

NOTES ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

* * * JESUS CHRIST AS THE INCARNATE WORD AND SON OF GOD * * *

S.L.H.
Soli Deo Gloria!

"But these [signs] are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name." **John 20:31**

AUTHOR: The Apostle John (c. 85-90 AD)

AUTHORSHIP AND DATE. The fourth Gospel does not explicitly identify its author, yet its authorship is not in question. The author refers to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (Jn13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7,20) or "the other disciple" (18:15-16; 20:2; 21:2). He was one of the twelve apostles (Jn13:23; cf. Mk14:17). His most intimate relationship with Jesus necessitates that he was one of the three disciples that comprised the inner circle of Peter, James, and John (cf. Matt17:1; Mk5:37; 14:33; Luk8:51). He is distinguished from Peter (cf., Jn13:23-24; 20:2), and James was martyred by Herod far too early (c. 42 AD) for him to have authored the fourth gospel (Act12:1-2). This leaves **John** as the obvious author, a conclusion with strong external support of early Church history.

Irenaeus (born 130 AD in Smyrna), a disciple of Polycarp (born 69 AD in Smyrna), who was a disciple of John himself, recorded that John wrote the Book of Revelation while exiled to Patmos (Rev1:9) "toward the end of Domitian's reign", which ended in 96 AD. Prior to (and after) his exile to Patmos, John lived in Ephesus and ministered to the churches of Asia (i.e., Asia Minor; cf. Rev1:4,11). The testimony of early Church writers is that John wrote his Gospel from Ephesus prior to his exile to Patmos, c. 85-90 AD.

WHO WAS JOHN? "John" is a contraction of the Hebrew name Jehohanan (Cp., Ezr10:28; Neh12:13,42), which means *Jehovah is gracious*. Originally disciples of John the Baptist (Jn1:35-40), John and his brother James were among the first disciples called to follow Jesus (Matt4:18-22). John's father Zebedee had a fishing business, in which both brothers participated, and the family may have been affluent (since John had a personal relationship with the high priest and his family; cf. Jn18:10,15). John's mother was Salome (Cp., Matt27:56; Mk1:19; 15:40), the sister of Mary (the mother of Jesus; cf. Jn19:25), so John and Jesus were first cousins. Peter, James, and John comprised Jesus' inner circle, often receiving private revelations from Him when the other disciples were not present. He was exiled to Patmos during the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian (81-95 AD), but was released by Nerva in 96 AD; after his release he resided in Ephesus and ministered to the churches of Asia until his death (which occurred during the reign of Trajan; 98-117 AD). It is possible that John was the youngest of the twelve apostles, he outlived all the others, and he apparently died a natural death at a very old age.

PURPOSE OF JOHN'S GOSPEL. John's Gospel demonstrates the deity of Jesus Christ as the eternal incarnate Word and Son of God (Jn1:1; 8:58 10:30-33; 14:9; 20:28,31); it presents Him as the only way to God the Father

(Jn14:6); and it asserts belief in Him as the only means to eternal life (Jn3:16; 20:31). It also provides the theological basis for understanding the transformation of the Jewish disciples from exclusive ministers to the nation of Israel (before the death of Christ; cf. Matt10:1-15) into those who would become the apostolic foundation of the Church (after the death of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit; Eph2:20). While it would be the role of the Apostle Paul to formally reveal the mystery of the Church as the Body/Bride of Christ, with its new and unique doctrines, Jesus set the stage for Paul's "revelation of the mystery" (cf. Rom16:25-26; Eph3:1-2; Coll:24-27) by giving a prophetic preview of the coming Church Age to His apostles on the night before His crucifixion (cf. Jn13-17). Consistent with a dispensational transition from Israel to the Church, John appears to address his Gospel to a Gentile audience, as he carefully defines Hebrew terms and customs (Cp., Jn1;38,41,42; 5:1; 10:22).

KEY WORD/THEME. The key word in the Gospel of John is "believe"¹ (e.g., Jn1:7,12; 3:16; 20:35). In contrast, the word repent/repentance is never used by John; rather, the N.T. concept of repentance (Greek, *μετάνοια*; i.e., a change of mind) is implicitly included in John's usage of "believe" (and Paul's; Cp., Act16:30-31). The contrast between "light" and "darkness" is a prominent theme in the Gospel of John (e.g., Jn1:4-5; 3:19; 8:12; 12:35,46).

UNIQUENESS OF JOHN'S GOSPEL. Most of the content (>90%) in John's Gospel is not found in Matthew, Mark, or Luke (the so-called synoptic Gospels). The 7 public discourses of Jesus recorded by John are not found in the synoptics. Only 2 of the 7 miracles of Jesus recorded by John (i.e., feeding the 5,000 and walking on water) can be found in other gospels. John records no parables of Jesus, though these are prominent in the synoptics. John records nothing at all relative to Christ's birth, childhood, baptism, temptation, transfiguration, last supper, suffering at Gethsemane, or ascension. According to Andy Woods, "John obviously wrote to accomplish a particular literary purpose rather than to present a comprehensive biography of Christ". John makes frequent editorial comments of a theological nature that are not found in the other Gospels (e.g., Jn3:16).

Only John records the Upper Room Discourse (Jn13-17), yet John omits the lengthy Sermon on the Mount and the Olivet Discourse (which are prominent in the synoptics). John emphasizes the deity of Jesus Christ (see THEME/PURPOSE OF JOHN'S GOSPEL) much more so than the other Gospel writers (e.g., Jn1:1; 8:58; 10:30-33). Whereas the synoptic Gospels focus on Jesus' Galilean ministry, John focuses on His Judean ministry.

THE FEASTS OF ISRAEL IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN. The Feasts of Israel (i.e., the Feasts of the LORD; Leviticus 23) occupy a prominent place in John's Gospel. According to Elwood McQuaid, 660 of the 879 verses (75%) in the Gospel of John relate to events that occurred during the feasts. Attendance at the great feasts, **in Jerusalem**, was mandatory for all Jewish men under the Law of Moses (Deut16:16); this explains why John's Gospel focuses on Jesus' Judean ministry—it focuses on His attendance at the feasts. It also makes sense that, in order to most effectively provide a testimony to all the nation of Israel, a majority of Jesus' public ministry occurred at the feasts when all the nation of Israel would be assembled together. Finally, it is from John's Gospel that we understand

¹ In the Gospel of John (KJV), the various forms of "believe" occur 99 times, whereas they only occur 38 times in Matthew, Mark, and Luke combined.

Jesus' public ministry lasted just over three years (i.e., three-and-a-half years), since it records His attendance at 3 Passover feasts; cf. Jn2:13; 6:4; 12:1).

WHY IS JOHN'S GOSPEL SO DIFFERENT? Unlike Matthew, Mark, and Luke, John's Gospel is written *from the outset* from the perspective of Israel's rejection of Christ and His proffered kingdom (cf. Jn1:11); it presents itself as written from the standpoint in time when John wrote (85-90 AD), not from the actual time of Christ's earthly ministry (29-32 AD). John wrote much later than Matthew, Mark, and Luke², after their Gospels had been in circulation for many decades (thus, no need to repeat what was common knowledge), and after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD (thus, if there was a window of opportunity for the nation of Israel to repent, it had closed). From John's perspective, God's priority had decidedly shifted from preaching the "gospel of the kingdom" (cf. Matt3:2; 4:17,22; 10:5-7; Mk1:14,15; Luk3:3,8; 4:43) and the prophetic program of Israel to preparations for the coming mystery program of the Church (cf. 1Cor2:6-8). Issues related to the preparation of the apostles to become leaders of the Church take priority over prophecy concerning Israel. The Sermon on the Mount and most of the parables³ concern the Kingdom, not the Church Age, so they are not relevant to John's purpose. The Olivet Discourse concerns the 70th Week of Daniel (i.e., the 7-year Tribulation), during which the Church is not present on earth, so it is omitted. Much more important to John's purpose is the Upper Room discourse (Jn13-17), in which coming dispensational changes are previewed (in the future tense; cf. Jn14:16; 15:26; 16:7,13) and the doctrinal preparation of the apostles for the Church Age begins. Thus, the very different purpose of John's Gospel accounts for its very different character.

ORGANIZATION OF JOHN. The Apostle John wrote both the Gospel of John and the Book of Revelation. In the Book of Revelation, the use of the number 7 as an organizing principle is obvious (e.g., 7 seals, 7 trumpets, 7 vials). Though less obvious, a similar heptadic structure exists in the Gospel of John; John selects 7 messianic sign-miracles performed by Jesus, records 7 public discourses given by Jesus associated with those signs, and presents 7 metaphorical "I am" statements of Jesus (see the CHART: HEPTADIC ORGANIZATION OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN).

OUTLINE OF JOHN.

I. INTRODUCTION	John 1
A. Revelation of Jesus as the Incarnate Word of God	Jn1:1-18
B. Calling of Disciples	Jn1:19-51
II. JESUS PERFORMS MESSIANIC SIGNS FOR ISRAEL	John 2-11
1) Turning Water into Wine	Jn2:1-12
2) Healing a Nobleman's Son	Jn4:46-54
3) Healing an Impotent Man	Jn5:1-16
4) Feeding the Five Thousand	Jn6:1-14
5) Walking on Water	Jn6:15-21
6) Healing the Man Born Blind	Jn9:1-41
7) Raising Lazarus from the Dead	Jn11:1-44

² There is strong internal evidence that the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke were all completed by 41 AD (e.g., Luk1:3; Act1:1).

³ The English word "parable" only occurs once in John (10:6), and it is not a translation of the Greek word *παραβολή*; John 10:1-5 is an allegory rather than a parable.

III. REJECTION OF JESUS BY ISRAEL	John 12
IV. JESUS AND DISCIPLES IN THE UPPER ROOM	John 13-17
(Preview of Coming Dispensational Changes)	
V. PASSION NARRATIVE	John 18-21
A. Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus	Jn18:1-40
B. Crucifixion of Jesus	Jn19:1-37
C. Burial of Jesus	Jn19:38-42
D. Resurrection and Appearances of Jesus	Jn20:1-21:25

DISPENSATIONAL NOTE. An important caveat is in order before undertaking the study of any of the Gospels. The Dispensation of the Law ends with the death of Christ (Eph2:14-15; Heb9:16), *not His birth*. The Gospels are a record of the Lord Jesus Christ living as a Jewish Man under the Law of Moses (Gal4:4). Thus, direct application of the life of Christ as recorded in the Gospels to the believer living during the Dispensation of Grace must be considered carefully; Christ lived a life in absolute obedience to the Mosaic Law, keeping every provision (Matt5:17), whereas the Apostle Paul makes expressly clear in his epistles that the Christian is not under the requirements of the Mosaic Law (cf. Rom6:14-15; Gal3:23-25).

CHAPTER 1

REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST AS THE INCARNATE WORD OF GOD

It is fascinating that each of the four Gospels contain (or lack) a genealogy of Jesus Christ that perfectly aligns with the theme of the Gospel. **Matthew** presents Jesus Christ as Messiah, King of the Jews, so his genealogy (Matt1:1-16) begins with Abraham (the first Jew) and passes through King David to Solomon and the royal line of Judah, ending with Joseph. **Mark** presents Jesus Christ as the Suffering Servant of Jehovah; as the pedigree of a servant is irrelevant, no genealogy is found in Mark's Gospel. **Luke** presents Jesus Christ as the Son of Man (emphasizing His humanity), so his genealogy (Luk3:23-38) begins with Adam (the first man) and passes from David to his son Nathan, ending with Mary (the human blood line, not the royal line). Though often not recognized, the Gospel of John also contains a genealogy of sorts. **John** presents Jesus Christ as the Son of God (emphasizing His deity); consistent with this theme, John 1:1 is the genealogy of the pre-existent (eternal) Word of God.

- [1] "In the beginning" is an explicit link to Genesis 1:1; the "Word" is uncreated, it already existed when God created the material universe. This verse is a powerful assertion of the deity and eternality of the Word of God (i.e., the Lord Jesus Christ; Rev19:13). It also demands the plural nature of the Godhead, which elsewhere John reveals to be a Trinity (1Jn5:7).

Implications of John 1:1. The final clause in John 1:1, translated "and the Word was God", appears in the Greek text as **καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος**. Since Koine Greek is a fully inflected language, it does not rely on word order to indicate the function of the individual words that make up a sentence or clause; rather, word order tends to be used for emphasis. In this Greek clause, "God" (**θεός**) appears first to emphasize essence, but it is not the subject of the clause; since "Word" (**λόγος**) is articulated, it must function as the subject. For this reason, the understanding of this clause in Greek is that the essence or intrinsic nature of "the Word" is "God" (i.e., Deity). All that the Word is, is divine! But this is something entirely different than saying "God is the Word"; the essence of God is not the Word, since the intrinsic nature of God also includes the Father and the Holy Spirit (1Jn5:7). Thus, inherent in the Greek syntax of John 1:1 is an implicit recognition of the plurality of the Godhead. Thus, the Word can be both "with God" (i.e., a distinct Person in the Godhead) as well as "God" (i.e., fully divine in essence).

- [2] The verb translated "was" in vv1-2 is the Greek **ἦν**, the imperfect tense of **εἰμί**, the Greek verb "to be", which denotes a continuous state of being (i.e., existence) in the past. The "Word" did not originate at that moment of *ex nihilo* creation, but was already "with God" at that time. Thus, the eternality of the Word is emphasized.
- [3] To be absolutely unequivocal, Jesus Christ as the eternal Word of God was not a creation, but was in fact the divine Agent of creation of "the heaven and the earth" (Gen1:1; cf. Gen1:3; Coll1:16; Heb1:2). Beginning here, the Word is referenced using the masculine personal pronoun, "him".

- [4] The Word of God is not merely living (Heb4:12), He is the source of all "life", physical and spiritual (Jn5:26; 6:57; 10:10; 11:25; 14:6; 17:3; 20:31). Implicit here is the **aseity** (i.e., self-existence) of God and His Word; being the very source of all life, He is not contingent or dependent on anything outside of His own Person (cf. Exod3:14). The Word of God is also "light", which is necessary for sight (Ps36:9; Ps119:104-105; 2Pet1:19); only by means of the Word of God (i.e., revelation) can "men" know/understand anything.
- [5] Here begins John's contrast between "light" and "darkness" (cf. Jn3:19). Spiritual "darkness" is not merely the absence of light, but its antithesis. Light dispels darkness, and darkness is unable to overcome light. This is a contrast of the kingdom of God versus the rebellion/counter-kingdom of Satan (Act26:18), with God's ultimate victory assured.
- [6] "John" (the Baptist) was the final and greatest of the O.T. prophets (Matt11:11; Luk7:28), himself the subject of prophecy (Isa40:3; Mal3:1); whereas all prophets before John prophesied the coming of Messiah, John was "sent from God" to announce His arrival (Jn1:29-34).
- [7] John is the first of seven personal "witness[es]" to the deity of Christ in the Gospel of John: 1) John the Baptist (Jn1:34), 2) Nathaniel (Jn1:49), 3) Peter (Jn6:69), 4) Jesus (Jn10:36), 5) Martha (Jn11:27), 6) Thomas (Jn20:28), and 7) John the Apostle (Jn20:31). The purpose of this "witness" is "that all men through him might **believe**".
- Note on Calvinism. In John 1:7, the Greek verb "believe" is in the subjunctive mood, expressed in English using the helping (modal) verb "might"; the subjunctive mood expresses permission or *possibility*, but not certainty. The witness to Christ in Scripture is sufficient to create the possibility for "all men" to "believe" (and be saved; Act16:30-31). Calvinism's doctrine of Total Depravity, according to which lost men are unable to believe prior to regeneration (a supernatural work performed by God only for the so-called elect), is not Biblical.
- [8] It was thought by some Jews that John himself might be the Messiah (i.e., "that Light"; Jn1:19-20), but he denied it.
- [9] The "true Light" is the Word (vv4-5), Jesus Christ. The fact that Christ "lighteth **every man** that cometh into the world" does not mean that all will be saved, but that all will be convicted of sin (cf. Jn3:19-21; 9:39-41; Cp., Jn16:7-11).
- [10] Jesus Christ, the Word of God (v1) and Creator (v3), came into the **world** He created, but the vast majority of people did not recognize Him (Matt7:13-14). The failure of men to recognize Christ is not due to an inadequate witness (Rom1:20), but because they "[suppress] the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom1:18).
- [11] Christ's "own" people were the Jews, the nation of **Israel** (cf. Rom9:3-5). The nation of Israel recognized Christ, but they refused to "receive" Him (Jn12:42; 19:14-15; cf. Matt21:38).

- [12] Although the nation of Israel rejected Christ at His first coming, there was a remnant of individuals who "received him" by "believ[ing] on his name". This expression makes use of a common Hebrew idiom in which the "name" of the person is equivalent to the person himself (Cp., Act16:30-31). For those who "believe", they become the "sons of God". That is, all men are related to God as creatures to their Creator (Act17:28-29), but only believers become members of the family of God (Rom8:14; Eph3:15). Those individual Jews who "believed" were incorporated into the **Church** after Pentecost (cf. Act19: 1-7; Rom11:5).
- [13] As individuals become members of their natural families via natural birth, individuals become members of the family of God by being "born" again (cf. Jn3:5-7). The new birth is "not of blood" (i.e., ancestry; Jews are not saved by virtue of their descent from Abraham; Cp., Luk3:8; Jn8:39), "nor of the will of the flesh" (i.e., your own power), "nor of the will of man" (i.e., the power of any other man). The new birth is equivalent to "regeneration" (Tit3:5), which is a supernatural work performed "of God".
- Note on Calvinism. Calvinists use this verse to teach a doctrine they call *monergism* (i.e., that a man plays absolutely no part in his own salvation, not even exercising personal faith until after regeneration). While it is true that man plays no part in the new birth (i.e., regeneration), which is a supernatural work "of God", God only performs the work of regeneration upon those who believe; believing is man's part in salvation (Act16:30-31; 1Cor1:21; Eph1:13), which is not a work (cf. Rom4:5).
- [14] This verse asserts the incarnation, or "the Word" of God (i.e., a Person of the Godhead) taking on "flesh" (i.e., a human nature; 1Tim3:16). The divine nature of Christ was not in any way diminished by the incarnation; He remained fully God. In addition, however, Christ took on a genuine human nature (Phil2:5-7). Whereas John 1:1-2 used the imperfect tense of the verb of being (denoting continuous existence into eternity past) in describing the divine nature of Christ, v14 uses the Greek verb *ἐγένετο* (the aorist middle indicative of *γίνομαι*, which means 'to come into existence', or 'to be created') in describing His human nature; that is, Christ took on a created human nature at a particular point of time in history (thereafter, in the Person of Christ, God is both Creator and creature). The uniting of divine and human natures in the Person of Christ at the incarnation is termed the **hypostatic union**.

The Hypostatic Union. The Chalcedon Creed, formulated in 451 AD, includes what has endured to the present day as the orthodox understanding of the relationship of Christ's divine and human natures from the time of the incarnation forward. "**Christ is undiminished Deity, united with true humanity, without confusion, in one Person, forever.**"

Note that as a result of the incarnation, Jesus Christ is one Person with two natures. In the language of the Chalcedon Creed, these two natures are **never confused** (i.e., mixed; the Creator-creature distinction is maintained, even in the Person of Christ); recognition of this fact leads to the resolution of seemingly contradictory assertions concerning Christ (e.g., Matt24:36 vs. Mk13:32). Finally,

though Christ only became a Man at the incarnation, He will remain a Man **forever** (Eph1:20-21; Rev5:1-7).

The Greek word translated "dwelt" literally means **tabernacled**⁴, or to reside in a tent (cf. 2Cor5:1); it corresponds to the Hebrew word *shekinah*. In the O.T., the Tabernacle (and later the Temple) was constructed so that the physical manifestation of the presence of God could "dwell" among His people (Exod25:8), and that physical presence of God was referred to as the "glory" of the LORD (Exod40:34; 2Chron5:13-14). After the incarnation, the "glory" of God dwells in the Person of "the Word ... made flesh" (Cp., Col2:9; 1Tim3:16). With the incarnation of the Word of God in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, "grace and truth" have finally been revealed in their "full[ness]"; that is not to say there was no "grace" or "truth" for Israel in the O.T., but the revelation of "grace and truth" under the Dispensation of Law was a mere shadow of what it has become in the Dispensation of Grace.

