

# Resources

“Commentary on the Gospel According to John” by John **Calvin** in *Calvin’s Commentaries* (1553)

“An Exposition, With Practical Observations, of the Gospel According to St. John” by Matthew **Henry** in *Matthew Henry’s Commentary* (1721)

John by J.C. **Ryle** in *Ryle’s Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* (1865, 1869, 1873)

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“Gospel of St. John” by Alexander **Maclaren** in *Maclaren’s Expositions of Holy Scripture* (1959)

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“The Gospel According to John” by Edward **Dobson** in the *Liberty Commentary on the New Testament* (1978)

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“The Gospel of John” by Merrill **Tenney** in Volume 9 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (1981)

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*The Gospel of John* by F. F. **Bruce** (1983)

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*The Gospel According to John* by Leon **Morris** in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (1995)

*John: That You May Believe* by R. Kent **Hughes** in *Preaching the Word* (1999)

“John” by Warren **Wiersbe** in *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (2001)

*John* by Colin **Kruse** in the *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (2003)

*John* by Andreas **Kostenberger** in the *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (2004)

*The Upper Room* by John **MacArthur** (2014)

# Introduction to the Gospel of John

“The Gospel of John is unique in loveliness, and of a truth the principal gospel, far, far superior to the other three, and much to be preferred” (Martin Luther, quoted in D. Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 1:191). “The Gospel according to John is the most amazing book that was ever written” (Hendriksen, 1:3). It is “the most remarkable as well as the most important literary production ever composed by man” (Philip Schaff, cited in Edward Panosian, “The Most Remarkable Book in the World,” *Biblical Viewpoint*, April 1976, p. 10) and “probably the most important document in all the literature of the world” (Charles Erdman, cited in Panosian, p. 14).

The Gospel of John is found among the Gospels in our English Bibles. There are 4 Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.<sup>1</sup> The first 3 are commonly called the

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<sup>1</sup>The word, “gospel” means good news. “The four gospels are the good news about the most significant events in all of history—the life, sacrificial death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth” (John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Handbook*, p. 289; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Perhaps due to Mark 1:1 (“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God”), these books collectively came to be called “Gospels” (accordingly, the four authors are often referred to as “evangelists”). Though they are called Gospels (plural), they do not give four different gospels. Rather, they present the same message, though from four different perspectives (due to differing authors, audiences, and aims), what the *Zondervan Handbook to the Bible* (p. 541) describes as “four camera angles on the same scene” or what Morris (p. 42) describes as four artists painting a portrait of the same subject. Accordingly, they came to be called, respectively, the Gospel According to Matthew, the Gospel According to Mark, the Gospel According to Luke, and the Gospel According to John. Matthew writes to Jews, presenting Jesus as King; Mark writes to Romans, presenting Jesus as Servant; Luke writes to Greeks, presenting Jesus as Son of Man; John writes to all mankind, presenting Jesus as Son of God. The Gospels comprise 48% of the New Testament (D. Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 1:20). Gospel is a unique genre, consisting of a combination of the biographical/historical and theological, with the theological being the more significant component. John Grassmick (“Mark,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 2:96) describes the genre of gospel as “a theological proclamation to a particular audience of God’s ‘good news’ centered in the historical events of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection.” John MacArthur (*The MacArthur Bible Handbook*, p. 341) calls John’s Gospel the most theological of the Gospels.

“Synoptics”<sup>2</sup> because their content is very similar. John’s Gospel is unique.<sup>3</sup> Much found in the Synoptics is not found in John (e.g., the temptation of Jesus, the Transfiguration, the institution of the Lord’s Supper, Gethsemane, Jesus’ parables, and the casting out of demons). Likewise, much found in John is not found in the Synoptics (Jesus & Nicodemus, Jesus & the woman at the well, Jesus’ raising of Lazarus, and Jesus washing the disciples’ feet).<sup>4</sup>

Neither John’s Gospel nor any of the other 3 were intended to be exhaustive<sup>5</sup> (cf. John 20:30 and 21:25); the “evangelists” (as the gospel writers are sometimes called) selected only the material that fit their respective purposes for writing.

Though the Gospels are historical and biographical, they are more so theological. John’s Gospel is not so much informational as it is confrontational (1987 NIV Single Column Reference Bible, p. 1468) and inspirational.

### ***Authorship***

The Gospel of John, like the other 3 Gospels, is “formally anonymous” (Carson, p. 68). However, the consensus throughout church history has been that John, one of the Twelve, wrote the Gospel bearing his name. Lending credence to this conclusion is 1) the fact that John never refers to himself (or to his brother, James) by name in the book<sup>6</sup> and 2) the fact that John calls John the Baptist simply “John” (chapters 1 and 3).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>The word, synoptic literally means “to see together.”

<sup>3</sup>One author (Robert Kysar) has subtitled his commentary on John “the maverick gospel.”

<sup>4</sup>Compared to the Synoptics, 93% of the material in John is original (Blum, p. 269). For more on the contrasts between the Synoptics and the Gospel of John, see page 95 of H. Wayne House’s *Chronological and Background Charts of the New Testament*.

<sup>5</sup>The events related in the Gospels cover only 50 days of Jesus’ life (D. Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 1:27). The events related in John’s Gospel cover only 20 days of Jesus’ life (Henry Thiessen, quoted in Hiebert, 1:229); Kent (p. 21) says 30.

<sup>6</sup>Explaining this phenomenon, Morris (p. 7) states: “It is not easy to think of a reason why any early Christian, other than John himself, should have completely omitted all mention of such a prominent apostle.” When referring to himself in his Gospel, John calls himself the disciple Jesus loved (13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7, and 20), another/the other disciple (18:15-16, 20:2, 3, 4, and 8), and a son of Zebedee (21:2).

<sup>7</sup>Explaining this phenomenon, Carson (p. 72; emphasis his) suggests: “The simplest explanation is that John the son of Zebedee is the one person who would *not* feel it necessary to distinguish the other John from himself.”

John went from being a disciple of John the Baptist to a follower of Jesus (1:35-37), eventually becoming one of the twelve apostles (Matthew 10:2-4//Mark 3:16-19//Luke 6:14-16). His father was Zebedee (Matthew 10:2, Mark 1:19-20, 3:17, 10:35, and Luke 5:10), his mother Salome (compare Matthew 27:56 with Mark 15:40).<sup>8</sup> John was a fisherman by trade (Matthew 4:21-22//Mark 1:19-20).<sup>9</sup> We know he had at least one sibling, his older (since he is always listed first) brother, James (Matthew 4:21//Mark 1:19, Matthew 10:2//Mark 3:17, Matthew 17:1, and Acts 12:2).<sup>10</sup> Christ nicknamed James and John “the sons of thunder” (Mark 3:17), no doubt due to their tempestuous temperaments, as evidenced in Luke 9:54. Peter, James, and John (fishing partners—Luke 5:10) comprised the “inner circle” among the Twelve (Mark 5:37//Luke 8:51, Matthew 17:1//Mark 9:2//Luke 9:28, and Matthew 26:37//Mark 14:33).<sup>11</sup>

John was one of the “pillars” of the early church (Galatians 2:9). It is commonly believed that in his later years he resided in Ephesus, overseeing the churches located in the Roman province of Asia (particularly the 7 mentioned in Revelation 2-3), of which Ephesus was the capital. Besides his Gospel, John also wrote 3 epistles (1, 2, and 3 John) and the book of Revelation, the latter when in exile on the island of Patmos (Revelation 1:9). It is commonly believed that he was the last of the Twelve to die, dying a natural death at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D.

### ***Date of Events***

The events narrated in the Gospel of John begin with the ministry of John the Baptist and conclude with several post-resurrection appearances of Jesus, events that occurred over a period of several years in the late 20s/early 30s A.D. The greater part of the Gospel of John, as with all the Gospels, concentrates on the final week of Jesus’ earthly life.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Based on a comparison of Matthew 27:56 with John 19:25, it may be that Salome and Mary, the mother of Jesus, were sisters (this may be the reason why Jesus asked John to look after his mother in John 19:25-27). If so, Jesus and John would have been cousins.

<sup>9</sup>Not surprisingly, John is the only biblical writer to use the Greek word for “cooked fish,” which he does 5 times (in 6:9, 11, 21:9, 10, and 13).

<sup>10</sup>James was martyred by Herod Agrippa I in 44 A.D. (Acts 12:2).

<sup>11</sup>John and Peter are often closely associated (John 18:15-16, 20:2-8, Acts 3:1-4:23, and 8:14f).

<sup>12</sup>All of the Gospels make the final week of Jesus’ earthly life their main focus. According to Irving Jensen (*The Life of Christ*, p. 10/1), one-third of Matthew, one-fourth of Mark, one-seventh of Luke, and one-third of John is devoted to this week. Another source (based on number of chapters) gives the following percentages: 30% of Matthew,

### ***Date of Writing***

Most interpreters believe that the Gospel of John was written in the last quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D.<sup>13</sup> It was the last of the Gospels written, approximately two decades after the other 3. In fact, it was one of the last biblical books to be written (along with John's other writings).

### ***Place of Writing***

It is commonly believed that John wrote his Gospel while residing in Ephesus. "Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon His breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia" (Irenaeus, quoted in Morris, p. 54).<sup>14</sup> There are many who believe that John pastored the church at Ephesus for a time.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Purpose for Writing***

The Gospel of John, like the epistle of First John (see 1 John 5:13), has one of the most explicit statements of purpose of any biblical book: "*Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name*" (20:30-31).<sup>16</sup> John wrote his Gospel to convince his readers of the deity of Christ (i.e., that Christ is God)<sup>17</sup>, thereby bringing them to salvation. Accordingly, the Gospel of John, like Romans, is an excellent evangelistic resource. "This Gospel, unlike the others, answers the question, 'What must I do to be saved?' The others mainly confine themselves to the story of discipleship" (C. F. D. Moule, quoted in Morris, p. 34). The key word of the book is "believe," found 98

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37% of Mark, 25% of Luke, and 43% of John. In this regard, Martin Kahler (cited in D.A. Carson, Douglas Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 101) has called each of the Gospels "a passion narrative with an extended introduction." John's Gospel spends five chapters (chapters 13-17) on one night alone, the Thursday night of Passion Week.

<sup>13</sup>Anywhere from 80-98 A.D. Morris (p. 30) favors an earlier date (pre-70 A.D.).

<sup>14</sup>Lending credence to the testimony of Irenaeus is the fact that Irenaeus was a pupil of Polycarp, and Polycarp was a pupil of John.

<sup>15</sup>John is often referred to as the apostle of love. If, indeed, he pastored the church at Ephesus, it is interesting to note that in Revelation 2-3 (written by John), the first of the 7 churches addressed was the church at Ephesus, rebuked for leaving its first love (Revelation 2:4).

<sup>16</sup>Unless otherwise specified, all Scriptural citations in this study are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB).

<sup>17</sup>Not surprisingly, the very first verse of the book makes a clear declaration of this fact.

times (Blum, p. 270), more than twice as many times as in the Synoptic Gospels combined and more than twice as many times as in any other New Testament book; many synonyms for believe are also found (e.g., “receive” in 1:12, “drink” in 4:14, and “eat” and “drink” in 6:48-58). In the prologue (1:1-18), John tells us that some believed (1:12), while others did not (1:11). The rest of the book shows both responses being displayed with ever-increasing intensity. Another key word is life, found approximately three dozen times, twice as many times as in any other New Testament book.

### ***Occasion for Writing***

What prompted John to write what he wrote when he wrote it? One possible answer is that John wrote his Gospel to refute some Christological heresy (or heresies) that had arisen (a common occurrence in the early church). Lending credence to this suggestion is the fact that the Johannine Epistles (written about the same time by the same author) combat Christological errors (see 1 John 2:22-23, 4:2-3, 15, 5:1, 2 John 7, and 9-10). Thus, though the primary purpose for John’s Gospel was clearly evangelistic, a secondary purpose may have been apologetic.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Theme***

As with all of the Gospels, the focus of the Gospel of John is on Jesus. In distinction from the other Gospels, the Gospel of John especially emphasizes the deity of Jesus.

This emphasis on the deity of Jesus is seen in the opening verse of the book (1:1), which ends by saying that the Word (God the Son) was God. This emphasis is weaved throughout the book: in 1:14 (He is the “only begotten of the Father,” meaning that He is unique, one-of-a-kind, being divine like God the Father; cf. 3:16’s and 3:18’s “only begotten Son”); 1:18 (He is the “only begotten God,” NASB<sup>19</sup>); 1:19-34 (the witness of John the Baptist, culminating with his calling Jesus the Son of God in 1:34); 1:41 (the witness of Andrew, who called Jesus the Messiah); 1:49 (the witness of Nathanael, who called Jesus the Son of God); 4:25-26 (the witness of Jesus to the woman at the well, telling her that He was the Messiah); 4:29 (the witness of the woman at the well, calling Jesus the Christ); 4:42 (the witness of the Samaritans, calling Jesus the Christ); 5:17-18 (the witness of Jesus, calling God His Father<sup>20</sup>, causing the Jews to seek His

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<sup>18</sup>“Apologetics” means the defense of the faith (from the Greek word for “defense,” *apologia*).

<sup>19</sup>More recent translations (so ESV, NASB, and NIV) translate “God,” rather than “Son,” based on the reading of manuscripts that are more ancient/closer in time to the original.

<sup>20</sup>According to Kruse (p. 40), “Some forty times [in the Gospel of John] Jesus speaks to or of God as his Father, thus presenting himself as the Son of God.”

death for “making himself equal with God,” 5:18; cf. 19:7); 6:69 (the witness of Peter, calling Jesus “that Christ, the Son of the living God”); 8:58-59 (the witness of Jesus, calling Himself the eternal “I am,”<sup>21</sup> causing the Jews to seek to stone Him for supposed blasphemy; cf. 13:19 and 18:5-6); 9:35-37 (the witness of Jesus to the man born blind, telling him that He was the Son of God); 10:30-33 (the witness of Jesus, equating Himself with God the Father, causing the Jews to seek to stone Him because He “[made Himself] God”); 11:27 (the witness of Martha, who called Jesus “the Christ, the Son of the living God”); 13:13 (the witness of Jesus, who affirmed that He is what the disciples called Him, Lord); 14:9 (the witness of Jesus, who told Philip that “He who has seen Me has seen the Father”); and in 20:28 (the witness of Thomas, who called Jesus “my Lord and my God”). This emphasis is found at the culmination of the body of the book, with the statement of the purpose for writing in 20:31: “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.”

Based on 20:30-31, the miraculous signs that Jesus performed that are recorded in John’s Gospel are further declarations of His deity. These signs included: 1) turning the water into wine (2:1-11, especially verse 11); 2) the healing of a royal official’s son (4:46-54, especially verse 54); 3) the healing of a man at the pool of Bethesda (5:1f); 4) the feeding of the 5,000 (6:1-14, especially verse 14); 5) walking on the water (6:15-21); 6) the healing of a man born blind (9:1f, especially verse 3); 7) the raising of Lazarus (11:1f, especially verse 4); and 8) the miraculous catch of fish (21:4f). To these can be added the ultimate sign, the Resurrection (chapter 20; cf. 2:18-22).

John in his Gospel summons several witnesses<sup>22</sup> to testify regarding the identity of Jesus. According to Kruse (p. 43), these witnesses include: John the Baptist (see 1:7-8, 15, 19, 32, 34, 3:26, and 5:32-36a); the woman at the well (see 4:39; cf. 4:29); the witnesses to Lazarus’ resurrection (see 12:17); Jesus’ disciples (see 15:27; cf. Andrew in 1:41, Nathanael in 1:49, and Peter in 6:69); Jesus Himself (see 3:11, 32-33, 8:13-14, 18a, and 18:37; cf. 4:25-26, 5:17-18, 8:58-59, 9:35-37, 10:30-33, 36, 13:13, 14:9, 18:5-6, and 19:7); Jesus’ works (see 5:36, 10:24-25, 38, and 14:11); God the Father (see 5:37 and 8:18b); the Scriptures (see 5:39); and God the Holy Spirit (see 15:26). To these can be added the witness of the Samaritans (see 4:42), Martha (see 11:27), Thomas (see 20:28), and the apostle John (see 19:35 and 21:24).

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<sup>21</sup>Some also see the seven “I am” sayings (see under “Striking Features” at the end of this lesson) as implicit testimony to Jesus’ deity.

<sup>22</sup>According to Layton Talbert (“John: Introducing God’s Word to the World,” *FrontLine*, November/December 2002, p. 32), both the Greek noun and verb for witness are found more in the Gospel of John (approximately four dozen times) than in any other New Testament book.

## ***Striking Features***

Its simplicity, yet profundity. The vocabulary of the Gospel of John is the smallest of any New Testament book (Edward Panosian, “The Most Remarkable Book in the World,” *Biblical Viewpoint*, April 1976, p. 11). Kruse (p. 29) calls the Greek of the Gospel of John the simplest in the New Testament. However, even though John was an “uneducated and untrained” (Acts 4:13) Galilean fisherman, his Gospel has taxed the intellects of the most brilliant theologians throughout church history. Carson (p. 103) describes it as “complexity wrapped in simplicity.” Hendriksen (1:37) calls it “simple yet sublime.” Morris (p. 3) opens his commentary on John’s Gospel with these words: “I like the comparison of John’s Gospel to a pool in which a child may wade and an elephant can swim. It is both simple and profound.” Ryle (1:iii) has written: “... I think every intelligent student of Scripture will bear me out when I say, that St. John’s Gospel is pre-eminently full of things ‘hard to be understood.’ (2 Pet. iii. 16.) It contains a large portion of our Lord Jesus Christ’s doctrinal teaching. It abounds in ‘deep things of God,’ and ‘sayings of the King,’ which we feel instinctively we have no line to fully fathom, no mind to fully comprehend, no words to fully explain.”

Its famous passages. Examples include the doctrinally-rich prologue (1:1-18), Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus (chapter 3), the most famous verse in the Bible (3:16), Jesus’ conversation with the woman at the well (chapter 4), and the raising of Lazarus (chapter 11).

Its textual questions. Most textual scholars believe that both 5:3b-4 and 7:53-8:11 (the woman taken in adultery) were not part of the original text of John’s Gospel, but were later added by copyists/scribes.<sup>23</sup>

The 7 “I am”s. John is the only one of the 4 evangelists who records for us Jesus’

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<sup>23</sup>For more on these two textual issues in the Gospel of John, one may consult page 224 of volume 1 of D. Edmond Hiebert’s *An Introduction to the New Testament* and pages 172-173 of *An Introduction to the New Testament* by D.A. Carson, Douglas Moo, and Leon Morris. The latter’s arguments against the authenticity of 7:53-8:11 include: 1) These verses are absent from virtually all early Greek manuscripts of the Gospel of John; 2) All the early church fathers omit this narrative, passing immediately from 7:52 to 8:12 when commenting on the Gospel of John; 3) A number of later manuscripts of the Gospel of John that include this text mark it off, indicating hesitation about its authenticity; 4) among manuscripts of the Gospel of John that do include this section, there is some degree of variation among them as to where it is placed within the book (including some that place it in the Gospel of Luke instead); and 5) This section includes numerous expressions and constructions that are not characteristic of the apostle John. For a more cautious conclusion on the authenticity of this section, one may consult Hendriksen (2:33-35).



claim to be the following: “the bread of life” (6:35), “the Light of the world” (8:12), “the door of the sheep” (10:7), “the good shepherd” (10:11), “the resurrection and the life” (11:25), “the way, and the truth, and the life” (14:6), and “the true vine” (15:1).

### ***Overview***

John’s Gospel begins with a prologue (1:1-18). Next comes Jesus’ public ministry/His ministry with His disciples (1:19-12:50), followed by His private ministry/His ministry to His disciples (13:1-17:26). Next comes His propitiatory ministry/His ministry for His disciples (18:1-20:31), including His crucifixion and all the events leading up to it (18:1-19:42), followed by His resurrection (20:1-31). The Gospel concludes with an epilogue (21:1-25).

## John 1:1-18

John begins his Gospel with what has been called a “prologue,” a forward or preface of sorts, setting the stage for what is to follow in the rest of the book.<sup>24</sup> “No book in literature has so breath-taking an opening . . . given us as a kind of thesis, of which all the facts that are to follow are the proof” (Arthur Gossip, quoted in D. Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 1:230). Hughes (p. 15) suggests that the prologue may have been an early Christian hymn. The prologue consists of the first 18 verses of the book and is “theologically packed.” Let’s start unpacking!

### **Verse 1**

As set forth in the introductory lesson (see under “Purpose for Writing”), John wrote his Gospel to convince his readers of the deity of Christ (20:31). John wastes no time making this point, explicitly declaring Christ’s deity in the very first verse of the book, a verse that Hughes (p. 17) calls “the most compact and pulsating theological statement in all of Scripture.”

*In the beginning was the Word.* When time began (Genesis 1:1 and 1 John 1:1), the “Word”<sup>25</sup> (a reference to the second person of the Godhead, God the Son) already was (cf. 17:5).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>“... [A]s a great musician will hint all his subsequent themes in his overture, [John] gathers up in one all the main threads and points of his teaching” (Alexander Maclaren, “The Epistles of John, Jude, and Revelation,” in *Maclaren’s Expositions of Holy Scripture*, p. 14). “The Prologue is like the foyer of a theatre, where various scenes from the drama to be enacted inside are placarded” (Kruse, p. 60).

<sup>25</sup>God the Son is called the “Word” (cf. 1:14, 1 John 1:1, and Revelation 19:13) in that 1) He is “God’s ultimate self-disclosure” (Carson, p. 116) (see Hebrews 1:1-2) and 2) He is the “builder” (see footnote 30 below) of Creation (cf. 1:3; cf. also Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, and Psalm 33:6).

<sup>26</sup>Here is a great example of the precision of the Greek language. John uses one particular verb of being (*ginomai*) when referring to created things (verse 3), including John the Baptist (verse 6), but a related, yet distinct, verb of being (*eimi*) when referring to the Word (verses 1-2). John makes the same distinction in 8:58. Furthermore, when John uses *eimi* in reference to the Word, he uses the imperfect tense of the verb, implying

*and the Word was with God* (cf. 1 John 1:2). John distinguishes God the Son from God the Father. Some also see in this expression an indication of the intimate relationship between the Father and the Son (cf. 1:18's "in the bosom of the Father").

*and the Word was God*. This is a declaration of deity. The Greek literally says: "and God was the Word." "God" is placed first, for emphasis.

### ***The Jehovah's Witnesses and John 1:1***

The Jehovah's Witnesses, in their *New World Translation*, translate the end of John 1:1 as "the Word was a god," pointing out that "God" is anarthrous (does not have an article) and, therefore, should be translated as an indefinite. This, however, is a bogus translation.<sup>27</sup> Because "God" in this verse is an "anarthrous precopulative predicate nominative" (to be explained in class), it cannot be translated as an indefinite (E. C. Colwell's Rule). It has to be translated either as a definite (the God) or qualitatively (God). It cannot be translated as a definite, else John would be contradicting himself within the same verse (the Word and God have already been distinguished).<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, 94% of the time in John's Gospel, anarthrous precopulative predicate nominatives are qualitative (Combs, p. 5). What makes the *NWT* rendering even more suspect is that 1) it teaches polytheism and 2) though "God" is without an article in verses 6, 12, 13, and 18, the *NWT* translates it "God" (not surprisingly, the second "God" in verse 18, a reference to God the Son, is translated "god" in the *NWT*).

### ***Verse 3***

God the Son was the "builder" of "all things" (cf. verse 10; cf. also 1 Corinthians 8:6, Colossians 1:16<sup>29</sup>, Hebrews 1:2, and 10).<sup>30</sup> Consequently, He could not have

the eternality of the Word (i.e., He had no beginning/He has always existed; cf. Micah 5:2), contra Arius (see footnote 31 below). In light of all this, Carson (p. 114) calls this a "theologically-loaded was."

<sup>27</sup>Kostenberger (p. 28) concludes: "... [I]t is illegitimate to infer indefiniteness from the lack of the article in the present passage."

<sup>28</sup>John would also be teaching the Christological heresy known as "Sabellianism," the belief that God the Father and God the Son were one and the same person (Kent, p. 27), which was condemned in 263 A.D.

<sup>29</sup>Not surprisingly, the *NWT* inserts "other" (in brackets) before "things" in this verse.

<sup>30</sup>God the Father was the "architect" of Creation (see 1 Corinthians 8:6). God the Holy Spirit was also involved (see Genesis 1:2). The functional relationship of the 3 persons

been a created being, as the Jehovah's Witnesses teach.<sup>31</sup>

### **Verses 4-5**

In John's writings, "life" (see John 5:26, 11:25, 14:6, and 1 John 1:1) and "light" (see John 1:7-9, 3:19, 8:12, 9:5, 12:35-36, and 46) are often used in conjunction with God the Son. Taking all these references into consideration, John's point in verses 4-5 seems to be that God the Son, man's only hope for eternal life, came into a sin-darkened world as a light (see Matthew 4:15-16 and Luke 1:79), yet for the most part was rejected.

### **Verses 6-8**

In all 4 Gospels, the ministry of John the Baptist receives special mention. Like John (see 5:35), believers are a light (see Matthew 5:14-16 and Philippians 2:15). We are to "brighten the corner" where we are. How bright is our light? Is it a flickering flame or a blazing bonfire? Like John (verses 7a & 8b<sup>32</sup>; cf. 1:15, 19-36, 3:26-30, and 5:33), our task is to point others to the Light. Like John (verse 7b), God uses our witness as the means of bringing unbelievers to faith in Christ (Romans 10:13-14). Like John (verse 6; cf. 1:33 and 3:28), we are sent (Matthew 28:19 and Romans 10:15).

### **Verses 9-11**

As John will go on to say more memorably in verse 14, there was a point in time at which God the Son entered human history in the person of Jesus Christ, indiscriminately shining the light of salvation (verse 9; cf. Luke 2:32, John 3:15-16, 4:14, 8:12, 9:5, 12:46, and Romans 10:13). However, as has already been stated in verse 5b, this light of salvation was, for the most part, rejected (verses 10b-11; cf. 3:19).

The "own" in verse 11 is a reference to the Jews. Just as the Jews in the Old Testament rejected the prophets (see Jeremiah 7:25-26), so the Jews in Jesus'

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of the Godhead has been likened to the relationship between an architect (God the Father), builder (God the Son), and construction worker (God the Holy Spirit). The Father is the source (from the Father), the Son the channel (through the Son), and the Spirit the active agent (by the Spirit) (Rolland McCune, "Systematic Theology I" class notes, p. 139).

<sup>31</sup>The belief that God the Son was a created being is the ancient Christological heresy known as "Arianism," which was condemned at the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. Arius (cited in Bruce, p. 31) taught: "There was once when he was not."

<sup>32</sup>John the Baptist is the first "witness" summoned by John in his Gospel. Others on the witness list include God the Father (5:32, 37, and 8:18), God the Son (8:14, 18, and 10:36), God the Holy Spirit (15:26), Christ's works (5:36, 10:25, and 14:11), the Old Testament (5:39 and 45-46), and the disciples (15:27), including John himself (19:35 and 21:24). For more on this, see under "Theme" in the introductory lesson to this series.

day rejected the Prophet (see Matthew 13:54-57, Luke 19:14, and John 6:41-42).

### **Verses 12-13**

Though His own rejected Christ, some not His own received Him (for example, the Samaritans in chapter 4). Those who receive Christ become God's children (Galatians 3:26) by means of spiritual birth/regeneration (3:3-8), a work of sovereign grace (verse 13; cf. James 1:18 and 1 Peter 1:3).

The verb translated "believe" in verse 12 is in the present tense (so, literally: "are believing"), implying the perseverance in the faith of every true believer.

### **Verse 14**

This verse tells us how God the Son became Jesus (Carson, p. 111). It happened by means of the "Incarnation."<sup>33</sup> God the Son added humanity to His deity (He did not exchange one for the other), becoming the God-man (Romans 1:3, 8:3, Philippians 2:6-7, Colossians 2:9, 1 Timothy 3:16, and Hebrews 2:14).<sup>34</sup> The Greek verb translated "dwelt" is literally "tabernacled" or "pitched a tent." The significance behind John's use of this word is either 1) to emphasize the limited time God the Son would spend on earth or, more likely, 2) to emphasize that Christ, like the Old Testament tabernacle, was where the presence of God resided (see Exodus 25:8).<sup>35</sup>

Just as God's glory was displayed in the Old Testament tabernacle (see Exodus 40:34-35), so it was in the tabernacle which was Christ. John may have the Transfiguration (Matthew 17//Mark 9//Luke 9) in mind, of which he was an eyewitness. However, this event is not recorded in his Gospel. More likely, "glory" is a reference to the miracles Christ performed (see 2:11, 11:4, and 40), which glory John, being an eyewitness, "saw" (cf. 1 John 1:1).

John calls Christ "the only begotten from the Father." The Greek adjective translated "only begotten" (cf. 1:18, 3:16, 18, Hebrews 11:17, and 1 John 4:9) is

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<sup>33</sup>"Incarnation" literally means "in flesh." Apparently, one of the Christological heresies of John's day was a denial of the Incarnation (see 1 John 4:2-3 and 2 John 7).

<sup>34</sup>At the Incarnation, humanity became a permanent part of Christ's nature (see 1 Timothy 2:5). Christ is fully (100%) God and fully (100%) man. The first has already been seen in the prologue to John's Gospel and will continue to be seen throughout the rest of its pages, while the second is also seen in it (see 4:6 and 19:28). Though all humans are sinners (Romans 3:23), sin is not essential to humanity (Adam and Eve prior to the Fall were human and without sin); thus, Christ could take on humanity (by means of virgin conception) without being tainted by sin.

<sup>35</sup>The Greek verb is *skenoo*. The term commonly used for the presence of God in the Old Testament tabernacle was the "Shekinah glory" (see Exodus 40:34-35).

*monogenes*, from *monos*, “only” + *genos*, “kind.”<sup>36</sup> In other words, Jesus was God’s special, unique, one-of-a-kind Son.<sup>37</sup>

Like God the Father, God the Son was “full of grace and truth,” likely an allusion to Exodus 34:6 (cf. Exodus 33:18f), “abounding in lovingkindness and truth” in Exodus 34:6 corresponding to “full of grace and truth” in John 1:14. Because in Christ all the fullness of deity dwelt (Colossians 1:19 and 2:9), so did the fullness of every divine attribute, including grace and truth.

### **Verses 16-17**

Since verse 12, John has had believers in view. According to verse 16, believers are recipients of the “fullness” referred to in verse 14 (cf. Ephesians 3:19, 4:13, and 2 Peter 1:4), particularly God’s grace, which is abundant (see Romans 5:17, 20, Ephesians 1:7, 2:7, and James 4:6).<sup>38</sup>

Verse 17 is not implying that there was no grace in the Old Testament (a common misconception), but merely pointing to the dispensational distinction between the Testaments, implying the superiority of the new dispensation to the old (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:7-11, Colossians 2:17, and Hebrews 3:1-6). It is not that the old was bad and the new good, but rather that the old was good, the new better. Henry (pp. 856-857) says that the Old Testament was types and pictures, while the New Testament was truth and a Person.

### **Verse 18**

Though some have, in a limited sense, seen God the Father (Moses saw God’s

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<sup>36</sup>Some have incorrectly identified the derivative of *genes* in *monogenes* as the Greek verb, *gennaō*, “to bear, beget, give birth to,” the reason for the rendering “only begotten.” Unfortunately, this inaccurate rendering potentially gives fuel to those who teach that Christ was created (see footnote 31 above).

<sup>37</sup>Jesus is not God’s only “son.” Angels, Adam, and believers are also called sons of God in Scripture. Jesus, however, is God’s special Son (the only one being divine, like Himself). Similarly, Isaac was not Abraham’s only son (Ishmael was also his son, born to Hagar), but was his special son (being the son of promise, born to Sarah). See Genesis 22:2, 12, and 16, as well as Hebrews 11:17-18. I am indebted to page 230 of Homer Kent’s commentary on Hebrews for the bulk of the information contained in this footnote.

<sup>38</sup>Many interpreters understand “grace upon grace” in verse 16 in the sense of “wave upon wave.” Among them are Bruce (p. 43): “one wave of grace being constantly replaced by a fresh one.” Kostenberger (p. 47) understands “grace upon grace” as the grace given through Moses being replaced by the grace given through Christ, thus translating “grace and truth” in verse 17 as “true grace.”

