basically nothing. The words *doing* and *performing* are the same Greek word. Jesus is doing miracle after miracle after miracle, and

we are doing nothing! Here is proof that even abundant evidence cannot convince an unbelieving heart.

The council concludes that the mass of Jesus' indisputable miracles will cause the masses to turn to Him and thus set Him up as their head. The words *all men will believe in Him* are an exaggeration, but they do reveal the strength of the fears of the religious leaders. If He gains a great following, they reason, the Romans will interpret this as sedition and will crush the entire nation.

### In Particular 11:49-53

#### *Caiaphas's Identity 11:49*

*"But a certain one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, 'You know nothing at all....' "*

Caiaphas was high priest from A.D. 18 to A.D. 36. His words show a typical Sadducean rudeness. His statement contains a double negative—"nothing, you know nothing." Josephus says, "The Sadducees...are even among themselves, rather boorish in their behavior, and in their intercourse with their peers are as rude as to aliens."

#### *Caiaphas's Conclusion 11:50-53*

*" '...nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish.'*

<sup>51</sup>*Now this he did not say on his own initiative; but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, <sup>52</sup>and not for the nation only, but that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. <sup>53</sup>So from that day on they planned together to kill Him."*

The words are sheer cynicism; better for one man, no matter how innocent, to die than for the whole nation to perish. His words, though unknown to him, are profound prophecy, preaching the doctrine of the cross. Verses 51 and 52 are John's reflection on Caiaphas's words. That this was not spoken on his own initiative points to the sovereignty of God. Consistent with I Corinthians 15:3, the preposition explaining the death of Christ is *hyper*, which means *sacrifice on behalf of*. John notes that though Caiaphas's words speak truth, they are not comprehensive enough. Caiaphas sees Jesus as a substitute for the nation; John, as a substitute for the whole world. Caiaphas anticipates a death for political security; John, for spiritual salvation. The council understands the political significance of his words and, from that day, plots Jesus' death.



**ON JESUS 11:54-57**

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

Jesus’ actions illustrate once again that the sovereignty of God does not preclude the use of means. He is protected for His hour, but it is best not to publicly display Himself to the Jews.

To be silent about the whereabouts of Jesus was to be accessory with Him in avoiding the Jewish officials. Judas will be the one to report Jesus to the officials and thus fulfill the orders of the Pharisees as given in verse 57. Judas will do the job—for money.

**THE REPERCUSSIONS OF THE RAISING OF LAZARUS SUMMARIZED**

- Some of the Jews Came to Believe 11:45
- The Pharisees Formalized the Decision to Kill Him 11:53
- An Edict was Proclaimed to All Jews to Turn Jesus In 11:57
- It Created Great Anticipation at the Coming Passover 11:55-56
- The Faith of Mary and Martha Was Strengthened 12:1-8
- It Later Drew a Great Crowd 12:9
- A Decision Was Made to Put Lazarus to Death Also 12:10-11

## NOTES

# **T**he Close of Jesus' Public Ministry

*or "The Week Before the Passover"*

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John 12:1-50

## THE ANOINTING AT BETHANY 12:1-8

### THE SETTING 12:1-2

*"Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup>So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him."*

The supper was apparently given out of gratefulness for the raising of Lazarus. This is indicated by the word *so* that opens verse 2. It is a connective used to introduce an inference and means *in the light of the foregoing*. Martha is seen here in her characteristic role of serving, an imperfect tense verb showing continuous action.

### THE ANOINTING 12:3

*"Mary therefore took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume."*

The perfume is called *nard*. The word may refer to a plant or to the aromatic oils the plant yields. It was often diluted or contaminated, but this was not; it was *pure*, meaning *genuine, undiluted*. There are three unique features of this anointing.

### The Anointing Oil Was Very Expensive

It was expensive because it had to be imported. It was useful for investments for three reasons. First, it occupied a very small space and was easy to store. Second, it was portable and easily transported. Third, it was easily negotiable in the market place.

Three hundred denarii, the value of the perfume according to verse 5, was about one year's wages for a working man. It could well be that Mary poured her entire life savings on the feet of Jesus!

### **The Anointing Oil Was Poured on Jesus' Feet**

Attending to the feet of guests was the task of the lowest slave in the household. This reveals the genuine humility and deep devotion of Mary.

### **The Anointing Oil Was Wiped from Jesus' Feet with Mary's Hair**

A Jewish woman never unbound her hair in public, for to do so was to imply loose morals. Numbers 5:12, 16-18 instructs the priest to loosen the hair of a woman accused of adultery. What, then, does this say of Mary? It most certainly points to her deep devotion to the Lord. She is so overcome with affection for Jesus that she does not care what anyone thinks—she will worship Him in utmost humility.

### **THE OBJECTION 12:4-6**

#### **His Words 12:4-5**

*“But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, <sup>5</sup>‘Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii, and given to poor people?’”*

This is the only statement in any of the four Gospels showing Judas to be of bad character before the betrayal. Judas not only carried the money box, he also “carried off” the money box. Judas did not really want the money to go to the poor; he wanted the money to go in the box and thus be in his “care.”

#### **His Character 12:6**

*“Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.”*

Immediately after the anointing, Matthew and Mark show Judas going to the chief priests and making financial arrangements to betray Jesus. Judas apparently saw one source of personal enrichment lost, so he hastened to make another.

### **THE REBUKE 12:7-8**

*“Jesus therefore said, ‘Let her alone, in order that she may keep it for the day of My burial. <sup>8</sup>For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have Me.’”*

What does Jesus mean by saying she is to be allowed to keep it when she has just poured it all out? Perhaps this shows that the only way to keep anything is to devote it entirely to Him. Judas is reminded that if he truly wishes to help the poor, there will never be a shortage of them.

## OBSERVATIONS ON THE ANOINTING OF JESUS

- Devotion by itself has great intrinsic value.  
What Mary did met no human need. The perfume she poured out is now worth nothing; her anointing oil was irretrievably lost. In spite of these facts, the great value of her devotion is to be memorialized for all time. Mark 14:9 says, “And truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, that also which this woman has done shall be spoken of in memory of her.”
- Evil character is often hidden behind pious words.  
Judas demonstrates that the most evil men may lurk under the disguise of noble profession. “Give it to the poor,” says the thief!
- Love spares no expense to express itself.  
Mary doubtless had no concern about the cost of the ointment. Devotion meant more than the denarii.
- Hypocrites always find something to censure in the lives of the sincere.  
Judas the hypocrite finds fault with Mary the devoted one! A hypocrite must cover his real self, and criticism of others on moral issues is an effective way to do it.
- Judas’s betrayal of Jesus for money was not an impulsive act of the moment; it was a sin to which he was accustomed.  
Judas betrayed his trust before he betrayed the Lord.
- The good that can be done anytime, such as giving money to the poor, should give way to the good that can be done only now—namely, the anointing of Jesus.  
Worship is superior to welfare.

## THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY 12:9-19

## THE SETTING 12:9-11

*“The great multitude therefore of the Jews learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead. <sup>10</sup>But the chief priests took counsel that they might put Lazarus to death also; <sup>11</sup>because on account of him many of the Jews were going away, and were believing in Jesus.”*

The opinion Jewish leadership expressed in John 11:48, *all men will believe in Him*, was being fulfilled, so they fear. It seems strange that they would want to put Lazarus to death since the command of Jesus had already brought him back to life. What is to prevent this happening again?

Lazarus was a double embarrassment to the Sadducees. First, Lazarus was causing men to become followers of Jesus. Second, Lazarus was a living rebuttal of their doctrine. Sadducees emphatically denied the resurrection; and yet, here stands its living proof.

## THE EVENT 12:12-19

### The Acclamation of the Crowd 12:12-13

*“On the next day the great multitude who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, <sup>13</sup>took the branches of the palm trees, and went out to meet Him, and began to cry out, ‘Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.’ ”*

The triumphal entry marks a distinct change in Jesus’ approach to the masses of people. Previously, publicity had been carefully avoided. Those healed were told not to tell; those who witnessed the transfiguration were told to remain silent; and Jesus had come to the previous Passover *in secret* according to John 7.

For the first time in His ministry, Jesus openly accepts the accolades of kingship. Jesus came to be king of Israel (Luke 1:31-33) and also to be Savior of the world (Luke 2:10-11). Here is one more opportunity for Israel to receive her king.

The *branches of the palm trees* were a mark of homage to a victor or a king (Revelation 7:9). The repeated shout of *Hosanna* means *Save I pray*, with the words coming from Psalm 118:26. One should note that the words *King of Israel* are not part of the Psalm. This reveals the understanding of the Psalm by the people of Israel. Jesus does not reject their interpretation, but rather affirms it both by word and action.

### The Action of Jesus 12:14-15

*“And Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, <sup>15</sup>‘Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your King is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.’ ”*

Typically, a king would enter a city either riding a steed or on foot leading his army. Jesus instead came riding on a donkey, as prophesied by Zechariah 9:9. This shows that His purpose was not to overthrow Rome but to present a kingdom of a different nature.

### The Commentary of John 12:16

*“These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him.”*

John mentions *these things* three times in verse 16. The principle involved is that assimilation of truth takes time. The disciples had

gone through the mechanics of listening and observing, but only with the passage of time do they come to understand their meaning. According to John 2:22, the same process took place in their coming to understand the resurrection.

### The Place of Lazarus 12:17-18

*“And so the multitude who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb, and raised him from the dead, were bearing Him witness. <sup>18</sup>For this cause also the multitude went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign.”*

When referring to the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead, note is made that he was *called...out of the tomb*. This calls attention to the way Jesus raised Lazarus, which had made a profound impression on those who saw it. That the raising of Lazarus was unique among the signs is conveyed by the last words of verse 18 translated literally—“He did this—the sign!”

### The Observation of the Pharisees 12:19

*“The Pharisees therefore said to one another, ‘You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him.’ ”*

The Pharisees are aware of their total lack of success and Jesus’ great success. At this point they seem to feel that their cause has failed, and Jesus is the victor. However this may be, it has no bearing on their intense hostility. Win or lose, they hate Jesus.

## THE COMING OF THE GREEKS 12:20-26

### THE REQUEST 12:20-22

*“Now there were certain Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; <sup>21</sup>these therefore came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, ‘Sir, we wish to see Jesus.’ <sup>22</sup>Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came, and they told Jesus.”*

These were apparently Greeks by birth but Jewish by religion. This would account for their presence at Passover time. Judaism had many proselytes. The request to *see* Jesus means they wish to have an interview with Him. Anyone could see Jesus as He moved about, but they wanted more.

### THE ANSWER 12:23-26

#### The Announcement 12:23

*“And Jesus answered them, saying, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.’ ”*

This is the first assertion that His hour has arrived. His life was directed toward a specific goal and a specific time (John 2:4). Nothing could hasten or delay its arrival (John 7:30, 8:20). It included His suffering and death and extended to His ascension (John 12:23, 13:1). His hour also included His return to the Father's presence (John 17:1, 5). His glorification is co-extensive with His hour.

### The Principles 12:24-26

#### *The Principle in Theory 12:24*

*“ ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.’ ”*

At the triumphal entry, they would crown Him king; but this cannot be, and these words explain why. A seed must die before it produces and so with Jesus—His death precedes His crown. The word translated *grain* has the article with it. This means the words apply specifically to Jesus.

#### *The Principle in Practice 12:25-26*

*“ ‘He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal. <sup>26</sup>If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.’ ”*

Jesus did not love His own life and demonstrated it by total submission to His Father's plan. For the follower of Jesus to refuse to submit to God's plan is to lose his life. On the other hand, to hate life is to keep life. A principle of interpretation needs to be observed here. Luke 14:26 speaks of hating father, mother, wife, and children. Verses such as these must be understood comparatively. The dearest things are hated when compared to love for Christ. As compared to others, we love our parents; as compared to Christ, we hate our parents.

## THE CLIMACTIC HOUR NEARS 12:27-36A

### THE PRAYER OF JESUS 12:27-28A

*“ ‘Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, “Father, save Me from this hour”? But for this purpose I came to this hour. <sup>28</sup>Father, glorify Thy name.’ ”*

The prayer in Gethsemane, not recorded by John, was “...yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt (Matthew 26:39).” John shows us that that prayer was the culmination of struggle. The question was tentative, but its resolution was final.



## THE VOICE OF GOD 12:28B-33

*“There came therefore a voice out of heaven: ‘I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.’<sup>29</sup> The multitude therefore, who stood by and heard it, were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, ‘An angel has spoken to Him.’<sup>30</sup> Jesus answered and said, ‘This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes.<sup>31</sup> Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out.<sup>32</sup> And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.’<sup>33</sup> But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die.”*

On three occasions a voice came from heaven according to the Gospel narratives; this is the only one of which John speaks. On each occasion the voice indicated public endorsement of the person and work of Jesus by God the Father. Jesus’ prayer was accompanied by a pledge of fulfillment by the Father. The public and audible commendation of Jesus’ person and work occurred at His baptism, which marked the beginning of His ministry (Matthew 3:17, Mark 1:11, Luke 3:21-22). It occurred a second time at the transfiguration (Matthew 17:5, Mark 9:7, Luke 9:35). Finally, it occurs here in John 12:28, which is at the conclusion of His ministry.

The cross and resurrection of Jesus spelled out the fate of Satan, *the ruler of this world*. Satan is obviously still active, but his fate is certain and sealed; it only awaits historical fulfillment at God’s own time.

When Jesus speaks of being lifted up *from the earth*, He uses the preposition *ek*. This means *out from*, not merely *away from* in the sense of being suspended above the ground on the cross. This means He must have had not only His crucifixion in mind, but also His resurrection. John uses the words *lifted up* to refer to Jesus’ death in 3:14, 8:28, 12:32, 34.

The words *all men* do not teach universal salvation, but rather mean Jesus calls men irrespective of race, nationality, social status, or personal merit.

## THE CONFUSION OF THE MULTITUDES 12:34-36

### Their Question 12:34

*“The multitude therefore answered Him, ‘We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, “The Son of Man must be lifted up”? Who is this Son of Man?’ ”*

The Jewish multitudes had a misconception concerning the Messiah that did not allow for suffering but would initiate His reign dramatically and suddenly. Jesus offers no answer to the crowd but rather asserts how critical it is to have a proper relationship to Himself.

**Jesus' Answer 12:35-36a**

*"Jesus therefore said to them, 'For a little while longer the light is among you. Walk while you have the light, that darkness may not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. <sup>36</sup>While you have the light, believe in the light, in order that you may become sons of light.' "*

The emphasis lies on seizing the opportunity while it is present. These words lead to John's explanation of the significance and importance of the moment and the crisis of belief and unbelief.

**THE RESPONSE TO UNBELIEF 12:36B-50****JOHN'S REGRET 12:36B-37**

*"These things Jesus spoke, and He departed and hid Himself from them. <sup>37</sup>But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him..."*

These words introduce John's comments and explanations concerning the preceding events and include the words of Jesus, which make urgent appeal to His hearers.

John is apparently surprised that faith in Jesus was not more widespread, considering the many miracles that He performed. Unbelief was maintained in spite of overwhelming evidence that Jesus was who He claimed to be. John turns to Isaiah to explain this unbelief.

**ISAIAH'S PROPHECY 12:38-43****As Found in Isaiah 53 12:38**

*"...that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, 'Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?' "*

In using this passage from the "servant songs" of Isaiah, it is clear that John considers the servant to be Jesus Himself. Old Testament Messianic prophecy was the subject of the preaching of the apostles in the book of Acts and was the foundation for much doctrine.

Romans 10:16 identifies the *report* spoken of by Isaiah as the *glad tidings* (gospel). The *arm of the Lord* is an anthropomorphism for the power of God. To believe the gospel is to experience the power of God (Romans 1:16).