- [15] The ministry of John [the Baptist] was to "[bear] witness" to Jesus Christ. John was older than Jesus (Luk1:36), and his ministry began before that of Jesus, but Jesus was "preferred before" him; this is in contrast to Jewish tradition, which generally venerated the elder above the younger. When John says "he was before me", he asserts the preexistence/eternality of Jesus as the "Word" of God (v1).
- [16] John reiterates (from v14) that with Jesus came "the fullness" of "grace". The expression, "grace for grace", is a Hebrew idiom meaning "grace" from beginning to end (i.e., pure grace; Cp., Rom1:17).
- [17] "Moses" was God's instrument to reveal "law" (i.e., God's attributes of holiness and justice; cf. Heb10:28), whereas "Jesus Christ" was God's instrument to reveal "grace and truth" (although "grace" would be dispensed by Paul; cf. Eph3:2). The offer of "grace" from God is only possible after the justice of God has been satisfied (cf. Rom3:26) by the work of Christ (1Jn2:2). Jesus Christ as the "Word" of God is "truth", both in His Person as the living word (Jn14:6) and in the completion of Scripture as the written word (Jn16:7,13; 17:17). By "truth" is meant **the standard against which all propositions are measured/judged**.

In contrast with Christ, whose ministry was to manifest/reveal "truth", the program of Antichrist will be to propagate "a lie" (2Thess2:9,11). And Satan, who "is a liar, and the father of it" and "abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him" (Jn8:44), has an agenda to "deceive the nations" (Rev20:3).

- [18] Although theophanies made occasional appearances in the O.T., no man ever saw God in His full glory (cf. Exod33:18-23). However, God is fully "declared" (i.e., revealed) in the Person of Jesus Christ (cf. Col2:9; 1Tim3:16), such that Jesus could say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (Jn14:9).

⁴ Though it cannot be demonstrated definitively from Scripture, it is possible that the birth of Christ (i.e., the incarnation) occurred on the Feast of Tabernacles; if true, this could explain the difficulty Joseph and Mary had in finding lodging at the time of Jesus' birth (Luk2:7).

In Scripture, many are called "son/sons of God": 1) Adam (Luk3:38), 2) angels (Gen6:2; Job1:6; 2:1; 38:7); and 3) believers in Christ (Jnl:12); these categories of creatures are referred to as "sons of God" in the sense that they are direct creations of God (cf. 2Cor5:17). However, Jesus alone is referred to as "the *only begotten* Son [of God]". Modern Bible versions err in two respects relative to the phrase "only begotten Son" as it appears in John 1:18. First, many render the Greek word *μονογενής* as "only" in the sense of unique, omitting "begotten" and divorcing it from biological generation⁵; but in His incarnation, Jesus Christ is "only *begotten*" in the sense of genuine biological generation (Matt1:1; Luk1:35). Second, a textual variant occurs in some Greek manuscripts, with *Θεός* (God) replacing *υἱός* (Son), resulting in the translation "only begotten God". While some view such a rendering as bolstering the doctrine of the deity of Christ, it necessarily implies that God had a beginning, which is an ancient Gnostic heresy that must be rejected (Cp., Exod3:14; Ps90:2; 93:2; 102:24-27; Mic5:2). In His incarnation, Jesus Christ is the "only begotten Son [of God]".

PUBLIC MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

- [19] Since there had been no prophet from the LORD in four hundred years (cf. Amos8:11-12), the sudden and very public ministry of John the Baptist was an exceptional phenomenon that attracted great attention. Furthermore, for those who took prophecy seriously (i.e., Dan9:24-25), it was a time of Messianic expectation (cf. Luk2:25-38). John's preaching attracted such large crowds of Jews that an official delegation of "priests" and "Levites" came from Jerusalem to investigate.
- [20] When asked if he was "the Christ" (i.e., Messiah; cf. Jnl:41), John definitely denied it. This suggests that many among the Jews were openly speculating that John the Baptist might be the Messiah.
- [21] John was asked if he was "Elijah", based on the prophecy of Malachi 4:5. John asserted that, "I am not" Elijah, though Jesus enigmatically taught that if the Jews had received Him, John could have fulfilled the prophecy concerning Elijah (cf. Matt11:13-14). John resembled Elijah⁶ in significant ways (Cp., 2Kgs1:8; Matt3:4; Luk1:15), and his ministry had been prophesied to come "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luk1:17). John was also asked if he was "that prophet", meaning the coming "Prophet" who would be "like" Moses (Deut18:15); the prophet "like" Moses was a prophecy concerning the Messiah, so the Jews apparently misunderstood this prophet as being distinct from Messiah.
- [23] When asked, "Who art thou?" (v22), John quoted Isaiah 40:3. In so doing, John asserted that he was the prophesied forerunner of the Messiah.

⁵ This translation error results from mistakenly presuming the etymology of *μονογενής* derives from *γένος* (kind), rather than *γίνωμαι* (to become, to come into existence).

⁶ John was a Nazirite from birth (Luk1:15), as Samson and Samuel had been (Judg13:4-5; 1Sam1:11), which meant his hair had never been cut; Elijah was arguably under a Nazirite vow, at least during the days of his prophetic ministry (cf. 2Kgs1:8).

- [24] Verse 19 indicated the delegation from Jerusalem was comprised of "priests and Levites" (which would have been Sadducees; cf. Act5:17), but "Pharisees" were included among them as well. Whereas the Sadducees were the theological liberals within 1st century Judaism who denied the supernatural aspects of the scriptures, the Pharisees were the ultra-orthodox who took the scriptures most seriously⁷ (cf. Act23:8).
- [25] The question for John from the Jewish religious leadership was, "Why baptizest thou?" (i.e., what is the purpose of your baptism?). John preached "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mk1:4; Luk3:3; cf. Num19:19).

Note on Baptism. Baptism was not a strange religious ritual introduced for the first time by John, it was an integral element of the Law of Moses practiced daily in 1st century Israel (as well as in modern Judaism). The Law of Moses had many "baptisms" (cf. Heb6:2) to be performed for a variety of purposes, including: 1) ritual cleansing (cf. Lev15, termed "bathe"), 2) conversion of a Gentile to Judaism, and 3) inauguration of a priest into the ministry at age 30⁸ (Exod29:4; Num4:3). Jewish baptisms could be performed in open water (Lev15:13), but for convenience they were often performed in a man-made baptismal pool called a *mikvah*; archeological excavations of the Temple complex has revealed that it included dozens of mikvahs, and today every Jewish synagogue has a mikvah. Baptism under the Law was never performed on infants, and it was always performed by **immersion**. The English word "baptize" is a transliteration of the Greek word βαπτίζω, which means to immerse.

- [26] John's baptism "with water" is to be distinguished from other baptisms⁹.
- [27] The Messiah, who was already present among them (v26), would "baptize ... with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Matt3:11; i.e., two different baptisms).
- [28] "Bethabara" is historically significant for several reasons. It is the location where the Jews first entered the Promised Land under Joshua (Bethabara means "house of the ford"; cf. Josh4:1-24), and it is the place where Elijah was raptured into heaven (2Kgs2:5-6,11; cf. Luk1:17).
- [29] This is John's public introduction of Jesus. The "Lamb of God" is a messianic title (Isa53:7; cf. 1Cor5:7; 1Pet1:19). The role of the "lamb" is sacrificial (cf. Exod12:3-11), so the death of Messiah as a substitutional sacrifice is announced by John at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry. However, the sacrifice of Jesus would "taketh away ... sins", something the sacrifice of "bulls and goats" never

⁷ The theological error of the Sadducees was in taking away from the words of God by denying the authority of many books of the Hebrew scriptures (they tended to view only the Torah as authoritative; cf. Matt22:23,29). The error of the Pharisees was in adding tradition as an authority in addition to Scripture (Matt15:1,9).

⁸ Note that Jesus' public ministry began with His baptism at age 30 (Luk3:21-23).

⁹ Baptism under the Law had a variety of purposes (hence the Jews' questioning of John as to the purpose of his), and it should not be presumed that the purpose of Christian baptism is the same as John's baptism (cf. Act19:1-5)—it is not. The purpose of Christian baptism is identification with Christ (Rom6:3-4).

did (Heb10:4). Furthermore, while the sacrifices in the Temple applied to the nation of Israel alone (Lev16:34), the sacrifice of Christ would apply to "the world" (cf. Jn3:16; 1Jn2:2).

Theme of the Sacrificial Lamb. The motif of the sacrificial lamb and the scope of its substitutional application is revealed in Scripture progressively; it is for: 1) the individual (Gen4:4), 2) the Jewish family (Exod12:3), 3) the nation of Israel (Lev16:34), and 4) the whole world (Jn1:29; 3:16; 1Jn2:2).

- [30] John repeats his previous description of Messiah (v15), clearly applied to Jesus. The ministry of Jesus superseded that of John, "for he was before me" (i.e., preexistent; Jn1:1).
- [31] Being cousins (Luk1:36), John and Jesus surely knew each other. However, the fact that Jesus was the Messiah was not revealed to John until this public encounter.
- [32] Apparently it was only John who witnessed "the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him" at Jesus' baptism (Matt3:16).
- [33] God sent John "to baptize with water", and he was told in advance that the "Spirit descending" upon an individual would be the sign identifying the Messiah to him. He also heard God's voice from heaven (Matt3:17).
- [34] The "Son of God" is the predominant messianic title (1Chron17:13; Ps2:7; Dan3:25) used of Jesus in the Gospel of John. As a Hebrew idiom, "the son of" denotes essential equality (Cp., Jn10:33-36).

CALLING OF DISCIPLES

Jesus is addressed as "Rabbi" only in the Gospel of John (Jn1:38,49; 3:2,26; 6:25; 20:16). Rabbi means *master*, but it was used by Jews as an honorific title for their religious teachers (Jn1:38). As a Jewish rabbi, Jesus called disciples to follow Him.

- [35] Note that John is himself a rabbi, having "disciples". The "next day" is the day after John's baptism of Jesus.
- [36] John's exhortation to, "Behold the Lamb of God", in the presence of his own disciples has the force of pointing his disciples away from himself as a rabbi and to Jesus as the Messiah.
- [37] John's disciples now seek to "follow" Jesus as their rabbi.
- [38] Note that uniquely Jewish terms (here, "Rabbi") tend to be explicitly defined in John's Gospel, suggesting his intended audience was non-Jewish. "What seek ye"/"where dwellest thou" was the standard Jewish ritual for inviting/accepting new disciples by a rabbi.
- [39] "Come and see" is Jesus' acceptance of the disciples. Jewish disciples typically lived with their rabbi, and "abode with him that

day" likely means from that day forward (Cp., Jn15:4). This exchange occurred at "the tenth hour", meaning 10 a.m.¹⁰

- [40] Peter's brother "Andrew" was one of these disciples of John, and he was the first to "follow" Jesus.
- [41] Andrew's first priority was to evangelize his own brother, "Simon" (i.e., Peter). At the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, Andrew recognizes Him as "the Messiah". "Messiah" (cf. Dan9:25) is a transliteration of the Hebrew word that means *anointed one*¹¹; "Christ" is a transliteration of the Greek word having the same meaning, so that "Messiah" and "Christ" are equivalent titles.
- [42] Peter's Hebrew name is "Simon" (i.e., Simeon, meaning [*the LORD hath heard*; Cp., Gen29:33; Act15:14]). Jesus gives Peter the new name, "Cephas", which is an Aramaic word meaning "*a stone*". Peter, the Greek equivalent of the Aramaic Cephas, means *rock* (Cp., Matt16:18).
- [43] Jesus invites "Philip" to become His disciple.
- [44] "Philip", along with the brothers "Andrew and Peter", were from "Bethsaida". Knowing this is important to make certain necessary connections (e.g., Cp., Luk9:10-17; Jn6:5).
- [45] "Nathanael" means *gift of God*; he is called Bartholomew elsewhere in Scripture (Matt10:3; Mk3:18; Luk6:14; Act1:13). Philip's testimony is that this "Jesus of Nazareth" is the one "of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write" (Cp., Luk24:27; Jn5:39; Heb10:7).
- [46] Jews of the first century looked upon those from Galilee in general, and the city of Nazareth in particular, with disdain (cf., Matt2:23; Jn7:41,52); this is the significance of the prophecy to which Matthew 2:23 alludes. For this reason, Nathanael finds it inconceivable that the Messiah could come from Nazareth.
- [47] Jesus seems to use a pun in commending Nathanael (Cp., Ps32:2). The name Jacob essentially means "guile" (Gen27:35), so Jesus said of Nathanael, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no *Jacob*". This is what the prophets called the believing "remnant" of Israel (Isa1:9; cf. Rom2:28-29; 9:6; 11:5).
- [48] To sit "under [a] fig tree" is a Hebraism for a time/place of safety/leisure (cf. 1Kgs4:25; Mic4:4; Zech3:10), which a devout Jew often spent in meditation upon Scripture (Psl:1-2). For this reason, the expression "under the fig tree" became a nested idiom implying meditation upon Scripture (whether it was being performed "under a

¹⁰ The synoptic Gospels record time according to Jewish reckoning, which counted hours from sunrise/sunset; John's Gospel records time according to Roman reckoning, which counted hours from midnight/noon (Cp., Jn19:14 with Matt27:1-2,45-46; Mk15:25,33-34; Luk23:44). This difference is consistent with the fact that Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote very early (not later than 41 AD; cf. Luk1:3) from Israel, whereas John wrote much later (c. 85-90 AD) from the Roman province of Asia (cf. Rev1:4).

¹¹ In Israel, priests and kings were anointed with oil by prophets (Exod29:7; 1Sam16:1,2) as a symbol of their selection by God and the Spirit of the LORD coming upon them (1Sam16:13); for this reason, the word became a title for the coming Messiah (Deut17:15).

fig tree" or not). Jesus asserts that He knows Nathanael had been meditating on Scripture when Philip called him.

- [49] Nathanael probably was not literally sitting under a fig tree while he was meditating on Scripture, which makes that fact that Jesus was aware of what he was doing much more significant. This demonstration of omniscience immediately convinces Nathanael that Jesus is the Messiah. Nathanael properly equates two messianic titles, "the Son of God" and "the King of Israel" (Ps2:6-7).
- [50] Jesus says that Nathanael will see even greater signs demonstrating that He is indeed is "the Son of God", which John asserts is the very purpose of his Gospel (Jn20:30-31).
- [51] The "Son of man" is another messianic title (Dan7:13-14), the one Jesus most often used when speaking of Himself. Here, Jesus alludes to Jacob's dream at Bethel (Gen28:12), the implication being this is the portion of Scripture upon which Nathanael had been meditating. Furthermore, Jesus asserts that He is Jacob's "ladder", the channel of communication between heaven and earth.

Textual Note. The English word "verily" is a translation of the Hebrew word "amen" (meaning *truth*; cf. Isa65:16). It is used throughout the Gospels, but its repetition, "verily, verily", occurs only in the Gospel of John.

CHAPTER 2

JESUS PERFORMS MESSIANIC SIGNS FOR THE NATION OF ISRAEL

John chs. 2-11 record seven "signs" (i.e., miracles) performed by Jesus, which John considers sufficient to demonstrate "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (Jn20:30-31). These "signs" were performed by Jesus in the land of Israel, for the Jews (cf. Matt15:24; 1Cor1:22), although they are recorded in Scripture as a testimony for all (Jn20:29).

1ST SIGN: TURNING WATER INTO WINE

This first of all miracles of Jesus (Jn2:11) was performed privately, with only his mother, his disciples, and perhaps a few servants as its only witnesses. It is recorded only in the Gospel of John.

- [1] "Cana, of Galilee" is Kanah in the O.T. (Josh19:17,28). There are several possible meanings for "the third day". First, it could mean "the third day" of Jesus' public ministry as recorded by John (cf. Jn1:29,35); this is unlikely, since travel from Bethabara to Galilee on foot over a one or two day period would be extremely aggressive, perhaps impossible. Second, it almost certainly means "the third day" of the week¹² (i.e., Tuesday) which is the traditional day for Jewish weddings (because it is the day of the Creation week that received a double blessing from God; Gen1:10,12). Third, "the third day" becomes a type of resurrection (cf. Jon1:17; Matt12:39-40;

¹² In the Bible, the names of the week and the months of the year are referred to simply by their number (cf. Gen1; Lev23). The Jewish names used for the days and the months are Babylonian and were adopted by the Jews during their captivity.

16:21; Luk24:21), which the miracle of turning water into wine typologically prefigures. Mary, "the mother of Jesus", is always unnamed in John's Gospel.

- [2] Jesus was invited to the wedding, suggesting he was personally acquainted with the host family.
- [3] A Jewish marriage feast could last up to a week, so it was not unusual to eventually run out of "wine". In the Bible, "wine" is used symbolically for that which brings joy to both man and God (cf. Judg9:13; Ps23:5; 104:15; Prov31:6; Eccl10:19; Jer31:12; Zech9:17). Mary seemingly expects Jesus to do something (cf. v5); however, since He had never previously performed a miracle (v11), she could not have anticipated what would happen.
- [4] Jesus addresses Mary as "Woman" in John's Gospel (cf. Jn19:26), likely a deliberate choice to distance Himself from presuppositions that are attached to natural relationships (cf. Matt12:46-50; Mk3:31-35; Luk8:19-20). In saying, "what have I to do with thee?", Jesus used a Hebrew idiom meaning "what does that have to do with you and me?" (Cp., 1Kgs17:18; 2Kgs3:13; 2Chron35:21). Jesus asserted, "Mine hour is not yet come" (cf. Jn7:6,8,30; 8:20), meaning it was not yet appropriate for Him to fully and publicly reveal Himself as Messiah (contrast with Jn12:23; 13:1; 17:1).
- [5] Mary obviously expects Jesus to do something. However, she acknowledges it is His prerogative, not hers, to dictate the terms of His action. Incidentally, "Whatever he saith unto you, do it" are the last recorded words of Mary.
- [6] The "six waterpots of stone" have typological significance. The number 6, when used symbolically, represents *man* (man was created on Day 6). When "stone" is used symbolically, it often represents the *unregenerate heart* (cf. Ezek36:26). These "waterpots" were used "after the manner of the purifying of the Jews", pointing to the ritualism required under the Law of Moses (i.e., the Old Covenant). A "firkin" is approximately 9 gallons.
- [7] Jesus did not merely turn the water contained in the waterpots into wine, He first instructed the servants to "fill them up to the brim" (i.e., for maximum blessing).
- [8] Though unobserved by anyone, the miraculous transformation has already occurred.
- [9] The "governor of the feast" was unaware of what had occurred, but the quality of the "wine" he received was unexpected.
- [10] Jesus' "good wine" is better than that which came before it.
- [11] The Gospel of John is ordered thematically (Jn20:30); it is not strictly chronological. However, turning water to wine was the "beginning of miracles" (i.e., Jesus' first miracle¹³). This display of Jesus' "glory" caused His disciples to "[believe] on him" as

¹³ For this reason, the numerous pseudepigraphal gospels that purport to record accounts of Jesus' childhood, during which he is alleged to have performed miracles, cannot be authentic.

Messiah, but this is not the same as believing the gospel of grace (cf. Matt16:21-23; Luk18:31-34; Jn20:8-9; 1Cor15:3-4).

Contrast Between Moses and Jesus (Jn1:17). The first miracle of Moses was to turn water into blood, which was a sign of coming judgment (Exod7:20). In contrast, the first miracle of Jesus was to turn water into wine, which was a sign of coming blessing.

Typological Significance of Turning Water to Wine. The waterpots represent Israel under the Law of Moses (i.e., the Old Covenant; Heb8:13) in which religious ritualism operated apart from individual regeneration. In the O.T. and the Gospels, regeneration (i.e., the new birth; Jn3:3; Tit3:5) is something that is yet future (cf. Deut30:6; Ezek36:26; Jn7:38-39); it is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit initiated under the New Covenant (Jer31:33; Ezek36:26). As the new wine was better than the old wine, the New Covenant is better than the Old Covenant—the grand theme of the Book of Hebrews (Heb7:22; 8:6). Finally, the supernatural work of regeneration is invisible to men (cf. Jn3:8).

- [12] "After this", "Capernaum" became Jesus' base of operations (Cp., Matt4:13; Mk1:21; 2:1). "Capernaum" means *village of Nahum*, and it was likely named after the prophet Nahum (Cp., Nah1:1; Jn7:52).

