

The Gospel of **John**



"I am the Bread of Life"
John 6:51

by Doyle Gilliam

SUNSET BIBLE STUDY LIBRARY

The Gospel of John

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This Book is Dedicated to

Louise Gilliam

my faithful companion in my ministry
and mission work, both state-side and on foreign fields.



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A special “*thank you*” to

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for making the printing of this book possible.

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A companion workbook on the study of the Gospel of John by Doyle Gilliam (an excellent **Bible Class Workbook**) is available for purchase through the Sunset International Bible Institute External Studies: 1 (800) 687-2121

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This book is the result of a multi-step process which began with a video taped course. The voice track of the video tape was first transcribed, then formatted and edited from spoken to written style. The goal of the editorial process has been to produce a readable document while protecting the course content and the style and personality of the teacher. We believe the goal has been achieved and that each of the forty books planned for the Sunset Study Library will likewise achieve that goal.

Special gratitude must be expressed to Cline Paden and Truman Scott who began the video course series in 1989, to Bob Martin, who directed Sunset Video Studio, to Virgil Yocham and the staff of Sunset External Studies Division who

wrote the study guides, to Darlene Morris and the staff of Sunset Translation / Editing Center who edited the manuscripts and to each faculty member of Sunset International Bible Institute who took extra time to prepare and present these courses in the studio.

This book and its companion volumes are being translated into the major languages of the world to produce a Bible Study Library which can be used on the mission fields of the world to mature Christians, train church leaders, and grow churches that plant other churches.

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The Gospel Of Belief

Introduction

The gospel of John has been called the most beautiful book in the entire world. The vocabulary of the gospel of John is simple. Its miracles and lessons from Jesus have delighted people all over the world, both young and old, in many different languages and in many different cultures. Yet in some ways it is a very profound book. This book has been compared to a pond in which a child can wade and in which an elephant can swim. On the surface it seems very simple. It is easy to understand. The language is simple. People who have studied the Greek language generally begin their study with either the gospel of John or the epistles of John because the language in these books is the most simple in the original Greek language. Those trying to learn any foreign language have found they can read the gospel of John before any other New Testament writing. Beneath the surface there is a depth, a profoundness, that the most thorough scholars find as a constant challenge. Nevertheless, students are encouraged to study this gospel.

The purpose of the book, the author of the book, and some of the main characteristics of the book will be studied in this chapter. Looking at the book as a whole will help the reader to understand the book as it is studied in more detail in the chapters to come.

The Purpose of the Book

The gospel of John was written to produce faith and to encourage or strengthen faith. The theme passage is found in John 20:30–31:

Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

In the original language the word “*believe*” is used in a tense that means continuous action. So John is not simply writing about those who have never believed, but he is also writing to strengthen and deepen the faith of those who already believe. I believe that the study of the gospel of John will deepen and encourage every reader’s faith.

“Sign” Evidence Presented by John

In the theme passage John wrote that Jesus did many other miraculous signs which were not recorded in his Gospel. This implies that John was aware of many other miracles which he did not write about. He selected certain signs from all the miracles that Jesus performed. His purpose in recording them was to produce or to increase faith which will result in life.

There are three main words used by John in the theme passage. The first main word given is the word “*signs*” which was translated from the Greek word ***simeon***. There are two other Greek words in the New Testament that also imply supernatural activity or miracles. The word ***dunamas*** is translated miracle and means supernatural power or divine energy that is being expended in the performed activity. A good example of that is found in Matthew 11:20–24 when Jesus rebuked certain cities because of their unbelief:

Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. “Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. . . . If the

miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day.”

The people had the ability to see that what had happened was from God which proved that Jesus was from God. And yet they refused to repent, even though they saw the demonstrations of divine activity. These cities were rebuked by Jesus because they refused to repent though they had more opportunity to see the miracles of Jesus than any other city. They saw demonstrations of supernatural activity and divine energy being expended, and yet they still refused to believe. The basic concept of **dunamas** or miracle was demonstrated by Jesus’ supernatural power.

The Greek word **teros**, which is translated wonder or “wonders,” is also found a number of times in the Bible. It always appears in the plural and always in connection with signs. This word emphasizes the effect on the beholder. It causes wonder, astonishment, or amazement.

But the word used by John in the theme passage is the word **simeon**. This word emphasizes that behind the miracle there is a power, a meaning, and a supernatural teaching that is even greater than the miracle itself. In the discussion that ensued after Jesus fed the 5,000 with five barley loaves and two small fish, He declared: “. . . ‘*I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty*’” (John 6:35). The miracle itself was the feeding of the 5,000 men. A few hours later they would be hungry again. The miracle itself did not last very long, but the truth that the miracle demonstrated is an eternal truth. Jesus, who could feed 5,000 with a few loaves and fishes, is “*the Bread of life*” and can supply a person’s every need. The one who comes to Him will never be hungry, and the one who trusts in Him will never be thirsty.

Lazarus had been dead for four days when Jesus brought him out of the tomb, but Lazarus would later die again (cf. John 11:44). All the people in the Bible, in both the Old and

New Testaments, who were raised from the dead, later died. It is Jesus who is described as the firstfruits of those who has been raised from the dead: *“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep”* (1 Corinthians 15:20). He is the first One to have conquered death. He is the One who could say: *“I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades”* (Revelation 1:18). No one else could ever make that statement because everyone else who had been raised from the dead later died again. By raising Lazarus from the dead Jesus proved a truth that is greater than the miracle itself. He said to Martha, Lazarus’ sister, in John 11:25–26:

“ . . . I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

Obedient believers have an assurance of resurrection and eternal life because Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. The spiritual truth behind the miracle was even greater than the miracle itself.

The second main word used by John in the theme passage is the word *“believe”* which is translated from the Greek word **pistuo**. This verb form is found 98 times in the gospel of John. However, the noun form **pistus** meaning faith or belief is not found. Thayer’s Greek Lexicon, page 511, defines **pistuo** as a conviction full of joyful trust that Jesus is the Messiah, the divinely appointed author of eternal salvation in the kingdom of God, conjoined with obedience to Christ.

There are three elements found in the Greek word **pistuo** which is translated *“believe.”* First, is the idea of **conviction** that Jesus is the Messiah, the divinely appointed author of salvation. One must believe in his heart that Jesus is who He claims to be. There must be a deep conviction that Jesus is the

Son of God and that He is the Christ.

The second element of saving faith is **trust**. Trust means full commitment to Jesus rather than trust in self or in self righteousness. People can believe men in history. They can believe in Julius Caesar, Abraham Lincoln, or George Washington. But they should not believe in those men the same way they believe in Jesus Christ. People cannot trust men of history for their salvation. Men of history did not die for a sinful person. They were not raised again from the dead for a sinful person's justification. People should only put their trust in Jesus and in His shed blood.

The third element of saving faith is **obedience** to Christ. Saving faith according to the Bible is always obedient faith. It is the same in the Old Testament as well. John the baptizer taught that the person who believes on the Son has eternal life: *"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him"* (John 3:36). If a person believes he has life, but does not obey the word, he does not have life because believing involves obedience. The person who is disbelieving is also disobedient. The same thought is found in Hebrews 3:18–19:

And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

The people who disobeyed Moses were not able to enter God's rest because of their unbelief, and they did not enter because of their disobedience. So unbelief equals disobedience, and, therefore, belief equals obedience.

In the book of Romans, the longest discussion in all the Bible about justification by faith, there are many wonderful passages that state that man is justified by faith. Man is not justified on the basis of his works, nor on the basis of his righteousness, but on the basis of his faith. However, that faith

is not simply a mental assent. In Romans 1:5 Paul wrote about the obedience of faith among all the nations. When he concluded the book, he again referred to the obedience of faith: “ . . . so that all nations might believe and obey him” (Romans 16:16). So the faith that John wrote about is a faith that contains **conviction**. It is a faith that has **trust**, and it is a faith that contains **obedience**. That is the meaning John gives to saving faith.

The third word that John uses in connection with the theme passage is the word “*life*.” “*Life*” is one of the key words in the gospel of John. It is found 36 times. As used by John, life does not mean mere existence because all men have mere existence. He means a quality of existence that is found only in the Son. It has to do with fellowship with God and with abundant life which God supplies. Jesus Himself said in John 17:3: “*Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*”

Jesus said He came to give life to the full: “ . . . *I have come that they may have life and may have it to the full*” (John 10:10). This life is found only in Jesus, the Son of God. It is found nowhere else. John wrote in 1 John 5:11–12:

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

There is no life in isolation from Jesus. Men may exist. They may have physical life. But there is no real life, no union with God, and no fellowship with God apart from His Son, Jesus Christ: “*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him*” (John 3:36).

The Fruit of the Signs in John

The signs were done by Jesus in order to cause men to

believe. However, not everybody who saw the signs believed. Some people saw the signs and went away in unbelief because of the condition of their hearts. The signs were done, and they were sufficient to produce belief that would result in life. Signs produce belief, and belief produces life. There is evidence to show a sincere person that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and by believing in Him one can have life eternal. But men may reject that evidence.

Throughout the gospel of John the growth of belief **and** unbelief is seen in the lives of people. The unbelief will culminate in the crucifixion of Jesus. The faith will culminate in a tremendous confession like the one made by Thomas: “*My Lord and my God*” (John 20:28).

There are reasons given for unbelief all through the gospel of John. Jesus told Nicodemus: “*This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil*” (John 3:19). “*The verdict*” means the judgment. Jesus told the Jews who were persecuting Him that they did not have the love of God in their hearts: “. . . *I know you, that you do not have the love of God in your hearts*” (John 5:42). The Jews did not believe Jesus because of the lack of evidence in the works that He performed or the other testimonies that were given, but because they did not have the love of God in their hearts. There were some among the Jewish rulers who believed in Jesus, but they would not confess their faith. John 12:42–43:

Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved praise from men more than praise from God.

When men love the praise of other men more than the praise of God, then their hearts will not accept the evidence that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Believing is going to result in life, a present reality. Men who are not responsive to the gospel are also going to be judged. There will be a future life with God in heaven, and there will be a future judgment at the end of time. But John wrote that eternal life is a present reality. He also stated that judgment is a present reality. John 3:18:

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son

John the Baptizer told a Jew that the wrath of God remains on the man who rejects the Son: “*whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him*” (John 3:36). John did not say that the wrath would be upon him. He said that the wrath of God was upon him. It was already upon him.

The Seven Signs In John

John selects certain signs out of all the signs that Jesus worked to present his case. He was aware of many more miracles that Jesus performed. There are references throughout the gospel of John about miracles or signs that He did that caused people to believe. However, only seven are discussed in detail, and these are the ones that John selected to build his case. In John 2 there is the changing of water into wine, in John 4 the healing of an official's son, and in John 5 there is the healing of an invalid man at the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem. The feeding of the 5000 near the Sea of Galilee is given in John 6 and walking on the water is also found in John 6. The sixth miracle or sign is the healing of a man born blind found in John 9. In John 11 the raising of Lazarus, a man who was had been dead for four days and was brought forth from the tomb by the power of Jesus, is the seventh sign.

Witnesses To The Deity of Jesus

In addition to the seven signs or miracles, there is also the use of witnesses. The word witness in noun and verbal form is found 47 times in the gospel of John. It is only found six times in the other three gospels. This shows that John also builds his case around the testimonies of the witnesses who gave their views about who Jesus is. These were qualified witnesses who had every reason to believe because of the basis of the testimony that was given, and there are a number of witnesses in the gospel of John.

One, of course, is the **witness of the Father**. Jesus always appealed to the witness of the Father as His main witness. The Father sent Him into the world, sanctified Him, set Him apart, and gave Him a message. He stamped His approval on all that Jesus did by working mighty signs and wonders through Him as He lived here on earth.

There is the **witness of Christ Himself**. Even though Jesus Christ is bearing testimony about Himself, His testimony is valid because He knows His origin and He knows His destiny. He knows that He came from God, and He knows that He has the message of God. On the basis of His own knowledge of His origin and destiny, He knows that He is going to return to the Father. He is a competent witness to bear record about His own Sonship.

There is the **witness of the Holy Spirit**. Jesus knew that the apostles would forget many of the things that He taught them over a period of three years. A person often forgets information that he heard last week or last month. Jesus, too, reminded them of all the things that He had taught. And to teach them all the things that they needed to know, He promised to send them the Holy Spirit as another witness. The Spirit would guide them into all truth and would remind them of all the things that Jesus had said to them. The witness of the Holy Spirit is one of the main witnesses in the gospel of John for the deity of Jesus.

There is also the **witness of the works of Jesus**. Reference

was made earlier to His signs, but the works relate to His miracles and all the other things He did that had the divine stamp of approval. Supernatural knowledge, knowing what someone was thinking and what would happen, is an example. These are other indications that God was indeed working in the life of Jesus and stamping His approval upon His life by the works that He performed through Him.

Old Testament Scriptures witness to the deity of Jesus. Jesus referred to these witnesses: *“You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me”* (John 5:39). There are many predictive prophecies about the Christ in the Old Testament. People who have searched the Old Testament and the New Testament have found that many, many predictions about the Messiah have been perfectly fulfilled in Jesus. So the Old Testament scriptures bear witness or testimony about Jesus.

There is the **testimony of John the Baptizer**. John is introduced in the gospel of John as one who would bear witness. He was not the Light, but he came that he might bear witness of the Light. John came as one to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus. He denied that he was the Christ. He denied that he was Elijah. He denied that he was the Prophet. He claimed to be a voice preparing the way for the One who would come after Him. He affirmed that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. John testified that Jesus is the Son of God: *“I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God”* (John 1:34).

There are other witnesses found in the gospel of John. For example, there are a number of disciples and a number of individuals who bore testimony about who Jesus is. Andrew excitedly found his brother Simon and told him about Jesus: *“The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (that is, the Christ)”* (John 1:41). Philip witnessed to Nathanael in John 1:45:

Philip found Nathanael and told him, 'We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.'

Peter believed that Jesus was the Holy One of God: “. . . *You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God*” (John 6:68–69).

Nicodemus, a leader in the Sanhedrin Court, came to Jesus by night and said: “. . . *Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him*” (John 3:2). Many Samaritans believed that Jesus is the Savior of the world. (cf. John 4:42) Even the Pharisees were forced to confess on the basis of the evidence that Jesus performed many miraculous signs (cf. John 11:47). The blind man believed in the Son of Man and called him Lord: “*Then the man said, 'Lord, I believe,' and he worshiped him*” (John 9:38). Thomas made perhaps the greatest confession of all when he said: “. . . *My Lord and my God*” (John 20:28).

The Author and Make-up of the Book

The Author

The author of the book is John, the brother of James. External evidence, outside of the gospel of John, points to John as the one who wrote the book. And internally the evidence points to the same person. John was one of the twelve apostles. He is known as “*the disciple whom Jesus loved,*” an expression found in John 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7, and 21:20. All of these verses indicate that there is one person especially close to Jesus who was listed as “*the disciple whom Jesus loved.*” Jesus chose twelve men to become His apostles. Three of His disciples, Peter, James and John, were closer to Him than the other apostles (cf. Mark 13:3, 14:33; Luke 8:51). The apostle whom Jesus loved could not have been James because he was

beheaded very early, according to Acts 12:2. It was not Peter because Peter was distinguished from that disciple in some of the passages in the gospel of John. In fact, in a number of cases, Peter and “*the disciple whom Jesus loved*” were mentioned together (cf. John 13:23–24, 20:2, 21:7, 21:20). Thus, John, the brother of James, has to be the author of the gospel of John. John wrote that he was the disciple who saw and recorded the events given in the gospel: “*This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true*” (John 21:24).

The Make-up of the Book

Notice some of the characteristics of the gospel of John. First, John has an announced purpose: “*But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name*” (John 20:31). He uses signs, witnesses, and other testimonies to prove the point that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Second, John omits many of the main events in the life of Jesus. He does not write about the birth of Jesus, His genealogy, His youth, His baptism, His temptation, His transfiguration, or His ascension. John concentrates his gospel on Jesus’ activity in the area of Judea, especially in Jerusalem. Matthew, Mark, and Luke concentrate on His activity in Galilee. It was in Judea that the Messiah must be accepted or rejected. John has, at the utmost, an account of about twenty days in the Lord’s ministry. The activities recorded in chapters 13 through 19, which is roughly one-third of the entire book, took place in less than twenty-four hours.

Third, most of the miraculous signs that are found in John are found only in the gospel of John. Five of the seven signs which John wrote about are found in John’s gospel and are not found in Matthew, Mark or Luke.

Consider some characteristic words in the gospel of John. The word “*believe*” and its cognates are found 33 times.

“*Love*” and its cognates are found 57 times. The unique expressions “*verily, verily*.” The terms, *Amen, amen*” or “*I truly say unto you*” or “*I tell you the truth*” are translated in different ways in different translations, but are found uniquely in John’s gospel and always introduces a tremendous statement that Jesus was about to make.

Prologue To The Gospel Of John

John 1:1–18

Introduction

There are five major ideas given in this section of the gospel of John. First, John wrote about the relationship that Jesus has with God (cf. 1:1–2). Second, he examines the relationship of Jesus to the creation (cf. John 1:3–5). Third, John wrote about the relationship between Jesus and John the Baptizer (cf. John 1:6–8). Fourth, the relationship of the Incarnate Word to the world is examined (cf. John 1:9–14). Fifth, John wrote about the greatness of Jesus, the exceeding superiority of Jesus (cf. John 1:15–18).

These themes are not only found in the prologue to the gospel of John, but they are developed throughout the book. So, in a sense, a miniature gospel of John is seen in the first eighteen verses of the first chapter. As one reads through the gospel you will notice that these are the main themes that are given and then expanded upon.

The Relationship of Jesus with the Father

Examination of the Word “Logos”

The relationship between Jesus and God is examined: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning”* (John 1:1–2). The *“Word”* used in these verses is translated

from the Greek word **logos**. In the beginning was the “*Word*,” the **logos**. The **logos** was with God, and the **logos** was God. In the Greek language the word **logos** had a number of different meanings, but it came to mean something very significant. It sometimes meant the all-pervading principle of the whole universe, it also meant reason or thought, and it meant thought expressed through speech. But it was not personal; it was a force. When the Greeks used the term it always had a connotation of something very significant. John used the same term, but not in the same way that Greek philosophy had used the term.

There is development in the Old Testament of the word **logos**. In Genesis 1 God spoke, and the worlds were formed by His words. The phrase “*and God said*” appears eight times in Genesis 1 and on each occasion, creative activity took place. It is the nature of God to speak; this is revealed in Genesis 1 and in John 1. When John used the word **logos**, he poured content into it that makes it very different from Greek philosophy, and even different from Jewish thought in the Old Testament. **Logos** is like the word, “*God*.”

The word god has a number of meanings to people. In fact, somebody has said it is probably the most meaningless word in the English language until content is poured into it. Almost anything can be meant by the word god. But when content from the Bible is given to the English word god, the word becomes “God the Father of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” and “God the Father of Jesus Christ.” The same is true with the word **logos**. John used the word that would draw the attention of people when they read the word, but he did not use the word with the same meaning they had experienced in their Greek philosophy. The content of the word **logos** changes the meaning.

There are four things about the word **logos** in the gospel of John that mean the word is different from the background that the people had in Greek philosophy. First, the word **logos** in John means God. Second, the word **logos** is personal. God is a

personal god. Third, **logos** created all things. Fourth, the **logos** of John became flesh and lived among men. So John took the word the people knew, that had high connotations, but he put it in a biblical context which gave it a new meaning. John gave special meaning to the word **logos** in his gospel. The Word became flesh, John wrote, and made his dwelling among men for a while (cf. John 1:14).

The Word Is Eternal, Has Personality, and Is Deity

Notice three very special things that John wrote about the Word: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*” (John 1:1). First, he wrote that the Word is eternal. The Word was in the beginning. This verse goes farther back in the Bible than any other verse: “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*” (Genesis 1:1). The verse explains what happened in the beginning, but John wrote that the Word was in the beginning. The Word has always existed. He did not come into being; He was not created. The Word is eternal.

Second, John wrote about the personality of the Word. The Greek phrase, “*The Word was with God,*” implies a face to face encounter with God. The Word and the Father God were with each other. The Word was with God.

Third, John wrote about the deity of the Word. “*And the Word was God.*” The Word was not only with God, having personality and fellowship with the Father, but the Word has the same nature, quality, and essence of God. John stresses the deity of Christ in his gospel. There is no other book in the New Testament that stresses the deity of Jesus as much as the gospel of John. In the best manuscripts the “only Son” is referred to as God: “. . . *But God the only Son . . .*” (John 1:18). When the Jews persecuted Jesus for healing the invalid on the Sabbath, Jesus told them that He and His Father should both be honored: “*that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father . . .*” (John 5:23). Jesus identifies Himself with the eternal I AM of the Old Testament: “. . . *Before Abraham was born, I am!*”

(John 8:58). Jesus told the Jews that He and the Father were one: *"I and the Father are one"* (John 10:30). Jesus told Philip that anyone who knew Him knew the Father: *" . . . Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father . . ."* (John 14:9). Thomas made a tremendous confession to Jesus: *"My Lord and my God"* (John 20:28). Throughout the gospel John wrote that Jesus is God. Jesus is deity, with all that the word deity means and implies.

There are other Bible passages that teach that Jesus is deity. Paul wrote that Jesus has the very nature of God: *"Who, being in very nature God . . ."* (Philippians 2:6). Paul continued to write that Jesus emptied Himself and took the very nature of a servant (cf. Philippians 2:7). Paul wrote his true son in the faith about the glorious reappearance of the great God and Savior Jesus Christ (cf. Titus 2:13). God commanded all the angels of heaven to worship His Son: *" . . . when God brings his first-born into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him'"* (Hebrews 1:6). Christians should not worship a created being. Through out the Bible the worship of a human has always been condemned.

God Almighty desires for all men and all angels to worship His Son. On the island of Patmos John saw and heard all creation in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea praising and honoring the Lamb and the One who sits on the throne. John refers to God the Father, the One who sits on the throne, and to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb. Men, angels, and all created beings worship the Son in exactly the same way as they worship the Father: *" To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"* (Revelation 5:13).

Relation of Jesus and the Creation

He is the Creator of All Things

John wrote that the Word was not only with God, but the Word was God. He also wrote that all creation came into being because of the creative activity of Jesus Christ. According to John 1:3–5 everything was created through Jesus:

Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). Through the Son, God brought the universe into being (cf. Hebrews 1:2). God created all things but He did it through His Son. Paul also wrote about the creative activity of Jesus in Colossians 1:16:

For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.

Jesus was involved in the creation; He is the Creator. He is the One who brought the physical world into being. When one goes to the mountains and sees the great majestic sights, he should keep in mind that none of those things came into being without the creative activity of the Word of God.

He Is the Life Giver

John wrote that Jesus is the life giver: *“In him was life, and that life was the light of men”* (John 1: 4). Throughout the gospel of John, the word *“life”* is used over and over. Jesus told Nicodemus that whoever believes in God’s Son would have eternal life: *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:16). Jesus said He came to bring life: *“... I have come that they may have life and have it to the full”* (John 10:10). Jesus told Martha that He was the resurrection and the life: *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die . . .”* (John 11:25–26).

He Is the Light Bringer

Jesus is also the giver of light: *“In him was life, and that life was the light of men”* (John 1:4). Jesus told the people to follow Him so they could have the light of life: *“ . . . I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life ”* (John 8:12). Jesus again emphasized the fact that He is the Light of the world: *“While I am in the world, I am the light of the world”* (John 9:5). Jesus is the light giver, and men will remain in darkness unless they come to Him who is the Light.

There is antagonism toward the Light: *“The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it”* (John 1:5). This verse is probably better translated, as the New International Version marginal note states, “the light has not overpowered it.” In the gospel of John darkness is pictured as being in antagonism to the Light, not as trying to understand it. The same Greek word is translated “overtake” in John 12:35: *“ . . . Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you . . . ”* (John 3:19). Jesus told Nicodemus: *“ This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men love darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.”* So there is open hostility or opposition between darkness and Light. The darkness tried to put out the Light, but the darkness was not able to overpower it. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ on the cross became the way that men could be reconciled to God and brought out of darkness and into the light.

The Relation of Jesus to John the Baptizer

John, A God-Sent Man

John wrote about Jesus and the ministry of John the Baptizer: *“There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John”* (John 1:6). There was a tendency to exalt John the baptizer far beyond what he should have been. Some people followed John when they should have been following Jesus. When Paul came to the city of Ephesus, he found that

there were certain disciples who had been following John and knew only John's baptism. Paul explained that John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the One who came after John, that is Jesus. When they heard this they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (cf. Acts 19). John was not the Light, but he bore witness to the Light.

Then as a reaction, some people began to think of John as a false teacher. There are some writings from the second century in which people wrote that John was a false prophet. John, of course, wrote in the first century. John the baptizer was a man sent from God, but he was a man, not God. He was not the Word.

A Witness to the Light.

John the baptizer bore witness concerning the Light. John 1:7-8:

He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

The true position of John is found all through chapter one. He came as a witness to testify concerning the Light so that through Him all men might believe. Notice how he defines his work. He was not the light. He came only as a witness to the Light. Later when some of John's disciples were disturbed about the fact that so many of his followers were now following Jesus, John said: "*He must become greater; I must become less*" (John 3:30). John wanted Jesus to be in the limelight, not himself. What a marvelous thing it would be if gospel preachers today would do the same. Jesus, the true Light, came to earth to give all men the right to become children of God (cf. John 1:9–14).

The Incarnate Word and the World

The Negative Response of the World

Jesus is the true Light who came into the world: "*The true*

light that gives light to every man was coming into the world" (John 1:9). Some translations leave the impression that it was a man who was coming into the world, but in the gospel of John the expression "*to come into the world*" is always used about Jesus, not about others. For example, Jesus told Pilate: ". . . and for this I came into the world . . ." (John 18:37). Jesus told Nicodemus: "*For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world . . .*" (John 3:17). Jesus is always pictured as coming into the world from outside. The expression simply means that the One who came into the world to give light was Jesus.

Jesus has the potential to give light to every man because He tasted death for every man (cf. Hebrews 2:9). Potentially, every man can be saved by Christ because of His death: "*He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for the whole world*" (1 John 2:2). Jesus came into the world to give light to every man, but man must believe in the Light. Everyone who does evil hates the light. John 3:19–20:

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

Even though Jesus came to give light to every man, not every man will come to Him. Jesus said to the Jews: "*yet you refuse to come to me to have life*" (John 5:40). Throughout the gospel of John, Jesus appeals to men to believe in Him, to trust Him, and to follow Him. But unbelief characterizes many people who prefer darkness to the light that He came to bring.

The world rejected the Word and refused to believe in the One whom God had sent into the world. John 1:10–11:

He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He

came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

Though the world was made through Him, the world did not receive Him. John 1:11 is a summary of John 1–12: “*He came to that which was his own, and his own did not receive him.*” From John 1 through John 12 Jesus presents Himself to the world and asks the world to believe on Him on the basis of the testimonies He has given. But the world received Him not.

The rejection of Jesus was not total. The people who believed in Jesus became children of God. John 1:12–13:

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

John 1:13 is a summary of John 13 through John 17.

In John 1 through John 12 Jesus appears and appeals to the world, but the world receives Him not. In John 13 through John 17 He withdraws from the world and teaches His disciples. They believe Jesus, and to them He gave the right to become children of God.

In the gospel of John students are reminded again what believing means. There are three elements in biblical faith in the gospel of John. There is always **conviction**. A man must believe in his heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. And he must believe that Jesus is the Messiah, and that He is all that He claims to be. A man must also **trust** Jesus rather than trusting in his own righteousness, his own goodness, or his own morality. He must trust Jesus Christ and His shed blood. Then a man needs to practice **obedience** because obedience is always a factor in saving faith according to John and according to all the writings of the word of God.

Physical descent or fleshly relationship is not sufficient cause. Men are not born again of a husband’s will; they are not

born of natural descent; they are not born of a human decision, but they are born of God. This is a spiritual birth rather than a physical birth. The Jews were prone to trust in the fact that they were descended from Abraham. John the Baptizer told the Pharisees and Sadducees: *“And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham”* (Matthew 3:9). In John 8:31–34 Jesus told the Jews that the truth would set them free:

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” They answered him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?” Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.”

Jesus said the one who serves sin is a slave of sin. He stated that physical descent is not enough, that men cannot trust in the fact that they have come from Abraham in order to become children of God. They must be born again. Jesus taught Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish ruling council, that being born again was essential: *“In reply Jesus declared, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again’”* (John 3:3).

The Positive Response of God to the World.

John 1:14 is one of the most outstanding statements in all the New Testament: *“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”* The incarnation was absolutely necessary. There would be no way for God to save man unless Jesus became flesh and lived among the people. He had to become flesh in order to make the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the people. Hebrews 2:17:

For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

Jesus had to become a man in order to die for the sins of the world. Apart from His incarnation, apart from His becoming flesh, this could not have been done. Paul wrote that God presented Christ Jesus as a sacrifice of atonement: “*God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood*” (Romans 3:25). The only way God could be just, justify sinners, and let sinners come into His presence was through the atoning sacrificial death of Jesus. The Word became flesh in order to die, in order to present Himself as the atoning sacrifice before God.

There is another reason for the incarnation of the Word. He became a man in order to become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God that He might not only make propitiation for the sins of the people, but that He might be able to help people when they are tempted (cf. Hebrews 2:17–18). Jesus was tempted in every way, yet He is without sin, and can help believers in their time of need. Hebrews 4:15:

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Summary

There are a number of important things that can be learned from the incarnation. First, one can learn about God from the incarnation. The Judge of the universe, the One who brought the world into being, became the atoning sacrifice. God sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice because of His love: “*This is*

love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

Second, one can learn about duty from the incarnation of Jesus Christ. He took on the very nature of a servant. Philippians 2:5–7:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant . . .

Paul wrote the church in Philippi because they were apparently exalting themselves. There was some conflict among them. Philippians 2:3–4:

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

To solve the problems Paul told the brothers to have the same attitude as Jesus. Christians can learn not only about God, but also about their duty from the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

The Word’s Surpassing Excellence

John made a statement about the greatness of Jesus: “*John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, ‘This was he of whom I said, “He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me”’*” (John 1:15). Jesus was before John in two ways. Jesus was before John in time: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*” (John 1:1) Jesus was before time, but John came in time: “*There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John*” (John 1:6). Jesus brought time into being.

Grace upon grace, or one extension of grace after another,

provides blessing to God's people: *"From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another"* (John 1:16). The word "grace" is found only three times in the gospel of John. It is found only in John 1:14, 16, 18. It is not found in the rest of the gospel of John, but the words "give," "gave," "given," and "gift" appear some seventy-six times. They describe what is meant by grace because what God is giving is a gift from Him.

John presents a contrast between Moses and Jesus: *"For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ"* (John 1:17). Moses is referred to often in John's gospel because the Jews trusted him. The Jews claimed to be Moses' disciples: *" . . . We are disciples of Moses!"* (John 9:29) Jesus told the Jews that if they believed Moses, they would believe in Him. John 5:45–47:

"But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"

Jesus made God known in a way that no one else had ever made God known: *"No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known"* (John 1:18). Everything the men in the Old Testament said about God was true and accurate, but it remained for Jesus Christ, who was in the very bosom of the Father, to come from the Father and reveal God perfectly and fully. Thus Jesus was able to answer Philip *" . . . Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father . . . "* (John 14:9).

Jesus Begins His Personal Ministry

John 1:19–51

Introduction

As Jesus began His personal ministry, two main events occurred. There was the witness of John the baptizer (cf. John 1:19–34) and the selection of Jesus’ first followers (cf. John 1:35–51).

The Witness of John the Baptizer

The Investigating Committee

The Jews of Jerusalem sent men to find out who John was: *“Now this was John’s testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was”* (John 1:19). They were concerned about what John was preaching and the excitement that had occurred in the Jordan River area. The term *“the Jews”* is used seventy times by John. It has somewhat of an unusual meaning in the gospel of John. It usually meant the religious leaders, especially those in Jerusalem, who were in opposition to Jesus. The Jews were distinguished from the crowds or the multitudes in a number of different places.

The Jews, the investigating committee, were concerned because many people were excited by John’s preaching: *“People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan”* (Matthew 3:5). The people

wondered if John might be the long awaited Messiah: *“The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ”* (Luke 3:15). No wonder the religious leaders sent messengers to find out who John was. People from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went to hear John preach, and many were baptized (cf. Mark 1:5). Thus, the religious leaders felt the need to investigate what John said about himself.

Questions Asked And Answers Given – Negatively

Notice who John the baptizer was not: *“He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, ‘I am not the Christ.’”* (John 1:20). John freely confessed that he was not the expected Jewish Messiah.

The investigators asked John if he was Elijah or a prophet: *“They asked him, ‘Then who are you? Are you Elijah?’ He said, ‘I am not.’ ‘Are you the Prophet?’ He answered, ‘No.’”* (John 1:21). In at least two passages in the book of Matthew, Jesus identified John the Baptist with Elijah (cf. Matthew 11:11–14, 17:10–13). John was not literally Elijah, not the same individual. The key verse is found when Zacharias was told by an angel of the Lord that John would come in the spirit and power of Elijah (cf. Luke 1:17). Jesus recognized that John the Baptizer was the promised Elijah who was to come: *“And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come”* (Matthew 11:14). John fulfilled the passages that predicted His coming. After the transfiguration Peter, James, and John asked Jesus about Elijah. Matthew 17:10–13:

The disciples asked him, “Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?” Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished . . .” Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.

The disciples then understood that Jesus was talking to them about John the Baptizer. He was not literally Elijah, but he fulfilled the passages about Elijah's coming because he came in the spirit and power of the great prophet of the Old Testament.

The Jews asked John the Baptizer if he was the prophet. John's answer was no. Jesus told John's disciples that John was a prophet and more: *"Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet"* (Matthew 11:9). John was a prophet, but he was not "the" prophet. He was not the Prophet, the One who the people had anticipated from Moses' prediction: *"I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him"* (Deuteronomy 18:18). Peter identified that prophet as being Jesus (cf. Acts 3:20–22), as does Stephen (cf. Acts 7:37). Yes, John was a prophet, but he was not the Prophet, the One like Moses.

Question Answered Positively –

As to Who John Was and His Assignment

The Jews demanded an answer from John: *"Finally they said, 'Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?'"* (John 1:22). John answered with the words of Isaiah: *"John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, 'I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.''"* (John 1:23). John's answer was a quote from Isaiah 40:3, and he applied it to himself. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all have the same quote from Isaiah. All four gospels state that John the Baptizer was the voice who called in the wilderness to prepare the way for the Lord.

The people were surprised. If he was not the Messiah, not Elijah, and not the prophet, then why was he baptizing people? To take upon himself the prerogative of baptizing other people, was a strange and unique thing in the eyes of the Jews: *"Now some Pharisees who had been sent questioned him, 'Why then*

do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?'" (John 1:24–25). The Jews had become accustomed to what was called “proselyte baptism.” Gentiles who wanted to become Jews, accept Judaism, would be baptized. More accurately, they would baptize themselves. In other words, they would dip or immerse themselves much like Naaman did when he was cleansed of leprosy. He dipped himself seven times in the River Jordan by himself (cf. 2 Kings 5:14). Gentiles did the same thing when they received the “proselyte baptism.” But John did not baptize Gentile proselytes, he immersed Israelites. Anyone who claimed to have the power to baptize Israelites was very unusual and attracted the attention of Jewish leaders. John bore witness about who he really was and who Jesus is. John 1:26–28:

“I baptize with water,” John replied, “but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.” This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

The Startling Announcement – as to Who Jesus is

John introduced Jesus and gave testimony that He was the long awaited Messiah, the Lamb of God, the Son of God: *“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’”* (John 1:29). The Passover lamb was the reason for John’s statement. The sacrifice was to be from the goats or the sheep. It might be a lamb or a kid, but most of the time it was a lamb (cf. Exodus 12).

Isaiah wrote about one being led like a lamb to the slaughter (cf. Isaiah 53:7). The Suffering Servant of the Lord was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and He was silent before His shearers. When Phillip met the Ethiopian eunuch, he was riding in a chariot reading from Isaiah about One who was led as a Lamb to the slaughter: *“Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus”*

(Acts 8:35). He showed the eunuch that Jesus was indeed the Lamb who had been slain, the One who had been humiliated. The eunuch responded by trusting in Jesus, believing He was the Lamb of God. The Eunuch was baptized and went on his way rejoicing.

John wrote often about Jesus, the Lamb, in the book of Revelation. He is called the Lamb, the Lamb who was slain, and the Lamb standing in the center of the throne who was honored with God the Father. He is the One who takes away the sins of the world and in Him is no sin: *“But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin”* (1 John 3:5). John wrote that Christians have One who speaks to the Father in their defense. He is their atoning sacrifice: *“He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world”* (1 John 2:2). Peter wrote that Jesus was a Lamb who was slain before the foundation of the world but was revealed in the last times (cf 1 Peter 1:20). God always knew what He was going to do. In an agreement between the Father and the Son it was determined that Jesus would become flesh and live among men, and He would become the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. In this way God could be just, and He could justify sinful men who put their trust, their obedient faith, in Jesus Christ.

John the baptizer testified that Jesus was the Son of God because he saw the Spirit come upon Jesus after He was baptized. John 1:32–34:

Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.”

Luke wrote that the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in bodily form like a dove (cf. Luke 3:22). Peter told Cornelius that God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and power and He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil (cf. Acts 10:38). The apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit in order to bring to their remembrance all the things that Jesus taught and so that they might be guided into all truth (cf. Acts 2).

The believers who came with Peter to Cornelius' house were astonished that Gentiles received the Holy Spirit: *"The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles"* (Acts 10:45). Gentiles at the household of Cornelius were empowered by the Holy Spirit which proved that Gentiles could be saved by the gospel of Jesus the same as the Jews. God, indeed, is no respecter of people, but He will accept Jews and Gentiles both. John wrote in the theme passage that Jesus did many miraculous signs so a person can believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:30–32). Mark wrote in the beginning of his gospel that Jesus was the Son of God: *"The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God"* (Mark 1:1). There are many witnesses who give testimonies that Jesus is the Son of God.

Jesus' First Disciples

John Points Two Men to Jesus – the First of Many

The day after Jesus' baptism John the baptizer called Jesus the Lamb of God. *"The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, 'Look, the Lamb of God!'"* (John 1:35–36). These two disciples stopped following John and began to follow Jesus. John 1:37–39:

When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you

staying?” “Come,” he replied, “and you will see.” So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour.

The name of one of the followers was Andrew, but the name of the other disciple is not given. John 1:40-42:

Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which, when translated, is Peter).

Andrew immediately went to find his brother Simon to tell him that he had found the Messiah, and he brought Peter to the Lord Jesus.

Andrew’s name appears three times in the gospel of John, and each time he did the same thing. He brought someone to Jesus. First, he brought his brother. Second, Andrew brought a boy with loaves and fishes to Jesus. It has been said that Andrew had a way with children because he encouraged the young boy to share his sack lunch with others. Jesus was able to take the few loaves and fishes and multiply them and feed 5,000 men, besides women and children (cf. John 6:8–13).

Third, Andrew took some Greeks to Jesus. When the Greeks came to Jerusalem, they wanted to see Jesus, so they went to Philip who was from the Greek speaking area just north of Galilee. But Philip did not know what to do, so he went to Andrew, and together they told Jesus (John 12:20–22).

Jesus looked at Simon and told him he would be called Cephas, which is the Aramaic word for “rock.” which is translated “Peter” in the Greek, which also means rock. It is interesting to note that Jesus does not see people only for what

they are, He also sees them for what they can become. Peter was not always like a rock. He made some tragic mistakes, but Jesus saw Peter for what he would become. This is an example of one torch lighting another torch. Andrew had seen the Light, Jesus. He recognized Him as the Messiah and wanted his brother Simon to also know Jesus. Andrew is scarcely mentioned during the ministry of Jesus or the beginning of the church. Even though he may have been an ordinary person, he brought his brother to the Lord, and Simon Peter became a very significant and powerful preacher. On the day of Pentecost God used Peter to open the door of the kingdom to the Jewish people (cf. Acts 2) and to open the door of faith to the first Gentile, Cornelius (cf. Acts 10). How Andrew must have rejoiced as he witnessed Peter preach boldly before great multitudes and realized that he had brought his brother to Jesus.

Two More Recruits –

The Calling of Philip and Nathanael

Jesus issued the call again. He told Philip to follow him. John 1:43-44:

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida.

More recruits were found. Philip was excited and found Nathanael. John 1:45-46:

Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote-Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip.

Nathanael doubted that the Messiah could come from a small, insignificant place like Nazareth in Galilee. Surely the Messiah would come from Jerusalem or some better known place. Philip told Nathanael to come and see.

Jesus had been watching Nathanael and knew him. John 1:47-48:

When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."

This verse emphasizes the supernatural knowledge of Jesus. It is very likely that as Nathanael was sitting under a tree he was reading the story of Jacob because Jacob deceived his father on two different occasions, and his name was changed to Israel. So Jesus seemed to be saying, "Here is an Israelite who is not like Jacob. Here is an Israelite in whom there is no deception." Nathanael was truly a man of integrity and honor. And Nathanael was amazed that Jesus knew him.

Nathanael made a tremendous confession about Jesus: "Then Nathanael declared, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.'" (John 1:49). Another witness stated that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Nathanael also called Him the king of Israel. The term "king of Israel" is not found often in the gospel of John. But Jesus did tell Nicodemus about His kingdom (cf. John 3:3-5). Jesus spoke to Pilate about His Kingdom. John 18:36-37:

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place . . . for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth . . ."

Jesus told Nathanael he would witness greater things. John 1:50-51

Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that." He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

The Term "Son of Man"

Jesus was often called "Rabbi" or "Teacher." This was a favorite expression for Him, but His favorite expression for Himself was the term "Son of Man." It is used 83 times in the gospels and 17 of those times are in John. The title shows both the deity and humanity of Jesus.

The term Messiah had political implications, and was not used extensively by Jesus. If the gospel is read closely, one will notice that the word Messiah does not occur in the early part of His ministry. When Jesus was in Sychar, an area that was not politically active, a Samaritan woman told Jesus she knew the Messiah was coming. Jesus told her He was the Messiah (cf. John 4:35). He normally avoided calling Himself the Messiah because He worked within God's timetable. When Jesus taught in the temple courts, no one laid a hand on Him because His time had not yet come (cf. John 4:30). Another time when Jesus taught in the temple courts, the Pharisees challenged Him, yet no one seized Him because His time had not yet come (cf. John 8:20). Throughout His life Jesus referred to His approaching death that His Father had ordained, but He only used the term Messiah at the appointed time. When Jesus was being judged, He boldly and openly said He was the Messiah. Then He died at God's appointed time.

The background for the phrase "son of man" is found in one of Daniel's visions. Daniel 7:13-14:

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of

heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."

Obviously, the Ancient of Days is God the Father. One like a son of man is led into His presence. Notice, He was given authority, glory and sovereign power. All peoples, nations, and men of every language worshiped Him. This can be said about no one else except Jesus Christ. He is not a created being. He is God. The Son of Man and His kingdom are everlasting. The term "Son of Man" is also found in the book of Ezekiel in a number of places.

The term "son of man" emphasizes the humanity of Jesus, but it does not indicate lowliness or lack of distinction. It is a term that shows great dignity, honor and power. Matthew 25:31-34:

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'"

Jesus told the people about judgment and eternity, according to the decision of One who is called the Son of Man. He told those on the left about their eternal punishment: *"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels'"* (Matthew 25:41). The Son of Man will decide the eternal

destinies of all men according to the way they lived their lives. Men will be on His right hand or His left hand. Jesus is the only person who used the phrase “Son of Man” in the gospel of John and in the other gospels, with one exception. He used the phrase some eighty times. The Pharisees did not understand what Jesus taught them about His Father so Jesus taught them about the results of the Son of Man’s death. John 8:28:

So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.”

Stephen also used the phrase “Son of Man” in reference to Jesus shortly before he was stoned to death: “*Look,*” he said, “*I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God*” (Acts 7:56). The phrase is a term that has reference to the Messiah and the rule of His kingdom with all power, glory, splendor.

When Jesus told Nathanael he would see greater things, Jesus said he would see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man (cf. John 1:50–51). This is a reminder of the dream that Jacob had the night he slept on a stone. In the dream he saw a stairway extended into heaven, and angels of God were ascending and descending on it (cf. Genesis 28:12). Jesus claimed to be the ladder to heaven. He is the Way, the exclusive Way, by which men can enter into the very presence of God. When Jesus predicted His death, He told His disciples that He would come back to take them with Him. Thomas told Jesus that he did not know where Jesus was going, nor did he know the way: “*Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’*” (John 14:6). Jesus also claimed to be the Gate: “*I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture*” (John 10:9). He never claimed to be one of the gates

or one of the doors or one of the ways. He claimed to be the only Way to God.

As the apostles went out to evangelize the world, they believed they had the one exclusive message that every man needed. When Peter and John stood before the Sanhedrin, Peter told them that Jesus was the only way to be saved: *“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12). Paul wrote that Christ Jesus is the mediator between God and men: *“For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”* (1 Timothy 2:5).