**As Found in Isaiah 6 12:39-40**

*"For this cause they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, <sup>40</sup>'He has blinded their eyes, and He hardened their heart; lest they see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, and be converted, and I heal them.' "*

John uses Isaiah 6:10 to explain unbelief. When light is rejected, God sends a hardness of heart that makes belief impossible. Isaiah was to proclaim truth to Judah but was told by God that his message would not be believed and would, in fact, serve to further harden the hearts of the people, making it impossible for them to believe. Light enlightens those who believe but hardens those who do not—better no light than light rejected! Unbelief makes the heart increasingly impervious to truth.

### As Fulfilled by the Jews 12:41-43

*“These things Isaiah said, because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him. <sup>42</sup>Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; <sup>43</sup>for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.”*

John provides us with one of the clearest identifications of Jesus with Yahweh found anywhere in the New Testament. Isaiah 6 opens with Isaiah’s vision of “the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted” and proclaims “my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.” John interprets for us: Isaiah saw Jesus and spoke of Him.

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were among those rulers who believed in Jesus (John 19:38-39, Mark 15:43, Luke 23:50-51).

Members of the Sanhedrin, such as Nicodemus, remained silent because the council had ruled that any who believed should be excommunicated (John 9:22). Unfortunately, some who believed in Jesus and therefore disagreed with the council nonetheless desired its approval.

### JESUS’ CLAIMS 12:44-50

#### Jesus’ Oneness 12:44-45

*“And Jesus cried out and said, ‘He who believes in Me does not believe in Me, but in Him who sent Me. <sup>45</sup>And he who beholds Me beholds the One who sent Me.’ ”*

The oneness of Jesus with God the Father means that to believe in one is to believe in the other. John, in his epistle, says, “Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also (I John 2:23.” Though the Father and the Son are separate personalities, they are one being in essence and nature.

#### Jesus’ Revelation 12:46

*“ ‘I have come as light into the world, that everyone who believes in Me may not remain in darkness.’ ”*

It was the office of Jesus to make all things clear, which He could do because He Himself was the truth (John 14:6). The words *I have*

*come* and *I came* each convey a slightly different idea. *I came* is an aorist tense, pointing to a definite and decisive event; *I have come* is perfect tense, which refers to the abiding and permanent results of that coming. Darkness is assumed to be the normal state of men without Christ.

### Jesus' Judgment 12:47-48

“ ‘And if anyone hears My sayings, and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.  
<sup>48</sup>He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.’ ”

Judgment is not the purpose of the mission of Jesus, but it is inevitable when He is rejected. The purpose of Jesus' mission was to lead men from darkness to light and to evoke faith.

### Jesus' Words 12:49-50

“ ‘For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak.  
<sup>50</sup>And I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.’ ”

These words close the public ministry of Jesus; the rest of His teaching is private and directly to the disciples. Once again, identity with God the Father in both word and action is rightly claimed by Jesus.

# **T**he Upper Room Discourse

*or “His Hour Has Come”*

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John 13:1-16:33

With the end of chapter 12, we reach the end of Jesus’ public ministry. John tells us nothing more of any words spoken by Jesus to the multitudes. There are a few words to those who arrested Him and a few to those who examined Him; but apart from these, the whole of the rest of the Gospel of John concerns Jesus’ final ministry to His own disciples.

John 13-16 contains the farewell discourse of Jesus, and there is no parallel to these chapters in the synoptics. John does incorporate two events into the discourse—the washing of the disciples’ feet and the giving of the sop to Judas.

The four chapters of the upper room discourse revolve about the following themes.

- Cleansing 13:1-38
- Encouragement 14:1-31
- Fruit-bearing 15:1-27
- Prediction 16:1-33

Within 24 hours of the footwashing recorded in chapter 13, Jesus will be arrested and crucified, taking us to the end of chapter 19.

## **CLEANSING 13:1-38**

### **THE PHYSICAL ACT OF FOOTWASHING 13:1-7**

#### **The Setting 13:1-3**

##### *Jesus’ Time 13:1a*

*“Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father...”*

Nothing to follow on this night will be a surprise to Jesus. His hour is no longer anticipated; it has arrived. That He is to return to His

Father anticipates the success of the cross. In Jewish time it is the Passover; by divine time it is the hour.

### ***Jesus' Attitude 13:1b***

*"...having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end."*

All of the following events will be a supreme demonstration of love. The words *to the end* do not express a temporal idea meaning He loved them to the last moment; they refer to the degree of love with which He loved them—infinite love. The cross will demonstrate infinite love in the fullest sense.

### ***Jesus' Betrayer 13:2***

*"And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him..."*

Judas is still present as the Passover supper begins. In usual circumstances, the lowest servant in the household would wash the guests' feet. The disciples, however, had been discussing which of them was the greatest. With this subject at the forefront of their minds, no one was in the mood for washing a fellow disciple's feet, for to do so would be to admit being the lowliest servant.

If Jesus washed Judas's feet, as He may have done, it is an example of His grace. He would be reminding Judas of the absence of animosity and presenting the opportunity, even yet, to repent of his anticipated deed. Jesus was gracious to Judas to the end, and Judas's sin was against full light and extended grace.

Satan acted upon Judas in three stages. First, he placed the thought of the betrayal in his mind (John 13:2). We cannot fix the exact time at which this happened, but it was sometime previous to the last supper. Second, he motivated him to betray Jesus (Luke 22:3-6). Third, he empowered Judas to execute the betrayal (John 13:27).

The betrayal of Jesus is a prime illustration of the sovereignty of God over events and of the precise fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Zechariah 11:12-13 tells the amount of the betrayal money, thirty pieces of silver, and the manner in which the money will be deposited—*thrown*. It also prophesies that it will go to the *house of the Lord* and finally to the *potter*. The precise fulfillment of each of these aspects of the betrayal is given in the New Testament. The amount and manner of deposit is stated by Matthew 27:3. Matthew 27:5, 7 trace its final end to the temple and the potter.

### ***Jesus' Knowledge 13:3***

*"Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God, and was going back to God..."*

These words show what is occupying Jesus' mind. We do not read, "Jesus, knowing that Judas was about to betray Him..." though He

fully knew this. It was not the betrayal of Judas but the plan of His Father that occupied Him.

### The Action 13:4-6

#### *Its Drama 13:4-5*

*"...(Jesus) rose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself about. <sup>5</sup>Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded."*

Since it was customary to wash feet before the meal, why did Jesus wait until the meal was under way? The answer perhaps lies in that had He washed feet at the beginning of the meal, it would have indicated nothing more than usual courtesy with an added lesson in humility. The intention of the footwashing was to teach the doctrine of union and fellowship with Christ (John 13:8).

As Jesus went from disciple to disciple, silence must have filled the room—all one could hear was the splashing of the water in the bowl. This continued until Jesus arrived at the feet of Peter.

#### *Its Resistance 13:6*

*"And so he came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, 'Lord, do You wash my feet?' "*

The emphasis of these words is on the great difference between Peter and his Lord. The words *Lord* and *my* are placed in juxtaposition—"Lord, you my...feet wash!" Peter had the humility to see the incongruity of the Lord washing his feet; and yet, at the same time had the audacity to try to dictate His actions.

### The Mystery 13:7

*"Jesus answered and said to him, 'What I do you do not realize now, but you shall understand hereafter.' "*

Both the *I* and the *you* are emphatic pronouns. The contrast is between the significance of Jesus' action and Peter's lack of understanding of it. Peter certainly understood that his feet were being washed, but Peter did not understand the deep spiritual significance of it. The Lord will use the common courtesy of footwashing as a vehicle to teach the necessity of spiritual cleansing and fellowship with Himself.

## THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF FOOTWASHING 13:8-11

### Peter's Impulsive Response 13:8-9

*"Peter said to Him, 'Never shall You wash my feet!' Jesus answered him, 'If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.' <sup>9</sup>Simon Peter said to Him, 'Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.' "*

This time Peter is even more emphatic in his refusal. The word *never* is a double negative, and the sentence ends with the words *into the ages* or *into eternity*. “Never, never into all eternity will you wash my feet,” says Peter. Peter was so obsessed with his dedication that he was totally unaware of his ignorance. The Lord counters Peter’s obstinacy with a very firm reply. If Peter’s feet are not washed, he may have no fellowship with the Lord. Footwashing obviously has significance far beyond the physical. Peter responds once more in his impulsive, self-confident manner.

### **The Transition from the Act of Footwashing to the Symbolism of Footwashing 13:10-11**

“Jesus said to him, ‘He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.’ <sup>11</sup>For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, ‘Not all of you are clean.’ ”

When Jesus tells the disciples they are not all clean and specifies the unclean one as the betrayer, it is obvious that the issue is moral or spiritual cleanliness. Jesus makes a distinction between being bathed and washing the feet.

The one who is *bathed* is described by a perfect tense participle. This points to a past completed act with abiding results. As context indicates, this one never needs a second bathing, though he needs many footwashings. Titus 3:5 speaks of the “washing (a word from the same root as *bathed* in John 13:10) of regeneration.” Regeneration is viewed as a bath. To be bathed is to be regenerated, or born again.

The words *to wash* translate an aorist infinitive, which points to the need for periodic washings along the way. Those who have both bathed and washed their feet are described as *completely clean*. The word used is *katharos* and is used in passages such as John 15:3, which shows the word of God as the means whereby they have been cleansed. The verb form is used in I John 1:9 and is translated *to cleanse* with confession of sin as the means. Ephesians 5:26 uses the word for *bathed*, *loutros*, translating it *cleansed*, and the word *katharos*, translating it *washing*.

### **THE PERSONAL EXAMPLE OF FOOTWASHING 13:12-20**

#### **In Relationship to Others 13:12-15**

“And so when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments, and reclined at the table again, He said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you? <sup>13</sup>You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. <sup>14</sup>If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. <sup>15</sup>For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.’ ”

Jesus is teaching the disciples the extreme importance of humble service. He does so by contrasting Himself and them. The titles



*Teacher and Lord* each put Jesus on a level above the disciples. No act of service toward a fellow believer is to be considered too menial to perform. Whenever the New Testament introduces Christ as an example, it is within the context of self-sacrifice. The word *example* does not necessarily teach that footwashing is to be part of the activities of the church. I Timothy 5:10 alludes to it as a charitable act toward the poor but not as a custom of the church. Footwashing is an example of the kind of attitude that should exist among the followers of Jesus. We should always have a “footwashing attitude.”

### In Relationship to Themselves 13:16-20

#### *The Principle of Service 13:16*

“ ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master; neither is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.’ ”

Jesus constantly spoke of being sent by His heavenly Father. In stating that *the one who is sent* is not greater than *the one who sent him*, He is making a claim of absolute equality with God the Father. The Son always rendered complete obedience to the Father’s will, but He did so as one equal in character.

#### *The Application of Truth 13:17*

“ ‘If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.’ ”

Fullness of blessing is the fruit of acting upon what one knows. The disciples know of the value of humble service; joy will come when they engage in it. *These things* encompasses all the lessons and implications of footwashing.

#### *The Exception to the Teaching 13:18*

“ ‘I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, “He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me.” ’ ”

The choice spoken of here is not to salvation but to apostleship. Lifting up the heel points to brute violence. The quotation is from Psalm 41:9 where David laments the defection of a trusted friend. The friend was probably Ahithophel who deserted David in Absalom’s rebellion (II Samuel 15:12, 16:15-23, 17:4, 14, 23).

#### *The Information Needed 13:19-20*

“ ‘From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He. <sup>20</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.’ ”

ABOUT FUTURE EVENTS 13:19 The major issue is not personal loyalty to Jesus but faith in His person. The words *I am He* are

identical to those used in 8:24 and 28 at the Feast of Tabernacles. Previous to this moment, Jesus had borne His sorrow in secret; but now He shares it with the disciples because He anticipates the bitterness of disappointment. Jesus wants His disciples to know what is going to happen beforehand so that when these things come to pass, they will be strengthened rather than weakened in their faith. It is also important to note that He wants them to know future events before His resurrection confirms them.

ABOUT FUTURE RECEPTION 13:20 There is a link between the disciples and Jesus similar to the link between Jesus and His Father. This is part of the fellowship they will experience after His departure.

## THE BETRAYAL OF JUDAS 13:21-30

### The Prediction of Jesus 13:21

*“When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.’ ”*

The identification of Judas as the betrayer is found in all four Gospels, with John giving the most detail. Two among the group of disciples will be central in displaying disloyalty to Jesus—Judas as an unbeliever and Peter as a believer. Each carries a different message about disloyalty.

Judas is a study in hypocrisy. He was not among the group of defectors that abandoned Jesus in John 6:66. According to John 12:4-6 he pretended to have a great concern for the poor. When told that one of the disciples would betray Him, Judas said, “Surely not I, Rabbi?” (Matthew 26:21-25).

Peter, on the other hand, is a study in self-confidence. Peter pledged loyalty more fervently than any of the other disciples. Courage was Peter’s strong point, for it was He who drew the sword to fight.

Only John mentions the mental suffering of Jesus at this point. The word translated *troubled* is *tarasso* and is used literally of a shaking or stirring of water. Metaphorically, it is used of spiritual and/or emotional agitation. Jesus suffered at both the actions and thoughts of men. There are four elements in the prediction of betrayal. First, the betrayer was to be one of the Twelve. The words *of you* in 13:21 contain the preposition *ek*, which points to source and origin. The betrayer is identified precisely within the circle of the participants at the last supper (Luke 22:21, Mark 14:18). The certainty of the prediction is emphasized by the words *truly, truly*.

## The Response of the Disciples 13:22-25

### *As a Group 13:22*

*“The disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one He was speaking.”*

We need to use imagination to perceive what was in the mind of each disciple as they looked at one another. Does anyone’s face show any indication of guilt? The disciples are further described as *at a loss*. The Greek word is *aporeo* and is illustrated by the appearance of disciples at the tomb of Jesus only to find it empty. We are told they were *perplexed (aporeo)* about what they saw. The disciples apparently could not recall any incident that would make any one of them suspect. According to Luke 22:23, the disciples began arguing among themselves as to whom the betrayer might be.

### *As Individuals 13:23-25*

*“There was reclining on Jesus’ breast one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. <sup>24</sup>Simon Peter therefore gestured to him, and said to him, ‘Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking.’ <sup>25</sup>He, leaning back thus on Jesus’ breast, said to Him, ‘Lord, who is it?’ ”*

The disciples were reclining around the table propped up on their left arm. John was next to Jesus where he would hear even a whisper coming from Jesus’ lips. Jesus could have answered Peter’s question by saying, “It is Judas,” but He did not; Judas was being given his final chance.

## The Departure of Judas 13:26-30

### *The Morsel 13:26*

*“Jesus therefore answered, ‘That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him.’ So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.”*

For an oriental, eating bread with another barred any hostile act toward them. It was customary for the host to give a small piece of meat to the one he wished to honor. The giving of the sop to Judas was not merely a means of identification of the betrayer; it demonstrated the awful atrocity that was being enacted.

As a man, Judas had displayed no glaring character flaws; the other disciples had drawn the rebuke of Jesus on certain occasions, but not Judas. He cannot be said to be a man entirely without conscience, for out of regret he later hanged himself (Matthew 27:3-5). Judas did have a money problem—He pilfered (John 12:6), and he could be bought.

### *The Departure 13:27-30*

*“And after the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Jesus therefore said to him, ‘What you do, do quickly.’ <sup>28</sup>Now no one of those reclining at the*

*table knew for what purpose He had said this to him. <sup>29</sup>For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, 'Buy the things we have need of for the feast'; or else, that he should give something to the poor. <sup>30</sup>And so after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night."*

John emphasizes the moment with the word *then*. Having honored Judas with the morsel, the betrayal is set in motion. The pronoun *him*, found here in verse 27 and again in verse 30 (translated *he*), is the Greek word *ekeinos*. The word means *that (one)* and is used to set Judas outside the circle of those disciples gathered in the upper room. The word *enter* is used of evil spirits in Matthew 12:45, Mark 5:12, Luke 8:30, and 11:26. Judas had yielded to selfish impulse, and Satan took control.