JESUS' FIRST PASSOVER

- [13] This is the first "passover" attended by Jesus during His public ministry (also Jn6:4; 12:1). Jesus went to "Jerusalem", as required by the Law of Moses (Deut16:16).
- [14] Two different Greek words are translated "temple" in the N.T.; *ἱερόν*, used here, refers to the outer courts, whereas *ναός* (cf. v19) refers to the inner sanctuary. The merchants who sold animals for sacrifice and exchanged money for the required half-shekel temple tax (Exod30:13-16; Cp., Matt17:24-27) operated in the Court of the Gentiles. There were two issues associated with the presence of these merchants: 1) it was irreverent to conduct business within the Temple (Lev19:30), and 2) the merchants were corrupt, charging exorbitant fees for the pre-screened animals and currency exchange transactions (cf. Matt21:13; Mk11:17; Luk19:46).
- [15] Jesus' driving the moneychangers from the Temple (i.e., the House of God; v16) corresponds with the ritual of removing leaven from every Jewish house in preparation for Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (cf. Exod12:15). Jesus again drove the moneychangers from the Temple on a later occasion (Luk19:45-46), but it also occurred immediately preceding the celebration of Passover.
- [16] The Temple is referred to as the "Father's house", since during the Dispensation of Law this is where God dwells (1Kgs8:12-13). The issue was not the selling of "doves", which was necessary for the operation of the Temple as required by the Mosaic Covenant, but doing so within the Temple. God consistently warns His people against using religious offices/services as a means to get rich (cf. Mic3:11; 1Tim3:4,8; 1Pet5:2).

- [17] Quotation of Psalm 69:9.
- [18] "Jews" require a "sign" (1Cor1:22).
- [19] Here, "temple" is a translation of **ναός**, which refers to the inner sanctuary. This is a prophecy of Jesus' final "sign", which would be His own resurrection (Cp., Matt12:38-40). Though misunderstood, this prophecy was used against Jesus by the Jews at His trial before Caiaphas the high priest (Matt26:61) and on the cross (Mat27:40).
- [20] This "temple" was built by Zerubbabel and Joshua after the Jews returned from Babylon. Originally, it was a mere shadow of the glorious temple of Solomon (Hag2:2-3; Zech4:10). It came to be known as Herod's temple, since Herod began a massive refurbishment and expansion project that had been underway for "forty and six years" by this time.
- [21] Christ's prophecy (v19) was intentionally cryptic, analogous to His teaching in parables (and likely for the same reason; cf. Matt13:10-12). Yet, Christ's "body" can rightly be referred to as "the temple", since in it "dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col2:9).
- [22] After Christ's resurrection, this prophecy was "remembered" and properly understood by "his disciples", consistent with the principle of Matthew 13:10-12.
- [23] The "miracles" performed at this "passover" are not recorded in John's Gospel, but the result was that "many believed in his name" (i.e., that He was Messiah).
- [24] The fact that "many believed" (v23) is not equivalent to the nation of Israel properly receiving the Messiah, as was their obligation under the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Deut17:15); for this reason, "Jesus did not commit himself unto them" (Cp., Jn6:66; 1Jn2:19).
- [25] That Jesus "knew what was in man" was His divine attribute of omniscience.

CHAPTER 3

NICODEMUS AND THE NEW BIRTH

Nicodemus is often maligned by Christian commentators for his association with the Pharisees and the assumption that his coming to Jesus "by night" (Jn3:2) amounted to cowardice and/or hypocrisy on his part. However, it is probably better to accept Nicodemus as genuinely sincere in his desire to learn more about who Jesus was. Because of their virtual exhaustive knowledge of and extreme reverence for the Scriptures, many Pharisees eventually came to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (Act15:5), including Nicodemus (Jn19:39) and the Apostle Paul (Philip3:5); in contrast, Scripture records no instance of any Sadducee being converted.

- [1] The "Pharisees" of the 1st century were a small sect of extremely devout Jews, essentially equivalent to the ultra-orthodox of Judaism today. On the positive side, they confessed all the Hebrew scriptures (i.e., the O.T.) to be the very words of the LORD and

interpreted them literally; on the negative side, they accepted a large body of rabbinical tradition, which came to be known as the Oral Law, as equally authoritative (cf. Matt15:1-9).

"Nicodemus" is a Greek name that means *conqueror of the people*. That he was "a ruler of the Jews" signifies he was a member of the Sanhedrin, the council of 70 Jewish elders (patterned after Numbers 11:16-17) which ruled authoritatively over the nation of Israel in all religious and civil matters (cf. Luk22:66).

- [2] Nicodemus addresses Jesus as "Rabbi" (i.e., Master, an honorific title Jews used of their religious teachers) and confesses Him to be "a teacher come from God"; it is best to accept this as the genuine, sincere belief of Nicodemus, though he apparently was not as yet prepared to express this belief in public. By saying "we", Nicodemus indicates there are others (either Pharisees or members of the Sanhedrin; v1) who also view Jesus' teaching favorably, perhaps a reference to Joseph of Arimathea (cf. Luk23:50; Jn19:38) and/or Gamaliel (cf. Act5:34-39; 22:3). Nicodemus accepts Jesus as "a teacher come from God" on the basis of the "miracles" Jesus performed. While there were 3 miracles that were unique, definitive, and indisputable signs of the Messiah (see below), it is not clear that Jesus had performed these as yet; in general, however, "miracles" alone are not to be accepted as definitive signs of divine blessing or authority (cf. Deut13:1-5).

Miracles Unique to the Messiah. The Pharisees divided "miracles" into two categories; those that anyone could perform if so empowered by God (i.e., the prophets), and those that only Messiah would do. In the second category, there were three unique "miracles" that were regarded as indisputable signs of the Messiah: 1) cleansing of a Jewish leper (Mk1:40-45; Luk5:12-15), 2) casting out a dumb demon (Matt9:33; 12:22-23; Cp., Matt12:27; Mk5:9; Luk8:30; 11:19), and 3) healing of one born blind (Jn9:1-7,32). Before Jesus, no prophet had ever performed these "miracles", and the reaction of the Jews who witnessed them testifies to their extraordinary character.

- [3] "Verily, verily" is the repetition of the Hebrew word *Amen* (meaning "truth", used to introduce an assertion of absolute truth). In His assertion that, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God", Jesus is confronting the erroneous doctrine of the Pharisees that **all Israel has a share in the age to come** (cf. Matt3:7-9; Jn8:39); that is, the Pharisees had come to believe that by virtue of God's election of the nation of Israel (Isa65:9) and His covenant with Abraham (Gen12:1-3), all Jews would automatically be granted entrance into "the kingdom of God" (i.e., the kingdom established on earth at the coming of the Messiah; cf. Ps2:6-8; Dan2:44). According to Jesus, entrance into "the kingdom of God" is conditioned upon being "born again", even for Jews.
- [4] Nicodemus is confused by the term "born again" (v3). Though the term is not used in the O.T., the concept of the **new birth** is clearly taught under the figures of "circumcis[ion] of the heart" (Deut30:6) and "new heart" and/or "new spirit" (Jer24:7; 31:33-34; Ezek11:19; 36:26), but always as a future work of God. The new birth, or to be "born again", is equivalent to "regeneration" (Tit3:5); it is a benefit that comes as a result of the New Covenant, such that no

believer before the death/resurrection of Christ experienced regeneration (Cp., Jn7:37-39; 1Pet1:3).

- [5] Here, "born of water" refers to one's natural birth (cf. v6), and "[born] of the Spirit" refers to one's new birth. All men experience a natural birth, but only believers experience the new birth. Both are required to "enter into the kingdom of God"¹⁴. See the CHART: Rightly Dividing the Kingdom of God.
- [6] Parallelism is used in vv5-6. To be "born of water" (v5) is equivalent to being "born of the flesh" (v6; thus, it has nothing to do with baptism). To be "born of the Spirit" (i.e., regeneration) is not a natural process; it is a supernatural work of creation that only God can perform (Cp., Jn1:13; 2Cor5:17¹⁵).
- [7] Note the change of number in the pronouns¹⁶ used: "thee" is singular (i.e., Nicodemus), "ye" is plural (i.e., either all of Israel or all men). Since the subject was "a man" in v3, the requirement applies indiscriminately to all men. The new birth is a **universal requirement** of all men in order to enter the kingdom of God.
- [8] The new birth (i.e., the experience of being "born of the Spirit") is an invisible event. It is likened to the "wind", the effects of which can be observed, although the "wind" itself cannot. Jesus' parable given in Mark 4:26-29 appears to also point to the fact that spiritual birth/growth is a "mystery" from the human point of view.
- Greek Note. There is a word play in use in the Greek text of this verse. Both "wind" and "Spirit" are a translation of the Greek word πνεῦμα, so the metaphor of the "wind" points to the divine Agent responsible for the supernatural work of regeneration, which is the Holy "Spirit" (Tit3:5).
- [9] Nicodemus is confused by Jesus' teaching concerning the requirement of the new birth. The doctrinal position of the Pharisees is in conflict with the teaching of Scripture on the issue of who will enter the kingdom (cf. Matt15:9).
- [10] Nicodemus, as "a master [i.e., teacher] of Israel", is expected to "know ... these things", since they have been revealed in Scripture (e.g., Deut30:6; Jer24:7; 31:33-34; Ezek11:19; 36:26). In the Greek

¹⁴ Before Paul's revelation of the mystery of the Church and the Dispensation of Grace (Eph1:3; 2:3-11), believers did not view the afterlife as 'going to heaven'; the Jews looked forward to resting in Abraham's bosom (Luk16:22) until their resurrection in order to enter the Messianic Kingdom on earth (Dan12:1-2; Zech9:11).

¹⁵ Believers today (during the Church Age/Dispensation of Grace) experience regeneration since we live after the death/resurrection of Christ, which has made the benefits of the New Covenant available. However, regeneration is not equivalent to being baptized into the Body of Christ (1Cor12:13; Eph4:4-5). Only believers during the Dispensation of Grace are incorporated into the Body of Christ through spiritual baptism, but believers of all ages must be regenerated prior to entering the coming Millennial Kingdom.

¹⁶ In the KJV, "thee", "thy", "thine" are singular pronouns, whereas "ye", "you", "your" are always plural pronouns (in the second person). There is always a distinction between singular and plural pronouns in the second person in Hebrew and Greek, so the KJV preserves this important distinction in English. This important distinction is lost in all modern versions of the Bible.

text, "master" has an article, so Jesus addressed Nicodemus as "the teacher of Israel", suggesting he is Israel's most respected teacher. The study of Scripture is a serious obligation of all men (Isa8:20; Jn5:39; Act17:11; 2Tim2:15), but teachers especially will be held to a high standard by God (Jas3:1).

- [11] Beyond the revelation of this doctrine in the O.T., Nicodemus is now accountable to Jesus' prophetic "witness" to it (cf. Jn1:11).
- [12] The implication is that it is easier for one to believe what Jesus (or the Bible) teaches about "earthly things" (e.g., creation, history, natural science) than "heavenly things" (salvation, prophecy, the spiritual realm; Cp., Jn5:46-47; 1Cor2:14).
- [13] Prior to the death/resurrection/ascension of Jesus Christ, "no man hath ascended up to heaven". Rather, O.T. saints who died rested in "Abraham's bosom" (Luk16:22); the resurrection/ascension of Christ finally allowed them to be admitted into heaven (Ps68:18; Eph4:8-9). The sole exception to this is "the Son of man"¹⁷ (i.e., Jesus Christ), who "came down from heaven" in the incarnation, and who (at the time of John's writing, after the resurrection/ascension of Christ) was "in heaven" (assuming v13 is John speaking, rather than Jesus; see Note on **Red Letters** below). This verse is an allusion to Proverbs 30:4, where the implication is that the one who does this is God and "his son", whose "name" is the "word of God" (Prov30:5; Cp., Jn1:1; Rev19:13).

Note on Verses 13-21 in Red Letters. In so-called red letter Bibles, verses 13-21 commonly appear in red letters, suggesting these verses are words spoken by Christ (in the opinion of the Bible publisher). However, there is an abrupt change from the 1st person (vv3-12) to the 3rd person (vv13-21). The more natural understanding of this change is that the words spoken by Christ end at v12, and vv13-21 are commentary supplied by the Gospel writer (i.e., John). Regardless of whether they are words spoken by Christ or written by John after the fact, they are the inspired words of God by virtue of their inclusion in Scripture (2Tim3:16).

- [14] This verse is an allusion to Numbers 21:5-9. In the "wilderness", God provided the children of Israel deliverance from a plague of "fiery serpents" by means of a "brass serpent" fashioned by "Moses" and raised up on a "pole", such that anyone bitten by a serpent would "live" if he merely "beheld the serpent of brass". Typologically, the "serpent" represents sin (Gen3:1-6), and "brass", being the metal commonly associated with fire, connotes judgment (Exod27:1-2); the type portrays sin being judged on a pole (see LOOK AND LIVE: A Biblical Analogy for Faith). This verse asserts that Moses' "lift[ing] up the serpent" pointed typologically and prophetically to "the Son of man [being] lifted up" (i.e., the crucifixion of Christ; cf. Isa53:6; 2Cor5:21; Gal3:13; 1Pet2:24).
- [15] In the type, any Jew who looked at the brass serpent on a pole lived (physically survived the serpent's bite). In the antitype,

¹⁷ References to Jesus as "the Son of man" always refer to Him in His humanity, having a physical body which is constrained in time and space (cf. Ps8:4-6; Heb2:6-8). However, this does not preclude the omnipresence of Christ's divine nature, even after the incarnation (Cp., Matt18:20).

"whosoever believeth" in Christ "should not perish [spiritually], but have eternal life". Note that the use of the modal auxiliary verb "should" indicates the verb "perish" is in the subjunctive mood; thus, "not perish" is a possibility, not a certainty, contingent upon "belief" in Christ.

- [16] God was under no obligation to provide for any man's salvation; however, He chose to do so because of His great "love" (Rom5:8; 1Jn4:10). To satisfy His own holiness/justice (Rom3:26), He had to give "his only begotten Son" (see comments at John 1:18) as a propitiation (i.e., payment that satisfies the debt owed; cf. 1Jn2:2; 4:10) for sins, and the death of Christ (as the God-man, an infinite Person) serves as the propitiation for the sins of the "world". While Calvinists attempt to limit the scope of "world" in order to align with their doctrine of Limited Atonement¹⁸, the context here taken along with parallel passages elsewhere supports a universal (i.e., unlimited) understanding of "world" (Cp., Jn4:42; 2Cor5:14-15; 1Tim2:4,6; 4:10; Tit2:11; 2Pet3:9; 1Jn2:2; Rev22:17). The objection is that if Christ died for all men, why is it that all men are not saved? The answer is that the merits of the death of Christ, while available for all, are only applied to those who "believeth in him". This contingency is explicit in the Greek text, where the verbs "should not perish" and "have" [everlasting life] are in the subjunctive mood, which communicates possibility (not reality); "everlasting life" is only granted to individuals who "believeth in him".

Dispensational Note. It makes better sense to view John 3:16 as John's theological commentary on Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, written many years after the death/resurrection of Christ (c. 85-90 AD), rather than words spoken by Christ. At the time Jesus spoke to Nicodemus, His death/resurrection was yet future, such that the gospel of grace (i.e., Rom10:9; 1Cor15:1-4) was not yet available, neither was it understood by the disciples when Jesus prophesied concerning it (cf. Matt16:21-23; Luk18:31-34). During the earthly ministry of Jesus, Israel was called to believe "the gospel of the kingdom" (cf. Matt3:2; 4:23; 10:5-7; Mk1:14-15; Luk9:1-2).

- [17] Those who refuse to believe in Jesus Christ will be "condemn[ed]", but God's purpose in sending Him was that "the world might be saved" (Luk9:56; 2Pet3:9; 1Jn2:2); the object of God's grace in the Person and work of Christ is "the world" (i.e., "all men"; Rom5:18). Again, "might be saved" is in the subjunctive mood, expressing possibility but not certainty.
- [18] Believing on the Lord Jesus Christ is the sole requirement for salvation (cf. Act16:30-31) in the present dispensation. However, even before being confronted with Jesus Christ, all men are "condemned already", both for their participation in the sin of Adam (Rom5:12) and for their personal sins (Eccl7:20; Rom3:9,23; 1Jn1:8-

¹⁸ Calvinism's doctrine of Limited Atonement asserts that the propitiatory value of the death of Christ is limited to the elect (by which is meant those allegedly chosen before the foundation of the world to be the subjects of God's mercy/grace); that is, Christ died only for the elect. Limited Atonement is not consistent with Scripture.

10). Nevertheless, not believing "in the name¹⁹ of the only begotten Son of God" becomes an even more damning sin in this dispensation.

- [19] The contrast between "light" and "darkness" is a prominent theme in the Gospel of John. The Word of God, both the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn1:1,14; Rev19:13) and the Scriptures, are likened to "light" (Ps119:105; Prov6:23; Jn1:4; 8:12; 2Pet1:19), which is necessary to see. With the coming of Christ, "light is come into the world" (Jn1:9) in both senses; "the world" has seen God in the Person of Jesus Christ (Jn14:9), and the Scriptures are complete (Jn16:13; 2Pet1:19-21). Today, men rebel against God not because they are unable to see (Rom1:19-20), but because "men loved darkness" (which is the absence of Jesus Christ and His written Word; Ps2:2-3; Rom1:18,25; 2Thess2:10).
- [20] Evil-doers "hateth the light" (i.e., Jesus Christ and the Scriptures; Rom1:30) since it "reprove[s]" their sinful "deeds". In his heart of hearts, man knows God exists and that he is accountable to Him as his Creator, so he must "[suppress] the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom1:18).
- [21] Those that "doeth evil" (v20) are contrasted with those who "doeth truth". The Lord Jesus Christ and the Scriptures are also both asserted to be "truth" (Ps119:142; Jn1:17; 14:6; 17:17; 2Tim2:15). The Christian's "deeds" will "be made manifest" at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1Cor3:; 2Cor5:10).

FINAL PUBLIC TESTIMONY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

- [22] As John, "Jesus and his disciples" preached the gospel of the kingdom (Matt4:23; Mk1:14-15) and "baptized"; John 4:2 suggests that it was actually the "disciples" who performed the baptisms. These baptisms were a Jewish "baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mk1:4), not Christian baptism which is identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (cf. Rom6:3-5).
- [23] "Enon" means *springs*, and "Salim" means *peace*. Jewish baptism was exclusively by immersion (see Note on Baptism; Jn1:25), which is why John chose a place with "much water".
- [25] Jewish baptisms principally centered around "purif[ication]" from ceremonial uncleanness under the Law of Moses (cf. Lev15).
- [26] As a "Rabbi", "John" still has some disciples who had not left him to follow Jesus (Cp., Jn1:37). John's disciples are concerned that Jesus and His disciples, who also "baptizeth", are drawing bigger crowds than they are.
- [27] John's reply is that the number of men who are attracted to his ministry, or that of Jesus, is determined by "heaven" (i.e., God).
- [28] John was clear in his public testimony that he was not "the Christ" (Jn1:20). Furthermore, he taught that "I am sent before him" by quoting Isaiah 40:3 (Jn1:23).

¹⁹ In Hebrew idiom, a person's "name" represents the whole person. Thus, to believe in the "name" is to believe in the person (Cp., Gen4:26; Act4:12).

- [29] This is an important and informative object lesson. The "bridegroom" is Christ. Obviously, a bridegroom has a "bride", although she is not identified by John. This is consistent with the mystery nature of the Church (Eph5:30-32), which will be prepared to be the Bride of Christ (2Cor11:2), but which awaits the Apostle Paul for its revelation (Eph3:1-11). John identifies himself as "the friend of the bridegroom" (i.e., one invited to the wedding); in this relationship John represents the nation of Israel. This verse clearly teaches that the nation of Israel²⁰ is **not** the Bride of Christ (cf. Rev19:7-9).
- [30] John's ministry was to prepare the nation of the coming of Christ and announce His arrival (Jn1:29). After Christ comes, the ministry of His forerunner "must decrease".
- [31] A transition occurs here, extending to the end of the chapter. John the Baptist is no longer speaking; rather the writer of the Gospel now provides commentary that more fully develops the subject of the relationship between John and Jesus that was introduced by John. John was "of the earth", whereas Jesus was "from heaven" (Cp., 1Cor15:45-47). Being the only man who has come "from heaven", Jesus is necessarily "above all"; though John was the greatest of all O.T. prophets (Matt11:11; Luk7:28), Jesus is "above" him.
- [32] Coming from heaven (v31), Jesus "testifieth" of what "he hath seen and heard" in heaven, yet Israel (as a nation) has not received Him or His testimony (Jn1:11).
- [33] Yet, for the remnant of individual Jews who had "received his testimony" (Jn1:12), they demonstrated against the spirit of the age that "God is true" (cf. Rom3:3-4).
- [34] Jesus, as the Son of "God", is God's supreme and final messenger "sent" to the nation of Israel (cf. Matt21:33-39; Heb1:1-3). He "speaketh the words of God" (Jn7:16). Whereas all of God's prophets were empowered by the Holy "Spirit", to Jesus was given "the Spirit" without "measure" (cf. Is1:1-2; Col2:9).
- [35] The voice of "God" from heaven had testified to the "love" He has for His "Son" at Jesus' baptism. Recorded in all of the synoptic Gospels, in each instance these declarations of God's love for His Son is the first mention²¹ of "love" in those books (Matt3:17; Mk1:11; Luk3:22). God the "Father" has entrusted "all things" to His Son (cf. Matt11:27; 28:18; Jn5:22; 13:3; 17:2). In vv. 34-35, note the presence of the Trinity ("Father", "Son", and "Spirit").
- [36] The Gospel writer reiterates his prior preview of the coming gospel of grace (Jn3:16). During the Dispensation of Grace, the one who does nothing more than "believeth on the Son" (Act16:30-31; 1Cor15:1-4) "hath everlasting life" (note that "hath" is in the present tense, indicative mood, which indicates that "everlasting life" becomes a

²⁰ The nation of Israel is the wife of Jehovah (i.e., God the Father), whose marital relationship through history is portrayed in the Book of Hosea.