Conclusion

Jesus cannot be simply one of the Messiahs or one of the ways or one of the doors or one of the gates. If Jesus Christ is true, and if Jesus Christ told the truth, then He is the only One who can take Christians into the presence of God. It behooves all men to seriously consider what Jesus Christ said. If Jesus Christ is not the Way, then He is an imposter and a fraud, one who made claims that could not be substantiated. But Jesus performed many miraculous signs. He raised the dead, cleansed lepers, and healed the sick which demonstrated that He is the Son of God. He has great power so that all men can have absolute faith in everything that He said and in everything that He did.

At the close of the fourth day, Jesus had called at least five believing men who would become His apostles. In the following three years, the men would grow in faith as they listened to Jesus and would take the gospel to all mankind following Jesus' death.

The First Signs of Jesus

John 2:1–25

Introduction

In John 2 the activity of Jesus revolves around the first sign and the first cleansing of the temple. Take note of Jesus' claim to be independent from His mother's influence. The first sign of turning water to wine shows John's presentation of Jesus as the Son of God. There was a two-fold result of the sign: Jesus manifested His glory and the disciples believed. Jesus' cleansing of the temple began the conflict with the Jewish leaders.

The first sign as recorded by John in his gospel, the changing of water into wine, occurred at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Cana is mentioned only in John's gospel. Nathanael was from the city of Cana (cf. John 21:2). Jesus was in Cana when a royal official from Capernaum came and begged Him to heal his son before he died (cf. John 4:46). Jesus told the man that his son would live. The man departed and found out the next day that his son had been cured at the exact hour Jesus spoke. This miracle reveals Jesus' mastery of distance, healing a man's son who was some 20 miles away.

The problem at the wedding was that the supply of wine was gone. This caused embarrassment to the people who were there, especially the host. Jesus' mother was there, as well. Perhaps she was involved in serving, or perhaps she was might have even been the hostess of this particular feast. A lawsuit could have been filed by people in those days if the wine or the food were to run out. So Jesus' mother appealed to Him. She told Him that there was no more wine.

The Miracle in Cana

A Change in Quality of Relationship

Jesus, His disciples, and His mother attended the wedding in Cana in Galilee: *“On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding”* (John 2:1–2).

When the wine was gone Jesus’ mother told Jesus that there was no more wine (John 2:3).

Jesus responded: *“Dear woman, why do you involve me?”* Jesus replied. *“My time has not yet come”* (John 2:4). Some people think that Jesus was rude or impolite to His mother, Mary. This was not the case. The use of the word “woman” as found in the gospel of John does not imply any kind of rudeness, impoliteness, or harshness. Another example of the use of the word “woman” is found when Jesus was talking to the woman of Samaria: *“Jesus declared, ‘Believe me, **woman**, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem’”* (John 4:21). He used the term “woman,” but He did not use it in a derogatory sense.

When Jesus was on the cross and wanted to commit His mother into the hands of the disciple whom He loved, He used the term dear woman: *“When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, ‘**Dear woman**, here is your son’”* (John 19:26). The word “woman” was certainly a respectful term without any harshness. When Jesus appeared in the garden with Mary of Magdala after having been raised from the dead, he again used the word woman: *“**Woman**,” he said, “why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for? . . .”* (John 20:15). Again, there was no implication of rudeness or impoliteness.

The fact that Jesus called her “woman” rather than “Mother” indicates that a change in relationship must now be recognized by Mary. Jesus realized that He must now operate not within Mary’s timetable, but within God’s. It was God who set the schedule for Jesus, not Mary.

There were other occasions when Jesus refused to let His family members interfere with Him and His work. When He was twelve years old, He went with His family to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. On the way home Jesus' parents began looking for him among their relatives and friends. When they could not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem and found Him in the temple courts among the teachers. They anxiously asked Him why He had mistreated them. Jesus replied: *"Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"* (Luke 2:49).

There was another occasion when members of Jesus' family came looking for Him and tried to take Him under their charge. The crowd at the house told Jesus that His mother and brothers were outside looking for Him. Mark 3:33-34:

"Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked. Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

Jesus said that His family was those who do the will of God. He would not let His earthly family interfere with His work of serving God and doing God's will within God's timetable.

Mary made a very wise request to the servants at the wedding in Cana: *"His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you'"* (John 2:5). There could be no better advice than to do what Jesus said. Jesus said that the person who does the will of the Father shall enter the kingdom of heaven: *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 7:21). Jesus gave the example of the wise and foolish builders. Matthew 7:24-27:

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the

streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

Mary gave good advice. No better advice could be given by anyone than to do whatever Jesus said.

A Change in Quality of Water

John explained to the Gentile readers that at the feast there were six large water jars. The jars were the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing. John 2:6-8:

Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water;” so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.” They did so.

John wrote to people who did not know Jewish customs, ceremonies, and feasts. Since each one of the jars held 20–30 gallons, then the total of the six water jars would be between 120–180 gallons.

The water was turned into wine, but the master of the banquet did not realize where it had come from. John 2:9–10:

. . . and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, “Everyone brings out the choice wine

first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

The master of the banquet was amazed because the wine was a far better quality than the earlier wine. This sign shows that Jesus supplies not only what is superior in quality but also in quantity. He supplied the needs of the people on that occasion.

The Two-fold Results of the Sign

The results of the sign were two-fold: First, by doing this miracle Jesus manifested His glory. Second, His disciples believed on Him: "*This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him*" (John 2:11). There is belief and unbelief seen in the gospel of John. The disciples believed on Jesus because they saw the miracle that He performed. They continued to believe on Him, and their faith increased. There were periods of unbelief in others that culminated in Jesus being crucified on a Roman cross. This belief and unbelief will be noted through out the gospel of John.

Jesus Clears the Temple

Short Visit to Capernaum

Jesus went for a short visit to Capernaum with His mother, His brothers, and His disciples: "*After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days*" (John 2:12). This verse is a transition verse. According to Matthew, Jesus had four brothers. They were James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas. Matthew also wrote about all His sisters, which implies more than two (cf. Matthew 13:55–56). So Jesus must have had at least four brothers and three sisters.

A person should not be surprised that Jesus had siblings because after He was born of a virgin, Joseph and Mary came

together as husband and wife. Joseph did not know her, meaning he did not have union with her, until she gave birth (cf. Matthew 1:25). Luke wrote that Mary gave birth to her firstborn, a son, which implies that others were born later (cf. Luke 2:7). After an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, he took Mary home as his wife, and they had a number of children after the birth of Jesus.

Capernaum became the headquarters for Jesus' personal ministry. Some people do not realize that Capernaum was where Jesus lived, rather than Nazareth: "*Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali*" (Matthew 4:13). Before Jesus healed the paralytic, he crossed over to his own town: "*Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town*" (Matthew 9:1). One cannot cross the Sea of Galilee and come to Nazareth because it is not on the coast. Jesus crossed the lake and came to Capernaum, his adult home. Perhaps this explains why Jesus spoke so strongly about God's judgment upon Capernaum. Jesus denounced the cities in which most of His miracles had been performed because they did not repent. Matthew 11:23–24:

"And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you."

Jesus spent a lot of time around the area of the sea of Galilee, especially in the towns to the north, Bethsaida, Korazin, and Capernaum.

The First Public Manifestation of His Official Position

The first cleansing of the temple occurred when Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Jewish Passover. John 2:13–15:

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote about a cleansing of the temple that occurred in the latter part of Jesus' life. Some scholars believe that John got the event out of place or that John was mistaken. Or perhaps Matthew, Mark, and Luke were wrong by putting the cleansing of the temple late in Jesus' ministry rather than early. But why should anyone assume that any of the writers were mistaken? It is very likely that there were two cleansings of the temple, one early in Jesus' ministry and one toward the end of His life. It is hard to believe that because Jesus drove the money changers out of the temple courts that they never restarted their business. It is very likely they were back the very next day engaged in their business again.

Notice another thing about this event, it takes place during or near the Passover. The Jewish Passover is mentioned in the gospel of John on at least three different occasions. The Passover is the celebration of the greatest event in the history of the nation of Israel, their deliverance from Egyptian bondage (cf. Exodus 12). There is no event in Israelite history that is referred to more often as a demonstration of the mighty working of Almighty God in the lives of His people than their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. By the outstretched arm of Jehovah, they were delivered from captivity and led to the Promised Land. They celebrated the Passover when they left the land of Egypt, and they celebrated it every year.

If a person were to read Matthew, Mark, and Luke, he would not know that the ministry of Jesus was about three or three and a half years. Because there are three Passover Feasts

mentioned in the gospel of John, the ministry of Jesus must have lasted at least three years (cf. John 2:13; 6:4; 11:55–19:14). The Passover references from John 11:55–19:14 all refer to the same third Passover. Jesus was offered as the Passover Lamb during the time of the third Passover. The ministry of Jesus can be roughly dated at three years only because John wrote about the three Passover feasts during His personal ministry.

The Action of Jesus

There are two Greek words that are translated “*temple*.” First, the Greek word **heharan** is translated “*the temple courts*” in the New International Version. This is the correct translation of where the events took place during the first Passover of Jesus’ ministry. Jesus did not go into the Holy Place and cast out moneychangers and drive out animals. Nobody went into the Holy Place except the priest. The smaller room in the building called the Most Holy Place was only entered by the High Priest once a year. So when a student thinks of Jesus casting out the moneychangers and driving out the animals, he should not think of this happening within the sanctuary. The Greek word **naos** means the sanctuary, the building that had the two rooms, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. The activities spoken of here took place in the temple courts not in the temple sanctuary.

In the temple there were at least three, maybe four, courts. There was the court of the priests where the sacrifices were offered during Jesus’ ministry. There was the Court of Israel where the men would assemble. There was the court of the women. And there was a court of the Gentiles at later times. These areas are all outside the building, the sanctuary. The courts all surround the temple. The temple courts are the place where Jesus found the money changers and the animals which were sold to be used as sacrifices. He drove them all out with the whip he had made. Jesus condemned the men for turning the temple into a market: “*To those who sold doves he said,*

‘Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!’” (John 2:16). The size of the sanctuary, the Holy Place and Most Holy Place, was only 90 cubits by 30 cubits by 45 cubits (cf. 1 Kings 6:2). It was not large enough for assemblies to be held in it. It was only a place for the priests to minister as they went into the Holy Place on a daily basis. The men were selling cattle, sheep, and doves in the temple courts. Imagine all the noise that the animals must have made in the oriental market. The temple court had become a market place. The men were probably haggling over prices and exchanging money from other lands. The money changers needed another place to exchange money so the people could offer proper gifts in the temple area. Some people needed to buy sheep, cattle, or doves for sacrifices, but not in the temple court. The temple courts should have been places of prayer for the people from many nations.

The Anger of Jesus

Jesus was angry. Sometimes anger is wrong and sinful. Christians are often told to put away anger and wrath, but sometimes anger is right and proper. When God’s holy name is defiled and when God’s holy place is made dishonorable, it is antagonistic to Jesus. Jesus was angry and rightly so.

Jesus became angry and deeply distressed because the Pharisees had stubborn hearts. When Jesus healed a man with a shriveled hand, the Pharisees looked for a reason to accuse Him. Mark 3:4–5:

“Then Jesus asked them, ‘Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?’ But they remained silent. He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts . . .”

Jesus had righteous indignation when men violated the will of God and had stubbornness of heart.

Righteous indignation should be a principle governing Christians today. There is a time when it is wrong to be angry, but there is also a time when it is the right to be angry. When Paul went to the city of Athens, there were idols everywhere. Some men said there were more gods in ancient Athens than there were men. The city was full of idols. Paul was deeply distressed that the Athenians did not know the one true God. They were worshiping gods that lived in temples built by human hands (cf. Acts 17:16). Christians also need to learn that there are times righteous indignation has its place. It's right to be angry when God's name is misused or when that which is unholy and impure is taught and practiced by others.

The Astonishment of the Disciples

Notice the reaction of the disciples. When they saw the anger of Jesus, they remembered what was written: *"His disciples remembered that it is written: 'Zeal for your house will consume me'"* (John 2:17). Jesus angered the religious leaders because of His zeal for the house of God. The religious leaders did not forget, and they did not forgive. Later that zeal for God's house did indeed consume Him.

The Answer of the Jews

Notice the response of the Jews. They demanded a sign: *"Then the Jews demanded of him, 'What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?'"* (John 2:18). The Jews often demanded signs. Paul wrote the church in Corinth about the demands Jews often made. 1 Corinthians 1:22–24:

Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

The Jews always asked for more signs throughout the life of Jesus. They saw signs performed and immediately demanded more signs. It was not a lack of evidence that caused their unbelief. It was the attitude of their hearts that caused their unbelief. John summarizes the attitude that the Jews had throughout the ministry of Jesus: *“Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him”* (John 12:37).

The Bold Announcement of Jesus

This section in the gospel of John summarizes the entire ministry of Jesus. Even though Jesus had performed many miraculous signs in their presence, many of them refused to believe. Jesus replied to their unreasonable demand: *“Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days”* (John 2:19). The Jews thought Jesus was referring to the physical temple. Their physical temple was the temple of Herod. There had been two other temples before this one. Around 970 B.C. Solomon began building a temple. It was completed in one year. When Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon came with His forces in the year 586 B.C., they destroyed the temple of Solomon. Later, a temple was built by Zerubbabel and the people who returned from Babylonian captivity. This temple was destroyed by the Romans about 20 or 19 B.C. The third temple was called the Temple of Herod. The Jews thought Jesus was referring to Herod’s temple: *“The Jews replied, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?’”* (John 2:20). The temple had not been completed. In fact, it was not completed until about 64 A.D. Jesus told His disciples that the temple would be destroyed: *“Do you see all these things?” he asked. “I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down”* (Matthew 24:2). Jesus’ words were fulfilled in 70 A.D. when the Roman armies attacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple.

Herod’s temple, the physical temple, was destroyed, but it was not the temple that Jesus had in mind. He was talking

about His own body: *“But the temple he had spoken of was his body”* (John 2:21). Perhaps Jesus even motioned toward His body when he spoke.

After Jesus was raised from the dead, His disciples believed the words Jesus had spoken: *“After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken”* (John 2:22). They believed two things. First, they believed the scriptures that predicted the resurrection of the Messiah. Perhaps they thought about Psalms 16:10 because that passage was quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost: *“. . .you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay”* (Acts 2:27). God did not leave His Holy One in the grave nor allow Him to see decay.

His disciples remembered that Jesus had predicted His resurrection from the dead. Isaiah wrote about the suffering servant who was led to the slaughter like a lamb (cf. Isaiah 53:7) Perhaps such passages were in the minds of the disciples when they thought about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. After His death Jesus appeared to His disciples and other people which expresses indirectly His resurrection from the dead. After Jesus was raised from the dead, His disciples recalled His words. They remembered that He had predicted that he would be killed, and after three days He would rise again (cf. Mark 9:31).

Untrustworthy Faith

While He was in Jerusalem, He performed a number of other miraculous signs which prompted faith: *“Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name”* (John 2:23). This is similar to the theme passage. John 20:30–31:

Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus

is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

John 2:23 indicates that John was selective about what he wrote. He knew other things that Jesus did and other miracles that Jesus performed that he did not include in the gospel.

Many people saw the miraculous signs Jesus did and believed in His name. A Pharisee named Nicodemus believed that Jesus was from God because He performed miraculous signs. John 3:2:

He (Nicodemus) came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."

There are references throughout the gospel of John that indicate that there were other miraculous signs that John knew about, but he did not write about them. Instead, he wrote about seven miraculous signs to prove to men that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Notice, though the people believed in Him, He did not trust their faith: *"But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man"* (John 2:24–25). Jesus knew what all men were like. He did not need anyone to tell Him what a man was thinking or believing. He knew whether a man's faith was superficial or real, whether it was profound or shallow. He did not trust the people because He perceived that their faith was superficial, based upon the miracles He worked but not His teaching about who He was. There are several examples in John that demonstrate Jesus' perception of man's heart. Nicodemus asked Jesus several questions. Jesus responded, not to Nicodemus' questions, but to what Nicodemus was thinking in his heart (cf. John 3:1–21).

Later, when Jesus talked to a Samaritan woman, he told

her many things that she had done: *“The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband . . .”* (John 4:18). Jesus knew the woman’s background, and He had knowledge of her heart.

After Jesus healed the disabled man by the Bethesda pool in Jerusalem, He told the Jews that He knew them and their lack of love: *“but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts”* (John 5:42).

From the beginning Jesus knew who would betray Him: *“ . . . For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him”* (John 6:64). Jesus had always known that Judas would betray Him. Jesus knew Judas’ heart, and He knows every man’s heart today. The supernatural knowledge of Jesus is observed throughout the gospel of John.

The New Birth And The Witness of John the Baptist

John 3:1–36

Introduction

There are two main sections in John 3. First, Jesus taught Nicodemus; second, John the Baptizer testified about Jesus. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a member of the ruling Jewish counsel, the Sanhedrin. Being a member of the Sanhedrin court meant he had a position of high authority. Nicodemus had certain convictions, though, about Jesus. He believed that Jesus was a teacher who had come from God because He had worked miraculous signs.

Nicodemus was not blinded by prejudice as many of the other Jewish leaders were. When the Jews could not answer Jesus' arguments about God, they revealed their prejudice: *"The Jews answered him, 'Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?'"* (John 8:48). They attributed demon possession to Jesus a number of times: *"And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons'"* (Mark 3:22). The religious leaders were often very prejudiced against Jesus and unwilling to examine the evidence that He was the Son of God. They attributed His work, even His miraculous work, to the influence of demons.

Jesus, Nicodemus, and the New Birth

When Nicodemus came to Jesus at night, Jesus taught him about the new birth. John 3:1–3:

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

The word "see" means to participate in or to have some kind of experience with. In relationship to the kingdom of God, it means to experience the kingdom or to be allowed to participate in it. This is also the meaning of the word "see" in other New Testament passages. Another example is given in John 3:36: ". . . *whoever rejects the Son will not see life . . .*" The person who rejects the Son will not experience, nor participate in eternal life. Peter quoted the psalmist: ". . . *nor will you let your Holy One see decay*" (Acts 2:27). The Holy One would not see, nor experience, nor participate in corruption.

The Nature of the New Birth

The new birth was spiritual, not physical. Peter wrote about the new birth: "*For, 'Whoever would love life and see good days . . .'*" (1 Peter 3:10). Again, the word "see" means to participate or to experience. Jesus meant that Nicodemus could not experience the kingdom of God unless he was born again. His birth would be a spiritual birth, not a physical birth. The words "*born again*" could be translated "to be born from above." John wrote about the children of God: "*children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God*" (John 1:13). The Jews trusted in their physical birth. They trusted in their relationship to Abraham. John the Baptizer told the Jews not to rely on Abraham as their father because he was not enough. It takes more than physical birth to be a child of God. John the baptizer told the Jews not

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to claim they had Abraham as their father because God is able to raise up children for Abraham: “. . . *out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham*” (Matthew 3:9). It is not the mere physical descent from Abraham that guarantees one the right relationship with God. The same tendency was displayed among the Jews at another time. John 8:33–34: “. . . *“We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves to anyone” . . . Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.”* If people live a life of sin, it does not matter whether they are children of Abraham because they are in bondage and need to be set free.

Paul wrote the same message: “. . . *For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel*” (Romans 9:6). There has always been an Israel within Israel. There is Israel according to the flesh, but there is also Israel according to faith. It is the believing, trusting Israel who are the real Israel of God, not those who trust in their physical descent from Abraham or from Jacob or from any forefathers.

The Description of the New Birth

Nicodemus was puzzled by Jesus’ statement concerning the new birth: John 3:4–6:

“How can a man be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!” Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.”

Jesus said that water and the Spirit was involved in the new birth. Jesus and His disciples were baptizing in the countryside: “. . . *Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized*” (John 3:22). John also baptized with water: “Now

John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water . . .” (John 3:23). In reference to these verses where baptism by water is mentioned, F.F. Bruce wrote in his commentary on the gospel of John, pages 84–85: “ It is a pity when reaction against the notion of baptismal regeneration by an *opus operatum* leads to the complete overlooking of the baptismal allusion in these words of Jesus.” Bruce meant that is a pity when people do not understand the allusion to water baptism that Jesus has intended for them to grasp. Practically all scholars who commented on John 3:5 up to the time of John Calvin, believed that the water referred to baptism.

Other New Testament passages are in harmony with this interpretation. Notice, Paul wrote that Christians are saved through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. Titus 3:5:

. . .he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

After His resurrection, Jesus told the Eleven to go into all the world and preach the good news. And He said that those who believe and are baptized will be saved. Mark 16:15-16:

He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”

Saul was told by Ananias to be baptized in order to have his sins washed away: “*And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name*” (Acts 22:16). On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached to thousands of Jews who were convicted because they had crucified the Son of God. Acts 2:37–38:

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When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

About 3,000 souls were baptized on the day of Pentecost: *"Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day"* (Acts 2:41). Can anyone deny that those people were born again, that they were born of water and the Spirit? 3,000 people were saved that day. Being saved people, they must have been born again. They were born again of water and of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit was involved in the new births. Without the Holy Spirit, there would be no new births. The Holy Spirit gave a message that cuts men's hearts and leads them to faith and conviction that Jesus is the Son of God. The Holy Spirit leads them to recognize their own sinfulness and their need to be born again.

Sometimes the power to bring forth birth is attributed to the Word: *"He chose to give us birth through the word of truth . . ."* (James 1:18). Peter attributed the new birth to the living and enduring word of God: *"For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God"* (1 Peter 1:23). Remember, Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, and 3,000 people were born again. Although the expression "born again" is not found in Acts 2, no one would deny that the people who were saved by God were born again. They were born again because the Spirit led them to recognize their sinfulness and led them to understand that Jesus was the Messiah. Their hearts were pricked and their consciences were touched. The people were told to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. When the people obeyed, their sins were forgiven, and

they were indeed able to receive the gift of God's Holy Spirit.

Nicodemus was given three gentle rebukes by Jesus for his unbelief and his misunderstanding. John 3:7–8:

“You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

As a Jewish leader and teacher, Nicodemus should have understood when Jesus spoke to him about being born again: “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked. “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things?” (John 3:9–10). As a Jewish rabbi, a Jewish teacher, he should have understood the analogies from the Old Testament that would help him understand the reality of a man being born again.

Jesus gave Nicodemus a third gentle rebuke. John 3:11–13:

I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?

Noah and His Family

As a Jew, Nicodemus should have understood the principle of new birth. The idea of beginning life over and of a nation beginning again is taught numerous times in the Old Testament. For example, Noah and his family were saved through the waters of a flood. The flood destroyed all the ungodly people in the world, but Noah and his family were saved by that same waters (cf. Genesis 6–9). Peter wrote about the symbolism of the flood water to baptism. 1 Peter 3:20–21:

... God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in

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all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also-not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The flood that destroyed the ancient world and saved Noah and his family is like a new birth. Noah and his family began a new life and a baptized Christian also begins a new life.

Israel Crossing the Red Sea

Another example of the beginning of new live is the crossing of the Red Sea by the nation of Israel. The people walked safely through on dry ground with a pillar of cloud behind them and a wall of water on both sides (cf. Exodus 13–15). Paul used this event as an illustration of baptism. He wrote that our forefathers were all under the cloud, and they passed through the sea and were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. When the Israelites got on the other side, they found freedom. They had a new life, like a new birth. The bondage of Egypt was gone forever, and their enemies lay dead in the Red Sea (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:1–5).

Naaman, the Syrian Commander

Nicodemus should have known about Naaman, a commander of the army of Syria who was a leper (cf. 2 Kings 5). He was sent to the land of Israel that he might be cured of his leprosy. When he was told by the prophet Elisha to dip in the River Jordan seven times, he was deeply offended. He went away in a rage. His servants convinced him to do what the prophet said. He returned to the River Jordan and dipped himself seven times. The Greek translation of 2 Kings 5:14 states that he baptized himself. His flesh was restored and became clean like that of a little boy. He was like a new person.

Nicodemus had the analogies of Old Testament people who started over, like a new birth. He had the example of Noah

and his family who were saved through the waters of the flood even though it killed all the ungodly people in the world. Nicodemus had the example of the Israelites passing through the Red Sea and being baptized into Moses. And he had the example of Naaman dipping in the river and coming out with his flesh like new, like a new birth. As a teacher of Israel, Nicodemus should have understood.

A Breathtaking Revelation

Jesus gave an illustration from a well known Old Testament event: *“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life”* (John 3:14–15). Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. Because the Israelites complained against God and Moses, God sent venomous serpents among them. The serpents bit the people, and many of them died. They cried out to Moses, and God had Moses put a bronze serpent up on a pole. The people who looked at the bronze serpent did not die from their snake bites. The Israelites were at death’s door, and people were dying all about them, but when they trusted in God and looked up at that serpent, they lived (cf. Number 21:4–9). In three ways Jesus is like the brass serpent lifted up in the desert. First, both were lifted up to public view. Second, the curative power is in response to faith. Third, the response of the individual determines his destiny.

As the snake was lifted up in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up the same way. Note how John used the term *“lifted up.”* In John’s gospel this term means to be lifted up on a cross, to be crucified. John 8:28:

So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be, and that I do nothing on my own, but speak just what the Father has taught me.”

The Pharisees understood that Jesus meant death. They believed the Messiah was going to live forever, but they did not

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understand who the Son of Man was or how he could be lifted up?

Later Jesus explained His death more clearly: “*‘But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.’ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die*” (John 12:32–33). The Greek word that is translated “*lifted up*” is also translated “being exalted.” Sometimes it is used this way in the New Testament. A profound truth is seen here. Jesus was exalted in His death. He was lifted up on a cross, but He never glorified God more than when He died on the cross. He never brought more glory to Himself than when He was crucified for the sins of the world. By being lifted up, He did not bring men mere physical life, He brought them eternal life. When men saw the snake that was lifted up, they had physical life, but the lifted up Savior provides eternal life.

In John 5:24 Jesus said that man crosses from death to life when he hears Jesus’ words and believes Him:

“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”

The transition takes place immediately. Man passes from being dead in sin into a state of life, eternal life with God. But whoever rejects the Son will not see life: “*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him*” (John 3:36). God’s wrath remains on that man.

The Golden Text of the Bible

This verse is called the golden text of the Bible by many and, in many ways, it is the golden text: “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*” (John 3:16, KJV). The motivation for God sending His Son was

God's love: "*This is love: not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins*" (1 John 4:10). Paul wrote about God's love in Romans 5:7–8:

Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

There is a negative consequence for those who do not believe, but those who believe shall not perish. To perish means to be separated from God, from the presence of God, and from all that is good. To perish means to be lost forever, to be eternally in hell. Jesus told Nicodemus that the one who believes will not perish; he will not suffer the negative consequence of being separated from the presence of God forever.

There is a positive consequence as well. The person who believes shall have eternal life, not just eternal existence. Everyone will have eternal existence, but Jesus said believers will have a quality existence, an abundant life with God: "*Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent*" (John 17:3). Jesus promised an abundant life to those who believe in Him: "... *I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full*" (John 10:10).

The Express Purpose of Jesus' Coming

Jesus said the purpose of His coming was not to judge the world: "... *For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it*" (John 12:47). An angel of the Lord told Joseph the purpose of Jesus' coming: "... *you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins*" (Matthew 1:21). Jesus revealed His purpose for coming to Zacchaeus: "*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost*" (Luke 19:10). No wonder John the Baptizer called Jesus the

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Lamb of God, the One who takes away the sins of the world. (cf. John 1:29).

Jesus' coming was a judgment because men who believe will be saved and those who refuse to believe will be condemned. Every person has a choice to make. They can love light, or they can love darkness. If they love light then they can come to the Light and be saved. If they love darkness, they will remain lost. Every man has to make a decision of whether he will love light or love darkness, whether he will believe or not believe.

John wrote that Jesus' own people rejected Him: "*He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him*" (John 1:11). Unbelief, in John's gospel, is attributed to a number of reasons, but it is not for a lack of evidence or proof. Unbelief was caused by an attitude of the heart. Another reason for unbelief is the fact that men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. John 3:19–21:

"This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil."

Jesus accused the people of lack of love for God: "*but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts*" (John 5:42). People sought the praise of men more than the praise of God. John 12:42–43:

" . . . many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved praise from men more than praise from God."

The people refused to believe the very man they claimed to trust, Moses. John 5:45–47:

“But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?”

They claimed to be disciples of Moses, but they did not believe Moses and did not believe the testimony that Moses gave about the coming Messiah. If they had believed Moses, they would have believed Jesus, as well. Much of the unbelief of our time is not because Jesus baffles the intellect, but because He challenges a person’s heart and lifestyle. As long as people love darkness rather than light, they will demand more proof, or they will find something about the teachings of Jesus that will serve as an excuse for their unbelief.

The Testimony of John the Baptizer

John’s Testimony about Himself

Jesus and His disciples spent some time in the Judean countryside: *“After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized”* (John 3:22). Jesus Himself did not baptize; His disciples did the actual baptizing (cf. John 4:1–2). Jesus was involved in baptizing people in the sense that His disciples were baptizing people for Him. But John was baptizing at a place called Aenon near Salim. John 3:23–24:

Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were constantly coming to be baptized. (This was before John was put in prison.)

Most scholars believe this area was in Samaria, not too far from the town of Samaria. An argument developed between some of John’s disciples and a certain Jew over ceremonial washing.

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The disciples of John were not pleased that John was losing his popularity. John 3:26:

They came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of Jordan—the one you testified about—well, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him.”

Most of the disciples who had formerly followed John were now following Jesus. John’s disciples were concerned that so many people had left John and were following Jesus. But John the Baptizer was delighted that men were following Jesus. John realized that he was not the Messiah. John 3:27–30:

To this John replied, “A man can receive only what is given him from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him.’ The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete.”

John was given the job to prepare the way for the coming of the Son of God. He was like a bridegroom’s friend, the best man. John made the arrangements and when the bridegroom came, John was joyful.

John made a tremendous statement: “*He must become greater; I must become less*” (John 3:30). If there is anything that is needed today, it is for men to have this attitude toward Jesus Christ. This attitude means a man becomes less and less important. He becomes less and less the focus, so Jesus Christ can be exalted. Jesus Christ can become greater and greater when a person has John’s attitude. This attitude should characterize all of God’s people.

John's Testimony about Jesus

John the baptizer gave testimony about the absolute superiority and the uniqueness of Jesus. He contrasted the One who came from above to himself who was from the earth. John 3:31:

"The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all."

Jesus, the One who came from heaven, is above all and testified to everything He had seen and heard: *"He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony"* (John 3:32). Jesus' teachings were not His own: *"For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit"* (John 3:34). Jesus' teachings came from God: *"... 'My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me'"* (John 7:16). Another time Jesus told the Jews that the Father determined what He said and how He said it: *"For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it"* (John 12:49). Jesus heard the voice of God and revealed it to others.

Jesus received the Spirit without limit. The text indicates that John was referring to Jesus, not to another individual. Jesus is the One who is above all. He is the One who came from above. He is the One who received the Word of God. He is the One the Father loves and gave great authority: *"The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands"* (John 3:35). Jesus received the Spirit without limit. Other people receive the Spirit but only Jesus received the Spirit without limit, and the Father has placed everything into His hands.

John the Baptizer said that eternal life is found only in the Son and nowhere else: *"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal*

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life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him" (John 3:36). The Apostle John wrote that God gives eternal life through His Son. 1 John 5:11–12:

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Conclusion

Two options are given in John 3:36. A person can believe and have eternal life. Remember, eternal life cannot be found in any person living or dead except the Lord Jesus Christ. But a person may choose not to believe in Him. He may choose to reject the eternal life given through the Son. If he does, the wrath of God remains on him. The wrath of God is now upon every person who is living in disobedience, rebellion, and unbelief toward Jesus Christ. John wrote earlier that the one who does not believe is already condemned (cf. John 3:18). He ends the chapter by writing that the wrath of God abides on the unbeliever.

Every person has two options: to believe in the Son and have life, or to refuse to obey and be condemned by God's wrath. May the study of this gospel help every student make the right decision.

A Samaritan Woman and A Jewish Nobleman

John 4:1 – 34

Introduction

The two main topics in John chapter four are a discussion with a Samaritan Woman and the healing of a royal official's son. After His trip to the Judean area, Jesus returned to Galilee because He did not want to precipitate a crisis. His activities had to fit with God's timetable, and it was not time for Him to die. Jesus died on a cross in Jerusalem, but this trip was not His appointed time.

When the Pharisees learned about the success of Jesus' ministry, it prompted Jesus to returned to Galilee. John 4:1–3:

The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

Jesus was not doing the baptizing. It was His disciples who were doing the baptizing. Anyone can baptize another person. The requirements in the scriptures are not on the person doing the baptizing, but on the person being baptized. The work of baptizing could have been done by any of the disciples of Jesus. Preaching and ministry were the reasons He had come. Because Jesus did not wish at this stage in His ministry to be drawn into

a controversy about baptism, He left Judea and went to Galilee. When He went toward Galilee, He came to a place in Samaria. Galilee was in the far northern part of the land of Israel. Samaria was in the central part, and Judea was in the southern part of Israel. Jesus went through Samaria, although many of the Jewish people would not travel there.

Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

Background of the People of Samaria

In the year 722 B.C. after the northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians, the Assyrians settled people in the land they had conquered. Some Jews were left in Samaria, and they probably intermarried with the pagan people who were brought by the Assyrian conquerors. They became a mixed race called the Samaritans. The Jews and Samaritans greatly disliked one another. Numerous passages in the Bible show evidence of their hatred. For example, when the Jews came back to Judah from their Babylonian captivity, some of the Samaritans wanted to help rebuild Jerusalem, but the Jews turned down their offer. The Samaritans became one of their most bitter enemies (cf. Ezra 4:1–2,8–10). As time went on, this feeling increased. About 125 B.C. the Jews burned to the ground the temple that was built on Mount Gerizim. This, of course, aggravated the bad feelings between the Jews and the Samaritans.

When the Jews left the land of Galilee and went south to Judea, many of them would actually cross the Jordan River again in order not to go through the land of the Samaritans. Some of those going north would do the same thing because of the strong feelings they had toward one another. One time when Jesus was on His way toward Jerusalem from Galilee, He went through Samaria. When He came near a Samaritan town, he sent messengers ahead to prepare for Him. Because His face was steadfastly set toward Jerusalem, the Samaritans did not want Him and His disciples to stay in their town. James and John were incensed by this, and they asked Jesus to let them

call down fire from heaven to destroy the people. Jesus rebuked them for this spirit. He did not share the racial prejudice that was exhibited by both Jews and Samaritans (cf. Luke 9:51–56).

Before Jesus was taken up into heaven, He told His apostles they must go to Samaria and share the gospel. They were told to give the Samaritans, and all people to the ends of the earth, the word of life (cf. Acts 1:8). He who is the Light of the world needed to shine among the Samaritans, not merely among the Jews. Jesus went through Samaria that He might share with them the water of life: *“Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph”* (John 4:4–5). Jesus was tired from His journey when He sat down by the well: *“Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour”* (John 4:6). John emphasizes not only Jesus’ deity, but he also emphasizes His humanity. Jesus was tired at the well. He was thirsty when He cried out on the cross: *“ . . . I am thirsty!”* (John 19:28). Jesus shed blood and died; blood and water came from his body when the soldier pierced His side (cf. John 19:33–34). John wanted the readers of his gospel to know that Jesus is completely human even though He is fully God.

Jesus’ Discussion with a Samaritan Woman

Jesus, as He sat by Jacob’s well, began to talk to a Samaritan woman. He asked her to give Him a drink of water. *“When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, ‘Will you give me a drink?’ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)”* (John 4:7–8). She was absolutely amazed. John 4:9:

The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Probably the expression “*Jews do not associate with Samaritans*” means “Jews do not use dishes the Samaritans have used.” The fact that the disciples were in the town of Sychar buying food from the Samaritans shows they had some dealings with one another, but they would not drink out of the same vessel. The expression does not exclude all association between the Jews and the Samaritans.

The woman was amazed that a Jewish man would ask her, a Samaritan woman, for a drink. Then Jesus told her about living water: “*Jesus answered her, ‘If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water’*” (John 4:10). Living water has an Old Testament background. God spoke to Jeremiah about Israel: “. . . *They have forsaken me, the spring of living water . . .*” (Jeremiah 2:13). God gave this invitation to His people: “*Come all you who are thirsty, come to the waters . . .*” (Isaiah 55:1). The psalmist describes the inner thirst of a person who is apart from God: “*As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God*” (Psalm 42:1).

Jesus claimed in the New Testament what God the Father, Jehovah claimed in the Old Testament. God claimed that He can supply man’s needs and give him the abundant life (cf. Deuteronomy 28:11). Later Jesus claimed to be the bread of life: “*I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty*” (John 6:35).

The Samaritan woman asked Jesus where one could get the living water, a question most people would ask, and Jesus told her. John 4:13–14:

Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

The person who drinks the living water will be abundantly supplied with life now and life forever. Jesus did not claim to be the living water; He claimed to give the living water. He claimed to be the Bread of Life, and He will give living water that will spring up unto everlasting life.

The woman's response shows that she was thinking strictly on a physical level: "*The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water' "*" (John 4:15). Jesus realized He had to talk to the woman about her needs. Beyond her physical needs, she had spiritual needs. Before the Samaritan woman felt a need for the living water, she had to understand that she was a sinful soul that needed deliverance from bondage. So Jesus told her to call her husband, knowing that she had no husband: John 4:16–18.

*He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."
"I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her,
"You are right when you say you have no husband.
The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man
you now have is not your husband. What you have just
said is quite true."*

When Jesus revealed that He knew everything about this woman's life, she knew He had supernatural knowledge from God: "*Sir,*" *the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet"* (John 4:19). The word prophet does not always mean one who predicts the future. A prophet is a spokesman for God. He spoke about the past and about the present, and sometimes he spoke about the future. As a spokesman for God, a prophet could predict future events by divine revelation. The Samaritan woman realized that Jesus was a prophet, and later she went back to town and said to the people: "*Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did . . .*" (John 4:29). Jesus knows everything about every person's life; everybody's whole history has been laid bare before God by this man Jesus. Remember,

Jesus knows every man's heart. He knew the Samaritan woman's heart. Jesus knew her needs, and He was able to cause her to want the living water that He supplies.

The Place and Nature of Worship

The Samaritan woman brought up a discussion that Jews and Samaritans had been discussing for many generations: *"Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem"* (John 4:20). God specified that there would be a certain place where He would place His name (cf. Deuteronomy 12:5). The place where God placed His name would be where the Jews should worship Him. Deuteronomy 12:5 does not specify where that place is, but in 2 Chronicles 6:6, 12 the place is identified as Jerusalem. The Samaritans did not accept all the Old Testament books. They only accepted the first five books of the Old Testament. That means they did not have complete knowledge of God that was given in Old Testament Scripture. They did not have all of God's revelation. Jesus recognized that salvation would come from the Jews, but the Samaritans had been worshipping God in ignorance. John 4:21–22:

Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews."

Note, what Jesus said and what He did not say. Jesus did not say that salvation was for the Jews. He said that salvation was from the Jews. Jesus, being a Jew, came to be the Savior of the whole world. Later, the Samaritans believed that Jesus is the Savior of the world: *" . . . we know that this man really is the Savior of the world"* (John 4:42).

The Attributes of True Worship

Jesus talked about true worship with this Samaritan woman. John 4:23–24:

“Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”

Worship must be to the right person—God the Father. Jesus said that true worship would no longer be in a certain place. It would no longer matter whether a person worships God in Jerusalem or on a mountain.

Worship must be with the **right attitude or spirit**. God seeks men who worship Him in spirit and in truth. To worship God in spirit a person must worship Him sincerely from the heart, not as a sham or a mere ceremony.

Worship must be by the **right standard**. Worship must also be according to truth. Jesus said that God’s word is truth (John 17:17). Only God can tell a person about Himself, and only God can tell a person what pleases Him in worship. God wants people to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Worship must be through **the right person**. The woman confessed that Jesus was the Christ, and Jesus made a startling revelation about Himself. Jesus confirmed Himself to be the Christ. John 4:25–26:

The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” Then Jesus declared, “I who speak to you am he.”

Samaria was a remote area, and this conversation was not in a politically area of activity. Jesus did not publically confess Himself so boldly to be the Messiah in the early part of His

ministry. Later Jesus told Thomas that He was the Way to the Father: “*Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’*” (John 14:6). Shortly before His crucifixion, the high priest asked Jesus if He was the Christ. Mark 14:61–62:

... Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?” “I am,” said Jesus. “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

Before the Sanhedrin, Jesus boldly confessed Himself to be the Messiah, even as He had made a similar confession to the Samaritan woman and to His apostles.

The Food of Will and Work

When the disciples of Jesus returned, they are surprised to see Jesus talking to a woman. John 4:27:

Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, “What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her?”

The woman was so excited about what she had learned about Jesus that she left the water pot, and rushed back to the town to invite the people to meet this tremendous individual. John 4:28–30:

Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

Jesus was with these disciples at the well of Jacob, and they offered Him food. John 4:31–33:

Meanwhile his disciples urged him, “Rabbi, eat something.” But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about.” Then his disciples said to each other, “Could someone have brought him food?”

He became so involved in offering the water of life to this woman, and through her to the people of Samaria, that He forgot about physical food. He was not concerned about physical food. He was more concerned about the Samaritans receiving His message about the living water so they could receive His power and His glory. Jesus’ prime concern was to do the will of His Father. John 4:34–35:

“My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.”

The Conversion of a City

The Samaritans heard what the woman said, so they believed her enough to investigate what she had heard and seen: *“Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me everything I ever did’”* (John 4:39). When the people came to Jesus, they asked Him to come to their town. He agreed to go there, and He stayed for two days: *“So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days”* (John 4:40). Imagine the many questions they must have had when they had the Messiah in their own village for two days and nights. They could ask Him questions that had plagued their forefathers, questions about the Jews and the Samaritans

and their relationship to one another. For two days He taught them the word of God. Because of His words, many believed that Jesus is the Savior of the world. John 4:41–42:

And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.”

The expression “*Savior of the world*” is only found in this verse and in 1 John 4:14. One would think that the phrase would appear in all the gospels and, perhaps, in the epistles. The concept is found throughout the New Testament because Jesus is indeed the Savior of the world. Potentially, He will bring all men to the Light because He tasted death for every man: “*But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself*” (John 12:32).

After Stephen was stoned to death, a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem and many people were scattered. Philip went down to Samaria and the Samaritan people had the opportunity to hear the gospel of salvation. Many of the Samaritan people, men and women, believed and were baptized. Thus, the church was established in Samaria (cf. Acts 8:1–25). When Paul and Barnabas were traveling up to Jerusalem to consult the apostles and elders about the question of circumcision, they traveled through Samaria. Paul and Barnabas told them about Gentile conversions and encouraged the church. The news brought great joy to the brothers (cf. Acts 15:1–3).

Healing the Official’s Son

A Prophet and Honor in His Own Country

After two days Jesus left for Galilee. Remember, He was on His way to Galilee when He stopped in Samaria. He had said a prophet does not have honor in His own country: “*After*

the two days he left for Galilee. (Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country.)" (John 4:43–44). Many have thought that He was going to Galilee to have more honor. Matthew 13:54, Mark 6:1, and Luke 4:16 indicate that Galilee was where he was reared. John records Phillip's statement to Nathanael that they had found the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth (cf. John 1:45). Jesus' hometown, Nazareth, was in the northern part of Galilee.

Jesus had left Judea because the Pharisees heard that He was baptizing more disciples than John. He did not leave because He was unsuccessful. Jesus left because He was having great success. He did not want to precipitate a crisis. Jesus did not want the Jews to put Him to death before the appointed time. He went to Galilee knowing He would not be honored there as He had been in Judea. The Galileans welcomed Him, but they welcomed Him as a miracle worker, not as Lord and Savior: "*When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, for they also had been there*" (John 4:45). The honor the Galileans gave Jesus was not the kind of honor that He desired. Many of His disciples turned back and no longer followed Him because His teachings were difficult (cf. John 6:41–66). Jesus was not seeking popularity. His message was sometimes unpopular. Jesus knew it would lead to opposition. Jesus left Judea and went to Galilee knowing that a prophet has no honor in his own country.

An Interview with the Royal Official

When Jesus came to Cana in Galilee where He performed the first miracle, He met a man from Capernaum who was very distressed. His son was at the point of death, and he begged Jesus to come and heal him. John 4:46–47:

Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. When

this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.

Jesus responded using a plural you: “*Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders,*” Jesus told him, “*you will never believe*” (John 4:48). He was not referring to the royal official only. In fact, the man was an exception to Jesus’ statement. He believed and trusted in Jesus before He witnessed the miracle, whereas most of the Galileans would not believe without seeing miracles and signs.

Jesus challenged the official’s faith: “*Jesus replied, ‘You may go. Your son will live.’ The man took Jesus at his word and departed*” (John 4:50). The man had traveled a great many miles for a long time, and he was simply told by Jesus to leave. He probably did not want to leave Jesus. He may have wanted to take Jesus with him, but because he trusted in Jesus, he did what Jesus said. The next day he met his servants from Capernaum. John 4:51–52

While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, “The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour.”