## JESUS' WORDS UPON JUDAS'S DEPARTURE 13:31-35

### About His Victory 13:31-32

*"When therefore he had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; <sup>32</sup>if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately.' "*

The word *glory* in some form is found five times in this single sentence. The reference to glory is strange from the human standpoint. One who has just eaten with Jesus has left the room to betray Him, and the agony of Gethsemane is just a few hours away. The disciples have not understood Him, themselves, or Judas—and yet this is Jesus' hour of glory.

Why glory? Because He is about to fulfill the Father's plan of salvation, and His death will be the first occasion wherein a member of the human race enters the presence of God on the basis of personal merit. Self-sacrifice in the execution of God's will is glory!

Jesus says God is glorified *in Him*, not *by Him*. Both are true, and one does not exclude the other. *In Him* is stronger, however, because it means Jesus is the very embodiment of God's glory.

### About His Departure 13:33

*" 'Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You shall seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, I now say to you also, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' ' "*

The disciples are addressed as *little children*, which is the single Greek word *teknia*. The word is used only here in the Gospel accounts. *Teknia* is a term of intimacy and affection; and John is highly impressed with it, as shown in the epistle of I John where he uses it to address believers six times.

### About His Commandment 13:34-35

“ ‘A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.’ ”

Two questions must be answered in interpreting the meaning of these two verses. Do the words *that you love one another* tell us the content of the new commandment, or is the new commandment something else and loving one another is the result of that commandment?

Verse 35 would cause us to lean toward the first interpretation, whereas the word *that* is normally used to introduce purpose or result clauses and would favor the latter interpretation. Another problem arises: If the content of the commandment is to love one another, in what sense is it new? The Old Testament tells us to love our neighbor.

A new commandment had been given that very night and is found in Luke 22:19. “This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” This would certainly be a doctrinally sound interpretation since the Lord’s supper focuses on His love for us, which, in turn, causes us to love one another and thus have impact in our witness to the world.

### THE DENIALS OF PETER 13:36-38

#### Protested by Peter 13:36-37

“Simon Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, where are You going?’ Jesus answered, ‘Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you shall follow later.’

<sup>37</sup>Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You.’ ”

Peter is obviously not too concerned with the loving that Jesus had been talking about—he was interested in action—he wanted to go! Peter will eventually go where Jesus is going, for just as Jesus is going to the Father via the cross, so will Peter (John 21:18-19).

#### Predicted by Jesus 13:38

“Jesus answered, ‘Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a cock shall not crow, until you deny Me three times.’ ”

It all happened this way—that night!

## ENCOURAGEMENT 14:1-31

### THE SETTING FOR THE TEACHING OF JOHN 14

#### As Seen in the Words Spoken by Jesus

Jesus has just told the disciples that He was going to depart, and they could not go with Him (John 13:33). One should keep in mind that they had been asked to leave family and friends and occupation to follow Him. This they had done, and now He is about to forsake them; the question that would occupy their minds would be, How can He do this to us?

#### As Seen in the Emotional State of the Disciples

John 13:22 speaks of their perplexity; 13:28 of their confusion. The entire state of things is summarized by the opening words of chapter 14—"Let not your heart be troubled...." The teaching of this chapter will give them a foundation in truth that will overcome their fears. Jesus had said, "Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you shall follow later (John 13:36)." John 14 is an exposition of what should happen between the *now* and the *later*. The thrust of the teaching is that the disciples will be better off after His departure. Many of the concepts of John 14 describe conditions that exist in the age in which we now live. We, like the disciples, live in the period between Jesus' departure and His yet anticipated return.

### THE ADVANTAGES OF JESUS' DEPARTURE 14:1-27

#### An Eternal Home Is Being Prepared for All Believers 14:1-5

*" 'Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. <sup>2</sup>In my Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. <sup>4</sup>And you know the way where I am going.' <sup>5</sup>Thomas said to Him, 'Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?' "*

The noun *heart* is the most comprehensive word in the Bible for the immaterial part of man's nature. It includes the will, as in Romans 10:9; the mind, as in Psalm 10:3; and the emotions, as in Romans 9:2.

The verb *believe* may be translated as an indicative mood or an imperative mood. If both are taken as indicative, the sense is, "You believe in God (and if this is true), you also believe in Me." King James Version takes the first as indicative, *you believe*, and the second as imperative, *believe*. The New American Standard Bible takes both as imperatives, as shown above. The sense would be, "Believe in God and believe also in Me (because I too am God)."

The image of multiple dwelling places within a single house is oriental. Children often had apartments under the same roof as their parents. The *Father's house* refers to heaven; the word *dwelling places* is plural. It translates the single Greek word *mona*, which occurs in 14:2 and again in 14:23. The first alludes to our place with Him in the future; the second, to His place with us in the present.

The words *if it were not so, I would have told you* underscore the certainty of what Jesus is saying. Jesus speaks with a tone of complete confidence—He is as familiar with eternity as we are with our own hometown.

What is conveyed by the idea of a single house containing a multiplicity of dwellings? It denotes the idea of individual preparation for each inhabitant of heaven. It also carries the idea of spaciousness and roominess. All of this is linked to His work for us. It is ours because He has gone to prepare it for us. We are not even left to find this place for ourselves, for He will come to take us there.

When II Corinthians 5:8 tells us that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, it refers to our intermediate state, whereas Jesus is speaking of the eternal state of the believer. When the Lord returns, however, body, soul, and spirit will go to be with Him in the dwelling place spoken of here in John 14.

The assurance about knowing *the way* raises a question and prompts a request. Thomas asks the question based on simple logic: If we do not know where you are going, how can we be expected to know how to get there? It appears that Thomas had failed to grasp that Jesus was going to His *Father's house*.

### Access to the Father Is Provided by Jesus Now 14:6-11

#### *“The Way” Explained 14:6-7*

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me. <sup>7</sup>If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.’ ”

The verb *I am* is emphatic and excludes all others from the statement Jesus is about to make. The words *the way* point in two directions. Jesus is the way from man to God in salvation; Jesus is the way from God to man in the incarnation. *The truth* focuses on one of John's favorite themes, with the word occurring twenty-five times in John and only seven in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. *The life* is another word John uses frequently, some thirty-seven times. As emphasized repeatedly in the teaching of Jesus, to know Him is to know the Father; and to know the Father is to know the Son.

#### *“The Father” Explained 14:8-11*

“Philip said to Him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.’  
<sup>9</sup>Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not

*come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, "Show us the Father"? <sup>10</sup>Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. <sup>11</sup>Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me; otherwise believe on account of the works themselves.' "*

Philip may well have had in mind the Old Testament appearances of the "angel of the Lord" and desires a visible manifestation of God. He could also have in mind something like the dramatic descent of God on Mt. Sinai to speak with Moses. Philip wishes to have his physical senses satisfied. The abstractions involved in Jesus' teaching apparently meant little to Philip. No material likeness can adequately manifest God, but Jesus the God-Man can (John 1:18). Jesus revealed God in His words and in His works. Merrill Tenney puts it well, saying, "The truth of God filled Jesus' words; the power of God produced His works."

### **Greater Works Will Be Accomplished 14:12-14**

*" 'Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father. <sup>13</sup>And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup>If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.' "*

We should remind ourselves that Jesus is showing the disciples why His departure is to their advantage. Many wonderful things are going to happen between His departure and His return. One of those things concerns the doing of greater works.

Jesus first points out that their ministry will be a continuation of His. In what sense, however, will the disciples works be greater? They will be greater in the sense of meeting man's most basic need. As wonderful as the feeding of the five thousand was, it did not meet man's more fundamental need for spiritual food and sustenance. Lazarus was raised, but the need for spiritual life is more basic than physical life. Acts 2:41 is a good example of a disciple performing *greater works* saying, "So then, those who had received his (Peter) word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls." There were more converts after the initial sermon of Peter than are recorded for the entire career of Jesus.

The first word of verse 13 connects it to verse 12. The doing of greater works, then, is tied to prayer. With the words *in My name*, a totally new concept is introduced. A *name* stands for the entire person and explains the basis upon which God the Father may be approached. This concept continues through 14:26, 15:16, 16:23, 24, and 26.



**The Holy Spirit Will Take Up Residency in Them 14:15-17**

“ ‘If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. <sup>16</sup>And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; <sup>17</sup>that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you.’ ”

The word *another* means *another in number*. The word *Helper* is *paraklatos* and literally means *one called along side* and by usage carries the idea of providing help and assistance. It was used in Greek law courts for an unpaid advocate who pleaded for the defendant. We have two helpers, one on earth and one in heaven. Jesus is speaking of the Holy Spirit who is soon to come to be with them and occupy that position forever. I John 2:1 speaks of an *advocate* (*paraklatos*) in heaven who is Jesus Christ, the propitiation for our sins. The departure of Jesus is going to make the disciples richer, not poorer.

There is to be a great transition from the present relationship to the Holy Spirit as *with you* (them) to *in you* (them).

**Jesus Christ Himself Will Also Be Present With Us 14:18-21**

“ ‘I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. <sup>19</sup>After a little while the world will behold Me no more; but you will behold Me; because I live, you shall live also. <sup>20</sup>In that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. <sup>21</sup>He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him.’ ”

Jesus' departure is not to be thought of as a father dying and leaving his children as orphans. Jesus is stressing the difference between a departure and a desertion. With the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Son comes also. The essence of our relationship to Christ in the church age is expressed in six monosyllabic words: *you in Me—I in you*. The first is a union with Christ brought about by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:12-13). Christ dwelling in us and imparting eternal life is the doctrine of regeneration. The departure of Jesus, then, is only bodily.

**The Question of Judas (not Iscariot) 14:22-24**

“Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, ‘Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us, and not to the world?’ <sup>23</sup>Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him. <sup>24</sup>He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.’ ”

Judas apparently does not understand how Jesus would be both visible and invisible; it surely must be one or the other but not both. Their perception of the presence of Jesus will be conditioned

on obedience. Once again, Jesus emphasizes His intimate relationship to His Father. To believe Jesus' words is to believe those of the Father, for they are one. The use of the plural pronoun *we* by Jesus is a claim to deity; He and God the Father act in concert.

### **Jesus' Departure Guarantees a Teacher 14:25-26**

*" 'These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you. <sup>26</sup>But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.' "*

The reference to *all things* is obviously a circumscribed statement—Jesus is not going to make them omniscient. *All things* refers to all those things that God has chosen to reveal. Clearly, the disciples are to expect additional revelation of truth after Jesus' departure. The need for supernatural aid in recalling all that Jesus had said to them becomes obvious when one notes that as John writes his Gospel, he is some sixty years removed from those events of which he speaks.

### **Jesus' Departure Bequeaths Us Peace 14:27**

*" 'Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.' "*

From the teaching that follows in chapter 15, the peace of which Jesus speaks is not freedom from trouble, conflict, and persecution but calmness that comes from knowing one is doing the will of God.

## **THE CONCLUSION OF THE DEPARTURE DISCOURSE 14:28-31**

### **The Purpose of His Words 14:28-29**

*" 'You heard that I said to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced, because I go to the Father; for the Father is greater than I. <sup>29</sup>And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it comes to pass, you may believe.' "*

When Jesus speaks of the Father as greater, He is referring to His position, not His essence. Jesus is nothing less than deity, but He occupies a position of obedience relative to the Father's will. The necessity of believing is repeated often in John (1:50; 3:12, 15; 4:21, 41; 5:24, 44, 46; 6:29, 35, 47, 64; 7:38; 8:24, 45; 9:35; 10:38; 11:25, 40; 12:37, 44; 13:19; 14:1, 11; 16:31; 17:20; 20:27).

### **The Termination of His Words 14:30-31**

*" 'I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me; <sup>31</sup>but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go from here.' "*

Jesus is preparing for Satan's last attack. The Gospel of John makes no mention of the temptation of Christ as the other Gospels do. The departure from the room may mean John 15:17 was spoken on the way to the garden. The words conclude the dialogue.

## COMMUNION 15:1-27

The physical setting is suggested by the last words spoken in the upper room, "Arise, let us go from here." The words found here are apparently spoken between the upper room and the garden of Gethsemane. It is possible that they were walking near vineyards, and from these Jesus draws His illustration. Viticulture was a common feature of Palestinian life; but what was familiar to the disciples is unfamiliar to us.

The chapter breaks logically into three parts. First, Jesus speaks of the believer's relationship to Himself in 15:1-10. Second, He speaks of the believers' relationship to one another in 15:11-17. Third, He tells of the believer's relationship to the world in 15:18-27.

The purpose of symbolical teaching, such as found here, is to represent an abstract truth by concrete or pictorial illustration. In the culture in which they were living, the idea and the image were closely associated. Cultures do not, however, leave a handbook of their symbols. We must be careful not to press illustrations such as the vine and branches too far—John 15 has suffered much from this misuse.

At the outset, it would be well to summarize the basic applicable elements of the illustration. The true vine is Christ seen as the source of life. The vinedresser is the Father who acts upon the vines. There are two kinds of vines: the non-fruit bearing vine and the fruit bearing ones. The common association that each kind sustains lies in the fact that Jesus says they are both *in Me*. The action the Father takes toward each is hinged on a distinct verb used of both kinds of vines.

### THE RELATIONSHIP OF BELIEVERS TO CHRIST 15:1-10

#### The Vine and Vinedresser 15:1-2

##### *The Identity 15:1*

*"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser."*

The Son is the vine, and the point to be made is that branches cannot produce apart from union with the vine. The word *true* means *genuine* and points to Christ as the only source of fruit. The Father is the vinedresser. The point of the analogy here is that the branches need to be acted upon if fruit is to be borne. Once again, the Father and the Son are seen in a context of cooperation.

***The Activity 15:2***

“ ‘Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit.’ ”

**IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE NON-FRUIT BEARING BRANCHES 15:2A**

Every action of the vinedresser is with a view to fruit bearing. The verb *takes away* is *airo*, and its basic meaning is *to lift up*. John 8:59 uses it saying the Jews *picked up stones to throw at Him*. John 11:41 says that at the grave of Lazarus they *removed the stone*. Taking this basic meaning, the Father *lifts up* the branches; He curtails their wandering characteristics. The words *in Me* are emphatic, showing that even non-fruit bearing branches are nonetheless genuine branches.

**IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE FRUIT BEARING BRANCHES 15:2B** The word translated *prunes* is *kathairo*, which means *to cleanse*. Once again, it seems best to take the word in its basic meaning. The Father removes superfluous things—things that do not contribute to fruit bearing. The words *more fruit* convey two ideas. First, they do more than any other words to explain the actions of God the Father toward His own children. Every action of God toward us is intended to bring forth *more fruit*. Second, they show that the growth process is never over. Fruit is never completely borne; a new harvest is always in the future.

**The Status of the Disciples 15:3**

“ ‘You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.’ ”

These words set the context for the teaching that follows. Cleanliness relates to salvation. This verse distinguishes their standing from their conduct, for even though they are clean, they will deny Him in a matter of hours. The only evidence of their cleanness on this night is the Lord’s declaration, not their behavior.

**The Concept of Abiding 15:4-10*****Its Necessity 15:4-5***

“ ‘Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. <sup>5</sup>I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.’ ”

Jesus’ word for fellowship with Himself is *abiding*. It is the word John uses in his epistle for fellowship with the Lord. Paul speaks of walking by the Spirit; John speaks of abiding in Christ.

Letting Christ abide in us finds its parallel in Colossians 3:15-16. It is not fruit that we are to pursue; it is fellowship that we are to pursue—why? Because where there is abiding, fruit is inevitably produced.