²¹ The first mention of "love" in the Bible occurs in Genesis 22:2, speaking of Abraham's love of Isaac. The highest and purest of all forms of "love" is that of a father for his son.

present reality at the moment of belief). In contrast, the one who "believeth not" will not receive "[everlasting] life", but rather should expect "the wrath of God" (i.e., the righteous judgment of God; cf. Rom1:18; Eph5:6; Col3:6; Rev14:10).

CHAPTER 4

JESUS AND THE (SAMARITAN) WOMAN AT THE WELL

John 4 is in almost perfect contrast with John 3. In John 3, Jesus spoke privately, at night, in Jerusalem, with a Pharisee who was well-known and well-respected as a rabbinical teacher and a member of the Sanhedrin. In John 4, Jesus speaks publicly, during the day, in Samaria, with a Samaritan woman who was despised as a serial adulterer from a corrupted race which had a corrupted religion.

- [1] The public ministry of "John" the Baptist had caused quite a stir among both common Jews and the religious elite, but the public ministry of "Jesus" has now overtaken John's in both notoriety and magnitude. The preached message and purpose in baptizing of Jesus and John were identical (Cp., Matt3:2; 4:17; Mk1:4); the difference was John identified himself as the forerunner of the Messiah (Jn1:23) who must necessarily "decrease" in significance with His arrival (Jn3:30), and John pointed to Jesus as the Messiah (Jn1:29-34).
- [2] It was the "disciples" of "Jesus" who performed baptisms on His behalf, presumably to avoid the potential for sectarianism (Cp., 1Cor1:11-17).
- [3] Presumably Jesus had been in Jerusalem to attend Passover (Jn2:13), and He now returns to His home in "Galilee".
- [4] In traveling from Judea to Galilee, it was not (geographically) necessary to go through Samaria. Though the most direct route, it was rough mountain terrain. For this reason, as well as the desire of Jews to avoid contact with the Samaritans, most travelers went east to the Jordan river valley and then north to Galilee. Jesus' "need [to] go through Samaria" was for a ministry purpose.

The Samaritans. After the northern Kingdom of Israel was conquered by Assyria (722 BC), the Assyrians deported many Jews to other regions of the empire, and simultaneously imported Gentile peoples into the land of Israel (2Kgs17:24). Subsequent intermarriage between the Jews who remained in Israel and these Gentile peoples resulted in a mongrel race referred to as the Samaritans. Samaritans were despised by Jews (Jn4:9) for two reasons: 1) their pure Jewish lineage had been corrupted (cf. Deut7:3-4; Cp., Ezr9:1-2; Neh13:23-27), and 2) their pure Jewish religion had been corrupted (2Kgs17:25-34). Thus, although living in the land of Israel, the Samaritans were not considered to be part of the covenant people of God.

- [5] The "city" of "Sychar" is called **Shechem** in the O.T. (Gen33:18), which was a city of refuge (Josh20:2,7) within the tribal territory of "Joseph" (i.e., Manasseh; Josh17:7).

- [6] The Gospel of John reckons time in the Roman manner, so "the sixth hour [from noon]" would be 6 p.m.; Jesus, who was fully human, would have been "wearied" after a full day of travel (cf. Heb4:15). At this time, "Jacob's well" had been revered as a holy place for ~2,000 years (and remains so today; cf. Gen33:18-19).
- [7] When Jesus spoke to this "woman of Samaria", it was unusual for two reasons: 1) a rabbi was expected to refrain from personal interactions with women other than his wife and close relatives, and 2) "Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" (v9).
- [8] Had the "disciples" been present to witness Jesus speaking to this woman, they would have been appalled (cf. v27). The disciples were nominally sent "unto the city to buy [food]", but apparently Jesus expected something more (Cp., v38).
- [9] Jesus would have been immediately recognized as a Jewish man by His attire (cf. Num15:38-39; Deut22:12; Cp., Matt9:20; 14:36).
- [10] Jesus immediately turns the conversation to spiritual matters (i.e., personal salvation). Note what is implied by Jesus: 1) salvation is "the gift of God" (Eph2:8), 2) one must know who gives it (Matt7:23; Jn10:14; 17:3), 3) one must "ask" for it (Matt7:7; Luk11:9; 1Jn5:14), and 4) it will be given to one who asks Him for it (Matt7:8; Luk11:10; Jn6:37; 1Jn5:15; Rev22:17). Denotatively, "living water" is running/flowing water, but it is used connotatively as a type of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn7:38-39). No mention of the woman's sinfulness is made; turning from sin is not a prerequisite for salvation.
- [11] The "woman" does not realize Jesus is speaking of spiritual matters.
- [12] The corrupt religion of the Samaritans was syncretic, an amalgamation of paganism with a primitive form of Mosaic Judaism (cf. 2Kgs17:29-33). They revered the books of Moses (but not the remainder of the O.T.) and considered "Jacob" to be the "father" of their nation.
- [13] Nothing of this world can bring ultimate and lasting satisfaction. Every carnal desire, ambition, or pursuit only leaves one thirsty for more. This single statement of Jesus concisely summarizes the message of the Book of Ecclesiastes (Eccl1:7-8).
- [14] Only communion with God provides ultimate and lasting satisfaction (cf. Jn7:37-39; 17:3).
- [15] Jesus has created a thirst in the woman for this living "water", but still she does not recognize its spiritual significance.
- [17] The "woman" claims to "have no husband", and Jesus agrees with her.
- [18] Here, Jesus' divine attribute of omniscience is displayed. The woman "has had five husbands" (past tense); whether these prior marriages ended in the deaths of her husbands, or divorce, is not stated, but Jesus does regard them as being terminated. She is now living with a man, whom Jesus does not consider to be a "husband"; He does not regard cohabitation as marriage.

- [19] In Samaritan theology, the last "prophet" was Moses, and the next "prophet" to come would be the Messiah (Deut18:15; cf. v25).
- [20] Perceiving that Jesus is a "prophet" (v19), the woman seeks from Him an answer to the most disputed question between the Samaritans and the Jews: where is the proper "place" to "worship"? The Samaritans worshiped on the "mountain" of Gerizim (cf. Deut11:29; 27:12; Josh8:30-35), but the Jews insisted "Jerusalem" was "the place where men ought to worship". The Samaritans revered only the books of Moses, which did not name the "place" the LORD would designate for "worship" (cf. Deut12:5-6; Cp., 1Kgs9:3; 14:21; Ps122).
- [21] Jesus mentions in passing a time in the future when worship will not be required to be performed at a specific, designated, physical location. This is only true during the Church Age, since worship at "Jerusalem" will be required of all nations during the coming Millennial Kingdom (Zech14:16-17). The present Church Age is the only period of time during which a physical temple does not exist²²; rather, the Holy Spirit of God dwells in the Body of Christ (Cp., 1Cor6:19), comprised of persons who reside in every place.
- [22] Jesus unequivocally asserts that Samaritan worship is false, and Jewish worship is true. There are not multiple paths to God (Jn14:6), "salvation is [only] of the Jews" (cf. Gen12:3; Gal3:8-9). That is, the written revelation of God to man has come through the Jews alone (Rom3:1-2), and it is the Jewish race that has provided the Messiah (Luk1:31-33; Rom9:3-5) who is the Savior of the world (Jn1:29; 4:42; 1Tim4:10; 1Jn2:2).
- [23] But even at that present time, with the arrival of Jesus on earth as "the Son of the living God" (Matt16:16) and "God manifest in the flesh" (1Tim3:16), "worship" must change even for the Jews in certain ways. Jesus will assert Himself to be "the truth" (Jn14:6), and "worship" of "the Father" must be through Him; it is not possible to worship "the Father" apart from His Son (cf. 1Jn2:22-23; 2Jn9).
- [24] "God is [a] Spirit", a reference to His invisible, non-material nature, which is consistent with His attribute of omnipresence. God is everywhere, such that worshiping Him "in spirit" cannot be confined to a single location (Cp., 1Kgs8:11,27). Worshiping God "in truth" also precludes the syncretism of the Samaritans (2Kgs17:33; 1Cor10:20).
- [25] The Samaritan woman has acknowledged Jesus as "a prophet" (v19), but does not recognize Him as "Messiah".
- [26] Jesus unequivocally asserts that He is the promised "Messiah" (v25). In the Greek text, Jesus' sentence begins with "Εγώ εἰμι" (i.e., "I am"; Exod3:14).
- [27] The "disciples" now return from the city and are shocked to find Jesus speaking with the Samaritan woman (cf. vv8-9).
- [28] In John 2:6, the "waterpot" was used as a symbol of the ritualism associated with the Law of Moses (i.e., Judaism). Thus, this

²² This observation applies to the present earth; there will be no temple in the new heaven/earth (Rev21:22).

Gentile²³ woman leaving her waterpot may be a type of the Church (cf. Act15:14; Rom6:14; Gal3:24-25; Eph5:30-32).

- [29] The woman now recognizes Jesus is "the Christ" (i.e., the Messiah), and her response is to call the "men" of her "city" (v28) to "come" and "see" Him (Cp., Jn1:46).
- [30] The woman's call was effective.
- [31] Jesus' "disciples" are concerned with His need for physical food.
- [32] Jesus' put spiritual needs above physical needs (cf. v4).
- [33] The disciples fail to recognize Jesus is speaking of spiritual, rather than physical, matters, just like the Samaritan woman (cf. vv10-11).
- [34] In His earthly ministry, Jesus put the "will" of the Father, who "sent" Him (Jn17:3), above His own (Jn5:30; 6:38; Luk22:42). He would indeed "finish" the "work" He was "sent" to do (Jn17:4; 19:30).
- [35] The village of Sychar was located in the mountains of Samaria; had the disciples "lift[ed]" their "eyes", they would not have seen fields. What they would have seen, however, were the men coming from the village by the testimony of the Samaritan woman that Messiah was present (v30)! This was the same village the disciples had just visited to buy food (v8). Jesus' point was that in this village were many who were awaiting the coming of Messiah and were ripe for "harvest", yet the disciples had not told them He was here.
- [36] In the salvation of souls, there are those who "soweth" and those who "reapeth"; both are necessary, and both will receive "wages" (i.e., rewards; 1Thess2:19).
- [37] Compare with 1 Corinthians 3:5-9.
- [38] Jesus had sent His disciples into the village (v8) to "reap" souls awaiting the arrival of Messiah, but they had only purchased food.
- [39] In contrast with the "many ... Samaritans" who "believed on Him", most Jews did not (Jn1:11). Whereas "Jews require a sign" (1Cor1:22), the Samaritans "believed" based on the testimony of "the woman" (cf. Jn20:29).
- [40] Jesus "abode" with "the Samaritans" (i.e., Gentiles) for "**two days**", which could be a prophetic foreshadowing of a two thousand year Church Age (cf. Hos6:2; 2Pet3:8; Jn2:1; 11:6).
- [41] These Samaritans (i.e., Gentiles) "believed" because of Christ's "word" (Cp., Jn20:29), whereas Jews need to see miracles to believe (1Cor1:22). **Faith** is believing the "word" of God (Rom4:20-21; Heb11:1-3). The record of the Samaritans' faith is an implicit upbraiding of the Jews.

²³ Samaritans were a mixed race, a somewhat unique category considered to be neither fully Jewish nor fully Gentile (Act1:8). However, for the *typological* purposes of John 4, the Samaritans are viewed as non-Jewish (i.e., Gentiles).

- [42] The content of the Samaritans' faith was that Jesus "is indeed the Christ" (Cp., Matt16:16), and that He is "**the Savior of the world**" (Jn1:29), not Israel alone. This is not an assertion of universal salvation, but that because of the work of Christ men will be saved "of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues" (Rev7:9).
- [43] See comments on v40.
- [44] This proverb of "Jesus" rings true in so many settings. It is always difficult to accept as an authority one who has grown up in your midst.
- [45] Again the implicit contrast is made between the reception of Jesus by the Samaritans (i.e., Gentiles) based on hearing His "word" (v41) versus "the Galileans" (i.e., Jews), who "received him" after "having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem" (Cp., 1Cor1:22; 2Cor5:7). As Jews, the Galileans would have been "at Jerusalem" as He was, since attendance of "the feast" (i.e., Passover; Jn2:13) in Jerusalem was required by the Law (Deut16:16).

2ND SIGN: HEALING A NOBLEMAN'S SON

Jesus' second sign to Israel is placed immediately following His encounter with the Samaritans, who "believed on him" (v39) by faith in the testimony of the woman and Jesus Himself (vv39-43), without any miracles being performed. In contrast to the Samaritans, Jesus says of the Jews, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe" (v48; Cp., 1Cor1:22). In addition, this sign could be a continuation of the typological foreshadowing of John 4:39-43; namely, Jesus healing a Jewish son after spending two days with the Gentiles might point to the Millennial Kingdom in which the nation of Israel is regenerated and restored as head of the nations to come following a two-thousand year Church Age (Act15:14-16; cf. Hos6:2; 2Pet3:8; Jn2:1; 11:6).

- [46] This second sign selected by John (Jn20:30-31) occurs in "Cana, of Galilee", as did the first sign (Jn2:1). This may be to emphasize that the prophets foresaw that Messiah's ministry to Israel would be connected to "Galilee" (Isa9:1-2; Matt4:14-16). This Jewish "nobleman" has come to "Cana" from "Capernaum", a journey of ~20 miles.
- [47] At this point in His ministry, Jesus' notoriety as a healer has spread throughout "Galilee" (Matt4:23). The Jewish "son" is "at the point of death", perhaps a type of the nation of Israel at the end of the Church Age (cf. Lev26:33-39; Deut28:64-66).
- [48] In a certain sense, Jesus considers a desire to see "signs and wonders", a characteristic commonly associated with the Jews (1Cor1:22), as evidence of their unbelief (Matt12:38-39). To believe the words of Jesus/God without seeing "signs and wonders" is viewed as more virtuous (Jn20:29; 2Cor5:7; 1Pet1:8-9).
- [49] The "nobleman" has faith in Jesus as a healer.
- [50] In its most comprehensive expression, **faith** is *believing all that God has said*. When this nobleman "believed the word" that Jesus said to him concerning his "son", it was an expression of faith (Cp.,

Gen15:4-6; Rom4:18-22). Note that initially the nobleman had desired Jesus to "come down [to Capernaum], and heal his son" (v47); now, he accepts Jesus' "word" that "thy son liveth".

- [51] Being "God manifest in the flesh" (1Tim3:16), the words of Jesus are "sure" and "certain" (cf. Ps111:7; Prov22:21).
- [52] The "seventh hour" would be 7 pm, as John reckons time in the Roman manner.
- [53] The recovery of the nobleman's son was not merely coincidental, but had occurred at the very moment Jesus said, "Thy son liveth" (v50). Not only did the nobleman "believe", but so did "his whole house"; this is consistent with the type of the "whole house" of Israel believing at Messiah's second coming (cf. Jer30:7; 31:34; Ezek37:11; 39:25; Dan12:1; Zech13:8-9; Rom11:26).
- [54] The healing of the nobleman's son was the "second miracle" Jesus performed "in Galilee", not necessarily the second of all His miracles.

CHAPTER 5

3RD SIGN: HEALING AN IMPOTENT MAN

The healing of the impotent (i.e., paralyzed) man occurs at a "feast of the Jews" (v1). The feast is unnamed, and its identity is the subject of much debate. Many commentators simply assume it was a Passover without warrant. However, the context of the passage, and the discourse of Jesus that is connected with the healing, strongly suggest it was a **Feast of Trumpets**. First, it occurs on a "sabbath" (v9), and the Feast of Trumpets is a "sabbath" day (irrespective of which day of the week it occurs; cf. Lev23:24). Second, the theme of Jesus' discourse associated with this feast day is the necessity of credible witnesses (Deut17:6; Jn8:17; 2Cor13:1) to His messianic identity: 1) the witness of John the Baptist (vv33-35), 2) the witness of Jesus' works (v36), 3) the witness of the Father (vv37-38), and 4) the witness of the Scriptures (vv39-47). The necessity of credible witnesses is uniquely associated with the Feast of Trumpets. This feast occurred on the first day of the (7th) month (Lev23:24; Num29:1), which on Israel's lunar calendar coincided with the new moon. Since new moons could not be predicted to the exact day, identification of the first day of each month depended on witnesses to herald their arrival, which they did with the blowing of trumpets (cf. Ps81:3).

- [1] As discussed in the introduction, this "feast" was likely the Feast of Trumpets. Although not a mandatory feast (Deut16:16), "Jesus went up to Jerusalem" to participate in it.
- [2] The "sheep [market]" is the sheep gate, the entrance into the city used to bring sacrificial animals to the Temple. "Bethesda" means *house of mercy*.
- [3] As used in contemporary English, "impotent" generally has a very specific meaning relating to sexual virility; but "impotent" in its most literal sense means *without power*, and that is how it is used in

this passage. The "impotent man" (v7) cannot "walk" (v8), so he is paralyzed in some sense.

There was a "great multitude" in need of healing, but Jesus healed only one (contrast with Matt8:16; 12:15; Luk6:19). This was not a random occasion of healing, but must have typological significance (cf. Jn20:30-31). These Jews were "waiting for the moving of the water" in hope of healing, but they should have been waiting for Messiah (Isa35:5-6; 61:2; Matt11:5; Cp., Luk2:25).

Textual Note. Modern Bible versions omit the second half of v3, "waiting for the moving of the water", and all of v4, because they do not appear in Codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus (although they appear in the vast majority of Greek manuscripts). However, without the context these verses provide, there is no logical explanation for why "impotent", "blind", "halt", and "withered" (v3) Jews faithfully gathered at the pool of Bethesda (v2), or even for the basis of the name "Bethesda" itself (i.e., the pool was already named Bethesda before Jesus performed His healing). The context of the passage demands these verses be included as authentic.

- [4] The periodic "troubling of the water" provided a supernatural healing, which was an act of mercy for the one who received it. To "trouble" is not to stir; people watched for the "moving" of the water (v3), but the "troubling" may not have been visible.
- [5] The duration of the man's "infirmity", "thirty eight years", is a period of time associated with Israel's time spent wandering in the wilderness. God's judgment on the Israelites was to wander in the wilderness for forty years (Num14:33-34), but that period of time included the two years that had already transpired since they had departed from Egypt (Num1:1). The typological significance of this "sign" may be to foreshadow the fact that, although the kingdom will be offered to this generation of Jews, they will reject it, and it will be subsequent generation which enters the kingdom (Num14:31; cf. Matt21:43).
- [6] To ask the impotent man, "Wilt thou be made whole?", is a seemingly ridiculous question. Yet today, all men are lost and most have no interest in being saved (Matt7:13-14; Gal4:27).

The duration of the man's "infirmity" is described as "a long time". It will end only if he is willing to "be made whole". Typologically, the setting aside of Israel will endure for "a long time", but will end when the nation is "willing" to receive Messiah and His kingdom (cf. Ps110:3; Isal:19; Hos5:15-6:2).

- [7] The "impotent man" has great faith (i.e., he is brought to the "pool" every day), but he has placed his faith in the wrong object (i.e., the "pool", rather than God). Analogously, the Jews exalted their traditions above the Word of God (Matt15:3-9; Mk7:6-13).
- [8] Jesus' command challenges the man to put his faith in Him, rather than the tradition associated with the pool.
- [9] This healing occurred on "the sabbath", which violated the Pharisaical traditions associated with sabbath observance. However, healing on "the sabbath" was not forbidden by the Law of Moses.

Typology of Healing the Impotent Man. The pool called "Bethesda" (i.e., house of mercy) that appeared to offer healing is a type of the Law of Moses. It was mediated by an "angel" (cf. Act7:53; Gal3:19), but it was a false hope to an impotent man (cf. Matt5:20; Rom3:26; Gal2:16). It was presumed to offer healing to one who would step into the pool after the troubling of the water, but it was a false hope to one unable to walk. The hope it appeared to offer could not be realized. Likewise, the Law of Moses could not offer mercy (Deut17:11-12; Heb10:28). In contrast, Christ healed contingent on personal faith alone (cf. Matt9:28-29; 15:28; Mk10:52).