The man then realized that was exactly the time Jesus had told him that his son would live. The official and all his household believed. This miracle proves that Jesus is the master of space and distance. He spoke and a boy who was 20 miles away was instantly healed.

William Barclay wrote about Jesus’ miracle, “He had begun with a sense of desperate need; that need had been supplied; and his sense of need had turned into an overwhelming and overmastering faith and love—and that must always be the story of the progress of the Christian life.”

Jesus Heals A Lame Man

John 5:1–47

Introduction

Several months elapsed after the events of the previous chapter. The Lord's controversy with the Jews, which finally erupted into open conflict, began at this time. Jesus traveled to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover or the feast of Tabernacles. Nearly every major event in Jesus' life is connected with one of the Jewish festivals in Jerusalem, either the feast of Passover, the feast of Tabernacles, or the feast of Dedication.

The Healing at the Pool

A Pessimistic Paralytic

The compassion of Jesus is manifested in the healing of a lame man in Jerusalem. This event took place during a festival of the Jews. John 5:1–3:

Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed.

There were sick people all around the pool. The pool was fed by an intermittent spring, and this gave rise to the belief that an angel periodically disturbed the waters.

Some of the sick people had been there for a long time. One particular man had been an invalid for 38 years. Jesus seemed to challenge this man's will: "... *Do you want to get well?*" (John 5:5). Some cultures where there are a lot of beggars a person might have a fairly decent living by begging. It would involve a lot of responsibility to be well again. Years of frustrated hopes had reduced the invalid to a state of chronic pessimism. The man responded that it is a lack of opportunity that prevents him from receiving healing. John 5:7:

"Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me"

His statement was based on the idea that while the water was being stirred by the angel, the first person to get into the pool would be cured. Jesus spoke powerful words: "*Then Jesus said to him, 'Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.'*" At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked . . ." (John 5:8–9). Immediately the lame man was healed.

Conflict With The Pharisees

The fact that the man was carrying his mat offended the religious leaders. John 5:9–10:

... The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat."

Carrying his mat on the Sabbath violated the traditions of the Jews. The man did not violate the Sabbath law. Jesus did not violate the Sabbath law, nor teach this man to do so. Jesus was Lord of the Sabbath (cf. Luke 6:5), and He told the man to pick up his mat and walk. Later, Jesus clearly taught that the

Sabbath had not been broken when He healed the lame man (cf. John 7:23). Only the Jewish rules about the Sabbath were broken, as occurred other times in the life of Jesus. The man had no idea who had healed him for Jesus had slipped away from the crowd.

Jesus told the man to stop sinning or something worse would happen to him: *“Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, ‘See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you’”* (John 5:14). The Greek tense implies that the man needed to stop a present action. Jesus was not saying that the man was crippled because of sin in his life. Jesus was saying that the man was living a life of sin. He needed to stop sinning or something worse would happen to him. Punishment on Judgment Day would be far worse than any kind of physical illness or disease.

There is no direct relationship between a person having a malady or an illness and sin in his life. No scripture indicates that sin is caused by illness or tragedy in a person’s life. Job’s friends assumed that he was a sinful man because he suffered much tragedy. He lost his herds, his flocks and nearly all of his wealth. He lost his children. The conclusion of his friends was that Job must have sinned, otherwise the tragedies would not have happened to him. This belief is still held by many people today.

Paul was a great servant of God, a man who believed and trusted God, and yet he had a thorn in the flesh. 2 Corinthians 12:8–9:

Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

Paul learned that through his weakness, God was able to develop his character. Christians should not conclude that a person’s suffering is because of sin. There may be other causes that are unknown to the believers.

Public Opposition to Jesus

This section of John's gospel is sometimes called the period of controversy by scholars. There will also be controversy with the Jews in Galilee (cf. John 6:25–59). The first public opposition to Jesus occurred in Jerusalem: "*So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him*" (John 5:16). Persecution is invoked by the Jews because, in their view, He broke the Sabbath laws. They objected because He healed on the Sabbath. The tense of the verb "*was doing*" implies that it was something that happened over and over. It was not a one time situation. Later, Jesus healed a blind man on the Sabbath (cf. John 9:1–12), and He healed a woman on the Sabbath who was crippled (cf. Luke 13:10–17). Jesus believed that works of mercy could be done on the Sabbath day, and He frequently did them.

Life Through the Son

The Blasphemous Claim

The Jews also sought to kill Jesus because He called God His father, making Him equal with God. John 5:17–18:

Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

This charge would ultimately result in Jesus' death. When Jesus was tried before Pilate, the accusation was that He, a man, claimed to be the Son of God. To them that was blasphemy, and they thought He deserved to die (cf. John 19:9).

No Rivalry in the Godhead

In John 5:19–29 the claims against Jesus are made more strongly, more systematically, and more firmly than in any

other section of scripture. There is no place in the New Testament where the divine Sonship, the commission of Jesus, and the unity of Jesus with the Father is so thoroughly presented as in this section. Because of His special relationship with God, Jesus is able to supply the living water to sinful men. John used the term “*the Son*” in the absolute sense eight times in verses John 5:19–26. Jesus also called Himself “*the Son of God*” and “*Son of Man*.”

The Unity of the Godhead

In His relationship with the Father, Jesus made a number of claims. First, He claimed that He does not operate independently from the Father; He does whatever the Father does. John 5:19:

Jesus gave them this answer: “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”

Jesus never claimed that He worked independently or apart from the Father: “*Jesus answered, ‘My teaching is not mine own. It comes from him who sent me’*” (John 7:16). Jesus said that His father directed His words: “*For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it*” (John 12:49). He claimed to do what the Father does, and to work closely with the Father.

Second, Jesus claimed that the Father loves the Son and shows Him what to do: “*For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these*” (John 5:20). The Father gave the Son power to give life to others: “*For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it*” (John 5:21). The Father has entrusted all judgment to the Son: “*Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the*

Son” (John 5:22). All judgment is given unto the Son by the Father. Acts 17:31:

For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.

As God through the Son created the world, so the judgment of the world will be done by the Father through the Son.

Third, the Father and the Son are worthy of the same kind of worship, adoration, and praise: John 5:22-23:

Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.

Jesus made one of the greatest claims when He said that God wants all men to honor the Son as they honor the Father. Whatever honor the Father is to be given, the Son is to be given, as well. Jesus said that He and the Father are one. “. . . understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father” (John 10:38). Jesus reprimanded Philip because he did not understand that Jesus and God were one: John 14:9-10:

“Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me?”

Jesus had glory with God before the world began: “*And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began*” (John 17:5). Thomas’ confession shows that he believed that Jesus was deity: “*Thomas said to him, ‘My Lord and my God!’*” (John 20:28). When John tried to worship an angel, the angel said: “*Do not do it! I am a fellow*

servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God!" (Revelation 19:10). But Jesus who taught that only God should be worshiped, accepted worship and adoration from Thomas and others. Jesus accepted the designation of God and Lord, and then said: ". . . *Because you have seen me, you have believed . . .*" (John 20:29). Thomas believed what he had confessed, that Jesus is both Lord and God. Revelation 5:11–14 is very significant because many people deny the deity of Jesus today, claiming that He is only a created being. Therefore, they believe Jesus is not to be worshiped, nor is He to receive the same honor as the Father.

The previous passages confirm that Jesus Christ and God the Father are to be worshiped identically by all creation with the Father's approval. John wrote about the angels who praised the lamb who was slain. Revelation 5:11–13:

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

Notice, the One who sits on the throne would be God the Father, and the Lamb who was slain is the Lord Jesus Christ. They both were given praise and honor and glory and power forever and ever. There was no distinction made between the worship that was offered to God the Father and to the Lamb of God who was with Him in the heavenly scene.

In the final verse of the chapter the four living creatures give their approval and the elders worship the Father and the

Son: “*The four living creatures said, ‘Amen’ and the elders fell down and worshiped*” (Revelation 5:14). They were honoring the Son as they honored the Father, like God wants all men to do.

Fourth, Jesus claimed that God gives Him the power to do certain things. Because Jesus Christ is not only God, but also man, then some things can be said about Him in His humanity that could not have been said about Him if He had remained with God the Father in Heaven. Jesus became tired (cf. John 4:6). He became thirsty (cf. John 19:28). There is no scripture about God being thirsty or tired, but Jesus in His humanity became thirsty and tired. He was tempted: “*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin*” (Hebrews 4:15). God cannot be tempted by evil (cf. James 1:13). As God, Jesus could not be tempted with evil, but as man He was tempted by the devil (cf. Luke 4:1–13). On the Mount of Olives Jesus prayed and was strengthened. He prayed to the Father and an angel was sent from heaven to strengthen Him (cf. Luke 22:42–43).

Jesus could only teach what He learned from His Father: “. . . ‘*My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me*’” (John 7:16). He was given power to judge because He is the Son of Man (cf. John 5:22, 27). And He was granted power to have life in Himself (cf. John 5: 26). Things that could not have been said about Jesus as deity could be said about Him as man. This explains the paradox that Jesus Christ is fully God and worthy of being worshiped, and He is fully man and became tired, thirsty, hungry, and died on the cross for the sins of the world.

The Son and Judgment

Eternal life is a present possession: “*I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life*” (John 5:24). When people who are dead in

their sins, hear and respond to the gospel, then they are raised to walk in newness of life. Men who are dead spiritually in the sight of a Holy and Almighty God can be made alive: *“I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live”* (John 5:25). Men can begin life again if they are born again.

Because Jesus is the Son of Man, He has been given authority to judge: *“And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man”* (John 5:27). The expression *“Son of Man”* is used some eighty times in the gospel of John. It is a favorite expression of Jesus’ concerning Himself. He repeatedly referred to Himself as the Son of Man. The background for the Son of Man concept is found in Daniel 7:13–14:

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

The expression is also used by Jesus for Himself in Matthew 25:31–32:

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.”

The connotation *“Son of Man”* is a high messianic connotation with implications of glory, power, and dignity which is seen in John 5:28–29:

“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.”

Not only will Jesus raise men who are dead spiritually, those who are dead in sin, but He will also raise those men who are dead in their graves. Jesus said this resurrection will result in two eternal destinies; there are only two destinies given in the Bible. Some people will rise to live in the presence of God forever, but some will rise to be condemned. There will be an absolute condemnation of those who die in their sins. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for their lack of belief: “. . . *I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come*” (John 8:21). The Jews did not believe that this kind of statement would be made. So they wondered if He meant He would commit suicide. But He was simply stating that He was going back to the Father, and they would die in their sins and be eternally lost. On the day of resurrection some men will receive a sentence of condemnation as others receive a sentence of life.

Testimonies Concerning Jesus

Five Specific Testimonies About Jesus

According to Deuteronomy 19:15 a single witness was not enough to convict a man of a crime:

One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

There are five testimonies that Jesus gave to confirm the claim that He made about Himself and His special relationship with

God because His testimony alone was not valid: *“If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid”* (John 5:31).

The Testimony of the Father

Jesus first appealed to the testimony of the Father because God’s testimony was the most important: *“There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid”* (John 5:32). From the context it is obvious that Jesus was referring to the witness of His Father. He referred to that witness again in John 5:37-38:

“And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent.”

Notice, the Jews failed to respond to the voice of the Father who gave testimony about His Son. Jesus came as the One who represented God. He is the exact image of God (cf. Colossians 1:15). Jesus came to reveal God, to show what God was like: *“. . . Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father . . .”* (John 14:9). When men refuse to believe the testimony of Jesus, they have not seen the form of God. They have not seen God’s nature and have not listened to His word. The Jews turned down the One who came revealing God, as no one has ever done.

The Testimony of John the Baptizer

The second testimony about Jesus was given by John the Baptizer. It is significant that many times in the gospel of John the testimony of John the Baptizer is given. Jesus said that John the Baptizer testified to the truth: *“You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth. Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved”* (John 5:33–34). Remember, the excitement surrounding John when he began baptizing. People were coming from everywhere to be baptized by him. The Jewish leaders were wondering if he

was the Messiah or Elijah or one of the prophets. John confessed freely that he was not the Christ (cf. John 1:19–21).

The next day when John saw Jesus passing by, he gave this testimony: “. . . *Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*” (John 1:29) John also testified that Jesus is the Son of God: “*I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.*” But the Jewish leaders never seriously believed what John the Baptizer said about Jesus. They wanted to accept Jesus as a prophet, but they rejected John’s claim that Jesus is the Lamb of God, the Savior of the world, and the Son of God.

The Testimony Of His Works

The third testimony, Jesus’ works, is more convincing than John the Baptizer’s testimony. John 5:36:

“But I have a greater witness than John’s: for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me” (NKJ)

The works that Jesus did testify that the Father sent him. His works allude to His miracles and all that He did. When John the Baptizer was in prison, he began to wonder if Jesus really was the One the Jews were expecting. Matthew 11:2–3:

When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him, “Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?”

Jesus was casting out demons, cleansing lepers, and healing the sick at that time. So Jesus told John’s disciples to report what they heard and saw. Matthew 11: 4–6:

Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk,

those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.”

The works that Jesus did bear testimony that God had indeed sent Him. Remember the theme passage of this gospel. John 20:30–31:

Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

The Testimony Of Scripture

Scripture testifies about Jesus, yet the Jewish leaders refused to believe it. John 5:39–40:

You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

The Jews thought the mere possession of scripture would guarantee them eternal life. They diligently searched the scriptures, but they failed to accept the scriptures about the Messiah. The Jews were not willing to obey Jesus in order to have life. They did not believe the scriptures that came from God or believe the testimony that the scriptures give.

The Witness Of Moses

Moses was the fifth witness that Jesus gave to confirm the claims He made about Himself and His special relationship with God. John 5:45–47:

“But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?”

Moses was indeed the one on whom the Jews had set their hopes. When the Jews were having a discussion with the healed blind man, they hurled insults at him and claimed to be disciples of Moses: John 9:28–29:

Then they hurled insults at him and said, “You are this fellow’s disciple! We are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don’t even know where he comes from.”

The Jews boasted of their relationship to Moses, yet they did not believe Moses’ testimony about Jesus. Moses, their witness and prosecutor, will be their accuser before the Father.

Conclusion

Jesus made tremendous claims in John 5. Either they are true, or they are false. If they are true then Jesus is indeed the Son of God. If they are false, then He is a fraud and an imposter.

His claims are substantiated by reliable testimony. The gospel shows that men may reject His claims, not because of lack of evidence, but because of the condition of their hearts. Some of the reasons for unbelief was pointed out before. Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. They do not have God’s love in their hearts, and they love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Many of the same reasons explain the unbelief of men in our world today. The five testimonies are sufficient to prove to the honest man that Jesus is indeed who He claims to be.

5,000 Fed and Discourse On Bread of Life

John 6:1–71

Introduction

Jesus moved from the realm of words to that of works. In John 6 there are three major subjects: the feeding of the 5,000, walking on the water, and the discourse on the Bread of life. The narrative of the feeding of the 5,000 is common to all four gospels. It is the only miracle recorded by all the gospel writers except for the resurrection of Jesus. Out of Jesus' miracle of feeding the 5,000 will issue His discourse on the Bread of life. This discourse is only found in the gospel of John.

A comparison of the accounts of John, Matthew, Mark, and Luke reveal that these events took place after the return of the twelve from their first campaign and after the death of John the Baptizer. The fact that God incorporated the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 into Matthew, Mark, Luke and John indicates its significance. God desires all people to understand the message found in the miracle. The parallels of this miracle are found in Matthew 14:13–21, Mark 6:32–44, and Luke 9:10–17.

Jesus Feeds The Multitude

The Compassionate Savior

It is important to look first at the circumstances of the miracle. It took place on the far side of the Sea of Galilee,

also called the Sea of Tiberias: “*Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias)*” (John 6:1). The Sea of Galilee is only called the Sea of Tiberias in this passage and in John 21:1. The reason it was called the Sea of Tiberias is because a town named Tiberias was founded on the west shore about the year 20 A.D. Luke wrote that John the Baptizer’s ministry began during the reign of Tiberius Caesar (cf. Luke 3:1). The town was named after the Roman king, and after a period of time the lake was known as the Sea of Tiberias. The miracle took place on a hillside on the northeastern side of the Sea of Galilee. The hillside today is known as the Golan Heights.

Many people followed Jesus because He performed miraculous signs. John 6:2–3:

and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples.

The crowds came because of the miraculous signs Jesus had performed on the sick. They came to be healed, and many of them were healed.

According to Mark’s account, the apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to Him all they had done and taught. Jesus wanted the disciples to get away and have a time to rest because they had not even had enough time to eat, but the crowd followed them. Jesus had compassion on the people and began to teach them many things. Late in the day His disciples asked Jesus to send the people away into the villages to buy food for themselves. But Jesus took care of the problem rather than sending the people away to buy food (cf. Mark 6:30–44).

Major events recorded in the gospel of John were centered around the Jewish feast days as occurred on this occasion: “*The Jewish Passover Feast was near*” (John 6:4).

Another major emphasis is found when Jesus went to Judea for the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles (cf. John 7:2) and for the Feast of Dedication (cf. John 10:22). These feasts were closely connected with the Feast of Passover.

The Miraculous Provision

Jesus' next miracle occurred near the Passover Feast. John 6:5–6:

When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

Perhaps the reason Jesus asked Philip was because Philip was from nearby Bethsaida. He would be the logical one to know how to solve the problem of feeding all of the people. Philip gave some statistics to show the hopelessness of the situation: "Philip answered him, 'Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!'" (John 6:7). The phrase "eight months' wages" is based on the fact that the original Greek was **200 denarii** and one denarii was the wage of a working man for one day.

The Apostle Andrew had a proposal. John 6:8–9:

Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

The boy only had five small barley loaves and two small fish. The fish were probably sardine size fish, and the loaves were about pancake size and shape. This was enough for a snack for the boy for the day. Jesus told the disciples to seat the people. Then He took the loaves and the few fish, gave

thanks, and distributed them. John 6:10–11:

Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

As Jesus distributed the food, it kept multiplying, and the multitudes were fed. Five thousand men, plus the women and children, ate all that they wanted. Jesus told His disciples to gather the leftover pieces so nothing would be wasted. John 6:12–13:

When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.” So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

The boy only had five small barley loaves and two small fish, but there were twelve baskets of food left after all the people had finished eating.

The Response of the People

How did the people react to this miracle of being fed by a few loaves and fish? First, they said that Jesus was the Prophet: “After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, ‘Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world’” (John 6:14). Moses gave a prediction from God about a prophet who would be raised up from among the brothers. God would put His words into the Prophet’s mouth to be spoken unto the people. Everyone was commanded to listen to the Prophet (cf. Deuteronomy 18:15–18). The Jews had anticipated His coming for many

centuries. Upon seeing the miraculous sign that Jesus did, the people believed Jesus was the Prophet whom Moses spoke of, but they wanted to make Him king by force: *“Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself”* (John 6:15). They wanted a political king who could work miracles and supply their daily needs. Since He could work miracles, the Jews thought that perhaps He could overthrow the Roman empire and put the Jews in power instead. They wanted a miracle-working king who could give them political power. But in trying to force Jesus to be the kind of king they wanted, they did not receive Him as the kind of king that He was. Nor did they receive the kingdom that He offered to them.

The Response Of Jesus

Jesus then withdrew to the mountain by Himself (cf. John 6:15). Matthew and Mark wrote that He went there in order to pray (cf. Matthew 14:23; Mark 6:46). Jesus had faced a similar kind of temptation when the devil led Him up to a high place and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world with their glory and power. Luke 4:6–7:

And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours.”

Jesus answered with Old Testament scripture: *“Jesus answered, ‘It is written: “Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.”’”* (Luke 4:8). Jesus later told Pilate that His kingdom was not of this world. John 18:36:

Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.”

Jesus had already rejected this kind of temptation. He was not going to be a political king. Jesus later gave a discourse that grew out of the miracle of feeding the 5,000.

Jesus Is Lord over Nature

Jesus Walks on Water

Between the feeding of the 5,000 and the discourse on the Bread of life is the miracle of Jesus walking on the water. John 6:16–21:

When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. When they had rowed three or three and a half miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were terrified. But he said to them, “It is I; don’t be afraid.” Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.

Peter Also Walks on the Water

Matthew’s account adds an interesting detail to the account of Jesus walking on the water. Matthew 14:28–33:

“Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.” “Come,” he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!” Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?” And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat

worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Walking on the water proved to Jesus' disciples that He is the Lord of the creation. Remember, there was not anything that came into being except through the power of the One who is the Word (cf. John 1:3). Although Jesus was not the political king the people wanted Him to be, He is King of all nature which He demonstrated by walking on the water.

Discourse on the Bread of Life

The Materialistic Motivation of the People

The discourse on the bread of life is one of Jesus' longest discourses in the gospel of John. It was spoken to three different groups of people, and the three groups are involved in the discussion with Jesus about the bread of life. First, Jesus talked to the multitude or the crowd (cf. John 6:22–40). Second, He spoke to the Jews (cf. John 6:41–59). In the gospel of John, the word Jews normally refers to the Jewish religious leaders, especially those who were centered in Jerusalem. But in this text it was the Jewish religious leaders who were in Galilee. The third discussion of Jesus was with the disciples (cf. John 6:60–71). All three groups were involved with Jesus in the discussion of the bread of life.

Noting that Jesus was not there and the disciples were not there, the crowd got into the boats and came on the other side looking for Jesus. John 6:22–24:

The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone. Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. Once the crowd realized that

neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

Notice the attitude of the Jewish crowd as they encounter Jesus: *“When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, ‘Rabbi, when did you get here?’”* (John 6:25). First, they had wrong motives: John 6:26–27:

Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”

Their motivation to follow Jesus was to find physical advantage. If they followed Him, they thought they would have a daily supply of nourishment for their bodies. They were not looking for nourishment for their souls, which they desperately needed. Jesus had the discussion of the bread of life to help the crowd understand that what they really needed was not the physical nourishment that would give strength to their bodies, but the spiritual nourishment they needed for their souls.

Second, the crowds followed for the wrong method. They asked Jesus to give them a plan so they could work out their salvation: *“Then they asked him, ‘What must we do to do the works God requires?’”* (John 6:28). They wanted a list of rules and regulations. The people thought they could gain God’s favor by meeting certain requirements on a regular basis, and God would be obligated to them. Many of the Jews had this problem. Paul wrote about Jews who did not know God’s righteousness: *“Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness”*

(Romans 10:3). They wanted righteousness by works rather than by faith in Jesus Christ: *“Jesus answered, ‘The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent’”* (John 6:29). It is trust in Jesus and commitment to Him that God wants, not a list of legalistic rules.

Third, their request was wrong when they demanded more proof. John 6:30–31:

So they asked him, “What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

The crowd had seen a tremendous miracle. Jesus had taken a few loaves and fish and fed over 5,000 people. He had also taken up fragments. They had sufficient proof, but they demanded more. Later Jews had the same attitude according to Paul: *“Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to Gentiles”* (1 Corinthians 1:22–23). John summarized the attitude of rejection by the people despite the many miracles that Jesus had performed: *“Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him”* (John 12:37).

Fourth, the crowd had the wrong benefactor. The people wanted someone who would perform a miracle greater than Moses did, but it was not Moses who had given the Israelites bread from heaven. John 6:32–33:

Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

The “*true bread*” is not earthly bread; it is Jesus. He came to give life to the world, and He did this by offering Himself as an atoning sacrifice. He provided the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the people. Jesus supplies life that the world so desperately needs.

The people demanded that Jesus give them the bread: “*Sir,*” *they said, “from now on give us this bread”* (John 6:34). The Samaritan woman had the same attitude: “*The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water”*” (John 4:15). They both were thinking of physical items, but Jesus told both of them that they needed nourishment for their souls far more than they needed nourishment for their bodies.

Jesus’ Claim to Be the Needed Bread

There are seven “I am” claims made by Jesus in the gospel of John. Jesus first stated that He is the Bread of life: “*Then Jesus declared, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty’*” (John 6:35). Each time Jesus called Himself “I am,” He defined what He is and how He meets the needs of men. The other examples are: “. . . *I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*” (John 8:12). “*I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved . . .*” (John 10:9). Jesus called Himself the good Shepherd twice: “*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep*” (John 10:11). “*I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me*” (John 10:14). Jesus told Martha that He was the resurrection: “*Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies’*” (John 11:25). Jesus told Thomas that He was the way: “*Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’*” (John 14:6). Jesus twice claimed to be the true vine: “*I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener*” (John 15:1). “*I am the vine; you are*

the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5) Each one of the "I am" statements teaches an important fact about Jesus and His relationship to man. Every person would do well to look closely at the statements because they are tremendous claims about Jesus and about how He meets the needs of men throughout the world.

As the Bread of life, Jesus claims there will be no room left for spiritual hunger or thirst for the one who receives Him: *"Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty'"* (John 6:35). God, who made man, knows what man needs and how to meet his needs. He has met those needs perfectly through Jesus Christ, the Bread of life, but a believer must continue believing in Jesus. It is not enough to have believed in Him in the past. The verb tense that Jesus used means that a person must keep on believing. Past trust will not supply the bread of life to individuals, but continual belief will.

Jesus treats all men the same. He will accept men, whoever they are, because He wants all men to be saved: *"For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day"* (John 6:40). The perfect will of God is that all men be saved: *"... He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9). Paul also wrote about God's desire for all men to be saved: *"... God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth"* (1 Timothy 2:3-4). That is God's perfect will.

God's permissive will is that men have the freedom to turn from Him: *"yet you refuse to come to me to have life"* (John 5:40). There are several reasons for men remaining in darkness, in unbelief. They love darkness rather than light because their deeds will be exposed (cf. John 3:19), but God desires all men to be saved. Jesus tasted death for every man

to make provision for them to be saved. Every man needs to be drawn to Jesus by the teaching of the Father so they might have eternal life. The one who looks to the Son and believes on Him will have eternal life and be raised up on the last day.

The Discussion with the Jews

The Jews began to grumble about Jesus: “*At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, ‘I am the bread that came down from heaven’*” (John 6:41). There is a change of location to the synagogue in Capernaum with the Jewish religious leaders (cf. John 6:59). It is very likely that there had been movement after Jesus talked to the crowd on the seashore. Instead of the crowd responding to Jesus, it is the Jewish leaders with whom He had discussion. They began to murmur because Jesus said He came down from heaven and was the Bread of life.

The Jews had been noted for murmuring. After they had crossed the Red Sea and went for three days without any water, they began to complain because the water in Marah was bitter: “*So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, ‘What are we to drink?’*” (Exodus 15:24). After the Israelite spies had returned from the promised land, they gave a report and showed the fruit of the land. It was a beautiful land indeed, but they said there were powerful giants with fortified cities and the spies looked like grasshoppers in comparison. They began to murmur against Moses and Aaron, wishing they had died in Egypt or in the desert. They wanted to choose another leader and return to Egypt. God was displeased with the murmuring. Numbers 14:22–23:

*not one of the men who saw my glory and the
miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the
desert but who disobeyed me and tested me ten
times—not one of them will ever see the land I
promised on oath to their forefathers . . .*

The murmuring continued by the Jews in Jesus' time. They had difficulty understanding what Jesus said because they knew that Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary: "*They said, 'Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, "I came down from heaven"?'*" (John 6:42). Jesus told them to stop grumbling: "*'Stop grumbling among yourselves,' Jesus answered*" (John 6:43).

Jesus explained to the Jews that the Father draws men to Him. John 6:44–45:

"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me."

The drawing of the Father was absolutely necessary, but Jesus showed the methodology of the Father's drawing. They will be taught of God. Those who listen to the Father, by listening to the Son, will be drawn to the Lord and receive the Bread of life. The bread which Jesus gives is far superior to the manna eaten in the desert. John 6:49–51:

Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven . . .

Jesus laid down His life voluntarily as an atoning sacrifice for all men. Remember what John the baptizer said about the Lamb of God: "*Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*" (John 1:29). Jesus, who came as the Prince of Peace, came to unite men in one body, the church. Paul wrote that Jesus would reconcile both Jew and Gentile unto God in one body by the cross (cf. Ephesians 2:11–19). However,

Jesus often divided men, as He did while teaching in Capernaum. There is a paradox all through the New Testament. Jesus who came to unite men often divided men. His claims are of such a nature that those who choose the Light can no longer live in peace with those who are in darkness. There will always be friction between those who are living in the Light and those who are living in darkness. There will always be friction between those who follow Jesus and those who turn from Him.

Eating the Flesh and Drinking the Blood of Jesus

Jesus said that those who eat the living bread will live forever: *“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”* (John 6:51). These words have puzzled many people. When Jesus talked about eating His flesh and drinking His blood, He was not talking about the Lord’s Supper. People sometimes use this passage in reference to the Lord’s Supper, but there are a number of reasons why this is not the case.

First, Jesus was not referring to the Lord’s Supper because most of the people present were not His faithful followers. Jesus used the Greek word *sarks* for “flesh” which is never used in reference to the Lord’s Supper.

Second, when Jesus talked about the Lord’s Supper, He used the word “body.” The word “body” was only used in the presence of His faithful disciples, not in the midst of a group of people who were rejecting Him.

Third, eating Jesus’ flesh and drinking His blood are connected with giving His life for the people of the world. John 6:51:

“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

This verse refers to Jesus' sacrificial death for the sins of men. A person must accept His sacrifice, trust in His blood, and then make Jesus' life his life. Eating His flesh and drinking His blood is an impressive way of stating that a person must assimilate Christ and His teaching into his life.

Jesus Spoke to His Disciples

Many of His disciples said that Jesus' words were difficult to accept: "*On hearing it, many of his disciples said, 'This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?'*" (John 6:60). They were not saying that Jesus' words were hard to understand. His disciples were saying that His demands were hard to receive. The implication of eating His flesh and drinking His blood was so hard that many could not accept it. Jesus, though, did not compromise in this regard. He did not then say that He would give them teachings that were not so difficult and make it easier for them.

On another occasion Jesus gave His disciples another difficult command: "*Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me'*" (Matthew 16:24). Jesus does not want half-hearted followers so He did not soften His demands or provide a way of ease and comfort. He let those who would not follow Him wholeheartedly walk away: "*From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him*" (John 6:66).

Then Jesus turned to the twelve for a response: "*'You do not want to leave too, do you?'*" Jesus asked the Twelve" (John 6:67). That is the way this verse should be translated because the form in the original Greek implies a negative answer. Peter, speaking for the twelve, boldly proclaims their faith in Jesus Christ: "*Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God'*" (John 6:68–69). The disciples had come to a subtle faith; they believed that Jesus was the holy One of God. Who else could command

their love and loyalty? To the wounded heart of Jesus, Peter's confession must have been as a soothing balm. But He also knew of the approaching treachery of Judas. John 6:70–71:

Then Jesus replied, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!" (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)

Judas' betrayal is found in the later portion of the gospel of John (cf. John 18:2–5).

Jesus At The Feast of Tabernacles

John 7:1–53

Introduction

The scene shifts from Galilee, where Jesus had spent six months, to Jerusalem. Opposition to Him was mounting, and the period of conflict was about to begin in earnest. In this one chapter there are no fewer than seven references to the Jew's desire and attempts to kill Jesus (cf. John 7:1, 7:13, 7:19, 7:23, 7:25, 7:30, 7:35). The Feast of Tabernacles is the setting for this confrontation. The feast was a celebration of God's providential care of Israel in the wilderness and His blessings in the current harvest.

God's Timetable for Jesus

Background of the Feast of Tabernacles

Jesus continued to receive opposition, but it was not His time to die: *"After this, Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to take his life"* (John 7:1). Remember, He must die in Jerusalem at God's appointed time, not man's. Again, a feast day was involved in Jesus' teaching situation. John 7:2–4:

But when the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near, Jesus' brothers said to him, "You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see

the miracles you do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world."

The Feast of Tabernacles was one of the great Jewish feasts. It took place in the seventh month of the year, beginning on the 15th day and continuing for seven days after they had gathered the produce of their threshing floor and winepress. For seven days they were to present offerings made to the Lord by fire and be joyful. The Israelites were to live in booths for seven days so their descendants would know that they had lived in booths or tents in the wilderness for forty years when God brought them out of Egypt. On the eighth day they were to hold a closing, sacred assembly and do no regular work (cf. Leviticus 23:33–36, 42–43; Deuteronomy 16:13–15).

When the Israelites came into the land of Canaan, they received houses which they had not built and vineyards which they had not planted. God wanted them to remember that they had been sojourners in the wilderness for all those years. Once every year, at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, they were to remember what they had experienced in the wilderness. They would live in the booths or tents on their flat-roofed houses or out in courtyards during the festival. The feast was at harvest time, a time of thanksgiving for the crops. It was a time of much joy. Someone has described it as having all the joy and inconvenience of a picnic.

Christ Answers His Unbelieving Brothers

Jesus had a discussion with His brothers about going up to the Feast of Tabernacles. These brothers were born of Joseph and Mary after Jesus' virgin birth. Their names were James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas. There were sisters, as well (cf. Matthew 13:55–56).

At the time of the discussion Jesus' brothers did not believe in Him: "*For even his own brothers did not believe in him*" (John 7:5). Later they became believers. When the 120

met in the upper room, before God sent the Holy Spirit and established the church, the brothers of Jesus and Mary were there (cf. Acts 1:14). One of His brothers, James, became a very prominent and influential leader in the church in Jerusalem. Paul wrote that when he went up to Jerusalem, he saw the apostle Peter and James, the brother of the Lord (cf. Galatians 1:18–19). Paul wrote that James, Peter, and John were reputed to be pillars in the church in Jerusalem (cf. Galatians 2:9). At least one of Jesus' brothers became an influential leader in the church and perhaps he wrote the book of James.

Jesus' brothers did not understand the nature of His ministry. They thought He sought popularity, not knowing that His message to an unbelieving world would bring opposition. John 7:6–7:

Therefore Jesus told them, "The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil."

They were of the world, and they spoke as men of the world. Jesus did not go to the feast at the time or in the manner His brothers suggested: *"However, after his brothers had left for the Feast, he went also, not publicly, but in secret"* (John 7:10). When Jesus did go, He did not go to build public relations or to show Himself as a public figure. He had a different motivation entirely.

The Jews were watching for Him, and the crowds were whispering about Him. John 7:11–12:

Now at the Feast the Jews were watching for him and asking, "Where is that man?" Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, "He is a good man." Others replied, "No, he deceives the people."

Some of the people had heard about Jesus. Others had seen His miracles, His power. There was widespread interest and whispering about Him, but there was no agreement among the people. The crowd did not say anything openly because they feared the Jews. Remember, all of the people are Jews, but the expression “the Jews” has reference to the religious leaders. The crowd was afraid to discuss Jesus openly because of opposition from the Jewish leaders.

Jesus’ Teaching Mission

Jesus Answers Prejudices Concerning His Teaching

Jesus arrived in the middle of the feast, and He began teaching openly in the temple courts. The Jews were amazed at the ability that Jesus had to teach the scriptures, the word of God. John 7:14–15:

Not until halfway through the Feast did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach. The Jews were amazed and asked, “How did this man get such learning without having studied?”

The Jews knew that Jesus had not attended the school for the rabbis. So how could He teach publicly with such authority, they wondered? Later, when Peter and John stood before the Sanhedrin, they were called “unschooled and ordinary men.” The men took note that the apostles had been with Jesus and had great courage (cf. Acts 4:13). Contrast the attitude of governor Festus when he heard Paul speak: “*At this point Festus interrupted Paul’s defense. ‘You are out of your mind, Paul!’ he shouted. ‘Your great learning is driving you insane’*” (Acts 26:24).

There will always be critics; either the speakers have too much schooling, or they do not have enough. At the feast Jesus did not claim that He was self-taught or that He had studied with anyone. He claimed that the Father had given

Him the message: “*Jesus answered, ‘My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me’*” (John 7:16). Jesus later told the Jews that the Father told Him what to say: “*For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it*” (John 12:49).

A Determining Factor in Understanding

Choosing to do God’s will is a part of the learning process: “*If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own*” (John 7:17). There is a moral implication in this verse. People sometimes think that they do because they know, but according to what Jesus said, people know because they do. If a man does God’s will, he will know whether Jesus speaks for Himself or if He speaks for the Father. A good and honest heart will understand. Remember, all through the gospel of John the evidences were sufficient to produce faith. It was not the lack of evidence; it was a lack of love for God in the hearts of the Jews. The people loved darkness rather than light. The Jewish leaders lacked faith because they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God (cf. John 12:43). Jesus was saying that there was a moral issue involved in receiving His teachings. If one really wants to know whether Jesus’ teaching is from God or from Himself, the evidence is sufficient.

Jesus described Himself as a person of integrity because He did not seek to please Himself or gain honor for himself. John 7:18:

“He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him.”

Jesus always sought to please the Father. He was a man of truth because He sought honor for the One who had sent Him.

Prejudice Concerning His Works

Jesus accused the Jews because they did not keep the law: *“Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?”* (John 7:19). The crowd reacted to Jesus’ accusation of their actions: *“You are demon-possessed,” the crowd answered. “Who is trying to kill you?”* (John 7:20). In the gospel of John, demon possession always refers to accusations by the enemies of Jesus against Him. There are no incidents of demon possession given in the gospel of John, only charges that Jesus is demon possessed. Perhaps the crowd did not know that the Jewish religious leaders had proposed to kill Him already. The cause of the opposition was the miracle of healing the man by the pool on the Sabbath Day: *“Jesus said to them, ‘I did one miracle, and you are all astonished’”* (John 7:21). Jesus had already done many miracles, but those other miracles did not cause trouble for Him with the Jewish religious leaders. It was the one miracle of healing on the Sabbath Day (cf. John 5:1–15) that caused all the opposition. Jesus showed the inconsistency of the Jewish religious leaders. John 7:22–23:

“Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a child on the Sabbath. Now if a child can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing the whole man on the Sabbath?”

Jesus admonished the Jews because they had not judged Him fairly: *“Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment”* (John 7:24). They had not applied the same principles to their own practices that they had applied to Jesus. The Jews were inconsistent in evaluating the person and personality of Jesus.

Questions Concerning His Origin

Prejudice Concerning His Origin and Mission

Some of the people asked whether or not Jesus is indeed the Messiah. John 7:25–27:

At that point some of the people of Jerusalem began to ask, “Isn’t this the man they are trying to kill? Here he is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying a word to him. Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Christ? But we know where this man is from; when the Christ comes, no one will know where he is from.”

John presents some of the differing views that the people had about Jesus. They wondered why the authorities allowed Jesus to speak openly. Some of them realized that the Jews had indeed proposed to kill Jesus, and yet they let Him speak. Did the Jewish authorities secretly believe that He was the Messiah, though they had plans to kill Him, the people wondered? Not everyone agreed on where Jesus was from. Some said that no one would know where He was from. Later, some of the people said that the Messiah would come from the family of David and from Bethlehem (cf. John 7:42).

Jesus Answers Prejudices Concerning His Teaching

Jesus knew that the people did not really know Him nor His origin though they thought they did. John 7:28–29:

Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, “Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, but I know him because I am from him and he sent me.”

Jesus spoke ironically at the temple courts, as well as later.

For example, Jesus testified that the people do not know where He came from or where He is going. John 8:14:

Jesus answered, "Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going."

The people thought they knew where He came from, but they did not know that He came from God. Later, Jesus said that they did not know Him or His Father: “. . . ‘You do not know me or my Father,’ Jesus replied. ‘If you knew me, you would know my Father also’” (John 8:19). It is interesting to note that the religious people were told that they did not even know God. They knew that Jesus was from Nazareth, but they did not know that He had come from God, and that is a really important point.

They Attempt To Arrest Jesus

The Jews attempted to arrest Jesus in response to the crowd because so many of the people were believing Him and putting their trust in Him. John 7:30–32:

At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his time had not yet come. Still, many in the crowd put their faith in him. They said, “When the Christ comes, will he do more miraculous signs than this man?” The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about him. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest him.

No one arrested Jesus because His time had not yet come. The chief priests are mentioned for the first time in John’s gospel. The chief priests were collaborators with the Roman government. They were in charge, and they had power and

influence. The chief priests had no influence with the common people, but they had influence with the Roman authorities. They were in charge of the temple, the center of worship in Jerusalem. The Pharisees were in charge of the local synagogue, and the real leaders of the common people. The chief priests and the Pharisees had very little in common, but they did unite in their bitter opposition to Jesus Christ, His teachings, and His claims to be the Messiah.

A Perplexed Audience

Jesus told of His plans to return to the Father. John 7:33–34:

Jesus said, “I am with you for only a short time, and then I go to the one who sent me. You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come.”

The spiritually blind Jews wondered where Jesus was going. They interpreted His words literally, as though they applied to travel in Palestine. John 7:35–36:

The Jews said to one another, “Where does this man intend to go that we cannot find him? Will he go where our people live scattered among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks?”

They little knew that they had spoken of the very methodology that would be followed by the apostles. Paul and the other apostles traveled from place to place in the Roman empire teaching the good news. When they arrived in a city, they would first teach in the Jewish synagogue. They would also find devout Gentiles who believed in the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. They would find people who had respect for the Old Testament and feared God, as well as proselytes, men who

had fully accepted Judaism. Paul and his companion would preach to these people. They did, indeed, follow the very methodology that the Jews thought Jesus might follow. The apostles taught among the people of the dispersion and the Greek people (cf. Acts 8–28).

An Amazing Invitation

Jesus taught about the coming of the Spirit on the last day of the Feast. John 7:37–39:

On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

“The last and greatest day of the Feast” probably refers to the eighth day. According to Jewish tradition, on the eighth day the people would go to the Pool of Siloam. As the priest dipped his golden pitcher in the pool and lifted it out, the people chanted from Isaiah 12:3: “*With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.*” By doing this they were reminded of the harvest they had experienced. They were also praying for rain for the coming season.

As the priest emptied the water at the base of the altar, and poured it out, Jesus cried “*If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.*” Out of the emphasis on things that were physical, Jesus turned their attention to that which was spiritual and eternal. He meant that He would give a stream of living water that would flow into eternal life. Jesus was speaking of the Holy Spirit who would be given to those who believed on Him. The Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

The Promise Of The Holy Spirit

John 7:39 is a puzzling verse because the Spirit is involved in the lives of many of God's people in the Old Testament. For example, the Spirit of the Lord stirred Samson (cf. Judges 13:25). The Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power so that he tore the lion apart with his bare hands (cf. Judges 14:6). Another time the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson, and he defeated a great host of the Philistines (cf. Judges 15:14). The Spirit of God also came upon Saul, and he prophesied with the prophets (cf. 1 Samuel 10:10). When God's Spirit came upon people in the Old Testament, it was the miraculous empowering Spirit which was given to people in both the Old and New Testament. The indwelling of the Spirit was given after Jesus was glorified, and it was given to believers.

The Holy Spirit led men in the Old Testament to write and to speak prophecy. 2 Peter 1:20–21:

. . . no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Before John the Baptizer was born, an angel told Zacharias that his son would be filled with the Holy Spirit: “. . . he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth” (Luke 1:15). Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptizer, was filled with the Holy Spirit when she heard Mary's greeting (cf. Luke 1:41). Zachariah was also filled with the Holy Spirit (cf. Luke 1:67).

The Holy Spirit came upon Jesus when He was baptized. Luke 3:21–22:

When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove . . .

Jesus was led by the Spirit in the desert: “*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert*” (Luke 4:1). Jesus returned to Galilee by the power of the Spirit (cf. Luke 4:14). Peter told Cornelius that God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those who were oppressed by the devil (cf. Acts 10:38).

The permanent indwelling of the Spirit is what Jesus had in mind when he said to the apostles: “. . . *for he lives with you and will be in you*” (John 14:17). This is a key verse about the Spirit. After Jesus glorified God by His death on the cross, after He was raised from the dead and ascended to the right hand of God, He sent the Holy Spirit. On the Day of Pentecost men were told that they were sinners and had crucified the Son of God. Peter convicted them. The people realized that they were lost in God’s sight and asked what they needed to do. Acts 2:38:

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

The Holy Spirit is given to people who obey God (cf. Acts 5:32). God sends His Spirit to those who become His sons: “*Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father’*” (Galatians 4:6).

In a discussion about sexual immorality, Paul wrote that a believer’s body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 6:19–20:

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Having been glorified and seated at the right hand of God, Jesus gave the indwelling Holy Spirit to His people.

There was division over Jesus' identify. Some of the people identified Jesus as the Prophet: *"On hearing his words, some of the people said, 'Surely this man is the Prophet'"* (John 7:40). The Samaritan woman at the well also believed Jesus was a prophet: *"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet"* (John 4:19). After Jesus had fed the 5,000, the people called Jesus a prophet: *"... 'Surely this is the Prophet who is come into the world'"* (John 6:14). The people did not believe that the Prophet and the Messiah would be the same individual. They had read passages in the Old Testament about the coming Messiah and about the coming Prophet, but they did not realize that He was the same person. Some of the people thought Jesus was the Christ, but others wondered how He could come from Galilee. John 7:41– 42:

Others said, "He is the Christ." Still others asked, "How can the Christ come from Galilee? Does not the Scripture say that the Christ will come from David's family and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?"