***Its Results 15:6-8***

*“ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. <sup>7</sup>If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. <sup>8</sup>By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.’ ”*

FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT ABIDE 15:6 While verse 2 describes the actions of the Father toward the non-abiding and thus non-fruit bearing, it is important to note that verse 6 speaks of the actors as *they*, not the Father. This is apparently a statement of the worth of the non-fruit bearing to the unbeliever. He is worth nothing more than something to burn. To take the burning to be hell is stretching the illustration beyond reason and is not supported by the words found here. All symbolical teaching has its limitation because no symbol is a perfect symbol; no symbol is all symbol.

FOR THOSE WHO DO ABIDE 15:7-8 The two-fold results of abiding are prevailing prayer (verse 7) and glorifying God (verse 8).

***Its Responsibility 15:9-10***

*“ Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love.’ ”*

As branches are united to the vine, so love binds the disciples to Christ. Flowing from this relationship are obedience and joy. Jesus did not intend for the disciples to have a “kill-joy” type of experience. Jesus did not plan failure for His disciples but success in the true meaning of the word.

**THE RELATIONSHIP OF BELIEVERS TO ONE ANOTHER 15:11-17****It Is the Will of God that Believers Have Christ’s Joy 15:11**

*“ These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.’ ”*

The next seven verses are filled with purpose clauses (15:11, 12, 13, 16, 17). They are full of expressions of the will of God for the believer. Verse 11 lays special emphasis on the pronoun *My*. It points to the joy that is uniquely His. What was that joy? The answer is expressed figuratively in John 4:34 where Jesus says, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work.” His joy was in carrying out His Father’s will.

Prior to John 15, the word *joy* has been used only one time (John 3:29); but it is used seven times in the upper room discourse. Four of the seven references to joy are found in the context of persecution (16:20, 21-22, 24). Three of those four are in the context of sorrow (16:20-22). The joy the Lord desires His own to have exists

apart from circumstances and consists of delight in doing God's will.

How do we develop delight in doing God's will? Joy is due to the word of Christ, as shown by the purpose clause in verse 11. The word has the power to produce joy because it explains and expounds the will of God.

### It Is the Will of God that Believers Love One Another 15:12-15

*“ This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. <sup>14</sup>You are My friends, if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup>No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. ’ ”*

Once again, the word *My* is given special emphasis. Connected with the noun *commandment*, it refers to the commandment that is uniquely Christ's; and that commandment is to have self-sacrificing love. The words *just as* introduce the standard or norm of true love, which is His love. The verb *have loved* is an aorist tense, pointing to a definite act of love—namely, the cross. The same idea is also found in I John 3:16.

What evidence do we have that the Lord is our friend? Is it not true that the heart of any good friendship is free communication? Jesus calls the disciples *friends*, not slaves, because He has communicated truth to them. The Lord is our friend because He has given us His word.

Does the word *if* in verse 14 introduce the evidence of friendship or the condition of friendship? In the light of verse 16, it must be understood as the evidence of friendship, not the condition. The disciples have just been elevated from servants to friends. What change in the disciples brought this about? No change in the eleven had occurred—the cause of the new position did not lie in them; they were elevated by grace.

### It Is the Will of God that Believers Bear Fruit 15:16-17

*“ You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give it to you. <sup>17</sup>This I command you, that you love one another. ’ ”*

The teaching of verse 16 is given in order to establish the stability and permanency of the friend relationship. The choosing the Lord speaks of does not pertain to their salvation but to their call to be His disciples. The verb *chose* is an aorist tense, which indicates a definite event. Exactly the same word was used in John 6:70 and included Judas; Judas was chosen, but he was not saved. The verb

is also used in John 13:18, where it refers to the call to discipleship. The historical event is recorded in Luke 6:12-13.

Jesus' triple purpose for the disciples is found here. First, the words *that you should go* point to the independent activity of each that will begin with His departure. The Greek word is used of going in the sense of leaving the presence of another. This anticipates the time when they will work apart from the personal presence of Jesus. The words *bear fruit* point to His second purpose for them—profitable activity. Third, the words *that your fruit should remain* anticipate permanent activity.

## THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE BELIEVER TO THE WORLD 15:18-27

### The Partnership of the World's Hatred 15:18

“ *If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.* ”

A striking paradox is found here. The love of Christ for us is the antidote to the world's hatred, and it is also the cause of the world's hatred—Christ's love is both cause and cure for the hatred of the world. The verb *hates* is present tense, showing continuous activity; whereas, the verb *has hated* is perfect tense, showing a fixed and abiding condition. Paul speaks of this partnership with Christ as “the fellowship of His sufferings” in Philippians 3:10. The word *if* introduces a first class conditional sentence, meaning the *if* clause is assumed to be true.

### The Cause of the World's Hatred 15:19-21

#### *The World Hates the Believer Because of a Difference in Nature* 15:19-20

“ *If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.* <sup>20</sup>*Remember the word that I said to you, “A slave is not greater than his master.” If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.* ”

The *if* used here is second class conditional, which assumes the condition not to be true. The preposition *of* is *ek*, which points to source or origin. The verb *love* is *phileo*, affection flowing from one's nature. The term *its own* shows the kind of love the world has; it is a love that is introverted on itself. The love of the world knows no object outside itself.

Verse 20 teaches that we should expect no better treatment than that given Jesus. Jesus promised the disciples nothing more than that which He received.

***The World Hates the Believer Because It Does Not Know Our God 15:21***

“ ‘But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.’ ”

The reason for the attitude of the world is ignorance. The world does not have a true concept of who God is and therefore cannot properly evaluate His messenger or His followers.

**The Guilt of the World’s Hatred 15:22**

“ ‘If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.’ ”

The world has light for two reasons. First, it has light because of the incarnation of Jesus. The verb *had come* is aorist tense—a definite event. Second, it has light because of Jesus’ teaching. Having no sin is not an absolute statement but must be understood within the historical context; it is a reference to the sin of rejecting Jesus.

**The Association of the World’s Hatred 15:23**

“ ‘He who hates Me hates My Father also.’ ”

Why the need to remind of the inseparability of the Father and Son? Because some of the disciples will be put to death by people who will think they are doing God a service (John 16:2). The book of Acts furnishes us with historical accounts of such actions, not the least of which was Paul’s persecution of Christians.

**The Injustice of the World’s Hatred 15:24-25**

“ ‘If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. <sup>25</sup>But they have done this in order that the word may be fulfilled that is written in their Law, “They hated Me without a cause.” ’ ”

The sin of those who rejected Jesus was without excuse and deliberate. It was sin against full revelation and light. The evidence Jesus presented, both in words and works, was overwhelming, making the rejection all the more inexcusable and revealing the sinfulness of man’s nature. The treatment of Jesus was no surprise, however, for it was the subject of prophecies such as Psalm 35:19.

**The Resistor of the World’s Hatred 15:26-27**

“ ‘When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me, <sup>27</sup>and you will bear witness also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.’ ”



***The New Witness Will Be the Holy Spirit 15:26***

The quality assigned to the Holy Spirit is *truth*, the most essential characteristic of a witness.

***The New Instruments Will Be the Disciples 15:27***

The words *from the beginning* point to the disciples' association with Jesus from the very beginning of His ministry. When Judas was replaced, one of the requirements of a replacement was that he had been with Jesus from the beginning to the end of His ministry (Acts 1:21-22). The disciples were not to pass on a message of their own making but were to be transmitters of the facts as they stood. This required experiential involvement in the ministry of Jesus.

## PREDICTION 16:1-33

John 16 is the first chapter of what we now call church history. Many of the predictions found in this chapter are fulfilled in the book of Acts. John 15 spoke of Christ's love for His own and the world's hatred for them. After Jesus departs, what action will He take toward them and the world? For the disciples, He will provide guidance (16:13); and toward the world, the Holy Spirit will bring conviction (16:8). John 16 is full of revelation concerning the immediate future.

**THE REVELATION ABOUT PERSECUTION 16:1-4**

*“ These things I have spoken to you, that you may be kept from stumbling. <sup>2</sup>They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God. <sup>3</sup>And these things they will do, because they have not known the Father, or Me. <sup>4</sup>But these things I have spoken to you, that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you. ’ ”*

These predictions are future to the disciples, historically fulfilled in Acts, and reality throughout the church age. The first prophecy concerns the hostility of religion to Christianity. The synagogue was not merely a place of worship; it was the very heart of Jewish life. Excommunication from the synagogue involved exile from one's family and loss of jobs and trade privileges. Verse 2 describes the social and physical death they will face.

The word rendered *service* refers to religious acts of worship. Numbers 25:13 says, “and it shall be for him and his descendants after him, a covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God, and made atonement for the sons of Israel.” The Midrash comments on this verse saying, “Was this said because he offered an offering? No, but to teach that everyone that sheds the blood of the wicked is as he that offers an offering.” Acts 7:54-57 and 26:9-12 serve as examples of such persecution.

Jesus was not speaking of persecution by the secular state of Rome but of the religious zealots of Israel. Religious zeal and knowledge of God are not the same, and their evil acts will be the result of blinded thought. The teaching of verse 4 regards the word of God as an adequate replacement for the Lord's personal presence.

## THE REVELATION ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT 16:5-15

### His Relationship to the Disciples 16:5-7

#### *In Their Present 16:5-6*

*“ ‘But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, “Where are You going?” ‘But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.’ ”*

At this point, the disciples seemed to be so consumed with sorrow that they did not pursue truth. The emotions had completely blocked the doctrine He was trying to teach them. The words that were designed to encourage them had instead been taken in a way that discouraged them. Emotion clouded their minds and caused them to miss truth.

#### *In Their Future 16:7*

*“ ‘But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.’ ”*

The opening six words of this verse are not necessary to understand the meaning of the sentence. What, then, is their significance? They are placed here to give the sentence force; they add weight and emphasis to what is being said. What seemed logical to the disciples was in reality illogical. Jesus' departure really was to their advantage. The coming of the *Helper* would make it possible for Him to communicate with them any time, any place.

### His Relationship to the World 16:8-11

#### *The Summary 16:8*

*“ ‘And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment...’ ”*

The verb *convict* means to bring fact to light by use of proof, resulting in censure. II Timothy 3:16 says, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof....” Here the word *reproof* is the same as *convict* in John 16:8. In II Timothy 4:2, Timothy is exhorted to “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove....” The word *reprove* is also the same as *convict* in John 16:8.

These verses summarize the concept of conviction. The producing of conviction is linked to three entities in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit is the source of conviction (John 16:8); the word of God

is the means of conviction (II Timothy 3:16); and man, the human messenger, is the agent of conviction (II Timothy 4:2).

### ***The Details 16:9-11***

“ ‘...concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; <sup>10</sup>and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me; <sup>11</sup>and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.’ ”

HE CONVICTS “CONCERNING SIN” The noun *sin* is singular, not plural—*sin*, not *sins*. The connective *because* is best taken recitatively and could be translated *namely*. The second clause names the singular sin of which the Holy Spirit convicts. The Holy Spirit convicts of the sin of unbelief in Christ. Relationship to Christ is the single issue for the unbeliever.

HE CONVICTS “CONCERNING RIGHTEOUSNESS” The righteousness spoken of is that kind that enabled Christ to go directly into the presence of the Father. The righteousness is His and is therefore perfect. The Holy Spirit enlightens the unbeliever, revealing that the only righteousness acceptable to God is the righteousness of Christ who is therefore man’s only hope for salvation.

HE CONVICTS “CONCERNING JUDGMENT” The ruler of this world is Satan, and his judgment is complete. This does not mean that God does not permit him to engage in his Satanic activity; it does mean that the cross will seal his fate. If the chief opponent of God has been judged, what then of his followers?

Every aspect of the convicting work of the Holy Spirit centers in Christ. Bringing a person to Christ is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit accomplished through the proclamation of the word of God.

### **His Relationship to Truth 16:12-15**

“ ‘I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup>But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. <sup>14</sup>He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you. <sup>15</sup>All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said, that He takes of Mine, and will disclose it to you.’ ”

### ***Future Revelation Is Necessary 16:12***

This verse makes it clear that the Gospels are not a full revelation in and of themselves. The words *many more things to say* convey two ideas. First, they teach the incompleteness of His teaching to this point. Second, a large volume of revelation is future to the teaching of Christ on earth. This in no way implies imperfection in what He did teach. Incompleteness and imperfection are totally different concepts.

***Future Revelation Will Be Dependable 16:13***

This is indicated by the reference to the *Spirit of truth*. Truthfulness of the revelation is tied to the truthfulness of the author.

***Future Revelation Will Be Given Through the Apostles 16:13***

The pronoun *you* is not general but specific. It refers to those who were present listening to the words of Jesus—the apostles.

***Future Revelation Will Be Complete 16:13***

The noun *truth* has a definite article with it and therefore indicates, not truth in general, but a definite and definable body of truth. *Truth* is also modified by the word *all*, pointing to revelation that is to be complete.

***Future Revelation Will Be Christological 16:13-15***

Verse 13 says that the Holy Spirit will reveal what is to come. This points to the whole Christian system of truth and doctrine, which was in the future as Jesus spoke these words. Verse 14 indicates the Christocentric work of the Holy Spirit. The pronoun *Me* is emphatic by both form and position in the sentence. The Holy Spirit never makes Himself prominent. Where the Holy Spirit is prominent, something else has been mistaken for the Holy Spirit. The true evidence of the working of the Holy Spirit is determined by the preeminent place given to Christ.

**THE REVELATION ABOUT JESUS' RESURRECTION 16:16-24****The Promise 16:16**

“ ‘A little while, and you will no longer behold Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me.’ ”

The words of this verse were a riddle to the disciples, but they are not such to us because we can look back on their fulfillment. There are two *little whiles* here, and each culminates in a different way. The first *little while* is the time between the speaking of these words and Jesus' death. It was a period of hours, not days. The second *little while* is the time between Jesus' death and His resurrection. The words *you will see Me* refer to the resurrection and all the post-resurrection appearances over a period of forty days.

**The Confusion 16:17-18**

“Some of His disciples therefore said to one another, ‘What is this thing He is telling us, “A little while, and you will not behold Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me”; and, “because I go to the Father”?’  
<sup>18</sup>And so they were saying, ‘What is this He says, “A little while ”? We do not know what He is talking about.’ ”

The disciples were seeking clarification from the wrong source, for they were speaking with *one another*. Jesus will correct this mistake

in verse 19. They were also seeking clarification by the wrong method. They were seeking to determine truth by consensus, the epistemology of the world.

### The Insight 16:19

*“Jesus knew that they wished to question Him, and He said to them, ‘Are you deliberating together about this, that I said, “A little while, and you will not behold Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me”?’ ”*

Jesus always had a quick and perfect comprehension of what His listeners were thinking and feeling. The disciples did not have to explain themselves because Jesus always knew what they were thinking and responded to it. Jesus was never non-plussed. We should always remember this truth: Since the Lord knows us as we are and deals with us as we are, we must approach Him as we are. Illusions about ourselves cut us off from divine help.

### The Explanation 16:20-24

#### *The Experience of the Double Interval 16:20*

*“ ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned to joy.’ ”*

The first interval extends from late evening until morning. On the disciples’ part, there will be weeping, a literal shedding of tears; there will be lamenting, a reference to a funeral dirge. On the world’s part, there will be rejoicing at the crucifixion of Jesus. The disciples’ sorrow will be turned to joy by the resurrection.

#### *The Promise for the Double Interval 16:21-22*

*“ ‘Whenever a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she remembers the anguish no more, for joy that a child has been born into the world. <sup>22</sup>Therefore you too now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one takes your joy away from you.’ ”*

Jesus prefaces His promise with an illustration. The noun *woman* has a definite article with it. This means He is referring to women as a class; He is not looking at a single case but a universal law. The joy over the birth of a child puts the anguish in the past. The words *for joy* are literally *because of joy*.