“back”<sup>39</sup> in Exodus 33:23; Isaiah saw a vision of God in Isaiah 6), no one has fully so (John 5:37, 1 Timothy 6:16,<sup>40</sup> and 1 John 4:12), except God the Son (John 6:46) and God the Holy Spirit, for if they did, they would die (Exodus 33:20).

John calls the Son “the only begotten God,” another (as in verse 1) clear assertion of Christ’s deity.<sup>41</sup> Thus, John ends his prologue on the same note with which he began it (cf. verse 1’s “and the Word was God”). John concludes the prologue to his Gospel by saying that Christ has “explained” God the Father. The Greek verb is *exegeomai* (from which we get our English word, “exegesis”), which means “to interpret” or “to set forth in great detail” (Kruse, p. 75). God the Son, being God Himself, is a perfect, one-for-one revelation of God the Father (see John 12:45 and 14:9; cf. Philippians 2:6, Colossians 1:15 and Hebrews 1:3). If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus. Rolland McCune (“Systematic Theology 1” class notes, p. 141) calls this the “Christ-likeness of God.” “Jesus is the exegesis of God” (Carson, p. 135). The rest of John’s Gospel will go on to show that this is so.

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<sup>39</sup>What Bruce (p. 44) calls God’s “afterglow.”

<sup>40</sup>As this verse states, God cannot be seen, the reason being He is invisible (1 Timothy 1:17). Neither Moses nor Isaiah actually saw God. Moses saw a part of His glory, Isaiah a vision of God.

<sup>41</sup>The KJV (based on certain, less ancient Greek texts) reads: “the only begotten Son,” instead of “the only begotten God” (the reading of the NASB [cf. the readings of the NIV and the ESV], based on certain, more ancient Greek texts). “KJV-only” advocates often accuse more-recent versions of deprecating the deity of Christ. This is one of many instances where more-recent versions affirm the deity of Christ more clearly than the KJV does.

## **John 1:19-2:11**

Having laid the groundwork for his Gospel in the prologue (1:1-18), John begins the next major section (1:19-12:50<sup>42</sup>), which has as its focus Jesus' public ministry.

### ***The Testimony of John the Baptist (1:19-34)***

As mentioned in footnote 32 (in the comments on 1:1-18), John the Baptist was the first of the many witnesses summoned by John in his Gospel to testify (1:7-8, 15, 19, 32, 34, and 3:26) regarding Jesus' true identity.

Verses 19-28. The religious leaders ("the Jews," verse 19) in Jerusalem sent a delegation to do some reconnaissance on John the Baptist (verses 19, 22, and 24). "John did not seem to fit into any ecclesiastical category familiar to the Jewish authorities" (Tenney, p. 35). John testified to these emissaries that he was neither the Messiah (verse 20; cf. 3:28), nor Elijah<sup>43</sup> (verse 21a), nor "the Prophet"<sup>44</sup> (verse 21b), but simply a "trailblazer" for the Messiah, quoting Isaiah 40:3 (verse 23; cf. 3:28, as well as Matthew 3:3//Mark 1:3//Luke 3:4).<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup>This section is often referred to as the "book of signs," tied together by 7 "signs" (see comments on 2:11 for the significance of "sign"): 1) turning of water into wine (2:1-11); 2) healing of royal official's son (4:46-54); 3) healing of man at pool of Bethesda (5:1-9); 4) feeding of 5,000 (6:5-14); 5) walking on water (6:16-21); 6) healing of blind man (9:1-7); and 7) raising of Lazarus (11:1-44).

<sup>43</sup>In light of the prophecy of Malachi 4:5 and the Elijah-like appearance of John the Baptist (compare Matthew 3:4//Mark 1:6 with 2 Kings 1:8), it is easy to see why John the Baptist would be mistaken for Elijah. Though John was not actually Elijah (hence, his denial), he was Elijah-like in more ways than just his appearance (cf. Luke 1:17). Therefore, Christ referred to him as Elijah (Matthew 11:14 and 17:12-13).

<sup>44</sup>Cf. Deuteronomy 18:15, 18, John 6:14, 7:40, and Acts 7:37. John was a prophet (Matthew 11:9//Luke 7:26), but not the Prophet.

<sup>45</sup>See also Matthew 11:10, where Matthew quotes Malachi 3:1. Kostenberger (p. 62) applies verse 23 to today: "The task of witnessing to Jesus today is similar: clearing



Upon further questioning, John concluded his testimony to these men by declaring his inferiority to Christ (cf. 1:15, 1:30, and 3:30), admitting his unworthiness to serve one so great as Christ in even the most menial way, removing the sandal prior to washing the feet (verse 27; cf. Mark 1:7//Luke 3:16 and Acts 13:25).

Verses 29-34. John the Baptist's testimony regarding Christ continued the next day, this time to the multitudes, beginning with the exclamation that Jesus was "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (verse 29; cf. 1:36)!<sup>46</sup> John, being the son of a priest (Luke 1:5-13), was familiar with the Old Testament sacrificial system. The animals that were sacrificed pointed to the ultimate sacrifice for sin, the Lamb (Genesis 22:7-8, the Passover lamb of Exodus 12:1-13, Isaiah 53:7, 1 Corinthians 5:7, and 1 Peter 1:19, as well as many references in Revelation—5:6f, 7:17, 12:11, 13:8, 17:14, 19:7, 9, 21:22-23, 22:1, and 3). However, unlike the Old Testament sacrificial animals, which could not and did not take away sin (Hebrews 10:4), the Lamb of God could and did (Hebrews 9:26 and 1 John 3:5). Christ's death was sufficient for the sins of all without distinction (cf. 1 John 2:2).

John, as he did to the delegation the day before (1:27), declared to the multitudes his inferiority to Christ, due to the latter's pre-existence (verse 30; cf. 1:15).<sup>47</sup>

Though John the Baptist and Jesus were related (Luke 1:36), John did not recognize Jesus for who He truly was until he baptized Him (verses 31-33; cf. Matthew 3:16//Mark 1:10//Luke 3:22). John concluded his testimony to the multitudes by declaring that Jesus was "the Son of God" (verse 34; cf. 1:49, 3:18, 5:25, 10:36, 11:4, 27, 19:7, and 20:31).<sup>48</sup>

### ***Jesus' Initial Contact with Five of the Twelve (1:35-51)***

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away obstacles that may keep people from coming to Jesus."

<sup>46</sup>Ryle (1:54) calls 1:29 "a verse which ought to be printed in great letters in the memory of every reader of the Bible."

<sup>47</sup>Later in John's Gospel (in 8:58), Christ Himself will testify to this fact.

<sup>48</sup>The phrase, "son of x" was a Hebraism, expressing the character or essence of someone or something. An Old Testament example is the Hebrew phrase, "son of x number of years" to indicate a person's age. New Testament examples include James and John, the "Sons of Thunder" (Mark 3:17) and Barnabas, the "Son of Encouragement" (Acts 4:36). For the New Testament writers to say that Jesus Christ was the Son of God was tantamount to saying He was God. "The designation 'Son of God' when used of our Lord means of the order of God and is a strong and clear claim to full deity" (Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, p. 248).

With John and Andrew (Verses 35-40). In keeping with his mission as a light leading men to the Light (see comments on 1:6-8), John the Baptist pointed two of his disciples to Christ. One of the two was Andrew (verse 40). The other was most likely John, since he is not identified, a common occurrence in this Gospel when John is referred to (see under “Authorship” in the introductory lesson to this series).<sup>49</sup> Morris (p. 137) says that the verb translated “followed” in verse 40 indicates “once-for-all action, which may indicate that they cast in their lot with Jesus. They did not mean to make a tentative inquiry but to give themselves to him.”

With Peter (Verses 41-42). Andrew wasted no time in leading his brother, Peter to Christ.<sup>50</sup> Andrew calls Jesus the Messiah, which John interprets for his readers (verse 41). “Messiah” (Hebrew) and “Christ” (Greek) both mean “Anointed One.” In the Old Testament, prophets, priests, and kings were anointed. Jesus is the ultimate Prophet, Priest, and King.

Christ gave Peter the name, “Cephas” (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:5 and Galatians 1:18), which John also interprets for his readers (verse 42). “Cephas” (Aramaic) and “Peter” (Greek) both mean “rock” or “stone” (cf. Matthew 16:18 for the significance of this nickname; cf. also Galatians 2:9). “Simon” (Hebrew) was Peter’s given name.<sup>51</sup>

With Philip (Verses 43-44). “Follow” in verse 43 is in the present tense, so could be literally translated: “keep on following me.” Philip was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter (verse 44), making it quite probable that the three previously knew each other.

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<sup>49</sup>In all 3 of the Synoptic disciple lists (Matthew 10:2-4, Mark 3:16-19, and Luke 6:14-16), the first 6 disciples listed are Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, and Bartholomew. They are in this order in Matthew and Luke. Mark drops Andrew’s name from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>50</sup>“In later years, when Simon Peter performed such mighty works in the name of Jesus ... Andrew must have recalled with deep satisfaction that day when he brought his brother and their Master together. No one can foresee, when he brings a man or woman to Jesus, what Jesus will make of that person” (Bruce, pp. 57-58). “Whenever you find Andrew in John’s Gospel, he is bringing somebody to Jesus: his brother, the lad with the loaves and fishes (John 6:8), and the Greeks who wanted to see Jesus (John 12:20-21)” (Wiersbe, p. 288). Carson (p. 155) calls Andrew “the first in a long line of successors who have discovered that the most common and effective Christian testimony is the private witness of friend to friend, brother to brother.”

<sup>51</sup>In Matthew 16:17, Jesus calls Peter “Simon Barjona,” “Barjona” meaning “son of John” (John 1:42 and 21:15-17). “Barjona” is what is called a “patronymic.”

With Nathanael (Verses 45-51). Like Andrew before him, Philip wasted no time leading someone else to Christ.<sup>52</sup> Nathanael was most likely whom the Synoptics call “Bartholomew<sup>53</sup>,” as in each disciple list, Bartholomew follows Philip (see footnote 49). Philip told Nathanael that he had found “Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote”<sup>54</sup> (verse 45; cf. 5:39, 46, Luke 24:27, Acts 3:18, 7:52, 10:43, 13:29, 26:22-23, and 28:23), his way of testifying to Jesus’ true identity. Philip also calls Jesus “the son of Joseph” (verse 45), which was true in a legal sense, but not in a biological sense.

Nathanael’s reply to Philip (verse 46) has become proverbial.<sup>55</sup> Rhetorical questions, such as Nathanael’s, are usually left unanswered. NOT THIS ONE! Jesus answered Nathanael’s question by displaying His omniscience (cf. 2:24-25, 4:29, 6:64, 13:11, and 21:17). Christ’s omniscience was displayed through His knowledge of Nathanael’s whereabouts (verse 48). Assuming Nathanael had been meditating on Jacob’s dream in Genesis 28 while under the fig tree (thus, Christ’s allusions to it in verses 47 and 51), Christ’s omniscience was also displayed through His knowledge of Nathanael’s thoughts.

Like Andrew (in verse 41) and Philip (in verse 45) before him, Nathanael also professed faith in the person of Christ (verse 49). In His reply to Nathanael’s profession, Christ refers to Himself as the “Son of Man” (verse 51), primarily a reference to His humanity (cf. Psalm 8:4, as well as footnote 48). Concerning verse 51, Kostenberger (p. 86) writes: “Jesus is ... the place where God is revealed, where heaven and earth, God and mankind, meet” (cf. 3:13).

### ***The Turning of Water into Wine (2:1-11)***

John’s is the only Gospel that records Jesus’ miracle of turning the water into wine at a wedding feast (which lasted up to 7 days) in Cana. It is interesting to note that chapter 1 ends with Jesus’ encounter with Nathanael, while chapter 2 begins with an event that took place in Nathanael’s hometown (21:2). Also, chapter 1 ends with Jesus promising Nathanael that he will see greater things

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<sup>52</sup> Hughes (p. 50) says at this point: “...[W]e see immediate incendiary results in Philip’s life—he had a burning desire to share the gospel. One lighted torch lights another torch.”

<sup>53</sup> Nathanael would have been his given name, Bartholomew his patronymic (son of Ptolemy, Tolmai, or the like).

<sup>54</sup> The Law (Genesis-Deuteronomy) was the first major section of the Hebrew Old Testament, the Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, The Twelve) the second major section, the Writings (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles) the third.

<sup>55</sup> Nathanael knew of Nazareth because it was just 4 miles from his hometown of Cana (21:2).

(1:50), with chapter 2 beginning by narrating such a thing.

Because Nathanael was from Cana, it is possible that the bride and/or the groom were personally known by Nathanael. Because of the presence of Jesus and His mother at the wedding, it is quite likely that the bride and/or the groom were personally known by Jesus' family.

Jesus' response to His mother in verse 4 strikes the English reader as disrespectful. However, "woman" was a common way of addressing females in that day, and Jesus used it on many occasions (see Matthew 15:28, Luke 13:12, John 4:21, 19:26, and 20:15). Rather than being rude, it was respectful, "a term of respect or affection" (Morris, p. 158, citing the Greek lexicon [dictionary] of Liddell and Scott). There is no getting around the fact, however, that Jesus' reply was a respectful rebuke, intended to remind His mother that He was a "man on a mission" and that no one, not even her, would deter Him from it (cf. Luke 2:48-49). This was Jesus' way of telling His mother that she was no longer to look at Him as her lad, but as her Lord. While Jesus' "hour" had not yet arrived (cf. 7:6, 8, 30, and 8:20), it would in conjunction with His death (12:23, 13:1, 16:32, and 17:1; cf. Matthew 26:18 and 45//Mark 14:41).

The six stone water pots of verse 6 stored water which was used, not for drinking, but for the washing of hands (Matthew 15:2 and Mark 7:3) and dishes (Mark 7:4). Each pot contained approximately 20-30 gallons.

### ***Wine, Grape Juice, or Neither?***

When Jesus turned the water into "wine," was the wine He made to any degree fermented? Yes, but to a much smaller degree than the wine of our day. Was it an "intoxicating beverage"? Hardly. Because Israel's water in that day was unsafe to drink (much as it is in many foreign countries today), fermented grape juice was added to the water in order to purify it. This water-wine mixture was the drinking water of the day and was simply called "wine." Though it was technically fermented, it was so diluted with water (at least 3 parts water to 1 part fermented grape juice) that one would have to drink an exorbitant amount of it to get intoxicated.<sup>56</sup> This is what Jesus turned the water into. Wine in our day is not analogous to what the Bible calls "wine," but to what the Bible calls "strong drink" (1 part water or less to 1 part fermented

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<sup>56</sup>"It is possible to become intoxicated from wine mixed with three parts of water, but one's drinking would probably affect the bladder long before it affected the mind" (Robert Stein, "Wine-Drinking in New Testament Times" in the June 20, 1975 issue of *Christianity Today*, p. 11). Another article on this topic is entitled "A Christian Perspective on Wine-Drinking" by Norman Geisler in the January-March 1982 issue of *Bibliotheca Sacra*.

grape juice). The Bible condemns the second, but not the first.

According to verse 11, turning the water into wine was Christ's first miracle.<sup>57</sup> John calls it a "sign" because it signified something more significant, the supernatural nature of the One who performed it (middle of verse 11). According to the end of verse 11, witnessing this feat strengthened the disciples' conviction that Jesus was "the Christ, the Son of God" (20:31).

**2:12**

Though Capernaum is northeast of Cana, one would go "down" to it because Capernaum was lower in elevation than Cana. Capernaum was "headquarters" for much of Jesus' ministry (Matthew 4:13, 9:1, and Mark 2:1). Jesus had 4 brothers: James (author of the epistle bearing his name), Joseph, Simon, and Jude (author of the epistle bearing his name) and at least 2 sisters (Matthew 13:55-56//Mark 6:3).<sup>58</sup> Since Joseph is not mentioned, speculation is that he had died prematurely. Since Jesus' sisters are not mentioned, speculation is that they had been married.

***The Cleansing of the Temple (2:13-22)***<sup>59</sup>

As customary (Luke 2:41), Jesus went "up" to Jerusalem (Jerusalem, though south of Capernaum, was higher in elevation<sup>60</sup>) for the feast of Passover (verse 13). This is the first of 4 Passovers mentioned in John's Gospel,<sup>61</sup> an indication that Jesus' ministry lasted just over 3 years.

When Jesus arrived at the temple in Jerusalem, He was appalled at what He saw. The outer court, or Court of the Gentiles, just inside the temple precincts had been overrun by those selling animals and exchanging money (verse 14). Neither

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<sup>57</sup>Jesus did not perform miracles as a child. The Gospels record 35 of Christ's miracles (see p. 277 of Blum for a complete listing).

<sup>58</sup>Mary was not a perpetual virgin, contrary to the teaching of Catholicism.

<sup>59</sup>Apparently, Jesus "cleansed the temple" twice. The first instance took place early on in His ministry and is recorded here in John 2. The second instance took place towards the end of His ministry and is recorded in the Synoptics (Matthew 21:12-13//Mark 11:15-17//Luke 19:45-46).

<sup>60</sup>According to Hendriksen (1:122), Capernaum, located on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, was 680 feet below sea level, whereas Jerusalem was 2,500 feet above sea level.

<sup>61</sup>2:13 mentions the first; 5:1 (assumed to be Passover) the second; 6:4 the third; and 11:55, 12:1, 13:1, 18:28, 39, and 19:14 the fourth.

of these activities was necessarily improper in and of itself<sup>62</sup>; the main problem was the location in which they were being carried out.<sup>63</sup> The Jews were essentially shutting the Gentiles out from meeting with God (cf. Mark 11:17).

In (at least partial) fulfillment of the prophecy of Malachi 3:1-4 (and perhaps also Zechariah 14:21), Jesus “cleaned house,” cleansing/clearing the temple (verses 15-16), more due to moral force than muscular force, an indication of His zeal for His Father’s house (verse 17, quoting Psalm 69:9a), as well as an expression of righteous indignation, when being mad is not bad (cf. Mark 3:5). Unfortunately, it seems as though some in our day are trying to pick the overturned tables back up!

Even though what Jesus had just done was itself a sign (see Malachi 3:1-4), the Jews demanded that Jesus perform a sign to legitimize His actions (verse 18; cf. Matthew 12:38, 16:1, Luke 11:16, and 1 Corinthians 1:22). The sign would be Jesus’ resurrection (verses 19-22; cf. Matthew 12:39-40, 16:4, and Luke 11:29), proof of His deity and, thus, right to do what He had just done.<sup>64</sup>

### **2:23-25**

Jesus performed many more signs than the 7 recorded in John’s Gospel (20:30), some of which He performed while in Jerusalem that first Passover (verse 23; cf. 3:2). As a result of such signs, “many believed in His name” (verse 23). However, such belief fell short of saving faith (verse 24). Such individuals were believing in Jesus (verse 23), but Jesus was not believing (same Greek verb as in verse 23) in them (verse 24). As has been said, the

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<sup>62</sup>The selling of sacrificial animals was a convenience to those making the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, sparing them from having to transport such animals over great distances and/or risking the rejection of such animals for sacrifice due to their being deemed imperfect. The exchanging of money was a necessity, as local currency had to be used to pay the annual temple tax (Matthew 17:24-27).

<sup>63</sup>An ancillary problem likely was the price gouging that no doubt took place (as Matthew 21:13//Mark 11:17//Luke 19:46 seem to indicate).

<sup>64</sup>While Jesus was talking about the temple of His body (verse 21), His opponents thought He was referring to “Herod’s temple” (in distinction from “Solomon’s temple” and “Zerubbabel’s temple”), in which this confrontation took place (verse 20). Construction on Herod’s temple began in 20 or 19 B.C., thus placing this Passover in the spring of either 27 or 28 A.D. (Kostenberger, p. 104 suggests a precise date of April 7, A.D. 30). Herod’s temple was not fully completed until 63 A.D. It suffered the same fate as Solomon’s and Zerubbabel’s, being destroyed in 70 A.D. Just as God’s presence was at one time manifested in the temple (1 Kings 8:10-11 and 2 Chronicles 7:1-3), now it was being manifested in the temple of Christ (cf. comments on 1:14).

issue is not: Do you believe in God? Rather, it is: Does God believe in you?

## **John 3:1-21**

John's is the only Gospel that records for us two of Jesus' most memorable personal encounters, with Nicodemus in chapter 3 and with the woman at the well in chapter 4.

### ***Jesus' Encounter with Nicodemus (3:1-15)***

After arriving in Jerusalem for the Passover (2:13), Jesus cleansed the temple (2:14-22) and performed some "signs"<sup>65</sup> (2:23). The latter (verse 2) caught the attention of a member of the Sanhedrin<sup>66</sup> ("ruler of the Jews" in verse 1) named Nicodemus.

Probably acting unilaterally, Nicodemus paid Jesus a visit one night (verse 2; cf. 7:50 and 19:39).<sup>67</sup> Nicodemus, though courteous, was unconverted (verse 2).<sup>68</sup> Jesus directly challenged Nicodemus' unbelief. Nicodemus, the "crème de la crème" of Israel, the teacher (verse 10), had no hope of seeing, let alone entering

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<sup>65</sup>For the significance of the word, "sign," see comments on 2:11.

<sup>66</sup>The Sanhedrin was the 70-member body (71, if including the high priest, who presided over it) that ruled the Jews civilly (as deputies of Rome) and religiously, what Maclaren (1:144) calls the Jewish supreme court. In Jesus' day, the majority of its members were Sadducees, the minority Pharisees. The Sadducees were more liberal, the Pharisees more conservative.

<sup>67</sup>What significance is there, if any, to the fact that Nicodemus came at night? Though there may be some truth to the idea that he came at night out of fear of being seen (especially by others on the Sanhedrin), the more likely reason is that nighttime would be the only time he could speak to Jesus privately.

<sup>68</sup>To Nicodemus, Jesus was only "a teacher" (verse 2).

(verse 5), the kingdom of God ( $\approx$  heaven) unless “born again<sup>69</sup>,” regenerated<sup>70</sup> (verse 3; cf. 1:13, 3:7, James 1:18, 1 Peter 1:3, 23, 1 John 2:29, 3:9, 4:7, 5:1, 4, and 18, as well as Titus 3:5).

While Jesus was speaking of a spiritual rebirth, Nicodemus thought He was talking about a physical one (verse 4), so Jesus made His point more clearly (verses 5-8). To be born again is to be “born of water and the Spirit” (verse 5). To what is “water” a reference? One possibility is that “water” is a reference to physical birth, while “Spirit” is a reference to spiritual birth. A better option, however, is that both “water” and “Spirit” are referring to spiritual birth.<sup>71</sup> Though spiritual birth, like the wind, cannot be fully grasped (verse 8), it can be truly so. Nicodemus was not only in the dark physically (verse 2), but also spiritually (verse 9). Being an Old Testament scholar (“the teacher,” verse 10), he should have grasped it, for the Old Testament taught it (see Isaiah 44:3, Ezekiel 11:19, 18:31, 36:26-27, and 37:14).

Just as Nicodemus was not alone in his unbelief (verses 2 and 7<sup>72</sup>), so Jesus was not alone in testifying to the truth (verse 11). Nicodemus’ response to Jesus’ testimony, at least at this point<sup>73</sup>, was the typical Jewish one (verse 11; cf. 1:11 and 3:32).

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<sup>69</sup>The Greek adverb translated “again” (cf. Galatians 4:9) can also be translated “from above” (cf. Matthew 27:51//Mark 15:38, James 1:17, 3:15, and 17). In the other uses of this adverb in the Gospel of John, “from above” is the intended meaning (3:31, 19:11, and 23). In light of Nicodemus’ response in 3:4, however, “again” seems preferable in the present context. Admittedly, there is no significant difference between the two, as to be born again is to be born from above, and vice versa.

<sup>70</sup>Theologically, regeneration means the imparting of spiritual life to the spiritually dead.

<sup>71</sup>The following 3 points can be made in support of this interpretation: 1) water and Spirit share one preposition (“of”); 2) a comparison of verse 5 with verse 3 shows that “born of water and the Spirit” = “born again”; and 3) other passages in Scripture seem to confirm it (see Isaiah 44:3, Ezekiel 36:25-27, John 7:37-39, and Titus 3:5). Ryle (1:131) writes: “[Jesus] would have Nicodemus know that a man must have his heart as thoroughly cleansed and renewed by the Spirit as the body is cleansed and purified by water. He must be born of the Spirit working on his inward nature, as water works on the material body. In short, he must have a ‘clean heart’ created in him if he would belong to Messiah’s kingdom.”

<sup>72</sup>The second “you” in verse 7 is in the plural.

<sup>73</sup>Though Nicodemus did not believe at this time, it seems probable that he eventually did (see 7:50-52 and 19:38-42).



In concluding His response to Nicodemus, Jesus alludes to the “fiery serpent” incident in Numbers 21:4-9 (verses 14-15). Just as the bronze serpent was lifted up on a pole (Numbers 21:8-9), so the Son of Man would be lifted up on a cross (verse 14; cf. Isaiah 52:13, John 8:28, and 12:32-34). Just as the Israelites had to physically look at the bronze serpent in order to physically live (Numbers 21:8-9), so must one spiritually look at (i.e., believe on) Jesus Christ in order to spiritually live (verse 15).

### ***John’s Reflection Following the Encounter (3:16-21)***

Because the original text did not have quotation marks, it is difficult to know where Jesus’ words end and where John’s begin. Most likely, the “break”<sup>74</sup> comes between verses 15 and 16.<sup>75</sup>

Taking Jesus’ words in verse 15 as his cue, John records for us that most famous of all verses, John 3:16, a verse that Martin Luther (cited in Ryle, 1:141) calls “the Bible in miniature.”

This verse makes 3 propositions. First, God loved<sup>76</sup> the world. What makes this statement so significant is the word, “world,” especially if John is viewing it in a qualitative, rather than quantitative, sense.<sup>77</sup> In support of this perspective, see Romans 5:6 (“ungodly”), 5:8 (“sinners”), and 5:10 (“enemies”).

Second, God demonstrated His love for the world by sacrificing His “only begotten”<sup>78</sup> Son (see also Romans 5:8 and 1 John 4:9-10).

Third, the purpose for God sacrificing His Son (see also verse 17b and 12:47b) was so that the world could be saved. In order to be saved, however, one must “believe.” This involves comprehension (intellect), conviction (emotion), and commitment (will). Belief must be in the right object (“in Him”; cf. “through

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<sup>74</sup>“Break” is perhaps too strong a word, as the transition from Jesus’ words to John’s are virtually seamless. “It seems that the Evangelist, as he records Jesus’ words about his death, is led to some reflections of his own on the same subject” (Morris, p. 202).

<sup>75</sup>See p. 202 of Morris for several supports for this suggestion.

<sup>76</sup>John is rightly called the “apostle of love.” See page 202 of Morris for the frequency with which John uses the two main Greek verbs for love, especially in relation to how less frequently the other New Testament writers use them.

<sup>77</sup>“God’s love is to be admired not because the world is so big but because the world is so bad” (Carson, p. 123). See also pages 142-145 of *The Grandeur of God* by C. Samuel Storms.

<sup>78</sup>See comments on 1:14.

Him” in verse 17). Those who believe in Christ pass from death (“perish”<sup>79</sup>) to life (5:24). “Eternal life” is not so much a quantitative concept, as it is a qualitative one (see 10:10). God’s purpose for sacrificing His Son was a positive one (verse 17b; see also Ezekiel 18:23, 32, 33:11, Luke 19:10, John 12:47, Galatians 4:4-5, 1 Timothy 1:15, 2:4, 1 John 5:14, and 2 Peter 3:9). Though the purpose of the sending of the Son was a positive one, the tragic result for most (Matthew 7:13) is a negative one (verse 19).<sup>80</sup> Belief in Christ removes the cloud of condemnation hanging over the sinner (verse 18; cf. 3:36, 5:24, and Romans 8:1). “All that one has to do to perish is nothing” (Tenney, p. 50).

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<sup>79</sup>“Neither here nor anywhere else in the New Testament is the awful reality behind this word ‘perish’ brought out. But everywhere there is the recognition that a dreadful reality awaits the finally impenitent” (Morris, p. 204).

<sup>80</sup>By way of analogy, though the shining of the sun results in shadows, the sun’s purpose is to give light (Morris, p. 205).

## **John 3:22-36**

### ***Final Testimony of John the Baptist (3:22-30)***

Throughout his Gospel, John summons several witnesses (see footnote 32) to testify regarding the true identity of Jesus. John the Baptist was the first to “take the stand” (see 1:7a, 8b, and 19-36). Further testimony has been given by Andrew (see 1:41), Philip (see 1:45), Nathanael (see 1:49), and the miracle at Cana (see 2:11). John the Baptist now takes the stand a second and final time.

For a brief time, the ministries of John the Baptist (verse 23<sup>81</sup>) and Jesus (verse 22<sup>82</sup>) overlapped. Though John’s disciples were unhappy that the ministry of Jesus was beginning to eclipse that of John (verse 26), John himself was thrilled about it (verse 29), testifying that he, the “friend of the bridegroom” (≈ the best man), must give way to Christ, “the bridegroom” (verses 29-30<sup>83</sup>; cf. Matthew 9:15//Mark 2:19-20//Luke 5:34-35). Rather than regretting the rise of Jesus, John rejoiced in it (Henry, p. 894).

### ***John’s Reflection Following the Baptist’s Testimony (3:31-36)***

As earlier in the chapter (verses 16-21), John reflects on what he has just related.

<sup>84</sup>

The reason why Jesus must eclipse John the Baptist is because Jesus is God,

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<sup>81</sup>The words, “much water” (NIV: “plenty of water”; ESV: “water was plentiful”) in this verse clearly imply that immersion is the biblical mode of baptism (cf. Acts 8:38-39).

<sup>82</sup>According to 4:2, Jesus Himself did not do the actual baptizing, but did so by the hands of His disciples.

<sup>83</sup>Morris (p. 214) calls verse 30 “one of the greatest utterances that ever fell from human lips.”

<sup>84</sup>There are some (Ryle, Hendriksen, the NASB, and the NKJV) who view verses 31-36 as a continuation of the words of John the Baptist.

while John, though an eminent man (Matthew 11:11a), was merely a man (verse 31).

Not only was John the Baptist on the “witness list,” but so also Jesus Himself (verse 32a; cf. 3:11, 5:31, 8:14, 18, 38a, 40, and 15:15).

In words reminiscent of the prologue (1:11-12), some accepted (verse 33), while others rejected (verse 32b) Jesus’ testimony. He who accepts it (“believes<sup>85</sup>”) immediately receives eternal life (see comments on 3:16), while he who rejects it (“does not obey”<sup>86</sup>) continues to be under God’s wrath (present tense “abides” in verse 36; cf. 3:18’s “judged already”), “the divine allergy to moral evil” (Tenney, pp. 52-53; cf. Habakkuk 1:13).

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<sup>85</sup>The Greek verb translated “believes” in verse 36 is in the present tense (literally: “is believing”), implying the perseverance in the faith of the true believer.

<sup>86</sup>Acceptance of Christ is not an option, but an obligation. The gospel is something that must be obeyed (see Acts 6:7, Romans 1:5, 2:8, 16:26, 2 Thessalonians 1:8, 1 Peter 1:22, and 3:1).

## **John 4:1-42**

John's Gospel is famous for the personal encounters Jesus had with two individuals, Nicodemus in chapter 3 and the woman at the well in chapter 4. Nicodemus and this woman were the antithesis of one another in every respect, save one: both needed to be saved. Blum (p. 284) gives the following contrasts between the two:

	<b>Nicodemus</b>	<b>Samaritan Woman</b>
<b>Place</b>	(Jerusalem) Judah	Samaria
<b>Time</b>	By night	About 6 p.m. <sup>87</sup>
<b>Occasion</b>	Planned visit	By chance <sup>88</sup>
<b>Content</b>	Theological	Practical
<b>Initiator</b>	Nicodemus	Jesus
<b>Ethnic Group</b>	Jew	Samaritan (mixed blood)
<b>Social Status</b>	Highly respected ruler, teacher	Despised woman (immoral)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	Female
<b>Attitude</b>	Polite, calling Jesus Rabbi	First hostility, then respect
<b>Form</b>	Nicodemus faded out, dialogue became monologue	Dialogue carried to the end
<b>Result</b>	Not mentioned	Woman converted, witnessed, and people came to believe

Verses 1-6. In order to avert a premature (compare 2:4, 7:6, 8, 30, and 8:20 with

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<sup>87</sup>While most interpreters understand the sixth hour of 4:6 to be Noon, based on the Jewish way of reckoning time, some (such as Blum, Wiersbe, and Hendriksen) understand it to be 6 p.m., based on the Roman way of reckoning time.