Not knowing that Jesus had been born in Bethlehem and was from David's family, some of the people decided that He could not be the Messiah. There was division about Jesus, and some of the people wanted to seize Him: *"Thus the people were divided because of Jesus. Some wanted to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him"* (John 7:43–44). No one laid a hand on Jesus because His time had not yet come.

Unbelief of the Jewish Leaders

The Obstinate Action of the Jews

The temple guards were supposed to have arrested Jesus, but they came back without Him. John 7:45–46:

Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, "Why didn't you bring him in?" "No one ever spoke the way this man does," the guards declared.

The guards gave an honest report when they explained why they had not brought Jesus. They simply said that no one every spoke the way this man did. It is as if they thought Jesus was more than a mere man. No mere man could speak the words that Jesus spoke. This is one of the greatest testimonies in the gospel of John to the power and influence of Jesus Christ.

Notice the arrogance of the Jewish leaders. John 7:47–49:

"You mean he has deceived you also?" the Pharisees retorted. "Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law-there is a curse on them."

The Jewish rulers though that the ignorant people believed Jesus, but not any of the sophisticated, intellectual leaders like themselves would believe on Him. Surely, the Jews have too much legal knowledge to believe that this man is the Messiah, they thought.

Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council, had earlier come to Jesus by night (cf. John 3:1–21). The same man spoke up: *"Does our law condemn anyone without first hearing him to find out what he is doing?"* (John 7:51). The Jews were unable to answer Nicodemus so they simply insulted him: *"They replied, 'Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, (the Law)and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee'"* (John 7:52). The religious leaders were more interested in their traditions and their positions of authority than in learning the truth about Jesus.

Conflict With The Pharisees And The Jews

John 8:1–59

Introduction

There is a manuscript problem that would not be fair to ignore in John 8:1–11, the story of the woman who was caught in adultery. “The earliest and most reliable manuscripts and many other witnesses do not have John 7:53–8:11” according to the New International Version footnote. The American Standard, the Revised Standard Version, the New American Standard, and other modern translations all have a similar footnote. There is not strong manuscript evidence for this passage in this particular place. However, the passage is still regarded as a true historic event in the life of Christ. The problem is not whether or not it is a true event, but where should it be included in the word of God. Some manuscripts have it at the end of John’s gospel, some have it after John 7:36, and some have it after Luke 21:38. The story of the woman who was caught in adultery is viewed as a true historic event because it is in harmony with everything known about Jesus and about the scribes and Pharisees.

The Woman Caught in Adultery

Jesus Before the Bar of Wicked Men

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives, a hill east of the temple area: “*But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives*” (John

8:1). Each day during the last week of His life, Jesus taught at the temple and each evening he spent the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives (cf. Luke 21:37). Jesus went to pray on the Mount of Olives the night of His betrayal, and Judas led the soldiers with the crowd into the garden to arrest Him. Judas knew where to find Jesus (cf. John 18:1–3).

Jesus taught in the temple courts, and a great number of people gathered around to hear Him: *“At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them”* (John 8:2). The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery: John 8:3–4

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery.”

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees are not mentioned any other time in the gospel of John, but they are mentioned many times in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Jesus was often in controversy with them and often rebuked the men for their hypocrisy. Jesus pronounced woes upon the Pharisees because of their hypocrisy in Matthew 23:27–28:

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

The deceit of the Pharisees and scribes is seen in this event. If they were interested in justice, why did they bring the woman who was caught in adultery and not the man? There

should have been two sinners standing before Jesus, not one. The Pharisees and scribes were not interested in the woman, nor were they interested in justice. They were only interested in using her as a tool to accuse Jesus. John 8:5–6:

In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say? They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him . . .

If Jesus said she should go free, then in their minds He would array Himself against Moses. If He said she should be stoned to death, He would array Himself against the Roman authorities who had taken away from the Jews the right of capital punishment. The Pharisees and scribes thought that whatever Jesus did, they would trap Him.

The Wicked Men Before Their Own Bar

Jesus responded by simply writing on the ground: “. . . *But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger*” (John 8:6). This is the only record in all the Bible of Jesus writing anything, and the writing has been eroded away by the sands of time. No one knows what He wrote. Some people suggest that Jesus may have written the charges that were made against the accused in the fashion of a Roman governor. Perhaps He wrote the sins of the accusers. When He stood up, He gave the accusers instructions: “*When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, ‘If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her’*” (John 8:7). Then He bent down and began writing again. The emphasis shifted from the woman’s sin to their sins. The consciences of the men appear to have been affected by the words Jesus spoke: “*At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there*” (John 8:9).

The Woman Before the Bar of Jesus

Since the crowd had been in the outer perimeter when the Pharisees and scribes brought the woman to Jesus, it can be assumed that they were still there when the Jewish religious leaders left. Jesus spoke to the woman: *“Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”* (John 7:10). She gave a negative answer. Since there were no witnesses, no judgment could be given: *“No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin”* (John 8:11). Jesus did not come to condemn, but to extend mercy and forgiveness for sinners (cf. John 3:17). Someone has said, “If grace is not for sinners, then it is not grace.” Jesus told Zacchaeus His purpose for coming: *“. . . the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost”* (Luke 19:10). Paul wrote a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: *“. . . Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst”* (1 Timothy 1:15).

Jesus was not lax concerning the adulteress woman’s sin. He insisted that she go and leave her life of sin. She needed to turn away from the sin in her life. In both the Old and New Testaments, the forgiveness of God is always given to a penitent sinner; God’s forgiveness was never given to a impenitent person.

Validity of Jesus’ Testimony

Jesus’ Claim and Authority Challenged

Jesus made another great claim about Himself. John 8:12:

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

Jesus claimed to be the Light of the world, but the Pharisees challenged Him: *“Here you are, appearing as your own*

witness; your testimony is not valid” (John 8:13). Jesus’ claim is closely related to the claim He made to His disciples when they saw the blind man. He demonstrated that He is the Light of the world by opening the eyes of the man born blind (cf. John 9:1–7). Jesus stated that the Pharisees were spiritually blind and guilty before God because they rejected His claims despite all the evidence (cf. John 9:41).

The background for Jesus’ claim that He is the light of the world is found in the Old Testament. When the Israelites left the land of Egypt and crossed the Red Sea, they were guided by the Lord in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to give them light (cf. Exodus 13:21). The pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire never departed from them during the forty years in the desert. The entire time the Israelites were in the wilderness they knew when to break camp. They knew when to go, and they knew where to go because the light of God went before them (cf. Nehemiah 9:12–19).

Jesus claimed to be the bread of life (cf. John 6:35), the living waters (cf. John 4:10), and the light of the world guiding His people in the way they should go. Jesus also fulfilled Old Testament predictions that the Messiah would be a great light to both Jews and Gentiles. Isaiah predicted that the Messiah would be a light to the Gentiles, the people sitting in darkness would see a great light (cf. Isaiah 9:1–2). This passage was applied to the teaching of Jesus in the area of Galilee (cf. Matthew 4:15–16).

Isaiah again predicted that Jesus would be a covenant to the people and a light to the Gentiles (cf. Isaiah 42:6). Again Isaiah predicted that Jesus would be a light for the Gentiles. Isaiah 49:6:

It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.

Paul and Barnabas referred to Isaiah's prediction and applied it to the ministry of Jesus' apostles as they took the word of salvation to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 13:46–47). Jesus was indeed a light to the Gentiles, and He brought salvation to the ends of the earth.

Christ's Authority Vindicated

The Pharisees rejected Jesus' claims because He was appearing as His own witness, but Jesus gave a two-fold answer. John 8:14-18:

Jesus answered, "Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going. You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one. But if I do judge, my decisions are right, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me. In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two men is valid. I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me."

First, Jesus said His testimony was valid because He knew His origin and He knew His destination. The Pharisees did not know about Jesus. He was qualified to speak on His own behalf. Jesus was competent to bear witness about Himself since He knew that He had come from God and He knew that He was also returning to the Father.

Second, Jesus' testimony about Himself was supported by His Father. According to Moses' Law the testimony of two witnesses is true. Jesus had his own witness, and He had the witness of His Father.

The Pharisees continued to question Jesus: "*Then they asked him, 'Where is your father?' 'You do not know me or my Father,' Jesus replied. 'If you knew me, you would know my Father also.'*" (John 8:19). Because the Jews refused to

accept the message Jesus gave, they did not know the Father, He said. Throughout the gospel of John this message is found: men must hear the voice of God through the messenger He sanctified and sent into the world. There is no other way to fully know God except through His Son, Jesus Christ: *"No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known"* (John 1:18). In the Greek it means Jesus has exegeted Him. Jesus gave a clear, detailed description of God that no one had previously done. Jesus explained the way to the Father: *"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'"* (John 14:6). Again Jesus pointed the way to the Father: *". . . Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father . . ."* (John 14:9). As long as the Pharisees rejected the testimony of Jesus, they could not know God. Any one who rejects the testimony of the Son does not know God.

The Enigma of Christ

Jesus taught in the temple near where the offerings were put, in an area very near the Jewish high court, the Sanhedrin: *"He spoke these words while teaching in the temple area near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his time had not yet come"* (John 8:20). Even though Jesus taught near the Jewish high court, no one seized Him because His time had not yet come.

Again Jesus said He was going away and the Jews would die in their sin: *"Once more Jesus said to them, 'I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come'"* (John 8:21). Jesus said He was going to return to the Father who had sent Him: *"Jesus said, 'I am with you for only a short time, and then I go to the one who sent me'"* (John 7:33). Jesus said at another time that He would go to the Father: *"It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. . ."* (John 13:1). To *"die in your sin"* means to be separated from God eternally. Isaiah 59:1–2:

*Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save,
nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have
separated you from your God; your sins have hidden
his face from you, so that he will not hear.*

Paul wrote about people who were once dead in their transgressions and sins (cf. Ephesians 2:1). When they were dead in their transgressions and sins, they were separated from God. This is the greatest tragedy that could ever happen to anyone. A person who “dies in sin” dies for his own sin. He is not considered a sinner because of the sin of someone else. A son is not a sinner because his father was a sinner, nor will the father be a sinner because of the sins of the son. The soul who sins is the one who will die. God will judge each person according to his own sins. God desires that everyone repent and live (cf. Ezekiel 18:1–32).

The tragedy of dying in sin is also expressed in Revelation 20:14–15. The second death is the lake of fire. It is not only separation from God, but it is a place of punishment where men are separated from the presence of God and punished because of their rejection of God’s testimony concerning His Son. To die in sin is the worst tragedy that a person can experience.

When Jesus talked about going to a place where the Jews could not go, the Pharisees thought He was talking about suicide: “*This made the Jews ask, ‘Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, “Where I go, you cannot come”?’*” (John 8:22). They believed that suicide was a very serious sin and anyone who killed himself could not go to heaven.

They felt quite secure about themselves because they were descendants of Abraham, but Jesus told them that they would die in their sins if they did not believe that He was who He claimed to be. John 8:23–24:

*But he continued, “You are from below; I am from
above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.*

I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am [the one I claim to be], you will indeed die in your sins.”

The lack of faith of the Jews meant they would die in their sins. They would not be with Jesus and the Father eternally unless they repented and believed.

A Puzzling Person

The Pharisees asked Jesus who He was. John 8:25–26:

“Who are you?” they asked. “Just what I have been claiming all along,” Jesus replied. “I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world.”

The Jews did not understand that Jesus was telling them about God and Their relationship. John 8:27–28:

They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father. So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am [the one I claim to be] and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.”

In the gospel of John the term “*lifted up*” usually refers to Jesus being lifted up on the cross. It usually refers to His crucifixion, as it does in this verse. When Jesus was lifted up on the cross, many of the Jews understood that He really was the One He claimed to be. He was not only crucified, but He was raised from the dead and lifted up on high to the right hand of God.

Peter stood before the Jews on the Day of Pentecost and preached that Jesus had been exalted to the right hand of God

and many of them were led to repentance. They were convicted that they had indeed crucified the Son of God. They were convicted by His death, resurrection, and ascension that He had been sent by God. Three thousand of the Jews responded to the preaching of Peter on the Day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:14–41).

Paul used the same term but in an intensive form when he wrote that after Jesus died on the cross, after He humbled Himself even unto death, God exalted Him: “*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name*” (Philippians 2:9). God “*exalted him*” to the utmost. He was exalted in His death, but He was also exalted in His resurrection and in His ascension to the right hand of God. All of the events together became proof to many of the Jews of the truthfulness of Jesus’ claims and the truthfulness of His teaching. Through all of these experiences Jesus was strengthened because He knew the Father was with Him: “*‘The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.’ Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him*” (John 8:29–30). The Father never left Jesus. He always had the Father’s guidance and strength.

The Truth about Discipleship

The Conditions of True Discipleship

Jesus gave a description of the true children of Abraham. John 8:31–32:

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

The words of Jesus caused many of the Jews to believe in Him (cf. John 8:30). However, their belief was not deep nor sufficient. Jesus wanted to show the Jews the implications of

their faith, and He wanted to deepen their faith. His message about discipleship and freedom brought such opposition that their weak faith turned into an active hatred. Soon they picked up stones to kill him (cf. John 8:59). There is no sharp transition from one group of people to another in this passage. Jesus was talking to the same group of people who had come to believe in Him. But there was a transition in their attitude toward Jesus and His claims about what faith involved. The proof of discipleship is shown when a person holds to His teachings.

Jesus gave other proofs about discipleship. For example, when Jesus gave a new command, He explained discipleship: *“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another”* (John 13:35). So one of the proofs of discipleship is abiding in His word. Another proof is loving one another as Jesus loves. Another test of discipleship is bearing much fruit: *“This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples”* (John 15:8). Jesus wants all of the fruits to be in the lives of Christians to prove that they are indeed His disciples.

The Question of Freedom

Staying in His teaching would have set the Jews free from bondage, not political bondage but spiritual bondage. Though their forefathers had been in Egyptian bondage for many years, and they had been conquered by many foreign enemies, and they were under the heel of the Roman conquerors at that very time, they boldly denied their lack of freedom: *“They answered him, ‘We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?’”* (John 8:33). The Jews thought their kinship to Abraham was sufficient to guarantee them a relationship to God. Pride made them blind to the truth.

Jesus’ Estimate of the Jews

Jesus responded that sin is what makes a person a slave:

“Jesus replied, ‘I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin’” (John 8:34). It is not physical bondage or physical captivity into the hands of another nation that is the real bondage. Jesus was talking about freedom from sin: *“Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed”* (John 8:35–36). Whoever serves sin is a slave of sin whether he is the son of Abraham or not. Being descendants of Abraham did not automatically make them children of God.

John the Baptizer called some of the Pharisees and Sadducees a brood of vipers and told them not to trust in their physical descent from Abraham: *“And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham”* (Matthew 3:9). They were descendants of Abraham, but Jesus implied that they had another father. John 8:37–38:

“I know you are Abraham’s descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word. I am telling you what I have seen in the Father’s presence, and you do what you have heard from your father.”

Their father is not named, but he will be named later. Jesus was implying that their father was not God. The Jews were seeking to do the will of that father, not Abraham. Jesus said that if they were Abraham’s children they would have the same spirit and faith that Abraham had. John 8:39–40:

“Abraham is our father,” they answered. “If you were Abraham’s children,” said Jesus, “then you would do the things Abraham did. As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things.”

The Jews were trying to kill a Man who brought them the truth that He had learned from the God of Abraham. Their antagonism, hatred, and desire to kill Jesus showed that they really were not the sons of Abraham.

The Revealing of Their True Heritage

God Is Not Their Father

If God had been the Father of these men, they would love Jesus. John 8:42–43:

“Jesus said to them, ‘If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say.’”

Jesus told them clearly that they were children of the devil. John 8:44–47:

“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language for he is a liar and the father of lies. Yet because I tell you the truth, you do not believe me! Can any one of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don’t you believe me? He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.”

These are some of the strongest words in the New Testament. Jesus told them plainly what He had only implied before. He told the Pharisees that God was not their Father because they refused to love and honor the One whom God had sent. Jesus told them that their father was the devil, and he was a

murderer from the beginning. When Satan speaks a lie, he speaks out of his own nature. Their desire to kill Jesus shows they had the same nature as their father, the devil. When Jesus told the truth, they did not believe Him! Hence, their very opposition to the truth was the thing that demonstrated that they were indeed sons of the devil rather than sons of God. By refusing to hear the One whom God had sent, they refused to hear God and demonstrated that they did not belong to God.

Notice the accusations the Jews made against Jesus: *“The Jews answered him, ‘Aren’t we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?’”* (John 8:48). To call a Jew a Samaritan was a racial slur, but Jesus did not share their racial prejudice. In fact, He did not even respond to their charge. The second charge was that Jesus was demon possessed. Jesus denied this charge and accused them of dishonoring Him by making the charge. John 8:49–50:

“I am not possessed by a demon,” said Jesus, “but I honor my Father and you dishonor me. I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge.”

Five Great Claims of Jesus

In the last section of John 8 are five major claims that Jesus made about Himself. **First**, Jesus claimed to be without sin: *“Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don’t you believe me?”* (John 8:46). Jesus challenge His most bitter enemies to prove any sin in His life. No one else in all of human history could make such a claim. **Second**, He claimed that He had the power to keep men from dying: *“I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.”* (John 8:51). Jesus later made a similar claim to Martha. John 11:25–36:

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies;

and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”

Because He is the resurrection and the life, Jesus has the ability to keep men who die physically from dying eternally.

Third, Jesus claimed that God is the one who glorifies Him: *“Jesus replied, ‘If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me’”* (John 8:54).

Fourth, Jesus claimed that Abraham foresaw His day: *“Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad”* (John 8:56). According to Old Testament prophets, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the prophets longed for the coming of the Messiah. They longed to know the time or the manner of time that these things would take place, and even angels longed to look into them (cf. 1 Peter 1:10–12). Jesus told His disciples that many prophets longed to hear what they were hearing. Matthew 13:17:

“For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.”

Fifth, Jesus’ last claim was that He proceeded Abraham: *“Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad”* (John 8:56). This claim was the most shocking of all. Jesus identified Himself as the eternal “I AM.” Before Abraham was born, “I AM” existed.

Jesus’ words are either the words of blasphemy, or they are the words of One who is God in the flesh. Either Jesus is a blasphemer and a madman, or He is the eternal Son of God, the Eternal “I AM.” There is no other option.

Healing A Blind Man Causes More Controversy

John 9:1–41

Introduction

Isaiah predicted that in messianic times various signs would occur. The Messiah would open the eyes of those who were blind (cf. Isaiah 29:18; 35:5; 42:7). Jesus often healed the blind (cf. Matthew 9:27–31; 12:22–23; 15:30; 20:29–34; 21:14). The miracle in John 9 is notable because Jesus had just proclaimed Himself as the Light of the world (cf. John 8:12). As a public demonstration of His claim, Jesus gave sight to a man born blind.

There are no cases of the healing of the blind in the Old Testament, with one exception. Aramean soldiers are temporarily struck blind and later receive their sight back (cf. 2 Kings 6:18–20). There is no other healing of the blind in the Old Testament.

Old Testament prophets predicted that the Messiah would open the eyes of the blind, unstop the ears of the deaf, and cause the lame to leap and the mute to shout for joy. But there are more healings of the blind in the New Testament than any other kind of healing. The healing of the man in this chapter was unusual because he was born blind. Perhaps other blind people whom Jesus healed were born blind, but this is the only case in the Bible in which a man who was specified to have been born blind received his sight again.

Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind

A Question of Responsibility

Jesus' disciples question Him about the blind man: "*As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'*" (John 9:1–2). The disciples erroneously believed that when a man had some kind of disease or illness, it could always be directly traced back to sin in his life. This, of course, is not true. Many people still have this belief today. People throughout most of the centuries have believed that if a man has a serious disease or illness, he must be very sinful.

The three friends of Job had that view of Job. They encouraged Job to admit that he was a sinner. The very fact that he had lost all his herds, flocks, property, and family was proof to Job's friends that he was a sinner in the sight of God. They asked Job to admit that he was a sinner so everything would be well. The Bible does not state that man is always directly punished in this life for sin. Nor does the Bible state that a person's pain or malady is the result of a sinful life.

There are two possible causes for this belief. First, some of the rabbis believed in a doctrine of reincarnation. They believed that a man could be born with sin from his previous life. There is no Bible background for this kind of view. This view is widely held by eastern peoples today, and it is even held by many people in the western world. This view is not taught in the Bible. In fact, reincarnation is contrary to Bible teaching: "*Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment*" (Hebrews 9:27). If people believe in reincarnation over a period of time, then life is not very vital or significant. But if people believe that they only live one time, then they need to live their lives with the realization that judgment follows death.

Second, there were other Jewish rabbis who came to a different conclusion. They concluded that sin could be committed within the mother's womb before birth. This was

based on the fact that Esau and Jacob, the twins of Rebekah, jostled one another within the womb (cf. Genesis 25:22). Because they jostled one another, the rabbis decided that sin could be committed within the womb. This sin could cause a person to have a disease or an illness.

Jesus said the man's blindness was not caused by sin: *"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life"* (John 9:3). Jesus was not saying that they had never sinned. Of course the man and his parents had sinned, but that was not the reason he was born blind. Jesus did not state the **cause** of his blindness but the **purpose** of his blindness. The man was born blind that the works of God might be manifested.

An Act of Compassion

Jesus was able to demonstrate that He was indeed the Light of the world and that He could bring light to those who are in darkness. John 9:4–5:

"As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

The man was sent to the Pool of Siloam to wash, a pool in the southeastern part of Jerusalem after Jesus had made a mud pack out of saliva and dirt and applied it to his eyes. John 9:6–7:

Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

For the first time in his life the man could see trees, people, and buildings, and he could see Jesus Christ.

A Question of Identity

The neighbors were very interested in what had happened to him: *“His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, ‘Isn’t this the same man who used to sit and beg?’”* (John 9:8). Some of the people were quite sure that he was the same blind man who they had known for so long, but others said he only looked like him: *“Some claimed that he was. Others said, ‘No, he only looks like him.’ But he himself insisted, ‘I am the man’”* (John 9:9). Perhaps, because of the change in his appearance from the radiant joy that was on his face, some of the people thought he looked a little bit like the blind man, but not exactly the same. The controversy was ended by the man’s own assertion. The Pharisees then began to investigate this healing.

The Blind Man Examined

The fact that Jesus healed on the Sabbath day, upset some of the Jews. John 9:16:

Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others asked, “How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?” So they were divided.

Earlier when Jesus healed the lame man on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted Him (John 5:16). Jesus also healed a crippled woman on the Sabbath day. She was bent over and could not straighten up. Jesus set her free from her infirmity. The synagogue ruler was indignant that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath. Jesus did not violate the Sabbath. He only violated their traditions about how to keep the Sabbath. He affirmed that it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath day (cf. Luke 13:10–16).

The Pharisees were divided in their reaction to Jesus’ healing of the blind man. They began to discuss who Jesus really was. Some said He could not be a man from God

because He did not keep the Sabbath. When Jesus broke the Sabbath, in their eyes, it did not matter what miracle He performed. But other people wondered how a sinner could do such a miraculous signs. Surely, God must be with a man who could do miraculous signs. So the Pharisees were divided over the claims of Jesus.

The healed man had a strong affirmation: *“Finally they turned again to the blind man, ‘What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened.’ The man replied, ‘He is a prophet’”* (John 9:17). The healed blind man did not know who Jesus was. He merely knew that someone has healed him so he concluded that the Man who healed him was a prophet. Later he believed that Jesus was the Son of Man and worshiped Him. You will notice the growth of the man’s faith as you read through the chapter.

The Man’s Parents Examined

The parents were investigated by the Pharisees: *“The Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man’s parents”* (John 9:18). The Jews asked the parents three questions: *“Is this your son?” they asked. “Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?”* (John 9:19). His parents confirm both his identity and his previous condition: *“We know he is our son,” the parents answered, “and we know he was born blind”* (John 9:20). But they denied any knowledge of the miracle: *“But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don’t know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself”* (John 9:21). Fear of the religious leaders prompted their answer. John 9:22–23:

His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. That was why his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

The parents did not have the courage and boldness that their son had. He boldly confessed Jesus regardless of the pressure, and he was not be intimidated by the religious leaders. The parents were intimidated so they denied any knowledge of how their son had been healed.

The Man Examined a Second Time

A second time the religious leaders summoned the man who had been blind: *“A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. ‘Give glory to God,’ they said. ‘We know this man is a sinner’”* (John 9:24). The same charge to tell the truth was given by Joshua to Achan after the Israelites had been defeated because there was sin in the camp. When Achan was brought before Joshua and the leaders of Israel, Joshua told Achan to give glory to God. Joshua was telling him to tell the truth in the presence of Almighty God because what he had done had caused great evil in the camp of Israel (cf. Joshua 7:19). The Jews were commanding the man who was born blind to tell the truth in the presence of Almighty God.

The blind man made a bold proclamation: *“Whether he is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!”* (John 9:25). Again the Jews questioned the man: *“What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?”* (John 9:26).

The man answered their questions and then questioned them: *“I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?”* (John 9:27). His question implies that he considered himself one of Jesus’ disciples. Why did the Jews continue questioning the man? Was it because secretly they also wanted to become His disciples? No, they considered themselves disciples of Moses. Their vindictive outburst showed their ungodly hearts. John 9:28–29:

Then they hurled insults at him and said, “You are this fellow’s disciple! We are disciples of Moses! We

know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."

It was much safer to believe in Moses who they knew was a spokesman for God. The blind man was following a man whom they knew nothing about.

The man was amazed by the Jews' reaction: "*The man answered, 'Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes'*" (John 9:30). The fact that Jesus had opened the eyes of the blind man should have demonstrated to the Jews that He was from God."

Then the man said something very significant: "*We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will*" (John 9:31). Christians need to be careful about misusing this verse. It is the recording of what the former blind man said, but he was not an inspired man. John gives an accurate record of what the man said, what the Pharisees said, and what others said, but the word "*sinners*" should be understood. When the word sinners is used in scripture, it usually means someone not in a covenant relationship with God. But that is not the meaning of the word "*sinners*" in this verse. Sinners in this context does not mean aliens or pagans; it means God's covenant people. The question is really: Is Jesus a sinner? Jesus, of course, is in a covenant relationship with God. He is the Son of God. He is not in any sense an alien or a pagan.

The man made the statement from his background of the Old Testament that God does not listen to sinners. He may have had in mind a passage like Psalms 66:18: "*If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.*" This verse is about a child of God who deliberately, willfully holds sin in his heart, in his life. God will not answer the prayers of that person. The former blind man may have also been referring to Proverbs 28:9: "*If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayers are detestable.*" Solomon was not writing about a non-believer. He was writing about a covenant

child of God who knows the Law, but deliberately rejects it. Therefore, that man's prayers will not be acceptable. They will be an abomination in God's sight. God rebuked the children of Israel in Isaiah 1:15:

When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood.

The Israelites were displeasing to God because of their evil deeds. Their prayers were an abomination in His sight. God will not listen to sinful rebellious children who put Him aside in their lives and hearts.

Cornelius is an example of a man whose prayers were heard: “. . . Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me and said, ‘Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor’” (Acts 10:30–31). God heard the prayer of Cornelius and saw to it that salvation was brought to his house. Peter was sent to the house of Cornelius, and he told Cornelius words whereby he and his family could be saved. Cornelius was not saved when God heard his prayer. He had to respond to the gospel that Peter shared with them. Cornelius was not the type of sinner who is discussed in John 9, nor the type of sinner in the passages from the Old Testament.

Saul, while he was waiting to know the truth, was praying and his prayer, I am sure, was not an abomination in the sight of God. God is pleased when sincere people want to know His will and ask for help to learn that will. God will provide help for them to learn the truth.

The Pharisees were unable to answer the arguments of the blind healed man so they resorted to slander and insult: “*To this they replied, ‘You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!’ And they threw him out*” (John 9:34) This is not a statement that can prove that men are born sinners. This

is, again, only an accurate recording by John of what the Pharisees said. When reading a Bible passage, one must always note who is speaking and to whom they are speaking. A person can quote passages from Eliphaz, Bildad, or Zophar in the book of Job, but the Bible plainly says that these men did not tell the truth about God. Carefully read the Bible and interpret it correctly.

The Progression of Faith

A Challenge to Faith

When Jesus heard that the Pharisees had thrown the man out of the synagogue, He asked the man an important question and gave him relevant information. John 9:35–37:

Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” “Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.” Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.”

The man confessed his faith: *“Then the man said, ‘Lord, I believe,’ and he worshiped him”* (John 9:38). There is a contrast of belief and unbelief in this section of scripture. The growing belief of the healed blind man and the unbelief of the Pharisees is vividly shown.

First, the blind man met a man named Jesus who had healed him. Later he called Jesus a prophet. Then he referred to himself as one of Jesus’ disciples. Next he confessed Him as Lord. Then the healed man believed in the Son of Man and worshiped Him, and Jesus accepted that worship. Remember, Jesus had told the devil that only God should be worshiped (cf. Matthew 4:10). Jesus accepted worship from human beings and did not rebuke them for doing so. When John tried to worship an angel, he was told by the angel not to worship

him, but to worship God! (cf. Revelation 22:8–9). Thomas knew that Jesus was God: “*Thomas said to him, ‘My Lord and my God!’*” (John 20:28). Jesus did not reply, “Thomas don’t say that. Don’t believe that.” Instead Jesus confirmed to Thomas that He was God: “*Then Jesus told him, ‘Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’*” (John 20:29). Jesus is both Lord and God and, hence, can be worshiped by men in the same way that God the Father is worshiped.

An Absence of Faith

Jesus came to earth primarily to save and not to judge, but His very coming into the world was a judgment: “*Jesus said, ‘For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind’*” (John 9:39). Jesus taught Nicodemus about the Light who came into the world: “*This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil*” (John 3:19). Men have to decide whether they love light or darkness, whether they will accept His claims or turn them down, or whether they will become His disciples or refuse Him.

When Jesus told the Pharisees that He had come that men who were blind might see and those who were seeing might become blind, the unbelief of the Pharisees was revealed: “*Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, ‘What? Are we blind too?’*” (John 9:40). The refusal of the Pharisees to admit their blind condition left them with their guilt: “*Jesus said, ‘If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains’*” (John 9:41). They were indeed not able to see and needed to have their eyes opened. Then having their eyes opened they would have to confess their sin. The Jews were unwilling to come to Jesus and have their eyes opened and indeed see. Because they claimed not to have sin and because they claimed that they could see, their guilt remained.

Conclusion

As John 9 ends, the Pharisees had grown in their unbelief and the blind man had grown in his belief. He had confessed Jesus to be Lord and had worshiped Him as God. Christians still need to do the same thing today.

John 10 is a continuation of many of the same thoughts that are found in John 9. Jesus is described as the Good Shepherd and exposes the religious hypocrisy and the deceit of the Pharisees.

Remember, when reading a Bible passage, one must always note who is speaking and to whom they are speaking. Carefully read the Bible and interpret it correctly.

The Shepherd and the Sheep

John 10:1–42

Introduction

It would be difficult to miss the connection between John 9 and John 10. The latter chapter appears to be addressed to the people referred to in John 9:34, the professed shepherds who had shown no compassion for the afflicted man. They had expelled him from the house of God, but Jesus sought him and introduced him to a much broader and more congenial fellowship. The contrasts are developed in the following section of scripture. Light and darkness give place to Shepherd and sheep, but the same distinctions are evident.

The Picture of the Shepherd and the Sheep

Old Testament Background

Jesus taught that God is the Shepherd of His people. The background for this phrase is found in the Old Testament where God is often pictured as the shepherd of His people: “*The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want*” (Psalm 23:1) In other passages in the Old Testament, God is pictured as the shepherd of Israel: “*Hear us, O Shepherd of Israel*” (Psalm 80:1). The psalmist also called the Israelite people sheep: “. . . *we are his people, the sheep of his pasture*” (Psalm 110:3). God is pictured as the Shepherd of His people, He takes the little lambs close to His heart, protects them, and cares for them (cf. Isaiah 40:11).

In the Old Testament, religious leaders were also

considered the appointed shepherds of God's people. As shepherds they were to feed and protect His flock. However, they were often rebuked and called false shepherds because they only fed themselves and allowed the flock to be destroyed by wild animals. In Jeremiah 23:1–4 there is an extended discussion about the false shepherds who did not care for their flock at all. They did not bring back those who went astray, and they even devoured the best of the flocks themselves. Sometimes they would let the sheep go astray, and they would be devoured by wild animals. Many were unfaithful shepherds who were appointed by the Great Shepherd to look after the people of Israel, but they were unfaithful to His charge.

In the Old Testament there is another group referred to as shepherds of God's people. Kings or rulers were sometimes portrayed as shepherds of the people. God called the pagan king Cyrus his shepherd. Isaiah 44:28:

... who says of Cyrus, "He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, 'Let it be rebuilt,' and of the temple, 'Let its foundations be laid.'"

Other passages in the Old Testament portray kings or rulers as shepherds of the people of God. A prediction was made of a coming ruler who would be the shepherd of Israel (cf. Micah 5:2). When the Magi came to the city of Jerusalem, they wanted to know where the King of the Jews was (cf. Matthew 2:1–2). The scribes had no problem answering the question. They said He was to be born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea because they knew what the prophet had written: "*But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel*" (Micah 5:2). This passage was fulfilled with the birth of Jesus Christ.

Jesus, the True Shepherd of God's People

There are many New Testament passages outside of the gospel of John that call Jesus a Shepherd: *"our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep"* (Hebrews 13:20). Peter wrote to the elders about Jesus: *"And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away"* (1 Peter 5:4). Elders are shepherds of God's people in local congregations, but there is a *"chief Shepherd"* who is the Lord Jesus Christ. In Revelation 7:17 there is a very beautiful passage about the Lamb at the center of the throne who will be their Shepherd. Although Jesus is called a Lamb, He is called a Shepherd, as well. He cares for, preserves, and protects His people.

The Pharisees, the False Shepherds of God's People

The Pharisees appeared as false shepherds who harmed, rather than helped the Jewish people. Jesus, the good Shepherd, is contrasted with them. He cares for His sheep and willingly lays down His life for them. In John 9 these religious leaders were described as being spiritually blind. In John 10 the Jewish leaders are described as thieves and robbers because they did not enter the sheep pen by the gate, the Lord Jesus Christ: *"I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber"* (John 10:1). They would not accept His claims nor enter in by the only way that men can enter and be saved: *"The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep"* (John 1:2).

The True Shepherd and Discerning Sheep

The proper work of the shepherd is described by Jesus. John 10: 3–6:

"The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out

all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them.

The shepherd is known by the watchman or the gate keeper, so he is allowed to lead the sheep in and out of the sheep pen freely. There is a close relationship between the shepherd and his sheep. He knows each one of them by name, and each of them also know him. The sheep will not follow a stranger's voice. They know the voice of their shepherd. They cannot be deceived by someone coming up and claiming to be that shepherd. They will only listen to the voice of their shepherd.

Jesus Used Two Figures – Gate and Shepherd

Jesus spoke of being the gate for the sheep: *"Therefore Jesus said again, 'I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep'"* (John 10:7). He is the way to salvation and the blessings of God. There is no other way: *"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'"* (John 14:6). He is the good Shepherd. By contrast the Pharisees and others are like hired men who care nothing for the sheep. The true Shepherd was the opposite of the robber who would come to rob, kill, and destroy: *"All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them"* (John 10:8). He came to give His life and give it to the fullest. John 10:9–10:

I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

He Is a Sacrificial Shepherd

There is a close relationship between Jesus and His sheep. It is like the relationship that Jesus has with His Father. John 10:14–15:

“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.”

Jesus promised that He would willingly lay down His life for the sheep. John 10:18:

“No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

Jesus willingly died for the sins of the world. He was given the power by His Father. This had been planned by the eternal counsels of Almighty God, along with the Lord Jesus Christ. The plan to save the world through an atoning sacrificial death has eternal benefits. Jesus came into the world as a real person, willing to die. This plan was agreed upon between the Father and the Son before the creation of the world. Peter wrote of Christ the Lamb without blemish or defect who was chosen before the creation of the world. 1 Peter 1:19–20:

. . . but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.

In Revelation 13:8 Jesus is described as the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world. God always knew what was going to happen. God was not surprised when men

rejected His Son and crucified Him on the cross. All this had been anticipated by the providential working of Almighty God from eternity – that Jesus would willingly lay down His life so that the sheep could be saved.

Jesus also anticipated a time when other sheep who were not of the flock would also hear His voice and become a part of His flock. John 10:16:

I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

Jesus was referring to the Gentiles. He was talking to Jewish people, some of whom, were becoming His sheep. Jesus knew that God's plan was not for Jews only. He had said to the Samaritan woman: “. . . *for salvation is from the Jews*” (John 4:22). Salvation was from the Jews, but not for the Jews only. Jesus and His Father had anticipated the coming of the Gentiles into the fellowship even from the beginning. Often He spoke of Gentiles being included in the people of God: “*I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 8:11). Many of those who were supposed to be in the kingdom, the Jews, were cast out, but Gentiles came into the kingdom. Jesus knew that He would taste death for every man. After He was raised from the dead, He specifically commanded His disciples to go and teach all nations. Mark 16:15–16:

He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”

Jesus opened His disciples' minds so they could understand the Scriptures: “*and repentance and forgiveness of sins will*

be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). Jesus anticipated the coming of the Gentiles into the flock. He knew there would be one flock with one Shepherd. Paul wrote about the same thing in Ephesians 2:11–14:

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth . . . were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

God's purpose was to make in Himself one new man out of the Jew and Gentile: "*and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility*" (Ephesians 2:16). Paul wrote the same thing that Jesus said. Jesus did not want a Jewish church and a separate Gentile church. He wanted there to be one body made up of God's people, both Jews and Gentiles. They would all be in one body with one head. The Shepherd would have only one flock.

Notice the division, again, among the Jews: "*At these words the Jews were again divided*" (John 10:19). This is the third time in the gospel of John that men were divided over Jesus and His teaching. This caused another paradox. Jesus came as the Prince of Peace to unite men into one body, but because men were free to reject or receive Him, men divided. Some had honest hearts and wanted to know the will of God. They accepted the testimonies that had been given and did God's will. Others, because of their hard hearts and their love of darkness, refused to follow Jesus.

The Jews accused Jesus of demon possession: "*Many of them said, 'He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?'*" (John 10:20). But others did not accept this

conclusion, and they argued: “*These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?*” (John 10:21). At the cross the centurion and the guards said: “*Surely this was a righteous man*” (Luke 23:47). Jesus was either a demon-ridden madman, or He was the Son of God. His words and deeds showed that He was completely sane.

Rejection of the Good Shepherd

A Menacing Request for Clarification

Most of Jesus’ activities were centered around the Jewish festivals. The Feast of Dedication is first mentioned in the tenth chapter of John. It is not mentioned anywhere in the Old Testament. The feast had its origin between the Testaments. There are some 400 years between the writings of the Old Testament and the beginning of the events of the New Testament. It was during this period of time that the Feast of Dedication began. The Temple was captured and defiled by the Syrians who offered a pig on the altar of burnt sacrifice causing the Temple to be defiled in the eyes of every God-fearing Jew. The temple was cleansed when the city of Jerusalem was recaptured by the Maccabees. A celebration was begun to celebrate the dedication of the Temple back to the service and worship of Almighty God. It was known as the Feast of Dedication and took place about the year 164 B.C. The feast is still celebrated by Jews throughout the world. It is now known as the Feast of Lights or Hanukkah.

It was in winter time when Jesus came to the feast in Jerusalem: “*Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon’s Colonnade*” (John 10:22–23). Jesus was walking in the colonnade as He taught because it was a bit warmer and out of the elements there. The same colonnade or porch was used by Peter and John when they preached the word of God (cf. Acts 3:11). The same colonnade of Solomon was used by the

early church when they met for their assemblies (cf. Acts 5:12).

The Jews asked Jesus if He was the Messiah: "*The Jews gathered around him, saying, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly'*" (John 10:24). The word Messiah or Christ had all kinds of political connotations. It had overtones and implications that Jesus wanted to avoid in the early part of His ministry. He had not claimed publicly in Jerusalem that He was the Messiah. Yet, He said His miracles had told them: "*Jesus answered, 'I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me'*" (John 10:25). He meant that by the claims He made that God had sanctified and sent Him into the world, they should have known that He was the Messiah. Besides, the miracles that He performed told them that He was the Messiah. The miracles should have shown the Jews that God had sent Jesus. He claimed to be the Messiah by the signs that He performed.

Jesus had performed so many signs in Jerusalem that one of the Sanhedrin members, Nicodemus, came to Him because he believed that Jesus was a teacher who had come from God (John 3:2). Unbelievers then and now still demand more evidence in order for them to believe. But it is a person's hard heart, not the lack of evidence, that causes unbelief.

True Believers Characterized

There are two important characteristics that the followers of Jesus, the sheep, display: "*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me*" (John 10:27). In the Greek the tense means continuous action. In other words, the sheep keep listening to Jesus' voice. They continuously listen to the voice of the shepherd, and they follow Him.

The sheep have eternal life: "*I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand*" (John 10:28). The sheep have security and assurance as long as they listen to the shepherd and follow Him. All men are free moral agents. Even after people have accepted Jesus,

they are free to listen to the voice of the Son of God, or they are free to turn away from Him. At any time Christians may decide to stop listening to the Shepherd. They may stop following Him, stop believing in Him, and stop trusting Him. If they turn away, they do not have the hope of eternal life. There are other passages in the Bible warning Christians against the danger of falling away from the living God: *"You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace"* (Galatians 5:4). Paul warned Christians to stand firm: *"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery"* (Galatians 5:1). If a Christian goes back to the law to be justified, he will fall from the grace of God. The warning of the danger of unbelief is given to brothers, those who have already been saved: *"See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God"* (Hebrews 3:12).

Paul wrote the Corinthian church that the Israelites went through the Red Sea and were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They drank of the spiritual rock that accompanied them, which was Christ. But God was not pleased with most of them, and they fell in the wilderness. Paul warned the church not to set their hearts on evil things and fall: *"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"* (1 Corinthians 10:12). Christ protects Christians through their faith. Christians are guarded by faith into a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Christ will not keep them against their will if they reject Him. He keeps Christians through their faith. They must continue abiding in Him (cf. 1 Peter 1:5). Jesus gave the illustration of a person who does not remain faithful: *"If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned"* (John 15:6). The protection is for those believers who listen to the voice of the Shepherd and follow Him.

The Staggering Claim

The claim that Jesus made is similar to His other claims: *“I and the Father are one”* (John 10:30). Jesus said that all men should honor the Son just as they honor the Father (cf. John 5:23). Jesus claimed to have been before Abraham: *“before Abraham was born, I am”* (John 8:5). Jesus said: “. . . *Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father . . .*” (John 14:9). The Father and Jesus are not one person, but They are one in nature, in purpose, and in character. Jesus is described as being the exact representation of God (cf. Hebrews 1:3). If men want to know what God is like, they need to learn about Jesus Christ because He is exactly like God, the Father. Jesus is consistently linked with God in the book of John and in other portions of the Holy Scripture.

Conflict and Open Hostility

The Jews accused Jesus of blasphemy and threatened to kill Him: *“Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him”* (John 10:31). The Jews had previously tried to stone Jesus for the same supposed reason, for blasphemy (cf. John 8:59). They could not believe that a man would claim to be the I Am of the Old Testament. They believed that Jesus was appropriating to Himself a place that belonged only to God Almighty.

Jesus defended Himself and explained what He was doing and why He was doing it: *“but Jesus said to them, ‘I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?’”* (John 10:32). These works demonstrate that He is who He claims to be, the Son of the living God. The miracles demonstrate that He is not guilty of blasphemy. Because the Father worked these miracles in their presence demonstrates that He gives approval to everything that Jesus taught and to everything that Jesus did.

Jesus proves His point from Psalm 82:6: *“Jesus answered them, ‘Is it not written in your Law, “I have said you are gods”?’”* (John 10:34). The writer of the Psalm is referring to

the judges who had been appointed by God to judge for Him. Other times judges were told that they were acting for God when they made judgment (cf. Deuteronomy 1:17; Deuteronomy 19:17). Therefore, in that sense, they could be called “gods.” Those who act for God are those who speak for God.

God told Moses that Aaron would speak for him as if he, Moses, were God: *“He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him”* (Exodus 4:16). This did not mean that Aaron should worship Moses as God. It means that Aaron was to listen to Moses as if he were listening to God because God would give Moses the words. When God spoke through Moses, Aaron was to listen to him as if he were listening to God. God later said He made Moses like God to Pharaoh: *“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet’”* (Exodus 7:1). Again, God was not saying that Pharaoh should worship Moses. Pharaoh was supposed to listen to the voice of Moses as if he were listening to the voice of God because Moses was speaking the very words of God.

If men who spoke for God were considered like God, Jesus asked why they objected to Him calling Himself God’s Son. John 10:35–36:

“If he called them ‘gods,’ to whom the word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be broken—what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’?”

Jesus did not want the Jews to believe unless there was sufficient evidence. But the evidence was there. It was abundant for those who were honest. John 10:37–38:

“Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me,

believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.”