Verse 22 makes application of the illustration. The idea of birth pain becoming joy is not just the idea of transition but shows the necessary condition for joy. Temporary suffering is the womb that carries eternal joy.

### ***The Future after the Double Interval 16:23-24***

“ ‘And in that day you will ask Me no question. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you shall ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you in My name. <sup>24</sup>Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full.’ ”

The age to follow is referred to as *that day*, and it is the day in which we live—the church age. First, there will be a new knowledge. Second, there will be a new way of praying. The words *in My name* introduce the grounds upon which God the Father may be approached. Finally, there will be new joy. The opening words of verse 24 are not a rebuke but a mere statement of fact.

## **THE REVELATION OF THE FATHER 16:25-33**

### **Jesus' Instruction in the Past 16:25**

“ ‘These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will speak no more to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father.’ ”

The reference to *figurative language* probably means Jesus used many figures of speech, such as the vine and branches in the preceding chapter. Jesus is dealing with what the disciples consider a major problem: They are losing their teacher. Jesus encourages them by saying the revelation of the future will have a fresh clarity.

### **Jesus' Statement for the Present 16:26-30**

#### ***Their Petitions in the Future 16:26-27***

“ ‘In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request the Father on your behalf, <sup>27</sup>for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father.’ ”

Jesus will not need to make petition on their behalf in the future because they will have the privilege of doing it for themselves. The term *in My name* means that their entree and standing before God depends upon His merits. Those merits are secured for them because they have believed.

#### ***Their Understanding in the Present 16:28-30***

“ ‘I came forth from the Father, and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again, and going to the Father.’ <sup>29</sup>His disciples said, ‘Lo, now You are speaking plainly, and are not using a figure of speech. <sup>30</sup>Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God.’ ”

The word *lo* is a very sharp interjection and occurs in John's Gospel more times than in all the rest of the New Testament books combined. The implication of the disciples' words is that the figurative

language was the reason they had not previously understood statements concerning His departure.

### Jesus' Prophecy of the Future 16:31-33

*"Jesus answered them, 'Do you now believe? <sup>32</sup>Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. <sup>33</sup>These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.'* "

The scattering will begin with the arrest of Jesus in the garden. His words now being spoken are to be their strength until He comes forth from the dead. Jesus had no doubts as to the successful outcome of His cross work and of overcoming as a finished work.

### NOTES

## NOTES



# Jesus' Prayer of Intercession

or "Father, the Hour Has Come"

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John 17:1-26

## THE SETTING OF JESUS' PRAYER

The prayer of John 17 is directly linked to the preceding context by the phrase *these things Jesus spoke*, which includes the words of the upper room discourse that extends from John 13-16. The words *lifting up His eyes* point forward to the content of chapter 17. The ones to whom Jesus' words are directed now change. In John 13-16 they were directed to the disciples; in John 17 they are directed to God the Father. We get the privilege of "listening in" to these words.

The Greek New Testament breaks the prayer into three paragraphs. First, Jesus prays for Himself (17:1-5). Second, Jesus prays for the disciples (17:6-19). Third, Jesus prays for future believers (17:20-26).

## JESUS PRAYS FOR HIMSELF 17:1-5

### HIS REQUEST 17:1

*"These things Jesus spoke; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee...' "*

The words *glorify Thy Son* show the total contrast of man's viewpoint with that of Jesus. To men, the cross was an instrument of shame, humiliation, and indignity—to Jesus, the cross was His glory.

The purpose clause introduced by the word *that* shows the perfect motivation in prayer. Jesus desired that His request for Himself be honored only because so doing would glorify the Father.

**HIS POSITION 17:2-3**

“ ‘...even as Thou gavest Him authority over all mankind, that to all whom Thou hast given Him, He may give eternal life. <sup>3</sup>And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent.’ ”

The word *give*, in some form, is found thirteen times in this prayer. In each case, the Father is the subject of the verb; and in each case, the Son is the recipient of the gift. Here Jesus is given the position of ultimate authority. This means that Jesus reigned as king from the cross!

The realm of Jesus' authority in this context pertains to eternal life. Eternal life is not described in chronological terms but in terms of relationship of men to God. Eternal life is knowing God. Possessing eternal life will lead us to eternal association with Christ in His glory (17:24).

**HIS SUCCESS 17:4**

“ ‘I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given me to do.’ ”

Jesus' words are proleptic; He is treating a future event as already having happened. He has yet to complete the glorifying of His Father; and yet, the result is so assured that He may point to His obedience to His Father's will as though it were now complete.

**HIS REITERATION 17:5**

“ ‘And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.’ ”

These words repeat the petition of verse 1 with an additional thought. The glory that He desires is His pre-existent glory. It was with the Father and before the world was. The noun *world* occurs eighteen times in this prayer. This is more frequently than in any other section of Scripture of comparable length. It points to the truth that right relationship of the disciples and future believers to the world is of great importance.

Though we have noted that in these verses Jesus prays for Himself, we should be careful to note the absence of confession of sin, or the expression of need, or request for strength as we might make. All elements of human sin and weakness are absent; He prays as one who has executed the will of His Father to perfection.

## JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS DISCIPLES 17:6-19

### HIS RELATIONSHIP TO THEM 17:6-8

#### He Manifested the Father's Name to Them 17:6-7

*“ I manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me, and they have kept Thy word. <sup>7</sup>Now they have come to know that everything Thou hast given Me is from Thee...’ ”*

The disciples are designated as those whom the Father has given the Son. While the reference here is to the eleven disciples, it will be expanded to include all future believers in verse 24. The noun *name* stands for the whole person. To reveal the name of the Father is to reveal His essential nature. Revealing the person of the Father expands on verse 4 that spoke of Jesus as glorifying the Father on earth.

Jesus gives the disciples their “report card” on their response to His three years of teaching by saying, “They have kept Thy word....” In spite of the many failings of the disciples, they had learned the one essential lesson that everything they saw in Jesus was from God. It took three years to teach one lesson—Jesus is God. The disciples understood the heavenly origin of Jesus.

#### He Manifested the Father's Words to Them 17:8

*“ ‘...for the words which Thou gavest Me I have given to them; and they received them, and truly understood that I came forth from Thee, and they believed that Thou didst send Me.’ ”*

This verse puts great stress on divine revelation. The essential matter was not so much the example of Jesus as the message of Jesus. The attitude of the disciples is described by three statements. First, they *received* the words of Jesus. This sets them in contrast to others of their day, especially the religious leaders. The verb *received* has no stated object, which emphasizes that they were simply “believing kind of men.” Second, they *understood* the significance of His words—they spoke of His divine origin. Finally, they *believed* those words. They had open minds, true understanding, and genuine faith.

### HIS REQUEST FOR THEM 17:9-19

#### The Request Limited 17:9-10

*“ I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine; <sup>10</sup>and all things that are Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I have been glorified in them.’ ”*

The pronoun *I* is emphatic, both in form and position. The Son focuses on who He is—the person of the one making the petition. He may do this because behind His prayer lies the perfection of His person.

Why is Jesus not praying for the world? Because the disciples are the instruments through which the world would be reached. The same principle is true in the church. Pastors and teachers are given to equip saints so that they can perform the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12).

The words *Mine are Thine* may be said by anyone, but the words *Thine are Mine* may be spoken only by Jesus who is truly God manifest in the flesh. The men of Jesus' day saw nothing whatsoever in the disciples that made them eminent in any way. They were, however, eminently eminent as proved by Jesus' words, *I have been glorified in them*. The world's views were all wrong about the cross, and they were all wrong about the disciples.

### The Request Specified 17:11-19

#### *The Request Concerning Their Protection Stated Positively 17:11-14*

##### THE NEED FOR PROTECTION 17:11

“ ‘And I am no more in the world, and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, the name which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as We are.’ ”

The need of the disciples rises from Jesus' absence from the world. Just as it is His task to go out of the world, so it is their task to remain in the world.

##### THE PERFECTION OF PROTECTION 17:12

“ ‘While I was with them, I was keeping them in Thy name which Thou hast given Me; and I guarded them, and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.’ ”

What is the meaning of the exception clause? Is Jesus saying that He kept them all successfully except Judas? The answer lies in observing the class of men that were within the scope of His keeping power. His keeping power extended only to those who had been given Him by the Father, and Judas was not one of those. All whom He kept were kept successfully. Thus, the emphasis of this verse lies on the perfect keeping power of Jesus.

##### THE MEANS OF PROTECTION 17:13-14

“ ‘But now I come to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy made full in themselves. <sup>14</sup>I have given them Thy word, and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.’ ”

Both verses call attention to the fact that Jesus has left them with His word. Jesus uses three prepositions to describe the relationship

of the disciples to the world. First, they are *in (en)* the world (17:11). Second, they were once *of (ek)* the world (17:6) but are not now *of (ek)* the world (17:14). Third, they are sent *to (eis)* the world (17:18).

### ***The Request Concerning Their Protection Stated Negatively 17:15-16***

“ ‘I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup>They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.’ ”

Two observations are worth making concerning the removal of the believer from the world. First, some of God’s great men have asked to be taken out of the world. Moses did (Numbers 11: 15), Elijah did (I Kings 19:4), and Jonah did (Jonah 4:3, 8). Second, in no case was the request for removal granted.

### ***The Request Concerning Their Sanctification 17:17-19***

“ ‘Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth. <sup>18</sup>As Thou didst send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup>And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.’ ”

The word which will set them apart (*sanctify them*) is viewed as possessed in 17:14 and yet to be given them in 16:13. Jesus gave them sufficient truth during His teaching on earth, but more would be needed in the future. The mission of Jesus is the pattern for the mission of the disciples and us as well. To *sanctify* means *to set apart for something*. That for which one is set apart is always defined by the context. Jesus sanctifies Himself in this particular context for His coming death on the cross.

## **JESUS PRAYS FOR FUTURE BELIEVERS 17:20-26**

### **JESUS’ DESCRIPTION OF THE FUTURE BODY 17:20**

“ ‘I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word...’ ”

The words *who believe* refer to all who will come to faith in Christ through the words of the apostles. We are part of that group. So far, the disciples had effectively taught no one. Thousands will come to faith through their preaching, as is recorded in the book of Acts. Millions more have been saved through their words, as seen in church history. In the mind of Jesus, you and I were present as He prayed this prayer. We were future in terms of time but present in the eyes of Jesus. The prepositional phrase *in Me* is composed of *in (eis)*, a strong word for channeling the action of the verb, and the pronoun *Me*, which is in the emphatic form.

The phrase *through their word* has a unique position in the Greek sentence. Literally, we have “those that believe through their word

in Me.” This highlights the word as the means of begetting saving faith. Faith is the means of salvation (17:20); the word is the means of faith (17:20); and truth is the means of growth (17:17).

### JESUS’ PURPOSE FOR THE FUTURE BODY 17:21

“ ‘...that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me.’ ”

This verse contains three purpose clauses. The first involves their relationship to one another (*may all be one*). The second has to do with their relationship to the Lord (*may be in Us*). The third views their relationship to the world (*world may believe*).

The oneness of believers does not refer to how they get along with one another or how they feel about one another. Paul, in speaking of the formation of the church, regarded this oneness as an accomplished fact (Romans 12:5, Ephesians 4:4).

### JESUS’ PROVISION FOR THE FUTURE BODY 17:22-23

“ ‘And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; <sup>23</sup>I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me.’ ”

Jesus’ glory was in the doing of His Father’s will. Doing the Father’s will meant the death of the cross followed by the glory of the resurrection and the ascension. We are given the same kind of glory—the glory that is preceded by service and suffering.

### JESUS’ PETITION FOR THE FUTURE BODY 17:24-26

“ ‘Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world. <sup>25</sup>O righteous Father, although the world has not known Thee, yet I have known Thee; and these have known that Thou didst send Me; <sup>26</sup>and I have made Thy name known to them, and will make it known; that the love wherewith Thou didst love Me may be in them, and I in them.’ ”

In John 14 Jesus tells the disciples that upon His departure He would go to prepare a place for believers in heaven. That concept is personalized here in terms of the place and the person involved in the future of every believer. The occupation of heaven will be to behold Christ’s glory.

The life of the believer is successful because of relationship to Christ. Everything we are and ever will be is because of Him. Salvation, fruitfulness, and ultimate glory are found only in Christ.

# The Crucifixion

*or “The Cup Which the Father Has  
Given Me, Shall I Not Drink It?”*

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John 18:1-19:42

All four Gospels record the crucifixion. Each selects the details that are pertinent to the doctrinal point the author wishes to make. Matthew emphasizes those events that show the kingship of Jesus; John records those that display the deity and Messiahship of Jesus.

John observes three revelations about Jesus. First, the voluntary nature of the death of Jesus is found in John 18:4, 11. Second, the fulfillment of the divine plan in Jesus' suffering is noted in John 18:9, 32; 19:11, 24, 28, 30, and 36. Third, the majesty of Jesus' in suffering is seen in John 18:6, 37; 19:11, and 26.

Though the events of the night cannot be put in certain chronological order, the following is probable. At 1:00 A.M. the agony in the garden, the betrayal, and the delivery to the high priest occur. Around 2:00 A.M. Jesus stands before Annas, an event recorded only by John. At 3:00 A.M. He is sent to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. At 5:00 A.M. the formal decision to send Him to Pilate is made. Very shortly thereafter, He is delivered to Herod where He is mocked by the soldiers. By 6:30 A.M. Pilate has announced his sentence; He is then mocked by the soldiers. About 9:00 A.M. Jesus is placed on the cross; and at noon He cries, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” The crucifixion is over by 3:00 P.M.

## THE ARREST OF JESUS 18:1-11

### THE SETTING 18:1-3

*“When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, into which He Himself entered, and His disciples. <sup>2</sup>Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place; for Jesus had often met there with His disciples. <sup>3</sup>Judas then, having received the Roman cohort, and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.”*

Jesus' absolute control of all that happens is especially noted by John. Only John, for example, tells of the striking down of the

Romans soldiers with the words *I am*. One who can do this does not have to be crucified. John alone reminds us that Jesus knew everything that was about to happen (18:4); he omits the betraying kiss of Judas.

Judas knew that Jesus frequently went to the garden. Had the Lord wanted to escape, He would certainly have gone elsewhere. That Jesus made Himself easy to find highlights two facts: He knew it was time to die, and He was willing to die.

The betrayal by Judas illustrates the principle of divine cause and human cause. The word *betraying* used in verse 2 describes the action of Judas toward Jesus; the same word is used in Romans 8:32 to describe the action of God the Father in the giving of the Son. Sovereignly, God uses Judas to accomplish the divine purpose.

As the arresting group arrives, we learn two things about them. First, they anticipate resistance. This best explains the number of arresting officers, assuming the cohort to be the normal six hundred soldiers. This number still seems very high if they expected to face only Jesus and the eleven. But Jesus had many sympathetic followers, and large masses were in Jerusalem for the Passover—the possibility of a Jewish uprising was real. Second, they must have anticipated that Jesus and His disciples would attempt to hide. This explains the lanterns and torches. Being Passover season, there would have been a full moon so Jesus could be easily found unless He hid someplace.

## THE CONFRONTATION 18:4-9

### Jesus' Readiness to Face Death 18:4-5

*"Jesus therefore, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth, and said to them, 'Whom do you seek?' <sup>5</sup>They answered Him, 'Jesus the Nazarene.' He said to them, 'I am He.' And Judas also who was betraying Him, was standing with them."*

Not only was deep suffering to be experienced, it was also felt in anticipation. The words *went forth* point to active obedience. Jesus stepped forward to suffer and die. In the ordinary sense of the word, Jesus was not arrested; He presented Himself to the officers.

The words *I am He* translate two words, *ego eimi*, found numerous times in John. Special note is made of the presence of Judas—why? First, because Judas had heard these words on many occasions (6:20; 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19). Second, this shows that Judas is sinning against full light.