- [10] The charge raised by "the Jews" against the man "that was cured" was that "it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed" (i.e., work; Lev23:24-25; Deut5:14) on the "sabbath".
- [11] If their charge were true, Jesus would have commanded this Jewish man to violate the Law of Moses, which would be sin. In fact, Jesus elsewhere pointed out that the Law of Moses never precluded acts of mercy, even on the "sabbath" (cf. Luk13:15; 14:5).
- [12] The Jewish religious leaders were always intensely interested in who Jesus was, or who He claimed to be (i.e., Messiah).
- [13] That the man "that was healed [knew] not who it was" that had healed him may be sin on his part (v14); this particular healing should have convinced him that Jesus was Messiah (Cp., Matt11:2-6).
- [14] Jesus commands the man to "sin no more"; that is, acknowledge that Jesus is Messiah. If he refuses to do that, the fact that he has been "made whole" will be for naught, since he will remain lost and his subsequent eternal judgment will be "a worse thing" than his infirmity of 38 years.
- [15] The significance of this seems to be a public acknowledgement of "Jesus" as Messiah.
- [16] Arnold Fruchtenbaum teaches that the Jews rejected Jesus as Messiah, not because He did not deliver the nation from Roman oppression (as is commonly presumed), but because he refused to conform to Pharisaical Judaism. That interpretation seems to comport well with the reaction of the Jews to Jesus as recorded in the Gospels.

JESUS ASSERTS EQUALITY WITH GOD

- [17] To refrain from "work[ing]" on the sabbath day was a commandment for men patterned after the creation week, during which God "worked" for six days, then "rested" on the seventh (Exod20:11). However, in actuality God's "work" of sustaining His creation necessarily continued even on the seventh day of creation and every day since. What is true of God the "Father" is true of His Son (Coll:15-19); this is also the idea behind Jesus' statement elsewhere that the Son of Man is Lord of the sabbath (Matt12:8; Mk2:28; Luk6:5). For Jesus to assert that God was His "Father" (i.e., "My Father"), and that they both "worketh hitherto" (i.e., continuously), was to assert equality with God.

- [18] While perhaps not obvious to us, "the Jews" immediately recognized the significance of Jesus' statement (v17) as "making himself equal with God".
- [19] Here, Jesus is not disclaiming equality with "the Father", but reaffirming it. To the contrary, His point is that He and "the Father" are in perfect harmony relative to their purpose and work (Jn10:30).
- [20] Jesus "the Son" is not ignorant of the plan of "the Father". The plan of "the Father" has been fully disclosed to "the Son", because "the Father loveth the Son". The Biblical pattern is that God discloses His plans to those who are His friends (cf. Gen18:17; 2Chron20:7; Isa41:8; Jn15:15; Jas2:23), and He reveals His most comprehensive prophecies of the future to those He "loveth" (cf. Dan9:22-23; Jn21:20-22; Rev1:19).
- [21] Not only are "the Father" and "the Son" in perfect harmony relative to purpose and plan, they are equal in power. Jesus "the Son" has the same power over "life", including resurrection from "the dead", as God "the Father" (Jn1:4).
- [22] While "the Father" and "the Son" are equal in divine essence, there are different roles among members of the Godhead (Cp., 1Cor11:3). All "judgment" has been "committed" to "the Son" (Cp., Act17:31), presumably because of His empathy with God's creatures that is inherent in the incarnation (cf. v27; Cp., Heb4:15).
- [23] Because of their equality in purpose, plan, and power, "the Son" must be "honor[ed]" in the same way as "the Father" (Cp., Rev5:13). It is not possible to honor "the Father" without honoring "the Son". Jews who deny "Jesus is the Christ" have denied both "the Father and the Son" (1Jn2:22-23).
- [24] Jesus the Son has power over life and death (v21), and all judgment has been committed to Him (v22). His future judgment of creatures will be predicated on "hear[ing the] word" of Jesus the Son and "believ[ing] on him that sent" Him (i.e., God the Father). Note that this declaration stops short of the gospel of grace that will be revealed by Paul (1Cor15:1-4), since the historical events upon which it will be based have not yet occurred, but it allows for it. Jesus will grant believers "everlasting life" free from future "condemnation" (Rom8:1). Here, "death" and "life" are used idiomatically to contrast *spiritual* "death" vs. *spiritual* "life" (Cp., Eph2:1,5); to "pass from death unto life" is effected by the new birth (i.e., regeneration; Jn3:6-7; Tit3:5; Js1:18; 1Pet1:23).
- [25] Here, "hour" is used idiomatically, meaning a period of time. God's work of regenerating "the dead" (cf. Eph2:1,5) began with the completed work of Christ and His sending of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn7:37-39; 14:16; 16:7), and it continues to this present day. That Jesus says it "now is" is significant, as it reinforces the fact that regeneration was not a work performed on believers prior to the advent of Christ; the O.T. prophets always viewed regeneration as a future work (Cp., Deut30:6; Jer32:39; 31:33; Ezek11:19; 36:26-27).

- [26] Aseity, or self-existence, is the most fundamental attribute defining Deity (Exod3:14). Both "the Father" and "the Son" have "life in himself" (Cp., Jn1:4), meaning God's existence is not dependent upon anything outside of Himself. Self-existence is never an attribute of the creature (Cp., Coll:17; Heb1:3).
- [27] Jesus has been given "authority to execute judgment", "because he is the Son of man". The title, "the Son of man", applies to Jesus in His incarnation (cf. Ps8:4-6; Dan7:13-14; Heb2:6-8). As a perfect Man (i.e., a creature), Jesus has empathy with all of God's creatures, making Him a uniquely qualified Judge (Heb4:15).
- [28] Here, "hour" is again used idiomatically, meaning a period of time that begins at some definite point, but can extend far into the future (Cp., v25). Whereas v25 spoke of the regeneration of a believer who is *spiritually* dead, this verse speaks of the resurrection of the physically dead. Thus, the Son's power over life includes both its spiritual and physical aspects.
- [29] The Son, who has power over both spiritual and physical life, will eventually resurrect all men. There will be **two categories** of resurrection. Here they are called "the resurrection of life" and "the resurrection of damnation". Elsewhere they are called the resurrection of the "just and unjust" (Act24:15), or "the first resurrection" and an implied second resurrection (Rev20:4-5). In each case, the first category includes all believers, whereas the second category includes all unbelievers. Resurrection of all men is necessary for them to receive bodies fit for an eternal existence; for believers, that eternal existence will be in the "new heaven" and "new earth" (Rev21:1-3), whereas for unbelievers that eternal existence will be in "the lake of fire" (Rev20:15).

As with the "hour" of regeneration (v25), which has extended from the Day of Pentecost to the present, the "hour" of resurrection also extends over a long period of time. The first "resurrection" includes the resurrection of Christ as the "first fruits" (1Cor15:20-23), to be followed by the transformation/resurrection of the Church/Body of Christ at the rapture (1Cor15:51-53; 1Thess4:13-18) and the resurrection of Israel/O.T. saints at the second coming (Dan12:1-2). The second "resurrection" includes the unbelieving from all ages and occurs at the end of the millennial kingdom (cf. Rev20:5,11-15). The reality of an eschatological, bodily resurrection was a primeval truth revealed by God (cf. Job19:25-26).

WITNESSES TO JESUS' MESSIANIC CLAIMS

- [30] This verse transitions from Jesus' assertion of His divine equality with "the Father" (vv17-29) back to His dependence upon "the Father" in His humanity; at His first coming, Jesus lived a genuine human life (cf. Philip2:6-8; Heb5:7-9), perfectly executing "the will of the Father" rather than His own (cf. Matt26:39; Mk14:36; Luk22:42), empowered by the Holy Spirit rather than drawing upon His divine attributes (cf. Luk4:1-14).
- [31] This verse refers to the requirement under the Law of Moses for "two or three witnesses" (Deut19:15; Jn8:17; 2Cor13:1) in order to *legally* establish a claim.

- [32] In vv33-47, Jesus sets forth four exceedingly credible "witness[es]" to His messianic claims, fulfilling the requirements of the Law of Moses (Matt5:17). Those four witnesses are set forth in order, from least to most important.

(1) THE WITNESS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

- [33] The first "witness" to Jesus as Messiah was the testimony of "John" the Baptist (cf. Jn1:29-34). John was an exceedingly credible "witness", being the greatest of Israel's prophets (Matt11:11; Luk7:28) whose own ministry had also been the subject of prophecy (cf. Jn1:23; Isa40:3).
- [34] The witness of John is the least important of the witnesses, because it is the witness of a mere "man" (Cp., Jn2:24-25). Nonetheless, among men, John is the greatest (Matt11:11; Luk7:28). The first witness is natural, the next three will be supernatural.
- [35] John was received as a prophet by the nation of Israel (Matt14:5; 21:26), so his testimony should have been considered exceedingly credible.

(2) THE WITNESS OF JESUS' WORKS

- [36] A "greater witness than that of John" were the "works" (i.e., miracles) that Jesus performed in public. The supernatural signs and wonders Jesus performed were prophesied in Scripture (cf. Isa61:1-2; Matt11:3-5) and were an important witness to His messianic claims. Even more significant, Jesus performed the three miracles that definitively demonstrated He was the Messiah (see: Miracles Unique to the Messiah; Jn3:2).

(3) THE WITNESS OF THE FATHER

- [37] The "Father himself" bore "witness" to Jesus as His Son (i.e., Messiah; cf. Ps2:2,7) at John's baptism of Jesus (Matt3:17; Mk1:11; Luk3:22). This was the first time since Mount Sinai that the nation of Israel had heard the audible "voice" of God "the Father" (Cp., Exod19:9; 20:19).
- [38] After the coming of Jesus Christ, it is obligatory for Israel to "believe" in "the Father" and the Son/Messiah, "whom he hath sent" (cf. Jn17:3; 1Jn2:22-23).

(4) THE WITNESS OF THE SCRIPTURES

- [39] The greatest of all witnesses to Jesus as Messiah are the "scriptures". The Jews already believe that the revelation of "eternal life" is contained in the "scriptures", and Jesus asserts that the "scriptures" testify of me" (Cp., Ps40:7; Luk24:25-27; Heb10:7).

- [40] Jesus, of whom the scriptures testify, is the source of "life" (Jn1:4; 5:21; 11:25; 14:6). For those who revere the scriptures as the very words of God, their testimony to Jesus as Messiah must be accepted. However, Israel (as a nation) would not "come to [Jesus]" (Jn1:11).
- Note on Calvinism. Calvinism's doctrine of Total Depravity asserts that an unregenerate man is unable to come to Christ. However, testimony of Scripture is that unbelieving men "will not" come to Christ. The failure of men to come to Christ is not an issue of man's ability, but of man's "will". This issue will be a major subject of discussion in John 6.
- [41] Jesus did not receive honor from the nation of Israel at His first coming.
- [42] Jesus asserts that their failure to honor him (as Messiah) was because they did not "love ... God"; it is impossible to love God and not honor Jesus (cf. 1Jn2:22-23).
- [43] The ultimate illustration of Israel's failure to honor Jesus came when the nation "receive[d]" Barabbas²⁴ rather than Him (Matt27:20; Mk15:9-11; Luk23:18; Jn18:40), which resulted in His crucifixion. Some take this verse to speak prophetically of the Antichrist and understand it to teach that the nation of Israel will receive the Antichrist as Messiah when he comes, but that will not be the case. The Bible says that the nation of Israel will enter into a covenant (i.e., a peace treaty; Isa28:18) with the Antichrist, which is the event that begins the 70th week of Daniel (i.e., the 7-year Tribulation; Dan9:27), but they will not believe him to be the *Jewish* Messiah²⁵.
- [44] One reason Israel did not receive Jesus as Messiah was because they desired "honor" from men more than "from God only" (cf. Jn12:42).
- [45] The Jews believe they are being faithful to "Moses", whereas it will be "Moses" (i.e., the scriptures Moses wrote; cf. v37; Deut31:19-22) who "accuse[s]" them.
- [46] "Moses", whom they revere, "wrote of [Christ]". Not only are there explicit prophecies concerning Christ in the books of Moses (e.g., Gen3:15; 22:8; 49:10; Num24:17; Deut18:15-19), there are a multitude of types of Christ (e.g., Adam, Abel, Isaac, Joseph; the Passover lamb, bread from heaven (i.e., manna), the rock that provided water when smitten, the brazen serpent on a pole that saved from death, etc.).
- [47] To revere Moses, but "believe not his writings" concerning Christ was hypocrisy (Cp., Matt23:13). The inspired "writings" of Moses are the very words of God (2Tim3:16; 2Pet1:19-21), just as much as the "words" of Jesus (Cp., 1Cor14:37).

²⁴ It is interesting that Barabbas is an Aramaic name meaning *son of the father*.

²⁵ The most obvious reason Israel will not accept the Antichrist as the *Jewish* Messiah is the fact that he will be a Gentile (Dan9:26-27).

CHAPTER 6

4TH SIGN: FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND

The feeding of the five thousand is the only miracle²⁶ of Jesus recorded in all 4 Gospels (cf. Matt14:15-21; Mk6:32-44; Luk9:12-17), which testifies implicitly to its paramount importance. It provides the backdrop to the very long discourse of Jesus concerning Himself as "the bread of life" (Jn6:35). It occurs as the second Passover is approaching (Jn6:4; i.e., during the second year of Jesus' public three-and-a-half year ministry).

- [1] The "Sea of Galilee" was also known as the Sea of "Tiberius".
- [2] Jesus healed all the sick with whom He came into contact (e.g., Matt4:23; 9:35; 12:15; 14:14), which naturally resulted in "a great multitude" following Him.
- [3] Many of Jesus' most important revelations to the nation of Israel and/or His disciples occurred on "a mountain", including the sermon on the mount (Matt5:1), the mount of transfiguration (Matt17:1), and the Olivet discourse (Matt24:3). The significance of this pattern is likely as a theological parallel to God's revelation to Moses at Mt. Sinai (Exod19:3; cf. Jn1:17).
- [4] This is the second "passover" feast during Jesus' public three-and-a-half year ministry. Since attendance at the "passover" feast in Jerusalem was mandatory (Deut16:16), many dispersed Jewish pilgrims from outside the land would be traveling into and through Israel; this is probably the explanation for why these many Jews could not simply be sent home to eat.
- [5] The feeding of the five thousand occurred at Bethsaida (Luk9:10), a village on the northeast shore of the Sea of Galilee ("Bethsaida" means *the house of fish*). Bethsaida was the hometown of "Philip" (Jn1:44; 12:21), which explains why Jesus asks him where "bread" can be purchased.
- [6] Jesus' question was a test for Philip and the disciples, since "he himself knew" it would not be possible to purchase food for such a multitude in the tiny village.
- [7] In the KJV, "penny" is a translation of the Latin word *denarius*. A denarius was the wage paid to a common laborer for one day of work (Matt20:2). Thus, to purchase even a small amount of "bread" for the entire multitude would have cost the equivalent of the wages paid for "two hundred" days of labor, a vast sum which the disciples obviously did not have. There is no natural solution to this problem, it must be solved supernaturally.
- [8] Bethsaida was also the hometown of "Andrew and Peter" (Jn1:44).
- [9] Andrew may have personally known the "lad". The "lad" literally had "five barley loaves and two small fishes", a paltry amount of food incapable of feeding such a multitude; yet, when used symbolically, the numbers "five" and "two" represent grace/mercy (Cp., Jn5:2) and a minimum number of witnesses (Deut17:6), respectively.

²⁶ His own resurrection is not counted as one of the miracles of Jesus.

- [10] In Mark's account, the "much grass in the place" is specifically said to be "green" (Mk6:39). When Jesus instructs these Jews to "sit down" in "green grass" in preparation to be fed, He is asserting implicitly that He is the LORD's "shepherd" (i.e., Messiah; Ps23:1-2; Jn10:11,14). The number of the "men" present was "about five thousand", but the total including women and children was likely more than twice that number.
- [11] Jesus gave "thanks" before the meal, which has long been a pattern followed by believers (Cp., 1Tim4:3). "Jesus" supernaturally nourished these Jews with "as much as they would"; that is, all ate till they were totally satisfied (Cp., Ps23:1). It is unclear at what point the food was multiplied, but Jesus used "the disciples" as instruments who participated in His miracle of provision.
- [12] After "they were filled", food still remained, indicating Jesus' provision was more than adequate.
- [13] Indeed, more food remained after all had been fed than what had been present at the beginning (v9). More than simply adequate, the gracious provision of God is "exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph3:20). This miracle is analogous to that performed by the prophet Elisha (2Kgs4:42-44). When used symbolically, the number "twelve" is always associated with the nation of Israel (cf. Gen35:22; 37:9-10; Matt19:28; Rev12:1).
- [14] The "men" who witnessed this "miracle that Jesus did" acknowledge Him to be "that prophet" Moses prophesied to "come" (i.e., Messiah; Deut18:15); yet, their belief is predicated on the "miracle" (1Cor1:22).

Typology of Feeding the Five Thousand. Being the only miracle of Jesus recorded in all 4 Gospels, this "sign" (Jn6:30) must be of paramount importance. Jesus as Messiah is seen as the LORD's Shepherd, who assumes the responsibility for feeding the flock of God (Ps23:1-2). In the discourse that follows, Jesus will assert that, "I am the bread of life" (Jn6:35), indicating that the manna the fathers of Israel ate in the wilderness (Jn6:31) was a type of Him. Prophetically, such supernatural nourishment of the nation of Israel will occur again during the second half of the 7-year Tribulation (cf. Matt24:15-16; Rev12:6,14).

5TH SIGN: WALKING ON WATER

Jesus literally walked upon the waters of the Sea of Galilee, as recorded in John 6:15-21. And yet, this sign is rich with typological significance for the nation of Israel. There are numerous parallels between the account of Jesus walking on water and the Book of Jonah, in which Jonah is a type of the nation of Israel in her dispersion.

- [15] Having been fed by Jesus' miracle of multiplying the bread, the crowd "would come and take him by force, to make him a king". This is seemingly a large scale reception of Jesus as Messiah, which is the ultimate obligation of the nation under the Mosaic covenant

(Deut17:15). However, the time is not yet right (Cp., Jn2:4; 7:30; 8:20; cf. Dan9:25).

- [16] When used symbolically, the "sea" represents the Gentile nations (cf. Rev13:1; 17:15).
- [17] Bethsaida was on the northeast side of the Sea of Galilee, whereas "Capernaum" was on its western shore. Consistent with the contrast between light and darkness that is prominent in John's Gospel, the absence of "Jesus" leaves the disciples in the "dark". According to Mark's account, this occurred during "the fourth watch of the night" (i.e., between 3 and 6 am; Mk6:48).
- [18] The storm upon the "sea" caused by "a great wind" is analogous to the one encountered by Jonah, in which case "the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea" (Jon1:4). That is, the storm does not arise by chance; symbolically, this is a picture of the persecution/tribulation experienced by the Jews when dispersed from the land of Israel and forced to dwell among the Gentiles (Deut28:63-67).
- [19] A "furlong" is one-eighth of a mile, so "thirty furlongs" would be slightly less than four miles. The efforts of the disciples have no power to deliver themselves from the storm (Cp., Jon1:13). According to Mark's account, they are "afraid" when they see "Jesus walking on the sea", believing him to be "a spirit" (i.e., a ghost; Mk6:49).
- [20] In the Greek text, Jesus says **Εγώ εἰμι** (literally, "I am"; Cp., Exod3:14). In the Bible, men are always "afraid" when they realize they are in the presence of God (Cp., Dan10:5-8; Rev1:12-17).
- [21] The disciples are delivered from the storm when they "willingly received" Jesus.

Typology of Jesus Walking on Water. After Jesus "departed" from the disciples to a "mountain" (v15), they go out upon the "sea" (v16) and immediately encounter a storm (v18). They are saved when Jesus returns by "walking on the sea" (v19) and they "willingly receive" Him, at which time they are "immediately" at "the land" (v21). Typologically, this is picture of the ascension of Jesus into heaven following His rejection/crucifixion by Israel at the first coming (Luk24:51), after which the Jews are dispersed among the nations and suffer persecution from the Gentiles (Deut28:63-67). Israel will be saved at the return of Christ when they receive Him as king (Zech14:1-9), at which time the Gentiles will be subjugated (Rev19:15), and the Jews will be regathered to their land to enter the kingdom (Matt24:29-31).

JESUS' BREAD OF LIFE DISCOURSE

Jesus walking on water was a private sign witnessed only by the disciples. However, the multitude who had been fed by Jesus in Bethsaida followed him to Capernaum, leading to a very lengthy discourse in which He asserts "**I am** the bread of life" (Jn6:35).