John’s entire gospel was written so that men might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and believing they might have life in His name (cf. John 20:31). The religious leaders tried to seize Jesus again, but they failed because His time had not yet come: *“Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp”* (John 10:39).

Jesus then went back across the Jordan where John had baptized: *“Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. Here he stayed”* (John 10:40). According to John 1:28 this was a place called Bethany where the people there had listened to the testimony of John. They said that everything John the Baptizer had said about Jesus was true: *“and many people came to him. They said, ‘Though John never performed a miraculous sign, all that John said about this man was true’”* (John 10:41). Even though John had worked no miracles, the people saw that his testimony about Jesus was valid, and they believed on the One for whom John had prepared the way: *“And in that place many believed in Jesus”* (John 10:42).

Resurrection And Life

John 11:1–57

Introduction

This chapter of scripture can be divided into four different headings. First, the death of Lazarus is recorded in John 11:1–16; second, Jesus comforted the sisters, Martha and Mary, in verses 17–37; third, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead in verses 38–43; and fourth, the results of the miracle are given in verses 44–57. This is the seventh and final miracle which John selected to present to prove that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.

Remember the other six miracles that John wrote about in the gospel. In John 2, Jesus changed the water into wine; in chapter 4, He healed an official's son; in chapter 5, the healing of an invalid man is recorded. Two signs are given in chapter 6, the feeding of the 5,000 and Jesus walking on the water. The record of the sixth miracle, the healing of a man born blind, is found in chapter nine.

The Seventh Sign

The Bethany Family

Strangely enough, though this is one of Jesus' greatest miracles, it is not recorded in the other three gospels. Matthew, Mark, and Luke did not write about the raising of Lazarus from the dead. But it should not be too surprising because Matthew, Mark, and Luke did not write about the

ministry of Jesus near or in Jerusalem, except for a few events. Of course they recorded the events of His final days. They did not write, for example, about the invalid man who was cured (cf. John 5:1–9), nor did they write about the blind man who was healed (cf. John 9:1–12). So it is not unusual that John is the only gospel writer who wrote about the great miracle of the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

Lazarus is mentioned only in John 11 and 12. However, his sisters, Martha and Mary, are also mentioned in Luke 10:38–42. On this occasion Jesus was teaching in the home of Martha, and Mary sat down to listen to His words. Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made, and she asked Jesus to tell Mary to help her. Jesus reminded Martha that Mary had chosen what was better, and it would not be taken away from her. In both gospels the same characterization of the women is shown. Martha appears to be more forward. She is busy, involved in serving, while Mary appears to be more quiet and meditative. She has time to sit down and listen to the words of Jesus.

Lazarus is identified as the brother of Mary and Martha: *“Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha”* (John 11:1). It is specified that Mary is the woman who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped His feet with her hair: *“This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair”* (John 11:2). The pouring of perfume on Jesus’ feet is not even mentioned in the gospel of John until the next chapter, but it must have been a well-known incident. It was an extraordinary act of love and was well-known by early Christians and people who knew about Jesus.

The sisters notified Jesus of Lazarus’ sickness, but they did not specify what He should do: *“So the sisters sent word to Jesus, ‘Lord, the one you love is sick’”* (John 11:3). They knew that Jesus would do something helpful, whatever it might be. When Jesus heard the words about Lazarus being

sick He said that his sickness would not end in death: *“When he heard this, Jesus said, ‘This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it’”* (John 11:4). This did not mean that Lazarus would not die. In fact, he was probably already dead.

When Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, He stayed where He was two more days even though He loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus: *“Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days”* (John 11:5–6). It must have taken the messenger one day to get to Jesus, and it would have taken one day for Jesus to get back to Lazarus. But Jesus stayed where He was for two more days which explains why Martha later said that Lazarus had been dead for four days (cf. John 11:39). He probably died soon after the messenger was sent. Jesus, of course, knew that Lazarus was already dead, but He knew that this sickness would not end in death, meaning that Jesus would raise Lazarus from the dead so that God’s Son might be glorified. The real purpose of this seeming tragedy was that God and Jesus would be glorified.

Remember, Jesus had earlier said that the man was born blind so that the work of God might be displayed in his life (cf. John 9:3). The emphasis in the Bible is often on the consequence of a given circumstance rather than its cause. God was glorified by the raising of Lazarus from the dead, and the faith of Mary and Martha was strengthened, as was the faith of the disciples. After Lazarus was raised from the dead, many of the Jews who came to visit Mary saw what Jesus did and put their faith in Him. Sometimes God allows sickness and sadness to come into the lives of Christians so He can increase their faith and dependence upon Him.

Jesus’ delay for two days can be explained only on the basis that He is the Master of death. Since He was and is the Resurrection and the Life, it was as easy for Him to raise the dead as it was to heal the sick. Jesus delayed coming to Lazarus because, as always, He worked within God’s

timetable. Christians must also understand that when God delays meeting a person's requests, it does not mean that He does not love them. Whatever strengthens a believer's faith and makes him dependent upon God is good, and it is allowed by his faithful and loving Lord. The disciples thought that going back to Judea meant death. John 11:7–8:

Then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." "But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?"

Jesus' Confidence in God's Control of His Destiny

Earlier the Jews had tried to stone Jesus, but He had escaped their grasp and had gone over to the east side of the Jordan River. Jesus was fully aware that He needed to work within the timetable that God Almighty had set up for Him. John 11:9–10:

Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world's light. It is when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light."

Jesus meant that there was enough time to do whatever God wanted done. He would not die before God's appointed time. Enough time remained for Jesus to return to Judea to complete God's plan for His death, an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world.

Jesus puzzled His disciples with His next statement: "After he had said this, he went on to tell them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up'" (John 11:11). The disciples did not realize that Jesus used the word "sleep" to mean death: "His disciples replied, 'Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.' Jesus had been

speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep” (John 11:12–13).

When Stephen was stoned to death, Luke wrote that he fell asleep (cf. Acts 7:60). Luke continued by writing that Saul was consenting to his death (cf. Acts 9:1). Paul wrote about those who fall asleep (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13). In the next verse Paul indicates that sleep means death: *“We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him”* (1 Thessalonians 4:14). Paul was writing about the resurrection of the dead at the return of Christ. Another time Paul used the word sleep to mean death: *“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep”* (1 Corinthians 15:20).

Then Jesus clearly told the disciples that Lazarus was dead: *“So then he told them plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him’”* (John 11:14–15). Jesus was not glad that Lazarus was dead. He understood the grief that Mary and Martha had. He shed tears on their behalf. Jesus was glad that Lazarus’ death would give Him the opportunity to demonstrate that He was the Resurrection and the Life. He was the Victor over death. The faith of His followers would be greatly strengthened and deepened by the events which would take place after their return from Bethany.

Thomas shared the pessimism of the disciples: *“Then Thomas (called Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, ‘Let us also go, that we may die with him’”* (John 11:16). Even though Thomas thought he might die, he still was willing to go. For Thomas, it was better to die with Jesus than to live without Him.

Jesus Comforts the Grieving Sisters

Jesus in the Presence of Grief and Death

When Jesus arrived at Bethany, He found that Lazarus

was already in the tomb for four days (John 11:17). Raising a person who had been dead for four days was an impressive miracle. It was the climax of the seven signs that John selected to demonstrate that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, the Son of God.

Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem. It was southeast of the temple, beyond the Mount of Olives on the road to Jericho. It could be called a suburb of Jerusalem.

It was Martha, rather than Mary, who met Jesus when He arrived in Bethany: *"When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home"* (John 11:20). Martha's comment to Jesus should not be considered a rebuke: *"Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died"* (John 11:21). Martha believed that if Jesus had been there when Lazarus was first sick, then He could have made Lazarus well. She knew that Jesus had performed many miracles, healing all manner of sickness and disease. Martha had confidence in Jesus: *"But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask"* (John 11:22). Her statement did not mean that she expected an immediate resurrection from the dead. She did not want the tomb opened after four days: *"... by this time there is a bad odor..."* (John 11:39). However, like most of the Jews of this time, she believed in a resurrection on the last day: *"Martha answered, 'I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day'"* (John 11:24). The Pharisees, who had much influence on the common people, believed in a resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees, however, denied that there would be a resurrection of the dead, and they denied the existence of angels or spirits (cf. Matthew 22:23; Acts 23:8). Also, Mary had probably heard Jesus teach about the resurrection of the dead.

Jesus' Statement of Fact and Martha's Expression of Faith

Jesus made one of the greatest statements in the Word of God. John 11:25–26:

*Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life.
He who believes in me will live, even though he dies;
and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.
Do you believe this?"*

In Jesus, dead saints are promised resurrection, and living saints will never experience death. Jesus meant that His faithful followers will not taste separation from God. Eternal death is the fate of those who die without Christ. John wrote the church in Smyrna: ". . . *Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life*" . . . "*He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death*" (Revelation 2:10–11). Those who are outside of Christ will be eternally in the fiery lake of burning sulfur, the second death (cf. Revelation 21:8).

Martha's response to Jesus' question was a strong statement of faith: "*Yes, Lord,*" she told him, "*I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world*" (John 11:27). Martha confessed that Jesus was the Messiah, like Andrew had done (John 1:41). Martha confessed that Jesus was the Son of God, like Nathanael had done: "*Then Nathanael declared, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel'*" (John 1:49). Martha confessed that Jesus was the One written about by Moses and the prophets, like Philip had done: ". . . *'We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph'*" (John 1:45).

Martha's confession is one of the greatest confessions in the New Testament. But there are other great confessions, including the one by John the Baptizer: "*I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God*" (John 1:34). The climax of the great confessions was given by Thomas: "*Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!'*" (John 20:28). John recorded these confessions of faith to indicate that many people who had opportunity to see the miracles of Jesus believed that He was indeed who He claimed to be.

The Master's Call and Grief

Then Martha went to the house and told Mary that Jesus wanted to see her: *"And after she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. 'The Teacher is here,' she said, 'and is asking for you'"* (John 11:28). The emotional nature of Mary was shown when she met Jesus: *"When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died'"* (John 11:32). The expression implies anger. The anger was directed toward death, toward the devil who has the power of death (cf. Hebrews 2:14). Jesus went to the tomb, not only with grief, but as a Conqueror going against an enemy whom He would defeat.

Jesus was deeply moved when He witnessed Mary and the people with her weeping: *"When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled"* (John 11:33). Jesus also showed emotion when He arrived at the tomb: *"Jesus wept"* (John 11:35). Jesus has never been cold or calculating. He is deeply involved in every person's problems and sorrows. This was not the only time that Jesus wept. Jesus wept over Jerusalem (cf. Luke 19:41). Jesus offered prayers with tears while on earth. Hebrews 5:7:

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

Though He was fully God, Jesus was also man. He became tired and thirsty, and He shed tears of human sympathy. Peter wrote about Jesus' care and concern: *"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you"* (1 Peter 5:7). The Jews were impressed by the tears of Jesus: *"Then the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!'"* (John 11:36). Others remembered that Jesus had given sight to the blind, and they wondered why He did not

prevent Lazarus' death: "*But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?'*" (John 11:37).

Raising Lazarus from the Dead

When Jesus came to the tomb of Lazarus, the body had begun to decay and had a bad odor: "*Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance*" (John 11:38). In those days tombs were often caves. Jesus would, in a few days, be laid in a cave very similar to the one where Lazarus was laid. The Jews did not have the means of preserving bodies for long periods of time as did the ancient Egyptians. Martha objected to the tomb being opened: "*Take away the stone,*" he said. "*But, Lord,*" said Martha, *the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days"* (John 11:39).

Jesus challenged Martha to believe: "*Then Jesus said, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?'*" (John 11:40). This statement is not recorded earlier, but it is implied by what Jesus had said: "*. . . 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die . . .'*" (John 11:25).

Jesus' prayer was not a request for power to raise Lazarus from the dead. He already had that power. His prayer was a prayer of thanksgiving that God had already answered His prayer. John 11:41–42:

So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

The prayer was spoken aloud so that those standing there would know that God had sent Jesus and was working through

Him. Then the dead man came out when Jesus called him. John 11:43–44: *“When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out!’ The dead man came out. . .”* Jesus said that the Son gives life as the Father does: *“For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it”* (John 5:21).

Jesus did not need to cry out in a loud voice to raise Lazarus. He used a loud voice so the crowd would understand that the resurrection was a demonstration of God’s power working through Him. Lazarus was raised to the same kind of life that he had before. Hence, he like others who were raised from the dead in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, would die again. Jesus is the only person who was ever raised from the dead never to die again: *“But Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep”* (1 Corinthians 15:20). Paul wrote that death had no control over Christ: *“For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him”* (Romans 6:9). John affirmed with Jesus’ words that He would never die again: *“I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades”* (Revelation 1:18). Even though Lazarus died again, the fact that Jesus raised Lazarus proves that He is the Resurrection and the Life. Therefore, Jesus will fulfill His promise to raise Christians to eternal life and to keep them from the second death.

Opposition Intensifies – the Plot to Kill Jesus

The Dramatic Results of the Miracle

Jesus’ activity again divided the people: *“Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him”* (John 11:45). The people were willing to accept the evidence that Lazarus had been raised from the dead, and they believed on Jesus. Others made up their minds, though, not to believe regardless of all the

evidence. They went to the Pharisees, not to convince them that Lazarus had been raised, but to give them information that would help Jesus to be put to death: *“But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done”* (John 11:46).

Jesus’ Enemies Plotted His Death

The religious leaders reacted to the message: *“Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin . . .”* (John 11:47). This is the first time in the gospel of John that the chief priests are mentioned. They were connected with the religious sect called the Sadducees, but the word Sadducees does not appear in the entire book. The Sadducees controlled the Sanhedrin, the Jewish High Court. They took the lead in the arrest, the trial, and the crucifixion of Jesus. They also opposed the beginning of the church because they opposed the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, including the resurrection of Jesus (cf. Acts 4:1, 5:17, 23:6–8).

Their question implied that they had been standing idle too long while Jesus worked His miracles. John 11:47–48:

*. . . “What are we accomplishing?” they asked.
“Here is this man performing many miraculous
signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will
believe in him, and then the Romans will come and
take away both our place and our nation.”*

An unconscious prophecy was made by Caiaphas the High Priest in John 11:49–50:

*Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high
priest that year, spoke up, “You know nothing at all!
You do not realize that it is better for you that one man
die for the people than that the whole nation perish.”*

Caiaphas believed that his colleagues were acting in absolute ignorance, but there was a deeper meaning in his statement.

Caiaphas did not realize that he was prophesying a divine message. John 11:51–52:

He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.

The Jews then officially decided that they must put Jesus to death: “*So from that day on they plotted to take his life*” (John 11:53). So Jesus no longer moved among the Jews. John 11:54:

Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the Jews. Instead he withdrew to a region near the desert, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples.

There was excitement about whether Jesus would come to Jerusalem because He usually came to the Feast. John 11:55–56:

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover. They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple area they asked one another, “What do you think? Isn’t he coming to the Feast at all?”

There was much tension among the Jewish leaders. They were intrigued by Jesus, and, yet, the leaders made the decision to put Him to death: “*But the chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone found out where Jesus was, he should report it so that they might arrest him*” (John 11:57).

Conclusion

John 12 begins merely six days before the Passover Feast. It was during the Passover Feast that Jesus offered himself as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The religious leaders' mandate, that Jesus' whereabouts should be reported, shows that they did not expect Him to risk coming. But they did not know Christ's complete dedication to His appointed task.

Contrast of Belief and Unbelief

John 12:1–50

Introduction

This chapter records the last words and deeds of our Lord's public ministry; nothing more is recorded except what He said in private to His disciples. It introduces one of the most fragrant incidents of those three momentous years. In it, the spotlight is focused on two contrasting characters: Mary, the embodiment of self-sacrificing love, and Judas, the personification of duplicity and selfishness. There are four major points in John 12. First, Jesus is anointed at Bethany by Mary (verses 1–11). Second, Jesus makes a triumphal entry into Jerusalem (12–19). Third, Jesus predicts His death (verses 20–36). Fourth, the Jews continue in unbelief (verses 37–50).

The Intimacy of Belief – Jesus and His Friends

An Occasion of Honoring Jesus

The devotion of the family of Mary, Martha, and their brother, Lazarus, must have been very encouraging to Jesus as His “hour” was coming near: *“Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead”* (John 12:1). This Passover is the final Passover in the gospel and the final Passover in Jesus' life. One Passover is found in John 2, and another Passover found in John 6. There are other references to the Passover in succeeding chapters, but all of those scriptures refer to this final Passover of Jesus' life. John clearly wants readers to see

that Jesus is the Passover Lamb. Paul later wrote: “. . . *For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed for us*” (1 Corinthians 5:7).

An Occasion of Love and Devotion

Most of the activities in the gospel of John were centered around Jewish festivals. This was true of the anointing of Jesus by Mary of Bethany. John 12:2–3:

Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

The dinner to honor Jesus occurred within six days of the Passover festival. Martha, typically, was serving, and Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead, was reclining at the table. Mary, their sister, poured a pint of pure nard, expensive perfume, on Jesus' feet. There were other guests there, including the apostles of Jesus.

Matthew and Mark also wrote about an anointing of Jesus two days before Passover, but they do not state that the woman involved was named Mary. The woman poured the alabaster jar of very expensive perfume on Jesus' head as He was reclining at the table. Luke wrote about a different anointing of Jesus in Galilee by a sinful woman at the home of a Pharisee name Simon (cf. Luke 7:36–50). One should not confuse the events. They happened in different places and the circumstances were not the same.

Mark wrote that the dinner was in the home of a leper named Simon (cf. Mark 14:3). Very likely he had been healed by Jesus and wanted to show his appreciation. The dinner given in Jesus' honor was two days before the Passover.

Matthew and Mark record that the woman anointed Jesus'

head. John gives another detail. John wrote that she anointed His feet. The perfume that Mary used was from a plant that was grown in India and was very, very expensive. This was an act of humble service that showed the great love and appreciation that Mary felt for Jesus for all the things He had done for her in her life, and in the lives of her brother and sister.

Both Matthew and Mark wrote that Jesus' followers were indignant over the waste, as they called it. But John wrote that Judas was the one who made the complaint. John 12:4–5:

But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages."

Judas probably started and objected most strongly, and the others joined in with their complaints, as well. The perfume would have cost 300 denarii. That was the yearly wage of a common working man at that time. According to Matthew 20:2 a man was paid a *denarius* a day. A man would need to work a whole year, 300 days with time off for Sabbaths, in order to buy this kind of perfume.

Judas' complaint was not that he cared for the poor and their needs: "*He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it*" (John 12:6). The same greed would lead Judas to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver (cf. Matthew 26:14–16). None of the other apostles were aware of Judas' evil practices or his plans to betray Jesus.

Jesus did not allow Mary to be criticized. John 12:7–8:

"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "[It was intended] that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

Jesus believed that Mary had done a good thing when she anointed His body for burial. Jesus' hour had almost come, and Mary showed her deep devotion to Jesus by this loving and humble act. In Mark's account Jesus said that wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what this woman did will be told in memory of her. Almost 2,000 years later the very thing that Jesus said would happen, the loving act of Mary, is still remembered by people throughout the world.

Bethany was near Jerusalem, and it would not have been difficult for the crowds in Jerusalem to travel there. A large crowd came to see Jesus and Lazarus: *"Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead"* (John 12:9). The chief priests decided to also kill Lazarus: *"So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him"* (John 12:10–11). There are probably two reasons for their decision. First, because Lazarus was alive after being dead for four days, many people believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Second, the fact that Lazarus was alive again was a living testimony that the doctrine of no resurrection of the dead was false. Whether or not the chief priests were successful in their plans to kill Lazarus is unknown. He is not mentioned again in the Bible.

The Infatuation Of Belief – Jesus And The Passover Pilgrims

The Exultant Crowds

The entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem is called by scholars the triumphal entry. His coming into Jerusalem in this triumphant manner is also recorded in the other three gospels. (cf. Matthew 21:1–11; Mark 11:1–10; Luke 19:28–40).

There were two crowds involved. The Jews who came to Bethany were called the *"large crowd"* (cf. John 12:9). The next day there was another crowd called the *"great crowd"*

who went out from Jerusalem to meet Jesus. They praised Him as the King of Israel. John 12:12–15:

The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the King of Israel!" Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written, "Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt."

The Jews wanted a political king who would overthrow the Roman rulers. Earlier they had tried to take Jesus by force and make Him king, but He had withdrawn to a mountain by Himself (cf. John 6:15).

Jesus did not ride on a horse, which would be a symbol of war. He rode on a young donkey which symbolized the peaceful nature of His rule as Prince of Peace. He was indeed the King and Messiah, but not the kind of king the people were wanting. Jesus' kingdom would be a kingdom of truth, and He would rule in the hearts of people who accepted Him as Lord and Master of their lives.

This word "*hosanna*" means "save, I pray." It shows the hope that the people had in Jesus, but they quickly changed their minds when He did not turn out to be the kind of political king they wanted. In fact, a few days later the crowd wanted Jesus to be crucified! (cf. Matthew 27:22–25). Jesus' disciples did not always understand all the things that happened to Him, all the things that He said, nor all that He did. The crowds misunderstood the nature of Jesus and His kingdom, and the disciples were sometimes caught up in the popular sentiment of the times and the crowds. John 12:16:

At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these

things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him.

The Continuing Curiosity

The enthusiasm of the crowd who had seen Lazarus resurrected continued to grow and more and more people went out to see the resurrected man. John 12:17–18:

Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. Many people, because they had heard that he had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet him.

The Pharisees, of course, were upset and did not like the attention that Jesus received: “*So the Pharisees said to one another, ‘See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!’*” (John 12:19). They felt that everybody had decided to follow Jesus and all their efforts seemed to be in vain.

Jesus Predicts His Death

Inquisitive God-Fearing Greeks

Some Greeks were seeking to have an audience with Jesus because of His bold prediction of His coming death. John 12:20–22:

Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.” Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

The Greek inquirers had gone up to worship at the Feast. They were Gentiles who believed in the one true, living God,

the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. They evidently had not been circumcised and fully converted to Judaism, otherwise they would have been called proselytes or converts to Judaism (cf. Acts 2:11, 6:5, 13:43). Proselytes or converts were Gentiles who accepted Judaism fully, including circumcision and all the other requirements of the old law. But there were other Gentiles who feared God. They were distinguish from the proselytes or the converts to Judaism. Luke wrote that Cornelius and all his family were devout and God-fearing (cf. Acts 10:2). While traveling Paul met God-fearing Gentiles who worshiped God (cf. Acts 13:16, 17:4, 17:17). These were probably the same kind of Greeks or Gentiles who came up to worship God at the feast.

According to Jewish rules, the Greeks could go no farther than the Court of the Gentiles. Since they wanted to talk with Jesus, they approached Philip. Philip had a Greek name and was from a Greek speaking area north of the Sea of Galilee. Philip told Andrew, and they told Jesus that the Greeks would like to see Him. Jesus did not speak directly to the Greeks, nor did He refer to them in the comments that He made. He spoke to the crowd, which included the Greeks. Jesus was including the Jews, as well as all Gentiles scattered throughout the world, when He said: *“But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself”* (John 12:32).

The Master Principle

The coming of the Greeks was very important because it emphasized that the end of Jesus’ work was very near. For the first time Jesus said: “. . . *‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified’*” (John 12:23). The glorification of Jesus during His crucifixion is what is referred to in this context. The fact that a grain of wheat must die before it can produce a harvest is a general truth, but the following verse refers to Jesus’ death: *“I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds”* (John 12:24). Jesus died for

the sins of the world in order to lead men unto salvation. Unless He had died an atoning death, no one could be saved. Jesus later said: “. . . *I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me*” (John 14:6). Peter and John later preached to the Sanhedrin and boldly affirmed: “*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12). Paul wrote his true son in the faith, Timothy: “*For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*” (1 Timothy 2:5). These scriptures show that Jesus had to die in order for men to be saved. Paul wrote that the only way that God could be just and justify sinful men was by the atoning sacrificial death of the Son of God (cf. Romans 3:25–26).

The attitude of self sacrifice that Jesus exhibited in His life and in His death must also be in His followers: “*The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life*” (John 12:25). The person who lives only for himself and his own selfish desires will lose his life. The person who truly lives for God and for others, and by comparison does not value his life, will keep his life forever.

Jesus expressed another great truth. Following Him is the sum of Christian duty: “*Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me*” (John 12:26). Being with Jesus is the Christian reward. Whatever heaven is like, it is being with Jesus. John wrote in 1 John 3:2:

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

The reward for God’s faithful servants is being with Him. God will reward the servants of Christ in this life and in the life to come.

Throughout his gospel, John has stressed the deity of Christ. He wrote that Jesus was deity in the beginning: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"* (John 1:1). Jesus claimed to be deity: *"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"* (John 8:58). At the Feast of Dedication before Lazarus' death Jesus again claimed to be deity: *"I and the Father are one"* (John 10:30). Thomas also confessed that Jesus was deity: *"Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!'"* (John 20:28).

The Prayer And The Voice

John also stresses the humanity of Jesus. Jesus was tired from His journey when He sat down at Jacob's well in Sychar (cf. John 4:6), and He was thirsty, He needed water (cf. John 4:7). When Jesus' side was pierced by a spear, blood and water came out (cf. John 19:34).

Jesus showed His humanity in His prayer. John 12:27–28:

*"Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say?
'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this
very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your
name!" . . .*

There cannot be a more sacrificial prayer than this prayer. Whatever the cost, Jesus wanted the name of His Father glorified. Jesus knew that God would be glorified in His sacrificial death for the salvation of others. He was willing to submit to the will of God despite His troubled heart.

The Father responded: *" . . . Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and will glorify it again'"* (John 12:28). The Father had spoken two times before. Jesus heard the voice from heaven when He was baptized (cf. Matthew 3:16–17). On the Mount of Transfiguration God also spoke from heaven: *" . . . 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!'"* (Matthew 17:5). This is the only time in the gospel of John that God spoke during the

ministry of Jesus. *'I have glorified it'* could refer to the fact that God had glorified Jesus when He spoke to Him from heaven. But I think God was glorifying Jesus through the signs and miracles that Jesus performed. *"I . . . will glorify it again"* means that He would be glorified by the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The Purpose And The Explanation

Some thought it had thundered, and others said an angel had spoken to him. Obviously, God's words must have encouraged and strengthened Jesus, but the voice was primarily for the crowd (cf. John 12:29–30). They knew that something supernatural had happened, and that caused some to believe that Jesus was sent from God. The hour had come for Jesus to be glorified and for the world to be judged: *"Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out"* (John 12:31). *"The prince of this world"* refers to Satan, the devil, who was judged by the crucifixion of Christ. He did not win in the crucifixion of Jesus. He lost because it was Jesus' death that delivers men from the power of Satan: *" . . . he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil"* (Hebrews 2:14). Paul wrote about the importance of the gospel. 1 Corinthians 15:3–4:

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus are the basic facts of the gospel. Without them men are unable to be saved. Peter wrote that Jesus died so that men might be saved: *"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed"* (1 Peter 2:24). When Jesus was lifted up on the cross,

He tasted death for every man (cf. Hebrews 2:9). Jesus died not only for the Jews, but for every man who had ever lived and for every man who would later live.

Jesus knew that by His death men could be reconciled unto God: *“But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself. He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die”* (John 12:32–33). Paul wrote that God exalted Jesus to the highest place and at the name of Jesus every knee should bow (cf. Philippians 2:9–10).

The crowd heard the words that Jesus said, but they did not understand the meaning of what He said. John 12:34:

The crowd spoke up, “We have heard from the Law that the Christ will remain forever, so how can you say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this ‘Son of Man’?”

His being lifted up on the cross did not automatically save all men. But all men who are drawn to Him are drawn because of the cross. Men, of course, are free to accept or to reject Jesus. They can accept the benefits of His death, or they can turn Him down. Men are free to accept the sacrifice He made for them, or they are free to reject it. Jesus told the Jews that they refused to come to Him to have life (cf. John 5:40). Jesus showed His great concern for the Jews in Matthew 23:37:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.”

Paul and Barnabas turned to the Gentiles with the gospel because the Jews rejected it. Acts 13:46:

Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you

reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.”

Even though Jesus died for every man and would, potentially, draw all men unto Himself by His death on the cross, men still have to believe and respond to the overtures of Jesus. They can reject Him. They can love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. In that case, they will remain in that darkness.

The law that the crowd mentioned in John 12:34 refers to the Old Testament covenant. When the crowd said that the Christ would remain forever, they may have had in mind a scripture from the Psalms: *“The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: ‘You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek’”* (Psalm 110:4). Or perhaps they had in mind the words of Isaiah: *“. . . He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever . . .”* (Isaiah 9:7). Or perhaps they were referring to Daniel’s dream about the Messiah: *“. . . His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will not be destroyed”* (Daniel 7:14).

The Jews knew that Jesus called Himself the Son of Man and claimed to be the Messiah. But how could the Messiah die on a cross? Was the Son of Man different from the Messiah? Who was this Son of Man? Jesus did not answer them directly. John 12:35–36:

Then Jesus told them, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light”. . .

They needed to walk in the Light if they were to understand the things involved in Jesus’ coming into the world. Obedient,

trusting faith would make them sons of Light, people in whose lives the Light could be seen.

The Absence of Belief – The Jews Continue in Unbelief

The Unbelievable Unbelief

When Jesus had finished speaking, He left the people and hid Himself: “. . . *When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them*” (John 12:36). His public ministry was over. The rest of John 12 gives a summary of Jesus’ ministry and the reasons the Jews did not believe.

The unbelief of the Jews was senseless. John 12:37–38:

Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet: “Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

The miraculous signs were done for the express purpose of convincing men that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God. The evidence was abundant to produce saving faith, but the Jews steadfastly remained in unbelief. John wrote that Jesus came to His own, but His own did not receive Him (cf. John 1:11). The Jews refused to come to Jesus: “*yet you refuse to come to me to have life*” (John 5:40). The Jews refused to believe the prophet Isaiah, and they refused to believe Jesus and His disciples.

Their unbelief had been predicted. John 12:39–40:

For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere: “He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn—and I would heal them.”

The Jews did not believe Jesus because God had blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, but this only happens to people who exercise their freewill and refuse to believe. When God's word is preached, and men refuse to accept it, it will harden the hearts of those who do not believe. The Jews did not believe because they loved darkness rather than light, they did not have the love of God in their hearts, and they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. God said He had given up the Gentiles because they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and served and worshiped the created rather than the Creator (cf. Romans 1:24–25).

However, some of the Jews believed in Him. John 12:42–43:

Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved praise from men more than praise from God.

Some of the Jews did believe, like Nicodemus and Joseph of Aramathea. Because of the pressure of the Pharisees, some of the believers would not confess Jesus lest they be put out of the synagogue, as was the man born blind, now healed and seeing with both his physical eyes and the eye of faith. People who are not willing to confess Christ in the midst of opposition and persecution will not be confessed by Christ.

The Identity Of Unbelief

Believing in Jesus involves believing in the One who sent Him. Belief in Jesus Christ will lead men out of darkness. He is the only way for men to come into light. Jesus described what unbelief is. John 12:47–48:

“As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to

judge the world, but to save it. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day."

Unbelief is rejecting Jesus and His words. Jesus' words can bring life to those who accept them, but they will condemn those who reject them. The outcome of this unbelief according to Jesus is eternal condemnation. Jesus' words are so important because they are the words God gave Him: "*For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it*" (John 12:49). Jesus always claimed that His authority was from God. Jesus' words will bring eternal life to the believer, but the same words will bring condemnation to the unbeliever.

Jesus Shows Himself To His Disciples

John 13:1–38

Introduction

The first major section of the gospel of John was called Part I: Jesus Shows Himself to the World: The Growth of Belief and Unbelief (cf. John 1:1–12:50). In that section Jesus presented Himself to the world for their acceptance or their rejection. He worked many miraculous signs to prove that He was the Christ, the Son of God. Many witnesses bore testimony that Jesus was all that He claimed to be on the basis of what He did and what He taught. The evidence was overwhelming. That evidence should have led the people to trust and obey Jesus, the Son of God. But after Jesus had done all the miraculous signs, many people would not believe in Him (cf. John 12:37).

Jesus came to His own, but His own received Him not (cf. John 1:11). The first twelve chapters are a summary of that verse. However, some of the Jews became His children: *“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God”* (John 1:12). The second section of John is focused on those who received Him as the Messiah. This section is Part II: Jesus Shows Himself to His Disciples: the Results of Belief and Unbelief (cf. John 13:1–21:25).

Three major points are presented in the John13: Jesus washed the disciples feet (verses 1–17); Jesus predicted His

betrayal (verses 18–30); and Jesus predicted Peter’s denial (verses 31–38).

Jesus, The Sovereign Servant

Preview And Review

All the activities of John 13-19 take place in less than 24 hours. Only one day in the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ is covered in the seven chapters. Almost one-third of the whole gospel of John is found in those chapters. The focus of John’s gospel is on the events surrounding Jesus’ last discussion with His apostles and the following evening and day. During the last evening of Jesus’ life on earth, He washed the disciples’ feet, predicted the betrayal of Judas and the denials of Peter, and gave farewell discourses to the disciples. He prayed to His Father and was arrested, condemned, crucified, and buried in less than 24 hours.

Jesus died on the day before the Sabbath, Friday (cf. Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54). That Sabbath was called a special Sabbath because it was the Sabbath of the Passover. So the events of John 13 began on a Thursday before the Passover Festival. The Lord’s Supper was previewed that night (cf. Matthew 26:17–30; Mark 14:12–26; Luke 22:7–20).

The Setting Of The Scene

The time came for Jesus to leave the world and return to His Father. John 13:1:

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

Before His death Jesus showed His disciples the full extent of His love. Washing their feet demonstrated the spirit of

sacrifice and service. That same spirit lead Him to die on the cross so that they could be saved. The devil had prompted Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus: *“The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus”* (John 13:2). Judas was already stealing from the money bag (cf. John 12:6). Later he capitulated to the pressures from the devil and went out into the darkness in order to betray Jesus into the hands of the chief priests and religious leaders. Jesus, on this occasion, was very much aware of His special relationship with the Father: *“Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God”* (John 13:3). His return to God was on His mind as He began to humbly wash the feet of these disciples, who would not wash one another’s feet.

Jesus taught His disciples a lesson about serving. John 13:4–5:

. . . so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

Washing the feet of someone else was the work of a slave (cf. 1 Samuel 25:41). In cases where no slaves were available, water was simply furnished for the person to wash his own feet (cf. Genesis 18:4, 19:2; Judges 19:21; 2 Samuel 11:8). Jesus rebuked the Pharisee for not giving Him water to wash his feet: *“. . . You did not give me any water for my feet . . .”* (Luke 7:44).

That last evening the disciples argued about which one of them was the most important (cf. Luke 22:24). Apparently, none of them would agree to wash the feet of someone else because that would admit that the other person was greater. They needed to learn the lesson that greatness comes through

service. They had heard similar words from Jesus on numerous occasions: *“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted”* (Luke 14:11, 18:14; Matthew 23:12). The fact that Jesus made this statement so often shows what a tremendous problem humility is for people. Men want to be served rather than to serve. Jesus did for the disciples what they were too proud to do for one another. He demonstrated what He had told them earlier: *“... just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many”* (Matthew 20:28).

The nature of Jesus Christ made Him willing to empty Himself and become a slave, obedient unto death, even death on the cross (cf. Philippians 2:5–8). Peter wrote this instruction to young men: *“... clothe yourself with humility toward one another, because ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble’”* (1 Peter 5:5). Peter added the result of practicing humility: *“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time”* (1 Peter 5:6). Jesus clothed Himself with a towel to demonstrate humility, and Peter later encouraged his fellow Christians to humble themselves.

The Nature Of The Act

Jesus had already washed some of the disciples’ feet when He came to Peter: *“He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, ‘Lord, are you going to wash my feet?’”* (John 13:6). Whatever the other disciples thought about Jesus washing their feet, they said nothing, apparently. But Peter could not keep quiet: *“Jesus replied, ‘You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.’ ‘No,’ said Peter, ‘you shall never wash my feet . . .’”* (John 13:7–8). Peter said what he thought, as usual. It did not seem right for the Lord of Glory to be washing his dirty feet, and Peter had to say so.

Like other lessons that Jesus had taught, the foot washing lesson would not be fully understood until later when the disciples were taught by the Spirit all things and brought to

remembrance the things that Jesus had said to them (cf. John 14:26). Jesus said the disciples were not ready to hear everything: *"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear"* (John 16:12). Jesus promised to send the Spirit who would help them to understand the things that had happened to them while they were with Jesus.

The Significance Of The Act

Peter's refusal to let Jesus wash his feet shows that Peter was humble enough to see that the Lord should not be washing his feet. Yet Peter was proud enough to command Jesus not to do it. Jesus replied to Peter: *"... Unless I wash you, you have no part with me"* (John 13:8). Jesus' reply does not mean that a person must have his feet washed in order to belong to Jesus. It means that one must have the inner cleansing from sin which the washing symbolized. The shedding of the blood of Jesus is necessary for cleansing from sin: *"... without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness"* (Hebrews 9:22). A sincere heart full of faith with the blood of Jesus is needed. Hebrews 10:22:

... let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

John wrote of the purification given through the blood of Jesus: *"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his son, purifies us from all sin"* (1 John 1:7). This motif of cleansing by the blood of Jesus is carried out throughout the New Testament: *"... These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"* (Revelation 7:14). Unless one is cleansed by Jesus' sacrificial atoning death by washing in the blood, he cannot be clean nor have a part with Him. Since

Jesus came to serve and give His life as a ransom for many (cf. Matthew 20:28), His shed blood provided the cleansing that Peter needed and that all men throughout the world need.

Peter was thinking about physical cleansing when he asked that his whole body be washed: *“Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!”* (John 13:9). Jesus’ response is based on the fact that in those days a person would bathe his whole body before going to a dinner and only needed to wash his feet when he arrived: *“Jesus answered, ‘A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean . . .’”* (John 13:10). Jesus realized that Judas was different from Peter: *“. . . ‘And you are clean, though not every one of you.’ For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean”* (John 13:10–11). Judas’ greed and dishonesty showed that he was unclean. He had the same opportunity the other disciples had, but he gave in to the devil’s temptations. Jesus was fully aware of Judas’ plans, though the other disciples were not.

The Teacher’s Example

The disciples of Jesus knew that He had washed their feet, but they did not understand the meaning of His action. Jesus, their teacher and Lord, had washed their feet as a slave would do for his master. Jesus was not giving a command to practice foot washing as a church rule or ordinance. The only time that foot washing is mentioned after the church was established refers to good deeds done in the home such as rearing children and being kind to strangers (cf. 1 Timothy 5:10). There is no example of the church meeting together to wash feet – no example of the church meeting to remember Jesus’ death during the Lord’s Supper and washing one another’s feet. Jesus wanted His disciples to have that same spirit and attitude of serving that He had manifested His entire life. Philippians 2:3–8:

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

That is the kind of attitude that is needed in the church in order to have unity.

The disciples had often heard Jesus teach against pride and arrogance. He had taught them humility, but they were slow to learn, even as Christians are today. Greatness still comes through serving others, not by being honored nor by being served. Christians must be like their Lord in this matter. Knowing this truth is good, but one must practice it in his daily life.

The Revealing Of A Betrayer

After showing the disciples the example of serving, Jesus revealed His betrayer: “*I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: ‘He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me’*” (John 13:18). It was necessary for Judas to leave the room before Jesus could prepare His disciples for His approaching death. The other disciples were not flawless. They had weaknesses, but Judas was separated from the rest of them by his unbelief. Jesus works patiently with people who have weaknesses or flaws, but Judas was different. He was like a person who turns against a close friend who gives him his daily bread. Jesus wanted his followers to know in advance that He was fully aware of all that would happen: “*I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen*

you will believe that I am He" (John 13:19).

Though the apostles were not to think of themselves too highly, they did have a very important task: *"I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me"* (John 13:20). They were sent by Christ as His messengers. Therefore, accepting them meant accepting Christ and also accepting God who had sent Christ into the world.

Identifying The Betrayer

The presence of the traitor caused the Savior great distress: *"After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, 'I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me'"* (John 13:21). This is the third time in the gospel that John wrote that Jesus was troubled in spirit. Jesus was referring to one of the twelve apostles, since they were the only ones with Him. Mark makes it very clear that the betrayer was one of the twelve: *"It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me"* (Mark 14:20). Jesus' disciples could not believe that such a thing could happen: *"His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant"* (John 13:22). None of these apostles suspected that Judas would betray their Lord. The apostles were confused and perplexed: *"They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, 'Surely not I, Lord'"* (Matthew 26:22). It is also significant that Judas made the same denial as all the others made (cf. Matthew 26:25).

The disciple whom Jesus loved is mentioned for the first time: *"One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him"* (John 13:23). This is a rather unusual expression, and is found a number of times in the gospel of John. It was used when Jesus committed His mother to that disciple at the foot of the cross (cf. John 19:26). The disciple whom Jesus loved and Peter ran to the tomb after they heard that the tomb was empty (cf. John 20:2). Jesus met with His apostles, including the disciple whom He loved, on the shore

of the Sea of Galilee (John 21:7). The evidence in the gospel of John and the evidence outside the gospel indicate that the disciple whom Jesus loved is none other than John, the brother of James, one of the sons of Zebedee.

In those days when a person ate, he would recline on his left arm on a low couch or cushion and would bring food to his mouth with his right hand. John asked Jesus who the betrayer was: *“Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, ‘Lord, who is it?’”* (John 13:25). Jesus answered John’s question. John 13:26:

Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon.

Jesus’ answer was not understood by the apostles who were there. To dip bread in a common dish and to give it to a person was a way of honoring him. They did not understand that it really meant that Judas was the one who would betray Jesus.

By taking the bread, Judas made his decision to betray Jesus: *“As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him . . .”* (John 13:27). This was his final capitulation to the overtures of the devil who was insisting that Judas be the one to betray Jesus. Jesus then said to him: *“. . . ‘What you are about to do, do quickly,’ Jesus told him”* (John 13:27).

Jesus needed to prepare His faithful disciples for His departure, and this could only be done after Judas had left. The disciples again did not understand what Jesus meant: *“but no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him”* (John 13:28). The apostles were divided about what Jesus was telling Judas to do: *“Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the Feast, or to give something to the poor”* (John 13:29). Apparently this was a common practice of Jesus. As they met poor people, they would give them something out of the

common money bag. John wrote that it was night when Judas went out (cf. John 13:30). In view of John's emphasis on light and darkness throughout the gospel of John, he probably is stressing the darkness of the evil that Judas committed by betraying Jesus on that fatal night.

Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial

Jesus Begins To Prepare His Disciples For His Death And His Departure

After Judas left Jesus began to prepare the eleven for the coming events. Jesus challenged them to faithfulness, using Peter as an example. Jesus seemed to be relieved that Judas had left them, and He began to prepare His disciples for His death and departure: *"When he was gone, Jesus said, 'Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him'"* (John 13:31). Jesus knew that He would be glorified in His crucifixion. Never was God more glorified than when Jesus died the sacrificial atoning death for the sins of the world. Although in the eyes of the world, the cross was a stumbling block and nonsense: *"but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God"* (1 Corinthians 1:24). Because the cross was the means for God to reconcile man unto Himself, the cross brought glory to God. God was also glorified when He raised Jesus from the dead and exalted Him to His right hand. On the day of Pentecost Peter preached that Jesus had been raised Him from the dead, been exalted to the right hand of God, and been made both Lord and Christ (cf. Acts 2:32–33, 36). Paul wrote a similar statement in Philippians 2:9–11:

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus asked the Father to glorify Him: “*And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began*” (John 17:5). According to the Holy Scriptures, Jesus and God were glorified in His death. Jesus was also glorified when He was raised from the dead and exalted to the right hand of God, and He was given the glory that He had with the Father before the world began.

To tell the disciples that He was about to leave them and they could not follow Him would discourage them. He clarified the statement immediately: “*Simon Peter asked him, ‘Lord, where are you going?’ Jesus replied, ‘Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later’*” (John 13:36). Jesus later told them that He was going to prepare a place for them. John 14:2–3:

“ . . . I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

The New Commandment

In view of His leaving them, Jesus knew that the disciples needed the strength of their united efforts, which meant loving one another. God’s people were told to love one another under the Old Covenant: “*. . . but love your neighbor as yourself . . .*” (Leviticus 19:18). But Jesus required a new kind of love: “*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another*” (John 13:34). Jesus not only loved the people who were good, those who loved Him, He loved sinners, people who were unworthy of His love. Romans 5:6–8:

. . . when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Jesus told Zacchaeus his purpose for coming to earth: *“For the Son of man came to seek and to save what was lost”* (Luke 19:10). Paul wrote that Jesus’ love extended to sinners: *“Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst”* (1 Timothy 1:15). John also wrote about God’s love for sinners: *“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins”* (1 John 4:10).

This is the kind of love that Jesus wants His followers to have to prove to all men that they are His disciples: *“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another”* (John 13:35).