### Jesus' Power to Avoid Death 18:6-9

*"When therefore He said to them, 'I am He,' they drew back, and fell to the ground. <sup>7</sup>Again therefore He asked them, 'Whom do you seek?' And they said, 'Jesus the Nazarene.' <sup>8</sup>Jesus answered, 'I told you that I am He;*



*if therefore you seek Me, let these go their way,’<sup>9</sup> that the word might be fulfilled which He spoke, ‘Of those whom Thou hast given Me I lost not one.’ ”*

With two spoken words, the soldiers fall to the ground, proving that they will effect the arrest only by Jesus’ consent and at His own time. In the Gospel accounts, Jesus is identified two ways: the kiss and Jesus’ own self-identification. In line with the purpose of the Gospel of John, the kiss is omitted. All of the words found here show Jesus in full command of the situation.

## THE SWORD 18:10-11

*“Simon Peter therefore having a sword, drew it, and struck the high priest’s slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave’s name was Malchus. <sup>11</sup>Jesus therefore said to Peter, ‘Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?’ ”*

Since the carrying of a sword on a feast day was illegal, Peter must have sensed what was going to happen. Peter could have hardly thought the battle could be won by the sword. Why, then, did he wield it? It seems likely that he was determined to prove the words he had spoken to Jesus earlier that evening, “I will lay down my life for You.” In all probability, Peter did not intend to cut off only Malchus’ ear, but his head. Malchus must have dodged the path of the sword but did not totally succeed.

What is the significance of the *cup* metaphor? In the synoptic Gospels, the cup is mentioned in connection with Jesus’ prayer in the garden; in John it is connected to the action of Peter. The synoptics focus on the struggle and agony connected with the cup, whereas John focuses on the outcome and victory. John alone points to the Father as the origin of the cup. John’s theme is how perfectly Jesus fulfilled the will of His Father. The cup is consistently associated with wrath and judgment (Psalm 75:8; Isaiah 51:17, 22; Jeremiah 25:15; and Ezekiel 23:31-33).

## THE TRIAL BEFORE ANNAS 18:12-27

### THE ARRIVAL AT THE RESIDENCE OF ANNAS 18:12-14

#### The Actions of the Officers 18:12-13

*“So the Roman cohort and the commander, and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him, <sup>13</sup>and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.”*

The listing of the arresting official is specific and emphatic. Each noun has its own definite article. The irony is that all of these impressive officials combined to arrest a willing prisoner! According to Matthew 26:48, they acted in concert because of their agreement with Judas.

At this point Jesus was *bound*, the first time in His ministry in which He was not free to move about as He wished. Binding the sacrifice was the first step in making an animal offering in the Old Testament (Psalm 118:27).

Next, Jesus was *led* to Annas. This is the same verb used in the Septuagint in Isaiah 53:7 where the suffering servant is like “a lamb that is led to slaughter.” Jesus was neither dragged nor driven; He went in submission to His Father’s will.

Annas was the unofficial ecclesiastical head of the nation. He had been high priest twenty years earlier and had been succeeded by five sons. Verse 13 notes that Jesus was taken to Annas first. Annas held the position of ecclesiastical control: furthermore, it would take some time to gather the Sanhedrin together, and Annas represented seasoned experience. None would be more skilled in finding official formulas and procedures. The opinion of Annas could easily offset any objections that members of the Sanhedrin might have.

### The Bias of Caiaphas 18:14

*“Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people.”*

Caiaphas had already decided that the death of Jesus was necessary for the survival of the nation (John 11:49-52).

### THE DENIAL AT THE DOOR OF ANNAS 18:15-18

*“And Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest, <sup>16</sup>but Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought in Peter. <sup>17</sup>The slave-girl therefore who kept the door said to Peter, ‘You are not also one of this man’s disciples, are you?’ He said, ‘I am not.’ <sup>18</sup>Now the slaves and the officers were standing there, having made a charcoal fire, for it was cold and they were warming themselves; and Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself.”*

Several things may be said to Peter’s credit. First, he had sincerely promised to follow the Lord to death (John 13:37). Second, he had courage to fight against great odds (John 18:10). Third, he was still following the Lord, though fearfully. Peter and another disciple had traced the footsteps of Jesus and His captors from Gethsemane to Annas’s house. Matthew adds that he was following *afar off*.

That Peter carried a sword shows that he anticipated a major threat, as from an armed Roman soldier or the temple police. Neither turn out to be the challenge. Peter, however, did not fall at his weak point; he fell at his strong point. His strong courage became his weak defense.

## THE ACTIONS IN THE COURT OF ANNAS 18:19-27

### The Questions of the Priest 18:19-21

*“The high priest therefore questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching. <sup>20</sup>Jesus answered him, ‘I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues, and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret. <sup>21</sup>Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; behold, these know what I said.’ ”*

#### *Their Illegality*

First, all proceedings at night were prohibited. Second, private preliminary examinations were illegal. Annas had no legal right to question Jesus. Third, a witness could not be called upon to incriminate himself. Fourth, an indictment was to be precisely and accurately stated.

#### *Their Nature*

In the Jewish court, the charge was blasphemy (Mark 14:61-64); and in the Roman court, He was accused of sedition (John 19:12). The order of Annas’ questions is significant. First, he inquires of His followers and then His teaching. Annas was more interested in the size of Jesus’ following than the truthfulness of His teaching. In replying, Jesus uses the emphatic personal pronoun *I* three times, calling attention to His openness and indirectness of Annas.

### The Blow of the Jewish Officer 18:22-24

*“And when He had said this, one of the officers standing by gave Jesus a blow, saying, ‘Is that the way You answer the high priest?’ <sup>23</sup>Jesus answered him, ‘If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?’ <sup>24</sup>Annas therefore sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.”*

Here is the first physical violence directed toward Jesus. The act is obviously illegal. Jesus has not even been charged, much less convicted. The soldier focused on the way Jesus answered the high priest; Jesus focused on truth. Fact, not emotion, should rule. John says nothing of the hearing before Caiaphas. The synoptic Gospels indicate that an appearance before the Sanhedrin also occurred. They were probably specially summoned for the trial (Matthew 26:57-68, Mark 14:53-65, Luke 22:66-71).

### Peter’s Final Denials 18:25-27

*“Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They said therefore to him, ‘You are not also one of His disciples, are you?’ He denied it, and said, ‘I am not.’ <sup>26</sup>One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, ‘Did I not see you in the garden*

*with Him?’ <sup>27</sup>Peter therefore denied it again; and immediately a cock crowed.”*

The question asked of Peter is constructed in such a way that a “no” answer is expected. His reply was more than “no”; it was an emphatic denial—“I am not!” (an exclamation point would bring out this fact).

The third question expects a “yes” answer. The slave was sure he had seen Peter in the garden with Jesus. The questioning moves from suspicion to certainty, making Peter all the more nervous as revealed by the increasing vehemence of his denials. Peter stands in contrast to Judas. Judas denied the Lord, fell into despair, and killed himself; Peter, on the other hand, denied the Lord, faced his weakness, and returned to Jesus.

## THE TRIAL BEFORE PILATE 18:28-19:16

### JESUS DELIVERED TO PILATE 18:28-32

*“They led Jesus therefore from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium in order that they might not be defiled, but might eat the Passover. <sup>29</sup>Pilate therefore went out to them, and said, ‘What accusation do you bring against this Man?’ <sup>30</sup>They answered and said to him, ‘If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you.’ <sup>31</sup>Pilate therefore said to them, ‘Take Him yourselves and judge Him according to your law.’ The Jews said to him, ‘We are not permitted to put anyone to death,’ <sup>32</sup>that the word of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die.”*

Normally, Pilate would not be in Jerusalem; he resided at Caesarea fifty miles away. During Passover week, however, he came to Jerusalem along with extra Roman troops. At this festival, Jewish nationalistic sentiment was high; and uprisings were likely to occur. Had the Jews entered Pilate’s courtyard, they would have incurred ceremonial defilement for seven days. Their religiosity allowed them to have a clear conscience while, at the same time, rejecting the Son of God.

The question asked by Pilate in verse 29 did not mean he was not aware of what the Jews were up to; it means he is observing due form and is requesting the legal formal charge. The Jews respond by presenting Jesus as an *evildoer*, a continuous action participle plus a noun. Our expression “habitual criminal” would convey the idea.

The Jews present themselves as ones that Pilate could trust, but he would have none of it. The admission that they could not put one to death is an admission of their intentions.

## JESUS EXAMINED BY PILATE 18:33-40

### Pilate's Question 18:33

*"Pilate therefore entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus, and said to Him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?'"*

The disciples, the Jews, Caiaphas, and all other participants in the crucifixion fade into the background; and we have a confrontation between Caesar and Christ discussing the subject of kingship. Pilate's question shows he had had previous conversation with the Jews. In all four Gospels, this is treated as the first question Pilate asks of Jesus; and in each, the pronoun *you* is emphatic. Pilate is incredulous!

### Jesus' Reply 18:34

*"Jesus answered, 'Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?'"*

The reply of Jesus irritated Pilate, for he was used to getting answers to his questions, not challenges. If Pilate had asked this question on his own, it would have meant, Are you a political king conspiring against Caesar? If, on the other hand, Pilate asked the question because Caiaphas had prompted him, it would have meant, Are you the Messianic king of Israel? Jesus' answer to the first would have been no; to the second, yes.

### Pilate's Retort 18:35

*"Pilate answered, 'I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You up to me; what have You done?'"*

Pilate was convinced that there was more to the Jewish charge than met the eye. His words are full of contempt for the Jews, and the hatred was mutual.

### Jesus' Answer 18:36-37

*"Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.'*

*<sup>37</sup>Pilate therefore said to Him, 'So You are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.'"*

Pilate asked about truth but did not bother to listen for the answer. He was not attempting to gain information; it was merely his way of dismissing the subject. Jesus, however, was more interested in reaching Pilate than in defending Himself. This appears in all of the other interviews of Jesus, such as with Nicodemus and the woman at the well.

**Pilate's Verdict 18:38-40**

*"Pilate said to Him, 'What is truth?' And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, 'I find no guilt in Him.' <sup>39</sup>But you have a custom, that I should release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?' <sup>40</sup>Therefore they cried out again, saying, 'Not this Man, but Barabbas,' Now Barabbas was a robber."*

When Pilate pronounces the guiltlessness of Jesus, he refers to himself by an emphatic personal pronoun *I*. He wished to set himself apart from the Jewish leaders. The word *no* is *oudemia*, which is emphatic and means *not at all*. The crowd is a good example of the manipulated masses.

**JESUS SCOURGED AND MOCKED BY PILATE 19:1-3**

*"Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged Him. <sup>2</sup>And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and arrayed Him in a purple robe; <sup>3</sup>and they began to come up to Him, and say, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and to give Him blows in the face."*

Scourging was the usual accompaniment to crucifixion. The Roman scourge consisted of a wooden handle to which rawhide thongs were attached. Into each thong, small butterfly shaped pieces of metal or bone were fixed. A few strokes across the back would strip the flesh, and the victim frequently did not survive for crucifixion. Eusebius tells of martyrs in the time of Polycarp who "were torn by scourges down to the deep-seated veins and arteries, so that the hidden contents of the recesses of their bodies, their entrails and organs, were exposed to sight."

Verse 3 has three continuous action verbs—*come*, *say*, and *give*. The action expressed by these verbs occurred repeatedly. The physical appearance of Jesus made the charge of sedition obviously absurd.

**THE DEMAND FOR CRUCIFIXION 19:4-7**

*"And Pilate came out again, and said to them, 'Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no guilt in Him.' <sup>5</sup>Jesus therefore came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, 'Behold, the man!' <sup>6</sup>When therefore the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, 'Crucify, crucify!' Pilate said to them, 'Take Him yourselves, and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him.' <sup>7</sup>The Jews answered him, 'We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God.' "*

The word *crucify* appears here for the first time in the Gospel of John. Roman superstition believed that gods could, and sometimes did, appear in human form; and to offend them carried serious consequences. This could be at least a partial explanation of Pilate's attempts to rid himself of Jesus.

## THE SILENCE OF JESUS 19:8-11

*“When Pilate therefore heard this statement, he was the more afraid; <sup>9</sup>and he entered into the Praetorium again, and said to Jesus, ‘Where are You from?’ But Jesus gave him no answer. <sup>10</sup>Pilate therefore said to Him, ‘You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?’ <sup>11</sup>Jesus answered, ‘You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me up to you has the greater sin.’ ”*

Pagan mythology tells of Olympian deities who consorted with humans, producing a progeny who were part deity. Pilate doubtless feared that he might offend one of them and thus makes every attempt to rid himself of Jesus. Pilate’s question inquires, not of Jesus’ person, but of His origin. Jesus’ silence may perhaps be explained as providing an opportunity for Pilate to reflect on His claims.

Pilate’s irritation with Jesus’ silence is explained by the high position he felt he held. In the words *You do not speak to me*, the pronoun *me* is first in the sentence and is emphatic. “You may remain silent before others,” says Pilate, “but not before me.”

Pilate’s claim to act as he pleases causes Jesus to break His silence. There was both truth and error in Pilate’s claim. In this world’s order, Pilate was right; he had awesome power. But Pilate’s civil power was ruled by the divine power of God. Because Pilate represented civil power, his guilt was less than the high priest who represented Israel, who was intended to act as representative of divine government.

## THE DELIVERY BY PILATE 19:12-16

### The Final Pressure 19:12-13

*“As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, ‘If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar.’ <sup>13</sup>When Pilate therefore heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha.”*

The final cry of the crowd concerning Caesar won the day. The term *friend of Caesar* was not merely an allusion to patriotic loyalty; it denoted a member of Caesar’s inner circle. If Pilate did not punish Jesus, news would reach Caesar that he had allowed a rival to go unpunished. This would in all likelihood bring Pilate’s career, and probably his life, to an end. Until this moment, Pilate had attempted to get the Jews to seek Jesus’ release; now Pilate takes action and brings Jesus out. The Jews control Pilate by playing to his fears, and Pilate’s fear of the emperor overruled his fear of Christ.

**“Behold, Your King!” 19:14-16**

*“Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, ‘Behold, your King!’ <sup>15</sup>They therefore cried out, ‘Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!’ Pilate said to them, ‘Shall I crucify your King?’ The chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but Caesar.’ <sup>16</sup>So he then delivered Him to them to be crucified.”*

Shamefully, the leaders of Israel publicly proclaim themselves subjects of a pagan king. In the place of Christ, they chose the emperor.

Pilate never pronounced sentence on Jesus; he merely let the Jewish leaders have their way, and he vacillates for the final time. Several times we are told he went out or went in (18:29, 33, 38; 19:4, 9, 13). Jesus gave him the opportunity to embrace truth if only he would have done so, for only that morning he had asked, “What is truth?” The incarnate truth stood before Pilate; but he passed truth by for what he considered to be security and, in the end, lost both!

**JESUS PUT TO DEATH 19:17-42****THE CROSS 19:17-22**

*“They took Jesus therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. <sup>18</sup>There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between. <sup>19</sup>And Pilate wrote an inscription also, and put it on the cross. And it was written, ‘JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS.’ <sup>20</sup>Therefore this inscription many of the Jews read, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin, and in Greek. <sup>21</sup>And so the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, ‘Do not write, “The King of the Jews”; but that He said, “I am King of the Jews.”’ <sup>22</sup>Pilate answered, ‘What I have written I have written.’”*

With the close of verse 16, Jesus is turned over to the execution squad, which normally consisted of four legionnaires and an over-seeing centurion. This is confirmed by the division of Jesus’ clothing four ways (19:23). It was customary for the condemned person to wear a placard telling his name and the nature of his crime.