- [22] The multitude who had been fed by Jesus (vv1-14) understood the disciples had taken a "boat" to "the other side of the sea" during the night, but they believe Jesus remained in Bethsaida.
- [23] But "other boats" come to Bethsaida from "Tiberias" (a city on the western shore, south of Capernaum), perhaps seeking Jesus.
- [24] Eventually the multitude realizes Jesus is no longer in Bethsaida, so "they also took boats to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus".
- [25] The multitude addresses Jesus as "Rabbi", an acknowledgment of His teaching authority. Yet, they do not understand how He got from Bethsaida to Capernaum, since they know He did not take a boat.
- [26] Jesus indicates that it was not the "miracles" that drew the multitude after Him, but merely their desire for more food (i.e., their following of the Rabbi Jesus was not for spiritual reasons).
- [27] Jesus asserts that the Jews should prioritize their spiritual need above their physical need. This verse is analogous to Jesus' comments to the Samaritan woman (Jn4:10). In these two encounters, Jesus presents Himself as the source of "everlasting life" (Cp., Jn4:14) for both Jews and Gentiles. Jesus further asserts that He, as "the Son of man", has been "sealed" by "God the Father" (i.e., He has God's "seal" of approval; cf. Ps2:7; Isa42:1; Matt3:17; 17:5; Jn3:33).
- [28] The question of the Jews concerning the "work of God" refers back to Jesus' command for them to "labor ... for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life". In effect, they are asking, "what shall we do [to inherit eternal life]" (Cp., Matt19:16; Mk10:17; Luk10:25; 18:18).
- [29] When asked this question (in a different setting) in the synoptic Gospels, Jesus answers "keep the commandments" (Matt19:17); this was the national requirement to "inherit the kingdom" under the Mosaic covenant (cf. Matt25:34; Luk10:26). However, here in John's Gospel, Jesus answers "believe on him whom [God] hath sent", which is equivalent to Paul's reply to the Philippian jailor (Act16:30-31). These differences must be reconciled by "rightly dividing" (2Tim2:15); Jesus is looking beyond the offer of the kingdom to the nation of Israel (which will be rejected; Jn1:11) to the dispensational changes that will be inaugurated for the individual under the New Covenant (cf. Matt26:28; Jn17:3; Heb11:6).
- Notice the paradoxical wordplay in vv28-29; the Jews expect the requirement to be a "work" (v28), but Jesus says the necessary "work" is to "believe" (which is not a work; cf. Rom4:5; Eph2:8-9).
- [30] Jews require a "sign" in order to "believe" (1Cor1:21-22). The issue is not that the Jews request a "sign", per se, but that to demand a "sign" at this point in Jesus' public ministry, having already witnessed many miracles proving conclusively that Jesus was Messiah (cf. Matt12:22-23), is tantamount to their rejection of Jesus and His previous "signs" (i.e., their demand reveals their unbelief; Cp., Matt12:38-41).

- [31] The Jews dismiss the uniqueness of Jesus' "sign" (v30) of miraculously feeding the multitude, pointing to the miracle of "manna" provided under the ministry of Moses. Note that "manna" is the name coined by the Israelites as a term of derision (Exod16:15); God/Jesus refer to it as "bread from heaven" (or "angels' food"; Ps78:25).
- [32] Jesus corrects their understanding; it was not "Moses" that gave them "bread from heaven" in the desert (v31), but "my Father". By comparing Jesus' assertion here with that of Moses it becomes obvious that Jesus is again asserting equality with God (i.e., "my Father" = "the LORD"; Exod16:15; Cp., Jn5:17-18).
- [33] Here Jesus teaches that "the bread of God" (i.e., manna) was a type of Christ. As manna supernaturally gave physical "life" to Israel in the wilderness, Christ "giveth [spiritual] life unto the world".
- Note on Calvinism. As manna was made available to all Israel in the wilderness, and all were capable of collecting and eating it, so Christ offers Himself "unto the world"; the implication is that all the world is capable of receiving Christ. The Calvinist teaching that only an elect subgroup of people are capable of receiving Christ is not Biblical.
- [34] Analogous to the response of the Samaritan woman (Cp., Jn4:15), the Jews ask to be given "this bread", though they obviously have not grasped the spiritual significance of Jesus' teaching.
- [35] Recognizing that the Jews have still not understood the typological significance concerning manna, Jesus declares, "I am the bread of life" (the 1st of Christ's 7 metaphorical "I am" statements). This is significant in two aspects: 1) in His use of the divine name, "I am" (Exod3:14), Jesus again asserts equality with God, and 2) Jesus explicitly connects the typology of manna to Himself as the source of *spiritual* "life" (cf. Jn1:4; 5:21). Combining the metaphors of "living water" (Jn4:10) and "bread of God" (v33), Jesus asserts that He is capable of satisfying all spiritual "thirst" and "hunger".
- [36] This multitude of people witnessed Jesus' miracle of multiplying the bread, and were even nourished by it, yet they "believe not".
- [37] The one that "cometh to [Christ]" will "in **no wise** [be] cast out". Anyone can be saved. In this dispensation, it is as simple as, "call upon the name of the Lord" (Rom10:13), or "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Act16:31), and no one who does so will be turned away. The words "no wise" are a translation of the double negative²⁷ particles **οὐ μὴ** in Greek, which is a construction used to emphasize *impossibility*.

Note on Calvinism. Who are those that the "Father giveth [Christ]", who "shall come to [Him]"? The Calvinist understands them to be the

²⁷ Use of double negatives in English is considered improper grammar, but that is not the case in Greek.

so-called elect²⁸, those predestinated²⁹ for salvation, who are compelled by irresistible grace to come to Christ; but such an understanding is eisegesis³⁰. Rather, this is likely a reference to the apostles (Cp., Jn17:6-8, 12).

- [38] Jesus says, "I came down from heaven", which is both a reference to His eternal, preincarnate existence as "the Word" (cf. Jn1:1; 1Jn5:7) and a continuation of His typological interpretation of Himself as "bread from heaven" (v31; i.e., "manna").
- [39] As in v37, this verse is likely speaking denotatively of the apostles as those the "Father" has "given" to Christ (cf. Jn17:12), although there is also a connotative application to the nation of Israel (note the use of *neuter* pronouns "which" and "it"). Here, the time of resurrection is said to be "at the last day"; this should be understood in a relative sense as "the last day" of the Dispensation of Law, or at the end of the Tribulation, which is the time of resurrection for Israel, the O.T. saints, and the Tribulation martyrs (cf. Dan12:1-2; Rev20:4-5); in contrast, the resurrection of the Church occurs at the time of the Rapture (1Thess4:16-17).
- [40] The verb "may have [everlasting life]" is in the subjunctive mood, which expresses possibility, not certainty; "everlasting life" is conditioned upon an individual (note the use of the singular pronoun "him") believing on the Son (not an eternal decree of election), and that it is available to "everyone". God's gift of "everlasting life" guarantees resurrection "at the last day".

[SETTING SHIFTS TO SYNAGOGUE IN CAPERNAUM]

The setting apparently shifts to the synagogue in Capernaum at this point (cf. v59), where the theological discussion concerning Jesus' claim to be "the bread that came down from heaven" (v41) continues.

- [41] When "Jews" are said to "murmur" it is an indication of unbelief and/or rebellion (cf. Num14:2). It is ironic that the LORD first provided "bread that came down from heaven" on an occasion when "Israel murmured" in the wilderness (cf. Exod16:2-4).
- [42] The virgin birth of Jesus was not accepted by unbelieving "Jews" (v41); they assumed him to be "the son of Joseph" and to have been "born of fornication" (Jn8:41).
- [44] Jesus confronts their unbelief. This verse parallels v40, but adds a prerequisite to belief. Here, "come to me" is parallel to "believeth on him" (v40); v40 indicated this was a possibility for "everyone", but in this verse it is asserted that there is a necessity for "the Father" to "draw him". Verses 40 and 44 are not in conflict, since

²⁸ Elect/election are Biblical terms, but they are not used in Scripture in the way Calvinism defines them. Scripture never uses elect to mean someone chosen by God for salvation.

²⁹ Predestination is a Biblical term, but it is not used in Scripture in the way Calvinism defines it. Scripture never uses predestination to refer to an unbeliever being predestinated for salvation (or damnation).

³⁰ Eisegesis is reading a meaning into a text that comes from outside the text, rather than interpreting a text within its own context (i.e., exegesis).

elsewhere is it made clear that the crucifixion of Christ will "draw all men unto [Him]. So while it is true that no man can come to Christ unless he is drawn, Scripture asserts that all men are drawn.

Note on Calvinism. John 6:44 is widely used as a proof text for the central tenets of Calvinism. However, Calvinists make far more of this verse than it actually says. See JOHN 6:44 – WHAT THE CALVINIST BELIEVES THIS VERSE SAYS for a point-by-point comparison of the text versus their interpretation of it. Note, in particular, that while the drawing of the Father enables one to come to Christ (the verb used is "can", which communicates ability), it does not compel one to come to Christ.

- [45] The "Father" draws men to Christ by the means of the scriptures. By Scripture, "they shall all be taught of God". This is an allusion to Isaiah 54:13, but even more so it is the ubiquitous testimony of "the prophets" (cf. Luk24:25-27; Jn5:39). See the article, WHO AND HOW DOES THE FATHER DRAW?
- [46] No "man hath seen the Father" (Cp., Jn1:18; 6:46), all must learn of Him through the scriptures. The sole exception is Jesus Christ, "who is of God" (Jn7:29).
- [47] Note that the object of faith, "on me", is crucial; faith in any object other than Jesus Christ is "vain" (cf. 1Cor15:2,14,17). For the one that "believeth on [Jesus Christ]", "everlasting life" is a present reality.
- [48] See comments on v35.
- [49] Jesus contrasts "manna" as the type with Himself as the antitype. The "manna" only provided sustenance for physical life, and even that was temporary, since those of that generation of Israel "are [physically] dead".
- [50] Jesus as "the bread that cometh down from heaven" provides *spiritual* sustenance. His assertion that those who "eat" this bread will "not die" must be understood as a reference to the "second death" (Rev20:14), since believers still experience physical death (the exception being that generation alive at the time of the Rapture).
- [51] Here, Jesus adds "living" as an additional descriptor to "bread that came down from heaven" (vv35,48), analogous to "living water" (Jn4:10), which reinforces its *spiritual* nature. As in v50, Jesus' promise to those that "eat of this bread" to "live forever" must be understood as a reference to "everlasting life" (v47). Finally, the "life" of Jesus will be given for "the world" (cf. Jn1:29; 3:16; 1Jn2:2).
- [52] Verse 51 introduced what becomes the point of controversy for the Jews; namely, that this "living bread" is Jesus' "flesh", such that if taken literally appears to encourage cannibalism (which Scripture abhors; e.g., Lev26:29; Deut28:53-55; 2Kgs6:28-30; Lam2:20; 4:10).
- [53] Rather than relieving the concern of the Jews, Jesus seemingly exacerbates it. To the requirement to "eat the flesh of the Son of man", he adds "and drink his blood". The drinking of blood is prohibited in both the Noahic and Mosaic covenants (Gen9:3-4;

Lev17:11-14), such that it is abhorrent to both Jews and Gentiles (Cp., Act15:28-29).

The Proper Interpretation. Just as Jesus' declaration, "I am the bread of life" (vv35,48), is metaphorical, so eating His flesh and drinking His blood are extensions of that metaphor not intended to be taken literally. The key to recognizing this interpretation is v35. One who *hungers* must **eat** to be satisfied, which is in parallel with Jesus' exhortation to "cometh to me"; and one who *thirsts* must **drink** to be satisfied, which is in parallel with His exhortation to "believeth on me". The "flesh" (i.e., body) and "blood" of Jesus is synecdoche, a literary device widely used by the Hebrew prophets (e.g., Gen1:1), which signifies His entire Person (Cp., Mk14:22,24). Jesus confirms this spiritual application in v63.

- [54] Jesus sets forth belief in Him as the condition for "eternal life", which ensures a bodily resurrection "at the last day".
- [55] Spiritually, Jesus provides in Himself the life all men need. As a metaphorical extension, Jesus is "the Word of God" (Jn1:1; Rev19:13), and the written word of God is also set forth as the spiritual nourishment all believers need (1Pet2:2).
- [56] Here Jesus looks ahead to the dispensational change that will occur after His death/resurrection/ascension (cf. Matt26:28; 2Cor3:6; Heb9:16), which will include His indwelling presence in and union with the believer (cf. Jn14:17,20; Coll1:27).
- [57] Both the "Father" and His Son Jesus have the attribute of aseity/life, and both have the power to give life (Jn5:21,26).
- [58] See comments on vv49-51.
- [59] At some point in this long discourse, the setting shifts from addressing the multitude fed in Bethsaida, who followed Him to Capernaum, to a continuation of His teaching on this subject "in the synagogue" at "Capernaum"; the shift seems to have occurred at v41.

REACTION TO THE BREAD OF LIFE DISCOURSE

- [60] The "hard saying" is v53, and even Jesus' "disciples" struggle with it. This is probably due to the emphasis of the Pharisees on the literal interpretation of Scripture, especially relative to the Law of Moses, which had permeated all of Jewish culture.
- [61] See comments on v41, where "murmur[ing]" is an indication of unbelief (cf. v64).
- [62] Jesus suggests that if His disciples find that teaching (v41) "hard", they are not prepared for more advanced concepts—such as His future bodily ascension into heaven (Cp., Luk16:31; Jn5:47; Heb5:12-6:2).
- [63] Jesus makes clear that His "words" (v41) are "spirit" (i.e., metaphorical) and address spiritual "life" (not physical life).
- [64] Even some of Jesus' own disciples did not "believe" His teaching. Jesus "knew who they were", where "who" is plural in Greek. Jesus

also knew "who should betray him", where "who" is singular in Greek, which refers to Judas (Cp., vv70-71; cf. Jn13:21,26).

- [65] God gives all men the ability to "come unto [Christ]", both Jews (Act5:31) and Gentiles (Act11:18).

Note on Calvinism. Scripture teaches that "no man can come [to Christ], except it were given to him of [God]". Calvinism asserts that it is only "given" to some (i.e., the so-called elect), irrespective of any action or response on their part (even faith). But Scripture says it is "given" to all who believe (v40; Jn1:12).

- [66] Note that Jesus did not conceal nor change His doctrine in order to attract or retain disciples. Those who did not believe His teaching "walked no more with him" (Cp., 1Jn2:19).

- [67] Jesus' "disciples" (v61) included a company of people much larger than "the twelve" apostles (cf. Luk10:1).

- [68] "Peter", presuming to speak on behalf of "the twelve" (v67), acknowledges that only Jesus has "the words of eternal life" (i.e., Jesus is the exclusive way to God; cf. Matt7:13-14; Jn10:9; 14:6).

- [69] Peter, again presuming to speak on behalf of "the twelve" (note, "we believe"; v67), professes to "believe" that Jesus is "that Christ" (i.e., the Messiah prophesied to come) and "the Son of the living God" (i.e., equal with God; Cp., Jn5:18; 10:33,36). No doubt Peter believed this, but it is not possible for him to make this profession on behalf of others. Note that Peter says he "believe[s] and [is] sure"; genuine faith is more than mental assent to facts, but includes "sure" confidence in them (cf. Rom4:20-21; Heb11:1).

- [70] The "twelve" were not "chosen" by Jesus for salvation, since Judas was lost (Jn17:12), but for service as apostles. Here, Judas is referred to as "a devil". Judas will ultimately be possessed by Satan himself (Luk22:3; Jn13:27). Furthermore, Jesus will call Judas "the son of perdition" (Jn17:12), a title used only of Judas and the Antichrist (2Thess2:3), the only two persons Scripture indicates will be possessed by Satan himself (cf. Rev13:4).

- [71] That the Messiah would be "betray[ed]" was prophesied (Ps41:9; Act1:16; 2:23), so it was certain to happen (Matt26:24; Mk14:21; Luk17:1); however, "Judas Iscariot" chose to fill that prophesied role willfully (Matt26:14-16; Mk14:10-11).

CHAPTER 7

JESUS' UNBELIEVING BROTHERS

A brief interaction with Jesus' brethren in Galilee, prior to going to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, shows that they did not believe His messianic claims at this point in His ministry.

- [1] The ministry of Jesus "in Jewry" (i.e., in Judea, especially Jerusalem) was engendering considerable, even violent, opposition (e.g., Matt26:4; Jn5:18; 7:19,25; 8:37,40; 10:33).

- [2] The "feast of tabernacles" was approaching, which would require Jesus to be in Jerusalem (Deut16:16).
- [3] These "brethren" are the physical half-brothers of Jesus, the children of Mary and Joseph after the birth of Jesus (cf. Matt1:25; 13:55). Note that the "brethren" of Jesus are distinct from His "disciples".
- [4] Jesus' brethren are seemingly taunting Him. "If" (suggesting *unbelief* on their part) His claims were true, shouldn't He "openly" reveal Himself "to the world" as the Messiah He claimed to be? What was He doing spending so much of His time in Galilee, the backwater (cf. Matt2:23; Jn1:46; 7:52).
- [5] At this point in His ministry, Jesus' "brethren" do not "believe in him" (as Messiah), which was a fulfillment of prophecy (Ps69:8); they are apparently converted after His resurrection (cf. Act1:14; Gall:19).
- [6] Jesus is working to a precisely prophesied timetable, which requires that He present Himself to the nation of Israel as Messiah on a specified day (Dan9:25; cf. Luk19:28-44). The last clause, "but your time is always ready", simply means that in contrast to Jesus' life, the lives of His brethren were not subject to a predetermined timetable.
- [7] Because Jesus "testif[ies]" that the "works" of the "world" are "evil", the world "hateth" Him. In the same way, the "world" will hate the followers of Jesus (Jn15:18); however, being unbelievers, the world "cannot hate" the brethren of Jesus (Jn15:19).
- [8] Jesus encourages His brethren to "go ye up unto this feast", as required by the Law (Deut16:16); however, He is not going up "yet".
- Textual Note. Modern Bible versions, which follow the critical Greek text, omit "yet" (Greek, *ὄχι*). The omission of "yet" cannot be correct, for it would create two insurmountable problems: 1) Jesus asserts that He will not go to the Feast of Tabernacles, which would be a violation of the Law (Deut16:16; cf. Matt5:17), and 2) Jesus does in fact go to the Feast (v10), which means this statement to His brethren would be untrue (cf. Heb4:15; 1Pet2:22; 1Jn3:5).
- [9] Jesus "abode still in Galilee", meaning He was waiting until the last possible moment to travel to Jerusalem for the feast (v10).

JESUS AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

Under the Law of Moses, all Jewish men were required to attend the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem (Deut16:16; cf. Lev23:33-44; Num29:12-38). Being the last of the seven annual (Mosaic) feasts, it was generally considered to be the greatest.

- [10] Jesus attended "the feast" in Jerusalem, but "not openly" since many of "the Jews [in Jerusalem] sought to kill him" (v1).
- [11] The "Jews" rightly assume Jesus must be "at the feast", since it is required by the Law (Deut16:16).