Peter’s Sincere And Courageous Proclamation

When Peter asked Jesus where He was going, he was not asking about Jesus’ destination. He was only asking about His leaving them and the consequences they would suffer because He would be away from them. Peter was quite sure of his love for Christ and of his willingness to die for Him: *“Peter asked, ‘Lord, why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you’”* (John 13:37). Peter spoke in all sincerity. All four gospels record Jesus’ prediction that Peter would deny Him that very evening: *“Then Jesus answered, ‘Will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!’”* (John 13:38). Peter seemed to be shocked by such a prediction, and he remained silent until the arrest of Jesus in the garden. Jesus’ discourse with His disciples continues in John 14.

Discourse at the Table

John 14:1–31

Introduction

The closing words of John 13 were addressed to Peter. The opening words of John 14 embrace the whole group. Jesus was preparing His men, who were suffering from a universal form of "heart" disease, for what lay ahead of them. Jesus was troubled about the betrayer. The disciples were troubled at the thought of His departure. Jesus had told them that one of them would deny Him and even specified that it was Peter. Jesus then gave them encouraging words in John 14 in view of the ominous predictions that He had given them in the previous chapter.

There are three main points in John 14. Jesus comforted His disciples (verses 1–4); Jesus is the way to the Father (verses 5–15); and Jesus promised the Holy Spirit (verses 16–31).

Jesus Comforts His Disciples

Troubled Circumstances Cause Troubled Hearts

In view of the circumstances in John 13, Jesus said these words to His disciples: *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me"* (John 14:1). The hearts of the disciples were indeed troubled. They had been told that one of them would betray Jesus and Peter would deny Him three times. They had learned that Jesus would leave them very soon. The apostles had left everything to follow Jesus, and

now He was going away. No wonder their hearts were troubled. But their troubled hearts could find rest by trusting in God and in Jesus. Again Jesus placed Himself on the same level with God. Trusting in God was something that a first century Jew would expect to do. But to tell men that they should trust Jesus in the same way that they trusted God was an amazing concept. No mere man could say what Jesus said.

The Preparation Of A Home

Even though Jesus was going away, He was preparing something very special for His followers. John 14:2-3:

“In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

There will be plenty of room for all of God’s children in His Father’s house. Jesus would not return to the Father without first going to the cross on Calvary. After going to the cross and dying for the sins of the world, Jesus was resurrected from the dead and went back to the Father. It was the process of going to the Father via the cross and dying for the sins of the world that would prepare the place for His disciples. Jesus promised that He would come back and take His faithful followers to the place that He would prepared for them. He left them for a while, but when He comes back and receives them, they will be with Him forever.

Jesus Is The Way To The Father

The Destination And The Road

Jesus told the disciples that they knew the way: “*You know the way to the place where I am going*” (John 14:4). Thomas told Jesus that they did not know the way: “*Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we don’t know where you are*

going, so how can we know the way?’” (John 14:5). Jesus claimed to be the way to the Father. John 14:6–7:

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

For Thomas and for all other people, even to this day, Jesus is the way. Jesus is the means of entrance into the very presence of God: *“I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved . . .”* (John 10:9). Paul wrote the same truth: *“.through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand . . .”* (Romans 5:2). Paul wrote another beautiful passage: *“In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence”* (Ephesians 3:12). Men can come into the very presence of God because Jesus is the Way and because He is the Gate. In Hebrews 10:19–20 the writer stated a similar fact:

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body

Jesus is the One who can take a man into the presence of God. No one else can do that, according to the words of Jesus.

He is the truth. Jesus spoke the truth that He heard from God, but He was the very embodiment of truth. Jesus revealed God. No one had seen God, but Jesus, who had been in the very bosom of the Father, came to tell men what God is like (cf. John 1:18). Later Jesus told Philip that anyone who had seen Him had seen the Father (cf. John 14:9). Jesus was telling his followers that He was the embodiment of truth, and if they wanted to know truth, they needed to listen to His voice.

Jesus also said He is the Life, and it is found in Him only. He came to give men a full, complete life both now and forever. John wrote that in Him was life and the life was the light of men (cf. John 1:4). Jesus told the Jews the reason He came to earth: “. . . *I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full*” (John 10:10). Jesus told Martha He was the Life: “*Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies’*” (John 11:25). John wrote that Life is found in God’s son: “*And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life*” (1 John 5:11–12).

Note the exclusiveness of Jesus’ claims. He does not claim to be one of the ways to the Father. He claims to be the only way. The absolute uniqueness and finality of Jesus was proclaimed by Himself and by His followers as they spread His gospel throughout the entire world. Reference was made earlier to Peter’s statement to the Sanhedrin: “*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12). Paul also wrote that Jesus is the way to God: “*For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*” (1 Timothy 2:5).

The Disappointment Of Jesus

The apostles understood Jesus well enough to leave their work and their previous way of life. But that evening they began to understand more clearly what His plan and purpose was for them. They were able to know God as He was revealed by Jesus. John 14:8–9:

Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”

Jesus is the exact representation of God's being (cf. Hebrews 1:3). That is why Jesus said that he who has seen Me has seen the Father. Philip's request meant that he wanted to have some kind of special vision of God like Old Testament men had. Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders saw a vision of God (cf. Exodus 24:9–10). Moses saw the back of God as He moved, but not His face as God manifested Himself in some physical form (cf. Exodus 33:17–23). Isaiah also had a vision of God: *"In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted . . ."* (Isaiah 6:1). Philip was asking God to become flesh, but that is what He had already done when Jesus Christ came to earth. John 1:1,14:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus expressed disappointment that Philip did not understand that God had become flesh in Jesus Christ. John 14:10–11:

"Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves."

Jesus' words and His miraculous signs show the special relationship that existed between the Son and the Father. God spoke through Christ, and God performed miraculous signs through Christ. Jesus told the Jews that His teachings came from God: *"Jesus answered, 'My teaching is not my own. It*

comes from him who sent me” (John 7:16). Another time Jesus told the unbelieving Jews that God told Him what to say: *“For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it”* (John 12:49). There is a special relationship between Jesus and the Father because the Father is in Him and He is in the Father. Jesus hid His own glory and revealed the glory of the Father by both His words and by His deeds.

The Promise Of Greater Works

John 14:12 has often been misunderstood: *“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”* Many of the miraculous signs that Jesus did were performed by His apostles and others upon whom they laid their hands. God worked with them confirming His word which they spoke by the signs that accompanied it (cf. Mark 16:17–20). Hebrews 2:3–4 also states that God confirmed the word by signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit. When the apostles laid their hands on others, they were able to perform miraculous signs and wonders (cf. Acts 6:6–7, 8:17).

The greater thing that Jesus referred to was the taking of the gospel of salvation to the lost of all the nations. The apostles did not do greater physical miracles than Jesus did. They never walked on water. They never changed water into wine. They never calmed storms. The apostles never did greater physical miracles than Jesus did, but their preaching of the gospel caused thousands to find new life in Jesus Christ. The reason that they did greater things than Jesus did was because He went back to the Father. His return to the Father meant that He paid the atoning sacrifice so that men could be saved. He provided salvation for everyone.

His return to the Father also meant that He would send the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth and would bring to their minds all the things that He had taught them.

Without Jesus' return to the Father, the apostles could do nothing. When the church was established on the Day of Pentecost 3,000 people heard the message of Peter: *"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 2:38). Many heard the message and the number of men grew to about five thousand (cf. Acts 4:4). The church multiplied and spread throughout the entire world. The gospel of salvation provided by Jesus was made known by the apostles and other men.

The Promise Of Answered Prayer

Jesus promised that prayers asked in His name would be answered: *"And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it"* (John 14:13–14). Prayers asked in the name of Christ means the person recognizes who Jesus is and what He has done. There is no magical answer to a prayer ending with the words "in Jesus' name." A person must pray knowing what Jesus taught and knowing of His atoning death on the cross.

Jesus' promise to answer prayer is confirmed by other Scriptures in the New Testament, although confirmation is not needed. While Stephen was being stoned to death, he said: *" . . . Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"* (Acts 7:59). Paul begged the Lord three times to remove his thorn in the flesh, but the Lord said in 2 Corinthians 12:9–10:

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ' power may rest upon me."

John wrote about Jesus' return: *" . . . Amen. Come, Lord Jesus"* (Revelation 22:20). Prayers were addressed to the Lord Jesus who is God in the flesh. He told His disciples they could

ask Him for anything and He would do it. Then He returned to the right hand of God.

Connected with the promise of Jesus is the obedience of His followers to His commands. Jesus will work in their mission to a lost world and in answering their prayers, but they must continue to love Him. The test of their love, of course, is their obedience: *“If you love me, you will obey what I command”* (John 14:15). This concept is taught throughout the gospel of John, especially in John 14, 15, and 16. John wrote another statement about love for God: *“This is love for God: to obey his commands . . .”* (1 John 5:3). Jesus’ commandments are not grievous or burdensome. They bring people to light because they are commandments given from a heart that is full of love.

The Promise Of The Holy Spirit

The Promise Of Another Counselor

Jesus was still speaking to His followers, preparing their minds for His departure. He promised to return and receive them to the place He would prepare for them. He also promised to answer their prayers and enable them to do greater things than even He had done. In answer to Jesus’ request, He said God would give them another counselor who would be with them while He was away: *“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth . . .”* (John 14:16–17). The word *“Counselor”* literally means “one who is called along the side of” and refers primarily to a legal friend. It can also mean an advocate, a counsel for the defense, one who pleads the case of another. It involves standing beside someone and pleading his case to another person. Jesus does this work in heaven for His followers. 1 John 2:1–2:

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he

is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. (KJV)

Jesus is doing the work of a counselor, an intercessor, one who stands beside a man and makes intercession to the Father. Paul also wrote that Jesus is an intercessor: “*Christ Jesus . . . is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us*” (Romans 8:34). The writer of Hebrews stated that Jesus makes intercession for faithful believers: “. . . *because he always lives to intercede for them*” (Hebrews 7:25).

The Holy Spirit also makes intercession. Christians don’t always know how to pray, but the Spirit makes intercession for the saints with groans which cannot be uttered (cf. Romans 8:26–27). The Holy Spirit is not a mediator. He did not become flesh and die on the cross. But the Holy Spirit can make intercession. Jesus was promising that the counselor, the Holy Spirit, would come and help the disciples after He had departed from them.

Jesus said the world could not receive the Counselor. The word “world” in the gospel of John refers to the people who are under the power of the prince of this world. They are the people who live in rebellion and reject the will of God. It does not merely refer to lost people; it refers to those who refuse to submit to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Their lord is the god of this age (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4). They love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. Because the world is antagonistic and rebellious toward God, it cannot accept the Spirit of the living God.

“*Another Counselor*” has no reference to Mohammed, as Muslims claim. They believe Mohammed is the other Counselor, who took the place of Jesus. This theory cannot be true because the whole context shows that Jesus was talking about the Holy Spirit. In fact, Jesus called the counselor the Holy Spirit: “*But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send . . .*” (John 14:26). This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon the

apostles (cf. Acts 2:1–4). Jesus told them that they would be baptized by the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1:5) and receive power: *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”* (Acts 1:8). This One that Jesus was talking about was already with them and He would be on them. So He was not talking about someone who would be born five or six hundred years later. He was talking about the Holy Spirit who was already with them and would dwell in them in a fashion that was different from the way He had been with men in past times. Also, the Counselor was to glorify Jesus, not to seek to replace Him with a different message. So this counselor is the Holy Spirit, and by no means can it be stretched to mean Mohammed.

During the Last Supper Jesus called His followers “my children” (cf. John 13:33), and later He said He would not leave them as orphans: *“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you”* (John 14:18). This scripture was fulfilled with the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The Promise Of His Continued Presence

Jesus indicated He would come to His disciples after being away for a little while: *“Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me . . .”* (John 14:19). Later Jesus told them that their grief would be turned to joy (cf. John 16:20). After He was raised from the dead, Jesus did not appear to anyone but His disciples. Paul wrote that Jesus appeared to more than 500 of His brothers after His resurrection (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:6).

Jesus gave His followers a promise: *“. . . Because I live, you will also live”* (John 14:19). They would live because He died for their sins and was raised again for their justification. Because Jesus lived, believers have the promise of life eternal with Him.

The special relationship that Jesus has with the Father is a relationship that He enjoyed with His disciples: *“On that*

day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you” (John 14:20). “On that day” refers to the resurrection day when Jesus appeared again to His faithful followers and brought them joy. His appearance strengthened their faith. Again, Jesus insisted that the disciples were to prove their love by keeping His commands. John 14:21:

Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.

Jesus commissioned the eleven apostles to make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to obey: *“and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).* Jesus promised all of His disciples that He would be with them always. Peter told young men to cast all their anxiety upon God because He cares for them (cf. 1 Peter 57).

The Question Of Judas (Not Iscariot)

Judas asked Jesus a question: *“Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, ‘But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?’” (John 14:22).* The Judas was not Judas Iscariot. He had already left to betray Jesus. It refers to Judas the son of James, probably the Thaddaeus who is mentioned in the other gospels (cf. Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18).

Actually, Jesus had already revealed Himself to the world. John had recorded that revelation in the first twelve chapters of the gospel of John, but the world had rejected the truth that they had seen. They had refused to believe in Jesus. Even though He had done all the miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe. But the presence of God in Jesus Christ was for those who would love God and keep His commandments. It was the lack of love that made the difference: *“Jesus replied, ‘If anyone loves me, he will obey*

my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (John 14:23).

The words Jesus spoke were from His Father: “*He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me*” (John 14:24). Later the Apostle Paul wrote that the gospel he taught was not from man. Galatians 1:11-12:

. . . the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote a similar statement in 1 Thessalonians 2:13:

And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

The Ministry Of The Spirit

Jesus said the Holy Spirit would come, teach, and remind believers of all the things that He had said to them. John 14:25–26:

“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

The Bequest Of Peace

Jesus Christ was the One who suffered and died on the cross, but He did not think about Himself. He thought about His followers and their needs. Jesus urged them not to let their hearts be troubled. He promised them a peace that the world

could not give or take away: *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid”* (John 14:27). Later He again promised peace for his followers (cf. John 16:33). Paul wrote about the peace of Christ: *“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful”* (Colossians 3:15). Paul again wrote about the peace Of God. Philippians 4:6–7:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Jesus gives peace with God to people who have been justified. (cf. Romans 5:1). He gives men peace with other men (cf. Ephesians 2:15).

The Confirmation Of Faith

The apostles were thinking about themselves; they were not thinking about Jesus. If they had really loved Him they would be glad that He was going to return to the Father: *“You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I”* (John 14:28). His statement, *“the Father is greater than I”* does not mean that Jesus is not fully God. Many verses in John’s gospel show that Jesus is really God. This statement should be understood knowing that Jesus voluntarily became a man and accepted a position of obedience and submission. The Father retained His authority in glory while Jesus put His aside during His earthly ministry. Jesus told his disciples that He would go back to the Father, and they would believe: *“I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen*

you will believe” (John 14:29).

The disciple’s faith was strengthened and confirmed by the powerlessness of the devil to thwart Jesus’ purpose: *“I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me”* (John 14:30). The *“prince of this world”* was working in Judas’ life to get him to betray Jesus. When Judas and the enemies of the Lord came to arrest Jesus, they are pictured as coming due to the instigation of the devil (cf. John 18:1–9). Satan was coming in the arrest and betrayal of Jesus. When Jesus was lifted up on a cross, He drew all men unto Himself. The work of infamy, of arresting, seizing, and betraying Jesus, resulted in the salvation of lost mankind. When a Christian thinks about Jesus’ love and God’s love, he is reminded of Jesus on the cross.

God loved Jesus, and that is one reason He sent Him to earth. Because Jesus loved the Father, He was willing to die. Jesus wanted to please the Father, and He knew that the sacrificial atoning death was necessary to please the Father: *“but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me . . .”* (John 14:31).

Conclusion

Jesus’ final words of the chapter imply that He and His disciples got up and left: *“Come now, let us leave”* (John 14:31). And they did. John 15 and 16 should be understood in the context of Jesus and His apostles leaving the upper room and going toward the garden where Jesus would be arrested.

Abiding in Jesus

John 15:1–27

Introduction

The discussion of Jesus about the vine and the branches and the hatred of the world toward those who belong to Him are described in John 15. Jesus was continuing a discourse that He began in John 13. There are three main sections of the farewell discourses of Jesus recorded in John 15. First was the relationship of the disciples to Jesus (verses 1–11). Second was the relation of the disciples to each other (verses 12–17). Third was the relationship of the disciples to the world (verses 18–27). As Jesus and His disciples left the upper room and walked toward the garden of Gethsemane, He continued His teaching to prepare them for His departure.

In John 15 Jesus proclaimed the last of His seven I AM sayings: “I AM the true vine.” This figure of speech spoke volumes to those whom He addressed, and it strikingly illustrates the mutual indwelling and love from John 14.

The Relationship Of Believers To Christ

The Vine And The Branches

Jesus discussed the relationship that He had with His disciples, a relationship that is described as the vine and the branches. John 15:1–2:

*“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.
He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit,*

while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful."

There is background for this scripture in the Old Testament. Israel is often pictured as a vine that God has planted (cf. Psalm 80:8–16; Isaiah 5:1–7; Jeremiah 2:21; Ezekiel 15:1–8, 19:10). In these verses Israel is depicted as a vine that the Lord planted in fertile soil, cared for, and expected a fruitful harvest. However, each of the passages reveals that Israel was unfruitful and did not bear the fruit that God had intended it to bear. In contrast to the nation of Israel which had not fulfilled God's purpose as a fruitful vine, Jesus described Himself as the true vine. And the gardener is none other than His own Father. Jesus said the Father, the gardener, will cut off the branches that do not bear fruit. Dead branches would have insects and disease and would need to be removed for the health of the rest of the branches.

It was also necessary to trim the good branches in order to make them more fruitful. One of the ways the Father trims or cleanses Christians is through discipline. The writer of Hebrews refers to this principle in some detail: "*Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?*" (Hebrews 12:7). He wrote more about the discipline in the lives of Christians: "*Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best . . .*" (Hebrews 12:10). The earthly fathers did not always know what to do, but they did what they thought best. God disciplines His children so they can be more like Him: "*. . . but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness*" (Hebrews 12:10). God always knows what is best, and He disciplines His people for their good. Hebrews 12:11:

No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

God has to prune the branches that are bearing fruit so they may bear even more fruit. Sometimes the discipline is a painful experience, but out of the pain God develops character that will be transformed into the image of His Son.

The Branches And Fruit-bearing

The followers of Jesus had been cleansed by the message He preached to them: *"You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you"* (John 15:3). Then they needed to remain in Jesus: *"Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me"* (John 15:4). Christians remain in Jesus by listening to His word, following Him, and keeping His commandments: *"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me"* (John 10:27). Again Jesus told His followers to keep His commandments: *"If you love me, you will obey what I command"* (John 14:15). As the branches, the disciples listened to His voice, kept His commandments, and abided in Him.

Every branch must bear fruit: *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5). The fruit in this context can be a number of things. Among other things, the fruit can be an effective prayer life: *"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be given you"* (John 15:7). As Christians abide in Jesus, the fruit of an effective prayer life will be produced in their lives. Obedience to Christ is another fruit: *"If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love"* (John 15:10). Christ's joy in the heart of a believer is also fruit that is produced: *"I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete"* (John 15:11). Loving one another is another fruit that is produced: *"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you"* (John 15:12).

Other passages in the New Testament help a Christian understand what it means to bear fruit for God. John the Baptizer told people he was baptizing to produce fruit in keeping with repentance, fruit worthy of repentance (cf. Matthew 3:8). Paul described the fruit of the Spirit to the Galatians: *"But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control . . ."* (Galatians 5:22). Paul wrote about other fruit: *"for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth"* (Ephesians 5:9). Paul also wrote about the fruit of righteous living: *"filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God"* (Philippians 1:11). Another way to bear fruit is to live lives that are transformed by the spoken message (cf. Philippians 3:21). Disciples are fruitful branches when they lead other people to become disciples of Jesus (cf. Acts 4:20). Every thing a Christian does should bring glory to God: *"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples"* (John 15:8).

Jesus discussed the importance of remaining in Him because members of the body cannot produce fruit apart from Him: *" . . . apart from me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5). The opposite view is expressed in Paul's letter to the saints in Philippi: *"I can do everything through him who gives me strength"* (Philippians 4:13). It is not enough to begin to follow Jesus. A Christian must remain in Him. Paul also wrote that Jesus would present the faithful ones without blemish and free from accusation **if** they continued in the faith, established and firm and not moved from the hope held out in the gospel (cf. Colossians 1:23). The writer of Hebrews also encouraged believers to remain faithful: *"See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God"* (Hebrews 3:12). Jesus solemnly warned His disciples that the end result of not remaining in Him would be total rejection: *"If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown*

away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned" (John 15:6). Trusting in Christ means continuing to remain in Him, not relying on an experience that happened a long time ago.

Reciprocal Abiding

There are two blessings given to the disciples who remain in Christ. First, their prayers will be answered: *"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you"* (John 15:7). Second, they will bear much fruit: *"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples"* (John 15:8). Bearing the fruit of love will prove to others that Christians really are Jesus' disciples: *"... all men will know that you are my disciples, if love one another"* (John 13:35). Jesus further taught His disciples about love: *"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love"* (John 15:9). God loved Jesus from eternity, and He continued to love Him when He came into the world in order to save men from their sins. It is amazing that Jesus loves His disciples with the same love that the Father has for Him: *"If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love"* (John 15:10). The way Jesus remains in the Father's love is by keeping the Father's commandments. Jesus knows what it is to have commandments and to obey them. He obeys all of God's commandments with joy, thanksgiving, and love. The Christian's greatest joy is found in keeping God's commandments: *"I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete"* (John 15:11). His commands are not burdensome (cf. 1 John 5:3).

The Relationship Of The Disciples To Each Other

Jesus changed the conversation from His relationship with the disciples to a discussion of the relationship of the disciples to each other. Though the disciples have many commands to obey, their relationship to one another is summed up in one

command: *“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you”* (John 15:12). Paul wrote a similar statement in Romans 13:9:

The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Love will cause the disciples to fulfill all their obligations and responsibilities to one another. Jesus gave an example of brotherly love: *“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends”* (John 15:13).

Earlier Jesus had set an example for the disciples when He washed their feet, and He said that a slave is not more important than the master (cf. John 13:14–16). There is a sense in which all the followers of Jesus are slaves. They belong to Him, and He rules in their hearts. Paul wrote that Christians are slaves to righteousness. Romans 6:17–18:

But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

So, in a sense, Christians will always remain slaves of Jesus Christ because they belong to Him. He has bought them with His own blood. He is their master, and they are to obey Him completely.

There is an emphasis upon friendship and openness: *“You are my friends if you do what I command”* (John 15:14). Slaves are given orders, but the details of the orders are not explained to them. Their duty is simply to obey without question, but Jesus called His disciples friends. John 15:15:

“I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

Jesus spoke to the disciples openly, and they felt free to ask questions because they were called friends. The apostles had no reason to be proud of their special relationship with Jesus: *“You did not choose me, but I chose you . . .”* (John 15:16). Many men chose to become followers of Jesus. From the many disciples Jesus chose twelve who became His apostles. Luke 6:12–13:

. . . Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles.

The apostles had a special relationship with Jesus, and they had special responsibilities and functions in the sight of God. Jesus said that the apostles did not choose Him; He chose them: *“. . . ‘Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? . . .’”* (John 6:70). Their work was important, but they were to remember that their selection was done by Jesus.

They were told to bear fruit so their prayers would be answered by a loving Father: *“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name”* (John 15:16).

The Relationship Of The Disciples To The World

The World’s Attitude Toward Christ’s Disciples

The last main section of John 15 shows the relationship of the disciples to the world. Jesus spoke about the

relationship of His followers to Himself and about their relationship to one another. Then He explained to them the relationship they would have with the world. John 15:18–19:

“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.”

As the disciples exhibited love for one another, the world was known for its hatred. Jesus wanted to prepare His followers for the hatred and opposition of an unbelieving world. When it happened, they would not be surprised. Since the world hated Christ, His followers should expect the same animosity. Jesus repeated a statement that was recorded in John 13:16. John 15:20:

“Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.”

Paul also wrote that Christians would be persecuted: *“In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted . . .”* (2 Timothy 3:12). Peter too warned believers to be prepared for persecution: *“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you”* (1 Peter 4:12). God’s people ought to expect opposition and even persecution from an unbelieving world. The people of the world do not like people who are different from themselves. They try to make God’s people conform, be like they are. God’s people cannot be the same because He has called them out of the world.

A Christian today may be persecuted because he is

honest, truthful, and works diligently, while others about him do otherwise. Jesus said the reason for such opposition is because the people of the world do not know God: *“They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me”* (John 15:21). Not knowing God, they would not know the One who had been sent by God.

The people of the world are without excuse: *“If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin”* (John 15:22). Jesus did not make men sinners. All men were sinners before Jesus came to earth. If Jesus had not come, the people would not be guilty of sin. But Jesus was discussing the specific sin of rejection. They heard Jesus’ testimony and rejected Him so they had no excuse for their sin. When people turns down the message of Jesus, their sins are aggravated, and they have no excuse.

The fact that all men are sinners is affirmed throughout the Bible: *“There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins”* (Ecclesiastes 7:20). Paul wrote that neither Jews nor Gentiles are righteous. Romans 3:9–10:

*What shall we conclude then? Are we any better?
Not at all! We have already made the charge that
Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is
written: “There is no one righteous, not even one.”*

Paul wrote in the same chapter that all men sin: *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23). The sin of rejecting the revelation of God in Jesus Christ was a particular sin that men committed because they saw His miracles, heard what He taught, and still remained in unbelief. John 15:24:

*“If I had not done among them what no one else did,
they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have
seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me
and my Father.”*

Despite all the evidence that Jesus produced, men steadfastly refused to believe the truth. Therefore, their sin was more severe.

Jesus gave reasons why men remained in unbelief: “*But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: ‘They hated me without reason’*” (John 15:25). Jesus gave another reason for their lack of faith: “. . . *men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil*” (John 3:19). Jesus gave another reason for their unbelief: “*but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts*” (John 5:42). Jesus gave another reason why men rejected Him: “*for they loved praise from men more than praise from God*” (John 12:43). These and other reasons are given in the gospel of John for men remaining in the world and for their sin of unbelief.

The people saw Jesus perform miracles, yet they remained in unbelief and hated both Jesus and the Father: “*Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him*” (John 12:37). He did what no one else had ever done. He taught in a way that no one else had ever taught. The evidence was sufficient. The refusal of men not only made them guilty of sin, but their sin was without excuse. They fulfilled what was written in their law. The world hated Jesus without cause. Their love of darkness, their love of praise from men, their failure to know God, and their rejection of His messengers were the real reasons they hate Jesus. Jesus was not the cause of their hatred.

The Disciples Bear Witness By The Power Of The Spirit

Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would aid the disciples in their conflict: “*When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me*” (John 15:26). The Spirit of truth would aid believers during the persecution they would endure. He would speak through the apostles and guide them into all truth. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would

remind the apostles of the things He had said: *“But the counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you”* (John 14:26). The apostles were with Jesus about three years. Since they would forget many of the things that Jesus had taught them during those years, Jesus said God would send the Holy Spirit to remind them what He had taught. Jesus made another tremendous promise to these men: *“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth”* (John 16:13).

The apostles were also involved in the testimony: *“And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning”* (John 15:27). It was not just the Holy Spirit who was involved in the testimony; the apostles were told to testify about Jesus. They had heard Jesus teach. They had seen His miracles. They had even been sent out with power to work miracles themselves. They knew who Jesus was. They knew His claims because they had been with Him from the beginning. So the apostles were given the commission to bear witness to Jesus. In the book of Acts students will find that the apostles of Jesus, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, testified before men about Jesus. They believed in Him with all their heart and wanted the unbelieving world to receive the message of Jesus.

Conclusion

Witness given in the power of the Holy Spirit will create the conviction in hearers that Jesus really is who He claims to be —the Son of God. The apostles were personally involved in the life and actions of Christ and had the responsibility of giving witness to the things they saw and heard. Christians today must tell others what they know about Jesus. Every thing they do should bring glory to God.

The Holy Spirit and Coming Joy

John 16:1–33

Introduction

Jesus never concealed the cost of following Him. He never flattered anyone to gain allegiance. He was determined that those who followed Him on the pathway to the cross would never be able to say that He had deceived them about its nature. Repeatedly He warned His disciples of “the offence of the cross” (cf. Galatians 5:11).

In John 16 there are three elements found in Jesus’ farewell discourse with His apostles. First, there are admonitions and warning about opposition and persecution, a continuation of His teachings found in John 15. Second, there are teachings about the work of the Holy Spirit (verses 5–16). Third, John wrote about the disciples’ grief turned to joy (verses 17–33).

Jesus’ Warning For His Followers

The Difficulty Of Ministry

Jesus prepared His disciples for the inevitable separation and the times of testing that would follow. He continued to give warnings concerning the hatred and opposition of an unbelieving world. Jesus did not promise His followers material prosperity nor a life of comfort free from persecution. If they had been told to expect a life free from trouble and

hardship, they probably would have later gone astray. They might have been offended and stopped following Jesus when troubles came. But Jesus told them to expect hatred and opposition so they would not go astray: *“All this I have told you so that you will not go astray”* (John 16:1). To *“go astray”* means to deny Jesus under the pressure from an unbelieving world.

The Danger Of Ministry—Persecution And Hatred

When Jesus sent out His twelve apostles to the lost sheep of Israel, He told them they would be arrested and brought before governors and kings to witness to them. Then Jesus told them the results of their denial or faithfulness. Matthew 10:32–33:

“Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.”

After rebuking Peter, Jesus gave a similar warning to the crowd, along with His disciples. Mark 8:38:

“If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

Jesus wanted His followers to know that persecution would come; opposition was to be expected. Christians should not be offended when they are persecuted. They should be prepared for opposition from the world. Believers should not stumble or deny their faith in Jesus when they are persecuted.

Type And Extent Of Persecution

Jesus told about some of the forms of persecution that would take place: *“They will put you out of the synagogue; in*

fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God” (John 16:2). Earlier the Jewish leaders had threatened to put anyone out of the synagogue who confessed Jesus to be the Christ (cf. John 9:22). Many of the leaders believed in Jesus, but because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for they feared they would be put out of the synagogue. The leaders loved the praise from men more than praise from God (cf. John 12:42–43). The men were concerned that they would be denied the rights and privileges of the synagogues if they followed Jesus. Jesus was warning His followers that they should expect similar treatment.

The persecution came from religious people, people who thought they were pleasing God when they put Jesus’ disciples to death. Later Saul of Tarsus, with a good conscience, went about approving the killing of the followers of Jesus. When Stephen was stoned to death, Saul consented to his death (cf. Acts 8:1). Saul went from house to house binding men and women and committing them to prison. He got letters from the high priest to go to Damascus to find people who belonged to the Way so he would take them to Jerusalem as prisoners (cf. Acts 9:1–2). Paul later told the Sanhedrin: “. . . *My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day*” (Acts 23:1). In Acts 26:9–10 Paul told Agrippa and Bernice of his prior opposition to Jesus and His followers:

“I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them.”

At that time Paul thought that he was pleasing God.

The real cause of the persecution was not a personal dislike of the people of God but an attitude toward God the

Father and toward Jesus His Son: *“They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me”* (John 16:3). The Jews should have known God because He was revealed by Jesus: *“... Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father ...”* (John 14:9). To reject One was to reject the other One. Having rejected both Jesus and the Father, the world would persecute and even kill His faithful followers. Jesus had earlier spoken of opposition and persecution when He sent out the twelve disciples. (cf. Matthew 10:17–23). In Luke 21:12–19 there is another extended discussion about persecution. Earlier Jesus had stated that men would persecute His followers because of Him. Jesus goes beyond that to say that the real reason for the persecution is that they do not know Him or the Father. Disciples should not be discouraged and lose faith when persecution comes. Persecution confirms that what Jesus said is true.

While Jesus was on earth the opposition was mainly directed toward Him, but He warned the disciples that they would feel the full force of the world’s hatred when He left: *“I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you”* (John 16:5). One can read about the opposition in the gospel of John, as well as in the book of Acts. The epistles written by the apostles to churches and to individuals also confirm the persecution that Christians endured.

The Promise And Mission Of The Spirit

Jesus’ Departure And The Disciples’ Grieving Spirits

Jesus again told His disciples about the coming Holy Spirit. He reminded them that He was going to leave them and return to the Father: *“Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you even asked me, ‘Where are you going?’”* (John 16:5). Actually, Peter had asked that question earlier: *“Simon Peter asked him, ‘Lord, where are you going?’ ...”* (John

13:36). But Peter's question had a different intent. His question showed concern about Jesus leaving them and the effect it would have on them. He was not concerned about Jesus' destination. If Peter and the other apostles had been interested in what would happen to Jesus when He returned to the Father, they would have been glad. Their sadness was not that He was going to leave them. Their interest, it appears from the context, was in themselves.

Jesus' Departure and the Coming of the Holy Spirit

For the third time in this farewell address with the apostles, Jesus renewed His promise to send them the Holy Spirit. They would not be alone when they went out into the world with His message. John 16:6–7:

“Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”

Jesus' departure was for the good of His disciples. The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, would come when Jesus died on the cross to atone for the sins of the world, was resurrected, and returned to the Father to be glorified. The Spirit would not be given until Jesus was glorified (cf. John 7:39). It was better for the apostles not to depend on Jesus' physical presence but on His spiritual and eternal presence through the Spirit who would be sent to them. They were cowards on the night of Jesus' betrayal and arrest. But after they received the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, they preached God's message fearlessly.

The Sanhedrin Court was amazed at the boldness of Peter and John. They took note that the men had been with Jesus (cf. Acts 4:13). When the Sanhedrin commanded them not to speak any more in the name of Jesus, Peter and John obeyed God instead. Acts 4:19–20:

But Peter and John replied, “Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

When Peter and the other apostles were again given strict orders not to teach in the name of Jesus, they responded: “. . . *We must obey God rather than men!*” (Acts 5:29). The apostles had boldness and confidence after they received the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. They fearlessly preached the message to the ends of the earth.

Three Functions Of The Spirit

John wrote about the three functions of the coming Holy Spirit: “*When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment*” (John 16:8). According to John the Spirit will prove the world wrong about sin, righteousness, and judgment to come. The specific sin is unbelief, the refusal to believe in Christ. Unbelief shows that a person is a sinner. The Spirit will convict the world about righteousness. This happened through the resurrection of Jesus and His return to the Father. Jesus’ return to the Father proved that His entire life and ministry had God’s approval. God recognized Him as righteousness. Jesus’ return to the Father demonstrated that His righteousness was recognized by the Father. He convicted the world of sin and of righteousness.

The Holy Spirit will convict the world about judgment. This was done when Jesus was lifted up on the cross, giving His life to free men from the devil’s power: “. . . *that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death*” (Hebrews 2:14–15). The ruler of this world was judged and defeated by the death of Jesus. Jesus said He would draw all men to himself: “*But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself*” (John 12:32). The Holy Spirit convicts men of sin through the preaching of the word of God.

On the day of Pentecost Peter and the other apostles spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance. Peter accused the Jews of crucifying Jesus: “. . . and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead . . .” (Acts 2:23–24). Peter concluded his speech by saying that Jesus was both Lord and Christ: “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). The Jews were convicted: “When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’” (Acts 2:37). Peter answered their question by saying: “. . . Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Act 2:38). The Jews were convicted by the Holy Spirit as He spoke through Peter. The Holy Spirit still convicts men of sin the same way. When the gospel is preached and men are shown their sins, the Holy Spirit uses the word of God, the sword of the Spirit, to convict the men of sin (cf. Ephesians 6:17) . Where the word of God has not gone, men are not convicted of sin and made to realize their need for salvation in Jesus.

Also, the Holy Spirit had a relationship with the apostles. Jesus said the Spirit would guide the apostles into all truth, for they were not able to receive all that He had to teach or say to them. John 16:12–13:

“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”

The disciples did not understand the absolute necessity of the cross and the resurrection from the dead. But after the events occurred they would see clearly not only the events but the

meanings of them. The Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth. He would remind them of the things that Jesus had taught the past three years. Jesus claimed that His teaching was from God and not from Himself: “. . . *My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me*” (John 7:16). Jesus said the Father gave Him instructions about what to say: “*For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it*” (John 12:49). The same message Jesus had received from God would be given to the apostles. They were to faithfully preach the message to the ends of the earth. All they would speak and write would be revealed to them by the Holy Spirit.

After His resurrection Jesus was with His apostles over forty days teaching them about the kingdom of God (cf. Acts 1:2). And Jesus told the men that they would receive power from the Holy Spirit: “*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*” (Acts 1:8). Paul wrote about the mystery which was hidden from men in other generations but was revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit (cf. Ephesians 3:5). On the day of Pentecost Peter stood before unbelieving Jews and told them that Jesus Christ had been crucified and raised from the dead. He did it because the Spirit was speaking through him and giving him the message. Peter spoke the very words of God which had been given to Jesus, which Jesus had given to the Spirit. Then the Spirit gave the same message to the apostles.

In reference to the world, the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. In relationship to the apostles, the Holy Spirit guided them into all truth and brought to their remembrance all the things that Jesus had taught them during His earthly ministry. In reference to Himself, the Holy Spirit glorified Christ, He took the things of Christ and gave them to the apostles, so He could convict the world.

The Apostles' Grief Turned To Joy

The Savior's Death And Resurrection Foretold

In His farewell discourse Jesus mentioned often that He must leave His followers: *"My children, I will be with you only a little longer . . ."* (John 13:33). Jesus told His apostles He would prepare a place for them in His Father's house: *"In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you"* (John 14:2). He said He was coming back for them: *"You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you . . .'"* (John 14:28). Jesus said He would send the Spirit: *"But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you"* (John 16:7). Jesus' disciples were puzzled by His statement that: *"In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me"* (John 16:16).

His disciples were especially puzzled by His mystifying expression *"in a little while."* John 16:17–18:

Some of his disciples said to one another, "What does he mean by saying, 'In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me,' and 'Because I am going to the Father?' They kept asking, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We don't understand what he is saying."

Jesus talked to them about the coming of the Holy Spirit or His coming to them in the person of the Holy Spirit. He had also spoken about His second coming to receive them.

In the immediate context it appears that Jesus was talking about His resurrection after being taken from them by death. They did not see Him when He was crucified and buried, but they saw Him again when He was raised from the dead and appeared to them. Although the disciples did not understand

what Jesus meant, they did not question Him directly. They were saying these things to one another. John 16:19:

Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him about this, so he said to them, "Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, 'In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me'?"

Jesus, who knows what is in a man heart (cf. John 2:25) knew their thoughts and concerns. He did not deny that they would have sorrow: *"I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy"* (John 16:20). Although He would be crucified and appear defeated, His resurrection would prove that He had indeed won the victory.

Jesus compared the apostles' sorrow to the pains of a pregnant woman giving birth to a child: *"A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world"* (John 16:21). The very thing that brought the woman pain, the childbirth, would cause her joy, and she would quickly forget the pain when the baby was born.

The cross would bring the apostles grief, but it would later give them joy: *"So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy"* (John 16:22). The appearances of Jesus after the resurrection proved to His followers that all His claims were true. Jesus showed the disciples His pierced hands and His wounded side, and the disciples were overjoyed when they saw Him (cf. John 20:20). The promised joy could not be taken away by outward circumstances or by an unbelieving world. It was based on an inward relationships which was established by the Lord.

There is nothing that the world can do to take away joy from His disciples. About midnight after Paul and Silas had

been severely flogged and thrown into prison, they prayed and sang hymns to God (cf. Acts 16:25). Paul wrote from prison to people who were being persecuted and told them to rejoice. Philippians 4:4–7:

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

The peace of God cannot not be taken away from faithful followers of Jesus.

The apostles of Jesus had many questions to ask on that last evening before His death, but later they would no longer ask Him anything: *“In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name”* (John 16:23). The expression *“in that day”* refers to the time after Jesus’ resurrection when He would again see them. Prayers would be offered in Jesus’ name, something which had not been done previously. Only after His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead would men be able to ask for things in His name: *“Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete”* (John 16:24). *“Name”* stands for the person, who He is and what He has done. The cross and the resurrection demonstrate the power of Jesus’ name most meaningfully. God will grant requests asked *“in the name of Christ.”* Asking will lead to receiving and to complete joy in one’s heart.

The Savior’s Mission

Jesus explained further the changed situation that would prevail after His death and resurrection: *“Though I have been*

speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father” (John 16:25). Then the apostles would be able to understand more clearly the meaning of Christ’s mission and His plans for the conversion of the world. After Jesus was raised from the dead, He met and taught the apostles for forty days concerning the kingdom of God (cf. Acts 1:2–8). Beginning with Moses and all the prophets Jesus explained what was said in the scriptures concerning Himself (cf. Luke 24:27). Jesus continued to teach the apostles: *“Then he opened their minds so they could understand the scriptures”* (Luke 24:45). The apostles had more confidence and courage after the resurrection and after receiving the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

To ask in Christ’s name means to ask on the basis of all that He did by providing salvation and access to God. It includes His death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of God. Jesus meant that additional asking would not be necessary, when He said: *“In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf”* (John 16:26). What He had done would insure that the Father would answer their prayers. Jesus always lives to intercede for the saints according to the will of God (cf. Hebrews 7:25). He speaks to the Father in the defense of Christians who have sinned (cf. 1 John 2:1). Jesus is an advocate who stands at the right hand of God making intercession for God’s children (cf. Romans 8:24). Jesus is not more kind and merciful than the Father.

The Father loves believers who love Jesus and believe that He came forth from God: *“No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God”* (John 16:27). The work of Jesus involved a two-fold movement: *“I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father”* (John 16:28). Jesus came from heaven to die for mankind and become their Savior. When Jesus’ work was

accomplished, He returned to heaven with His Father's approval of His work.

The Savior's Warning

The disciples express their delight in the clarity of Jesus' words. They had begun to understand what Jesus had been saying to them. John 16:29–30:

Then Jesus' disciples said, "Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God."

The disciples did not understand everything, but they understood that Jesus knew all things. As long as He knew everything, He could perfectly meet all their needs. This convinced them that He had truly come from God.

Jesus did not deny that the apostles had faith, but He wanted to warn them that their faith would soon be tested. John 16:31–32:

"You believe at last!" Jesus answered. "But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me."

The disciples did not realize what faith in Jesus really involved. That very evening Jesus was arrested in the garden, and they scattered like sheep who had lost their shepherd, as Jesus had predicted: *"You will all fall away," Jesus told them, "for it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered'"* (Mark 14:27). They abandoned Jesus within a few hours: *"Then everyone deserted him and fled"* (Mark 14:50). However, Jesus was confident that the Father would be with Him despite the failure of His disciples' faith.

The Savior's Encouragement

Jesus' last words in the farewell discourse are words of victory: "*I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33). When the predictions of Jesus came true the apostles would be able to see that He was in control of all the events of His life. This would result in peace in their hearts. Jesus had promised that despite the opposition of the world they would find peace in Him. He went to the garden and to the cross as One who had met the world and had overcome it. For this reason He can give peace to His followers. The enemies that are arrayed against the Lord and against the church were revealed to John in Revelation 17:14:

"They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."

Jesus left this message of victory with His disciples on the night of His betrayal, His arrest, and the other events that followed.

Listening in on Deity

John 17:1–26

Introduction

John 17 contains a prayer of Jesus. It could be properly called “The Lord’s Prayer” because it is a prayer that Jesus actually prayed. The prayer that is often called the Lord’s Prayer is a model prayer that Jesus taught His disciples to pray (Matthew 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4).

There are three parts to the Lord’s Prayer. In the first five verses Jesus prayed for Himself. In John 17:6–19 Jesus prayed for His disciples. In verses 20–26 Jesus prayed for future disciples who would believe in Him because of the work of His apostles. The prayer is closely related to the final discourse which Jesus had given to His apostles in the previous few chapters.

Jesus Prayed For Himself

Jesus Talked To His Father

After talking to His disciples Jesus began to talk to His Father. This prayer was probably uttered someplace between the upper room where the supper had been eaten and the garden where He was arrested. After the supper Jesus had said: “*Come now; let us leave*” (John 14:31). Assuming that the disciples did what Jesus said, He spoke the rest of the discourse on the way to the garden. Somewhere between that upper room and the garden Jesus paused to utter the prayer, perhaps in the Temple area. Scripture does not say where He prayed.

Notice, Jesus looked toward heaven: “*After Jesus said this,*

he looked toward heaven and prayed . . .” (John 17:1). This was commonly done by Jews during their prayers to God. The Psalmist wrote: *“I lift up my eyes to you, to you whose throne is in heaven”* (Psalm 123:1). Jesus prayed the same way at Lazarus’ tomb: *“. . . Then Jesus looked up and said, ‘Father, I thank you that you have heard me’”* (John 11:41).