<sup>88</sup>“Chance” is not to imply that this visit was not part of the providential outworking of God's plan to save this Samaritan woman and her fellow Samaritans (see 4:4 and comments on).

12:23, 13:1, and 17:1) confrontation with the religious leaders (verse 1), Jesus decided to leave Judea and return (2:12-13) to Galilee (verse 3).

The most direct route between the two was through Samaria. However, because of their aversion for the Samaritans<sup>89</sup>, most Jews avoided Samaria, taking a detour through Perea to the east, or going along the Mediterranean coast to the west. Jesus, however, “had to pass through Samaria<sup>90</sup>” (verse 4) in order to do some “cross-cultural evangelism.” Unlike Jonah, Jesus did not allow racial prejudice to deter him from seeking and saving the lost (Luke 19:10).

Jesus, being fully human (cf. 1:14), got tired on the trip and rested at a well<sup>91</sup> in the Samaritan city of Sychar (verse 6).<sup>92</sup>

Verses 7-26. It was highly uncustomary for a woman to draw water alone, yet apparently this Samaritan woman did (her checkered past likely made her a social outcast; it is likely that this is also the reason for the time of day she went to the well—see footnote 87, as usually it would be in the morning or evening—see Genesis 24:11).

Much to her surprise (verse 9), Jesus asked her for a drink (verse 7). Her surprise was due to the fact that: 1) she was a Samaritan and 2) she was a woman (cf. verse 27). In regards to the first, John interjects: “Jews do not use dishes Samaritans have used” (NIV marginal note).<sup>93</sup>

Jesus skillfully weaved the gospel into the fabric of the conversation, using water as the point of contact. Like the Jewish leaders (see 2:19-21) and Nicodemus (see 3:4) before her, and the disciples of Jesus after her (see 4:32-34), the Samaritan

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<sup>89</sup>See 8:48. When Assyria took the northern kingdom (Israel) away into captivity in 722 B.C., it repopulated the region of Samaria with foreigners from five other nations (see 2 Kings 17:24ff). Those Jews left behind intermarried with these foreigners, producing a “mixed breed” of part Jew and part Gentile. Consequently, the “purebred” Jew shunned the Samaritan.

<sup>90</sup>Morris (p. 226) says that “the expression points to a compelling divine necessity.”

<sup>91</sup>This well still exists today and, according to Rudolf Schnackenburg (cited in Kruse, p. 129), is 7 feet in diameter and 106 feet deep (see verse 11’s “deep”).

<sup>92</sup>Morris (p. 228) suggests that “it was probably Jesus’ weariness that led the disciples to leave him while they went into the village to buy food.”

<sup>93</sup>The translation, “Jews have no dealings with Samaritans” in verse 9 seems questionable in light of the immediately preceding context of verse 8.

woman mistook the spiritual truth of which Christ spoke (verses 10 and 13-14<sup>94</sup>; cf. Psalm 36:9, Isaiah 12:3, 55:1, Jeremiah 2:13, 17:13, John 6:35, 7:37-38, Revelation 7:16-17, 21:6, and 22:17) for something physical (verses 11 and 15).

Jesus steered the conversation in a different direction beginning in verse 16, most likely in order to bring conviction of sin<sup>95</sup> leading to salvation. As Hendriksen (1:64) describes it, this was Jesus' way of helping the woman recognize her spiritual thirst.

In response to a clear display of Christ's omniscience (verses 17b-18; cf. 1:48 and 4:29), the Samaritan woman uttered perhaps the greatest understatement of all time: "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet" (verse 19).

The Samaritan woman attempted to steer the conversation in a different direction beginning in verse 20, bringing up a point of contention between the Jews and the Samaritans. The encounter between Jesus and this woman took place at the foot of Mount Gerizim, upon which the Samaritans had built their own temple (around 400 B.C.), rivaling that in Jerusalem.<sup>96</sup> Jesus responded by forthrightly declaring that the Jews were in the right in the matter (verse 22; cf. Deuteronomy 12:5-7, 1 Kings 14:21//2 Chronicles 12:13, 2 Chronicles 6:6, 7:12, Psalm 147:19-20, Romans 3:2, and 9:4-5), that "the Jewish people are the instrument by which God's redemption is mediated to others" (Kostenberger, p. 156), but that ultimately it did not matter, as such places of worship as Gerizim or Jerusalem would soon fade away into obsolescence (verse 21<sup>97</sup>). Besides, *how* (and, of course, *who*) one worships ("in spirit and in truth"; cf. Philippians 3:3; authentically and accurately/passionately and properly) is more important than *where* one worships (verses 23-24), as worship is more a matter of the internal than the external.

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<sup>94</sup>In verse 13, the Greek verb for drink is in the present tense, indicating the ongoing need to quench one's physical thirst, while the verb for drink in verse 14 is in the aorist tense, indicating a one-time drink that permanently quenches one's spiritual thirst. Regarding verse 14, Ryle (1:215-216) rightly writes: "It is difficult to understand how the ... doctrine of the possibility of believers completely falling away and being lost can be reconciled with any natural interpretation of this verse."

<sup>95</sup>Kostenberger (p. 153) identifies her sin as "serial fornication."

<sup>96</sup>Though this temple was destroyed by the Jews many years prior (in 128 B.C.) to the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, the Samaritans continued to use Gerizim as a place of worship and a few still do so even to this day.

<sup>97</sup>It is interesting to note how that after the Samaritan woman focuses on the Samaritan "fathers" in verse 20, Jesus turns her focus to "the Father" in verse 21.

Like the Jews, the Samaritans also looked for a Messiah (whom they called the “Taheb”). The Samaritan woman expressed this expectation in verse 25. Jesus responded by unequivocally declaring that He Himself was the One whom she was seeking (verse 26).

Verses 27-42. Much to the disciples’ surprise, Jesus did not let gender be a barrier to the gospel (verse 27).

The Samaritan woman, like Andrew (1:41-42) and Philip (1:45-46) before her, brought others to Jesus (verses 28-30 and 39). Commenting on her evangelistic efforts, Calvin (1:167) writes: “And this is the nature of faith, that when we have become partakers of eternal life, we wish to bring others to share with us; nor is it possible that the knowledge of God shall lie buried and inactive in our hearts without being manifested before men, for that saying must be true: I believed, and therefore I will speak (Psalm 116:10).”

Meanwhile, back at the well, Jesus prepared His disciples to, according to the will of God (verse 34; cf. 1 Timothy 2:4 and 2 Peter 3:9), reap the souls of the approaching white-robed Samaritans, who were ripe for the picking, (verse 35; cf. Matthew 9:37-38). Both sower and reaper play equally important roles in evangelism (verses 36-38; cf. 1 Corinthians 3:6-8). In this case, it appears that Jesus and the Samaritan woman were the sowers, while the disciples became the reapers.

Due to the testimony of the Samaritan woman (verse 39), but more so the testimony of Christ (verses 41-42), many Samaritans believed that Jesus, “the Savior of the world” (verse 42; cf. 3:16-17, 12:46-47, and 1 John 4:14), was not just the Savior of the Jews (Matthew 1:21), but also the Savior of the Samaritans (cf. Acts 1:8 and 8:4-8). Unlike the Jews (4:48), these Samaritans simply took Jesus at His word (verse 41; cf. verse 50 and 20:29b).



## **John 4:43-5:9a**

### ***Healing of a Royal Official's Son (4:46-54)***

This “royal official” (verse 46) likely served under Herod Antipas, the ruler of the Roman provinces of Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C. – 39 A.D. Herod Antipas is mentioned in Scripture in such passages as Luke 3:1, 19, 9:7//Mark 6:14, Luke 13:31-32, and 23:7f.

As is sometimes the case, affliction is what caused this man to come to and cry out to Jesus (cf. Psalm 119:67 and 71).

This royal official “was imploring” Jesus to help his son (verse 47), indicating a persistent request. This was evidence of a certain level of faith on the royal official’s part, what has been called “miraculous faith,” the belief that Jesus could perform a miracle on one’s behalf. His faith, however, was imperfect, as he: 1) assumed Jesus had to be physically present to heal (verse 47); 2) like his fellow Galileans, had to see a miracle in order to believe Jesus was the Messiah (verse 48; cf. 1 Corinthians 1:22a); and 3) assumed Jesus could no longer help should his son die (verse 49). His faith quickly matured, however, as he walked by faith, rather than by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7; cf. John 20:29 and Hebrews 11:1; it’s not a matter of “seeing is believing,” rather it’s a matter of “believing is seeing”), taking Jesus at His word and taking action (verse 50b), trusting and obeying.

Some (such as Maclaren, 1:232-233 and Hughes, p. 142) see significance in the possible implication that the royal official did not hasten to return home (a 15-20 mile journey) the same day his son was healed (see verse 52’s “yesterday”).

Though the royal official’s faith started out as “miraculous faith,” it ended in saving faith, as he and his whole household (cf. the household of Cornelius in Acts 11:14, the household of Lydia in Acts 16:15, the household of the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:31-33, and the household of Crispus in Acts 18:8), by means of this sign (verse 54; cf. 20:30-31), believed in Jesus as the Messiah (verse 53), the

One who could heal by simply saying so (verse 50a).

***Healing of the Man at the Pool of Bethesda (5:1-9a)***<sup>98</sup>

At an unnamed feast (either Passover, Pentecost, or Tabernacles), Jesus returned to Jerusalem (verse 1; cf. 2:13). While there (cf. 2:23), He performed the third of His seven miracles recorded in John's Gospel, healing a lame man.<sup>99</sup>

Once in Jerusalem, Jesus made His way to a "pool" by the "sheep gate" (verse 2). According to Kostenberger (p. 178), sheep were washed in this pool prior to being sacrificed at the nearby temple, being taken through this gate, "a small opening in the north wall of the temple." Kruse (p. 147) describes the pool as "a double pool ... Each pool was trapezoid in shape, and the overall length of the two pools (north to south) was about 318 feet. The smaller pool to the north was about 197 feet wide on its northern side and the larger southern pool was about 250 feet wide on its southern side. The five colonnades were located one on each of the four sides of the double pool and one across the centre dividing the two pools."

Jesus' knowledge of the lame man's condition (verse 6; cf. 1:48, 2:24-25, and 4:29) may very well be another instance of His omniscience on display.

Jesus' question (verse 6b) and the lame man's subsequent answer (verse 7) may have been Jesus' way of getting the man to acknowledge his helpless state, preparing him for the help that only Jesus could give him.

Notice that Jesus had to make the lame man well before he could obey the command to get up and walk (verses 8-9; cf. a similar phenomenon in Mark 2:11-12 and 3:5). This is illustrative of the fact that unbelievers are "spiritually paralyzed," unable to "get up and walk" until supernaturally given the ability to do so at salvation.

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<sup>98</sup>One notable feature of this account is the addition of verses 3b-4 in later Greek manuscripts. For an in-depth analysis of this issue, see Gordon Fee's article entitled "On the Inauthenticity of John 5:3b-4" in the October-December 1982 issue of *The Evangelical Quarterly*. Hughes (p. 145) says that the stirring of the waters may have been due to a subterranean spring at that site. Jewish tradition attributed the stirring to the work of an angel. In either case, there were those who believed that the waters, when so stirred, had miraculous healing power.

<sup>99</sup>That this was a Messianic sign, i.e., one that showed that Jesus was the Messiah, may be inferred from Isaiah 35:6's "Then the lame will leap like a deer."

## **John 5:9b-47**

### ***Controversy Over the Healing at Bethesda (5:9b-47)***

Verses 9b-18. As happened so many times during Jesus' ministry (see also Matthew 12:1-8//Mark 2:23-28, Matthew 12:9-14//Mark 3:1-6, Luke 13:10-17, 14:1-6, John 7:21-23, and 9:1f), the religious leaders took issue with Jesus over an alleged Sabbath violation.

Indeed, the Law explicitly forbade working on the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11 and 31:12-17), meaning that one was not to “go into work” on that day (certain professions excepted). However, the Pharisees attached 39 specific stipulations to this law, the 39<sup>th</sup> of which forbade carrying a load on the Sabbath (undoubtedly due to a misinterpretation of Nehemiah 13:19 and Jeremiah 17:21-22).<sup>100</sup> This was the issue in question (verse 10; cf. verse 16).

After being healed, the lame man made his way to the temple (verse 14a), perhaps to give a thank offering and/or to show himself to the priests to verify the healing (cf. Mark 1:44//Luke 5:14 and Luke 17:14). Based on what Jesus said to the man (verse 14b), some have inferred that the man became lame due to the direct result of some sin (cf. Psalm 107:17, Acts 5:1-11, and 1 Corinthians 11:30; note: not all sickness is the direct result of sin, John 9:1-3). Or, Jesus may be warning him of the need to be spiritually healed, lest he suffer the far worse fate of eternal death.

The man “turned Jesus in” to the authorities (verse 15), sparking a controversy (verse 16). Jesus added fuel to the fire by asserting His right, as God, to work on the Sabbath (verse 17; cf. Mark 2:28; preservation is one such work, Hebrews 1:3). Not believing Jesus to be God, the Jews considered Jesus' statement in verse 17 to be blasphemous and, therefore, sought to execute Him (verse 18<sup>101</sup>; cf.

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<sup>100</sup>Kruse (p. 150) lists all 39. Hughes (pp. 154-155) speaks of some others.

<sup>101</sup>In essence, God the Father and God the Son are equal (10:30). In function, however,

8:58-59 and 10:30-33) in accordance with the Law (Leviticus 24:10-23).

Verses 19-30. Jesus answers His opponents with a lengthy monologue (verses 19-47).

Two of the prerogatives (the “greater works” of verse 20) of being God are giving life, both physical and spiritual (verses 21, 25-26<sup>102</sup>, and 28-29<sup>103</sup>; on God giving spiritual life, see Ephesians 2:5 and Colossians 2:13), and judging (verses 22, 27, and 30), both of which the Son, being God, does (raising the physical dead in Luke 7:11-17, 8:49-56, and John 11:41-44; judging in Acts 17:31, Romans 2:16, 2 Corinthians 5:10, 2 Timothy 4:1, and Jude 14-15).

The key to receiving spiritual life and avoiding judgment (3:18a and Romans 8:1), to passing from the realm of death to the realm of life (cf. 1 John 3:14), is believing (verse 24; cf. 3:16 and 36), belief being contingent upon hearing God’s Word (verse 24), both physically (Romans 10:14, 17, and Ephesians 1:13) and spiritually (John 10:27, 18:37, and Ephesians 4:21).

Verses 31-47. Jesus concludes His response by appealing to several witnesses to His true identity.

Even if Jesus’ testimony was inadmissible (verse 31; this is based on the need for two or three witnesses, Deuteronomy 17:6, 19:15, Matthew 18:16, 2 Corinthians 13:1, and 1 Timothy 5:19; note: according to 8:14, Jesus’ testimony was admissible), there are many others whose testimony is admissible. These include God the Father (verses 32 and 37<sup>104</sup>; cf. 8:18b and 1 John 5:9), John the Baptist

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the Father has superiority (14:28).

<sup>102</sup>Being God, Jesus is self-existent (cf. 1:4 and 8:58). God’s self-existence (cf. Exodus 3:14 and Psalm 36:9a) is known as His aseity. “Some theologians use the word aseity to denote self-existence; i.e., God depends *a se*, on Himself” (Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, p. 37).

<sup>103</sup>According to verse 29, there are two different resurrections. The “first resurrection” (cf. Revelation 20:5-6) is the resurrection of the righteous (Daniel 12:2a, Luke 14:14, and Acts 24:15) or “the resurrection of life.” The second resurrection is the resurrection of the wicked (Daniel 12:2b and Acts 24:15) or “the resurrection of judgment.” The first resurrection takes place in two phases: church age believers at the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:16) and Old Testament and Tribulation saints at the end of the Tribulation (Revelation 20:4-6). The second resurrection takes place all at once: all unbelievers of all time at the Great White Throne Judgment at the end of the Millennium (Revelation 20:5a and 11-14).

<sup>104</sup>The Greek verb translated “has testified” is in the perfect tense, indicative of a past action with ongoing results. Two instances when the Father verbally testified regarding

(verses 33 and 35; cf. 1:7-8, 15, 19f, 3:26f, and 10:41), Jesus' works (verse 36; cf. Matthew 11:3-5//Luke 7:20-22, John 10:25, 37-38, 14:10-11, 20:30-31, and Acts 2:22), and the Old Testament (verses 39 and 45-47<sup>105</sup>; cf. Luke 16:29-31, 24:27, 44, John 1:45, 12:41, Acts 10:43, and 2 Timothy 3:15).

The problem of Jesus' opponents was not a lack of witnesses, but a lack of willingness (verses 38b and 40).

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the Son's true identity was at Jesus' baptism (Matthew 3:17//Mark 1:11) and transfiguration (Matthew 17:5//Mark 9:7).

<sup>105</sup>Moses wrote of Jesus in such passages as Genesis 3:15, 49:10, and Deuteronomy 18:15 and 18.

## **John 6**

Chapter 6 is the longest chapter in John's Gospel. In it, John relates three major events: 1) the feeding of the 5,000+; 2) Jesus' walking on the water; and 3) Jesus' "bread of life" discourse in the synagogue in Capernaum and its aftermath.

### ***The Feeding of the 5,000+ (verses 1-15)***

The feeding of the 5,000+<sup>106</sup> is the only one of Jesus' miracles recorded in all four Gospels (in Matthew 14, Mark 6, Luke 9, and John 6). It took place in Bethsaida (Luke 9:10) on the northeast shore of the Sea of Galilee.<sup>107</sup> From Jesus' home base in Capernaum (see comments on 2:12) on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus and His disciples made their way by boat (Mark 6:32) across the Sea of Galilee to Bethsaida (verse 1). A large crowd followed on foot (Matthew 14:13//Mark 6:33), walking along the northern shore from Capernaum to Bethsaida (verse 2).

Upon arriving in Bethsaida, Jesus and His disciples retreated into what is today known as the Golan Heights (verse 3). Once again, the crowd followed (verse 4). Jesus asked Philip where in Bethsaida they could buy enough bread to feed the crowd (verse 5),<sup>108</sup> not because Jesus intended to do so (verse 6), but to heighten

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<sup>106</sup>"Feeding of the 5,000" is somewhat of a misnomer, as many more than 5,000 were fed (Carson, p. 270 and Kostenberger, p. 202 suggest as many as 20,000). There were 5,000 men (verse 10, "men" being the Greek word for males, not the generic term for humans), besides women and children (Matthew 14:21).

<sup>107</sup>In Old Testament days, the Sea of Galilee was known as the Sea of Chinnereth (Numbers 34:11, Deuteronomy 3:17, Joshua 12:3, and 13:27). In the early days of the New Testament, it was known as the Sea of Galilee, as well as the "lake of Gennesaret" (Luke 5:1). In the later days of the New Testament (when John wrote his Gospel), it was known as the Sea of Tiberias (John 6:1, 23, and 21:1).

<sup>108</sup>Since Philip was from Bethsaida (1:44 and 12:21), he would know where to buy bread locally.

the effect of the miracle He was about to perform, making it clear that there was no humanly-possible way to do so (verse 7).

After canvassing the crowd, Andrew located a boy with five barley loaves<sup>109</sup> and two fish<sup>110</sup> (verses 8-9). Most likely in order to prevent a stampede, Jesus instructed His disciples to seat the crowd in an orderly and organized fashion (verse 10; cf. Mark 6:39-40), a measure of faith on the part of all. After giving thanks for the food (cf. Matthew 26:26-27//Mark 14:22-23//Luke 22:19, 1 Corinthians 11:24, and 1 Timothy 4:3-4)<sup>111</sup>, Jesus wrought a miracle with the bread and fish in much the same way Elisha did with the widow's oil (in 2 Kings 4:1-7<sup>112</sup>), multiplying it as it was being distributed (verse 11). Indeed, "little is much when God is in it." Rather than receiving a little (verse 7), everyone received as much as they wanted (verse 11) and were filled (verse 12). There were even leftovers (verses 12-13).<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup>The loaves were not loaves as we might think of them, but actually small cakes (rolls? buns?). Hendriksen (1:219) calls them "bread-cakes." Kruse (p. 162) describes them as "poor people's bread." Dobson (p. 187) describes it as "flat, round bread like the shape of pancakes."

<sup>110</sup>It is interesting to note that in recording this event, the other 3 evangelists (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) use the generic Greek word for fish, while John, a fisherman by trade, uses a more specific one. Ryle (1:330) calls it dried fish. Kostenberger (p. 202) describes it as dried, preserved, or pickled. Hendriksen (1:221) describes it as a relish or side dish for the bread.

<sup>111</sup>According to Blum (p. 294), devout Jews gave thanks before and after every meal. This instance of giving thanks for food not yet in one's possession (in the case of most of the food provided that day) is a reminder of a time when George Mueller thanked God for food for his orphans not yet in his possession that was remarkably provided by God after Mueller finished praying.

<sup>112</sup>Interestingly, later in the very same chapter, God through Elisha miraculously fed 100 men with 20 barley loaves provided by someone else (2 Kings 4:42-44). Augustine (cited in Morris, p. 300) makes a perceptive point about the power of God to provide food, whether through miracle/primary causation or providence/secondary causation: "For certainly the government of the whole world is a greater miracle than the satisfying of five thousand men with five loaves; and yet no man wonders at the former; but the latter men wonder at, not because it is greater, but because it is rare. For who even now feeds the whole world, but He who creates the cornfield from a few grains?"

<sup>113</sup>There probably is not any special significance to the fact that there were 12 baskets of leftovers (such as one for each disciple, one for each tribe of Israel, etc.), or 7 baskets when the 4,000 were fed (Matthew 15//Mark 8). The significance is that there was more than needed (cf. the same emphasis in the account related in footnote 112).

This miracle was the 4<sup>th</sup> of the 7 miracles of Jesus recorded in John's Gospel. As a result of this "sign<sup>114</sup>," the people equated Jesus with "the Prophet" of Deuteronomy 18:15 and 18<sup>115</sup> (verse 14; cf. 1:21 and 7:40). Rather than looking to Jesus for salvation from sin, however, the people looked to Him for salvation from Caesar (verse 15).

***Jesus Walks on the Water (verses 16-25; cf. Matthew 14:22-33 and Mark 6:45-52)***

Following the feeding of the 5,000+, Jesus sent His disciples back to Capernaum (verses 16-17; cf. Matthew 14:22), while He Himself retreated into the Golan Heights (if we may be so anachronistic) to pray (verse 15; cf. Matthew 14:23//Mark 6:46).

Storms on the Sea of Galilee were not uncommon (cf. Mark 4:37), and Jesus' disciples (several of whom had experience fishing on it—Andrew, Peter, James, and John) ran headlong into one (verse 18). While in the midst of their voyage, in the middle of the night<sup>116</sup>, the disciples were frightened by the sight of Jesus walking on the water (verse 19). That walking on the water was "no biggie" for Jesus is seen by the fact that the One who created the laws of nature (for Jesus as Creator, see John 1:3, 10, Colossians 1:16, and Hebrews 1:2) was certainly able to suspend or supersede them. After being reassured by Jesus (verse 20), the disciples brought Him on board<sup>117</sup> (verse 21<sup>118</sup>), and the storm stopped (Matthew

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<sup>114</sup>The pedagogical point of this passage is not "an ethical lesson on how to shame people into sharing their lunches" (Carson, p. 270); rather, its purpose is God-centered, intended to convince the reader of the true identity of the One who performed the sign described in it (cf. 20:30-31).

<sup>115</sup>Since God miraculously provided the Israelites manna through Moses (Exodus 16), it would only be natural for the 5,000+ to view Christ, the One through whom God had just miraculously provided bread for them, as the Prophet like Moses spoken of in Deuteronomy 18:15 and 18.

<sup>116</sup>According to Matthew 14:25//Mark 6:48, this occurred during the fourth watch of the night, which would have been between 3 and 6 a.m.

<sup>117</sup>John omits the fact that Peter also boarded the boat with Jesus at this time, Peter having left the boat to walk on the water towards Jesus (Matthew 14:28-32).

<sup>118</sup>Interpreters are divided as to whether or not the latter half of verse 21 is describing a miracle. One perspective is that articulated by Hughes (p. 199): "The times we spend with the love of our life fly by, and I think the disciples were so caught up in worshipping him that time ceased for them, and suddenly they found themselves on the shore." The other perspective is articulated by F. L. Godet (cited in Morris, p. 310): "One can scarcely imagine, indeed, that, after an act of power so magnificent and so kingly as



14:32).

This is the 5<sup>th</sup> of the 7 sign miracles of Jesus recorded by John (Job 9:8b may be an indication that this was, indeed, a sign that Jesus was the Messiah). As a result of witnessing this sign, the disciples exclaimed, “You are certainly God’s Son” (Matthew 14:33)! Upon realizing that Jesus was no longer in Bethsaida, the “crowd” crossed the Sea of Galilee and caught up with Jesus in Capernaum (verses 24-25a), but remained puzzled as to how He could have possibly gotten from Bethsaida to Capernaum (verse 25b), seeing His disciples had taken the only boat available (verse 22).

***“Bread of Life” Discourse in the Capernaum Synagogue (verses 26-59)***

While all four Gospels record the feeding of the 5,000+, only John’s Gospel records the “bread of life” discourse associated with it. The discourse took place in the synagogue in Capernaum (verse 59).

Jesus begins the discourse by chiding the crowd for seeking after the physical, rather than the spiritual (verses 26-27<sup>119</sup>), much as the woman at the well did at first (4:15). Physical bread perishes (verse 27a), while spiritual bread (i.e., eternal life) does not (verse 27b), just as physical water does not permanently quench thirst, while spiritual water does (4:13-14).

The crowd responds in typical Jewish works-righteousness fashion (verse 28; cf. Matthew 19:16; for a similar question, but from a different perspective, see Acts 2:37 and 16:30). Jesus answers by identifying the only “work<sup>120</sup>” God accepts,

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Jesus’ walking on the waters, He should have seated Himself in the boat, and the voyage should have been laboriously continued by the stroke of the oar. At the moment when Jesus set His foot on the boat, He communicated to it, as He has just done for Peter, the force victorious over gravity and space, which had just been so strikingly displayed on His own person.”

<sup>119</sup>Ryle (1:347), commenting on verse 27, writes: “How are we to labour? There is but one answer. We must labour in the use of all appointed means. We must read our Bibles, like men digging for hidden treasure. We must wrestle earnestly in prayer, like men contending with a deadly enemy for life. We must take our whole heart to the house of God, and worship and hear like those who listen to the reading of a will. We must fight daily against sin, the world, and the devil, like those who fight for liberty, and must conquer, or be slaves.”

<sup>120</sup>By “work” Jesus likely means the exercise of faith as an active, human response, as a manifestation of salvation, not the means of it. That faith is not a human work, but a divinely-derived one, may be seen by such passages as Acts 14:27, Ephesians 2:8, and

faith in His Son (verse 29<sup>121</sup>; cf. Acts 16:31).

Once again, the crowd responds in typical Jewish fashion, demanding a sign before they will believe (verse 30<sup>122</sup>; cf. Matthew 12:38, 16:1//Mark 8:11, Luke 11:16, John 2:18, 4:48, and 1 Corinthians 1:22). Incredibly, the sign they demanded was a miraculous provision of manna, such as God provided in Moses' day (verse 31). Like the disciples, they "had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened" (Mark 6:52). Jesus responds by using the manna of Moses' day as a point of comparison. Just as the manna of Moses' day was bread from heaven (cf. Nehemiah 9:15), so Jesus is the "true<sup>123</sup> bread out of heaven" (verse 32; cf. verse 55). Just as the manna of Moses' day sustained the Israelites physically<sup>124</sup>, so Jesus sustains believers spiritually (verse 33<sup>125</sup>). Unlike the manna of Moses' day, however, Jesus sustains eternally (verses 49-51 and 58).

Like the woman at the well (4:15), the crowd responds by asking for what Jesus is offering (verse 34). Jesus responds by making it clear that He Himself is "the bread of life"<sup>126</sup> (verses 35a and 48), the only One who can satiate the hungry

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Philippians 1:29 (cf. John 6:44). Salvation is received, not achieved.

<sup>121</sup>"Believe" in verse 29 is in the present tense, implying that a true believer will persevere in the faith. The same thing occurs in verses 47 ("believes"), 54 ("eats" and "drinks"), and 56 ("eats" and "drinks").

<sup>122</sup>The Jews walked by sight, not by faith. The expression, "seeing is believing" did not hold true for them, however (see especially verse 36). Seeing the signs did not produce belief. If anything, after seeing the signs, the Jews became even more hardened in their unbelief (see Luke 16:29-31 and John 12:37).

<sup>123</sup>Cf. Jesus as the "true Light" (1:9) and as the "true vine" (15:1).

<sup>124</sup>To this day, bread is the staple of the Jewish diet.

<sup>125</sup>Verse 33's "to the world" is another instance in John's Gospel of the universal extent of his audience and the universal extent of Christ's atonement (cf. 1:29, 3:16-17, 4:42, and 6:51).

<sup>126</sup>Literally "I I am the bread of the life." This is the first of the 7 "I am" statements made by Jesus recorded in John's Gospel (see #4 under "Striking Features" in the Introductory Lesson). Commenting on Jesus as the bread of life, Hughes (p. 208) says: "What ... does *bread* suggest? Christ is absolutely indispensable. Since bread was the staple of life in those days, it was difficult for people to conceive of life without bread. Is it difficult

heart (cf. 6:11's "as much as they wanted" and 6:12's "filled") and quench the thirsty soul<sup>127</sup> (verse 35b; cf. Isaiah 49:10, 55:1-2, John 4:14, and Revelation 7:16).

In order for bread to give life, however, it must be eaten. Thus, the unbeliever must "eat" (verses 50-51, 53-54, and 56-58), as well as "drink"<sup>128</sup> (verses 53-54 and 56; cf. Revelation 22:17), "come to" (verses 35, 44, 45, and 65; cf. Matthew 11:28 and Revelation 22:17), "believe in" (verses 35, 40, and 47), or "behold" (with the eyes of faith) (verse 40; cf. Numbers 21:8-9) Christ.

No one can come to Christ, however, unless God the Father gives him to the Son (verses 37a and 39; cf. 10:29, 17:2, 6, 9, 11-12, 24, 18:9, and Hebrews 2:13) and draws<sup>129</sup> him (verse 44a; cf. verse 65). Those who come will not be cast out (verse 37b; cf. footnote 127), nor lost (verse 39<sup>130</sup>; cf. 17:12 and 18:9).

In typical Jewish fashion (cf. Exodus 15:24, 16:2, 17:3, et. al.), Jesus' audience grumbled (verse 41a) over His claim of divine origin (verses 41b-42; cf. Mark 6:3). Their consternation increased as the conversation continued (verse 52), as they, like others before them in the Gospel of John (see 2:19-21, 3:3-4, and 4:10-11), took Jesus' words in a literal, physical sense, rather than in the metaphorical, spiritual sense that they were intended.

### ***Aftermath of the Discourse (verses 60-71)***

Tenney (p. 70) has rightly called the sixth chapter of John "the watershed of Jesus' career." As a result of the "bread of life" discourse, most of Jesus'

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for us to conceive of life without Christ?"

<sup>127</sup>For emphasis, verse 35 in the original uses a double negative with hunger ("not not hunger") and with thirst ("not not thirst ever"). This same double negative is used in verse 37 ("not not cast out").

<sup>128</sup>Morris (p. 312) writes: "The metaphor of eating and drinking was quite common among the Jews .... It points to taking within one's innermost being." A careful comparison of verses 40 and 54 will show that to eat and drink are synonymous with belief. Tenney (p. 77) aptly states: "No one will eat what he cannot trust to be edible."

<sup>129</sup>The Greek verb translated "draw" has the sense of "drag" in John 21:6, 11, Acts 16:19, 21:30, and James 2:6. This drawing is essential due to the total depravity and inability of sinners (see Romans 3:11, 8:7-8, Ephesians 2:1, and 5).