Merrill Tenney speaks of an ossuary found near Jerusalem that reveals the skeleton of a man who had been crucified. “It shows that the feet had been nailed sideways to the cross whereas the body had been facing forward. Such a position would create a twist of about ninety degrees at the waist. The unnatural position, growing thirst, exposure to the weather, some loss of blood, and impaired breathing prevented normal breathing, which caused the lungs to slowly fill with moisture. The victim drowned slowly by internal accumulation of fluid. The action of the heart was seriously affected. Frequently a crucified man might live as long as thirty-six



hours, or even longer in an increasing agony, unless by exhaustion or dementia he finally lapsed into unconsciousness. Crucifixion was probably the most diabolical form of death ever invented.”

As much as one should appreciate the agony of the crucifixion, it should be noted that none of the Gospels dwell on this agony. In John 19:1, John uses a single verb saying Pilate *scourged Him*; and John 19:18 simply says *they crucified Him*. The New Testament focuses on the significance of the cross, not the agony of the cross. G. Campbell Morgan states the case this way: “It may be a challengeable opinion, but I think the church of God has suffered more than it knows by pictures of the crucifying of Jesus; and sometimes by very honest and well-intentioned sermons, trying to describe the matter on the physical side. I am not denying the tragedy and the pain of it physically, but the physical suffering of Jesus was nothing compared to the deeper fact of the cross.”

### THE GARMENTS 19:23-24

*“The soldiers therefore, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. <sup>24</sup>They said therefore to one another, ‘Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be’; that the Scripture might be fulfilled, ‘They divided My outer garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.’ ”*

It was not unusual for the clothing of the one executed to become the property of the executioners. Jesus’ clothing consisted of five items: a headdress, robe, sash, sandals, and a tunic. John mentions the clothing in order to show the fulfillment of Psalm 22:18.

Josephus comments that the seamless robe was the tunic of the high priest.

### THE WOMEN 19:25-27

*“Therefore the soldiers did these things. But there were standing by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. <sup>26</sup>When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, ‘Woman, behold, your son!’ <sup>27</sup>Then He said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother!’ And from that hour the disciple took her into his own household.”*

The four believing women stand in direct contrast to the four mercenary and calloused soldiers. These four form a courageous group and stand in contrast to many who “were looking on from a distance.... (Matthew 27:55)” The concern of Jesus for His mother shows that everyday matters were cared for in spite of the agony of the cross. For the utterances of Christ on the cross, see the section on page 195, “The Seven Last Words of Christ.”

## THE CRY 19:28-30

*“After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, ‘I am thirsty.’<sup>29</sup> A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop, and brought it up to His mouth.<sup>30</sup> When Jesus therefore had received the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished!’ And He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit.”*

John’s notation about Jesus’ knowledge shows that He was consciously carrying out His heavenly Father’s plan. The circumstances of crucifixion had produced great physical thirst for Jesus. Even in this detail, all is under the sovereign control of God and fulfills the prophecy of Psalm 69:21. The perfect tense verb *it is finished* shows the fullness and completeness of Jesus’ work on the cross. It should be understood as a cry of victory. The verb *gave up* is active voice and would be better translated *gave over His spirit*. Jesus was conscious and in control to the end.

## THE SPEAR THRUST 19:31-37

### The Act 19:31-34

*“The Jews therefore, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.<sup>32</sup> The soldiers therefore came, and broke the legs of the first man, and of the other man who was crucified with Him;<sup>33</sup> but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs;<sup>34</sup> but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water.”*

The action taken here is a concession to the religious scruples of the Jews. Because the Romans left a body hanging for a period of time in order to serve as a warning to others, the Jews needed permission to take it down. By Jewish law, the body was to come down before sundown, and Deuteronomy 21:22-23 tells the consequences of failure to comply. The Jews did not want their land defiled by their dead, but they were not concerned that they themselves were defiled by their deed. This is the last reference to *the Jews* in the Gospel of John, and their last wish was to assure the death of Jesus.

While scourging was part of crucifixion, breaking the legs was not. The Romans called it *crucifragium*, and it was a way of assuring that death would occur shortly thereafter. One being crucified could breathe only by raising one’s chest by straightening the legs. With the legs broken, this was impossible, and death came quickly.

Why did the soldier pierce Jesus’ side? Considered from the human side, it may have been a final act of brutality or perhaps a means of determining if Jesus was dead. From the divine standpoint, it was the fulfillment of a prophecy.

**The Commentary 19:35-37**

*“And he who has seen has borne witness, and his witness is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe.”<sup>36</sup>For these things came to pass, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, ‘Not a bone of Him shall be broken.’<sup>37</sup>And again another Scripture says, ‘They shall look on Him whom they pierced.’ ”*

John puts great stress on the historical accuracy of his writings. The unbroken legs point to both Old Testament prophecy and practice. Psalm 34:19-20 speaks of the Lord’s care of the righteous, but John makes a specific application to Jesus. The bones of the Passover lamb were not to be broken (Exodus 12:43-46, Numbers 9:9-12); and since Jesus was the lamb of God, His legs were not broken.

The prophecy concerning looking on *Him whom they pierced* had a historical fulfillment at the cross but, according to Revelation 1:7, will be associated with the second coming of Christ. What is the significance of the blood and water? Perhaps it is this: John uses blood for natural life (John 1:13) and water for spiritual life (John 4:14). This would convey the idea that there is no life of any sort apart from Christ.

**THE BURIAL 19:38-42****The Arrival of Joseph 19:38**

*“And after these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. He came therefore, and took away His body.”*

Burial in the Middle East took place within twenty-four hours, and the body of one executed like Jesus would have been flung into a common pit with the other two criminals. The relatives of Jesus were either too poor or too fearful to assume responsibility for the body. The possibility of Jesus’ burial with the criminals is precluded by Isaiah 53:9, which says “His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death.” The *grave* assigned to Him anticipates what the Romans would have done with Him; the *rich man* prophesies the appearance of Joseph of Arimathea.

Who was Joseph of Arimathea? According to Matthew 27:57-60, he was wealthy; and Mark 15:42-46 says he was a member of the Sanhedrin who was “waiting for the kingdom of God.” Luke 23:50-56 informs us that he had not concurred in the vote of the council to condemn Jesus to death. His action was an open confession of faith.

**The Arrival of Nicodemus 19:39-42**

*“And Nicodemus came also, who had first come to Him by night; bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. <sup>40</sup>And so they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. <sup>41</sup>Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had yet been laid. <sup>42</sup>Therefore on account of the Jewish day of preparation, because the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.”*

This is the third appearance of Nicodemus in the Gospel of John. His first was in the lengthy interview with Jesus in chapter 3. Next, John 7:45-52 records his defense of Jesus before the Sanhedrin. Finally, we find him here at the burial of Jesus.

Two observations may be made concerning the spices. First, the amount was prodigious. Second, they were very expensive. Large amounts such as found here were used primarily in the burial of royalty. This could be considered a reminder of the kingship of Jesus. One recalls that the subject of conversation in chapter 3 pertained to entering the kingdom. Nicodemus is honoring His king!

**NOTES**

# The Resurrection

or “Beholding an Empty Tomb”

John 20:1-29

## THE EMPTY TOMB 20:1-10

### THE REPORT OF MARY 20:1-2

*“Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb. <sup>2</sup>And so she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, ‘They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.’ ”*

If John’s account had ended with chapter 19, it would not have been exceptional—all biographies end with death. The scene portrayed here is dramatic. Not only was the doorway to the tomb standing open, but the stone had been *taken away*. The Greek preposition *ek* is used, which means *out of*. Tombs were closed by a round stone that rolled in a track. The implication of the preposition is that the stone had been lifted out of this track.

The thought of a resurrection did not even cross Mary’s mind; she believed that *they* had taken Him away. The pronoun *they* is undefined. It could be an impersonal plural, or it could be a reference to the enemies of Jesus. This would imply that the Jews had come to commit some final indignities on the body of Jesus. Like Mary, neither Peter nor John anticipated the possibility of a resurrection. To them, the empty tomb was to be explained by some natural cause.

### THE ARRIVAL OF PETER 20:3-10

*“Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they were going to the tomb. <sup>4</sup>And the two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter, and came to the tomb first; <sup>5</sup>and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in. <sup>6</sup>Simon Peter therefore also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he beheld the linen wrappings lying there, <sup>7</sup>and the face-cloth, which*

*had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. <sup>8</sup>So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb entered then also, and he saw and believed. <sup>9</sup>For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. <sup>10</sup>So the disciples went away again to their own homes.”*

The act of running shows the great emotion involved. Only one other passage in the New Testament refers to running other than metaphorically. Matthew 28:8 says “And they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples.”

The touches of local color point to eyewitness historicity. John (probably) ran faster and got there first but did not go in; Peter arrived later and immediately entered the tomb. The grave clothes lay just as they had been when they were wrapped around the body. The description leads one to believe that Jesus arose through the grave clothes without disturbing them. The scene is orderly, not one that would be left by grave robbers.

Three different verbs are used for “seeing” in this account. In verse 1, Mary *saw* (*blepo*); in verse 6, Peter *beheld* (*theoreo*); and in verse 8, John *saw*, (*eiden*). Verse 8 tells us the *other disciple* (probably John) *saw and believed*. What did John believe? It probably means he believed that a resurrection had occurred but did not yet connect that fact with any particular Scripture. The disciples believed in the resurrection first and then connected it to Scripture later. This means they did not manufacture a resurrection to fit their interpretation of Old Testament prophecy.

## THE APPEARANCES OF JESUS 20:11-29

See page 199 for a listing of all of the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus.

### THE APPEARANCE TO MARY MAGDALENE 20:11-18

#### Her Arrival 20:11-12

*“But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; <sup>12</sup>and she beheld two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying.”*

The position of the grave clothes indicated where the head and feet had lain. When angels appear in the Bible, they are usually recognized by the powers they possess rather than any difference from human form. This is why Mary did not respond with shock or surprise. This is the only place where angels are mentioned in John’s narrative, though they abound in Luke’s writing. Mary did not expect an empty tomb; she came seeking a dead body.

The verb *beheld* is *theoreo* (from which our word *theater* comes) and denotes, not mere perception, but studied contemplation.

### Her Conversation 20:13

*“And they said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ She said to them, ‘Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.’ ”*

Mary repeated the words she had spoken to the disciples in verse 2 with two variations. Instead of *the Lord*, she says *my Lord*; and *I do not know* replaces *we do not know*. The words of verse 13 show her sense of personal loss is now intensified. The simplicity of the narrative may be seen by observing that from verse 13 through 18 there are no connecting particles. The simple questions and declarations emphasize the dignity of the scene.

The only function of the angels is to ask Mary why she is weeping. After they ask the question, nothing more is heard of them. Mary’s assumption is that Jesus is dead, and all she anticipates is finding a body. We would all have cause to weep if Mary had found what she sought. What a tragedy had she gotten that for which she wept!

### Her Discovery 20:14-18

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

There was something different about the risen Jesus because the Gospel accounts reveal that He was not always immediately recognized (Luke 24:15-31, 36-37; Matthew 28:16-17; John 21:4). Jesus repeats the question of the angels but adds *Whom are you seeking?* This was probably intended to lead Mary to look for a person, not a body—Jesus wishes to raise her expectations. The words *stop clinging to Me* carry two ideas. First, Mary is not to delay the Lord in ascending to the Father. Second, she must learn that fellowship with Him from now on is going to be different than it had been in the past.

Jesus speaks of *My God and your God*, not *our God*. He is obviously not speaking of two gods. The words indicate that His relationship to the Father is not of the same nature as her relationship to the Father.

## THE APPEARANCES TO THE DISCIPLES 20:19-29

### Without Thomas Present 20:19-23

*“When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst, and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’<sup>20</sup> And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples therefore rejoiced when they saw the Lord.<sup>21</sup> Jesus therefore said to them again, ‘Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’<sup>22</sup> And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.<sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.’ ”*

The disciples were afraid. They had escaped arrest in the garden but knew that being disciples of Jesus meant they were under suspicion. It is probable that they were meeting behind closed doors to decide how to escape from Jerusalem without being noticed.

Verse 19 demonstrates one of the characteristics of the resurrection body: The closed and locked doors were no impediment to Jesus—He merely passed through them. While the resurrection body is different, there is also continuity, for His hands and side were definable as human. Jesus offered words of comfort and physical evidence that He was alive.

The reminder that He was sending them forth to continue His work would take on new meaning now. They would have had little enthusiasm to go forth in His name were He dead. The resurrection made their commission all the more compelling.

The words about receiving the Holy Spirit were an initial announcement of which Pentecost would be the historic fulfillment. The word *any* is plural, showing that the forgiveness of which Jesus speaks is not that of an individual but of men as a class. The apostles will have the authority to declare the forgiveness of sins. How did they do this? The answer may be discovered by noting how these men preached in the book of Acts. We find they did it by preaching a message that said forgiveness of sin was on the single condition of faith in Christ (Acts 10:43). Everyone who proclaims the gospel is forgiving or not forgiving sins, conditioned on the response of faith or unbelief on the part of the hearer.

### With Thomas Present 20:24-29

#### *Thomas’s Doubt 20:24-25*

*“But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.<sup>25</sup> The other disciples therefore were saying to him, ‘We have seen the Lord!’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I shall see in His hands the*



*imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.’ ”*

Thomas provides further evidence that the disciples were not expecting Jesus to rise. Thomas even refuses to believe eyewitness accounts, of which there were five on the very day of the resurrection! There was no imaginary “building up” of appearances; in fact, the reverse is true. They were progressively restricted, not progressively built up. Thomas insisted on personal, visual, and tactile evidence before he would believe. The word *saying* indicates continuous action—the disciples said repeatedly, “We have seen the Lord!”

Thomas’s words, *I will not believe*, contain a double negative, making the refusal an emphatic one. Evidence was not requested but demanded.

### ***Thomas’s Discovery 20:26-29***

*“And after eight days again His disciples were inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst, and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ <sup>27</sup>Then He said to Thomas, ‘Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing.’ <sup>28</sup>Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ <sup>29</sup>Jesus said to him, ‘Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.’ ”*

During the eight day interval, the disciples are left to ponder the events of the resurrection day. As far as we know, there were no appearances during these eight days. The disciples are gathered in the same place and the same room as on resurrection day. This time, however, we are not told they were behind closed doors *for fear of the Jews* (20:19). Though the doors were closed, the reality of Christ’s resurrection must have freed them from their previous fears.

Jesus invites Thomas to touch His hands and side, but he did not do so—this was not required, for one look did it; and he exclaimed, *My Lord and my God!* Thomas is convinced Jesus is alive; but more than that, he acknowledges Him as deity. Jesus says in verse 29 that Thomas believed because he saw. This verse is not making a comparison between Thomas and those who come to believe without sight. He says those who believe without sight are *blessed*, but He does not say they are more blessed.

When Jesus tells Thomas not to be unbelieving, He uses the word *ginomai*, which means *to become*. It is an invitation to change his mind set. The transformation is to be dramatic, as indicated by the strong adversative particle *but*.

Verses 30-31 are discussed on pages 1-2 at the beginning of the commentary.

## NOTES

# The Epilogue

or “Turning Fishermen into Shepherds”

John 21:1-29

## THE CATCH OF FISH 21:1-14

### PETER’S PROPOSAL 21:1-3

“After these things Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and He manifested Himself in this way. <sup>2</sup>There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples. <sup>3</sup>Simon Peter said to them, ‘I am going fishing.’ They said to him, ‘We will also come with you.’ They went out, and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing.”

The word *manifested* is a significant word in this Gospel. It is consistently used of the self-revelation of Jesus (John 1:31, 2:11, and 9:3). It is found three times in the epilogue (twice in 21: 1 and once in 21:14).

Peter’s words, *I am going fishing*, translate only two Greek words. The first is a verb, and the second is an infinitive—literally “I go to fish.” Both are present tense, indicating continuous activity. With this in mind, it may be that Peter is proposing a return to their old occupation. After all, the kingdom had not arrived; and they had to make money on which to live. The definite article with the word *boat* may mean that it belonged to Peter. They will have a very bad night fishing, and Jesus makes a point of it (21:5).