There are many different postures for prayer mentioned in the Bible. No one single posture is the only acceptable one. Jesus anticipated people standing in prayer when He told Peter: *“And when you stand praying . . .”* (Mark 11:25). After Paul’s discussion with the Ephesian elders, they knelt down for prayer: *“. . . he knelt down with all of them and prayed. They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him”* (Acts 20:36–37). In a very touching scene Paul and the disciples in Tyre along with their wives and children all knelt down and prayed on the beach (cf. Acts 21:5). In the garden shortly before His crucifixion, Jesus fell with His face to the ground and prayed (cf. Matthew 26:39). Paul wrote Timothy about prayer: *“I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer . . .”* (1 Timothy 2:8). There are many different postures for prayer. A man may pray when he is walking or riding, sitting or standing on his knees, or lifting his eyes toward heaven, as Jesus did. No particular way should be bound upon the followers of Jesus.

Illustrations Of Jesus’ Practice Of Prayer

Jesus is often portrayed in the Bible as having engaged in fervent prayer. The gospel that emphasizes the prayer life of Jesus is Luke. While Jesus was being baptized, He was praying (cf. Luke 3:21). Very early in the morning before daybreak, Jesus got up and went to a secluded place to pray (cf. Mark 1:35). Jesus spent a night on a mountainside praying to God. At daylight He called His disciples and chose twelve whom He called apostles (cf. Luke 6:12–13). Luke wrote a summary statement about Jesus’ prayer life: *“But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed”* (Luke 5:16). Luke wrote about Jesus’ appearance at His transformation: *“As he was praying, the*

appearance of his face changed . . .” (Luke 9:29). The change took place while Jesus was engaged in prayer to the Father. Jesus ended His life in prayer: “. . . *Father, into your hands I commit my spirit . . .*” (Luke 23:46). The writer of Hebrews gave information about the prayer life of Jesus. Hebrews 5:7:

During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

Requests Made By Jesus

The longest recorded prayer of Jesus is found in John 17. When the time came for Jesus to go to the cross and fulfill God’s purpose, He requested God to glorify Him through His suffering and death: “*After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: ‘Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you’*” (John 17:1). Jesus’ prayer for Himself was not selfish. He asked only to be glorified in order that He might glorify the Father. God had been glorified all of Jesus’ life, through His ministry, His miracles, and His teaching. But God was never more glorified than when Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world.

Jesus requested that His authority to give eternal life be manifested to all: “*For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him*” (John 17:2). Christ spoke of the authority God had given Him. The purpose of God giving Him that authority was so Jesus might give eternal life to those who had been given to Him by God. God gives believing, trusting, faithful people to Jesus, and Jesus in turn gives those people eternal life. Again the unselfish nature of Jesus is shown.

Eternal life is not merely eternal existence. Even wicked people have eternal existence. Rather, eternal life is a quality of existence: “*Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent*” (John

17:3). Eternal life means to know God and Jesus Christ and to be in fellowship with them. It does not mean merely knowing any God. The word “god” in the English language is the most meaningless word in the whole language unless content is put into it. There are many things that are gods and many so-called gods, but Jesus was talking about the one true, living God. The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob is also Jesus’ own God and Father. He is the One whom Jesus revealed: *“No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known”* (John 1:18). Eternal life is knowing the Father and knowing His Son Jesus.

Jesus spoke of the glory He had brought to the Father and His desire to be glorified in the presence of the Father.

“I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began” (John 17: 4–5).

Jesus glorified God by doing all that God gave Him to do. Even on the cross Jesus fully accepted the responsibility. When He was confronted with the cross, Jesus refused to say: “. . . *Father, save me from this hour.*” Instead, He said: *“Father, glorify your name!”* (John 12:27–28).

After His suffering and death on the cross, Jesus anticipated the glory of returning to His Father and sharing the glory with Him again. He had been with God from eternity, before He became flesh and lived among men: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”* (John 1:1). Jesus told the Jews that He existed before Abraham: *“. . . before Abraham was born, I am”* (John 8:58). Jesus said He would return to the Father: *“I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father”* (John 16:28). Jesus had been with God and had the very nature of God, but He made Himself nothing and took the form of a servant and lived among men (cf. Philippians

2:6–7). The glory Jesus had temporarily put aside, He received again. Philippians 2:9–11:

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus' prayer for God to glorify Him with the glory He had before the world began was fulfilled when He returned to the right hand of God, having completed His work on earth.

Jesus Prayed For His Disciples

He Prayed For Their Knowledge

After praying for Himself Jesus prayed for His eleven apostles. John 17:6–8:

"I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me."

Jesus had previously prayed for Peter. Luke 22:31–32:

"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

In this text Jesus was praying, not only for Peter, but also for the other ten. He prayed for the eleven men whom God has given

Him out of the world. The expression in verse 6, “*I have revealed you,*” is more literally translated, “I have manifested your name.” In Scripture the word “name” stands for the person, His quality, His authority, and His attributes. By manifesting God’s name, Jesus was showing what God was really like. Jesus had told Phillip: “. . . *Any one who has seen me has seen the Father*” (John 14:9).

Jesus said that the apostles had been given God’s word and had obeyed it. They had not kept it perfectly, but they had forsaken all to follow Him because of faith in His word. The apostles were immature and their faith was weak, but it was real, and Jesus was willing to work through His followers. They believed that Jesus was more than a mere good teacher or a noble example. The apostles believed that Jesus had come from God and that He was all that God wanted Him to be. They knew that Jesus had been sent and that God was the sender.

Concern For His Own

“*I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours*” (John 17:9). Jesus’ words do not imply a lack of love or concern for the world. God loves the world so much that He gave Jesus to die for their sins (cf. John 3:16–17). But at this time His concern and prayer was for His disciples, the men who were given to Him by His Father. They would become His ambassadors to reach the unbelieving and lost world. Later in this prayer, Jesus revealed His concern for the world by praying for unity among His followers so the world might believe. He also showed His concern for the world when He prayed on the cross: “. . . *Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing . . .*” (Luke 23:34). Paul also believed it was right to pray for the world: “*Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved*” (Romans 10:1). Paul realized that the Jews were not saved, so he prayed for them to be saved. Paul believed it was right to pray for kings and people in authority. 1 Timothy 2:1–2:

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

Obviously, many of the world leaders and rulers were not Christians, but Paul indicates that Christians need to pray for the them. The apostles were given to Jesus to do the great work of spreading the good news throughout the world. Despite their failings and obvious weaknesses, they brought glory to Jesus.

Protection And Unity For His Own

As Jesus was preparing to return to the Father, He told the apostles God's scheme for saving mankind. John 17:10–11:

All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one.

This was Jesus' first petition for the apostles, that they would be protected. They would not leave the world when Jesus left. They had a mission for the world: it desperately needed the gospel of hope and salvation, and the apostles would bring it. Jesus, therefore, did not pray that they be removed from the world. Nor did He pray that they have no suffering or persecution. Jesus had already told them that they would have trouble from a world that did not know His Father and Him (cf. John 16:1–4). So Jesus prayed that God would keep His followers by the power of His name. Remember, name refers to the person, His quality, His authority, and His attributes. Jesus prayed that God would keep them on the basis of the love that God had for them, by the power of His name. Jesus also prayed that they might be united, even as He and His Father are one.

Security For His Own

Jesus' protecting power had been successful in keeping the apostles safe during his physical presence with them. John 17:12:

"While I was with them I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled."

The only one of the twelve apostles who had not remained faithful to Jesus was Judas. He was *"doomed to destruction"* because he had the type of character that deserved hell. He was free, of course, to choose good or evil. In choosing to betray Jesus, he fulfilled scripture: *"Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me"* (Psalm 41:9). God used the sinful action of Judas to bring about His righteous purpose. The betrayal of Judas brought about Jesus' death. His death is the saving power of God for sinners everywhere.

Insulated, Not Isolated

Jesus often spoke of joy and peace, as He did in the shadow of the cross: *"I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them"* (John 17:13). Jesus was thinking of His followers as He prayed. He asked that they might have complete joy in Him. Jesus had previously said He had come to bring them a full, abundant life: *". . . I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full"* (John 10:10). Jesus had spoken to the apostles about His departure and their commission to be scattered so that in Him they might have peace (cf. John 16:33). Jesus wanted them to have joy and peace despite the world's hatred and opposition of them.

Once again Jesus emphasizes the conflict between the disciples and the world: *"I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more*

than I am of the world” (John 17:14). When His followers received God’s word, they accepted His standard that was different from that of the world. They had a different lifestyle and were guided by different principles. The acceptance of a different standard caused opposition from the world for the followers of Christ.

Despite the world’s hatred and opposition, Jesus did not pray that His followers be isolated from the world: *“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one”* (John 17:15). Great men of God have sometimes become discouraged and asked to be taken out of the world. When the Israelites murmured in the desert about their daily diet of manna, Moses asked God to put him to death immediately, but his request was not granted by God (cf. Numbers 11:1–15). After Elijah had won a great victory over the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel, he was threatened by Jezebel and ran for his life. In the desert south of Beersheba he prayed for God to take his life, saying he was no better than his ancestors, but God did not grant this request (cf. 1 Kings 18–19). Jonah was so angry and disappointed when God spared Nineveh that he asked God to end his life: *“Now, O Lord, take away my life for it is better for me to die than to live”* (Jonah 4:3). God did not grant his request to leave this world. In all of these cases none of their requests were granted. They were all left in the world to serve God.

Jesus wanted His disciples to remain in the world after His departure so they might teach the world that was so antagonistic to Him. They needed to convict the world of sin. Unless the world is convicted of sin, the world will not feel a need for a savior. Having convicted the world of sin, they then needed to point to the Savior. The Lord Jesus can take away the sins of each person in the world because that was His purpose for coming to earth. However, they do need to be protected from the evil one because evil will destroy their work. The apostles cannot follow the world’s standards and adapt to its lifestyle: *“They are not of the world, even as I am not of it”* (John 17:16). They must

be different from the world in order to win the world from its darkness and shame.

Jesus made another request to His father for His disciples: *“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth”* (John 17:17). The word *“sanctify”* means to make holy, to set apart for a holy purpose. Jesus wanted His apostles to be set apart by the word of God for a mission and for service to the world. Christ sanctified Himself for His purpose to die for the world. John the Baptizer said Jesus could take away sins: *“... Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”* (John 1:29). Jesus’ heart was troubled, but His resolve was firm: *“... what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name’”* (John 12:27–28). Jesus had sanctified himself, and He wanted the apostles sanctified for the purposes of God. After His arrest Jesus told His disciples that His Father could send twelve legions of angels to deliver Him from crucifixion, but He wanted Scripture to be fulfilled (cf. Matthew 26:53–54). Because Jesus was willing to sanctify Himself to die for the sins of the world, the apostles needed to be sanctified for the task of preaching the gospel to the world.

Jesus’ Prayer for All Believers

Jesus Prays for Future Believers

Jesus prayed for Himself and for His apostles. Then He prayed for His future followers, expressing a deep concern for them. Jesus knew that His kingdom would grow when the apostles preached the word of God. Their words about Him and His sacrificial death would cause men to believe. John wrote about the gospel: *“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God . . .”* (John 20:31). Paul also wrote about the gospel: *“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ”* (Romans 10:17). Since His disciples would preach the message to the world, Jesus knew that others would come to believe in Him. So Jesus prayed for people who would believe the disciples’ message: *“My prayer*

is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message” (John 17:20).

As Jesus had prayed for unity among His apostles, He also prayed for the unity of His future followers: *“that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me”* (John 17:21). Unity among His followers cause people of the world to believe in Christ. Unity among Christ’s followers causes belief, but disunity and lack of love and harmony cause unbelief. John 17:22–23:

“I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

God was revealed in Jesus’ earthly life, a life of lowliness, humility and service. His life reached its greatest glory by the way of the cross which led to His resurrection and His return to the Father.

The glory given to Christ was shown to the apostles as well. His spirit of humility and service which revealed the Father’s glory caused them to be united. Unity among His followers proves to the world that God sent Jesus and that He loved the disciples as He loved Jesus. Notice the mutual indwelling that is mentioned in this section of Scripture. God is in Christ, Christ is in God, Christ is in His followers, and the followers are in the Father and in the Son (cf. John 17:21–23). Jesus had prayed for the unity of His future disciples and now He makes a second request (John 17:24).

“Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am and to see my glory, the glory you have given me . . .”

Jesus wanted His followers to be with Him to see His glory. In view of His impending departure from the disciples and His

return to the Father, Jesus knew they could not join Him at that time. But Jesus looked forward to the time of His return when He would take them to the place He had prepared for them (cf. John 14:1–3). In heaven His followers will get to see the glory Jesus has had with the Father since before the world existed (cf. John 17:5).

Jesus' final words in the prayer are a summary of all His words on that final night. John 17:25–26):

“Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”

Jesus contrasted Himself with a world that was ignorant of God. But Jesus knew that God had revealed Him to the apostles, and He had revealed the Father to them. He would continue to reveal the Father, through the love that was shown by His crucifixion. Jesus would continue to reveal the Father by sending the Holy Spirit to teach and guide His followers. The love that the Father had for His Son was extended to the chosen followers.

The Beginning of the End

John 18:1–40

Introduction

At the beginning of the Lord's ministry, the dove appeared following the appearance of the devil. At the close of His ministry the tender disclosures and moving prayer of the inner sanctuary is followed by the betrayer's kiss, although John omits this infamous detail. John 18 commences the record of Christ's suffering and crucifixion. Jesus moved from intercession for His own to giving His life for their salvation.

Although John does not specifically mention that the anguished prayer is in Gethsemane, there is little doubt that the garden mentioned in verse one is that sacred spot. It is interesting that Adam fell in a garden, Jesus' passion began in a garden, the place He was crucified was in a garden (cf. John 19:41), and the sepulcher where He was entombed was in a garden.

The arrest of Jesus and His trials before the Jewish and Roman authorities is recorded in this chapter.

Actions of the Betrayal Night

The Place of Betrayal – Gethsemane

After Jesus concluded His prayer (cf. John 17), He entered the olive grove, taking His disciples with Him: *“When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was an*

olive grove, and he and his disciples went into it" (John 18:1). The Kidron Valley was east of the temple area and a stream ran through the valley during the rainy season. A hill or ridge in the garden was called the Mount of Olives. It was the practice of Jesus to spend the night on that hill each evening during the last week of His life (cf. Luke 21:37). He taught at the Temple during the daytime, and spent the night at the Mount of Olives.

Judas knew of the garden because Jesus often met His disciples there: *"Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples"* (John 18:2). Luke wrote that Jesus went as usual to the Mount of Olives and His disciples followed Him there (cf. Luke 22:39). Even though Jesus was aware that Judas knew the place well, He did not avoid the place or try to escape. Jesus had plenty of time to cross the Jordan River and escape to the land of Perea, but the hour had come for His arrest, trials, and crucifixion. And so, Jesus would no longer say, *"My hour has not yet come,"* or *"Father, save me from this hour."* He would instead say: *"Father, glorify your name"* (John 12:28).

The Betrayers' Treachery and the Master's Majesty

Judas led some soldiers and officials to Jesus: *"So Judas came to the grove, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons"* (John 18:3). The detachment of soldiers were Roman soldiers sent with the Temple guards by the Jewish religious leaders. Since it was the time of the Passover festival, the Roman authorities were willing to help arrest Jesus. They did not want a riot or revolution from the Jews about a possible Messiah. They probably thought it would be difficult to find Jesus in the olive grove at night, so they brought torches and lanterns. Their weapons included swords and clubs (cf. Luke 22:52).

Rather than trying to hide or escape, Jesus calmly presented Himself to the soldiers and guards: *"Jesus, knowing*

all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, 'Who is it you want?'" (John 18:4). Jesus was completely aware of all that would happen to Him because His crucifixion and atoning death had been planned from before the creation of the world: *"but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world but was revealed in these last times for your sake"* (1 Peter 1:19–20.) John also wrote of Christ: *" . . . the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world"* (Revelation 13:8). He was ready to give Himself as a ransom for many (cf. Matthew 20:28), to lay down His life for His friends (cf. John 15:13). Jesus was in complete control of everything that took place that night. The soldiers and the temple guards were the ones who were surprised when Jesus stepped forward and spoke to them.

The other gospel writers describe Judas kissing Jesus in order to identify Him to the soldiers and guards (cf. Matthew 26:48–49; Mark 14:44–45; Luke 22:47–48). Only John relates that the soldiers drew back and fell to the ground: *"When Jesus said, 'I am he,' they drew back and fell to the ground"* (John 15:6). There was something about the dignified courage of Jesus that they did not understand. The soldiers and officials seemed to be overwhelmed with awe in His presence.

When Jesus told them a second time He was the One they wanted, He expressed concern for the safety of His followers: *"I told you that I am he," Jesus answered. "If you are looking for me, then let these men go"* (John 17:8). This was said to fulfill the words of His prayer: *"This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: 'I have not lost one of those you gave me'"* (John 18:9). Jesus' prayer in John 17:12 referred to the spiritual safety of His apostles, but at the moment of His arrest they needed physical safety, too. Their faith was still weak, and their arrest would have harmed them spiritually.

John recorded nothing Peter said after Jesus predicted that Peter would disown Him three times before the rooster crowed

(cf. John 13:37–38). Peter must have been deeply affected by Jesus' words and remained unusually quiet for most of the evening. Then the loyal, loving, impetuous Peter acted in character and defended Jesus: *"Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus)"* (John 18:10). Only John named the follower of Jesus who used the sword to cut off the right ear of the servant of the high priest, and the name of the servant whose ear was severed. Peter exhibited a lot of courage when he defended Jesus against so many. He surely must have intended to cut off the man's head rather than merely an ear. Jesus touched the servant's ear and healed him (cf. Luke 22:51). Jesus told Peter to put his sword away: *"Jesus commanded Peter, 'Put your sword away! . . .'"* (John 18:11). Jesus also told Peter: *" . . . for all who draw the sword will die by the sword"* (Matthew 26:52).

Jesus allowed nothing to defect Him from the cross: *" . . . Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"* (John 18:11). God had given the cup of suffering on the cross to Jesus, and by no other way could man be saved. In the garden before the soldiers arrived Jesus had fully submitted to the will of God: *"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done"* (Luke 22:42). Since the Father had given Jesus this cup, He was willing to drink it.

The Jewish Trial

The Arraignment Before Annas

Following His arrest Jesus was taken to Annas to be tried. John 18:12:

Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year.

Little information is given concerning Annas and Caiaphas. Jesus had predicted earlier in the evening that His disciples would scatter to their own home and would abandon Him (cf. John 16:32). Matthew and Mark both wrote that all of Jesus' followers deserted Him when He was arrested (cf. Matthew 26:56; Mark 14:50).

John is the only gospel that records the brief trial of Jesus before Annas, who was Caiaphas' father-in-law. Annas had served as high priest, but had been deposed by the Roman government. Five of his sons had also served as high priests, and then his son-in-law Caiaphas became high priest and served from 18–36 A.D. However, according to the Old Testament, the high priest was supposed to serve his entire life. Apparently, the Jews recognized Annas as the high priest in conjunction with Caiaphas (cf. Luke 3:2). After Pentecost when Peter and John appeared before the Sanhedrin, Annas was the high priest (cf. Acts 4:6).

It was probably necessary to get Annas' official approval for Jesus' trial before the Jewish high court. The fact that Caiaphas is mentioned as the high priest that year does not mean that John believed that a high priest served for only one year. He simply meant that the year Jesus was crucified, Caiaphas was high priest.

Caiaphas had earlier prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation (cf. John 11:49–52). John reminds his readers of Caiaphas' prophesy: "*Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it would be good if one man died for the people*" (John 18:14).

Peter's Denial of Jesus

As Jesus was led to His trial, Peter and another disciple followed Him from a distance into the courtyard of the high priest (cf. Mark 14:54). The identity of the other follower is not given. It could have been John, but he is unnamed. The unnamed disciple was known by the high priest so he was able to get Peter inside. John 18:15–16:

Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the girl on duty there and brought Peter in.

Peter may have later regretted going into the courtyard because it was there that he denied his Lord three times. The girl at the door asked Peter a question: “*You are not one of his disciples, are you?*” the girl at the door asked Peter. He replied, *‘I am not.’*” (John 18:17). In the Greek language the question implies a negative answer. This made it much easier for Peter to answer in the negative. This is the first of the three denials predicted by Jesus earlier that evening (cf. John 13:38). Once Peter was overtaken with fear and shame, it was difficult for him to be truthful.

The weather was cold, and Peter warmed himself at the fire along with some of the servants and officials of the high priest: “*It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself*” (John 18:18). In the courtyard near the fire, Peter denied his master three times. Around another fire he later affirmed his love for Jesus three times (cf. John 21:15–19).

The Trial Before Annas

The high priest questioned Jesus: “*Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching*” (John 18:19). The high priest in this context refers to Annas. His questioning of Jesus was not legal according to Jewish law. Witnesses had to be called before one’s guilt could be established (cf. Deuteronomy 17:6).

Jesus’ reply indicated that the trial was not being conducted properly. John 18:20–21:

"I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said."

There were many witnesses who had heard Jesus teach in the synagogues and in the temple courtyard. Jesus had taught in synagogues throughout both Judea and Galilee. He had also taught in the temple area night after night. Jesus knew that the law demanded that witnesses be called, and there were plenty of witnesses who had heard Him teach. When Jesus replied *"I said nothing in secret,"* He meant that He did not have a separate, dangerous message for His followers. What He taught in private, He also taught in public. He sometimes took His disciples aside and taught them more fully, but He did not teach them a dangerous political philosophy. What He taught in public was the same as what He taught in private. If the high priest had wanted to know what Jesus taught, he should have asked the proper witnesses.

An official was angered by Jesus' protest and slapped Him on the face: *"When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby struck him in the face. 'Is this the way you answer the high priest?' he demanded"* (John 18:22). Perhaps the man was trying to please the high priest, but Jesus had done nothing wrong and did not apologize. He had complete control. Jesus had no anger or ill will toward the man who hit Him. This was in harmony with the spirit of what He had previously taught: *" . . . If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also"* (Matthew 5:39). Jesus did not literally turn his other cheek. A man can literally turn the other cheek but be filled with rage and ill will toward the man who hit him. Jesus did not have any ill will or malice toward the person who hit Him.

Annas sent Jesus to His formal trial before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high court, where Caiaphas would preside: *"Then*

Annas sent him, still bound, to Caiaphas the high priest" (John 18:24). It may have been in the same building or within the same group of buildings where Annas had his residence. As Jesus went from Annas to Caiaphas, He possibly passed the courtyard where Peter was about to deny Him again.

Peter's Second and Third Denial of Jesus

Peter's first denial was to the girl keeping the door (cf. John 18:17). A second time Peter denied being a disciple of Jesus: "*As Simon Peter stood warming himself, he was asked, 'You are not one of his disciples, are you?' He denied it, saying, 'I am not'.*" (John 18:25). Again the question to Peter was worded in the original language as if to anticipate a negative answer.

A relative of Malchus thought that Peter was the same person he had seen in the garden: "*One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, 'Didn't I see you with him in the olive grove?'*" (John 18:26). The wording of this question indicates that the servant expected a positive answer, but Peter again denied knowing Jesus. Matthew wrote that Peter called down curses on himself, and he swore to them: "*. . . I don't know the man*" (Matthew 26:74). Calling curses upon one's self is something like the expression that Old Testament people said, "May God do to me and more also if I am not telling the truth" or "may God Almighty punish me ever so severely if I am not telling the truth." Peter was making a similar statement when he called curses down on himself.

A very interesting thing happened as Peter was denying Jesus the third time. Luke 22:60–62:

. . . The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

The Civil Trial – Phase I

Pious Legalism

John does not give the details of what happened in the trial before Caiaphas. To know the details of what happened before Caiaphas, a person needs to read the accounts in the other gospels. (cf. Matthew 26:57–27:1; Mark 14:53–15:1; Luke 22:66–71). However, John does give more details about the trial of Jesus before the Roman governor Pilate. John 18:28:

Then the Jews led Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover.

The Jewish leaders condemned Jesus to die and then wanted Pilate to give the approval of the Roman government for His execution. The Jews were concerned about being ceremonially unclean, but they were not concerned about their envy, deceit, or their planned murder of an innocent man.

Pilate requested the details of the charges against the accused: “*So Pilate came out to them and asked, ‘What charges are you bringing against this man?’*” (John 18:29). The Jews apparently expected Pilate to take their word about the guilt of Jesus: “*‘If he were not a criminal,’ they replied, ‘we would not have handed him over to you’*” (John 18:30). The Jews had proven to themselves that He was a criminal, but Pilate wanted proof of violation of the Roman law, not the Jewish customs or laws.

The Jews wanted the death penalty for Jesus, but this right had been taken away from them by the Roman authorities: “*Pilate said, ‘Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.’ ‘But we have no right to execute anyone,’ the Jews objected*” (John 18:31). For Jesus to be put to death legally, they needed the approval of Pilate. The Jews executed

people by stoning them, according to their law. They had earlier tried to stone Jesus (cf. John 8:59, 10:31). Stephen was later stoned to death by the Jews (cf. Acts 7:54–60).

These events occurred so Jesus' prophecy about His death would be fulfilled: "*This happened so that the words Jesus had spoken indicating the kind of death he was going to die would be fulfilled*" (John 18:32). The insistence of the Jews for the death of Jesus by the Romans fulfilled His prediction about His death (cf. John 3:14, 8:28, 12:32–33).

As Jesus was being judged before Pilate, Pilate was being judged before Jesus.

Contrasting Kingships and Kingdoms

Pilate asked Jesus an important question: "*Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, 'Are you the king of the Jews?'*" (John 18:33). All four of the gospels record the first words Pilate spoke to Jesus (cf. Matthew 27:11; Mark 15:2; and Luke 23:3). Pilate had obviously expected a political revolutionary who would use armed might to overthrow the Romans. He found it hard to believe that the meek and humble person who had been battered and beaten could be a danger to the Roman political system. Pilate's question indicates that he was surprised that Jesus called himself the king of the Jews?

Before Jesus answered Pilate's question, He needed to know why Pilate had asked the question: "*'Is that your own idea,' Jesus asked, 'or did others talk to you about me?'*" (John 18:34). Jesus wanted to know if Pilate was referring to a Roman type king with political ideas, a rival to Caesar, or was he referring to a Messianic king. If Pilate had in mind a political kingdom, the answer would be "no." But if Pilate had in mind a Jewish Messianic king, the answer would be "yes."

Pilate's response indicates that he was irritated: "*'Am I a Jew?'*" Pilate replied. *'It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?'*" (John 18:35). The Jewish leaders were the ones who

had accused Jesus. They believed He was guilty of a crime deserving the death penalty, but Pilate wanted more than the word of the Jewish leaders. What was the crime that had caused them to hand Him over? Pilate insisted that Jesus tell him what crime He had committed.

Jesus explained that He did indeed have a kingdom: *“Jesus said, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place’”* (John 18:36). Jesus’ kingdom was not the same kind of kingdom that Caesar ruled over. If He had that kind of kingdom, He would have recruited soldiers and trained them for war and for His own protection. Jesus’ kingdom was spiritual in nature. It was entered by a new birth (cf. John 3:3–5). Jesus rules in the hearts and lives of men and women of every nation who follow Him (cf. Colossians 1:13, Revelation 1:5–6). Since Jesus spoke of His kingdom, Pilate concluded that He must be a king. John 18:37:

“You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”

Jesus accepted the term “king” used by Pilate, but explained that He ruled a kingdom of truth, not a political one. Jesus came into the world to give proof about truth: *“Jesus answered, ‘My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me’”* (John 7:16).

Jesus appears to have made His final appeal to Pilate when He said: *“... Everyone on the side of truth listens to me”* (John 18:37). If Pilate had really desired truth, He would have listened to the words of Jesus. Pilate’s word could mean that he spoke as a cynic: *“‘What is truth?’ Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, ‘I find no basis*

for a charge against him” (John 18:38). Perhaps Pilate did want to know about truth. No matter what was in his heart, Pilate knew that Jesus was not guilty of a crime. If he had really been a man of truth, he would have released Jesus at once. Two other times Pilate admitted that he had no basis for a charge against Jesus (cf. John 19:4, 6). Yet Pilate’s desire to please the Jews was stronger than his desire for truth.

Pilate spoke of the custom of releasing one prisoner at the Passover festival: *“But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release ‘the king of the Jews’?”* (John 18:39). This custom is mentioned by all four of the gospel writers. Luke records that the notorious prisoner called Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city and for murder (cf. Luke 23:19)). Surely Pilate must have thought that the Jews would want to release Jesus rather than the criminal Barabbas. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Barabbas released instead (cf. Mark 15:11). The crowd demanded that Barabbas be released and Jesus be crucified: *“They shouted back, ‘No, not him! Give us Barabbas!’ Now Barabbas had taken part in a rebellion”* (John 18:40).

The Crucifixion And Burial Of Jesus

John 19:1–42

Introduction

There are four major points in John 19. Jesus was sentenced to be crucified by Pilate (verses 1–16), the crucifixion itself (verses 17–27), the death of Jesus (verses 28–37), and the burial of Jesus (verses 38–42)

The practice of flogging or scourging of a condemned person was extremely cruel. It involved the use of leather thongs which had pieces of bone or metal in them. The victim's back would be so severely lacerated that the internal organs were sometimes exposed. The flogging could easily cause death. Usually flogging was done as preparation for a crucifixion.

The Civil Trial – Phase II

The Scourging and Crown

Pilate, even though knowing the innocence of Jesus, had Jesus flogged (John 19:1). Pilate scourged Jesus to satisfy the Jewish religious leaders: “. . . *I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him*” (Luke 23:22). Pilate thought that the scourging would be enough, and the people would be satisfied. He did not understand the hatred of the Jewish leaders toward Jesus. 700 years earlier Isaiah had written as he

wept about the suffering servant: *“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed”* (Isaiah 53:5). Peter referred to the same passage: *“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed”* (I Peter 2:24).

Jesus was mocked and mistreated by the Roman soldiers. John 19:2–3:

The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again, saying, “Hail, king of the Jews!” And they struck him in the face.

The soldiers had no personal animosity or ill-will toward Jesus. To the soldiers Jesus was merely another condemned Jew with whom they could have fun. Herod and his soldiers also ridiculed and mocked Jesus (cf. Luke 23:11). The crown of thorns and the purple robe were items used to mock the fact that Jesus was called the king of the Jews. The soldier’s actions demonstrated the contempt they felt for the Jewish people and their so-called king. The rude soldiers struck Him in the face, apparently with their hands. Mark wrote that the soldiers called together the whole company of soldiers who beat Him and spit upon Him: *“Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him”* (Mark 15:19).

When the Roman soldiers mocked Jesus by calling Him king of the Jews, they had no idea who He really was. They did not realize that He really was the ruler of the kings of the earth (cf. Revelation 1:5). John wrote that Jesus is Lord of lords and Kings of kings (cf. Revelation 17:14, 19:16).

The Implacable Leaders

A second time Pilate admitted that Jesus was innocent: *“Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews, ‘Look, I*

am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him” (John 19:4). Since there was no basis for a charge against Him, Pilate should have released Jesus immediately. Instead, he again brought Jesus out to the crowd: *“When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, ‘Here is the man!’”* (John 19:5). After having been flogged and beaten, Jesus probably did not look like a king. Pilate, apparently, thought that the sight of Jesus in this condition would cause the Jews to have pity upon Him. Pilate’s statement, *“Here is the man!”* means He was the accused person whom the Jewish leaders had brought before Pilate. Perhaps John intended for the people to see a deeper meaning: Jesus is the perfect example of humanity, and look what humanity was doing to Him.

Pilate’s words did not satisfy the Jewish leaders: *“As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, ‘Crucify! Crucify!’ . . .”* (John 19:6). Pilate had not understood the depth of the Jewish hatred for Jesus and their determination to kill Him. The Jewish high court, the Sanhedrin, had plotted for some time to kill Jesus and nothing less than His death would satisfy them.

Pilate knew that the Jewish chief rulers and officials could not execute Jesus, but he wanted them to understand how powerless they were: *“But Pilate answered, ‘You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him’”* (John 19:6). The real reason for the Jewish opposition was given: *“The Jews insisted, ‘We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God’”* (John 19:7). The Jews thought Jesus had blasphemed the name of the Lord, and anyone who blasphemed Him was to be put to death according to Jewish law (cf. Leviticus 24:16). The earliest opposition to Jesus was based on the same charge when He claimed to be equal with God (cf. John 5:18). Later they accused Him of blasphemy because He said He was God’s son (cf. John 10:36). Claiming to be God’s son was much more serious to the Jewish leaders than claiming to be a king.

The Pitiful Roman Governor

Pilate was apparently not a religious man. Like most Gentiles, he probably believed in many god's and many lord's. Paul described such people in I Corinthians 8:5. Like many of the Romans, Pilate had likely heard that some of the god's would take upon themselves flesh and visit the earth. Jesus was certainly different from anyone Pilate had ever met. Could it be that He was some kind of god or son of a god and had come into the world in that form? When Pilate heard of Jesus' claim, He was even more afraid: *"When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, and he went back inside the palace. 'Where do you come from?' he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer"* (John 19:8–9). Pilate knew Jesus was from Galilee. He had sent Jesus to Herod because Jesus was a Galilean (cf. Luke 23:5–7). Perhaps Pilate was asking about the possibility of a heavenly origin? Something else very strange happened. Pilate's wife sent him a message: *"... Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him"* (Matthew 27:19).

Jesus did not answer Pilate's question. Pilate would not have understood Jesus' answer in view of his background and his attitude. Pilate found it incredible that Jesus did not answer his question and it angered Him: *"'Do you refuse to speak to me?' Pilate said. 'Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?'"* (John 19:10).

Pilate's power was given to Him by God: *"Jesus answered, 'You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin'"* (John 19:11). God is over all kings and rulers of the world. This truth is affirmed throughout the Bible. The prophet Daniel stood before King Nebuchadnezzar, one of the great world leaders, and said: *"... the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men"* (Daniel 4:17). Paul wrote that civil government's exist

because of the will of God: *“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established”* (Romans 13:1).

Since Pilate had been given authority to pronounce such sentences, he should have recognized that his rule was a sacred trust. But Pilate did not realize the consequences of condemning Jesus. Because Pilate went against his conscience, he bore some blame. The one who handed Jesus over to him was guilty of an even greater sin. This principle was stated by Jesus: *“. . . From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be”* (Luke 12:48). Caiphas had greater opportunity from his Jewish background and knowledge of scripture to understand who Jesus was. Therefore, his sin was greater.

The Heartless Jews and the Rejected King

Pilate continued his efforts to set Jesus free: *“From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, ‘If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar’”* (John 19:12). Pilate was certain that Jesus was guilty of no crime deserving death, nor was He a danger to the Roman government. Even if Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, that was not a crime according to Roman law. They recognized many god’s and many lord’s. So the Jewish leaders knew they must have a political reason in order to secure Jesus’ death. Pilate knew that the Jewish religious leaders had no loyalty to Caesar nor to his government. It was pure intimidation on the part of the Jews, but Pilate did not want an official investigation into his record. Pilate had mingled the blood of some Galileans with the sacrifices they offered (cf. Luke 13:1). His crimes were many, and the last thing he wanted was an official investigation. He especially did not want to be known as one who sets free a dangerous enemy of the government, a man who called Himself a King. Pilate knowing that Jesus was

innocent, added murder to his long list of crimes.

From a human point of view the words spoken by the Jews settled Jesus' fate: "*When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha)*" (John 19:13). Pilate brought Jesus out to sentence him to death even though he had pronounced Him innocent three times. The Judge of all was judged worthy of death by Pilate. He sinned because he was more interested in keeping his position as governor than he was in doing what he knew to be right. From the human standpoint, the trial of Jesus was the greatest crime and tragedy in history. From the divine viewpoint, it was the fulfillment of prophecy and the accomplishment of the will of God (cf. Acts 2:22-24).

Jesus was condemned to die on the day of Preparation of Passover Week, a Friday: "*It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour . . .*" (John 19:14). Mark confirms that it was a Friday: "*It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath)*" (Mark 15:42). Luke also confirms that Jesus was crucified on a Friday (cf. Luke 23:54).

There is a problem concerning John's statement in verse 14 that the judgement by Pilate occurred about the sixth hour because Mark wrote that it was the third hour when they crucified Him (cf. Mark 15:25). John, writing later in the first century and to mainly non-Jewish readers, used the Roman method of counting time rather than the Jewish. The Jews counted time from sunset to sunrise, but the Romans counted time from midnight to noon, as is done today. Confirmation of Roman time counting is found in John 20:19: "*On the evening of that first day of the week . . .*" According to the Jewish method, a new day would have already begun, but John indicates that it is the evening of the same day. Therefore, according to John's gospel Jesus was judged about the sixth hour, six o'clock in the morning. He was crucified at the third hour, nine o'clock in the morning according to Roman time. He died six hours later, the ninth hour, which

was three o'clock in the afternoon, Roman time.

Pilate did not believe that Jesus was a king, but he hated the Jews so he replied to them: “*‘Here is your king,’ Pilate said to the Jews*” (John 19:14). He especially hated them for forcing him to go against his conscience. To call Jesus their King was Pilate’s way of getting back at them.

The Jews again rejected Jesus, and Pilate made a final, feeble attempt to save Him: “*But they shouted, ‘Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!’ ‘Shall I crucify your king?’ Pilate asked. ‘We have no king but Caesar,’ the chief priests answered.*” (John 19:15). To say “*we have no king but Caesar*” was a complete rejection of one of their most cherished beliefs. They had claimed that only God was their king. In claiming Caesar was their king, they rejected God as their king and manifested their determination to put Jesus to death. Luke wrote that Pilate decided to grant the demands of the Jewish leaders. Luke 23:23–25:

But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed. So Pilate decided to grant their demand. He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will.

Pilate turned Jesus over to be crucified: “*Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus*” (John 19:16).

The Old Rugged Cross

Only John records that Jesus went out carrying His own cross: “*Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha)*” (John 19:17). Matthew, Mark, and Luke all wrote that the soldiers compelled a man by the name of Simon of Cyrene to bear the cross for Jesus (cf. Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26).

Jesus was probably greatly weakened by the flogging and other abuse He had suffered. After Jesus carried the cross for awhile, He may have stumbled and fallen. Then the soldiers compelled Simon to bear the cross the rest of the way to the place of the skull.

The Aramaic name for the place He was crucified is Golgotha. Aramaic was the language spoken by Jesus and the other Jews. The word Golgotha was translated into the English word Calvary. It is unknown why the place was called “the place of the skull.”

John does not give many details about the crucifixion: *“Here they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle”* (John 19:18). The people to whom John wrote knew a great deal about crucifixion because it was widely practiced in the Roman empire. It involved the nailing of the hands and the feet of the victim to a cross which was raised from the ground. It was a shameful and dishonorable death, usually reserved for the worst criminals. The Jews considered anyone who was hung on a tree to be under God’s curse: *“. . . anyone who is hung on a tree is under God’s curse”* (Deuteronomy 21:23). But Paul later wrote: *“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree’”* (Galatians 3:13).

Nailed to other crosses were two robbers, one on Jesus’ right side and the other to His left (cf. Matthew 27:38; Mark 15:27; Luke 23:32–33). This event fulfilled the words of the prophet Isaiah: *“. . . because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors”* (Isaiah 53:12).

According to the custom, a sign was prepared for the condemned person with a written charge of their crimes. Pilate wrote no charges against Jesus because he had none to write. Again Pilate showed his hatred and contempt of the Jewish people: *“Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS”* (John 19:19). The other gospel accounts also record

this notice. John would have readers understand that Jesus was King even in His death.

There was significance in the wording of the notice. First, *“Jesus Of Nazareth”* showed Jesus’ humanity. Second, *“The King”* referred to His Messianic dignity. Third, Israel sinned when they killed their King.

The place where He was crucified was said to be near Jerusalem: *“And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood”* (Hebrews 13:12). Everyone could read the sign because it was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek: *“Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek”* (John 19:20). Aramaic was the language spoken in Palestine by Jesus and other Jews who lived in the area. Latin was the official language of the Roman government, and Greek was the common language of most of the Roman empire.

The Jewish leaders had already rejected Jesus as their king so Pilate’s sign, “JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS,” was an insult to them. Was not His crime that He claimed to be the king of the Jews? The chief priests protested to Pilate: *“The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, ‘Do not write “The King of the Jews,” but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews’”* (John 18:21). But Pilate was in no mood to be controlled by the Jews. He had already violated his conscience, so he wanted to have the last word: *“Pilate answered, ‘What I have written, I have written’”* (John 19:22).

There were four soldiers involved in Jesus’ crucifixion according to John 19:23:

When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

Each soldier took one part of the four parts of Jesus' clothing. There was an undergarment, a robe, which was very special. It was a seamless garment made from one piece of woven cloth. It would have been ruined if it had been torn. The soldiers decided to gamble for Jesus' undergarment. John 19:24:

"Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it." This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled which said, "They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." So this is what the soldiers did.

The soldiers actions fulfilled the scripture found in the Old Testament: *"They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing"* (Psalms 22:18).

There were also four women standing near the cross: *"Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene"* (John 19:25). Jesus asked John to care for His mother. John 19:26–27:

When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

The Death Of Jesus

Jesus spoke about His physical condition to fulfill scripture: *"Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, 'I am thirsty'"* (John 18:28). Jesus was given vinegar: *"A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips"* (John 19:29).

Jesus then spoke about His work: *“When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘It is finished.’ With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit”* (John 19:30). Even on the cross, Jesus was looking after the needs of His mother. Everything else was done according to the purpose of God, which He has come to fulfill. He then turned to His own needs. He was thirsty as He hung on the cross, and He cried out for relief. Jesus was completely human. He became hungry, tired, and thirsty like other men, and He died on a cross, shedding His own blood. Truly, the Word became flesh. The sour wine was apparently placed there for the needs of those who were crucified. It was not the drugged wine for pain which Jesus had earlier refused (cf. Matthew 27:34). He faced death on the cross with a clear mind. The sour wine or vinegar which Jesus drank enabled Him to speak His last words so that He could be heard by others.

According to the Law of Moses, bodies of people who died on trees were to be taken down and buried on the day of their deaths (cf. Deuteronomy 21:23). A special Sabbath was near, the Sabbath of the Passover week. Therefore, the Jews were especially concerned that the bodies be removed from the crosses. John 19:31:

Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down.

The Jewish leaders had committed murder, but they were concerned about a small detail of their law. Breaking the legs of people on a cross caused them to die quickly. The Romans sometimes left bodies on crosses for days. So permission had to be gained from Pilate to take the bodies down. He agreed, and the legs of the two criminals were broken: *“The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had*

been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other” (John 19:32).

The soldiers did not break Jesus’ legs: *“But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs”* (John 19:33). Instead, Jesus’ side was pierced: *“Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water”* (John 19:34).

John wrote this eyewitness testimony: *“The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe”* (John 19:35). John saw Jesus’ death with his own eyes. Jesus was not a ghost or a spirit. He had a human body that shed blood and died. Because of that shed blood, men can be forgiven of their sins. Many Bible passages tell that Christians are forgiven by the blood of Jesus. Without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness. John wrote what he had seen to cause readers to believe the message of Jesus.

All of the events took place in accordance with Jewish scriptures: *“These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: ‘Not one of his bones will be broken’”* (John 19:36). This scripture refers to the Passover lamb (cf. Exodus 12:26-27). Paul wrote: *“. . . For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed* (1 Corinthians 5:7).

When the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side, they fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah 12:10: *“and, as another scripture says, ‘They will look on the one they have pierced’”* (John 19:37).

The fact that all the scriptures were fulfilled, proves that God was in control. What happened to Jesus was God’s plan before the creation of the world: *“ This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross”* (Acts 2:23).

Jesus’ Burial

Joseph of Arimathea requested the body of Jesus. John 19:38:

Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away.

Joseph was a rich man from the town of Arimathea. He was a prominent member of the Jewish Council, who was waiting for the kingdom of God (cf. Mark 15:43). He was a righteous man and a secret disciple of Jesus. He had not voted in the council for Jesus' execution.

Joseph of Arimathea, along with Nicodemus, took the body of Jesus to prepare it for burial: *"He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds"* (John 19:39). The men wrapped the body of Jesus according to Jewish burial traditions: *"Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs"* (John 19:40). Jesus' body was placed in a new tomb in a garden: *"At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid"* (John 19:41). They placed the body of Jesus in the nearby tomb because it was the day of Preparation: *"Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there"* (John 19: 42).

Conclusion

Jesus was born in a borrowed manger and buried in a borrowed tomb. Fittingly, it was a new tomb that had never been used. The first to lie in Joseph's tomb was the first to rise from the dead, never to die again!

The Historical Resurrection of Jesus

John 20:1–30

Introduction

John 20 contains one of the greatest historical facts of all time – the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Another great historical fact was His sacrificial death on the cross. Without both, the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, there would be no salvation for mankind.

John 20 has four main points. First, the empty tomb found in verses 1–9. Second, Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene in verses 10–18. Third, Jesus appeared to His disciples, found in verses 19–23. Fourth, Jesus appeared to Thomas in verses 24–31.