<sup>130</sup>Commenting on verse 39, Ryle (1:376) states: "It seems hard to imagine stronger words than these to express the doctrine [of the final perseverance of true believers]."

“disciples” “got off the bandwagon” (verses 60<sup>131</sup>-66; cf. 1:11, 8:31, and 1 John 2:19). However, some continued<sup>132</sup> to believe, namely, the Twelve (verses 67-69; cf. Matthew 16:16//Mark 8:29//Luke 9:20, as well as Ruth 1:14f and John 1:12), with the exception of Judas (verses 70-71).

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<sup>131</sup>What Christ said was not too hard to perceive, but too hard to believe. As William Barclay (cited in Morris, p. 338) states: “Here we come upon a truth that re-emerges in every age. Time and again it is not the intellectual difficulty of accepting Christ which keeps men from becoming Christians; it is the height of Christ’s moral demand.” I am reminded of something Mark Twain once said: “It is not those parts of the Bible that I do not understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand.”

<sup>132</sup>Accordingly, “believed” in verse 69 is in the perfect tense in the original.

## **John 7-8**

As John 6 turns to John 7, John fast forwards approximately 6 months, the time from the spring Passover of 6:4 to the fall Feast of Tabernacles of 7:2.

According to Deuteronomy 16:16, all Jewish males<sup>133</sup> were required to attend the three major annual Jewish feasts: the Feast of Unleavened Bread (also known as Passover), the Feast of Weeks (also known as Pentecost), and the Feast of Booths (also known as the Feast of Tabernacles). So far in John's Gospel, Jesus has visited Jerusalem twice to attend such feasts (Passover in 2:13 and an unnamed feast in 5:1). In chapters 7-8, Jesus once again returns to Jerusalem for a feast, this time the Feast of Booths (or the Feast of Tabernacles).<sup>134</sup>

### ***Prelude to the Feast (7:1-13)***

During Jesus' last visit to Jerusalem, the Jewish leaders sought to kill Him (5:18), prompting Jesus to avoid Judea as a general policy (verse 1).<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>133</sup>According to Hughes (p. 212), this applied to males living within 20 miles of Jerusalem.

<sup>134</sup>The significance of this Feast, which took place in our September-October, is explained in Leviticus 23:34-43 and Deuteronomy 16:13-15. Dobson (p. 189) calls it "a harvest feast [when grapes and olives were harvested] which commemorated the years of wilderness wandering." Kruse (p. 181) calls it "the most popular and joyful of the three pilgrim festivals." Ryle (2:6) says that it was "kept up with extraordinary festivity and rejoicing." It was called the Feast of Booths (or, the Feast of Tabernacles) because the Jews would build temporary, leafy shelters in which they would live during the duration of the Feast.

<sup>135</sup>This was not a matter of cowardice, but of chronology. Jesus' "time" or "hour" had not yet come (2:4, 7:6, 8, 30, and 8:20). Therefore, He did not want to prematurely precipitate the events of Passion Week. When the time was right (12:23, 13:1, 16:32, and 17:1; cf. Matthew 26:18 and 45//Mark 14:41), Jesus would enter Jerusalem one final time, also at a major feast (Passover). Ryle (2:5) makes this application: "Our Lord's

As the Feast of Tabernacles approached, Jesus' brothers<sup>136</sup> egged Him to go to the Feast and make a public display of His deity<sup>137</sup> (verses 2-4). Jesus rejected their suggestion (verses 6-9), but instead went to the Feast at the Father's behest, at a different time (verse 14) and in a different manner (verse 10) than human wisdom dictated. Meanwhile, at the Feast, Jesus was the "talk of the town" (verse 12).

### ***At the Feast of Tabernacles (7:14-52 and 8:12-59)***

7:14-36. Upon arriving in Jerusalem midway through the Feast, Jesus went to the temple, most likely to its outer court (also known as the "Court of the Gentiles"), a place Kruse (p. 184) calls "the most public area in Jerusalem" (cf. verse 26), and began teaching the first of two discourses He gave during the latter half of the 8-day feast (verse 14). Because Jesus had not been formally educated either by attending one of the leading rabbinical schools of the day or by being tutored by a prominent rabbi (as Paul had been by Gamaliel, Acts 22:3), the quality of His teaching caught the crowds by surprise (verse 15; cf. Acts 4:13, where the teaching of Peter and John elicited a similar response). Jesus' teaching was superior (Matthew 7:28-29) because it came directly from the Father (verse 16; cf. 8:26, 28, and 12:49). However, only those who by an act of the will commit themselves to such teaching know this to be the case (verse 17).<sup>138</sup>

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example recorded in this verse shows clearly that Christians are not meant to court martyrdom, or willfully expose themselves to certain death, under the idea that it is their duty. Many primitive martyrs seem not to have understood this." Henry (p. 961) gives the following principle in such cases: "Then, and not till then, we are called to expose and lay down our lives, when we cannot save them without sin."

<sup>136</sup>Jesus had four brothers: James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude (Matthew 13:55//Mark 6:3). Though at this time they were unbelievers (John 7:5; cf. Psalm 69:8), they did not remain so (Acts 1:14). In the case of James, this was likely due to a post-Resurrection appearance of Christ to him (1 Corinthians 15:7). In fact, James and Jude penned New Testament epistles bearing their names.

<sup>137</sup>Jesus would eventually do so (8:28).

<sup>138</sup>Augustine (cited in Morris, p. 360) once said: "Understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore do not seek to understand in order to believe, but believe that thou mayest understand ...." Anselm similarly once said: "I believe so that I may understand." Carson (p. 313; emphasis his) reminds: "... [F]inite and fallen human beings cannot set themselves up on some sure ground *outside* the truth and thus gain the vantage from which they may assess it. Divine revelation can only be assessed, as it were, from the inside. From that perspective the person who *chooses to do God's will* discovers that Jesus' teaching articulates it, that Jesus does not speak on his own but as the Word of God." Kent (p. 116) writes: "Unbelief is not basically lack of information but a will in

Jesus switches gears in verse 19, accusing the Jews of breaking the Sixth Commandment, the Mosaic prohibition against murder (Exodus 20:13), a charge that the Jews vehemently denied, in turn blasphemously accusing Jesus of being demon-possessed (verse 20; cf. 8:48, 52, and 10:20; John the Baptist was also accused of the same, Matthew 11:18). Jesus reminds them of their attempt on His life during His last visit to Jerusalem, after He had healed the paralyzed man on a Sabbath (5:18), chiding them for the hypocrisy they displayed at that time (verses 21-24).

Based on the popular, but mistaken, notion that the Messiah would “come out of nowhere,”<sup>139</sup> the crowd concluded that Jesus could not be the Messiah, because they knew (so they thought) His origin (verse 27; cf. 6:42). Jesus countered by declaring His true origin (verses 28-29), prompting an attempt to arrest Him, but to no avail (verse 30, cf. 7:44 and 8:20).<sup>140</sup> In spite of such opposition, there were those who believed (verse 31), a recurring theme throughout John’s Gospel (cf. 1:11-12, 3:19-21, and 6:66-69). The religious leaders sent officers from the temple police force (Levites) to arrest Jesus (verse 32), but also to no avail (verses 45-46; cf. 10:39).

Jesus concludes His first discourse during the Feast by alluding to His rapidly approaching (approximately 6 months away) departure back to the Father by means of the Ascension (verse 33). As long as the Jews persisted in their unbelief, they would be unable to join Jesus in Heaven (verse 34b; cf. 8:21; though the disciples would not be able to follow Jesus back to Heaven immediately, 13:33, they would be able to do so eventually, 12:26 and 14:3). The Jews totally missed the import of these words (verses 35-36).

7:37-52 and 8:12-59. On the eighth and final day of the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus taught a second discourse, this time in the inner court of the temple. More specifically, He taught in the treasury, located in the “Women’s Court,” just

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rebellion against God.” Morris (p. 360) observes: “His hearers had raised the question of his competence as a teacher [in verse 15]. He raises the question of their competence as hearers.”

<sup>139</sup> “... [T]hat Messiah would appear very suddenly, as if from nowhere—seems to have been a piece of popular theology ....” (Hendriksen, 2:15), perhaps based on Malachi 3:1.

<sup>140</sup>“They could not lay a hand on Him because the Father’s hand was over Him” (Blum, p. 301). Ryle (2:35) cites Martin Luther: “God has appointed a nice, easy hour, for everything; and that hour has the whole world for its enemy: it must attack it. The devil shoots and throws at the poor clock-hand, but in vain: for all depends on the hour. Till the hour comes, and the hand has run its course, the devil and the world shall accomplish nothing.” On Jesus’ “hour,” see footnote 135.

within the confines of the inner court (8:20).

During each of the first seven days of the Feast, a procession of priests would make their way to the pool of Siloam, fill a golden pitcher with water, return to the temple, and pour the water on the altar.<sup>141</sup> This practice, commemorating the two occasions when God provided the Israelites with water from a rock in the wilderness (Exodus 17:1-6, Numbers 20:1-11, Psalm 78:15-16, and 105:41), no doubt occasioned the words of Jesus in 7:37-39.<sup>142</sup>

As the rocks in the wilderness provided physical water, so Jesus provides spiritual water to quench the thirsty soul (7:37; see also 4:10, 14, 6:35, and 1 Corinthians 10:4; cf. Revelation 22:17). The arid climate of the Near East adds force to such words.

The precise Old Testament passage to which 7:38 refers is unclear. Possibilities include Isaiah 44:3, 58:11, and Zechariah 14:8.

As earlier in John's Gospel (see 3:5 and comments on), Jesus uses water as a metaphor for the Holy Spirit, a special ministry of Whom church age believers would receive once Jesus was glorified (7:39; cf. 14:16-18, 26, 15:26, 16:7, 13, 20:22, Acts 1:4-5, 8, 2:1-18, and 33).<sup>143</sup>

As earlier (see 7:12) and later (see 9:16 and 10:19-21), the people were divided over the true identity of Jesus (7:40-43). To some, He was "the Prophet" of

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<sup>141</sup>Hughes (pp. 110-111) shares the following historical incident associated with this ritual: "... [A] priest by the name of Alexander Janaeus once poured the water on the floor, and there ensued such a riot that around the environs of the temple 6,000 people were killed!"

<sup>142</sup>Maclaren (1:311) and Wiersbe (p. 317) suggest that Jesus stepped forward and said the words of verses 37 and 38 as soon as the priests finished pouring. Morris (p. 374) suggests that Jesus' posture (standing; Jewish teachers typically sat, while their audience stood) and voice volume ("cried out") in verse 37a signifies the supreme significance of what He is about to say.

<sup>143</sup>This ministry of the Spirit resulted in such things as the recording of the New Testament by the apostles and the Spirit-empowered preaching of God's Word by the early church, an age that Ryle (2:45) calls "the dispensation of the Spirit." Henry (p. 975) writes in this regard: "When the apostles spoke so fluently of the things of God, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts ii. 4), and afterwards preached and wrote the gospel of Christ with such a flood of divine eloquence, then this was fulfilled" and "If we compare the clear knowledge and strong grace of the disciples of Christ themselves, after the day of Pentecost, with their darkness and weakness before, we shall understand in what sense the Holy Ghost was not yet given."



Deuteronomy 18:15 and 18 (7:40; cf. 6:14) or the Messiah (7:41a). To others, He could not be, because the Messiah had to come from Bethlehem (per Micah 5:2), not Galilee (7:41b-42). As they were ignorant of His heavenly origin (7:27-29), so they were ignorant of His earthly origin (Luke 2:4-7 and 11).

Meanwhile, the temple police officers who had been sent to arrest Jesus returned to the religious leaders empty-handed, prompting the religious leaders to demand an explanation (7:45).

The officers testified of Jesus' eloquence (7:46<sup>144</sup>; cf. Matthew 7:29//Mark 1:22//Luke 4:32, Mark 12:17, and 37), prompting the religious leaders to ridicule them (7:47-49; cf. 9:34). Though the claim of 7:48 may have been true at the time, it eventually proved to be false (see 12:42 and 19:38-42).

Nicodemus' defense of Jesus (7:51), in keeping with such passages as Deuteronomy 1:16, 17:4, and 19:18 (cf. Acts 25:16), if not evidence that he had already been converted (due to his encounter with Jesus in chapter 3), was certainly a precursor to his eventual conversion (assuming 19:38-42 is indicative of the actions of a truly saved man).<sup>145</sup>

Like the multitudes (7:27 and 7:41b-42), the religious leaders were also ignorant of Jesus' heavenly (6:41-42) and earthly (7:52) origins. They also appear to not know that several Old Testament prophets were from Galilee (7:52).<sup>146</sup>

### ***The Adulterous Woman Episode (7:53-8:11)***

In the opinion of the overwhelming majority of textual scholars, the incident recorded in John 7:53-8:11 was not part of the original text of John's Gospel, but was later inserted by a scribe (so, the brackets in the NASB, which also includes a marginal note against its textual authenticity; the ESV does the same; the NIV sections it off with a line before and after it and includes a note against its textual authenticity). This does not imply, however, that the incident described is fictional; it may have actually happened as recorded. Since it lacks the authority of inspiration, however, it will not be commented

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<sup>144</sup>Wiersbe (p. 317) and Hughes (p. 224) point out that these officers were sent to arrest Jesus, but Jesus arrested them. Henry (p. 977) likewise writes: "The very officers that were sent to take him were taken with him."

<sup>145</sup>Hughes (p. 225) describes Nicodemus' meeting with Jesus in John 3 as the midnight of his life, this incident at the end of John 7 as the twilight, and the incident at the end of John 19 as the sunshine.

<sup>146</sup>Kruse (p. 196) says that Jonah, Nahum, and Hosea were from Galilee and that Elijah, Elisha, and Amos may also have been so.

on.<sup>147</sup> Ryle (2:65f) lays out arguments for and against its textual authenticity, being for it. Morris (p. 778f) gives as reasons against it: 1) It is not found in the oldest manuscripts; 2) In the manuscripts in which it is found, it is found at various places (after 7:36, after 7:44, after 7:52, after 21:25, etc.); 3) It is not Johannine in vocabulary and style; and 4) 8:12 naturally flows from 7:52. Kostenberger (p. 248) explains the reason for its inclusion in the King James Version: "... Erasmus ... though doubting the originality of the passage, nonetheless included it in his 1516 edition of the Greek NT in deference to its popularity by readers of the Latin Vulgate. From there, the pericope found its way into the seventeenth-century Textus Receptus" (the TR is the Greek text behind the KJV).

Jesus continues His second Feast of Tabernacles discourse with the 2<sup>nd</sup> of His 7 "I am" statements recorded in John's Gospel. Jesus is the "Light of the world" (8:12<sup>148</sup>; cf. Isaiah 9:2//Matthew 4:16, Isaiah 49:6, Malachi 4:2, Luke 1:79, 2:32, John 1:4-9, 3:19-21, 9:5, 12:35-36, 46, Acts 26:23, 2 Corinthians 4:4, and 6). The significance of this statement is heightened by the fact that it was made during the Feast of Booths, when the Women's Court (the place where Jesus uttered these words, 8:20) would be illuminated by several large menorahs (Jewish candelabra) in commemoration of the pillar of fire that led the Israelites in the wilderness (Exodus 13:21, 14:20, 24, 40:38, Numbers 9:15-16, and Psalm 78:14).  
<sup>149</sup>

The Pharisees rejected Jesus' claim to be the Light of the world, thinking it legally inadmissible (8:13; cf. 5:31). Because Jesus is who He is (God), however, His testimony is admissible on its own grounds, even if not verified by a second or third witness (8:14; cf. Numbers 35:30, Deuteronomy 17:6, and 19:15), due to its supernatural quality. Jesus' testimony, however, was verified by a second witness, the Father (8:16-18; cf. 5:37 and comments on).

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<sup>147</sup>Kostenberger (p. 248) advises: "... [P]roper conservatism and caution suggest that the passage be omitted from preaching in the churches ...."

<sup>148</sup>Jesus literally says in 8:12, "I I am," the "I" being repeated, for emphasis. This means that Jesus alone, that Jesus and no other is the light of the world. This means that there is no true spiritual light apart from Christ. That He is the light "of the world" is in keeping with the worldwide emphasis and audience of John's Gospel.

<sup>149</sup>Hughes (p. 228) describes the scene: "In the center of the treasury four great torches were set up. Some accounts say that the torches were as high as the highest walls of the temple and that at the top of these golden candelabra were great bowls holding sixty-five liters of oil. There was a ladder for each candelabrum, and in the evening young, healthy priests would carry the oil up to the top, where they would light the protruding wicks. The great flames that leapt out of these torches illumined the whole temple and much of Jerusalem. It was spectacular!"

As earlier (7:34), Jesus alludes to His upcoming departure (8:21). Once again (as in 7:35-36), the Jews missed the import of Jesus' words (8:22).

In one of the most significant statements in John's Gospel, Jesus declares that belief in His deity is essential to escaping spiritual death<sup>150</sup> (8:24; cf. John 20:31 and Romans 10:9). Jesus calls Himself "I am" (no predicate), God's personal name (Exodus 3:14; cf. Deuteronomy 32:39, Isaiah 41:4, 43:10, 13, 46:4, 48:12, and 52:6). Jesus' "uplifting" (i.e., His crucifixion, 3:14 and 12:32-33; cf. Isaiah 52:13) would be proof positive of His deity (8:28), a truth to which a centurion at the foot of the Cross gave testimony (Mark 15:39).

According to Jesus, a true believer will persevere in the faith (8:31; cf. John 8:51, 14:23, 1 Corinthians 15:1-2, Colossians 1:21-23, Hebrews 3:6, 14, and 2 John 9; cf. also the present tense verbals in 3:16, 18, 36, 6:35, 40, 47, 7:38, 11:25-26, 12:44, 46, 14:12, and 17:20). What unfolds in the verses to follow is an instance of the opposite, as those who professed faith in Christ (8:30) failed to persevere in their profession (8:33f, culminating in 8:59).

Sin enslaves<sup>151</sup> (8:34; cf. Romans 6:16-22 and 2 Peter 2:19), while truth (8:32) and the Son (8:36; cf. Luke 4:18 and Romans 8:2) liberate.

Though children of Abraham racially (8:33, 37, and 39), the Jews were not so religiously (Luke 19:9, Romans 2:28-29, 4:11-12, 9:6, Galatians 3:7, and 29), as evidenced by their actions (8:37 and 39-40). Such actions revealed that their spiritual father was Satan (8:38, 41a, and 44<sup>152</sup>; cf. Matthew 13:38's "sons of the evil one" and Matthew 23:15's "son of hell"), not God (8:41-42). Like father, like son.

The Jews respond to Jesus' words with two extremely derogatory labels (8:48; on

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<sup>150</sup>To die "in sin" is also spoken of in Ezekiel 3:18-19. Morris (p. 395) says: "It points to a horror that is all the more terrible for being unexplained. To die with one's sin unrepented and unatoned is the supreme disaster."

<sup>151</sup>Henry (p. 994; emphasis his) describes one enslaved to sin as one "that *makes choice* of sin, prefers the way of wickedness before the way of holiness ... that *makes a covenant* with sin, enters into league with it, and *makes a marriage* with it, —that *makes contrivances* of sin, *makes provision* for the flesh, and devises iniquity, —and that *makes a custom* of sin, who walks after the flesh, and *makes a trade* of sin."

<sup>152</sup>Commenting on this verse, Bruce (p. 201) states: "God is the life-giver and the fountain of truth; the devil is the life-destroyer and the father of lies." Satan lied to Adam and Eve (compare God's words in Genesis 2:17 with Satan's in Genesis 3:4), leading to their spiritual death (separation from God). See also Acts 5:3-5, 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10, and 1 John 3:12a. By contrast, Jesus is "the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

Samaritan, see footnote 89; on Jesus being called demonically possessed, see also Mark 3:22 and John 7:20, 8:52, and 10:20).

Jesus responds by claiming that believers are immune to spiritual and eternal death (8:51<sup>153</sup>; cf. Luke 20:36, John 3:16, 36, 5:24, 6:40, 47, 11:26, Revelation 2:11, and 20:6). The Jews misinterpret Jesus' statement to mean physical death (8:52), leading to Jesus' stupendous<sup>154</sup> statement in verse 58 (cf. 1:1, 8:24, and 28), a clear and undeniable claim to deity.<sup>155</sup> Consequently, the Jews sought to execute Jesus for blasphemy (8:59a; cf. 5:18 and 10:33) in accordance with Leviticus 24:16 (cf. 1 Kings 21:13), but to no avail (8:59b<sup>156</sup>; cf. Luke 4:30, John 10:39, and 12:36).

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<sup>153</sup>8:51 literally reads: "Death not not will he see to eternity." Ryle (2:127) sees three aspects to this avoidance of death: 1) avoidance of spiritual death (from ever again being separated from God and the life of God due to sin); 2) avoidance of the sting of bodily death (i.e., though the believer, short of the Rapture, will die physically, the experience of death is not as severe for the believer as it is for the unbeliever); and 3) avoidance of eternal death (eternal separation from God and the life of God in Hell).

<sup>154</sup>"The phrase harbors within itself the most authentic, the most audacious, and the most profound affirmation by Jesus of who he was" (Ethelbert Stauffer, quoted in Tenney, p. 99).

<sup>155</sup>Notice that Jesus said, "I am," not, "I was." "I am," besides being God's personal name (Exodus 3:14), emphasizes God's timelessness or eternality, as well as His immutability and self-existence/aseity. For other uses of this name in the Old Testament, see Deuteronomy 32:39, Isaiah 41:4, 43:10, 13, 46:4, 48:12, and 52:6.

<sup>156</sup>The voice of the Greek verb translated "hid Himself" (understood as a middle voice verb by the NASB, as seen by the "Himself") can also be understood as a passive voice verb ("was hid"). If so, this may be an indication of a supernatural act of some kind on the part of God the Father.

## **John 9**

According to John's Gospel, Jesus entered Jerusalem for the third time (1st time in 2:13; 2<sup>nd</sup> time in 5:1) to attend the Feast of Tabernacles/Booths (7:10), giving two discourses in the temple (the 1<sup>st</sup> in 7:14-36; the 2<sup>nd</sup> in 7:37-52, 8:12-59). Jesus apparently remained in Jerusalem for several months.<sup>157</sup> During this time, He healed a man born blind (9:1-12), which, like the miracle He performed during His previous visit to Jerusalem (healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda in chapter 5), sparked a controversy with the religious leaders (9:13-41). During this time, Jesus also gave His "Good Shepherd" Discourse (10:1-21) and tangled with the religious leaders at the Feast of the Dedication (10:22-39).

### ***Healing of the Man Born Blind (9:1-12)***

The Old Testament predicted that the Messiah would, among other things, open the eyes of the blind (Isaiah 29:18, 35:5, and 42:7; cf. Psalm 146:8, Matthew 11:5//Luke 7:22, and Luke 4:18). In fulfillment of this promise, Jesus did so on many occasions (see also Matthew 9:27-31, 12:22-23, 15:30-31, 20:29-34//Mark 10:46-52, 21:14, Mark 8:22-26, and Luke 7:21), making the healing of the blind His most frequently mentioned miracle. As the "Light of the world" (verse 5; cf. 8:12), Jesus not only healed the physically blind, giving the light of sight to those in physical darkness, but also healed the spiritually blind, giving the light of life to those in spiritual darkness (9:39; cf. Acts 26:18, 2 Corinthians 4:4, and 6).

As Jesus and His disciples were in Jerusalem, they crossed paths with a man who was born blind (verse 1). The disciples, reflecting the "retribution theology" of Job's three friends (see Acts 28:4 for another example of this kind of thinking),

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<sup>157</sup>The Feast of Tabernacles took place in the fall (our September-October). Jesus left Jerusalem for Perea (10:40) while attending the Feast of Dedication, which took place in the winter (our December).

attributed the man's blindness directly<sup>158</sup> to some specific sin, either on the part of the man's parents (no doubt with the principle of Exodus 20:5//Deuteronomy 5:9 in mind; cf. Exodus 34:7 and Numbers 14:18) or the man himself (some rabbis taught that sin could be committed in the womb, based on the supposition that Esau tried to kill Jacob in the womb in Genesis 25:22; cf. Luke 1:41 and 44 for another possible example of seemingly willful activity on the part of a child in the womb) (verse 2). Evidently, the disciples were primarily concerned about the cause, while Jesus was primarily concerned about the cure.

Jesus corrected their bad theology, stating that this man's blindness was not the direct result of some specific sin on his part or on the part of his parents, but had as its goal the glory of God (verse 3; cf. 11:4).<sup>159</sup>

Jesus was in the "twilight" of His ministry (Tenney, p. 101), as His words in verse 4 attest (cf. 12:35-36, as well as 7:33 and 13:33). Less than 6 months remained until His fourth, final, and fateful visit to Jerusalem. Jesus, therefore, sensed the need to strike while the proverbial iron was hot, to make hay while the proverbial sun shone, to do what He could while He could. Maclaren (2:41) suggests that the "must" of verse 4 is more one of delight than of duty.

The reason for the mud pack method Jesus used in healing this blind man (verse 6) is a matter of speculation. Some possibilities include: 1) creating a visual representation of the man's blind condition; 2) a partial reenactment of Genesis 2:7, indicative of the fully-functioning eyes that Christ, the Creator was about to create for this man; and 3) to challenge the error of the Jewish religious leaders by violating their manmade prohibitions against kneading and anointing on the Sabbath (see verses 14-16a).

Similar to what was said to Naaman (in 2 Kings 5), this blind man was told to wash in the pool of Siloam (cf. Nehemiah 3:15 and Isaiah 8:6), meaning "sent" (verse 7a).<sup>160</sup> Unlike Naaman and like others before him in John's Gospel (such

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<sup>158</sup>All calamity in life is indirectly the result of sin (see Luke 13:2-5), while some is also directly so (Numbers 12, Deuteronomy 34:5, 2 Samuel 6:7, John 5:14, Acts 5:1-11, and 1 Corinthians 11:30). Unless one has direct revelation, however, he or she cannot conclusively conclude a direct correlation between a particular sin and a particular instance of suffering.

<sup>159</sup>Though certainly speculative, it may be that this man would not have gotten saved had it not been for the fact that he was physically blind. Besides praise, other purposes for pain suggested in Scripture include proving (Job 2:3), purification (Job 23:10), punishment (1 Peter 4:15), perseverance (James 1:3), perfecting (James 1:4), path to the prize (2 Corinthians 4:17, Hebrews 12:2, and James 1:12), prevention of pride (2 Corinthians 12:7), empowering (2 Corinthians 12:9-10), and empathy (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

<sup>160</sup>Jesus, who was sent by the Father, sent this man to a pool called "sent." Hendriksen

as the Samaritans and the royal official in chapter 4), the blind man by faith immediately took Jesus at His word (verse 7b). Consequently, he was healed (verse 7b).<sup>161</sup> This is the 6<sup>th</sup> of the 7 sign miracles performed by Jesus recorded in John's Gospel.

The degree of difficulty others experienced in recognizing the man after he was healed (verses 8-9) may be a picture of the change that occurs when one is converted.

***Controversy Over the Healing of the Blind Man (9:13-41)***

As with the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda (in chapter 5), Jesus' healing of the man born blind sparked a controversy because several aspects of it allegedly violated the Sabbath law (verses 14 and 16a<sup>162</sup>).

One of the 39 specific stipulations the Pharisees attached to the Sabbath law was a prohibition against kneading on the Sabbath, a stipulation that they felt Jesus violated in making the clay He applied to the blind man's eyes (in 9:6a). Other ways in which Jesus allegedly violated the Sabbath law was by anointing on the Sabbath by applying the clay to the blind man's eyes (in 9:6b) and by healing on the Sabbath.

However, not all of the Pharisees present (including Nicodemus?) concurred with the erroneous (see footnote 162) conclusion of the rest (in verse 16a), making the case that His miracles proved otherwise (cf. 3:2), resulting in a division of opinion among them (verse 16b; cf. 7:12, 43, and 10:19).

The Pharisees went into "trial mode," calling the healed man to the witness stand (verses 15 and 17), then the man's parents (verses 18-23<sup>163</sup>), who, due to fear of the Jews (cf. 7:13, 12:42, 19:38, and 20:19), "passed the buck" back to their son (verses 22-23), leading to his second interrogation by the Pharisees (verses 24f).

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(2:76; emphasis his) makes a spiritual application at this point: "... [F]or spiritual cleansing one must go to the true Siloam; i.e., to the One who was *sent* by the Father to save sinners."

<sup>161</sup>Hughes (p. 257) suggests that the first thing the man saw was his own reflection in the water.

<sup>162</sup>The Pharisees' reasoning in verse 16a can be replicated in the form of a syllogism. Their major premise was: someone who breaks the Sabbath law is not from God. However, their minor premise (Jesus broke the Sabbath law) was faulty, leading to their faulty conclusion (Jesus is not from God). I am indebted to Bruce (p. 212) for the information contained in this footnote.

<sup>163</sup>Legal age (verses 21 and 23) according to Jewish law was 13 years and 1 day.

The Pharisees were already convinced of Jesus' guilt and tried to lead the witness, to say the least (verse 24<sup>164</sup>). The man replied to their inquisition in a memorable way (verse 25).<sup>165</sup>

The questioning of the witness became increasingly contentious, ultimately culminating in the man being excommunicated (verse 34<sup>166</sup>; cf. 16:2), as threatened in verse 22. The divide the Pharisees placed between Moses and Jesus (verse 28) had already been debunked by Jesus (see 5:45-47). The reasoning of the blind man in verse 31 (cf. 11:41-42) is based on such passages as Job 35:13, Psalm 34:15, 66:18, 145:19, Proverbs 15:29, Isaiah 1:15, 59:2, and Micah 3:4 (cf. 1 John 3:22).

After the man was "put out," Jesus sought Him out (cf. 5:14) and asked him the most critical of all questions (verse 35<sup>167</sup>). After Jesus unequivocally claimed to be the Messiah (verse 37; cf. 4:26), the man exercised saving faith, confessing Jesus as Lord<sup>168</sup> (verse 38a; cf. Romans 10:9) and worshipping Him (verse 38b). It is instructive to note that Jesus did not reject (see Acts 10:25-26 and 14:11-15, as well as Revelation 19:10 and 22:8-9), but rather received (see also Matthew 14:33, 28:9, 17, and John 20:26-29, as well as Matthew 2:11, Hebrews 1:6, and Revelation 5:6-14), such worship, indicative of His deity.

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<sup>164</sup>Wiersbe (p. 326) says that "'Give God the praise' is a form of Jewish 'swearing in' at court.'" Another way of understanding what the Pharisees were saying is that they were asking the man to give glory to God by concurring with their (incorrect) conclusion that Jesus was a sinner (cf. Joshua 7:19). Yet another way of understanding it is that they were saying that God should be given the glory for the healing, not Jesus, because Jesus was (so they thought) a sinner, so certainly not God. The man went on to "give glory to God" (verse 38; cf. Philippians 2:11), but certainly not in the way the Pharisees intended him to.

<sup>165</sup>"The man's testimony has been repeated innumerable times by men and women who have found in his words the means of communicating their own experience of deliverance from spiritual blindness" (Bruce, p. 217). One notable example is John Newton, in his "Amazing Grace."

<sup>166</sup>The accusation of the Pharisees in this verse (cf. 9:2) is a tacit admission that the man had indeed been blind, contrary to their earlier denial of this point (in verse 18).

<sup>167</sup>In the original, the "you" in Jesus' question is emphatic (repeated twice). We can translate: "Do you yourself believe in the Son of Man?" This is a reminder that salvation requires personal commitment. "Son of Man" is a Messianic designation (Daniel 7:13).

<sup>168</sup>It is interesting to note the progression of the man's belief regarding the identity of Jesus, from a "man" (9:11) to a "prophet" (9:17; cf. Mark 6:15, Luke 7:16, 24:19, and John 4:19) to one to be followed (9:27-28) to "from God" (9:33) and to "Lord" (9:38; note: "Lord" in 9:36 is better translated as "sir," so NIV and ESV).



Whereas this man was healed of both physical (9:7) and spiritual (verse 39a<sup>169</sup>) blindness, the Pharisees remained spiritually blind (verses 39b-41; cf. Matthew 15:14, 23:16, and 26; cf. Matthew 13:13//Mark 4:12). Concerning the blindness of the Pharisees, Wiersbe (p. 327) writes: “No one is so blind as he who will not see.” Calvin (p. 374) likewise says that they were willfully shutting their eyes while the sun was shining.