The words *that night they caught nothing* contain the emphatic pronoun *that*. This could indicate a circumstance that was very unusual for the disciples—they always caught fish but not this night.

### JESUS’ APPEARANCE 21:4

“But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.”

If one examines the post-resurrection appearances, it becomes obvious that Jesus Himself picks the time and place. His choice is never arbitrary, though the reason may not always be clear to the reader. Here it is obvious that Jesus wants the disciples to taste failure in their old occupation.

## JESUS' MIRACLE 21:5-14

### His Question 21:5

*"Jesus therefore said to them, 'Children, you do not have any fish, do you?' They answered Him, 'No.' "*

Jesus wishes to focus on the disciples' failure to catch any fish. His intention in so doing is not to embarrass but to teach. The grammatical construction of the question shows that Jesus knew they had caught no fish. The word *children* denotes difference of age or position, not relationship.

### His Command 21:6

*"And He said to them, 'Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you will find a catch.' They cast therefore, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish."*

What is the significance of casting the net on the right side of the boat instead of the left? Probably nothing. The difference is not between the right and the left but between working with and without divine guidance.

### His Identification 21:7-8

*"That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord.' And so when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea. <sup>8</sup>But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging the net full of fish."*

Peter and John reveal their basic characteristics: John is first to discern, and Peter is first to take action. The net of live fish that were trying to swim away would be difficult to manage.

### His Provision 21:9-14

*"And so when they got out upon the land, they saw a charcoal fire already laid, and fish placed on it, and bread. <sup>10</sup>Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish which you have now caught.' <sup>11</sup>Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn. <sup>12</sup>Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' None of the disciples ventured to question Him, 'Who are You?' knowing that it was the Lord. <sup>13</sup>Jesus came and took the bread, and*

*gave them, and the fish likewise. <sup>14</sup>This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead."*

Why did the Lord provide fish Himself, but also ask the disciples to bring the fish they had caught? Probably to teach them that He would be the one to bless and multiply their efforts. As Jesus served them breakfast, their thoughts could easily recall His doing the same thing at the recent Passover meal and would also bring back to their minds the words He had spoken to them then.

Many fanciful explanations have been given as to the number of fish caught. That the fish were counted is probably a simple indication of the care the disciples exercised over the catch the Lord had given them.

It appears that Jesus did not Himself eat of the bread and fish. He apparently wished to appear only in the role of provider, not fellow participant. The comment about this being the third time Jesus was manifested refers only to His appearances to the disciples.

## THE RESTORATION OF THE FISHERMAN 21:15-29

### THE QUESTIONS 21:15-17

#### The First Question About Peter's Love 21:15

*"So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Tend My lambs.' "*

Jesus' question may be understood in three ways. First, He may be saying "Do you love Me more than these other men do?" Second, He may be saying "Do you love Me more than you love these other men?" Third, He may mean, though it seems unlikely, "Do you love Me more than you love these things, i.e., boats, fishing, etc.?" The first interpretation seems best in the light of Peter's boastful statement that though all the other disciples might forsake the Lord, he would not.

The point is often made that there are two words translated *love* in this dialogue between Peter and Jesus. Jesus uses *agapao* in the first two questions and *phileo* in the third. Peter answers with *phileo* all three times. *Agapao* is frequently used of divine love and denotes purpose, as well as affection. *Phileo*, on the other hand, denotes affinity, friendship, and fondness. Both words represent a high degree of love, and both are used of God, as in John 3:16 and 5:20; both are used of men, as in John 14:21 and 16:27.

The word *tend* is *bosko*, which means *to feed*. Willingness to feed sheep is made the prime evidence of love for the Lord.

### The Second Question About Peter's Love 21:16

*"He said to him again a second time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Shepherd My sheep.' "*

The verb translated *shepherd* is *poimaino*, which takes in feeding plus all other shepherding activity. It is a metaphor translated pastor in Ephesians 4:11.

### The Third Question About Peter's Love 21:17

*"He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love Me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend My sheep.' "*

The three questions could not but recall Peter's three denials of the Lord.

## THE DESTINIES 21:18-23

### Pertaining to Peter 21:18-19

#### *The Prediction 21:18*

*" 'Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself, and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.' "*

The words *truly, truly* introduce a sober and important truth. Peter is told of his new responsibility in verses 15-17; now he is told of his future career. To stretch forth his hands is to be helpless and seeking help. To be girded probably refers to arrest and imprisonment.

#### *The Commentary 21:19*

*"Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, 'Follow Me!' "*

Tertullian attests to the crucifixion of Peter in Rome. Origen adds that he was crucified with his head downwards. The verb *follow* is a present tense and means *keep on following me*.

### Pertaining to John 21:20-23

#### *The Inquiry 21:20-21*

*"Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; the one who also had leaned back on His breast at the supper, and said, 'Lord, who is the one who betrays you?' <sup>21</sup>Peter therefore seeing him said to Jesus, 'Lord, and what about this man?' "*

Peter wants to know if John will face the same perils as he. Peter's question in the original is terse: "Lord, this (one) what?"

### ***The Reply 21:22***

*"Jesus said to him, 'If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!'"*

The Lord makes it clear to Peter that He will not reveal His plan for John to him. The issue is always personal obedience, not that of another. The pronouns *you* are emphatic and placed in juxtaposition. Peter's end will correspond with his work, and so will that of John. The arrangement of the body of Christ is the concern of God, not men.

### ***The Saying 21:23***

*"This saying therefore went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, 'If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?'"*

Jesus words *I come* are a clear allusion to His second coming. It marks the utmost point to which John could carry on his ministry. That John would live till Christ's return was a misinterpretation of His words, and John corrects the rumor. There was an early tradition that John was sleeping in his grave at Ephesus, and the blowing dust was evidence of his breathing. The term *among the brethren* is found only here in the Gospel records but is very common in the book of Acts.

## **THE COLOPHON 21:24-25**

*"This is the disciple who bears witness of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his witness is true.<sup>25</sup> And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books which were written."*

A colophon is a statement attached to the end of a book concerning its publication. John wishes to affirm two things about his Gospel: the accuracy of the account and the abundance of available material. A complete account of Jesus, the perfect person, would be infinite.

## NOTES



# The Seven Last Words of Christ

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**“FATHER, FORGIVE THEM; FOR THEY DO NOT KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING.” LUKE 23:34**

## **What This Cry Tells Us About God the Father**

Jesus’ direct address of the Father shows that to this point in the crucifixion, fellowship with God still exists. Of the seven utterances of the cross, the first and the last begin by Jesus addressing God as Father. Jesus was on the cross for six hours and at noon cried out, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” The first cry points to fellowship maintained, the fourth cry to fellowship lost, and the final cry to fellowship restored. They teach us that the work of the cross is complete; sin was adequately dealt with forever.

## **What This Cry Tells Us About God the Son**

Concern for others shows Jesus’ total self-forgetfulness and shows that the one being conquered is truly the conqueror. One of the pleasurable sensations of the sinful heart of man is revenge. We even call it “sweet revenge”!

## **What This Cry Tells Us About Men**

For whom is the prayer made? In narrow context, it is for the Roman soldiers who placed Him there; in broader context, all who are involved in the crucifixion.

But don’t these words create a doctrinal problem? Since when is ignorance a basis for forgiveness? Can men be saved because they are ignorant of their condition? Can men be forgiven without believing?

The answer lies in observing how this request was fulfilled. In Acts 2:23, Peter speaks to the crowd about their recent actions toward Jesus saying, “You nailed (Him) to a cross....” Acts 2:38 shows the offer of forgiveness, and Acts 2:41 speaks of the salvation of about three thousand. Jesus prayed for the forgiveness of those who crucified Him; and in a matter of days, His petition was answered.

**“TRULY I SAY TO YOU, TODAY YOU SHALL BE WITH ME IN PARADISE.”  
LUKE 23:43**

**The Thief's View of God (Luke 23:40)**

One thief disassociates himself from the other asking him, “Do you not even fear God...?” He seems to have a sense of justice and, though a criminal, has a certain respect for God.

**The Thief's View of Himself (Luke 23:41)**

He speaks of the justice of his punishment saying, “...for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.”

**The Thief's View of Jesus (Luke 23:41-42)**

| The thief perceived Jesus' righteousness and saving power.

**“WOMAN, BEHOLD, YOUR SON!” (TO JOHN) “BEHOLD, YOUR MOTHER!” JOHN 19:26-27**

These words show Jesus' concern for the care and well-being of Mary. One of the features of the life of Christ is to see Him in a very human situation with a corresponding display of dazzling power. He was born in the feeding trough of an animal; and at the same time, the heavens were filled with the singing of angels. Lazarus died and Jesus wept; He then spoke and a dead man came forth. In the preceding cry, Jesus cared for the man's eternal salvation in heaven, and now, for Mary's temporal care on earth.

**“MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?”  
MATTHEW 27:46, MARK 15:34**

This cry was preceded by three hours of darkness and silence. The words were screamed by Jesus, not merely spoken. Being forsaken was not new to Jesus. He had been forsaken by family (John 7:5), by friends (Mark 3:21), by shallow followers (John 6:66), and so recently by Judas. All of this was bearable because He had the unfailing support of His heavenly Father. Now He has arrived at His deepest suffering—the abandonment of the Father. Until this time, the pain had been largely physical; now it is spiritual.

Is God's absence subjective or objective in nature? If subjective, then it means Jesus had lost His *perception* of the Father's presence. If objective, it means that God the Father *actually* abandoned the Son. The latter is the truth. In the bearing of man's sin, the Father must abandon the Son until the sin is dealt with fully. One should note, however, that when He was abandoned *by* God He fled *to* God.

**“I AM THIRSTY.” JOHN 19:28**

While this cry had physical significance, one should not confine its meaning to this alone. He had just been abandoned by His Father in whose will He always delighted. The cry indicated His thirst for fellowship with the Father, which is soon to be restored. John ties this cry to Psalm 69:21.

**“IT IS FINISHED.” JOHN 19:30**

The perfect tense verb points to the finished work of redemption. This is the consummation of salvation and the cry of victory. This is the most “perfect” perfect tense ever spoken, for never had the work been more complete nor its results more abiding.

**“FATHER, INTO THY HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT.” LUKE 23:46**

Sin is paid for, and fellowship with the Father is restored. The words quote Psalm 31:5. The same words were used by Stephen at his martyrdom in Acts 7:59.

## NOTES

# The Post-Resurrection Appearances

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## APPEARANCES DURING THE FIRST MONTH

*To Mary (John 20:11-18)*

*To the Women (Matthew 28:9-10)*

*To Peter (Luke 24:34)*

*To Cleopas and Another (Luke 24:13-31)*

*To the Disciples Without Thomas (John 20:19-25)*

*To the Disciples With Thomas (John 20:26-29)*

*To Seven by Lake Tiberias (John 21:1-23)*

*To the Disciples Just Prior to His Ascension (Luke 24:36-49)*

*To Five Hundred Plus the Disciples (I Corinthians 15:6)*

*To James (I Corinthians 15:7)*

*To the Eleven in Jerusalem (Acts 1)*

## APPEARANCES AFTER PENTECOST

*To Stephen (Acts 7:55)*

*To Paul on the Damascus Road (Acts 9)*

*To Paul in the Temple (Acts 22:17-21)*

*To Paul in Prison (Acts 23:11)*

*To John on Patmos (Revelation 1)*

**IN EVERY APPEARANCE, WE ARE TOLD THAT JESUS WAS EITHER SEEN  
OR TOUCHED OR BOTH**

He was seen by Peter, the chief apostle; by the twelve, the chief body; by five-hundred, the largest group; by James, His closest relative; by Thomas, the chief doubter; and finally, by Paul who once hated Him most.

**NOTES**

# Transubstantiation

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John 6:52-59

*“The Jews therefore began to argue with one another, saying, ‘How can this man give us His flesh to eat?’ <sup>53</sup>Jesus therefore said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. <sup>54</sup>He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. <sup>55</sup>For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. <sup>56</sup>He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. <sup>57</sup>As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me. <sup>58</sup>This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate, and died, he who eats this bread shall live forever.’ <sup>59</sup>These things He said in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum.”*

## ROMAN CATHOLIC TEACHING CONCERNING JOHN 6:52-59

John 6:52-59 is held to be the fundamental passage on the sacrament of communion. From these verses the doctrine of transubstantiation is built. This is the teaching that the bread and wine turn into the body and blood of Christ literally. This supposedly occurs when the priest elevates the host between earth and heaven. If the mass is in Latin, the priest says, “Hoc corpus meus est,” at which moment transubstantiation occurs. In Catholicism, this is a “must believe” doctrine.

## REASONS WHY JOHN 6 DOES NOT TEACH TRANSUBSTANTIATION AND IS NOT A REFERENCE TO THE LORD’S SUPPER

### The Setting of These Words Argues Against the Sacramental Interpretation

Jesus was speaking in the synagogue at Capernaum. The crowd was made up of strong opponents and lukewarm disciples. We may always assume that Jesus teaches with a view to being understood. Since the institution of the Lord’s supper lay well into the future, references to it could do nothing but mystify those who heard.

### **The Strength of the Language Argues Against the Sacramental Interpretation**

John 6:53 says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves.” The language is absolute with no qualification inserted. If Jesus is referring to the Lord’s supper, then it and it alone is required for salvation. This is a concept that cannot be harmonized with the rest of the word of God.

### **The Result of Eating and Drinking Is Identical to that of Believing (John 6:35, 40, 47, and 54)**

That eating and drinking produce the same result as believing may be discovered in the very same context and within the very same discourse. With this in mind, we may move in three possible directions. First, one may say eternal life is received by believing and the Lord’s supper. This interpretation would assume that neither the “believing” nor the “eating and drinking” statements are absolute—neither is an adequate statement of truth by itself. Second, one could take the “eating and drinking” statements as absolute, but the “believing” statements are not. Third, both the “eating and drinking” and the “believing” statements are absolute and mean the same thing: Eternal life is obtained and sustained by our relationship to Christ.

### **The Metaphor of Eating and Drinking Must Be Understood as a First Century Jew Would Understand It**

One always teaches in language understood by one’s contemporaries. The metaphor of eating and drinking was common among the Jews. It pointed to the taking in of something to one’s innermost being. The key idea was appropriation of divine provision. It was used of blessings God’s people would receive in the promised land (Deuteronomy 8:7-10, 11:11-15, and Nehemiah 9:36). Eating and drinking was also used metaphorically for the reception of spiritual blessing as in Jeremiah 15:16, Ezekiel 2:8, 3:1, and Isaiah 55:1-3. The idea of fellowship was conveyed in passages such as Exodus 24:9-11, Deuteronomy 12:7, 15:19-20, 27:6-7, Ezra 6:21, and I Corinthians 5:8 in the New Testament.

### **The Tense of the Verbs “Eat” and “Drink” Is Aorist and Denotes a Once-for-all Action Rather than a Repeated Action**

The sacrament of communion duplicates and replicates the cross. The Lord’s supper is a remembrance, not a repetition. The death of Christ, on the other hand, is a once-for-all matter (Hebrews 10:10).

The once-for-all act of eating and drinking is followed by unbroken eating and drinking. With verse 53, a new verb for eating is introduced; *esthio*, which emphasizes the act, is dropped, and the new verb *trogo* is introduced, emphasizing the pleasure of eating and



drinking. We appropriate salvation in the person of Christ and enjoy it thereafter forever. All eating and drinking spoken of in verse 53 is in the present tense.

**The Origin of the Lord's Supper Is Traced to the Night of His Death, not to John 6 (I Corinthians 11:23-25)**

**The Lord's Supper Is a Proclamation of Christ's Death, not a Reenactment of His Death (I Corinthians 11:26)**