- [12] When Jews are said to "murmur" it is an indication of unbelief (cf. Num14:2). The search for Jesus at the feast revealed a division among "the people" between those who believe He is a "good man", which does not necessarily mean they believe Him to be Messiah (e.g., Matt19:16; Mk10:17; Luk18:18), and those who believe "he deceiveth the people"; the division is not between those who think He is Messiah and those who do not, but those who think He deserves to die and those who do not.
- [13] Even those who were favorable toward Jesus feared to speak "openly" of Him. Here, as is often the case in John's Gospel, "the Jews" is used as a reference to the Jewish **leadership**.
- [14] Jesus began to teach in "the temple" (i.e., publicly) midway through the 8-day feast (cf. Lev23:39).
- [15] Jesus had not been formally trained by a rabbi, yet all recognized the authority of His teaching (cf. Mk1:22). This was also true of the twelve apostles (cf. Act4:13); in contrast, the Apostle Paul was trained by one of the most well-known and revered rabbis of his day (cf. Act5:34; 22:3).
- [16] Jesus' "doctrine" (i.e., teaching) came from God (Jn3:34), not men; He studied every morning (Isa50:4; Cp., 2Tim2:15). Note that in Scripture, Jesus'/God's "doctrine" is always referred to in the singular (e.g., Deut32:2; Prov4:2; 1Tim4:6; 2Tim3:16), a seamless and unified whole (Cp., Js2:10), in contrast to the "doctrines" of Satan (e.g., 1Tim4:1; Heb13:9) and men (e.g., Matt15:9; Col2:22).
- [17] For "any man" to "know" (i.e., properly understand) the "doctrine ... of God" (including that taught by Jesus), he must first "will [to] do his will". That is, true "doctrine" (today, found in Scripture; cf. 2Tim3:16) is "spiritually discerned" (1Cor2:14), so it must be sought "in faith" (Js1:5-6; Ps111:10).
- [18] As the example of a perfect Man (cf. 1Cor15:45,47), Jesus is our example. His purpose was not to "seeketh his own glory" (Philip2:5-8; Js4:10), but the "glory" of God (1Cor6:20).
- [19] The Jews revered "Moses" and "the law", yet to "kill" Jesus would be a violation of "the law". This is hypocrisy (cf. Matt23:25).
- [20] As a way of justifying their desire "to kill" (v19) Jesus, the Jews repeatedly accused Him of demon possession (Cp. Matt12:24). Even if true, this would not justify killing Him, but would rather call for the casting out the "devil" (v19; cf. Matt7:22; 12:27; Luk9:40-50).
- [21] The "one work" of Jesus is a reference to His healing of the impotent man at the pool of Siloam/Bethesda (Jn5:1-9; cf. v23), which had first aroused their desire "to slay him" (Jn5:16). The pool of Siloam also figured prominently in the ritual associated with the Feast of Tabernacles (see The Outpouring of Water at v36).
- [22] The Jewish outrage associated with Jesus' healing of the impotent man was ostensibly over the fact that it took place on "the sabbath day" (Jn5:16). To expose their hypocrisy, Jesus points out that "ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man". Though "circumcision" was

incorporated into the Mosaic covenant (Lev12:3), it had its origin with "the fathers" (i.e., Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob practiced circumcision before the Law of Moses; cf. Gen17:9-14).

- [23] See comments on John 5:16-17.
- [24] "Judge not according to the appearance" is an allusion to 1 Samuel 16:7, where Israel chose Saul to be king based on his external characteristics. Jesus' command is not to refrain from all judging, but to "judge righteous judgment" (i.e., judge according to God's righteous standards).
- [26] Clearly, there is active discussion among both "the rulers" and the common Jews as to whether Jesus was "the very Christ" (i.e., Messiah).
- [27] This verse displays the ignorance among at least some of Micah 5:2 (Cp., v42), which clearly prophesied that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (cf. Matt2:4-6).
- [28] Up until this point, Jesus apparently "taught" a small group, such that even those seeking him (v11) may not have been aware he was in the temple. Now, he calls attention to himself, addressing all in attendance (for the Feast of Tabernacles; vv2,10). His message is that the Jews think they "know" him (i.e., he is Jesus, the son of Joseph, from Galilee; e.g., Matt13:55; Mk6:3), but they have failed to recognize He is "the very Christ" (v26) who is "sent" from God. This failure to recognize who Jesus is also reveals they "know not" God (cf. 1Jn2:22-23; 4:6,20).
- [29] Jesus asserts that His authority comes from God, who "sent" Him. Jesus' claim is very specific in Greek, where "from him" is the preposition *παρά* with an object ("him"; i.e., God) in the genitive case; this syntax means "from", in the sense of beside. Jesus claims to have come from the very presence of God (cf. Jn3:13).
- [30] Such a public assertion (v29) only served to further infuriate the Jews who sought to kill Him (v1). Although Jesus did intend to die, "his hour was not yet come" (cf. Jn12:23-24,33).
- [31] While "many of the people believed on him" as the "Christ", being convinced by His "miracles" (1Cor1:22), the leadership of the nation did not (v32). The Mosaic covenant is a national covenant, and the nation's ultimate obligation under that covenant was to install the Messiah as king upon His arrival (cf. Deut17:15; Jn19:14-15).
- [32] The national leadership of Israel (under Roman rule) was represented by "the Pharisees" and "the chief priests" (i.e., the Sadducees; Act5:17).
- [33] In v29 Jesus asserted that He came from the very presence of God; here He announces that in "a little while" He will return "unto him that sent me". This is more than an announcement of His imminent death, but that in death He will go back to God in heaven (cf. Jn3:13).

- [34] The souls of O.T. saints did not go to heaven after death, but to Abraham's bosom (Luk16:22); no one went to heaven before the death of Christ (Jn3:13).
- [35] The Jews find Jesus' words enigmatic because they limit their thinking to merely mundane possibilities³¹. However, their question, "Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?", was unwittingly prophetic (Matt28:19-20; Cp., Jn11:49-51).
- [36] Jesus finds their mundane thinking, for those in possession of the scriptures, inexcusable (cf. Ps16:10-11; Matt22:31).
- [37] The "last day" of the Feast of Tabernacles (v2) was "that great day of the feast" (Lev23:36); in principle, all Jewish men would be assembled at the Temple (Deut16:16). "Jesus stood and cried out", such that all in the Temple heard His words. His message to the men of Israel was the same as that to the Samaritan woman (Jn4:13-14); namely, "**any man**" (i.e., Jew or Gentile) is permitted to "come" to Christ to satisfy his spiritual needs (i.e., salvation; Cp., Jn6:35; Rev22:17). Note that during the Feast of Tabernacles, a total of 70 bulls were offered, emblematic of an offering for all the nations of the world (Num29:13-32; cf. Gen10:32; 46:27; Deut32:8); prophetically, the Feast of Tabernacles looks forward to the Millennial Kingdom, in which both Israel and the Gentile nations are reconciled to God.

The Outpouring of Water. Though not mentioned in Scripture, rabbinical tradition records that during the Second Temple period a ritual known as the "outpouring of water" was incorporated into the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles (Fruchtenbaum). During the 7 days of the feast, priests ceremonially transported water from the pool of Siloam (Jn9:7) through the Water Gate (Neh12:37) into the outer court (i.e., Court of Women). To enter the inner court, the priests had to ascend 15 steps, pausing on each to sing the 15 Songs of Ascent (Psalms 120-134). Once in the inner court, the water was poured out at the base of the Brazen Altar. This ritual commemorated God's supernatural supply of water in the wilderness (Exod17:6; Num20:11; cf. Lev23:43), and it was an expression of faith in God's promise to pour out His Spirit upon Israel (Ezek39:29; Joel2:28-29).

- [38] It is possible that these words of Jesus were spoken at the very moment the outpouring of water ritual was being observed; regardless, the image of the outpouring would be in the minds of the Jews as they heard Jesus' words. The "belly" (i.e., bowels; Jer4:19) was used idiomatically by Jews to represent the center of one's being (much as the heart is used among Greek peoples). A "river" of "living water" symbolically pictures *everlasting life* (i.e., never-ending nourishment that perfectly satisfies; Cp., Isal2:3). The fascinating thing is that Jesus introduces his words with, "as the scripture hath said". However, these words are not found in the O.T., but in John 4:14; Jesus quotes His own words and refers to them as "scripture".

³¹ Contemporary Christians are often as guilty of this shortcoming as the Jews of Jesus' day.

- [39] Ultimately, the fulfillment of Jesus' words (v38) would come when the Holy "Spirit" was given on the Day of Pentecost (Act2:1-4). After that point in time, believers enjoy the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but that could only be true after "Jesus" was "glorified" (cf. Jn14:17; 16:7).
- [40] The allusion is to "the Prophet" to come spoken of by Moses (Deut18:15,18). This "Prophet", of whom Moses spoke, was a reference to "the Christ" (v41).
- [41] Jesus was born in Bethlehem as prophesied (Mic5:2; cf. v42), but under unusual circumstances (i.e., travel necessitated by Caesar's decree of taxation; Luk2:1-7). Why was Jesus' family living in "Galilee", outside the tribal territory of Judah?
- [42] Allusion to Micah 5:2, which we well recognized as referring to Messiah (cf. Matt2:4-6).
- [43] Jesus Himself said that His coming was for the purpose of "division" (Luk12:51).
- [45] Apparently the "chief priests and Pharisees" had instructed the people to bring Jesus to them, which they did not do (v44).
- [46] All the people recognized that Jesus spoke with an authority and a wisdom that could not have come from their rabbis (Cp., Matt7:29; 13:54,56; Luk4:22).
- [47] The "Pharisees" believe Jesus' words and works to be Satanic deception (cf. Matt12:24).
- [48] In their spiritual arrogance, the "Pharisees" assume that none of their strict sect would be so foolish as to believe the teaching of Jesus. However, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were Pharisees who believed (Mk15:43; Jn3:1; 19:38-39), and the greatest of all would be Paul (Philip3:5).
- [49] The Pharisees categorize Jews who believe/follow Jesus as those "who know not the law", implying that Jesus did not keep the Law of Moses. Jesus kept the Law perfectly (Matt5:17); what He did not keep were the traditions of the Pharisees (cf. Matt15:1-9; Mk7:1-13).
- [50] At this point, "Nicodemus" is at least sympathetic toward Jesus, if not already the genuine believer he will eventually become (Jn19:39).
- [51] Nicodemus exposes the unbiblical attitude of his fellow Pharisees. They accuse Jesus and His followers of breaking the Law of Moses, for which they seek to kill Him (v1), but that Law requires the accused be formally charged, his own testimony and that of witnesses heard, before He can be condemned (Deut19:15-21). Thus, it is the Pharisees, not Jesus, who are guilty of breaking the Law of Moses.
- [52] As noted at John 1:46, Jews of the first century looked upon those from Galilee with disdain (cf., Matt2:23; Jn7:41). There was a "prophet" that arose from "Galilee", namely Jonah (cf. Josh19:10,13; 2Kgs14:25). Furthermore, Messiah was prophesied to arise from this very same region of Galilee (Isa9:1-2; Cp., Matt4:14-16).

- [53] With the "last day" of the Feast of Tabernacles concluded (v37), the Jews who had been living in booths for 7 days returned to their "own house" (Lev23:42).

CHAPTER 8

THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY³²

The interruption of Jesus' discourse, set in the context of the Feast of Tabernacles (which will resume at John 8:12), with this interlude seems unnatural to some. However, it graphically illustrates several points that will prove to be critically important when He resumes His discourse: 1) the "testimony of two men" is required by the "law" to convict a person (Jn8:17); 2) in accordance with the Law, Jesus by Himself "judge[s] no man" (Jn8:15); and 3) when given the opportunity in public, no one "convinceth [Jesus] of sin?" (Jn8:46). This interlude is not an occasion of Jesus simply dismissing the sin of adultery, but rather a formal proceeding conducted by Jesus in strict accordance with the requirements of the Law of Moses.

- [1] Whereas others returned to their homes at the conclusion of the feast (Jn7:53), Jesus did not have a home to which to return (Matt8:20).
- [2] On the day after the Feast of Tabernacles concluded (Jn7:10-53), Jesus resumes teaching in the "temple" (Jn7:14).
- [3] The "scribes and Pharisees" (at least 4 men, likely more than that) were experts in the Law of Moses and repeatedly challenged Jesus concerning its details (cf. Matt12:2; 19:3; Luk6:2).
- [4] By addressing Jesus as "Master", the Pharisees acknowledge Him to be a teacher of the Law. The woman was "taken in adultery, in the very act", so her guilt is not in question; and yet, the Law of Moses required the testimony of at least two eye-witnesses to convict³³ a sinner (Deut17:6). Furthermore, the Law required both the adulterer and the adulteress to be put to death (Lev20:10; Deut22:22). If the woman was "taken ... in the very act", the identity of the man is also known; why is he not present and charged as well? Thus, this interaction is seen to be contrived by the Pharisees to entrap Jesus, rather than a sincere desire for justice (cf. v6).
- [5] Under Roman rule, the Jews were forbidden from independently exercising the capital punishment provisions of the Law of "Moses" (cf. Jn19:7). The difficulty this confrontation presented for Jesus is obvious. Will He affirm the Law of Moses, or submit to the laws of the Romans?

³² Designated as the Pericope Adulterae by modern text critics, John 7:53-8:11 is found in the majority of extant Greek manuscripts of the Gospel of John, although it is omitted from some allegedly early ones; for this reason, modern Bible versions often include a footnote or make use of brackets around the text that cast doubt on the authenticity of this passage. However, if this passage is omitted, the reference to Jesus speaking "again" to the "Pharisees" (Jn8:12-13) has no proper antecedent (i.e., Jn8:3). This passage is indeed authentic and should be accepted as inspired scripture (2Tim3:16).

³³ While the Law of Moses contained far more capital offenses than modern law codes, its rigorous and demanding standards for conviction vastly exceeded those of today, including particularly harsh consequences for those who testified falsely.

- [6] The "finger" of "Jesus" is the finger of God. The Pharisees are challenging Jesus on the requirements of the Law, whose very same "finger" inscribed that Law (Exod31:18; Deut9:10; Cp., Dan5:5). Note that Jesus wrote on the "ground". In Jeremiah 17:13, the Messiah speaking prophetically says, "O LORD, the hope of Israel, all who forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they who depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters". This suggests that Jesus wrote the names of the men present "on the [earth]", indicating symbolically that they had forsaken the LORD by rejecting Him as Messiah. The fact that they are "written in the earth"³⁴ means they will be judged, since "the earth ... shall be burned up" (2Pet3:10).
- [7] Jesus is not saying that only a sinless person could participate in the stoning of an adulteress, else the judgments required by the Law of Moses could never be executed. Rather, Jesus is alluding to several important details of the Law: 1) the witnesses had to cast the first stone (Deut17:7), 2) those witnesses could not be guilty of the same sin (Deut19:15), and 3) if witnesses testify falsely, they must suffer the judgment of the Law for the sin of which they falsely accused another (Deut19:16-19). The judgment of the Law for adultery was death by stoning (Deut22:24).
- [8] Presumably, Jesus continues writing the names of the men present. Now it is they who have the dilemma, not Jesus. If this woman is genuinely guilty of adultery, and these men present were witnesses to it, they are required by the Law of Moses to cast the first stones in her execution (in violation of Roman law); if they are testifying falsely, they must themselves submit to stoning.
- [9] The Pharisees depart, "beginning at the eldest". Presumably, Jesus wrote their names from oldest to youngest, which was the natural order among Jews (cf. Gen44:12; 1Sam16:8-11).
- [10] As a matter of the Law of Moses, the woman cannot be "condemned" without witnesses present to "accuse" her (Deut17:6).
- [11] As a matter of the Law of Moses, Jesus cannot "condemn" her since He was not an eyewitness of her sin (and even if He were, a second witness to corroborate His testimony would be required). The woman is not condemned because of the lack of sufficient witnesses, as required by the Law. However, by saying to the woman, "Go, and sin no more", Jesus clearly does not excuse her sin.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD DISCOURSE

Following the interlude of the woman taken in adultery (vv1-11), Jesus returns to His teaching in the temple (v2). It is the day following the conclusion of the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. Jn7:2,37; 8:2), with the imagery of the festival's ritual still fresh in the minds of those who are present.

³⁴ In contrast, Jesus said the names of His disciples were "written in heaven" (Luk10:20; Cp., Heb12:23).

- [12] Jesus declares, "I am the light of the world" (the 2nd of Christ's 7 metaphorical "I am" statements). In the recurring theme of "light" versus "darkness" in John's Gospel (cf. Jn1:5), "light" is a metaphor for the program of God, and "darkness" is a metaphor for the program of Satan (Act26:18). Jesus asserts by implication that those "that followeth [Him]" follow God, which leads to "life", rather than Satan (which will result in death; cf. Matt25:41). As the Feast of Tabernacles had just concluded the day before (cf. Jn7:37,53; 8:2), this declaration of Jesus seems to point to Himself as the fulfillment of the Jewish hope that the physical presence of God would return to the Temple (see "The Kindling of the Lampstands").

Textual Note. Jesus "again" addresses the "Pharisees" (v13), the proper antecedent of which is in John 8:3; thus, this reference has no proper antecedent if the Pericope Adulterae is omitted. This is internal evidence which points to the authenticity, at this place in Scripture, of John 7:53-8:11.

The Kindling of the Lampstands. Though not mentioned in Scripture, rabbinical tradition records that during the Second Temple period a ritual known as the "kindling of the lampstands" was incorporated into the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles (Fruchtenbaum). The Court of Women was illuminated by 4 large lampstands with 4 golden bowls atop them. The Talmud records that the lampstands were 75 feet high with ladders allowing the bowls to be filled with oil. During the Feast of Tabernacles, these lampstands were lit to brilliantly illuminate the entire temple complex throughout the night. Rabbis understood this ritual to symbolize the Shekinah Glory, the visible manifestation of the presence of God, and its future return to the temple (cf. 1Kgs8:10-11; 2Chron5:13-14; Ezek10:4,18-19; 11:22-23).

- [13] The "Pharisees" allude to the provision of the Law of Moses that required the testimony of at least two witnesses to establish a claim (Deut17:6; v17); the testimony of a single witness, especially self-authentication, was not sufficient under the Law.
- [14] However, in certain circumstances, self-authentication is valid; only God can give genuine testimony concerning Himself. Jesus asserts His "record" of Himself is "true" because of "from where [He] came" (i.e., His preexistence with God attests to His deity; Jn1:1-3).
- [15] The "judg[ment]" of the Pharisees concerning Jesus was not correct, because they only looked upon His "flesh" (i.e., they could not discern His divine nature; Cp., 1Sam16:7). When Jesus says, "I judge no man", He refers to His purpose at the 1st coming (Jn3:17), not the second (Rev19:11).
- [16] Jesus does not "judge", not because His judgment would not be "true", but because it is not yet the appointed time for "judgment". However, when Jesus does "judge" (Rev19:11), His judgment will be valid, even under the requirements of the Law of Moses, since there will be two witnesses (i.e., the "Father" and the Son; v17).
- [17] Allusion to Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15.
- [18] This principle of the Law (v17) applies to the testimony of Jesus as the Son of God (Matt27:43; Jn10:36). Jesus' witness is not "alone"

(v16), because the "Father" also "beareth witness" of Him (cf. Matt3:17; Mk1:11; Luk3:22; Jn1:34).

- [19] The Pharisees' question, "Where is thy father?", is a subtle, pejorative allusion to the circumstances of Jesus' birth (Matt1:18-19); they are implying that Jesus is illegitimate (Cp., Jn8:41). Jesus asserts that to "know" the "Father" (i.e., God) necessitates "know[ing]" His Son (cf. 1Jn2:22-23).
- [20] This interaction occurred in the "treasury" of the "temple", which was located in the Court of Women (cf. Mk12:41-42; v12). Though these words of Jesus undoubtedly infuriated those who "sought to kill him" (Jn7:1), He was not taken by force at this time because "his hour was not yet come" (Dan9:25-26).
- [21] Jesus "again" speaks of His rapidly approaching death and subsequent return to heaven (cf. Jn7:34). Here, "ye shall seek me" is for the purpose of killing Jesus (Jn7:1; 8:37,40), not receiving Him. To "die in your sins" is to die lost, unforgiven, with no hope of heaven. In the Greek text, "sins" is singular, but in context it is properly translated as plural since Jesus is addressing a group. And yet, the singular "sin" they all are in danger of committing is that of rejecting Christ (cf. v24).
- [22] The Pharisees correctly understand that Jesus is speaking of death, but their understanding of salvation and the afterlife are incorrect (cf. Jn3:3-8). While Jesus will not "kill himself", He will "lay down [His] life" (Jn10:15,17).
- [23] Jesus contrasts their earthly origin with His heavenly origin.
- [24] The singular "sin" that will result in their damnation is to "believe not that **I am he**". Note that "*he*" is in italics, which means it is not present in the Greek text and has been supplied in English by the translators. Thus, Jesus asserts that they must "believe" that He is not only the Messiah, but JEHOVAH (i.e., God; Exod3:14-15; Ps83:18), in order to be saved.
- [25] Jesus' assertion (v24) was somewhat ambiguous. Was His intent to say merely, "I am [the Messiah]", or was it intended to imply, "**I am** [JEHOVAH]"? Thus, the Pharisees press Jesus to make an unambiguous assertion that He is God in order to provide a justification for their desire to kill Him. Jesus resists making an unequivocal statement, knowing it would accelerate the timeline leading to His death.
- [26] Jesus has "many things to say", but He must measure His words carefully since He is working to the Father's timeline (Dan9:25-26).
- [27] The Pharisees do not understand that when Jesus said, "he that sent me" (v26), he referred to God the "Father".
- [28] The "Son of man" is the messianic title that refers to His humanity (cf. Ps8:4-6; Dan7:13-14). To "lift [him] up" is an allusion to His death by crucifixion (Jn12:32-33). For Jesus to refer to God as "my Father" is to implicitly assert that He is the Son of God, which justifies His application of the divine name, "**I am**", to Himself.