## **John 10**

### ***The “Good Shepherd” Discourse (10:1-21)***

Most likely in continuation of His debate with the Pharisees over the healing of the man born blind in chapter 9 (but in monologue, rather than dialogue, mode), Jesus gives another (cf. His “Bread of Life” Discourse in chapter 6) of His famous discourses recorded in John’s Gospel, that of the “Good Shepherd.”

In the Old Testament, God is often likened to a shepherd (see Genesis 48:15, Psalm 23, 74:1, 77:20, 78:52, 79:13, 80:1, 95:7, 100:3, Isaiah 40:11, and Ezekiel 34:11f). Likewise, Jesus in the New Testament (see John 10:11, 14-16, 26-27, Hebrews 13:20-21, 1 Peter 2:25, and 5:4).

Jesus begins the discourse by contrasting Himself with the religious leaders of the day.<sup>170</sup> While they were thieves and robbers (verses 1 and 8), “trying to lead

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<sup>169</sup>Jesus’ words at the start of verse 39 should be understood as the consequence, not the cause, of His first coming; the result, not the purpose. The cause or purpose was not to judge, but to save (see 3:17 and 12:47).

<sup>170</sup>To fully understand Jesus’ words in this discourse, a little background knowledge is in order. In the evening, several different flocks of sheep would be led by their respective shepherds into a fold (or pen) to be guarded (from both wild animals and thieves) by a single doorkeeper throughout the night, who would guard the fold by lying across its opening. The sheepfold typically was a walled structure with one opening (door). According to Kruse (p. 229), the walls could be as high as six-and-a-half feet. Kostenberger (p. 300) says that the sheep pen “may have been a courtyard ... near or bordering a house, surrounded by a stone wall and topped by briars, where one or several families kept their sheep.” In the morning, the shepherds would retrieve their respective flocks from the fold by giving a distinct call, recognized only by that particular shepherd’s flock. The sheep would respond by following their shepherd out of the fold. H. V. Morton (cited in Morris, p. 447) writes in this regard: “Early one morning I saw an extraordinary sight not far from Bethlehem. Two shepherds had evidently spent the night

Israel while avoiding the door (Christ)” (Dobson, p. 195), He was a shepherd (verse 2). While they were strangers whom the sheep did not know (verse 5), the sheep knew Him, and He knew them (verses 3-4<sup>171</sup> and 14; cf. John 10:27, Galatians 4:9, and 2 Timothy 2:19), even by name (cf. Exodus 33:17 and Isaiah 43:1).

Not only is Jesus a shepherd, but He is also the door to the sheepfold (verses 7 and 9<sup>172</sup>; cf. Psalm 121:8).

While the religious leaders were bent on decimating the flock (verse 10a), Jesus provided His sheep with safety/protection and sustenance/provision (verse 9) in abundant measure<sup>173</sup> (verse 10b).

In verse 11 (cf. verse 14), Jesus makes the 4<sup>th</sup> of His 7 “I am” statements recorded in John’s Gospel. In contrast to the “worthless shepherd Who leaves the flock” spoken of in Zechariah 11:17, and in contrast to the religious leaders of His day, who were spiritually killing the sheep (verse 10a), Jesus is the “good shepherd,” because He sacrifices His life for His sheep (verses 11, 15, and 17-18<sup>174</sup>; cf. Isaiah

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with their flocks in a cave. The sheep were all mixed together and the time had come for the shepherds to go in different directions. One of the shepherds stood some distance from the sheep and began to call. First one, then another, then four or five animals ran towards him; and so on until he had counted his whole flock.” Phillip Keller (*A Shepherd Looks at the Good Shepherd and His Sheep*, p. 40) adds: “It used to amaze and intrigue visitors to my ranches to discover that my sheep were so indifferent to their voices. Occasionally I would invite them to call my sheep using the same words and phrases which I habitually employed. But it was to no avail. The ewes and lambs, and even the rams, would simply stand and stare at the newcomers in rather blank bewilderment, as if to say, ‘Who are you?’”

<sup>171</sup>Notice that, in typical Ancient Near Eastern fashion, the shepherd gets out in front and leads his sheep, rather than driving them from behind, as the typical Western shepherd does.

<sup>172</sup>This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the 7 “I am” statements made by Jesus recorded in John’s Gospel. As with all the others, this one is emphatic. Literally it reads: “I I am the door,” meaning “I and I alone,” or “I and no other.” The words, “through Me” in verse 9 are in an emphatic position. Literally, it reads: “through Me if anyone enters.” The same idea is taught in John 14:6, Romans 5:2, Ephesians 2:18, and Hebrews 10:20. Notice the “anyone” of verse 9, one of the many indications of the indiscriminate, universal offer of the gospel characteristic of John’s Gospel (cf. footnotes 125 and 148).

<sup>173</sup>Cf. comments regarding the significance of the leftovers in conjunction with the feeding of the 5,000+ in chapter 6, as well as 4:14, 6:35, and 7:37-38.

<sup>174</sup>While it is true in one sense that Jesus was “killed” (Acts 2:23 and 3:15), in another,

53:5-6, 12, Matthew 20:28//Mark 10:45, John 15:13, Romans 5:8, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 2:20, 3:13, Ephesians 5:2, 25, 1 Timothy 2:6, Hebrews 9:14, 1 Peter 3:18, and 1 John 3:16).

Once again, Jesus contrasts Himself with the religious leaders of His day, likening them to a “hired hand” (verses 12-13). Whereas such hired hands allowed the sheep to be snatched (verse 12), neither the Good Shepherd/God the Son (10:28) nor God the Father (10:29) ever would.

In verse 16, Jesus speaks of “other sheep” (elect Gentiles; cf. Isaiah 56:8 and John 11:52), “this fold” (elect Jews), and “one flock” (the body of Christ, composed of both Jewish and Gentile believers; cf. Galatians 3:28, Ephesians 2:14-16, and 3:6).

As happened so many times before (see 7:12, 40-43, and 9:16, as well as Matthew 10:34 and Luke 12:51), there was a division over Jesus’ words (verse 19), with some saying He was demon possessed (verse 20; cf. 7:20, 8:48, and 52).

### ***More Controversy at the Feast of the Dedication (10:22-39)***

The “Feast of the Dedication” (verse 22), which took place in our November-December (“winter,” verse 23), was not a major Jewish feast/festival (such as Passover, Pentecost, or the Feast of Tabernacles/Booths). In fact, it had a relatively late origin. Its purpose was to commemorate the cleansing and rededication of the temple by Judas Maccabeus (Maccabeus means “hammer” in Hebrew) in 165 or 164 B.C. following its desecration in 168 or 167 B.C. by Antiochus Epiphanes (Epiphanes means “God manifest”).<sup>175</sup> Today, this 8-day feast is known as Hanukkah (or the Feast of Lights, due to the lighting of lamps and candles in Jewish homes to celebrate it).

While in the area of the temple known as “the portico of Solomon” (verse 23; cf. Acts 3:11 and 5:12), “a covered colonnade<sup>176</sup> that ran along the eastern wall of the temple” (Hendriksen, 2:120) for about 200 yards (Kostenberger, p. 310), Jesus was literally surrounded by His Jewish antagonists, who demanded from Him a

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more ultimate sense, He laid down His life. Accordingly, verse 18 is emphatic, literally reading: “I I lay it down.” Hendriksen (2:115; emphasis his) writes in this regard: “The fact that Christ’s death is an act of free volition must be stressed in order that when death occurs the enemies who have brought it about may have no right to boast as if this were *their* victory, and also in order that the disciples may have no reason to despair as if this were *his* defeat.” After laying His life down, Jesus would take it up again by means of the Resurrection.

<sup>175</sup>Antiochus desecrated the temple by sacrificing a pig on the altar, the so-called “abomination of desolation” (as it is called in Daniel 8:13 and 11:31).

<sup>176</sup>A colonnade was a roofed structure supported by pillars.

clear declaration of His true identity (verse 24; cf. Matthew 26:63//Luke 22:67), no doubt seeking occasion to arrest Him. Jesus replied that both His words (verse 25a; cf. 5:17-18 and 8:58-59) and works<sup>177</sup> (verse 25b; cf. 5:36, 10:37-38, 14:11, and 20:30-31, as well as Matthew 11:3-5//Luke 7:20-22) witnessed to His true identity.

The Greek verb translated “follow” in verse 27 is in the present tense (literally: “are following”), indicative of the believer’s perseverance in faithfulness/good works.

In perhaps the clearest and most convincing declaration of eternal security in all of Scripture<sup>178</sup>, Jesus said in verses 28-29 that eternal life is a gift (cf. 17:2, as well as Romans 6:23b and Ephesians 2:8), the possessors of which will never perish<sup>179</sup> (besides the simple fact that eternal life is “eternal,” and the fact that the Greek verb translated “give” in verse 28 is in the present tense, see 3:16, 6:51, 58, 8:51-52, and 11:26), nor be “snatched”<sup>180</sup> out of God’s hand, a reminder that the basis of eternal security is not our hold on God, but His hold on us. A denial of eternal security is in reality an attack upon the character of God (especially His omnipotence; cf. 1 Peter 1:5).

As on two previous occasions (5:17 and 8:58), Jesus made an unequivocal declaration of His deity (verse 30<sup>181</sup>; cf. verses 28-29, 5:18, the co-inherence spoken of in verse 38b and 14:11a, and the end of 17:22). The Jews respond by (based on Leviticus 24:16) seeking to stone Jesus for blasphemy (verses 31-33<sup>182</sup>;

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<sup>177</sup>Some of these works included: the turning of the water into wine (2:11; cf. 20:30-31), the cleansing of the temple (2:15-16; cf. Malachi 3:1-4), the healing of the royal official’s son (4:54; cf. 20:30-31), the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda (5:9; cf. Isaiah 35:6), the feeding of the 5,000+ (6:14; cf. 20:30-31), walking on the water (6:19; cf. Job 9:8), and the healing of the man born blind (9:7; cf. Isaiah 29:18, 35:5, and 42:7).

<sup>178</sup>Ryle (2:211) writes: “...[I]t would be almost impossible to imagine words in which a saint’s ‘perseverance’ could be more strongly asserted.”

<sup>179</sup>In the original, this is an emphatic assertion (using the double negative; see footnote 127). It literally reads: “and not not will they perish unto the ages.”

<sup>180</sup>The same verb is used of the wolf snatching the sheep in 10:12.

<sup>181</sup>Jesus, being God, is equal in essence with God the Father (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4, Philippians 2:6, Colossians 1:15, 2:9, and Hebrews 1:3). In function, Jesus is subordinate to the Father (14:28).

<sup>182</sup>Many have pointed out how the Jews got it backwards: Jesus was not a man who made Himself out to be God (as they claimed), but God who also made Himself man.

cf. 5:18, 8:59, and 19:7). In His defense, Jesus pointed to the infallibility of God's Word (end of verse 35<sup>183</sup>). The Jews then sought to arrest Him, but once again to no avail (verse 39<sup>184</sup>; cf. 7:30, 44-45, 8:20, and 59, as well as Luke 4:30).

## **John 11-12**

Chapters 11 and 12 of John's Gospel conclude Jesus' public ministry (begun in 1:19). Chapter 11 contains the 7<sup>th</sup> and final of Jesus' "signs," the raising of Lazarus. Highlights of chapter 12 include Jesus' anointing by Mary (verses 1-11) and the Triumphal Entry (verses 12-19).

### ***The Raising of Lazarus (11:1-44)***<sup>185</sup>

Verses 1-16. At the end of chapter 10, Jesus retreated to Perea (10:40) in order to elude those seeking His life (10:39; cf. 11:8). While in Perea, He received news that His friend (verse 11; cf. verses 3 and 5), Lazarus<sup>186</sup>, the brother of Mary and Martha (verses 1-3; cf. Luke 10:38-42 and John 12:3//Matthew 26:7//Mark 14:3)

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<sup>183</sup>According to Morris (p. 468), the Greek verb translated "broken" means that Scripture "cannot be emptied of its force by being shown to be erroneous." Carson (p. 399) adds that this means that Scripture cannot be annulled or set aside or proved false.

<sup>184</sup>Henry (p. 1041) describes what happened as "he drew a veil over himself, or cast a mist before their eyes, or tied the hands of those whose hearts he did not turn."

<sup>185</sup>According to Henry (p. 1042), more space is devoted to the raising of Lazarus than to any other miracle of Christ recorded in the Gospels. The two other times Jesus raised someone from the dead were the raising of Jairus's daughter (Matthew 9:18f//Mark 5:22f//Luke 8:41f) and the raising of the widow of Nain's son (Luke 7:11f).

<sup>186</sup>According to Hendriksen (2:138), the name, Lazarus is an abbreviated form of the Hebrew name, Eleazar, meaning "he whom God helped."

was gravely ill (verse 3<sup>187</sup>) back in Bethany (verse 1).<sup>188</sup>

Though Lazarus's illness eventually took his life (verses 11<sup>189</sup> and 13-14), it did not do so ultimately or permanently (verse 4a).

Though Jesus loved Lazarus (verses 3 and 5; cf. 11:36), He surprisingly<sup>190</sup> waited two more days before coming to Bethany (verse 6). Consequently, He did not arrive until after Lazarus had been dead for four days (11:17 and 39). The theological reason for the delay was the fact that Jesus was on the Father's timetable (2:4 and 7:8-10). On a practical level, the probable reason for the delay was to leave no doubt that Lazarus had been resurrected, not resuscitated.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>187</sup>Several observations can be made regarding this 3<sup>rd</sup> verse: 1) "Tell It to Jesus" (the title of a 19<sup>th</sup> century gospel song written by Jeremiah Eames Rankin); 2) Sickness is not a sign that the Lord's love for us has been lost; and 3) The apostle John, the human author of these words, was also one whom the Lord loved (see John 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7, and 20).

<sup>188</sup>If, as may be reasonably assumed, Jesus was in Bethabara (compare John 1:28 with 10:40), He was approximately 20 miles from Bethany.

<sup>189</sup>"Sleep" is a common metaphor for death in Scripture (see Deuteronomy 31:16, 2 Samuel 7:12, 1 Kings 2:10, 2 Kings 8:24, 2 Chronicles 9:31, Job 14:12, Daniel 12:2, Matthew 9:24, 27:52, Acts 7:60, 13:36, 1 Corinthians 11:30, 15:6, 20, 51, and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-15). In light of the eventual eschatological resurrection of all men (John 11:24), it is an especially apt one. It is also particularly appropriate in Lazarus's case. As Tenney (p. 117) states: "From Jesus' standpoint, Lazarus's death was comparable to a nap, which cut off consciousness of this world temporarily but did not mean a permanent severance" (cf. Mark 5:39//Luke 8:52). Seventh-day Adventists erroneously see in this metaphor support for their unbiblical doctrine of "soul sleep," the belief that, after death, the souls of men "sleep" in a state of unconscious existence until reunited with the body when the body is resurrected. However, passages such as Luke 16:19-31, 23:43, 2 Corinthians 5:8, and Philippians 1:23 shatter this myth. When the Bible speaks of deceased individuals "sleeping," it is referring to their bodies, not to their souls. It is interesting to note that the Greek word for "asleep" in verse 11 is the word from which we get our English word, cemetery, which means "sleeping place."

<sup>190</sup>In the words of the 18<sup>th</sup> century British hymn writer, William Cowper, "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform."

<sup>191</sup>"The delay ensured that Lazarus had been dead long enough that no one could misinterpret the miracle as a mere resuscitation" (Carson, p. 407). According to rabbinic teaching, the soul hovered over the body for 3 days before departing on the 4<sup>th</sup>, ending any hope of resuscitation (Bruce, p. 243; Carson, p. 411; Kruse, p. 244; Hendriksen, 2:146; Morris, p. 485).

Though the primary purpose for the raising of Lazarus would be to glorify God (verse 4b; cf. 11:40, as well as 9:3), a secondary purpose would be to foster faith (verse 15; cf. 11:42, 45, and 20:30-31).<sup>192</sup>

When the time was right, Jesus determined to go to Bethany, thereby returning to Judea (verse 7), in spite of the potential danger (verse 8; cf. 10:31f). Paul followed His Lord's example in Acts 14:19-21.

Though the reply of Thomas<sup>193</sup> in verse 16 is variously understood, it is most likely to be commended. Morris (p. 484) writes: "Thomas looked death in the face and chose death with Jesus rather than life without him."

Verses 17-27. While approaching Bethany, Jesus was met by Martha (verse 20), who is to be commended for steadfastly maintaining her faith in Jesus, in spite of trying circumstances. Martha confessed her belief that Jesus could have prevented her brother's death<sup>194</sup> (verse 21; cf. 11:32), that Jesus was not "hamstrung" by what had transpired (verse 22), that the believing dead will be raised (verse 24; cf. Job 19:26, Isaiah 26:19, and Daniel 12:2), and that Jesus was who He claimed to be (verse 27<sup>195</sup>; cf. John the Baptist's confession in 1:34, Andrew's confession in 1:41, Nathanael's confession in 1:49, the people's confession in 6:14, and Peter's confession in Matthew 16:16; see also 20:31). Martha was not about to allow tragedy torpedo her faith.

In the midst of His conversation with Martha, Jesus uttered the 5<sup>th</sup> of His 7 "I am" statements recorded in John's Gospel: "I am the resurrection and the life"<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>192</sup>This is a reminder that God has a purpose for permitting the pain of the present, that it is not pointless, even the pain of death. For a survey of the purposes for pain found in Scripture, see footnote 159.

<sup>193</sup>Verse 16 also calls Thomas "Didymus." Thomas is the Aramaic word for "twin." Didymus is its Greek equivalent.

<sup>194</sup>A belief questioned by some (11:37). Jesus could have healed Lazarus from afar (as He did with the nobleman's son in 4:50), which would have been the safer way to go (in light of the words of verse 8). And He certainly could have healed Lazarus in person (implied by His words in verse 15).

<sup>195</sup>Martha's confession is an emphatic one. The personal pronoun is repeated twice, for emphasis. The original literally reads: "I I have believed," i.e., I myself have believed. See footnote 167. The continuous nature of her faith is seen in the use of the perfect tense of the verb "believe" (I have believed and continue to do so).

<sup>196</sup>This is the third such "I am" saying that has a corresponding sign, with the raising of Lazarus being the sign. The "I am the bread of life" saying of 6:35 corresponds to the

(verse 25a), resurrection corresponding to the words of verse 25b and life corresponding to the words of verse 26<sup>197</sup> (cf. 1:4 and 14:6).

Verses 28-37. While still on the outskirts of Bethany (verse 30), Jesus was also met by Mary and some of the mourners, Mary falling at His feet (verse 32a).<sup>198</sup> Like Martha before her (11:21), Mary confessed her belief that Jesus could have prevented her brother's death (verse 32b).

In response to the grief of Mary and the mourners, Jesus also grieved, both internally (verse 33<sup>199</sup>) and externally (verse 35<sup>200</sup>; cf. Luke 19:41 and Hebrews 5:7, as well as Romans 12:15b), with the second demonstrating His love for Lazarus (verse 36; cf. verses 3 and 5).

Verses 38-44. As Jesus Himself soon would be (19:41-20:1), Lazarus was buried in a cave-tomb, the opening of which was covered by a stone (verse 38; cf.

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sign of the feeding of the 5,000+ in chapter 6. The "I am the Light of the world" saying of 8:12 corresponds to the sign of giving sight to the man born blind in chapter 9.

<sup>197</sup>The Greek verb translated "believes" in verse 26 is in the present tense, indicative of the fact that true, saving faith is a persevering faith. The words, "will never die" are emphatic, literally "not not die unto the ages" (see footnotes 153 and 179, as well as 3:15-16).

<sup>198</sup>Wiersbe (p. 336) observes: "Mary is found three times in the Gospel record, and each time she is at the feet of Jesus (Luke 10:39; John 11:32; 12:3)."

<sup>199</sup>The Greek verb translated "deeply moved" in verses 33 and 38 is a very strong one. It means to be angered, outraged, or indignant. The Greek verb translated "troubled" in verse 33 (cf. 12:27, 13:21, 14:1, and 27, as well as Matthew 2:3, 14:26, Luke 1:12, and 24:38) is also a strong one. It means to be stirred or agitated (the same word is used to describe the stirring of the water in the pool of Bethesda in 5:7); besides anxiety and agitation, Carson (p. 440) uses such words as revulsion and horror. Jesus' indignation (for other instances of Jesus' righteous indignation, see Mark 3:5, as well as His two cleansings of the temple in John 2:13-17 and Matthew 21:12-13//Mark 11:15-17// Luke 19:45-46) and agitation was likely over the calamitous consequences of sin, not the least of which is death (Romans 5:12, 6:23a, and James 1:15).

<sup>200</sup>The Greek verb used to describe Jesus' weeping in verse 35 differs from the one used to describe the weeping of Mary and the mourners in verse 33. The second is the word used to describe loud wailing, while the first is the word used to describe quiet weeping. Though Jesus' weeping was of the quiet variety, according to Bruce (p. 246), the tense of the Greek verb lends itself to the rendering, "burst into tears" (cf. Hendriksen, 2:155 and Morris, p. 495).



Genesis 23:19).<sup>201</sup>

After having the stone removed (verse 41a) and uttering a brief prayer of thanksgiving (verses 41b-42), Jesus performed the most magnificent miracle of His ministry<sup>202</sup> by divine fiat with the words: “Lazarus<sup>203</sup>, come forth” (verse 43; cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:16), a “let there be life” (~ the “let there be light,” etc. of Genesis 1:3f), prompting Lazarus to walk out of the cave-tomb, grave clothes (cf. 20:5-7) and all (verse 44).

One cannot help but see in the physical resurrection of Lazarus a “fulfillment” of the words of 5:21, 25, and 28, as well as an illustration of the spiritual resurrection that takes place at the moment of conversion (Ephesians 2:5).

### ***Response to the Raising of Lazarus (11:45-54)***

As happens so often throughout John’s Gospel, Jesus’ words and works produce two divergent responses: belief (verse 45; cf. 20:30-31; that the raising of Lazarus was a sign of the Messiah is seen by Matthew 11:5’s//Luke 7:22’s “the dead are raised up”) and unbelief (verse 46<sup>204</sup>).

Those who responded in unbelief reported Jesus to the authorities (verse 46), who met in emergency session to discuss the “Jesus problem” (verse 47). Their primary concern was that Jesus would lead a political insurrection, causing the Romans to take away their “place,” a reference to the temple (see Acts 6:13-14 and 21:28), and their national identity (verse 48).

Caiaphas (cf. Matthew 26:3, 26:57f//Mark 14:53f//Luke 22:54f//John 18:24, Luke 3:2, John 18:13-14, and Acts 4:6), high priest and president of the Sanhedrin from 18-36 A.D., advised that Jesus be killed in order that the nation

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<sup>201</sup>Hughes (p. 287) writes: “A typical tomb in those days had eight occupants. It was a hallowed-out room, perhaps in a hillside. It had three indentations on one side, three on the other, and two at the end. Lazarus’ tomb could well have already been occupied by other bodies from previous years.”

<sup>202</sup>Jesus raised the dead on two other occasions: the widow’s son in Luke 7:11-17 and Jairus’s daughter in Luke 8:41-42, 49-56. What made the raising of Lazarus even more extraordinary than these two was the time that had elapsed between his death and resurrection.

<sup>203</sup>“A quaint Puritan writer said that if Jesus had not named Lazarus when He shouted, He would have emptied the whole cemetery!” (Wiersbe, p. 337).

<sup>204</sup>The unbelieving response of some who witnessed the miracle (verse 46; cf. 12:37) is a “fulfillment” of the words of Luke 16:31b: “they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.”

as a whole be spared (verses 49<sup>205</sup>-50). “He reasons that if Jesus lives, the nation will die. Therefore, in the interest of patriotism, Jesus must die so that the nation will live” (Dobson, p. 199). John points out the spiritual significance of Caiaphas’ words (verses 51-52; cf. Isaiah 56:8 and John 10:16).

The Sanhedrin took Caiaphas’ advice (verse 53), prompting Jesus to once again (cf. 7:1) retreat, this time north to Ephraim near the Judean wilderness (verse 54).

***Mary Anoints Jesus (12:1-11; cf. Matthew 26:6-13//Mark 14:3-9)***

Jesus eventually returned to Bethany to attend a supper in His honor (verse 2<sup>206</sup>) at the home of Simon the leper (Matthew 26:6//Mark 14:3) six days before the Passover on which He was crucified (verse 1).<sup>207</sup>

As in the account of Luke 10:38-42, Martha was serving (verse 2), while Mary was worshipping (verse 3; cf. 11:2).<sup>208</sup>

Mary anointed Jesus with a Roman pound (11-12 ounces) of perfume equivalent in worth to nearly a year of wages (verse 3).<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>205</sup>P. D. Duke (cited in Morris, p. 503), commenting on Caiaphas’ “You know nothing at all” in verse 49, says: “Irony can hardly be richer. Caiaphas, who has waited in the wings these many chapters, now steps on stage to utter his only line. He delivers it with proper conviction and flourish, but cannot hear how he mocks himself, and never perceives that his unseen audience looks on with amusement and pity ... the ignorance for which the high priest berates them is the very ignorance in which he will excel them.”

<sup>206</sup>Verse 2 says that those who dined were “reclining at the table.” Kruse (p. 258) explains: “They would have been reclining, leaning on their left elbows with their heads toward the U-shaped table ... and their feet away from the table.” This was also the case with the Last Supper.

<sup>207</sup>Kostenberger (p. 358) pinpoints the date of this supper as Saturday, March 28, 33 A.D.

<sup>208</sup>One noticeable difference between the incident of Luke 10:38-42 and this one is that in the first incident Martha was “distracted” (Luke 10:40) and “worried and bothered” (Luke 10:41), while in the second she is not (at least no mention is made of such). It appears that she had learned to serve her Savior with a right spirit. Hughes (p. 293) suggests that Martha served her Savior on this occasion with perspiration, Mary with perfume.

<sup>209</sup>This perfume is described by Winifred Walker (cited in Kostenberger, p. 361) as “a rich rose red and very sweetly scented.” One denarius=one day’s wage (Matthew 20:2). Three hundred denarii (verse 5)=300 days of wages. Based on a 6-day work week, 300 days of work=nearly a year’s worth of work. The reason why this particular perfume was so pricey is because of the production process and the shipping distance. It was extracted

Judas objected (verses 4-5<sup>210</sup>), but not without some supporters among the other disciples (Matthew 26:8-9//Mark 14:4-5). John goes on to unmask Judas' ulterior motive (verse 6).<sup>211</sup>

Jesus defended Mary's act and pointed out its special significance (verse 7; cf. Matthew 26:12//Mark 14:8), "a symbolic embalming of his body for burial" (Kruse, p. 259). Mary, perhaps due to her attentiveness to Jesus' teaching (see Luke 10:39), seems to have understood better than the Twelve that Jesus was about to die and, consequently, decided to use this perfume on Jesus before He died, rather than after (see 19:39-40).

Jesus' words in verse 8 (cf. Deuteronomy 15:11) do not imply that God's people should not seek to provide for the poor (see Galatians 2:10), but simply point to Mary's proper priority.

***The Triumphal Entry (12:12-19; cf. Matthew 21:1-11//Mark 11:1-10//Luke 19:28-40)***<sup>212</sup>

On "Palm Sunday" (if we may be so anachronistic), Jesus entered Jerusalem for the final time during His first advent.

Jews from all over the world had converged on Jerusalem for the Passover (verse 12; cf. verse 19).<sup>213</sup>

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from the nard plant, found in northern India (Kostenberger, p. 363), or between India and Tibet (Hendriksen, 2:175).

<sup>210</sup>Rightly could it be said of Judas that he "knew the price of everything and value of nothing."

<sup>211</sup>The KJV (cf. NIV and ESV) says that Judas had the "bag" (cf. 13:29), which was more likely a box than a bag (so NASB, Morris, p. 514, and Kostenberger, p. 363). The proceeds that Judas pilfered from this money box were such as those given by the women mentioned in Luke 8:2-3, "who were contributing to their [Jesus and the Twelve] support out of their private means" (Luke 8:3). That Judas' "besetting sin" may have been a love of money may be seen by this passage, as well as Matthew 26:14-15//Mark 14:10-11//Luke 22:3-5. If so, he is a prime example of what 1 Timothy 6:9-10 warns against.

<sup>212</sup>The Triumphal Entry is one of the handful of incidents in the life of the Lord that are recorded in all four Gospels (another would be the feeding of the 5,000+, the only miracle of Jesus recorded in all four).

<sup>213</sup>According to the Jewish historian, Josephus, Jerusalem's population swelled to more than 2.7 million during a later Passover. Kostenberger (p. 368) suggests as many as a million on this particular Passover.

They welcomed Jesus to Jerusalem with political fervor, confessing Him as king (verse 13; cf. 1:49). The palm branch (cf. Revelation 7:9) was a national symbol, symbolizing victory and kingship (Kruse, p. 260). Quoting Psalm 118:25-26, they cried out<sup>214</sup>, “Hosanna,” which means “save, please” or “save now.” The salvation they were thinking of, however, was political (from Caesar), not spiritual (from sin).

Jesus, however, dispelled such notions by riding into town on a donkey, an animal of peace (verse 14), rather than on a horse, an animal of war,<sup>215</sup> in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, written some 500 years prior, and as a sign that He was the Messiah (verse 15).

The significance of all of this was lost on the disciples (verse 16; cf. 2:22 and 20:9).<sup>216</sup>

### ***Jesus’ Final Public Words (12:20-36)***

Among those who made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover were some Gentiles (verse 20; cf. verse 19’s “the world has gone after Him”), who did not feel at liberty to go to Jesus directly (this would soon change, Ephesians 2:11-19), going indirectly through Philip (verse 21), perhaps because 1) Philip was a Greek name and/or 2) Philip was from an area that bordered Gentile territory. Philip, in turn, took their request to Andrew (verse 22a), who was from the same city as Philip (see 1:44). Philip and Andrew together took the request to Jesus (verse 22b).

This Gentile attempt to reach Jesus was a signal of sorts that the time had come for Jesus to die (verse 23), a death that would be exceedingly fruitful<sup>217</sup>, including

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<sup>214</sup>The verb translated “cried out” in verse 13 is in the imperfect tense, signifying a continual crying out.

<sup>215</sup>“He does not enter Jerusalem on a war horse, which would have whipped the political aspirations of the vast crowds into insurrectionist frenzy” (Carson, p. 433). However, when Christ comes again, He will come on a horse (see Revelation 19:11f).

<sup>216</sup>Commenting on verse 16, Ryle (3:119) states: “The disciples found, long after the triumphant entry into Jerusalem, that they had been unconscious actors in a mighty accomplishment of Scripture. This is a thought for all of us. We have not the least idea, during the greater part of our lives, how much of God’s great purposes on earth are being carried on through us and by us, without our being conscious of it. The full extent to which they are carried on we shall never know till we wake up in another world. We shall then discern with wonder and amazement the full meaning of many a thing in which we were unconscious agents during our lives.”

<sup>217</sup>“Quite literally each grain [of wheat] contains, if it is a good seed, a million similar offspring” (Hughes, p. 300).

Gentile salvation (verse 24).

Jesus' self denial, seen in His imminent death, served as an example and expectation for His followers (verse 26a), who were to "hate" their lives in order to hold on to them, rather than "love" them and, so, lose<sup>218</sup> them<sup>219</sup> (verse 25; cf. Matthew 10:39//16:25//Mark 8:35//Luke 9:24//17:33), to, paradoxically, live by dying (Hughes, p. 301), win by losing, or gain by giving up. As Jim Elliot famously said: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." The gain is being with Jesus (verse 26b; cf. John 14:3, Philippians 1:23, and 1 Thessalonians 4:17) and being honored by the Father (verse 26c; cf. 1 Samuel 2:30).

Jesus, showing His true humanity, was troubled (verse 27a; same verb as in 11:33; see footnote 199 for an explanation; cf. Matthew 26:38//Mark 14:34 and Luke 22:44) over the physical and spiritual (see Matthew 27:46//Mark 15:34) prospects of His imminent death, indicating how significant our sin really is, yet willingly submitted to it (verse 27; cf. Matthew 26:39//Mark 14:36//Luke 22:42) and sought it (verse 28a; cf. 17:1, as well as Matthew 6:9).