Evidence of the Resurrection of Jesus – The Empty Tomb

The First Witnesses –

Mary of Magdalene and Other Women

A woman was the first person to the empty tomb: “*Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance*” (John 20:1). The Mary mentioned in this verse was from the town of Magdala, located on the western shore of the sea of Tiberius between the cities of Tiberius and Capernaum. She was one of the women who

helped support Jesus and His disciples from her own means (cf. Luke 8:1–3). Jesus had driven seven demons out of her (cf. Mark 16:9). There is no record in scripture that Mary Magdalene was an immoral woman or a prostitute, although tradition has branded her this way.

Mary Magdalene was present with other women near the cross of Jesus (cf. John 19:25). All four of the gospels record the account of her coming to the tomb on the first day of the week. John wrote that Mary came to the tomb, but it is obvious from Mary's word "we" that other women were with her. John 20:2:

So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

The women brought spices and perfumes to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus (cf. Mark 16:1; Luke 23:56–24:1). Their concern was removing the stone: "*and they asked each other, 'Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?'*" (Mark 16:3). What they did not realize was that the stone had been removed by an angel from heaven: "*There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it*" (Matthew 28:2).

When Mary saw that the body of Jesus was not inside the tomb, she may have thought it had been stolen. She ran to Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved, identified as John. She wanted to let them know that the tomb was empty; the body of Jesus was missing.

The Second Witnesses – Peter and John

John was able to outrun Peter and arrived at the tomb first: "*So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first*" (John 20:3–4). From his position

outside the tomb John could see the strips of linen which had wrapped the body of Jesus: *“He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in”* (John 20:5). He could also see that the body of Jesus was missing. Neither Mary Magdalene, John, nor Peter really expected Jesus to rise from the dead. If the body had been stolen, why were the linen cloths lying there? They would have been taken with the body when it was stolen.

Peter arrived later than John, but he went into the tomb first: *“Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. . .”* (John 20:6). This was the typical behavior of Peter, shown throughout the four gospels. He was more bold than John, so he immediately went into the tomb.

Peter saw from inside the tomb what John had seen from outside: *“. . . He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus’ head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen”* (John 20:6–7). The cloth that had been around Jesus’ head was not torn but folded and separated from the linen strips. These items indicate that there was order to Jesus’ departure. There would have been disorder if His body had been taken away by grave robbers. The tomb was empty, and everything in it indicated that Jesus had been raised from the dead by the power of God, as Jesus had predicted many times. Jesus had explained to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, suffer many things, be crucified, and on the third day be raised to life (cf. Matthew 16:21). Jesus’ prophecy was, of course, fulfilled.

John may have been stopped by fear from entering the tomb, but Peter’s boldness encouraged him to follow: *“Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed”* (John 20:8). John saw the empty tomb and the orderly arrangement of the grave clothes, and he believed that Jesus had risen from the dead. Because John believed, he wrote an eyewitness account of Jesus’ resurrection. John was not one who learned of the resurrection from others. He went inside the grave and saw the evidence

that Jesus had indeed been raised from the dead. None of the disciples had understood the Jewish scriptures that said Jesus had to rise from the dead: “*(They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead)*” (John 20:9). Scriptures like David the psalmist wrote were not yet understood by the disciples: “*because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay*” (Psalms 16:10). The passage was quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost to show the necessity of Jesus Christ being raised from the dead (cf. Acts 2:27). The prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus was raised from the dead. His body was not left in the tomb to see corruption, and His spirit did not stay in Hades. He was raised by the power of God, and proclaimed to be the resurrected Lord.

The disciples did not yet understand Isaiah 53, the great chapter about the suffering servant of the Lord. The chapter refers to Jesus’ death and activity after His death and implies that there would be a resurrection from dead. The disciples did not understand this prophecy until later.

After the day of Pentecost Peter and the other disciples of Jesus firmly and boldly preached the resurrection of Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament scripture. The main burden of their preaching, found in the book of Acts, was that Jesus was not only crucified, but He was raised from the dead and ever lives. They referred to the Old Testament scriptures when they preached and when they wrote epistles to churches and individuals.

Evidence of the Resurrection – Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

The Angelic Vision

Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene as she returned to the tomb the second time. John 20:10–12:

Then the disciples went back to their homes, but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she

bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

Mary must have returned to the tomb after she told Peter and John about the empty tomb. After they left, she arrived. In the meantime, two angels appeared in the tomb. Nothing was said about the angels being in the tomb while Peter and John were there. However, some of the women had seen angels earlier according to the men on the road to Emmaus (cf. Luke 24:22–23). Angels had earlier spoken to the women in the tomb. Luke 24:5–7:

“ . . . Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’”

Mary was not expecting Jesus to rise from the dead. Rather than rejoicing, she was weeping. The angels' question implied that she had no reason for her weeping: *“They asked her, ‘Woman, why are you crying?’ ‘They have taken my Lord away,’ she said, ‘and I don't know where they have put him’”* (John 20:13). Mary wept because she could not find Jesus' dead body, but if she had found the corpse of Jesus, then all the world would weep forever. If Jesus had not been raised from the dead, there would be no hope for anyone. Many Bible passages confirm this statement. Jesus not only had to die, but He had to be raised from the dead by the power of God. Paul wrote about the purpose of Jesus' death: *“He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification”* (Romans 4:25). Paul wrote that preaching would be useless if Jesus had not died and been raised from the dead: *“And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is*

useless and so is your faith. . . And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins” (I Corinthians 15:14–17). Christians would be most pitied if Jesus was not been raised from the dead

Mary turned around and saw Jesus: *“At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus”* (John 20:14). It is not clear why Mary did not recognize Him. Perhaps it was because of her tears. She may have been blinded to some extent by her tears. Also, Jesus was not always easily recognized after He arose from the dead. Even though Jesus retained the same body, there were some changes in His body after His resurrection. Jesus was able to appear in a room with the doors locked (cf. John 20:19). He did not do anything like this during the days of His personal ministry. Jesus appeared in a different form to some of His disciples after His resurrection (cf. Mark 16:12). Some of the disciples doubted His resurrection when they saw Jesus before He gave them the great commission: *“When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted”* (Matthew 28:17).

Mary was not expecting to see Jesus alive so she concluded that He must be the gardener. John 20:15:

“Woman,” he said, “why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?” Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

Jesus again spoke to her and called her by name: *“Jesus said to her, ‘Mary.’ She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, ‘Rabboni!’ (which means Teacher)”* (John 20:16). The word that Mary used in response to Jesus was the word “*Rabboni*” which is a polite way of saying “teacher.” It refers to a teacher with dignity or significance.

Jesus did not forbid Mary to touch Him. John 20:17:

“Jesus said, ‘Do hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, “I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”’”

After Jesus was raised from the dead He allowed other women to clasp His feet and worship Him (cf. Matthew 28:8–9). On another occasion Jesus commanded His disciples to touch Him: *“Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have”* (Luke 24:39). Jesus’ words to Mary mean “do not cling to me.” Jesus did not want Mary to expect Him to live the same life He had lived before His resurrection. He would only be with His followers for a little while longer. Jesus was to return to His Father because He had completed the task that God had given Him, but He would be with His followers spiritually forever.

Jesus instructed Mary to go to “my brothers” which means she was to go to “His disciples.” Mary understood and followed His instructions: *“I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her*” (John 20:18). The same terminology is found in Matthew 28:10: *“Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.’”* Again “my brothers” refers to Jesus’ disciples: *“Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go”* (Matthew 28:16). Jesus had earlier said that those who do the will of God were His brother, sister, and mother? (cf. Matthew 12:50).

Note the unusual phraseology Jesus used: *“. . . I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God”* (John 20:17). Jesus did not refer to Himself and others with the terminology “our Father.” When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He told them to say: *“. . . ‘Our Father in heaven . . .’”* (Matthew 6:9). But when Jesus talked about His relationship to God and other people’s relationship, He did not

use such terminology. Though men may become sons of God, their sonship is different from Jesus' sonship. Jesus' sonship is unique, and His words preserve that distinction.

Evidence of the Resurrection — Jesus Appears to His Disciples

The Sunday Evening Gathering

Jesus appeared to His disciples on the evening of the first day of the week. John 20:19:

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"

It was the first day of the week, Sunday, the day Jesus was raised from the dead. Since Thomas was not with them (cf. John 20:24) nor Judas because He had committed suicide, there were only ten disciples present. The Jewish leaders had brought about Jesus' death, and the disciples probably feared the same fate. They were in the room with locked doors for fear of the Jews. Even though the doors were shut and locked, Jesus suddenly appeared in the room with them. His body had been nailed to the cross and was raised on the third day. Jesus showed them His hands and side: "*After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord*" (John 20:20). The disciples saw the nail marks in His hands and the wound in His side. The joy of the disciples was complete when they saw Him. His appearance fulfilled the promise He had made earlier: ". . . *Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy*" (John 16:22). The disciples were exceedingly joyful when they saw their resurrected, living Lord.

Assurance And Commission

Jesus again assured His disciples: "*Again Jesus said,*

‘Peace be with you! . . .’” (John 20:21). Jesus’ expression *“peace be with you”* was a common greeting among Jewish people, but it had a special meaning to the His disciples at this time. Had they not all forsaken Him and run away when He was arrested in the garden? Instead of rebuking them, Jesus offered them peace. Repeating the words encouraged them. The peace is a fulfillment of Jesus’ earlier promise: *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives . . .”* (John 14:27).

As God had sent Jesus into the world, Jesus sent His disciples into the world: *“. . . ‘As the Father has sent me, I am sending you’”* (John 20:21). Linking the disciples’ work with Jesus’ work must have given them a great deal of confidence.

Jesus breathed on the disciples: *“And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’”* (John 20:22). This was a symbol of His gift of the Holy Spirit. Receiving the Holy Spirit was connected with the power of the disciples to forgive sins, but they did not begin to do this until the day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2). They did not tell men how to be forgiven and saved until they received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. After receiving the power they convicted men of their sins. After hearing Peter’s address the Jews were cut to the heart and asked the brothers what they should do? Peter replied: *“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 2:38).

Reviewing Some Things About The Holy Spirit

The disciples began to exercise the power to forgive men of their sins, not by their own ingenuity but by telling men the will of God. They had been told by Jesus that the Holy Spirit would not come to them unless He went away: *“. . . but if I go, I will send him to you”* (John 16:7). They were told to wait in Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit and the power to speak in His name: *“. . . but stay in the city until*

you have been clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). Shortly before Jesus returned to heaven He told His disciples that John baptized with water, but in a few days they would receive the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1:5). Jesus also told them that they would be His witnesses: *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”* (Acts 1:8). Jesus was anticipating the events that would occur later. When the Holy Spirit came upon them, He would teach and remind them of everything that Jesus had said, and He would guide them into all truth (cf. John 14:26, 16:13).

Their power to forgive sins was not from within themselves. Only when they were guided by the Holy Spirit were they able to tell people God’s way of being forgiven. When men refused that way, they were not forgiven. That is what Jesus meant when He said: *“If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven”* (John 20:23). Jesus’ disciples told men what to do in order to be saved. Many people responded to the gospel, and their sins were forgiven. When people did not respond to the gospel, their sins were not forgiven. Men were not given the right to forgive sins according to their own will. They were given the privilege of telling lost people how God would forgive them. The apostles bound on earth what had already been bound in heaven (cf. Matthew 16:19). God did not bind in heaven what the apostles bound on earth. God had already bound the message in heaven, and He sent it down to the apostles on earth. As the apostles preached, they bound upon men what God had already bound in heaven.

Evidence For The Resurrection – Jesus Appears To Thomas

Thomas’ Demand For Evidence

Thomas was not with the other apostles when Jesus

appeared to them the previous time: “Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came” (John 20:24). Scripture does not reveal why he was absent. He was neither praised nor blamed for missing the event, but he did miss a significant event.

The other disciples told Thomas they had seen the Lord, but he was not convinced. John 20:25:

So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.”

Thomas has often been called “Doubting Thomas,” and doubt he did, but perhaps this has been an unjust characterization. He only demanded the same proof that all the other apostles had. They had seen the nail prints in Jesus’ hands and the wound in His side. The apostles were rebuked by Jesus for their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen Him after He had risen (cf. Mark 16:14). It was not only Thomas who doubted but the other Eleven, as well. The apostles needed conclusive proof before they believed, and Thomas demanded the same proof.

Jesus Presents Evidence To Thomas

Jesus presented Himself to Thomas. John 20:26:

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”

A week later would have been the Sunday following Jesus’ resurrection. This time Thomas was in the meeting with Jesus and the other disciples. Jesus knew that Thomas had demanded to see the nails in His hands and the wound in His

side, so He allowed Thomas to touch Him: *“Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe’”* (John 20:27). Thomas was absolutely convinced. He made one of the greatest, if not the greatest, confession of faith in the New Testament: *“Thomas told him, ‘My Lord and my God!’”* (John 20:28). What a tremendous statement of faith! Thomas’ confession was a tremendous statement for any Jew to have made in the first century. It would have taken powerful evidence for a Jew to confess that Jesus was the Son of God, but to call Him Lord and God proved that the evidence existed.

Jesus accepted the confession and worship of Thomas: *“Then Jesus told him, ‘Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed’”* (John 20:29).

Conclusion

Jesus did many other miracles which are not recorded by John: *“Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book”* (John 20:30). John concludes by writing the reason certain miracles were recorded: *“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name”* (John 20:31).

Trust and obedience to Christ will bring eternal life in His name. It did in the first century and it still does today. John wrote the gospel more than 1900 years ago, and yet today people are continuing to grow in their faith in Jesus Christ because of John’s record.

Appearance of Jesus And Peter Is Restored

John 21:1–25

Introduction

The last chapter of this gospel has been considered by many to be a postscript to the gospel which ends with the summary of the last two verses of John 20. There is no evidence, either external or internal, to support this view. The evangelist continues in a perfectly natural style to write of the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus. In the last chapter of the gospel of John, notice another post resurrection appearance of Jesus to His disciples (verses 1–14) and an account of the restoration of the apostle Peter to the service and work of his Lord (verses 15–25).

The Miraculous Catch Of Fish And Another Resurrection Appearance

The Appearances Of Jesus In And Around Jerusalem

Jesus had appeared to His disciples in the area around Jerusalem. He had appeared to ten disciples and later to eleven including Thomas (cf. John 20:19–29). He had earlier promised them that He would meet them in Galilee: “*But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee*” (Matthew 26:32). The angel said to the women at the tomb: “*Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will*

see him . . .” (Matthew 28:7). Mark also records the angels remarks to the women: *“But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you’”* (Mark 16:7). This scripture is especially significant because the angel told the women to *“tell the disciples and Peter.”* A special mention of Peter seems to be necessary since he had denied Jesus three times. The Lord especially wanted Peter to be there when He met with His disciples in Galilee.

A Fruitless Fishing Trip

Jesus met with the eleven disciples in Galilee when He gave them the great commission, authorizing them to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. Matthew 28:19–20:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

John wrote about one of Jesus’ appearances to some of His disciples in that area, but John’s account is of a different event: *“Afterwards Jesus appeared again to his disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way”* (John 21:1). In John’s account Jesus appears to seven of His disciples: *“Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together”* (John 21:2). Three of the men are named, Simon Peter, Thomas and Nathaniel. Four of the men are not named, the sons of Zebedee and two other disciples. The sons of Zebedee were James and John (cf. Luke 5:10), but the other two men are unnamed. The men returned to their former occupations. Maybe they were restless and anxious, or perhaps they needed to provide for their families. But the fishermen were unsuccessful: *“‘I’m going out to fish,’ Simon Peter told*

them, and they said, 'We'll go with you.' So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing" (John 21:3). Despite their experience and skill the men were unsuccessful.

The Miraculous Catch Of Fish And Renewed Fellowship

It was not wrong for the disciples to fish after Jesus had trained them for another work, but they needed to be reminded of the important work they had been given, to fish for men. On a previous occasion some of the men had fished all night and caught nothing. Jesus then called them to become fishers of men. (cf. Luke 5:4–11).

The disciples must have been discouraged after a hard night's work with nothing to show for their efforts. Jesus appeared on the shore: "*Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus*" (John 21:4). Perhaps they did not recognize Him because of the early morning light. Jesus called them friends: "*He called out to them, 'Friends, haven't you any fish?' 'No,' they answered*" (John 21:5).

Jesus told the men to throw their net into the water again: "*He said, 'Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.'* When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish" (John 21:6). Why they followed the advice of a stranger is not clear. Perhaps He spoke with the voice of authority, or perhaps they were willing to try anything after they had fished all night. Perhaps this great catch of fish reminded them of the previous day when they caught so many fish the nets began to tear. When they obeyed Jesus, they caught more fish than they could haul into the boat. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was the first person to recognize that it was Jesus. John 21:7:

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment

around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water.

Although John was the first person to recognize Jesus, again it was Peter who was the first to act. He was stripped for work; he had taken off everything but his undergarment. Peter immediately wrapped his outer garment around himself, jumped into the water, and went to Jesus. The other disciples brought in the great catch of fish: *“The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards”* (John 21:8).

The apostles found a fire on the shore: *“When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread”* (John 21:9). Perhaps this reminded Peter of another fire when he denied his Lord three times (cf. John 18:15–27). Jesus had prepared breakfast, but asked for more fish: *“Jesus said to them, ‘Bring some of the fish you have just caught’”* (John 21:10). His disciples had caught the fish because they followed His instructions.

They found that they had caught 153 large fish: *“Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn”* (John 21:11). A lot of the early writers tried to find some symbolism in the 153. One man wrote that the 100 stands for the Gentiles and 50 stands for the Jews and 3 stands for the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There were many other symbolic things that were said about the catch of fish, but one should not look for any special symbolism in the number 153. It was simply the actual number of fish they caught. As many fishermen do, they counted the number of fish that were caught. Jesus’ disciples were then fully convinced that the man was Jesus: *“Jesus said to them, ‘Come and have breakfast.’ None of the disciples dared ask him, ‘Who are you?’ They knew it was the Lord”* (John 21:12).

On another occasion Jesus took a piece of broiled fish and ate it in the presence of His disciples (cf. Luke 24:42–43). Peter spoke about this event when he told Cornelius about the

resurrection appearances of Jesus: *“He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead”* (Acts 10:41). Eating food with them proved that Jesus had been raised from the dead: *“Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish”* (John 21:13). He was not a ghost or a spirit. Jesus made a third appearance to His disciples following His resurrection: *“This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead”* (John 21:14). Fellowship which had been interrupted by death was resumed. Renewal of life with Him was a reality. Personal contact with Jesus was, and still is, possible only because of the resurrection.

There are other resurrection appearances recorded in other books of the New Testament. Matthew wrote about the appearance of Jesus when He gave the eleven a world-wide commission (cf. Matthew 28:16–20). Luke wrote that Jesus met with the apostles over a space of forty days, taught them concerning the kingdom of God, and challenged them to take His gospel to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (cf. Acts 1:3–11). Paul wrote that Jesus appeared to Peter, to the Twelve, to more than five hundred brother, to James, to all the apostles, and last of all He appeared to Paul himself (cf. I Corinthians 15:5–8). The many resurrection appearances of Jesus proves that He truly was raised from the dead.

Jesus’ Public Restoration Of Peter And His Call Of Commitment To The Cause

The Reinstatement Of Peter

One of the main purposes of this chapter is to relate how Peter was restored to the Lord and His work. This was done in a public way so Peter could serve the Lord and be recognized as one of the apostles of Jesus who had been committed to the task of world evangelization. Previously,

Peter had boasted about his love and faithfulness to Jesus. He had even affirmed that even if everybody else fell away, he never would (cf. Matthew 26:33). He had been more sure of himself than he had of the other apostles. But Jesus had predicted that Peter would deny Him: “. . . *before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!*” (John 13:38). Jesus had assured Peter of His special prayer for him: “*Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers*” (Luke 22:31–32). Jesus prayed that Peter would remain faithful so he in turn would be able to strengthen his brothers.

After Jesus was raised from the dead He appeared to Peter. “. . . *The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon*” (Luke 24:34). Paul also wrote that Jesus appeared to Peter after He was raised from the dead: “*and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. . .*” (I Corinthians 15:5). Even though Peter denied His Lord, he was not excluded from the work of Jesus, taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. Remember the passage where the women were told: “. . . *go, tell his disciples and Peter, He is going ahead of you into Galilee . . .*” (Mark 16:7). Peter must have been thrilled to know that the Lord still wanted him to be involved in His work. Perhaps Jesus had already assured Peter in private of His forgiveness and restoration, but it also needed to be done publicly. Hence, Jesus asked Peter an important question. John 21:15:

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs”

The question in the original language and even in English can be understood in a number of different ways. It could have meant “do you love me more than you love these men?” It

could have meant “do you love me more than these things?” That is the boats, the nets, and the fishing business. Or it could have meant “do you love me more than these men love me?” In view of the background the third possibility is surely the right one. Previously, Peter had boasted about his love for Jesus being greater than the other men’s love (cf. Matthew 26:33). Even if all others forsook Jesus, Peter claimed he never would. He said he would lay down his life for his Lord. Peter had affirmed that he loved the Lord more than anyone else.

Peter’s pride disappeared after he capitulated to the pressure of the evil one. He could only answer a second time that his love for Jesus was true: “*Again Jesus said, ‘Simon son of John, do you truly love me?’ He answered, ‘Yes, Lord, you know that I love you’ Jesus said, ‘Take care of my sheep’*” (John 21:16). Jesus asked Peter the same question a third time. John 21:17:

The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.”

The Use And Meaning Of The Two Greek Words: “Agape” And “Phileo”

Jesus used the Greek word **agape** in His first two questions. Peter responded each time with a different Greek word, **phileo**. The third time Jesus used the Greek word **phileo**.

Some commentators and even some translations indicate that there is a distinction in meaning between the two words in the context. But I, Doyle Gilliam, think this is unlikely. John used a variety of vocabulary words in his writings. For example, he wrote that Jesus told Nicodemus: “*In reply Jesus declared, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of*

God unless he is born again'' (John 3:3). Then Jesus explained it this way: *"Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit'"* (John 3:5). John included both of Jesus' explanation of baptism. The same thing was said by Jesus but in two different ways. John was fond of recording multiple explanations.

John used the Greek words **agape** and **phileo** without distinguishing between the two words. John wrote that Jesus loved Lazarus (cf. John 11:3), and merely two verses later he wrote that Jesus loved Martha, her sister, and Lazarus. John used the word **agape** in the first whereas he used the word **phileo** next. When John wrote about the disciple whom Jesus loved (cf. John 13:23), he used the Greek word **agape**. But later John used the Greek **phileo** when writing about the disciple whom Jesus loved (cf. John 20:2).

Another example is found when John wrote that the Father loves the Son (cf. John 3:35) and used the Greek word **agape**. Later John again wrote that the Father loves the Son (cf. John 5:20), but he used the Greek word **phileo**. These examples show that John liked to use variety in his vocabulary.

I personally think that there is no vast distinction between the two Greek words that are used in John 21. In the context note John's love for variety. There are two different words for "know." One word is found in verse 15 and another one in verse 17. There are two different words for "feed" and "take care of" found in verses 15–16. There are also two different words for "sheep" and "lambs" in verses 15–17. All of these examples shows that John liked to use variety in his vocabulary, so there should be no firm distinction between the two different Greek words used for "love."

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him a third time if he loved Him. In other words, Jesus did not ask Peter a different question (cf. John 21:17). If there were a firm distinction between the words, then Christians could conclude that Jesus

had asked Peter a different question. But He was asking him the same question the third time. Since Peter had denied Jesus three times, perhaps he needed to confess his love for Him three times, as well. Obviously, Peter had not wanted Jesus to be crucified. As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem to be crucified, Peter rebuked Him: “. . . *‘Never, Lord!’ he said. ‘This shall never happen to you!’*” (Matthew 16:22). Peter rebuked his Lord for even saying He would be crucified. Peter was unwilling, it seems, to serve a crucified Messiah. After the crucifixion what did Peter do? Did he accept Jesus and love Him as a crucified Messiah? Therefore, Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him.

Christ’s Instruction To Peter

There are three different expressions used in verses 15–17. First, in verse 15 Jesus told Peter: “. . . *‘Feed my lambs.’*” Second, in verse 16 Jesus said: “. . . *‘Take care of my sheep.’*” Third, in verse 17 Jesus told Peter: “. . . *‘Feed my sheep.’*” Notice again the variety of language used when Peter was given the three commissions that actually amount to one work that God gave him to do. The term “*take care of my sheep*” is a more comprehensive expression than “*feed my sheep*.” It involves the whole work of a shepherd including protection from false teachers and other harmful influences. The term was used by Paul when he told the elders of the church in Ephesus to keep watch over themselves and all their flock (cf. Acts 20:28). It is also used when Peter appealed to fellow elders to be shepherds of God’s flock (cf. 1 Peter 5:1–2). The same term was used by Paul when he instructed Titus to appoint elders who would contradict and expose false teachers (cf. Titus 1:9–11). Neither Peter nor the other apostles understood that this charge meant that Peter was given special power over the other apostles or over the whole church. When Peter later wrote his first epistle to several churches, he referred to himself as a fellow elder to the elders in those churches (cf. 1 Peter 5:1). Peter was one elder of his

congregation among other elders of other congregations. When Peter wrote about the chief shepherd, he was not referring to himself but to the Lord Jesus Christ: *“And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away”* (1 Peter 5:4).

Notice something very significant. Jesus asked the right question of Peter. He did not say, “Peter, are you sorry for what you did?” He did not say, “Peter, do you promise you will never do it again?” He did not even say, “Peter, will you be a fiery disciple for me? Will you preach my word?” What Jesus said to Peter was, *“do you love me?”* If Peter loved Jesus, everything would be right. But if Peter did not love Jesus, nothing would be right. The same is true for Christians today. Love for Jesus is absolutely necessary for Christians to take care of the flock of God even now. Paul wrote that if a person spoke in the tongues of men and of angels but did not have love, he was nothing. Even if he gave his body to be burned, sold all that he had and gave it to the poor, but had no love, he would gain nothing (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:1, 3). Yes, Jesus asked Peter the right question. Believers need to ask themselves the same question, do I love Jesus?

The Greatest Commission – “Follow Me!”

Jesus then spoke of Peter’s old age. John 21:18:

“I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.”

Jesus referred to Peter’s death: *“Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, ‘Follow me!’”* (John 21:19). Regardless of how Peter died, he had a responsibility and a constant obligation to follow Jesus. To be faithful even to the point of

death is still what Jesus expects of His followers today (cf. Revelation 2:10). Be faithful whatever the costs.

Peter noticed that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. John 21:20:

Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, 'Lord, who is going to betray you?')

Peter wanted to know about his good friend, John: “*When Peter saw him, he asked, 'Lord, what about him?'*” (John 21:21). But Jesus refused to answer the question: “*Jesus answered, 'If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.'*” (John 21:22). Not even an apostle needs to know everything about his fellow workers. Peter’s responsibility was the same regardless of what John did. His responsibility was to follow Jesus regardless of what anyone else did.

Even though John lived to be an old man, Jesus never said that he would not die. John 21:23:

Because of this, the rumor spread among the brothers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?”

God allows some men to die a martyr’s death while others are spared and kept alive for old age. This concept is rather difficult for some people to understand. God through His inspired writer stated that some people “. . . *escaped the edge of the sword . . .*” (Hebrews 11:34). Three verses later one can read that others were “*put to death by the sword.*” James the brother of John was put in prison and then beheaded by Herod (cf. Acts 12:1–2) . Peter, on the other hand, was released from

prison by an angel (cf. Acts 12:3–10). James was beheaded, but Peter was released by an angel. All Christians should glorify God both by their life and by their death, but not everyone will do it exactly the same way.

John was a personal witness: *“This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true”* (John 21:24). The writer identifies himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved and an eyewitness of the things that he had written down. One can read many proofs of his eyewitness testimony throughout the gospel.

The “we” probably refers to the elders of the church at Ephesus. According to tradition, John spent his last days there. The shepherds of the flock in Ephesus were in agreement that what John had written was the truth.

John previously wrote that Jesus performed many other miraculous signs which he did not include in his gospel (cf. John 20:30). These verses are considered the theme of the book. John concludes his gospel by writing that there was not room to include all of Jesus’ activities. John 21:25:

Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

Conclusion

John selected only seven miraculous signs from Jesus’ many miracles and around those seven, he built his case. John wrote that those were recorded so that people might believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God and by believing they might have life in His name (cf. John 20:31). Enough information was recorded about Jesus’ life for men to believe, follow Him, and obtain eternal life.

Review and Summary

Introduction

The last chapter of this book is a review and summary of the gospel of John. It is a review of the previous chapters of the book, a summary of what was learned in the studies.

There are two major parts of the book. In the first part Jesus showed Himself to the world. There was growth of two different attitudes of the people toward Jesus, belief and unbelief (cf. John 1–12). In the second part of the book Jesus showed Himself to His disciples. The result was also belief and unbelief (cf. John 13–21).

When Jesus presented Himself to the world, He worked many miraculous signs which prove that He is the Christ, the Son of God. Many witnesses were also present who gave their testimony to support the same proposition, that Jesus is the Messiah, God's Son. But tragically most of the Jewish people who saw the evidence, rejected Him despite the overwhelming nature of that evidence. Their rejection is mentioned in the opening verses of the gospel: "*He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him*" (John 1:11).

After the evidence had been presented, the rejection of the people was summarized: "*Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him*" (John 12:37). Jesus then withdrew from the world and revealed Himself more fully to His chosen disciples (cf. John 13–21). Some of multitudes believed, but others did not. Jesus prepared His disciples for His departure and return to the Father. His return to the Father was via the cross because He willing laid down His life for His sheep. The apostles were to

be His special messengers of the word of salvation for all men. They were promised the Holy Spirit who would teach them all things and guide them into all truth. The growth of their belief culminated in the confession of Thomas: “*Thomas said to him, ‘My Lord and my God!’*” (John 20:28).

The growth of unbelief was especially seen in the religious leaders animosity towards Jesus. They were the vanguard of those who crucified Jesus on a Roman cross. A review of the main lessons previously studied will be summarized in this last chapter.

An Examination of the Gospel of John By Way of Review

Lesson One

The purpose of the book, the author of the book and some of the characteristics of the book were given in lesson one. The main purpose of the gospel of John is based on the theme passage found in John 20:30–31:

Jesus did many other miraculous signs . . . which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

John chose seven signs around which he built his case for Jesus. They are the changing of the water into wine (John 2), the healing of an official’s son (John 4), the healing of an invalid man (John 5), feeding of the 5,000 (John 6), walking on the water and healing of a man born blind (John 9), and the raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11). These signs were to produce and increase belief, which involves conviction, trust, and obedience. The result of a trusting, obedient faith is eternal life which is more than mere eternal existence. It means a qualitative existence that involves knowing God and

knowing Jesus Christ, His Son.

John produced witnesses who, having seen and heard Jesus, gave their testimony about Him. They affirmed that He is the Son of God (John 1:34), He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29), He is the Messiah predicted by Moses (John 6:68), He is the Holy One of God (John 6:69), and He is both Lord and God (John 20:28).

Lesson Two

Lesson two began with the prologue which introduced the main ideas in the gospel (cf. John 1:1–18). The following themes were briefly presented: the Word and His relationship with God, the Word and His relation to creation, the Word and John the Baptizer, the Word became flesh, and the greatness of the Word. These themes were developed throughout the gospel of John.

Lesson Three

Jesus began His personal ministry (cf. John 1:19–51). There were two main points. The witness of John the Baptizer and Jesus' first followers were introduced. First, John the baptizer witnessed concerning himself. John told who he was not. He was not the Messiah, he was not the Christ, and he was not the prophet Elijah. John revealed who he was using the words of Isaiah the prophet: “. . . *I am the voice of one calling in the desert, “Make straight the way of the Lord”*” (John 1:23).

John witnessed concerning Jesus: “. . . *Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*” (John 1:29). After baptizing Jesus John said this about Him: “. . . *I testify that this is the Son of God*” (John 1:34).

Jesus' first followers are also introduced in the latter part of Chapter one. They were Andrew, Peter, and another unnamed disciple. Phillip and Nathaniel were also mentioned in the chapter.

Lesson Four

The first sign and the cleansing of the temple were studied in lesson four (cf. John 2). The first sign was the changing of water into wine in the town of Cana in Galilee. The first cleansing of the temple occurred in Jerusalem before the Jewish Passover. Miraculous signs were performed by Jesus in Jerusalem, and His supernatural knowledge was noted: *“He did not need man’s testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man”* (John 2:25).

Lesson Five

Jesus taught Nicodemus and the witness of John the Baptizer was noted in the fifth lesson. Jesus taught Nicodemus about the new birth (cf. John 3:1–21). John wrote about the testimony of John the Baptizer in the last part of John 3. John the Baptizer was a humble person who said that Christ must become greater while he must become less (cf. John 3:30). John the Baptizer testified about Jesus’ absolute superiority and uniqueness.

Lesson Six

Jesus talked to a Samaritan woman and an official’s son was healed in lesson six. Jesus talked with a Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well (cf. John 4:4–26). As a result of Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman, she returned to the town and invited the people to come see a man who told her everything she had ever done. After Jesus spent two days in the town, many of the Samaritans believed in Him and told the woman: *“ . . . ‘We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world’ ”* (John 4:42). Many Samaritans believed and trusted Jesus because He was with them for two days.

The healing of an official’s son is found the latter part of John 4. When Jesus returned to Cana in Galilee, a royal official from Capernaum went to Him and begged Him to come and heal

his son who was close to death. Jesus told the man that his son would live and twenty miles away the son was instantaneously healed. The man and his household believed in Jesus.

Lesson Seven

The healing by Jesus of the invalid in Jerusalem at the pool of Bethesda brought his first public opposition. Because Jesus healed the man on the Sabbath day, the Jews persecuted Him. They even tried to put Him to death: *“For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God”* (John 5:18).

In response to the charges by the Jews, Jesus gave some of the greatest claims found in all of the New Testament. In John 5:19–30 John introduced five testimonies to confirm the claims of Jesus. The testimony of the Father, the testimony of John the Baptizer, the testimony of His works, the testimony of Scripture, and the testimony of Moses are given. These testimonies confirm that Jesus is who He claimed to be.

Lesson Eight

Three events in the life of Jesus are found in John 6. Jesus fed the 5,000, walked on water, and gave a discourse on the bread of life. The first 15 verses relate the miracle of Jesus feeding the 5,000, and the next nine verses give an account of His miracle of walking on the water. The greater part of John 6 is the discourse on the bread of life in which Jesus said: *“... unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you”* (John 6:53). The results of Jesus’ words are found in the last part of John 6. Many of Jesus’ disciples turned back and no longer followed Him (cf. John 6:66). Jesus then asked the twelve if they wanted to leave too. Peter made the great confession, speaking for himself and the others: *“... ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God’”* (John 6:68–69).

Lesson Nine

John records Jesus' trip to the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles in John 7. When He taught at the feast, a controversial question arose. Some of the people asked if Jesus was the predicted Messiah of the Old Testament, the Christ. Jesus spoke about the Holy Spirit whom those who believed in Him would later receive. The Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus had not been glorified. He anticipated the time when He would go back to the right hand of God and send forth the Holy Spirit upon His followers. In the last part of the chapter there is information about the division of the people over Jesus and the unbelief of the religious leaders.

Lesson Ten

The teachers of the law and Pharisees brought a woman who was caught in adultery to Jesus. They brought her not because they wanted to know the will of God, but because they wanted to use her as a means to entrap Jesus. Jesus responded to their charges in an amazing way (cf. John 8:3–11).

Jesus called Himself the Light of the world (cf. John 8:12). The Pharisees denied Jesus' claims, but He said His testimony was valid. Jesus knew where He had come from and where He was going. He knew His origin and His destination.

The Jews claimed to be the children of Abraham, and said they had never been slaves of anyone. Jesus said that if they were Abraham's children, they would do what Abraham did. Yet, they were trying to kill a man who told the truth. Later Jesus called them children of the devil: "*You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire . . .*" (John 8:44).

Jesus made some great claims about Himself (cf. John 8:48–59). He charged the men to find any sin in His life: "*Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? . . .*" (John 8:46). Jesus promised that He could keep men alive: "*I tell you the*

truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death” (John 8:51). Jesus told the Jews that He lived before Abraham: *“I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!”* (John 8:58). Jesus was identifying Himself as the Eternal One, the I am of the old testament.

Lesson Eleven

Jesus encountered a man who was born blind (cf. John 9). He healed the man by putting mud on the man’s eyes and sending him to wash in the pool of Siloam. The man obeyed Jesus and came home able to see for the first time in his life. The Pharisees investigated the healing by questioning the man and his parents. The Jews refused to believe that Jesus was a man of God because He had healed the blind man on the Sabbath. Jesus responded by saying that the Pharisees were blind. They thought they were able to see, but they remained blind unable to see the spiritual reality that was all about them.

Lesson Twelve

Teachings about the shepherd and his flock are found in John 10. Jesus, the good Shepherd, is contrasted with the false shepherds of Israel. The false shepherds, the religious leaders of the Jews, were like thieves and robbers. They were like wolves in sheep’s clothing. They were not been the kind of leader’s that the Jews needed. In contrast to them Jesus called Himself the good Shepherd who would lay down His life for His sheep. He would guide them and give them eternal life so they would never perish.

The Jews refused to believe despite the miracles they had seen Jesus perform. Jesus said it was because they were not His sheep. Jesus’ sheep listen to His voice and they follow Him. The sheep have eternal life and will never perish (cf. John 10:22–42).

Lesson Thirteen

Jesus went to the village where Lazarus had died and

comforted the sisters, Martha and Mary. He said that He was the Resurrection and the Life. Jesus said that the one who believes will live, even though he dies. Whoever lives and believes shall never die.

Because Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, many believed on Him, but stunningly enough, some went away and told the Pharisees what Jesus had done. Some of the people who saw a dead man come out of a tomb still refused to believe because of their preconceived ideas and their religious prejudice (cf. John 11:1–46).

Lesson Fourteen

The close of Jesus' public ministry begins in John 12. Jesus was anointed by Mary in Bethany (verses 1–11). Then Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (verses 12–19). Some Greeks came to see Jesus. Jesus said His time had come, and He talked about His sacrificial death. Jesus said He would be lifted up from earth and would draw all men unto Himself. Even though Jesus did not refer directly to the Gentiles nor say anything to them, He must have had them in mind when He talked about being lifted up in order to draw all men unto Himself (verses 20–34).

Jesus was tragically rejected by most of the religious leaders: *“Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him”* (John 12:37). Jesus said this was to fulfill the prediction found in the Old Testament. Many among the leaders believed in Jesus, but they were afraid of the religious leaders, the Pharisees, and would not confess Him lest they be put out of the synagogue. There is a judge for the people who reject Jesus and His words. His words will condemn unbelievers at the last day, but they will bring life to those who accept them. Part one of the study of the gospel of John is completed in this lesson.

Lesson Fifteen

Jesus washed the disciples feet and predicted the betrayal

by Judas and the denial of Peter (cf. John 13). This event begins the second main part of the gospel of John (cf. John 13–21). When Jesus showed Himself to the disciples, the result was belief by some and unbelief by others. Jesus did not again appeal to the crowds.

Three major events are recorded in John 13. Jesus washed the disciples feet to teach them about humility. They had been arguing among themselves about which of them would be greatest, and Jesus demonstrated that greatness comes through service not by being served. He predicted that He would be betrayed by one of His own followers, and during that discussion Judas left. The other disciples did not understand what Jesus meant, but Jesus was fully aware that He would be betrayed by Judas, one of the twelve. Jesus also predicted that Peter would deny Him, but Peter said he would lay down his life for Him. Jesus then precisely told Peter what would happen: *“Then Jesus answered, ‘Will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!’”* (John 13:38).

Lesson Sixteen

Jesus prepared His disciples for His departure in John 14. He first comforted His disciples. Jesus had told them that He was going back to the Father, that one of them would betray Him, and Peter would deny Him three times. The disciples were discouraged. Jesus told them not to let their hearts be troubled, but to trust in God and trust also in Him. Jesus told them that He was going back to the Father and would prepare a place for them. Jesus promised to come back and take the disciples with Him.

Jesus said He was the way to the Father: *“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’”* (John 14:6). Jesus made a very exclusive claim. Jesus is indeed all that He claimed to be. He is the only way to God. If men want go to God, they must go through Him.

Jesus also promised the Holy Spirit. He said that the Counselor would bring to their remembrance all the things that He had said to them. The Spirit would teach them all things. The apostles, having been with Jesus for three years, could have forgotten many of the things that He had said. To assure that they only spoke the word of God, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit.

Lesson 17

As Jesus was about to separate from His disciples, he spoke to them about the vine and the branches and about the world's hatred (cf. John 15). Jesus is the vine and His followers are the branches; their responsibility is to abide in Him. If they abide in Him, His word will abide in them and they will bear much fruit.

Jesus talked to His disciples about their relationship to one another (cf. John 15: 9–17). If they were to do God's work, they needed to be united. This meant they needed to love one another as He loved them.

Jesus warned the disciples to expect opposition from an unbelieving world (cf. John 15:18–25). Because He had called them out of the world, they were not of the world. Because the world did not accept Jesus nor the Father, they should not expect to be warmly received by the world. In fact, they should expect opposition and persecution.

Lesson Eighteen

Jesus continued the farewell discourse with more warnings about the persecution that disciples would receive (cf. John 16:1–4). The main part of Jesus' discussion concerned the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 16:5–16). First, Jesus said the Holy Spirit would convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgement. Second, Jesus said the Spirit would guide the apostles into all truth. The Spirit would not speak on His own, but whatever He heard, He would speak. Third, He would glorify Jesus. The

Spirit would take what He received from God and make it known to the apostles.

Jesus said the disciples' grief would be turned into joy (cf. John 16:17–24). They were full of grief, but they would see Jesus again, and their grief would be turned to joy. That, of course, was fulfilled when they saw Jesus after He was raised from the dead.

Lesson Nineteen

Jesus's prayer is found in John 17. There are three parts in the prayer. First, Jesus prayed for Himself. He prayed for God to glorify Him so that the Father would be glorified. Then Jesus prayed that the Father would glorify Him with the glory that He had with the Father before the world began.

Second, Jesus prayed for His apostles (cf. John 17:6–19). He prayed that God would not take them out of the world, but He would protect them from the evil one. Jesus asked God to sanctify them by the truth. He stated that God's word is truth.

Third, Jesus prayed for future believers (cf. John 17:20–26). He prayed that they might be unified so the world might believe that God had sent Him. Jesus wanted all people, present or future, to see His glory.

Lesson Twenty

The arrest and trials of Jesus are found in John 18. He was arrested in the garden when the soldiers and officials were led to Jesus by Judas. He was first taken to Annas, the father-in-law of the high priest that year. Three times Peter denied being a disciple of Jesus. The high priest questioned Jesus and then sent Him to Pilate. Pilate also questioned Jesus.

Lesson Twenty-One

The crucifixion and burial of Jesus is found in John 19. Jesus was sentenced to be crucified even though Pilate realized that Jesus was innocent. Three times in the discussion, Pilate said he found no basis for a charge against

Jesus. Because he feared the Jews and wanted their praise, Pilate delivered Jesus to be crucified, violating his own conscience.

John does not give all the details of a crucifixion because the people in those days had often seen crucifixions. It was a death reserved for the worst kind of criminals, and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was given this kind of death. Paul later wrote about the cross in 1 Corinthians 1:23–24:

but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

The powerful message of crucifixion brings man to repentance and to eternal life even in our day.

Jesus said: “. . . ‘It is finished’ . . . and gave up His spirit” (John 19:30). He was buried by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea in a new tomb in which no man had ever been buried. But that is not the end of the story.

Lesson Twenty-Two

One can read about Jesus’ resurrection from the dead in John 20. The tomb was empty. The only thing left in the tomb were the clothes that had been on the body of Jesus. Angels appeared in the tomb and spoke to Mary of Magdala. Later Jesus appeared to Mary of Magdala (cf. John 20:10–18) and then to ten of His disciples (cf. John 20:19–23). He later appeared to Thomas with the other disciples (cf. John 20:24–29). It was on that occasion that the culmination of the disciples’ faith, that had been building, was shown by Thomas words: “. . . ‘My Lord and my God’” (John 20:28). Jesus did not rebuke Thomas for confessing Him to be Lord and God. Jesus pronounced a blessing upon those who believe what Thomas believed: “. . . *blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*” Then John wrote what many call the theme passage of the gospel of John. John 20:30–31:

Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Lesson Twenty-Three

In John 21 another resurrection appearance is recorded, as is the restoration of Peter. Jesus appeared to seven disciples after they had fished all night and caught nothing. After they came to shore, Jesus had a discussion with Peter about his love for Him. Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him more than the other disciples loved Him? Peter said, Lord, you know that I love you. On the basis of Peter's answer, Jesus told him to take care of His sheep.

John concluded the gospel by writing that there were many other things that Jesus did. If everything had been written, the whole world could not contain all the books.

Conclusion

Remember that John's gospel was a selective gospel. He wrote for people over 1900 years ago to produce faith and to increase faith in Jesus, the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God. As students study the gospel of John, it is my hope and prayer that they grow in their faith. May each reader's faith be deepened because of the study of a book that was designed to produce and to increase faith in Jesus as the Son of God. May God be with every student as they conform more and more to the image of God's Son.