For the third time in Jesus' ministry (1st time at His baptism in Matthew 3:17//Mark 1:11//Luke 3:22; 2<sup>nd</sup> time at His transfiguration in Matthew 17:5//Mark 9:7//Luke 9:35; cf. 2 Peter 1:17), the Father audibly expressed His approval of the Son (verse 28b), which the bystanders misinterpreted (verse 29).

<sup>220</sup>

The Cross would have as some of its consequences the condemnation of unrepentant sinners (verse 31a) and the conquering of Satan (verse 31b; cf. 16:11,

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<sup>218</sup>"Loses" in verse 25 is in the present tense, leading Morris (p. 527) to conclude: "Jesus is saying that anyone who loves his life is destroying it right now."

<sup>219</sup>Hatred here is hyperbolic (cf. Luke 14:26), with hatred and love not being used absolutely, but relatively. To love one and hate the other means to have a passionate preference for the one over the other. As examples of so "hating"/not "loving" life, see Acts 20:24 and Revelation 12:11. "When someone asked [George Muller], 'What has been the secret of your life?' Muller hung his head and said, 'There was a day when I died.' Then he bent lower and said, 'Died to George Muller, his opinions, preferences, tastes, and will; died to the world, its approval or censure; died to the approval or blame even of brethren or friends'" (Hughes, p. 301).

<sup>220</sup>As this verse shows, personal experience can be easily misinterpreted. Personal experience is not a solid foundation upon which to build one's life. Scripture is. See 2 Peter 1:17-19 in this regard (including the NASB's alternate rendering at the beginning of verse 19).

as well as Colossians 2:15 and Hebrews 2:14), “the ruler of this world” (cf. 14:30 and 16:11, as well as 2 Corinthians 4:4 and Ephesians 2:2).

When Jesus would be “lifted up” (cf. 3:14 and 8:28), i.e., crucified (verse 33), He would draw (cf. 6:44) all men without distinction (not without exception) to Himself (verse 32), whether Jews or Gentiles (see 10:16, 11:52, and Revelation 5:9), such as the Gentiles who had come to see Him on this occasion.

In response to Jesus’ words, the crowd was confused, thinking (perhaps based on passages like Isaiah 9:7) that the Messiah would never die (verse 34a). Their confusion would have been clarified had they considered such passages as Isaiah 52:13-53:12 and Daniel 9:26. Their confusion, however, led them to ask a crucial question: “Who is this Son of Man?” (verse 34b; cf. the crucial question of 9:35).

Once again (cf. 8:12 and 9:5) Jesus refers to Himself as “the Light” (verses 35-36a), but as a light that was fading (verse 35a; cf. 7:33, 13:33, and 14:19). Accordingly, Jesus fades from public view (verse 36b; cf. 8:59) for the final time prior to the events surrounding His crucifixion.

### ***John’s Summary of Jesus’ Public Ministry (12:37-50)***

In fulfillment of the words of Isaiah 53:1 (verse 38; cf. the same words cited by Paul in Romans 10:16), the typical Jew rejected Jesus, even in the face of so many signs (verse 37; cf. 1:11), a reminder that seeing signs is not sufficient to save, only Scripture (cf. Luke 16:31). This has been the Jews’ typical response throughout their history (Deuteronomy 29:2-4).

As a result of their unbelief, the Jews experienced a judicial hardening of heart (see Deuteronomy 2:30, Romans 1:24, 26, 28, and Ephesians 4:18-19; cf. 1 Timothy 4:2’s seared conscience; Pharaoh in the book of Exodus is a prime example of this), in fulfillment of Isaiah 6:9-10, rendering them incapable of believing (verses 39-40).

According to verse 41, Isaiah (like Abraham before him in 8:56) saw the Son’s glory (in Isaiah 6) and spoke of Him (in such passages as Isaiah 7:14, 9:6-7, and 52:13-53:12).<sup>221</sup>

There is some question as to whether or not the ones spoken of in verses 42-43 (cf. 9:22) were true believers (see 2:23-25 and 5:44, as well as Galatians 1:10). Bruce, Carson, and Combs think not. However, contextually (notice the “nevertheless” of verse 42), it seems that they comprised part of the believing remnant in Jesus’ day. If they were saved, the fear of man had certainly ensnared

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<sup>221</sup>Ryle (3:159) rightly remarks: “How any one, in the face of this evidence, can say that Jesus Christ is not very God, it seems hard to understand.”

them (Proverbs 29:25). Among them were Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus (19:38-39).

Verses 44-50 are a summary of Jesus' teaching throughout John's Gospel:

Verse 44<sup>222</sup>—cf. 13:20

Verse 45—cf. 14:9 (see also 2 Corinthians 4:6, Colossians 1:15, 2:9, and Hebrews 1:3)

Verse 46—cf. 1:4-9, 3:19-20, 8:12, 9:5, and 12:35-36 (note: as in 8:12 and 9:5, the "I" of this verse is emphatic)

Verse 47—cf. 3:17 (note: though judgment was not the purpose for Christ's first advent, it is the result—see 5:22, 27, and 9:39)

Verse 48<sup>223</sup>—cf. 1:11 and 5:45-47

Verses 49-50—cf. 7:16, 8:26, 28, 38, 40, 14:24, and 15:15 (cf. Deuteronomy 18:18)

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<sup>222</sup>Jesus crying out (cf. 7:28 and 37) implies the importance of what He cries (Morris, p. 539).

<sup>223</sup>Based on this verse, Ryle (3:170) writes: "There will be a resurrection of all faithful sermons at the last day."

## **John 13-14**

Chapters 13-17 comprise the third (the prologue, 1:1-18, being the first and Jesus' public ministry with His disciples, 1:19-12:50, being the second) major section of John's Gospel and focus on Jesus' private ministry to His disciples. Whereas the public ministry of chapters 1-12 covers a period of several years, the private ministry of chapters 13-17 covers a period of one evening, the night before Christ was crucified (Maundy<sup>224</sup> Thursday).<sup>225</sup>

Chapters 13 and 14 contain another of Jesus' famous discourses recorded in John's Gospel (cf. the "Bread of Life Discourse" in chapter 6 and the "Good

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<sup>224</sup>On this night, Jesus gave the disciples a "new commandment" (13:34). In Latin, new commandment is *mandatum novum*. The "Maundy" in Maundy Thursday comes from the Latin word for commandment, *mandatum*. The commandment to love one's fellow man was not new in the sense that it had not been given before (see Leviticus 19:18), but in the sense that Jesus, by His death, gave it fresh significance ("even as I have loved you" in 13:34; cf. 15:12-13, Ephesians 5:2, 25, 1 John 3:16, and 4:9-11).

<sup>225</sup>According to Hughes (p. 311), as chapter 13 begins, the Cross is 15-18 hours away.



Shepherd Discourse” in chapter 10), the “Upper Room<sup>226</sup> Discourse.”<sup>227</sup> Prior to the discourse itself (in 13:21-14:31), Jesus and the disciples share a meal (the “Last Supper”), during which Jesus institutes the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper (not recorded by John) and washes the disciples’ feet (recorded only by John, in 13:1-20).

### ***Jesus Washes the Disciples’ Feet (13:1-20)***

John chronologically places the events in the Upper Room “before the Feast of the Passover” (verse 1). The Passover (also known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread—see Luke 22:1) was one of three (Pentecost and Booths/Tabernacles being the other two) major annual Jewish feasts/festivals. It commemorated the death angel passing over the Jewish firstborns (due to the blood of the sacrificial lamb being applied to the lintel and doorposts, Exodus 12:7, 13, and 22-23) during the tenth and final plague inflicted upon the Egyptians prior to the Exodus. How significant that it was on Passover that Jesus, the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (1:29; cf. 1:36, Isaiah 53:7, 1 Corinthians 5:7, and 1 Peter 1:19), was sacrificed.

The time for Jesus to sacrifice His life for man’s sin, His “hour,” had come (verse 1; cf. 12:23 and 17:1). His death would manifest the magnitude of His love for His own (verse 1; cf. 15:13).<sup>228</sup>

Jesus signified both His love for His own and His death (less than 24 hours away) by washing His disciples’ feet.<sup>229</sup> He assumed the position of the lowliest servant, both in appearance<sup>230</sup> (verse 4; cf. Luke 12:37 and 17:8) and action (verse 5).

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<sup>226</sup>MacArthur (p. 1) describes the Upper Room as “a borrowed or rented banqueting room atop some shop or large family dwelling in Jerusalem.”

<sup>227</sup>MacArthur (p. 1) calls Jesus’ words in chapters 13-16 “His last will and testament.”

<sup>228</sup>MacArthur (p. 10) describes the phrase that ends verse 1 as “to perfection ... to the uttermost ... with total fullness of love.” Likewise, Herman Ridderbos (cited in Kostenberger, p. 402) describes it as “love in its highest intensity.” The NASB translates the same phrase in 1 Thessalonians 2:16 as “to the utmost.”

<sup>229</sup>“The minuteness with which every action of our Lord is related here is very striking. No less than seven distinct things are named, —rising, laying aside garments, taking a towel, girding Himself, pouring water into a basin, washing and wiping. This very particularity stamps the whole transaction with reality, and is the natural language of an astonished and admiring eye-witness” (Ryle, 4:10).

<sup>230</sup>“He then removed His outer robe, His belt, and very likely His inner tunic—leaving Him clothed like a slave” (MacArthur, p. 13). In the words of Philippians 2:7, He took the form of a servant. And in the words of 1 Peter 5:5, He clothed Himself with humility. According to Kostenberger (p. 404), the towel was “a long towel fashioned to the

When Jesus approached Peter to wash his feet, Peter emphatically<sup>231</sup> objected (verses 6 and 8a; cf. a similar reticence on the part of John the Baptist about baptizing Jesus in Matthew 3:14). Jesus replied by pointing out the soteriological or salvific significance of this act (verse 8b)<sup>232</sup>, prompting Peter to acquiesce (verse 9).

In the salvation process<sup>233</sup>, foot washing symbolized sanctification (verse 10<sup>234</sup>; cf. Ephesians 5:26-27 and 1 John 1:9; for washing as a symbol of salvation, see 1 Corinthians 6:11, Titus 3:5, and Revelation 1:5). Besides sanctification, foot washing also signified servanthood. Jesus, the disciples' Teacher and Lord<sup>235</sup>, was a servant (cf. Matthew 20:28//Mark 10:45, Luke 22:27, and Philippians 2:7); therefore, they should be also (verses 13-16).

### ***Is Foot Washing an Ordinance?***

Some groups (such as the Grace Brethren and Seventh-day Adventists) practice foot washing as an ordinance. However, since foot washing was not practiced as an ordinance by the early church (whereas baptism and the Lord's Supper were), Baptists do not. Furthermore, foot washing was culturally-bound

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shoulder.”

<sup>231</sup>In the original, both “you” and “my” in verse 6 are emphatically placed (“do You wash my feet?” is the idea). Verse 8 employs the emphatic double negative: “not not shall you wash my feet” (see footnotes 127 and 179). Hughes (p. 314) gives a literal rendering of Peter's words in verses 6 and 8: “Lord, You, my feet do You wash! No, never shall You wash my feet until eternity.”

<sup>232</sup>Jesus' humble act of washing His disciples' feet was a precursor to the even more humble act of laying down His life. “If Peter could not submit to having his feet washed by Jesus, he would certainly have trouble accepting what Jesus would do for him on the cross” (MacArthur, p. 16).

<sup>233</sup>Salvation is a process: we have been saved (past tense) from the penalty of sin; we are being saved (present tense) from the power of sin; and we shall one day be saved (future tense) from the very presence of sin.

<sup>234</sup>The Greek verb translated “bathed” in verse 10 is in the perfect tense, signifying a past, point-in-time occurrence with ongoing consequences, indicative of the permanent nature of salvation.

<sup>235</sup>Notice how Jesus unequivocally claims to be divine in verse 13 (cf. 5:17, 8:58, and 10:30).

(unlike us, they wore sandals and walked on dusty roads<sup>236</sup>). The point of perpetuation is not the practice of foot washing, but the principle of servanthood.

The potency of Jesus' action is magnified by the realization that, according to Luke 22:24-27, while Jesus and the disciples were gathered in the Upper Room, the disciples argued over which one of them was the greatest.<sup>237</sup>

In the form of a beatitude, Jesus taught that acting upon what one knows brings blessing (verse 17<sup>238</sup>; cf. Psalm 19:11, 119:1-2, Luke 11:28, and James 1:25).<sup>239</sup>

Though Jesus washed the feet of each of the Twelve, not all twelve were "clean," i.e., saved (verses 2, 10-11, and 18; cf. 6:64 and 70-71). In fulfillment of Psalm 41:9 (quoted by Jesus in verse 18), Judas "lifted up his heel<sup>240</sup>" against Jesus.<sup>241</sup>

Jesus foretold Judas' betrayal, yet another evidence of His deity (verse 19; cf. 14:29).

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<sup>236</sup>"Many groups throughout church history have practiced literal foot-washing as a church ordinance. However, present culture in many lands does not call for the need to wash dust from the feet of one's guests" (Blum, p. 320).

<sup>237</sup>Hendriksen (3:228) postulates that they were arguing over the order in which they were to be seated at the table, the greatest being the ones who would get the seats on either side of Jesus. Had the disciples heeded what Jesus taught in Matthew 20:26, Mark 9:35, Luke 9:48, and 22:26, they would have jumped at the opportunity to do the foot washing.

<sup>238</sup>Notice the order: knowing (mind), then doing (will), then feeling (emotion).

<sup>239</sup>Carson (p. 469), commenting on verse 17, states: "There is a form of religious piety that utters a hearty 'Amen!' to the most stringent demands of discipleship, but which rarely does anything about them."

<sup>240</sup>Morris (p. 553) understands this as "a metaphor derived from lifting up a horse's hoof preparatory to kicking."

<sup>241</sup>"It is significant that our Lord employed a phrase from Psalm 41:9, for it is generally agreed that Psalm 41 refers to the traitor Ahithophel [see 2 Samuel 15:12], who hung himself after he betrayed his master, David [see 2 Samuel 17:23]. Judas would have the same end [see Matthew 27:5]. Jesus was saying, 'Men, there is an Ahithophel in our fellowship'" (Hughes, p. 321).

### ***The Upper Room Discourse (13:21-14:31)***

13:21-30. Jesus' reflection on Judas' betrayal, alluded to in 13:18, caused Him considerable consternation (verse 21a).<sup>242</sup> His explicit announcement of it (verse 21b; cf. Mark 14:18) caused considerable commotion among the disciples (verse 22), prompting Peter to ask John to ask Jesus to identify His betrayer (verses 23-25<sup>243</sup>; cf. 21:20), which Jesus did through a signal, giving a dipped morsel, a piece of unleavened bread (or possibly meat) dipped in sauce, and a sign of friendship, to Judas (verse 26).<sup>244</sup> John, being the only one privy to Jesus' answer, would thus have been the only one (other than Jesus and Judas) who knew the betrayer's identity.

Judas' betrayal was satanically-motivated, to say the least (verse 27a; cf. 13:2, as well as Luke 22:3). Judas leaves the Upper Room at this point to carry out his diabolical plot (verse 30).<sup>245</sup> The next time Judas appears (in chapter 18), he consummates his betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane.

13:31-14:31. This section of John's Gospel records the first part of the Upper Room Discourse. MacArthur (p. 46) calls the Discourse a "valedictory address" by Jesus to the Eleven.

Judas' departure was, like the episode in 12:20-22, a signal of sorts that the time

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<sup>242</sup>Kostenberger (p. 410) translates: "Jesus was stirred up inside," describing Him as "in a state of turmoil, his whole inner self convulsing." Hughes (pp. 321-322) suggests that Jesus was troubled, not so much for Himself, but for Judas. For more on the Greek verb translated "troubled," see footnote 199.

<sup>243</sup>Most Oriental meals were eaten while seated. However, on special occasions, such as this one (or when no seating was available, such as in 6:10), meals were eaten in a reclining position (contra da Vinci's famous painting of the Last Supper), in which the participants would lay on their left sides, lean on their left elbows, eat with their right hands, have their heads closest to the table, and their feet farthest from the table. John, being on Jesus' right, would have had to lean back into Jesus' bosom to ask Him a question.

<sup>244</sup>Hughes (p. 323) suggests that Judas was seated to the left of Jesus, the place of highest honor (the place to the right, where John sat, was the place of second highest honor). Judas is called "Judas Iscariot," Iscariot literally meaning "man of Kerioth," Kerioth being the Judean town Judas was from.

<sup>245</sup>Most interpreters see significance in the fact that verse 30 mentions that "it was night," seeing the physical darkness as a picture of the spiritual darkness of Judas' soul (cf. Luke 22:53b).

had come for Jesus to be “glorified”<sup>246</sup> (13:31-32; cf. 12:23), this by being crucified, etc.<sup>247</sup>

Through the use of the endearing designation, “little children” (used also by John in 1 John 2:1, 12, 28, 3:7, 18, 4:4, and 5:21), Jesus told His disciples (as He had the Jews in 7:33-34; cf. 8:21 and 12:35) that He would soon be leaving them and that they would be unable to go with Him (verse 33). Unlike the Jews, however, who, because of their unbelief, would never be able to follow Jesus to heaven, the disciples eventually would, but their path to it, like His, would include suffering (verse 36b; cf. 21:18-19, the “cup”<sup>248</sup> of Mark 10:38-39, and 1 Peter 2:21).

In verse 34, Jesus gives the disciples a “new commandment” (see footnote 224), the keeping of which would demonstrate they were truly Christian (verse 35).<sup>249</sup>

In response to Peter’s declaration that he would die for Christ (verse 37b<sup>250</sup>; cf. Luke 22:33), Jesus informs him that he would deny Christ instead (verse 38; cf. Matthew 26:34//Mark 14:30//Luke 22:34), as would take place in 18:17 and 25-27. Rather than Peter dying for Christ, Christ would die for Peter. Later, Peter would die for the cause of Christ (see 21:18-19).

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<sup>246</sup>“Glorified” in verses 31 and 32 is in the past tense in the original, signifying that Christ’s glorification, though yet future at the time, was a “done deal” (so is the believer’s glorification, according to Romans 8:30).

<sup>247</sup>Jesus’ glorification commenced with His crucifixion (His being “lifted up,” 3:14, 8:28, and 12:32) and culminated with His return to glory at His ascension and session (17:5).

<sup>248</sup>The cup of suffering (see Matthew 26:39//Mark 14:36).

<sup>249</sup>Tertullian, a late 2<sup>nd</sup> century-early 3<sup>rd</sup> century church father (cited in Hendriksen, 2:254), once wrote: “But it is mainly the deeds of a love so noble that lead many to put a brand upon us. ‘See,’ they say, ‘how they love one another,’ for they themselves are animated by mutual hatred; ‘see how they are ready even to die for one another,’ for they themselves will rather put to death.”

<sup>250</sup>Commenting on this exchange between Peter and Jesus, Carson (p. 486) states: “Good intentions in a secure room after good food are far less attractive in a darkened garden with a hostile mob.” Maclaren (2:244) likewise writes: “In the upper room, with its sacred atmosphere, it was easy to feel, and would have been easy to do ... But it was not so easy, lying drowsily in Gethsemane, in the cold spring night, waiting for the Master’s coming out from beneath the trembling shadows of the olive trees, or huddled up by the fire at the lower end of the hall in the grey morning, when vitality is at its lowest.”

In light of what Jesus had told them in the Upper Room up to this point (one of them would betray Him, He would be leaving them shortly, and Peter would deny Him), it is not surprising that the disciples were “troubled”<sup>251</sup> (14:1a; cf. 11:33, 12:27, 13:21, and 14:27; see also footnote 199 for the flavor of this word in the original). The tonic for such heart trouble is trust (14:1b<sup>252</sup>; cf. Isaiah 26:3-4).

To further alleviate the disciples’ distress, Jesus assures them that both He and they will one day be reunited when He comes again (14:2-3<sup>253</sup>). In this regard, Henry (p. 1109) writes: “The belief of Christ’s second coming ... is an excellent preservative against trouble of heart.” See James 5:8.

Jesus answers Thomas’ question in 14:5 by uttering the 6<sup>th</sup> of His 7 “I am” statements recorded in John’s Gospel (14:6), which Herman Ridderbos (cited in Kostenberger, p. 428) calls “the core statement of this entire Gospel.” Jesus is the only<sup>254</sup> way to Heaven (cf. Acts 4:12, as well as Romans 5:2, 1 Timothy 2:5,

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<sup>251</sup>The way the sentence is structured in Greek, Jesus’ words could be more forcefully translated: “Stop letting your heart be troubled” or “Let not your hearts any longer be troubled” (Hendriksen, 2:262). Dobson (p. 202) describes “troubled” as stirred up, disturbed, or thrown into confusion; Hughes (p. 336) as shudder; and Hendriksen (2:262-263) as tempest-tossed, agitated, or thrown into a state of confusion and perplexity. It is interesting to note that, though Jesus’ own heart was troubled at the time (see 13:21), His concern was not His own trouble, but theirs.

<sup>252</sup>Both “believe”s in 14:1 can legitimately be translated as indicatives (statements of fact) or imperatives (commands). In Greek, the forms are the same. Most interpreters see both as imperatives (so also NASB and ESV).

<sup>253</sup>Several aspects of these verses warrant special comment. First, the “Father’s House” (14:2) is a reference to Heaven (see Deuteronomy 26:15, Psalm 33:13-14, and Isaiah 63:15). Second, the KJV’s (ultimately going back to the rendering in Jerome’s Latin Vulgate) “mansions” (14:2) is somewhat misleading. The NASB’s “dwelling places” is more accurate. “The imagery of a dwelling place (‘rooms’) is taken from the oriental house in which the sons and daughters have apartments under the same roof as their parents” (Tenney, p. 143). Unfortunately, the KJV rendering has caused misplaced emphasis on the opulence of the dwellings (emphasis on the dwelling places themselves), rather than on their abundance (emphasis on “many”). Third, the Cross was the means by which Jesus prepared a place in Heaven for us (14:2 and 3; so Carson, p. 489 and Kruse, p. 292). Fourth, what makes Heaven heavenly is not its opulence, but its Chief Occupant (14:3; cf. John 17:24, 2 Corinthians 5:8, Philippians 1:23, and 1 Thessalonians 4:17). To emphasize this, Jesus says “to Myself” (14:3), literally face to face (Dobson, p. 202 and Hendriksen, 2:265). Conversely, what makes Hell hellish is being eternally separated from Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:9).

<sup>254</sup>The original literally reads: “I I am the way . . . .” The “I” is repeated twice, for

and Hebrews 10:20). Jesus' sheep were lost/had lost their way; He came to earth to "find" them (Luke 19:10; cf. Luke 15:4-7). Once "found," His sheep follow Him (10:27) on the way to the "Father's house" (14:2). "The way" became a description of Christianity in the book of Acts (see Acts 9:2, 19:9, 23, 22:4, 24:14, and 22). Besides being "the way," Jesus is also "the truth and the life" (cf. 11:25 and 1 John 5:20).

Jesus responds to Philip's request for a theophany<sup>255</sup> in 14:8 by declaring that to see Him is to see the Father (14:9; cf. 1:18, 8:19, 14:7, and 12:45). This is because there is an eternal co-inherence between the Father and the Son, both being equally God in essence (14:10a and 11a; cf. 10:30), as evidenced by Jesus' words (14:10b; cf. 3:34, 7:16, 8:26, 28, 12:49-50, and 14:24) and works (14:11b; cf. 5:19, 36, 10:25, 32, and 37-38) while on earth.

Jesus' words in 14:12 are stunning, to say the least. In what sense would the disciples do greater works than Jesus did? Through the instrumentality of the ministry of the Holy Spirit upon the church after the Ascension (see Luke 24:47-49, John 7:39, Acts 1:4-5, and 8; cf. John 20:22), the disciples had many more converts than Jesus did<sup>256</sup> and spread the gospel throughout the world, not just Palestine.

Prayer "in Jesus' name," i.e., in accordance with His character and will, is guaranteed to be answered (14:13a and 14; cf. 15:16, 16:23-24, and 1 John 5:14-15), to the glory of God (14:13b; cf. David's prayer in 2 Samuel 7:18f//1 Chronicles 17:16f, especially 2 Samuel 7:25-26a//1 Chronicles 17:23-24a; Elijah's prayer in 1 Kings 18:36-37, especially verse 37; Hezekiah's prayer in 2 Kings 19:14f//Isaiah 37:14f, especially 2 Kings 19:19//Isaiah 37:20; and Jesus' prayer in John 17:1f, especially verse 1).

Those who truly love God (i.e., are saved) obey Him (14:15; cf. 14:21a, 23a, and 24a, as well as 1 John 5:2-3).

Besides Jesus (cf. 1 John 2:1), the apostles (and all other church age believers) would have "another Helper"<sup>257</sup> (14:16), the Holy Spirit (14:26), the Spirit of truth

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emphasis. One could translate: "I and no other am the way."

<sup>255</sup>A theophany is a physical manifestation of God's presence. The word is derived from the Greek words, *theos*, God + *phanos*, appearance.

<sup>256</sup>"There were more converts after the initial sermon of Peter at Pentecost than are recorded for Jesus during his entire career" (Tenney, p. 145).

<sup>257</sup>The Greek word translated "Helper" by the NASB and ESV ("Comforter" by the KJV and "Counselor" by the NIV) transliterated is "Paraclete," from the Greek verb *parakaleo*, which literally means "to call beside" (from *para*, beside + *kaleo*, to call). It

(14:17; cf. 15:26, 16:13, and 1 John 5:6), whose special presence would be sent by the Father (14:26 and 15:26) and the Son (15:26) for the duration of the church age (14:16), a privilege the unbelieving world would not experience (14:17; cf. 1 Corinthians 2:14) and one that would not leave believers orphaned (14:18; cf. Hebrews 13:5b).

The Holy Spirit performed a special ministry for the apostles<sup>258</sup> in their role as instruments of inspiration (14:26; cf. 2:22, 12:16, 20:9, and 2 Peter 1:21).

The disciples need not be troubled (14:27; cf. 14:1) because Jesus bequeathed to them His peace (cf. Philippians 4:7 and Colossians 3:15), meaning not the absence of conflict (so 16:33), but the presence of calmness and confidence in the midst of conflict, unlike the world, which has no such peace to give (cf. Isaiah 48:22 and 57:21).

Jesus' statement that the Father is greater than Him (14:28) should not be understood to mean that He is inferior in essence to the Father, as He is not (10:30), but rather to mean that His incarnate state on earth was inferior to the Father's existence in Heaven.

Jesus once again (cf. 13:19) gives evidence of His deity by foretelling what is to occur (14:29).

Though Satan, "the ruler of the world" (14:30; cf. 12:31 and 16:11), was coming for Christ (cf. 13:2 and 27), he could not conquer Christ.<sup>259</sup>

Jesus would "practice what He preached" (in 14:15, 21a, 23a, and 24a) by showing His love for the Father by His obedience (14:31), culminating with His going to the Cross (Philippians 2:8).

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has the idea of both strengthener/encourager and advocate/legal counselor.

<sup>258</sup>“The promise of v. 26 has in view the Spirit's role to the first generation of disciples, not to all subsequent Christians” (Carson, p. 505). Henry (p. 1119) describes this ministry of the Spirit: “The apostles were all of them to preach, and some of them to write, the things that Jesus did and taught, to transmit them to distant nations and future ages; now, if they had been left to themselves herein, some needful things might have been forgotten, others misrepresented, through the treachery of their memories; therefore the Spirit is promised to enable them truly to relate and record what Christ said unto them.”

<sup>259</sup>Jesus' words in 14:30 are emphatic, literally reading: “in me not he has nothing.”



## **John 15-16**

Chapters 13-17 of John's Gospel record Jesus' private ministry to His disciples. This private ministry has included Jesus washing His disciples' feet (chapter 13) and the Upper Room Discourse (chapters 13 and 14). It now continues with the Farewell Discourse (chapters 15 and 16). It will conclude with the Lord's Prayer (chapter 17).

### ***The Farewell Discourse (15:1-16:33)***

**15:1-11.** After finishing His Upper Room Discourse, Jesus, along with His disciples, departed (14:31) for Gethsemane (18:1). As they made the journey, Jesus gave His disciples a final discourse (the "Farewell Discourse"), the first part of which (15:1-11) focused on the disciples' relationship with Christ.

Perhaps prompted by the sight of the large golden vine, the national emblem of Israel, overhanging the main entrance to the temple, or by the sight of vines growing along the route<sup>260</sup>, Jesus gave the final of His 7 "I am" statements

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<sup>260</sup>Hendriksen (2:294) sees Jesus' words as prompted by the "fruit of the vine" (Matthew 26:29//Mark 14:25//Luke 22:18) that was drunk as part of the Passover meal and

recorded in John's Gospel, "I am the true vine" (15:1; cf. 15:5). In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel was often likened to a vine (see Psalm 80:8-16, Isaiah 5:1-7, 27:2-3, Jeremiah 2:21, 12:10, Ezekiel 15:1-8, 17:5-10, 19:10-14, and Hosea 10:1). In contrast to faithless Israel, Jesus is the true, genuine, or real vine (cf. Jesus being the "true Light" in 1:9 and the "true bread" in 6:32).

Some branches connected to Christ are fruitless (15:2a). Such dead branches are severed (15:2a), set aside (15:6a), and destroyed (15:6b; cf. Matthew 3:10 and 7:19). Who are these branches? They are professors (their connection to Christ), but not possessors, of salvation. Judas, who had apostatized just moments earlier, was a prime example. "The fruitless branches represent the mere professed believer who is finally severed from his superficial connection with Christ" (Kent, p. 181); they are "men and women with some degree of connection with Jesus, or with the Christian church, who nevertheless by failing to display the grace of perseverance finally testify that the transforming life of Christ has never pulsated within them" (Carson, p. 515). Henry (p. 1123) describes them as "tied to him by the thread of an outward profession."

A true possessor of salvation perseveres in faith/belief and good works/behavior (see John 8:31 and 1 John 2:19). He or she continues in his or her connection to Christ/abides in Christ<sup>261</sup>, thereby bearing fruit (15:5<sup>262</sup>) and proving to be a disciple (15:8b). If there is a true root, there will be fruit. See also Matthew 7:15-20, 13:8 and 23<sup>263</sup>, and Luke 6:43-44.

The fruit a true believer bears includes: the fruit of sinners saved (see John 4:36, Romans 1:13, and 1 Corinthians 16:15); the fruit of monetary giving (see Romans 15:28); the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23 and Ephesians 5:9), such as love (Galatians 5:22; cf. John 15:9-10, 12-13, and 17) and joy (Galatians 5:22; cf. John 15:11, as well as 16:24); and the fruit of giving praise to God (see Hebrews 13:15).

Believers are responsible to actively abide in Christ (15:4) through exposure to  

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institution of the Lord's Supper that took place in the Upper Room that night.

<sup>261</sup>Abiding in Christ is descriptive of salvation (compare John 6:54 with 6:56; see also 1 John 4:15). Christians abide in Christ; unbelievers do not.

<sup>262</sup>The end of 15:5 is emphatic, literally reading "without me not you are able to do nothing." An interesting historical tidbit is that among the first words spoken by Buzz Aldrin when he landed on the moon in 1969 were those of John 15:5: "I am the vine, ye are the branches ... Without me ye can do nothing."

<sup>263</sup>If one is a believer, he will bear some fruit, though the degree may vary from believer to believer. "An absolutely fruitless life is prima facie evidence that one is not a believer" (Tenney, p. 152).

the Word (15:7<sup>264</sup>). Part of this process includes pruning<sup>265</sup> (15:2b) by means of God's Word (15:3; cf. John 17:17 and Ephesians 5:26) and trials (see Hebrews 12:5-11), pruning that promotes productivity (15:2c).

The believer's motivation for bearing fruit should be to glorify God (15:8; cf. Matthew 5:16 and 1 Peter 2:12).

Besides abiding in Christ (15:4), believers are commanded to abide in Christ's love (15:9; cf. Jude 21), which, on a practical level, simply means keeping Christ's commandments (15:10; cf. 14:15, 21, and 23).<sup>266</sup>

15:12-17. The second part of Jesus' Farewell Discourse (15:12-17) focuses on the disciples' relationship with one another, relationships that are to be governed by reciprocal love (15:12 and 17; cf. 13:34, as well as Matthew 22:39, Romans 13:8, 1 Peter 1:22, 1 John 3:11, 23, 4:7, and 11), the supreme demonstration of which is giving one's life for another (15:13), which Jesus was about to do (see 10:11, 15, 17-18, as well as Romans 5:8, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 5:2, 25, and 1 John 3:16).

Believers are drafted into Christ's army, whether in regards to salvation or service; they do not enlist (15:16a and 19; cf. 2 Timothy 2:4). We did not find Christ; Christ found us. He was not lost; we were.

Once again (cf. 15:5), Jesus reminds His followers that they are to bear fruit (15:16b; cf. Ephesians 1:4 and 2:10). Such fruit includes answered prayer (15:16c; cf. John 14:13-14 and 16:23-24).

15:18-25. The third part of Jesus' Farewell Discourse (15:18-25) focuses on the disciples' relationship with the world. In contrast to the reciprocal love expected

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<sup>264</sup>Prayers prayed in accordance with God's will are guaranteed to be answered (1 John 5:14-15). The only way to know God's will is through the pages of Scripture (thus, "and My words abide in you" in verse 7). "Christ's words condition and control such a believer's mind so that his prayers conform to the Father's will. Since his prayer is in accord with God's will, the results are certain" (Blum, p. 326). "When believers abide in Christ and Christ's words abide in them, they live as close to Christ as well may be. Then their prayers will be prayers that are in accord with God's will and they will be fully answered" (Morris, p. 596).

<sup>265</sup>Robert Saucy (*The Church in God's Program*, p. 55) says that "no tree requires such extensive pruning as that of the vine."

<sup>266</sup>"Lest we should fill the injunction to remain in Christ's love with some insipid, pious jargon, v. 10 immediately makes the issue clear" (Carson, p. 520).

among the disciples (the previous section of 15:12-17), the world<sup>267</sup> would hate the disciples<sup>268</sup> (15:18-19; cf. John 17:14 and 1 John 3:13), a hatred that would be expressed through persecution (15:20; cf. especially Matthew 10:24-25, as well as Luke 6:40 and John 13:16).

The reason why the world would hate the disciples is because the world hated the One whom the disciples represented (15:18, 20-21, and 23-24; cf. Mark 13:9//Luke 21:12), a hatred without good reason (15:25; cf. Psalm 35:19 and 69:4), and because the disciples were not of the world (15:19; cf. 17:14).

15:26-16:15. The next segment of the Farewell Discourse (15:26-16:15) focuses primarily (but not exclusively) on the disciples' relationship with the Holy Spirit.

The "Helper" (15:26<sup>269</sup>; cf. 14:16, 26, and 16:7; for the significance of this designation, see footnote 257), the Holy Spirit, would, primarily through the disciples' testimony (15:27) recorded on the pages of the New Testament, testify (yet another witness summoned by John to "take the stand" to testify regarding Jesus' true identity) about Christ (15:26; cf. Acts 1:8 and 5:32).

Jesus once again (as in 15:20) braces the disciples for the persecution they will face after His departure (16:1-4). They would be excommunicated from the synagogue<sup>270</sup> (16:2a), like the man born blind (in 9:34). They would even be martyred (16:2b; according to Acts 12:2, John's brother, James, suffered such a fate at the hands of Herod Agrippa I in 44 A.D.; according to tradition, all of the disciples died martyr's deaths, except for John).

Jesus refocuses on the disciples' relationship with the Holy Spirit by informing the disciples that the Holy Spirit's ministry to them would be equal to, if not

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<sup>267</sup>"World" in this context refers to the mass of unsaved humanity in opposition to God.

<sup>268</sup>Here in John 15, to be friends of God (verses 13-15) is to be enemies with the world (verses 18-19), whereas in James 4:4, to be a friend of the world is to be an enemy of God.

<sup>269</sup>Note that in 15:26 the Holy Spirit is referred to with a personal pronoun ("He"), indicative of the fact that the Holy Spirit is a person, not an impersonal force of some kind. See also 14:16-17, 26, 16:7-8, and 13-15.

<sup>270</sup>According to Hendriksen (2:321), being so excommunicated included the loss of one's job, being exiled from family, and not being honorably buried at death.

superior to (see 14:12 and comments on), His ministry to them<sup>271</sup> (16:7<sup>272</sup>).

The Holy Spirit's "ministry" to the world, however, would be something altogether different. The Holy Spirit would "convict" unbelievers (16:8; cf. Acts 2:37), specifically of their sin of unbelief (16:9); of their attempts to vainly merit God's favor through works of "righteousness" (16:10a; cf. Isaiah 64:6, Matthew 5:20, Romans 10:3, Philippians 3:6-9, and Titus 3:5), rather than receiving the righteousness of Christ, which was confirmed by His resurrection and subsequent return to the Father (16:10b); and of their pending doom (cf. 3:18b), as evidenced by the pending doom<sup>273</sup> of their "father" (8:44), the devil (16:11; cf. 12:31).

The Holy Spirit would minister to the disciples in a special way as they penned the New Testament (16:13; cf. 14:26 and comments on).<sup>274</sup>

16:16-33. Jesus concludes His Farewell Discourse by reminding the disciples of His death the next day (16:16-33). Once Jesus died, the disciples would no longer see Him (16:16a). However, this would only last for three days (16:16b; cf. 20:19).

In conjunction with Jesus' death and resurrection, the disciples' emotions would swing 180°, going from supreme sadness (16:20a and 22a; cf. Matthew 9:15, Luke 22:45, 23:27, 24:17, and John 16:6) to great gladness (16:20b and 22b; cf. Luke 24:41, 52, and John 20:20), as with a woman in labor (16:21).

Jesus once again (as in 14:13-14 and 15:16b) reminds His disciples of the importance of praying in His name, meaning on the basis of His merits (Hendriksen, 2:335) or mediation (Ryle, 4:156) and according to His character and will. Such prayer will not only be answered (16:23b-24a), but will also result in full joy (16:24b; cf. John 15:11 and 1 John 1:4).

In fulfillment of Zechariah 13:7, the events of the next day would cause the

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<sup>271</sup>A sharp dichotomy should not be made, however, between the Holy Spirit's ministry to the disciples and Jesus' ministry to the disciples, as Jesus would continue to minister to the disciples through the Holy Spirit (15:26 and 16:14).

<sup>272</sup>"Jesus' valuation of what is for his disciples' 'good,' indeed, for our good, ought to temper longings of the 'Oh-if-only-I-could-have-been-in-Galilee-when-Jesus-was-there!' sort" (Carson, p. 534).

<sup>273</sup>Satan has already been tried, convicted, and sentenced. He is now on death row, awaiting his execution. Accordingly, the Greek verb translated "has been judged" in verse 11 is in the perfect tense, indicating a completed action, but with ongoing results.

<sup>274</sup>Blum (p. 329) writes: "The New Testament books are the fulfillment of this teaching ministry of the Spirit." Tenney (p. 158) similarly adds: "In this promise lies the germinal authority of the apostolic writings." See also Wiersbe (pp. 362-363).

disciples to temporarily flee from Christ (16:32a; cf. Matthew 26:31//Mark 14:27 and Matthew 26:56//Mark 14:50).<sup>275</sup> The Father, however, would be with Christ (16:32b; cf. 8:16 and 29).

In spite of the upheaval of the next day (16:33b<sup>276</sup>; cf. Acts 14:22, 2 Timothy 3:12, James 1:2, and 1 Peter 4:12), the disciples could have peace (16:33a; cf. 14:27 and comments on) and courage (16:33c; cf. Matthew 9:2, 22, 14:27//Mark 6:50, Mark 10:49, and Acts 23:11) because of their union to the One who has overcome the world (16:33c; cf. 1 John 4:4 and 5:4-5).<sup>277</sup> Hendriksen (2:346) rightly calls Jesus' words in 16:33 "a statement unparalleled for beauty and spiritual uplift."

## John 17

Immediately following His Farewell Discourse (chapters 15 and 16) and while still on the way to Gethsemane with His disciples (likely between midnight and 2 a.m. on the night before He went to the Cross), Jesus prayed for Himself<sup>278</sup> (verses

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<sup>275</sup>John's desertion was the shortest-lived, as he apparently was the only one who returned to be with Christ during His crucifixion (19:26-27).

<sup>276</sup>Morris (p. 633) understatedly says that the Greek word translated "tribulation" in 16:33 is one that "denotes great and pressing affliction, not some mild malady."

<sup>277</sup>"Say that a mountain-climber and his guide are trying to ascend a steep cliff. With the skill that results from long experience in mountaineering the guide makes the ascent, and shouts to the man who is at the lower end of the rope, 'Do not be afraid, for I have made it.' Similarly, the pressure that comes from the side of the world will never succeed in causing the disciples to lose their foothold, for Jesus (with whom they are united) has reached the top; hence *so* will they" (Hendriksen, 2:344; emphasis his).

<sup>278</sup>Instructively, Jesus' only request in His prayer for Himself is that both He and the Father might be glorified in the events of the next day and following (verses 1 and 5). Though at first glance it might seem improper to pray for one's own glorification, when one is God, as Jesus is (being preexistent, verse 5; being one with the Father, verse 11), such a prayer is perfectly appropriate. The glory of God ought to be the primary petition of our prayers (Matthew 6:9; cf. David's prayer in 2 Samuel 7:18f//1 Chronicles 17:16f, especially 2 Samuel 7:25-26a//1 Chronicles 17:23-24a; Elijah's prayer in 1 Kings 18:36b-37, especially verse 37; Hezekiah's prayer in 2 Kings 19:14f//Isaiah 37:14f, especially 2 Kings 19:19//Isaiah 37:20; Nehemiah's prayer in Nehemiah 1:11; and Paul's prayer in Philippians 1:11; see also John 12:28 and 14:13). D. A. Carson (*A Call to Spiritual Reformation*, p. 203) asks: "Has God become so central to all our thoughts and pursuits, and thus to our praying, that we cannot easily imagine asking for anything

1-5), His disciples (verses 6-19), and the church (verses 20-26).<sup>279</sup> I am calling this prayer “the Lord’s Prayer” (I call Matthew 6:9-13//Luke 11:2-4 “the model prayer”); it is also referred to as “the high-priestly prayer.”

According to Hughes (p. 391), Thomas Manton, chaplain of Oliver Cromwell, preached 45 sermons on this chapter; and Marcus Rainsford, an Irish preacher, wrote over 500 pages of exposition on it. Ryle (4:172) reports that the exposition of George Newton on it was 560 pages and that of Anthony Burgess was 700 pages. As the 16<sup>th</sup> century Scottish Reformer, John Knox was dying, he had his wife read to him this chapter, asking her to “read where I cast my first anchor.”

### ***Jesus Prays for Himself (verses 1-5)***

Jesus’ posture during this prayer was a common Jewish one (verse 1a; cf. Psalm 123:1, Mark 7:34, and John 11:41, as well as Luke 18:13).<sup>280</sup>

The “hour” that had come (verse 1b) was the time for Christ to exit this earth (13:1) and be exalted (12:23; cf. 13:31). Accordingly, Jesus prays that He might be glorified as He goes and that the Father might be glorified through His glorification (verse 1b; cf. 12:28 and 13:31). Jesus would be glorified through His crucifixion<sup>281</sup> (John 3:14, 8:28, 12:32, and 12:34), resurrection (Acts 2:36, Romans 1:4, and 1 Peter 1:21), and ascension/session (Ephesians 1:20-22). The Father would be glorified by Jesus going to the Cross, as this would show that the Father is worth serving, even at the cost of one’s earthly life.

According to verse 2 (cf. John 4:14, 10:28, and Romans 6:23b), eternal life is a gift.

According to verse 3 (cf. Matthew 7:23 and 1 John 5:20), salvation is primarily a

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without consciously longing that the answer bring glory to God?”

<sup>279</sup>It is interesting to note not only what Jesus prayed for His disciples and the church, but also what He did NOT pray for, such as, for example, health and wealth.

<sup>280</sup>Other prayer postures in Scripture include: standing (1 Kings 8:22, Mark 11:25, Luke 8:11, and 13), kneeling (1 Kings 8:54, Ezra 9:5, Luke 22:41, Acts 7:60, 9:40, 21:5, and Ephesians 3:14), sitting (2 Samuel 7:18), lying prostrate (Numbers 16:22, Joshua 5:14, Matthew 26:39, and Mark 14:35), and lifting up one’s hands (Luke 24:50 and 1 Timothy 2:8).

<sup>281</sup>Some of the ways Jesus would be glorified when crucified was by confessions of His innocence (by Judas Iscariot in Matthew 27:4; by Pilate’s wife in Matthew 27:19; by Pilate in Luke 23:4//John 18:38, 19:4, and 6; and by the Roman centurion in Luke 23:47) and identity (by the Roman centurion in Matthew 27:54//Mark 15:39).

relationship<sup>282</sup> (to the Jew, knowledge was more of a relational concept than an intellectual one; the salvation relationship, however, is built upon a factual foundation<sup>283</sup>). This relationship is a lifelong one (the Greek verb translated “know” in verse 3 is in the present tense), as well as an eternal one (though eternal life is not only a quantitative concept, but more of a qualitative one), with the “only true God” (cf. Jeremiah 10:10 and 1 Thessalonians 1:9; cf. Jesus as the true Light in 1:9, the true bread in 6:32, and the true vine in 15:1).

Jesus’ glorification of the Father by doing the work the Father sent Him to do (verse 4; cf. 4:34, 5:36, and 9:4) was soon to be complete (see 19:30). However, though it was not yet complete, it was so certain of being completed that Jesus could speak of it as a “done deal.” In spite of this certainty, Jesus still prayed for it (in verse 1), another instructive point.

Jesus’ final prayer for Himself was that He might once again experience His pre-incarnate glory (verse 5; cf. verse 24), which He temporarily gave up when He came to earth (Philippians 2:6).

### ***Jesus Prays for His Disciples (verses 6-19)***

The end of verse 6 is another reminder (cf. 8:31 and 51) in John’s Gospel that perseverance in the faith/belief is a telltale sign of salvation.

The start of verse 8 (cf. the start of verse 14) echoes the words that start Revelation 1:1.

While Jesus did not pray for the world in this particular prayer (verse 9), one occasion when He did was while on the Cross (see Luke 23:34; cf. Matthew 5:44//Luke 6:28).

Jesus prays for His disciples’ perseverance (verse 11b; cf. Luke 22:32 and 1 Thessalonians 5:23b), something we should be praying for ourselves and for other believers, a prayer that is guaranteed to be answered (see 1 Thessalonians 5:24, 2 Timothy 4:18, and 1 Peter 1:5), being according to God’s will (6:39; cf. 1 John 5:14-15). God indeed keeps all those who are His (verse 12a; cf. 18:9), while those who are not truly His, such as Judas Iscariot, are not kept (verse 12b). The

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<sup>282</sup>Salvation is more about a person than a “plan.”

<sup>283</sup>What must one know (and believe) in order to be saved? He must know that he is a sinner who has fallen short of the standard of perfection demanded by a holy God and is, therefore, liable to punishment; that the God-man, Jesus Christ, has met the standard by means of His sinless life and has paid the penalty by means of His sacrificial death; and that by responding in faith and repentance he can be justified in God’s sight as a result of Christ’s work (both His sinless life and sacrificial death) being applied to him.



apostasy of Judas, the “son of perdition” (verse 12b; cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:3’s “son of destruction”; this phrase is a Hebraism that means destined for perdition, or destruction; NIV: “doomed to destruction”) was a fulfillment of Psalm 41:9 (cf. 13:18).

God’s desire is that believers might be *in* the world (verse 15a; so, no hermits or unbroken “holy huddles”), but not *of* the world (verses 14 and 16; cf. Romans 12:2a, James 4:4, and 1 John 2:15-16). Because believers are not of the world, they will be opposed by the world (verse 14; cf. 15:19).

Again (cf. verse 11b), Jesus prays for something (verse 15b; cf. Matthew 6:13) that is a “done deal” (2 Thessalonians 3:3 and 1 John 5:18). Promises of preservation should not prevent prayers for perseverance; rather, they should produce them.

Jesus prays for His disciples’ sanctification (start of verse 17), something we should be praying for ourselves and for other believers (cf. Ephesians 3:16, Philippians 1:10b-11, Colossians 1:10, 4:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:23a, 2 Thessalonians 2:17, and Jude 20). Sanctification comes through Scripture (verses 17 and 19b; cf. Psalm 1:2-3, 119:9 and 11, John 15:3, Acts 20:32, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Ephesians 5:26, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, James 1:21, and 1 Peter 2:2). Scripture is inherently true, being “truth” (verse 17b; cf. 2 Samuel 7:28, Psalm 119:142, 151, and 160).<sup>284</sup>

Just as Jesus was sanctified and sent (10:36), so are His followers (verses 17 and

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<sup>284</sup>Wayne Grudem (*Systematic Theology*, p. 83; emphasis his) states in regards to John 17:17: “This verse is interesting because Jesus does not use the adjectives *alethinos* or *alethes* (‘true’), which we might have expected, to say, ‘Your word is true.’ Rather, he uses a noun, *aletheia* (‘truth’), to say that God’s Word is not simply ‘true,’ but it is truth itself. The difference is significant, for this statement encourages us to think of the Bible not simply as being ‘true’ in the sense that it conforms to some higher standard of truth, but rather to think of the Bible as being itself the final standard of truth. The Bible is God’s Word, and God’s Word is itself *truth*. Thus we are to think of the Bible as the ultimate standard of truth, the reference point by which every other claim to truthfulness is to be measured. Those assertions that conform with Scripture are ‘true’ while those that do not conform with Scripture are not true. What then is truth? Truth is what God says, and we have what God says ... in the Bible.” God says true things, but what makes them true is the fact that He says them. In other words, God Himself is the standard, not some standard of truth external to Himself to which He must conform. Another significant thing about John 17:17 is that it was spoken directly by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The following statement, uttered by H. C. G. Moule (quoted in Robert Saucy, *Scripture: Its Power, Authority, & Relevance*, p. 107) brings out the significance: “Christ absolutely trusted the Bible; and though there are in it things inexplicable and intricate that have puzzled me so much, I am going, not in a blind sense, but reverently, to trust the Book because of Him.”

18; cf. 20:21). Jesus sanctified Himself, i.e., dedicated Himself to death (verse 19a) in order to provide salvation (verse 19b).

### ***Jesus Prays for the Church (verses 20-26)***

Salvation comes only through the Word (verse 20; cf. Romans 10:17, 2 Timothy 3:15, and 1 Peter 1:23).

Jesus prays for the unity (not necessarily uniformity) of all believers (verses 21-23; cf. the end of verse 11). Unity, like love (13:35), is a telltale sign of authentic Christianity (verses 21b and 23b). Such unity is based on common acceptance of truth (“through their word” in verse 20; cf. vs. 17 and 19), not shared experience, etc. It is more of an organic unity than an organizational one.

In verse 24, Jesus prays that His people might be present with Him in Heaven to gaze on His glory, a presence He has promised and one that makes Heaven heavenly (see 14:3 and comments on).<sup>285</sup>

## **John 18-19**

Chapters 18 and 19 comprise the fourth of six major sections in John’s Gospel.<sup>286</sup> In these chapters, John records some<sup>287</sup> of the events surrounding Christ’s crucifixion, such as Jesus’ arrest (18:1-12), Jesus’ trial before Annas (18:13-14 and 19-24), Peter’s denial (18:15-18 and 25-27), Jesus’ trial before Pilate (18:28-19:15), the crucifixion itself (19:16-37), and Jesus’ burial (19:38-42).

### ***Jesus’ Arrest (18:1-12)***

After His prayer (in chapter 17), Jesus and His disciples crossed the Kidron Valley

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<sup>285</sup>Wiersbe (p. 371) writes: “I have often used John 17:24 as a text for funeral meditations. How do we know that Christians go to heaven? Because of the price that Jesus paid (1 Thes. 5:9-10), and the promise that Jesus made (John 14:1-6), and the prayer that Jesus prayed (John 17:24). The Father always answers His Son’s prayers, so we know that believers who die do go to heaven to behold the glory of God.”

<sup>286</sup>The six are: prologue (1:1-18); public ministry (1:19-12:50); private ministry (13:1-17:26); crucifixion (18:1-19:42); resurrection (20:1-31); and epilogue (21:1-25).

<sup>287</sup>John omits Jesus’ trials before (Joseph) Caiaphas, the Sanhedrin, and Herod; the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> of Jesus’ 7 sayings on the Cross; the conversion of the thief on the Cross; etc.

and entered the Garden of Gethsemane<sup>288</sup>, located on the western slope of the Mount of Olives (verse 1). Because Jesus and His disciples frequented this location (verse 2; cf. Luke 21:37 and 22:39), Judas rightly guessed Jesus' whereabouts. Assuming that Jesus had regularly prayed with His disciples there, how appalling it was that the place where Jesus prayed with Judas became the place where Jesus was betrayed by Judas.

Judas led a large contingent to Gethsemane, consisting of both Jewish temple police (cf. 7:32) and Roman soldiers (verse 3).<sup>289</sup> Jesus did not try to elude them (verse 4).

When Jesus used the divine designation, "I am" in reference to Himself (verse 5; cf. 8:58 and comments on), these men reacted accordingly (verse 6).<sup>290</sup> Peter, true to character, offered armed resistance<sup>291</sup> (verse 10; cf. Matthew 26:51//Mark 14:47//Luke 22:50), only to be once again (as in Matthew 16:22-23, 17:4-5, John 13:8, and 37-38) rebuked by the Lord for his impetuosity (verse 11a), seeing the Lord was ready to follow the Father's will in laying down His life (verse 11b; cf. Matthew 26:39//Mark 14:36//Luke 22:42). Though Jesus could have summoned "more than twelve legions of angels" (Matthew 26:53) to prevent His arrest, He did not (verse 12). He allowed Himself to be bound so that we could be set free.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>288</sup>Gethsemane means "oil press," perhaps because an oil press was located there for the production of olive oil from the grove of olive trees located on the Mount of Olives. John omits the account of Jesus' agony in Gethsemane, found in Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42, and Luke 22:39-46.

<sup>289</sup>"The combination of Jewish and Roman authorities in this arrest indicts the whole world" (Carson, p. 577).

<sup>290</sup>According to Hendriksen (2:379), they "lurched backwards." According to Ryle (4:218), this declaration (and demonstration?) of divinity was what prevented the disciples from also being taken: "It seems clear to me that the miracle saved the disciples from being taken prisoners, and so far awed the party of Judas that they were satisfied to seize our Lord only, and either intentionally let the eleven go, or in their fear of some further display of miraculous power, neglected them, and gave them time to escape." According to verse 9, the prevention of the disciples being taken ultimately fulfilled what Jesus had prayed in 17:12 (cf. 6:39), the implication being that had the disciples been taken, they would have apostatized (so Ryle, 4:220; Calvin, 2:194; Henry, p. 1173; and Hendriksen, 2:380).

<sup>291</sup>According to Hendriksen (2:381), this would have been a short sword, with a blade approximately 5-6 inches long.

<sup>292</sup>"It was not their fetters, but the 'cords of love' which held Him prisoner" (Maclaren, 3:224).

### ***Jesus' Trial Before Annas (18:13-14 and 19-24)***

Prior to His crucifixion, Jesus endured three separate religious trials (one before Annas, one before Caiaphas<sup>293</sup>, and one before the Sanhedrin<sup>294</sup>) and three separate civil ones (two before Pilate and one before Herod<sup>295</sup>).

Annas was the high priest from 6-15 A.D. Though not the actual high priest at the time of Jesus' arrest (his son-in-law, Joseph Caiaphas, who was high priest from 18-36 A.D., was—verse 13), in the mind of the Jews he was still so<sup>296</sup> (verse 19; cf. Luke 3:2 and Acts 4:6).

The most “striking” moment of the trial before Annas occurred when one of the temple police officers struck<sup>297</sup> Jesus (verse 22). Imagine, a creature striking His Creator (John 1:3, 10, Colossians 1:16, and Hebrews 1:2)! It must be kept in mind that Jesus was “bound” (18:12), i.e., had His hands tied together behind His back and, so, was defenseless against such blows (cf. 19:3 and Mark 14:65).

### ***Peter's Denials (18:15-18 and 25-27)***

According to Matthew 26:56//Mark 14:50, all of the disciples deserted Jesus at His arrest, a fact Jesus had prophesied (in Matthew 26:31 and John 16:32). The desertion of Peter and John<sup>298</sup> (verse 15) was short-lived, however, as both caught up with Christ during His first trial (before Annas).

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<sup>293</sup>John alludes to (in 18:24 and 28), but does not record the details of, Jesus' trial before Caiaphas, found in Matthew 26:57-68, Mark 14:53-65, and Luke 22:54 and 63-65.

<sup>294</sup>John omits the trial before the Sanhedrin, found in Matthew 27:1-2, Mark 15:1, and Luke 22:66-71.

<sup>295</sup>John omits Jesus' trial before Herod, found in Luke 23:6-12.

<sup>296</sup>Though the Romans had deposed Annas, the high priesthood was (according to Jewish law) a lifetime appointment. This is the reason why Annas was still considered to be a high priest. Bruce (p. 344) calls him a high priest “emeritus.”

<sup>297</sup>Most likely, this man struck Jesus with a club. According to John 18:3, the officers had “weapons.” According to Matthew 26:47//Mark 14:43, these weapons were clubs. Furthermore, Micah 5:1 predicted that Christ would be smitten on the cheek with a rod.

<sup>298</sup>That John was likely the “another disciple” mentioned in verse 15/the “other disciple” mentioned in verse 16 may be seen by the similar terminology of 20:2, where this “other disciple” is further described as “whom Jesus loved,” a description of John elsewhere in his Gospel (in 13:23, 19:26, 21:7, and 20).

Peter, however, went on to deny Christ three times (verses 17, 25, and 27<sup>299</sup>), a fact Jesus had prophesied (in Matthew 26:34 and John 13:38). Contrasting Jesus (before Annas) and Peter, R. E. Brown (quoted in Carson, pp. 585-586) states: “John has constructed a dramatic contrast wherein Jesus stands up to his questioners and denies nothing, while Peter cowers before his questioners and denies everything.”

***Jesus’ Trials Before Pilate (18:28-19:15; cf. 1 Timothy 6:13)***<sup>300</sup>

Following His religious trials before Annas, Caiaphas, and the Sanhedrin, Jesus faced two of His three civil trials, before Pontius Pilate, the governor of the Roman province of Judea (Matthew 27:2, Luke 3:1, and Acts 4:27), under the emperor, Tiberius, from 26-36 A.D.<sup>301</sup> Jesus’ trials before Pilate took place alternately on two stages: publicly/front stage (18:29-31, 38b-40, 19:4-7, and 12-15) and privately/back stage (18:33-38a, 19:1-3, and 9-11).

The first trial before Pilate (18:28-38)

In this trial, Pilate acted as the judge, Jesus as the defendant, and the Jewish leaders as the prosecuting attorneys. Pilate began the proceedings by asking the prosecutors to state their charge (18:29). The Jews charged Jesus with being an evildoer (18:30). More specifically, the charge was blasphemy (18:31 and 19:7; cf. Matthew 26:63-65//Mark 14:61-64), which, according to Leviticus 24:16, warranted the death penalty (by stoning) under Jewish law (cf. 5:18 and 10:30, 33, and 36). However, since the Romans had taken the right to administer the death penalty away from the Jews (18:31), the only way the Jews could accomplish their desired end<sup>302</sup> is if the Romans did the executing by crucifixion (18:32), an outcome foretold by Jesus (see Matthew 20:19, 26:2, John 3:14, and 12:32-33). In order to finally accomplish this end, the Jews ultimately switched

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<sup>299</sup>At the point of Peter’s third denial, the rooster crowed. This was likely at 3 a.m., as the night was divided into four “watches,” with 6-9 p.m. being the evening watch, 9 p.m.-midnight the midnight watch, midnight-3 a.m. when the rooster crows, and 3-6 a.m. the morning watch (see Mark 13:35).

<sup>300</sup>Kostenberger (p. 531) gives a precise date for these trials of April 3, 33 A.D. John says in 18:28 that it was “early,” likely between 3 and 6 a.m., but closer to 6. John merges the two trials before Pilate (the first is found in 18:28-38, the second in 18:39-19:15), omitting the trial before Herod between the two (found in Luke 23:6-12). The second trial before Pilate is also found in Matthew 27:15-25, Mark 15:6-14, and Luke 23:13-24.

<sup>301</sup>Hughes (p. 423) says that Pilate was “brutal, politically inept, and anti-Semitic. Originally he was a native of Seville, Spain, and only got his job when, after joining the Roman legions, he met and married Claudia Procula [see Matthew 27:19], a granddaughter of the Emperor Augustus.”

<sup>302</sup>The desired end was crucifixion, likely because the Jews wanted Jesus to be viewed as cursed (see Deuteronomy 21:22-23 and Galatians 3:13).

charges, from the religious one of blasphemy to the civil one of sedition (19:12).

In response to Pilate's query (in 18:37), Christ confirmed that He was a king.<sup>303</sup>

John is the only one of the Evangelists to record Pilate's famous quip: "What is truth?" (18:38a). Though Jesus did not answer Pilate's question at the time, the answer is found elsewhere in John's Gospel: Jesus, the living Word, is truth (14:6); so is the Bible, the written Word (17:17).

#### The second trial before Pilate (18:39-19:15)

A fascinating feature of Jesus' second trial before Pilate is the release of Barabbas instead of Jesus (18:39-40; cf. Matthew 27:15f, Mark 15:6f, and Luke 23:17f).<sup>304</sup> Barabbas was guilty of sedition (18:40; cf. Mark 15:7, Luke 23:19, and 25) and, thus, facing execution by crucifixion.<sup>305</sup> Jesus, falsely accused and convicted of the same charge, died in Barabbas' place.<sup>306</sup> It is befuddling that the Jews asked

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<sup>303</sup>The KJV's "Thou sayest that I am a king" is potentially unclear. The NASB's "You say correctly that I am a king" is clearer. Concerning the KJV rendering, Ryle (4:258) writes: "'Thou sayest,' is equivalent to an affirmation. 'Thou sayest truly: I am what thou askest about. I admit that I am a King.'"

<sup>304</sup>Hughes (p. 426) says that the liberation of a prisoner at Passover symbolically represented the liberation of the Jews from Egyptian bondage, the time God passed over the Jewish homes during the tenth and final plague upon the Egyptians.

<sup>305</sup>The two "thieves" who were crucified with Jesus were also guilty of this charge (compare John 18:40 with Matthew 27:38 and 44//Mark 15:27).

<sup>306</sup>This was a case of one Jesus taking the place of another Jesus, as it is believed that Barabbas' first name was Jesus, and one Son of a Father taking the place of another "son of a father" (what Barabbas means). Hughes (p. 427) has an interesting take on this incident from the perspective of Barabbas: "...[H]ow did Barabbas feel? Matthew 27 helps us here. The Praetorium was no more than 1,500 feet from the Tower of Antonia. Barabbas, because he was a prominent prisoner, was incarcerated in the bowels of Antonia, awaiting crucifixion. He probably could not hear Pilate, but it would be impossible not to hear the roarings of the crowd. Here is Pilate's dialogue with the crowd.

Pilate: 'Which of the two do you want me to release to you?' (v. 21)

Crowd: 'Barabbas!' (v. 21)

Pilate: 'What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?' (v. 22)

Crowd: 'Crucify him!' (v. 22)

Pilate: 'Why? What crime has he committed?' (v. 23)

Crowd (shouting all the more): 'Crucify him!' (v. 23)

Pilate, washing his hands: 'I am innocent of this man's blood. It is your responsibility!' (v. 24)

Crowd: 'Let his blood be on us and on our children!' (v. 25)

for the release of someone guilty of the very thing with which they would ultimately charge Jesus (in 19:12).

In a failed attempt to appease the Jews, Pilate had Jesus “scourged” (19:1), or “flogged” (so NIV and ESV). This scourging differed from the more severe one Jesus received just prior to His crucifixion (Matthew 27:26//Mark 15:15).<sup>307</sup> Pilate’s soldiers took the liberty to intensify Jesus’ affliction by means of a crown of thorns<sup>308</sup> (19:2) and repeated<sup>309</sup> blows to the face (19:3; cf. Matthew 27:30//Mark 15:19).

Jesus’ silence in 19:9 (cf. Matthew 26:63//Mark 14:60-61, Matthew 27:14//Mark 15:5, and Luke 23:9) was a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:7. His response (in 19:11) to Pilate’s objection (in 19:10) to His silence was in keeping with Daniel 2:21, 4:25, 32, and Romans 13:1.

### **The Crucifixion (19:16-37)**

But what did Barabbas hear from all this? ‘Barabbas ... Crucify him! ... Crucify him! ... Let his blood be on us and on our children.’ As hardened as he was, Barabbas must have grown faint. He may have stared at the palms of his hands in growing horror of the awaiting agony. He had seen crucifixions. He knew their interminable agony. He heard the sound of the key in the lock, felt even greater terror, and ... suddenly he was released from his chains and told he was free! He was probably in a daze when he emerged into the sunlight. Slowly the truth unfolded: Jesus Christ was dying in his place.”

<sup>307</sup>This is not meant to minimize the severity of the first one, however. As Bruce (p. 358) states: “Any beating carried out by Roman soldiers was brutal enough.” Scourging involved being beaten across one’s backside (shoulders, back, and legs) with a whip of leather straps that were embedded with pieces of metal and bone. Unlike the Jews, the Romans did not limit their number of lashes to thirty-nine (see Deuteronomy 25:3 and 2 Corinthians 11:24). Hughes (pp. 430-431) writes: “Scourging was terrible. Many died from it, and others went mad. Ancient authorities ... relate that scourging normally meant a flaying to the bone. Eusebius tells of martyrs who ‘were torn by scourges down to deep-seated veins and arteries, so that the hidden contents of the recesses of their bodies, their entrails and organs were exposed to sight.’” Morris (p. 699) perceptively points out at this point: “It is a further example of the reserve of the Gospels that they use but one word to describe this piece of frightfulness. There is no attempt to play on our emotions.” The same could be said for the narration of the Crucifixion to follow.

<sup>308</sup>This “crown” was composed of thorns measuring up to twelve inches in length (Carson, p. 598 and Kostenberger, p. 532).

<sup>309</sup>The Greek verbs in 19:3 are in the imperfect tense, indicating continuous action. The NIV translates: “went up to him again and again ...”

Crucifixion was a torturous form of execution, to say the least. Ryle (4:299) says that “it was a death which combined the maximum of pain with the least immediate destruction of life.” Hendriksen (2:427) lists the following physical effects of crucifixion: severe inflammation, the swelling of the wounds in the region of the nails, unbearable pain from torn tendons, fearful discomfort from the strained position of the body, throbbing headache, and burning thirst. Besides the pain involved, there was also the shame. Also bear in mind that Christ’s sufferings that day came after a sleepless night.

Just as Isaac carried the wood upon which he would be sacrificed (see Genesis 22:6), Jesus carried the horizontal beam/crossbar of His cross<sup>310</sup> down the Via Dolorosa<sup>311</sup> to Golgotha, or Calvary<sup>312</sup> (verse 17). Jesus was, as Isaiah 53:12 prophesied,<sup>313</sup> “numbered with the transgressors” in His death (verse 18).

Pilate posted the trilingual charge against Jesus on the Cross, sedition (verse 19), written in Aramaic, the language of the Jews; Greek, the language of culture; and Latin, the official language of Rome.

According to the custom of the day, executioners were allowed to have the clothing of those they executed. Accordingly, the soldiers who crucified Jesus divided His outer garments (sandals, head covering/turban, outer garment/cloak, and belt/sash) among the four of them and cast lots for His undergarment, the tunic, in fulfillment of Psalm 22:18 (verses 23-24).

While all the Eleven, except for John, had deserted or denied Jesus by this point, there was a group of women who continued to display their devotion: His mother, Mary; Salome, Mary’s sister and mother of James and John; Mary, the

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<sup>310</sup>According to the Synoptics (Matthew 27:32//Mark 15:21//Luke 23:26), a man named Simon was forced to carry Jesus’ cross. To harmonize John with the Synoptics, it must be inferred that Jesus’ suffering up to this point had been so severe that He was physically unable to carry His cross the entire way and, thus, Simon was needed to carry it the rest of the way. According to Hughes (p. 438), this crossbeam would have weighed over 100 pounds.

<sup>311</sup>Approximately a mile long, the “Via Dolorosa,” Latin for the way of grief, sorrow, or suffering, was the path from Pilate’s Praetorium to the place of crucifixion.

<sup>312</sup>Golgotha is Aramaic for “place of a skull” (verse 17; cf. Matthew 27:33//Mark 15:22). Calvary (Luke 23:33) is Latin for the same. The most likely reason for this designation is that the surrounding terrain in some way was skull-like in appearance.

<sup>313</sup>According to J. P. Free (cited in Hendriksen, 2:430), there are 332 Old Testament prophecies that were fulfilled by Christ during His first advent, with the odds of any one person in particular fulfilling all of them being 1 in 84 with 97 zeroes after it.



wife of Clopas; and Mary Magdalene (verse 25; cf. Matthew 27:56//Mark 15:40//Luke 23:49, Matthew 27:61//Mark 15:47//Luke 23:55, and Acts 1:14).

Jesus, in an act of characteristic selflessness, committed His mother, Mary to the care of John, with the 3<sup>rd</sup> of His 7 sayings on the Cross (verses 26-27; cf. 1 Timothy 5:4).<sup>314</sup>

In fulfillment of Psalm 69:21 (and perhaps also Psalm 22:15) and in response to the 5<sup>th</sup> of His 7 sayings on the Cross, “I am thirsty” (verse 28), Jesus was given sour wine to drink (verse 29; cf. Mark 15:36).<sup>315</sup>

Only John’s Gospel records the 6<sup>th</sup> of Jesus’ 7 sayings on the Cross: “It is finished” (verse 30; cf. 17:4 and 19:28)!<sup>316</sup> Not only was His suffering finished, but more significantly His substitutionary work for the salvation of sinners was also finished (both His active obedience/His sufficient death and His passive obedience/His sinless life). Having completed His labor, He ceded His life (end of verse 30; cf. 10:18, as well as Matthew 27:50//Mark 15:37//Luke 23:46).

In order to hasten death, the legs of one crucified would be broken<sup>317</sup> (verse 31), preventing inhalation<sup>318</sup> and causing asphyxiation. This was done to the two men crucified with Christ (verse 32), but not to Christ (verse 33), in fulfillment of Exodus 12:46, Numbers 9:12<sup>319</sup>, and Psalm 34:20 (verse 36). One of the soldiers

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<sup>314</sup>Mary may very well have been John’s aunt, making John and Jesus cousins (see footnote 8). That Jesus did not commit his mother to the care of any of His brothers was likely due to the fact that His brothers were yet unbelieving (7:5). It is to be safely assumed that Joseph had died by this point, making Mary a widow. According to Ryle (4:310), Mary was at least forty-eight at this point, while Kostenberger (p. 549) says early fifties.

<sup>315</sup>Earlier (Matthew 27:34//Mark 15:23), Jesus was offered a wine-myrrh/gall mixture, a sedative designed to dull the pain of crucifixion. Jesus, wanting to drink the cup of suffering (John 18:11; cf. footnote 248) to the full, refused the offer.

<sup>316</sup>The same Greek verb was written on tax receipts to indicate “paid in full.” It is in the perfect tense, indicating a completed action in the past with ongoing effect (it has been and continues to be finished). Wiersbe (p. 384) translates: “It is finished, it stands finished, and it always will be finished!”

<sup>317</sup>This practice was known as *crurifragium*, the shattering of the shinbone with an iron mallet.

<sup>318</sup>The legs of the crucified would rest on a peg, giving a leverage point for pushing up to fill the lungs with air. Breaking the legs would make such a leverage point useless.

<sup>319</sup>Both Exodus 12:46 and Numbers 9:12 stipulated that the lambs sacrificed at Passover

did, however, pierce Christ's side with a spear (verse 34), in fulfillment of Zechariah 12:10 (verse 37; cf. Revelation 1:7). The blood and water that came out confirmed that Christ was, indeed, dead.<sup>320</sup>

John was a reliable eyewitness of Christ's crucifixion (verse 35; cf. 21:24), and his purpose for relating this event was to foster belief (end of verse 35; cf. 20:31).

### ***Jesus' Burial (19:38-42)***

Jesus' death caused one of His disciples, Joseph of Arimathea, to "come out of the closet" (verse 38; cf. 12:42). Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin (Mark 15:43), but did not concur with the Sanhedrin's decision to put Jesus to death (Luke 23:50-51).

Joseph and Nicodemus (verse 39; cf. 3:1-15 and 7:50-52) prepared Jesus' body for burial (verse 40) and buried it in a cave-tomb owned by Joseph (verses 41-42; cf. Matthew 27:60). This latter act fulfilled Isaiah 53:9 ("He was with a rich man in His death"), Joseph being a rich man (Matthew 27:57).<sup>321</sup>

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were not to have any of their bones broken. Thus, it is befitting that Christ, the Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7), did not have any of His bones broken.

<sup>320</sup>Some suggest that this indicates that Christ suffered a rupture of the heart. Norman Geisler (*Christian Apologetics*, p. 347) calls the blood and water "an indisputable medical sign of death, indicating that the red and white blood corpuscles had separated." This is significant in light of the ancient Christological heresy known as Docetism, which taught that Jesus did not actually die, but only appeared to do so. Modern-day adherents of this heresy are the Muslims.

<sup>321</sup>It may be inferred that Nicodemus was also of some means, as seen by the amount of burial spices he contributed (verse 39), equivalent to 65 pounds in our way of measuring (the NIV and ESV say 75 pounds). Kruse (p. 368) perceptively points out: "Seventy-five pounds of myrrh and aloes is a very large amount, sufficient for a royal burial" (see 2 Chronicles 16:14).

## **John 20-21**

John concludes his Gospel with some<sup>322</sup> of the events surrounding Jesus' resurrection (chapter 20) and an epilogue (chapter 21).

### ***The Empty Tomb (20:1-10)***

According to the Synoptics (Matthew 28:1//Mark 16:1//Luke 24:1; cf. Luke 24:10), several women made their way to Jesus' tomb early (John 20:1's "early" and "still dark"; cf. Matthew 28:1's "as it began to dawn," Mark 16:2's "very early" and "when the sun had risen," and Luke 24:1's "at early dawn")<sup>323</sup> on Easter (if I may be so anachronistic)

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<sup>322</sup>John omits the angelic announcement to a group of women (Matthew 28:5-7//Mark 16:5-7//Luke 24:4-7), Jesus' appearance to these same women (Matthew 28:9-10), the bribery of the soldiers guarding the tomb (Matthew 28:11-15), Jesus' appearance to two men on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35), etc.

<sup>323</sup>Taking all the Gospel accounts into consideration, it appears that the group of women set out for the tomb while it was still dark and arrived when the sun was rising.

morning. John, however, focuses on only one of these women, Mary Magdalene (verse 1), out of whom Jesus had cast seven demons (Luke 8:2).

After Mary saw that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb<sup>324</sup> (verse 1), she erroneously concluded and reported to Peter and John (“the other disciple whom Jesus loved”; see footnote 6) that Jesus’ body had been stolen (verse 2).

Peter and John (“the other disciple” of verse 3) ran to the tomb (verses 3-4a).



Eugene Burnand’s *The Disciples Peter and John Running to the Sepulchre on the Morning of the Resurrection*

John arrived first (verse 4b) and looked in (verse 5).<sup>325</sup> Peter arrived second and, typical of his temperament, immediately went in (verse 6). John (“the other disciple” of verse 8) eventually followed Peter’s lead.

Peter and John made an amazing discovery that day. The body of Jesus was gone, but not because it had been stolen. If it had been stolen, either: 1) the grave clothes would have been taken along with the body or 2) the grave clothes would have been in a state of disarray. Instead, Peter and John found the grave clothes lying in an orderly manner (verses 5-7).<sup>326</sup> Unlike Lazarus, who had to have his grave clothes removed (11:44), Jesus’ body passed through His grave clothes.

For John, seeing was believing (verse 8; cf. 20:29a). It was not until after the fact that the disciples made the connection between the “many convincing proofs”

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<sup>324</sup>According to Hendriksen (2:448), the stone was no longer in its groove (or track) and was lying flat on the ground. The stone was taken away, not so that Christ could get out, but so that others could get in to see that He was not there.

<sup>325</sup>That John had to stoop to look into the tomb is due to the fact that the opening of such a tomb was usually no higher than a yard (Kostenberger, p. 562).

<sup>326</sup>Commenting on the “face-cloth” of verse 7, Carson (p. 637) states: “It had been neatly rolled up and set to one side by the one who no longer had any use for it.”

(Acts 1:3) and the Old Testament Scriptures (such as Psalm 16:10; cf. Acts 2:31 and 13:35-37) that predicted Christ's resurrection (verse 9; cf. 2:22, as well as Luke 24:44-46).

When Peter and John returned to their homes (verse 10), John no doubt told Mary, Jesus' mother (cf. 19:27), what he had seen.

### ***Post-Resurrection Appearances (20:11-29)***

Jesus made at least ten post-resurrection appearances. John records the 1<sup>st</sup> (to Mary Magdalene), the 5<sup>th</sup> (to the disciples, minus Thomas), the 6<sup>th</sup> (to the disciples, including Thomas), and the 7<sup>th</sup> (to a group of disciples fishing).

Verses 11-18. The first post-resurrection appearance Jesus made was to Mary Magdalene.<sup>327</sup>

After telling Peter and John that Jesus' body was gone (20:2), Mary returned to the tomb once again, this time by herself. Weeping<sup>328</sup>, she looked into the tomb for the first time (verse 11) and saw two angels (verse 12), who asked her why she was weeping (verse 13a). Mary was weeping because she still thought that Jesus' body had been taken (verse 13b).

Just then, Jesus appeared to Mary, but Mary did not recognize Him<sup>329</sup> (verse 14). Instead, she thought He was the gardener (verse 15b). Once Jesus called Mary by name<sup>330</sup>, however, she immediately recognized Him, calling Him "Rabboni" (cf.

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<sup>327</sup>Imagine being the first person to see Jesus alive! It is interesting to note that just as the first announcement of Jesus' birth was made to a group in the lower echelon of the societal ladder (the shepherds in Luke 2), so the first announcement of Jesus' resurrection was made to such a group (the women in Matthew 28:5-7//Mark 16:5-7//Luke 24:4-7). Furthermore, the first post-resurrection appearance was made to a woman.

<sup>328</sup>Mary's "weeping" was more of a wailing, like that of the mourners at Lazarus' tomb (see footnote 200). This is the weeping of one in despair. Hendriksen (2:452) describes it as "constant, unrestrained sobbing."

<sup>329</sup>Why didn't Mary recognize Jesus at first? Perhaps 1) it was still not completely light out; or 2) she could not see clearly through her tears; or 3) she did not take a careful enough look; or 4) Jesus was the last person she expected to see; or 5) she was supernaturally prevented from it; or 6) Jesus' appearance after His resurrection differed slightly from His appearance before it. The fifth and sixth may explain why the two on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:16), as well as the group of disciples fishing (John 21:4), did not immediately recognize Jesus either.

<sup>330</sup>Hendriksen (2:455) is of the opinion that Jesus called Mary by the Aramaic form of her name, "Miriam."

Mark 10:51), Aramaic (so NIV and ESV) for “teacher” (verse 16), and responding accordingly (verse 17a<sup>331</sup>; cf. Matthew 28:9).

Jesus then commissioned Mary to go and tell the disciples about His upcoming Ascension<sup>332</sup> (verse 17b), which she did (verse 18).

Verses 19-25 (cf. Luke 24:36f). Jesus’ fifth post-resurrection appearance was to a group of the disciples on the Sunday evening<sup>333</sup> of Easter.

Fearing for their lives, the disciples locked the doors of the place where they were meeting. In spite of this impediment, Jesus, apparently by dematerializing and rematerializing, entered the room (verse 19). Immediately, the disciples’ fear turned to joy (verse 20; cf. 16:20-22).

Jesus repeated the greeting of verse 19, “Peace be with you” (verse 21a), most likely an indication that these words were intended to signify more than a common courtesy.

Jesus also “re-commissioned” the disciples with the words, “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you” (verse 21b; cf. 17:18, as well as Matthew 28:18-20).<sup>334</sup> According to Carson (p. 653), verse 22 was a symbolic act, symbolizing the bestowal of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost fifty days later (cf. 7:39 and comments on). R. A. Whitacre (cited by Kostenberger, p. 575) calls this a conception, of which Pentecost was the birth.

Verse 23 (cf. Matthew 16:19 and 18:18) also poses an interpretive challenge. Contrary to Roman Catholicism, this verse does not teach the doctrine of absolution (that a priest has authority to forgive sins).<sup>335</sup> The apostles would

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<sup>331</sup>The KJV rendering, “touch me not” at the start of verse 17 is potentially misleading. Jesus could be and was touched after His resurrection (Matthew 28:9 and John 20:27; cf. Luke 24:39). The NASB’s “stop clinging to Me” is more accurate. “Mary in her delight at finding her Lord alive, clutches him lest she should lose him again” (Bruce, p. 389).

<sup>332</sup>Henry (p. 1215) says that Mary at this point “becomes an apostle to the apostles.” The Greek verb translated “ascend” in verse 17 is in the present tense (literally: “I am ascending”), signifying that this future event is so certain that it can be spoken of as already happening.

<sup>333</sup>According to Bruce (p. 391), the early church met on Sunday evenings, based on this Sunday night gathering and the one the following Sunday night (in 20:26).

<sup>334</sup>The designation, “apostle” means “sent one.” As a general rule, the Twelve were called “disciples” prior to the Resurrection, but “apostles” afterwards.

<sup>335</sup>“Who can forgive sins, but God alone” (Mark 2:7)? Morris (pp. 748-750) gives an

“forgive” and “retain” the sins of others by their preaching (see Acts 2:38, 3:19, 10:43, 13:38, and 16:43; cf. Luke 24:47).<sup>336</sup> The disciples did not provide forgiveness; rather, they proclaimed it (Wiersbe, p. 393).

Thomas (cf. 11:16, 14:5, and 21:2), or Didymus<sup>337</sup>, was not present at this particular post-resurrection appearance (verse 24). Consequently, when the other disciples told “doubting” Thomas about it, he was incredulous (verse 25<sup>338</sup>).

Verses 26-29. Jesus “humored” Thomas by appearing to the disciples once again a week later<sup>339</sup>, this time while Thomas was present (verse 26).

Like John before him (20:8), Thomas saw and believed (verse 27), prompting his great confession, “My Lord and my God” (verse 28)!<sup>340</sup> This is yet another witness in John’s Gospel to Jesus’ true identity (cf. the confessions of John the Baptist in 1:34, Nathanael in 1:49, the Samaritans in 4:42, Peter in 6:69, the man born blind in 9:38, and Martha in 11:27).

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excellent apologetic against the Roman Catholic position.

<sup>336</sup>“... [W]hat our Lord here commits to His disciples, to His Church, is the right authoritatively to declare, in His name, that there is forgiveness for man’s sin, and on what conditions the sin will be forgiven” (Milligan and Moulton, cited in Harrison, p. 373). “All who proclaim the gospel are in effect forgiving or not forgiving sins, depending on whether the hearer accepts or rejects the Lord Jesus” (Tenney, p. 193).

<sup>337</sup>Apparently, Thomas was a twin. “Thomas” is Aramaic for “twin”; “Didymus” is Greek for “twin.” Wiersbe (p. 393) asks: “Who was Thomas’ twin? We do not know—but sometimes you and I feel as if we might be his twins! How often we have refused to believe and have insisted that God prove Himself to us!”

<sup>338</sup>“Were saying” is in the imperfect tense in the original (“kept on saying”), indicating a repeated attempt on the part of the other disciples to convince Thomas of the reality of what they had seen.

<sup>339</sup>Verse 26 says 8 days later. Since the Jews used “inclusive reckoning,” this is equivalent to one week by our way of reckoning. This is why, though Jesus was crucified on a Friday and rose on a Sunday, there were 3 days (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday) between the two events, rather than 2 (Friday to Saturday and Saturday to Sunday).

<sup>340</sup>Domitian (who reigned from 81-96 A.D.), the Roman emperor during the time John’s Gospel was likely written, referred to himself as Lord and God. The inclusion of Thomas’ confession in John’s Gospel may very well have been John’s not-so-subtle way of indicating who the real Lord and God was. It is instructive to note that Jesus did not correct Thomas’ confession (cf. Acts 10:25-26, 14:13-15, Revelation 19:10, and 22:8-9, where such corrections occur), thereby concurring with it and confirming its correctness.

Though believers today are without visual confirmation of Jesus' resurrection, they are not without verbal confirmation (John 17:20b and Romans 10:17). Those who believe without seeing (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:7) are blessed (verse 29; cf. 1 Peter 1:8).

### ***John's Purpose for Writing (20:30-31)***

Jesus' resurrection was the ultimate sign of who He is (2:18-22). Besides this sign, Jesus performed many others (Blum, p. 277, lists 35, not including the Resurrection). John records only 9 (the 7 prior to the Resurrection, the Resurrection itself, and the miraculous catch of fish in chapter 21). The purpose for the inclusion of these 9 was to convince unbelievers of the deity of Christ, thereby leading them to saving faith.<sup>341</sup> John's Gospel continues to fulfill this purpose, "have been written" (verse 31) being in the perfect tense in the original ("it has been written and remains so"; cf. 19:19). For more on these verses, see under "Purpose for Writing" in the introductory lesson to this study.

### ***Epilogue (21:1-25)***

The final chapter of John's Gospel is a "postscript" (Tenney, p. 197) of sorts. The primary purpose for its inclusion is likely found in verse 23. Apparently, Jesus' statement to Peter regarding John in verse 22 had been misconstrued to mean that Jesus would return prior to John's death. John wanted to correct this misconception.<sup>342</sup>

Jesus' 7<sup>th</sup> post-resurrection appearance takes place in this chapter. In obedience to Jesus' command in Matthew 28:10, the disciples left Judea for Galilee. While in Galilee, seven of them<sup>343</sup> decided to go fishing on the Sea of Galilee<sup>344</sup> (verses 1-3a).

After fishing all night, they caught nothing (verse 3b). Even professional fishermen such as Peter, James, and John get "skunked" every now and then ☺ !

<sup>341</sup>One must believe in the deity of Christ in order to be saved (John 8:24, Romans 10:9, and 2 John 9).

<sup>342</sup>"When the Beloved Disciple was growing old and some people thought that Jesus had said he would return before his beloved follower's death, it was necessary to correct the error. Harm could occur to the church if he died and still the Lord had not come" (Morris, p. 757).

<sup>343</sup>Of the seven, five are named. The two unnamed ones are most commonly believed to have been Andrew and Philip.

<sup>344</sup>Called the Sea of Tiberias here (cf. 6:1). See footnote 107 for an explanation.



At daybreak, Jesus appeared on the shore (verse 4) and instructed them to cast their net on the starboard side (verse 6a). This they did, resulting in a catch of 153<sup>345</sup> fish (verses 6b and 11), prompting Wiersbe (p. 397) to write: “The difference between success and failure was the width of the ship! We are never far from success when we permit Jesus to give the orders, and we are usually closer to success than we realize.”

John’s mind undoubtedly raced back to a similar miracle Jesus performed when He first called some of His disciples in Luke 5:1-11, prompting him to exclaim: “It is the Lord” (verse 7a). When Peter heard this, he threw his outer garment on<sup>346</sup> and jumped into the water<sup>347</sup> to swim or wade his way to Jesus (verse 7b).

When Peter and the other disciples reached land, they found Jesus cooking some fish on a charcoal fire (verse 9).<sup>348</sup> This particular post-resurrection appearance was the third one Jesus made to the disciples as a group (verse 14; the first one was in 20:19-25, the second in 20:26-29).

After eating, Jesus and Peter had a conversation<sup>349</sup> (verses 15-17), the purpose of which was to publicly restore Peter in the presence of the other disciples.<sup>350</sup> Just

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<sup>345</sup>“Fantastic allegories have been constructed out of the total 153, more impressive for their ingenuity than for their hermeneutical soundness” (Kent, p. 225). For a survey of some of them, see pp. 401 and 411 (footnote 8) of Bruce, pp. 672-673 of Carson, pp. 764-765 of Morris, and 2:483-484 (footnote 300) of Hendriksen. There is no significance to the number 153. As William Temple (quoted in Morris, p. 764) states: “It is perverse to seek a hidden meaning in the number; it is recorded because it was found to be the number when the count was made.”

<sup>346</sup>The KJV’s “naked” gives the impression that Peter was completely unclothed. However, the Greek word can also mean not fully clothed. Peter was likely wearing an undergarment (a tunic). This is the understanding of the NASB (“put his outer garment on”), NIV (“wrapped his outer garment around him”), and ESV (“put on his outer garment”) translators. Both Hendriksen (2:481) and Kostenberger (p. 591) more specifically call it his fisherman’s jacket.

<sup>347</sup>Hughes (p. 465) opines that Peter “performed a cannonball. (People like Peter never dive!)”

<sup>348</sup>Perhaps this charcoal fire reminded Peter of the one in 18:18, when he denied Christ. In light of the primary purpose of the ensuing dialogue between Peter and Jesus in verses 15-17, this may not be such a far-fetched inference.

<sup>349</sup>Ryle (4:442) aptly remarks: “Well would it be for the Church, if all ‘after-dinner’ conversations among Christians were as useful and edifying as this.”

<sup>350</sup>Jesus had previously appeared to Peter (see Luke 24:34 and 1 Corinthians 15:5). It is

as Peter had denied Christ three times, so Jesus asked Peter the same question three times.<sup>351</sup> Jesus asked Peter if he loved<sup>352</sup> Him more than the other disciples did<sup>353</sup>, a claim that Peter had more or less made prior to his denial (see Matthew 26:33//Mark 14:29).

Peter's commission was to shepherd God's flock (verses 15-17; cf. Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:2). Jesus went on to tell Peter that he would die a martyr's death (verses 18-19; cf. 13:37 and 2 Peter 1:14) by crucifixion ("stretch out your hands" in verse 18), thereby glorifying God (cf. Philippians 1:20), which church history confirms.<sup>354</sup> Commenting on this fact, Carson (p. 680) remarks: "What is remarkable is that Peter lived and served three decades with this prediction hanging over him."

Peter, having been told his fate, was curious to know John's fate (verse 21). "Jesus' reply [in verse 22] is tart: in brief, Peter is told it is none of his business" (Carson, p. 681). Regardless of what happens to John, Peter's charge remains the same: "Follow me" (verses 19 and 22<sup>355</sup>)! This is a reminder to focus more on minding the revealed will of God than on finding the concealed will of God.

Throughout his Gospel, John has been testifying to the true identity of Jesus (verse 24; cf. 19:35). Once again (as in 20:30-31), John indicates that he has

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likely that he was personally and privately restored then.

<sup>351</sup>"As he had disowned Jesus three times, so Jesus requires this elementary yet profound confession three times" (Carson, p. 678).

<sup>352</sup>Much has been made of the fact that John uses two different Greek words for love in these verses: *agape* and *philos*. Though some see a significant distinction between the two in this context (such as Hendriksen, 2:494-500), most view them as roughly synonymous. The terms are used interchangeably elsewhere in John's Gospel (compare 13:23 with 20:2, 3:35 with 5:20, and 11:5 with 11:36). In like manner, "tend" (verses 15 and 17) and "shepherd" (verse 16) are roughly synonymous, as well as "lambs" (verses 15 and 17) and "sheep" (verse 16).

<sup>353</sup>Other options for the "these" in verse 15 include the disciples themselves (i.e., do you love Me more than you love these disciples; cf. Matthew 10:37) and fishing (i.e., do you love Me more than you love these fish).

<sup>354</sup>According to one report (by the church historian, Eusebius, the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. "father of church history"), Peter was crucified upside down during the reign of the Roman Emperor, Nero, in the mid-to-late 60s A.D. However, the upside down part is considered by most scholars to be unreliable.

<sup>355</sup>In verse 22, the charge is emphatic, literally: "you you follow me" (the "you" is repeated for emphasis).

been selective regarding the material recorded in his Gospel, a selectivity born of necessity (verse 25).

### Gospel of John Review Questions

1. If the Gospel of Matthew was written to Jews, Mark to Romans, and Luke to Greeks, to whom was the Gospel of John written? All men
2. If the Gospel of Matthew presents Jesus as King, Mark as Servant, and Luke as Son of Man, as whom does the Gospel of John present Jesus? Son of God
3. What percentage of the material in the Gospel of John is unique to the Gospel of John in comparison to the “synoptic” Gospels? 93%
4. Approximately how many days of Jesus’ life are covered in the Gospel of John? 20-30 days
5. What time period of Jesus’ life does the Gospel of John spend most of its time covering? The final week (approximately 33-43% of the book), including 5 chapters (chapters 13-17) on the Thursday night of that final week
6. How much longer after the other 3 gospels was the Gospel of John written? Approximately two or three decades

7. Where in the Gospel of John is its purpose statement given? 20:30-31
8. List some of the witnesses to the deity of Christ that John summons in his gospel.
  - John the Baptist (1:34)
  - Andrew (1:41)
  - Nathanael (1:49)
  - Jesus (4:25-26, 5:17-18, 8:58-59, 9:35-37, 10:30-33, 13:13, 14:9)
  - Jesus' works (5:36, 10:24-25, 38, 14:11)
  - God the Father (5:37 and 8:18b)
  - The Scriptures (5:39)
  - God the Holy Spirit (15:26)
  - The woman at the well (4:29)
  - The Samaritans (4:42)
  - Peter (6:69)
  - Martha (11:27)
  - Thomas (20:28)
  - The apostle John (19:35 and 21:24)
9. List the signs Jesus performed that are recorded in the Gospel of John, pointing to His deity.
  - Turning the water into wine (2:1-11, esp. v. 11)
  - The healing of a royal official's son (4:46-54, esp. v. 54)
  - The healing of a man at the pool of Bethesda (5:1f)
  - The feeding of the 5,000 (6:1-14, esp. v. 14)
  - Walking on the water (6:15-21)
  - The healing of a man born blind (9:1f, esp. v. 3)
  - The raising of Lazarus (11:1f, esp. v. 4)
  - The miraculous catch of fish (21:4f)
  - The Resurrection (chapter 20; cf. 2:18-22)
10. List the 7 "I am"s of the Gospel of John
  - The bread of life (6:35)
  - The Light of the world (8:12)
  - The door of the sheep (10:7)
  - The good shepherd (10:11)
  - The resurrection and the life (11:25)
  - The way, the truth, and the life (14:6)
  - The true vine (15:1)
11. If you were to give the Gospel of John a 5-fold division, what would it be?

Prologue (1:1-18); Jesus' public ministry/with His disciples (1:19-12:50); Jesus' private ministry/to His disciples (13:1-17:26); Jesus' propitiatory ministry/for His disciples (18:1-20:31); Epilogue (21:1-25)

12. Was the water that Jesus turned into wine an intoxicating beverage? No, it was fermented, but not intoxicating, purified water
13. To what is water a reference in 3:5? The Holy Spirit
14. What were the differences between Nicodemus (chapter 3) and the woman at the well (chapter 4)?
  - Nicodemus was a man, the woman at the well a woman
  - Nicodemus was religious and respected, the woman at the well was irreligious and ill-reputable
  - Nicodemus was a Jew, the woman at the well a Samaritan
15. Is footwashing an ordinance? No; it was a culturally-specific practice, practiced by those who lived in a culture where people wore sandals and walked on dusty roads
16. The KJV speaks of "mansions" in heaven in 14:2. What would be a better way of understanding the particular Greek word used? Dwelling places in the sense of many rooms under one roof
17. In what sense would believers do greater works than Jesus (14:12)? The early church saw more conversions than Jesus did during His time on earth and had a ministry that had a far greater geographical reach
18. Are the branches of chapter 15 referring to believers or unbelievers? Unbelievers (professors, but not true possessors, of salvation)
19. What is the significance of Jesus saying that God's Word is truth, rather than true, in 17:17? God's Word is not true in that it conforms to a standard of truth external to God, but is itself the standard of truth, the epitome of truth, the essence of truth