- [29] The words and works of Jesus are not "alone", but at all points were guided and validated by "the Father".
- [30] The "many" who "believed on him" are the referent of John 1:12.
- [31] To "believe on [Jesus]" is not the same thing as being His "disciple". Disciples believe and "continue in [His] word".
- [32] Those who continue as disciples of Jesus, and in the study of His word (v31; cf. 2Tim2:15), "shall know the truth". Since it is the word of God that is "truth" (Jn17:17), all genuine knowledge comes directly from, or is filtered through, Scripture (cf. Ps36:9; 119:142,160). It is only an intimate knowledge of Scripture that can make one "free" of all deception (cf. Rom12:2; 2Cor2:11; 4:4; 10:3-5; 11:3,13-15; Eph6:11; Col2:2-3; Rev20:3).
- [33] The Jews took pride in being "Abraham's seed", believing that it automatically afforded them spiritual privileges it did not. The nation of Israel is God's "elect" (Deut7:6-8; Isa45:4), not individual Jews (Rom9:6-8). Blinded by their own pride, note the ignorance the Pharisees reveal of their own national history, for they had been "in bondage" many times in the past (e.g., Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece), and even now were "in bondage" to Rome.
- [34] But of infinitely more significance than the past periods of bondage of Israel under Gentile nations was their current enslavement to "sin" (cf. Prov5:22; Rom6:16; 2Pet2:19). The Greek word translated "servant" is **δουλος**, whose denotative meaning is *bondsman* (i.e., one who out of love for his master has willingly submitted to perpetual enslavement; Exod21:5-6). Note that when Jesus prefaces a declaration with, "Verily, verily", what follows is of paramount importance.
- [35] The "servant" has a different relationship to "the house" than the "Son". The Son "abideth ever" in "the house [of God]", whereas a "servant" can be cast out (e.g., Isaac vs. Ismael in Abraham's house; Gen21:10; Gal4:28-31). Unbelieving Jews (v24) can be cast out of God's house.
- [36] The "Son" is the true and ultimate "seed of Abraham" (Gal3:16), and He can "make [the servant] free" of his bondage [to sin].
- [37] Jesus acknowledges that the Jews are the physical descendants of Abraham. However, they are not the *spiritual* seed of Abraham, since Abraham believed and they do not (cf. Rom4:16-22; 9:6-8; Gal3:6-9).
- [38] Jesus introduces a great contrast in spiritual heritage. Jesus' "Father" is God, but because they do not believe the Pharisees have another "father" (v44).
- [39] The Pharisees misunderstood Israel's privileged position as God's elect nation (Deut7:6-9; Isa45:4; Cp., Rom3:1-2; 9:4-5). The fact that "Abraham is our father" does not ensure that any particular Jewish person will enter the kingdom (cf. Jn3:3-5). To be saved, a Jew must "do the works of Abraham", which includes faith (Jn6:29; cf. Rom4:1-5).

- [40] The Jews understood who Jesus was (i.e., the Son of God; cf. Matt21:37-39; Jn1:11). Their desire to "kill" Him was an attempt to suppress "the truth" in unrighteousness (Rom1:18). The fact that they are not doing "the works of Abraham" (v39) testifies that they are not Abraham's children.
- [41] In contrast, the Pharisees are doing the "deeds" of "the devil" (v44), so they are his spiritual children. Note that the rejoinder of the Pharisees, "We are not born of fornication", is an implicit charge that Jesus was; they reject His claim of a virgin birth (Matt1:18-25; Luk1:31-35), which is a rejection of His Messiahship (Isa7:14).
- [42] The Apostle John will make very clear in his epistle that it is impossible to have God as your "Father" if you do not also receive His Son (1Jn2:22-23).
- [43] The Pharisees do not "understand" Jesus because they are carnal rather than spiritual men (1Cor2:14).
- [44] Whether wittingly or unwittingly, the Pharisees are the spiritual children of "the devil", since they are led by the same "lusts" he was. "He was a murderer from the beginning" (i.e., Adam), and they seek to murder Jesus (Jn7:1; 8:37). Satan "abode not in the truth", but "is a liar, and the father of it" (Gen3:4-5), and they reject the words of Jesus (vv43,45), who is the embodiment of "truth" (Jn1:14,17; 14:6; 18:37).
- [45] These Pharisees are unbelievers.
- [46] The Pharisees are faced with a dilemma. If they do not receive the words of Jesus as "the truth", then He is a false prophet—and they must charge Him with "sin" (even blasphemy; Cp., Jn10:33).
- [47] Sheep recognize the voice of their shepherd (Jn10:27). The fact that the Pharisees do not recognize the words of Jesus as the words of God indicate they are not "of God" (Cp., 1Cor14:37; 1Thess2:13); they are, rather, of "the devil" (v44). Note that Jesus said this to the religious leaders of the nation of Israel in the Temple (Jn8:2,13).
- [48] The Pharisees respond with two *ad hominem* attacks. First, they assert that "thou art a Samaritan", a people the Jews despised as being genetically corrupted (likely another aspersion relative to His ambiguous parentage; v41) and having apostatized from true Judaism (Jn4:20). Second, they charge Him with having "a devil" (i.e., demon possession), which is to suggest that He was empowered by Satan rather than by the Holy Spirit; this charge amounts to "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit", which is the unpardonable sin for the nation of Israel (cf. Matt12:24,31-32).
- [49] In "dishonor[ing]" Jesus (the Son of God), the Pharisees dishonored God the "Father" (cf. 1Jn2:22-23).
- [50] Jesus' words were not those of a demon possessed person, as He sought only to glorify God (Cp., 1Cor12:3).
- [51] The words of Jesus are "spirit" and "life" (Jn6:63); only by believing His words can one escape the second "death" (Rev20:14).

- [52] The Pharisees cite "Abraham" and "the prophets" as examples of righteous men who were "dead"; they fail to recognize that Jesus spoke of the "second death" (Rev20:14) rather than physical death.
- [53] The presupposition of the Pharisees is that Jesus is not "greater than Abraham". For them, only God was "greater than Abraham". Their question, "Whom makest thou thyself?", is to ask Jesus if He is asserting Himself to be God (cf. Jn10:33).
- [54] God the "Father", whom the Jews claim as their "God", had witnessed to/validated the ministry of Jesus (Jn5:37-38).
- [55] It is impossible to "know" God the Father and not acknowledge Jesus as His Son; to deny the Son is to deny the Father (1Jn2:22-23). Now Jesus has accused both "the devil" (v44) and his spiritual children the Pharisees of being "liar[s]", which is to imply they will have no part in the coming kingdom (Rev22:15).
- [56] The Pharisees took pride in being the descendants of "Abraham" (v39), yet Abraham "saw" Jesus' "day" and "was glad". This is a reference to Abraham's willing participation in the offering of his son Isaac on one of the mountains of Moriah (i.e., Calvary; Luk23:33; cf. Gen22:1-14), which was a type of the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ (Heb11:17-19).
- [57] This verse is not intended to imply anything concerning the age of Jesus (e.g., that He was "fifty years old" at this time). The Jews simply assert that Jesus is not old enough to have "seen Abraham", which was an implicit denial of His eternally divine nature.
- [58] Jesus asserts His eternally divine nature in the most unequivocal manner possible. Namely, He applies to Himself the divine name of "**I am**" (i.e., JEHOVAH, the eternally self-existing One; cf. Ps83:18); in the original context when this divine name was revealed to Moses, it was as the name of the "LORD God ... of Abraham" (Exod3:14-15).
- [59] Jesus' claim to be JEHOVAH, the God of Abraham, was clearly understood by the Pharisees; regarding it as blasphemy, they "took up stones to cast at him" (cf. Lev24:16; Cp., Jn5:18; 10:33).

CHAPTER 9

6TH SIGN: HEALING THE MAN BORN BLIND

In the Biblical record, Jesus alone healed a blind person; Jesus healed many blind people (e.g., Matt9:27-30; 11:5; 12:22; 15:30; 20:29-34; 21:14; Mk8:22-25; Luk7:21), and the healing of the blind is arguably His most common miracle. However, the healing of the man "blind from his birth" (Jn9:1) was unique. Having asserted, "I am the light of the world" (Jn8:12; 9:5), Jesus now gives sight to a man who has never seen. The healing of the blind was one of the three unique sign miracles that were connected with kingdom blessings³⁵ and definitively authenticated the identity of the Messiah (cf. Jn9:32; Cp., Isa29:18; 35:5; 42:7; Luk4:18).

- [1] The unique aspect is this man has been "blind from his birth".
- [2] The presupposition of the Jews is that blindness (or any particular malady) must be the result of "sin". Thus, one "born blind" presents a theological conundrum for them. Whose "sin" resulted in the blindness? It would seem unfair if the sin of the "parents" resulted in the blindness of their child (cf. Exod34:7); on the other hand, how could the sin of the child be the cause, since he was "blind from his birth"?
- [3] Jesus' answer was, "Neither". The presupposition of the Jews was a false dilemma; not every human malady is a consequence of personal sin. In this case, the man was born blind "that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (Cp., Exod4:11; Job1:8,12; Jn11:4).
- [4] Jesus has a limited amount of time to "work the works" He has been sent to do, since the exact date of His death is fixed (Dan9:25-26). The "day" is the time God has appointed for "work"; figuratively the "day" represents the life of Jesus. Normally "work" cannot be performed at "night"; figuratively "night" foreshadows the rapidly approaching death of Jesus (Cp., Eccl9:10).
- [5] Jesus was "the light of the world" as long as He was "in the world"; after His return to heaven, "light" is provided to the "world" by: 1) the written Word of God (Ps119:105; Isa8:20; 2Pet1:19), and 2) the testimony of believers (Matt5:14).

Note on Calvinism. Calvinism's soteriological system logically begins with its presupposition of the Total Depravity of man, by which is meant an utter inability to even respond to God. Its view is derived by analogy to being born *spiritually* dead (cf. Eph2:1); thus, in their soteriological system regeneration (i.e., being made alive) is a prerequisite to any response toward God, including faith³⁶, and God only chooses to regenerate some. However, the proper analogy is that man is born spiritually blind. The prerequisite to a personal response toward God is not regeneration, but **light**. Jesus and His Word are "light", which are available to all (cf. Ps36:9; 119:105; Prov6:23; Jn1:9; 8:12; 2Pet1:19).

³⁵ There will be no lepers, none blind, nor any possessed of demons in the kingdom; thus, the ubiquitous healings associated with the ministry of Jesus (Matt4:24; 8:16; 12:5; Luk4:40; 6:19) authenticated both His identity as Messiah and His message that the kingdom was "at hand" (cf. Matt3:2; Mk1:15; Luk4:18-19).

³⁶ That "regeneration precedes faith" is an axiom of Calvinistic soteriology.

- [6] Jesus often healed with a word (e.g., Jn4:50), but on this occasion He used an elaborate ritual. While the reason for this particular ritual is uncertain, a few observations can be made. First, Jesus kneading "clay" obtained from the "ground" points to the analogous process God used to create man (Gen2:7). Second, He performed this ritual on "the sabbath" (Jn9:14), perhaps yet another repudiation of the extra-biblical Jewish traditions against healing and working (i.e., kneading "clay") on the sabbath day (Cp., Jn5:16). Third, application of "clay" to the man's eyes necessitates that he go and wash, perhaps creating a test of faith (v7; Cp., 2Kgs5:10,13); in this regard, it may foreshadow the coming Church Age in which men must "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Act16:31) having never seen Him (cf. Jn20:29).
- [7] The man's healing occurred when he "washed" in the "pool of Siloam". Was the act of washing a work that was required, or an expression of faith (Jas2:18)? The Hebrew word "Siloam" means "Sent"; the fact that John provides an "interpretation" for this Hebrew word indicates: 1) John assumes he is addressing a Gentile audience, and 2) the meaning of the word must be significant in the proper understanding of this sign miracle; in this regard, the critical issue is whether Jesus is "sent" from God (v4; i.e., "Christ"; v22).
- The Pool of Siloam. The pool was an important source of fresh water inside the city of Jerusalem. It was created by King Hezekiah (2Kgs20:20), who cut an underground conduit over 1,700 feet long through solid rock in order to channel water from the spring of Gihon into the west side of the city of David (2Chron32:30). It both deprived would be besiegers of Jerusalem of a convenient source of fresh water outside the city and provided the inhabitants of the city with an abundant supply of fresh water that could not be easily interrupted by their enemies. It was from the Pool of Siloam that priests brought water into the Temple during the Feast of Tabernacles (see notes at John 8:37).
- [8] Many were present who could testify to the miracle of Jesus healing the man "born blind" (v2).
- [9] Some attempted to deny that the man Jesus healed was the one "born blind" (v2), but the man himself testified that "I am he".
- [10] There is no record of a blind person being given sight before Jesus, so the people naturally ask, "How?".
- [11] The man recounts the elaborate procedure Jesus used. He refers to Him as, "a man who is called Jesus", because at this point he has not seen Jesus (i.e., he did not receive his sight until he left Jesus and went to wash in the "pool of Siloam").
- [13] Perhaps sensing that this miracle had messianic significance, the people bring the man to the "Pharisees" (i.e., that sect of Judaism revered as most knowledgeable in religious matters).
- [14] The objection of the Pharisees focuses on the fact that Jesus healed on "the sabbath day", using a procedure that included making "clay", which violated their traditions concerning working on "the sabbath day" (Cp., Jn5:16).

- [16] If Jesus had violated "the sabbath day", He would indeed be a "sinner". However, the Law of Moses did not forbid healing on the sabbath; rather, it was the additional "traditions" (cf. Mk7:6-9) of the Pharisees that are at issue. It is not true that no "sinner" can perform a "miracle" (cf. Deut13:1-5; Matt12:24; 2Thess2:8-11). However, could anyone other than Messiah perform "such miracles" (i.e., miracles prophesied to definitively authenticate the Messiah)? The answer is obviously, no; only Messiah can perform "such miracles" (cf. v32).
- [17] Because of the miracle, the man born blind assumes Jesus must be "a prophet". However, giving sight to the blind was a sign miracle prophesied to be unique to Messiah (Isa29:18; 35:5; 42:7; Luk4:18).
- [18] In the Gospel of John, "the Jews" refers to Jewish leadership—in this case the leaders of the Pharisees.
- [19] In an attempt to disqualify this miracle as a messianic sign, the Pharisees challenge the assertion that the man was "born blind".
- [20] The "parents" testify that their son was indeed "born blind".
- [21] According to the Law of Moses, the parents could not testify concerning "by what means he now seeth" because they were not eye-witnesses to it (Deut17:6).
- [22] Here it is clear "the Jews" (i.e., religious leadership) recognize that giving sight to the blind is a unique sign miracle that definitively authenticates Jesus as "Christ" (i.e., Messiah). To discourage ordinary people from drawing the obvious conclusion, the religious leaders threaten them with being "put out of the synagogue" (i.e., excommunicated; analogous to being "cut off from his people" in the O.T.).
- [23] Even "his parents" are dissuaded from speaking, for "they feared the Jews" (v22).
- [24] Unable to refute the obvious miracle that has occurred, the Pharisees demand that the man "Give God the praise" (i.e., attribute his healing to "God", not Jesus).
- [25] Unwilling to take a side in the religious dispute concerning Jesus, the man simply restates the facts, "whereas I was blind, now I see".
- [27] The man asks if the intense interest of the Pharisees to know about Jesus is due to a desire to "be his disciples?". This is either a misreading of the real motivations of the Pharisees or an incredibly clever maneuver to take the focus off himself and put them on the defensive.
- [28] Obviously offended, the Pharisees assert that they are "Moses' disciples" (cf. Jn5:46).
- [29] Indeed, "God spoke unto Moses", and Moses spoke prophetically of Messiah, commanding that "unto him ye shall hearken" (i.e., Jesus; Deut18:15).

- [30] The man marvels that the Pharisees "know not from where [Jesus] is", implicitly suggesting that they have failed to recognize the Messiah by His unique and definitive sign miracle; namely, "he hath opened mine eyes".
- [31] This is the reasoning of the man born blind. God does not "hear" (and respond to) "sinners", but only His "worshippers" who "doeth his will". This has led him to conclude that Jesus must be one sent from God (cf. vv4,7).
- [32] Jesus' sign miracle of "open[ing] the eyes of one that was born blind" was recognized as being utterly unique "since the world began", which should have led the Jews to conclude that He must be the Messiah. Their failure to do so was inexcusable; it was not ignorance, but rebellion (cf. Matt22:37-38; Jn1:11).
- [33] This miracle was indeed stupendous. It involved not only restoring the proper function of the man's eyes, but also instantaneously creating in the man's brain/mind the ability to receive, process, and comprehend images he had never before seen.
- [34] The Pharisees assert that the man was "born in sins", revealing their faulty presupposition that all maladies/suffering must be attributable to "sins" (Cp., v2). To be "cast out [of the synagogue]" (i.e., excommunicated) was equivalent to being "cut off" from the nation of Israel. According to the theology of the Pharisees, to no longer be part of national Israel meant the man would not participate in the coming kingdom; however, their theology was incorrect (Heb13:13), as Jesus will reveal in John 10 (cf. Jn10:16).
- [35] Having learned that the man was "cast out", Jesus "found him" (Luk19:10). Jesus challenges the man to "believe" that He is "the Son of God" (i.e., this is the content of faith required to be saved at this point in history, prior to the death/resurrection of Christ).
- [36] The man is willing to "believe on him" who gave him sight, but as yet he does not know who it was.

Note on Calvinism. Calvinism teaches that men are not willing to believe until God regenerates them. However, the man born blind is clearly willing to "believe" on Jesus as "the Son of God", but he does not have the necessary information (i.e., it has not yet been revealed to him that it was Jesus who healed him). Jesus is "the light of the world" (Jn9:5), and "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (Jn1:9). Men do not require regeneration in order to believe, but light.

- [37] Jesus reveals that it was He who healed the man.
- [38] Upon receiving the knowledge that it was Jesus who healed him, immediately the man confessed belief in Him, and "worshipped him"; no Jew would worship a man unless he was convinced that He was "the Son of God" (i.e., God; v35).
- [39] There are two types of unbelievers. Those "who see not" (i.e., have not yet received adequate light), and those "who see" (i.e., have received adequate light, but have willfully rejected it). Jesus

asserts that His "com[ing] into this world" had a two-fold purpose: 1) that those who need light would receive it, and 2) that those who have rejected the light they have already received would "be made blind" (cf. Isa6:9-10; Matt13:10-12; Jn12:40; Rom11:25). The man born blind is an example of the former category, the Pharisees of the latter.

- [40] The teaching of Jesus is that the Pharisees are indeed "blind"—not physically, but *spiritually*.
- [41] From v39, it is "no sin" to be in the first category, but "your sin remaineth" for those in the second category.

Typology of Jesus Healing the Man Born Blind. The man born blind is a type of the unbelieving nation of Israel. Jesus was sent by God to be "the light of the world" (Jn8:12; 9:5) and "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (Jn1:9), but light is of no benefit to one who is blind. The healing of the man born blind signifies that God the Father sent His Son to perform the necessary work of drawing men (cf. Jn6:44; 12:32) by providing light (Jn6:45), and in so doing has enabled Israel to see, such that the nation is fully accountable for its rejection of Him (cf. Matt21:37-38; Jn1:11). Consistent with the light vs. darkness motif in John's Gospel, those who reject the light and remain in darkness are unbelievers under the power of Satan (Act26:18; 2Cor4:3-4).

CHAPTER 10

JESUS AS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

John 10 is of fundamental importance for two reasons: 1) it reveals Jesus as JEHOVAH in the role of "the good shepherd" (Jn10:11,14; Cp., Ps23:1; Isa40:10-11; Zech11:4-14), and 2) it reveals that Jesus has "sheep" (i.e., followers/believers) who are not of the "fold" which is the nation of Israel (Jn10:16). Whereas John 3 was a refutation of the doctrine of the Pharisees that "all Israel has a share in the age to come" (i.e., the kingdom; Jn3:3-7), John 10 is a refutation of their doctrine that God's kingdom is for Israel alone.

- [1] It is fundamental to understand what Jesus meant by the figure of the "sheepfold". The "sheepfold" is not a figure for heaven (i.e., salvation), as a "thief" and a "robber" are able to gain access into it in an unauthorized "way"; nor it is the Church, for Jesus leads His sheep out of it (v3). It is a figure for the nation of Israel under the Mosaic covenant (i.e., **the Law of Moses**), which was a temporary means of protection and blessing for Israel.

The "thief" and "robber" are not synonymous. Both desire to deprive their victims, but the "thief" attempts to do so undetected by means of subtlety or deception, whereas the "robber" attempts to do so openly by means of violence.

Background on a Sheepfold. A "sheepfold" (or simply fold) was a walled enclosure into which shepherds brought their flocks at night. The fold provided protection for the sheep. Typically, more than one flock would shelter overnight in a fold. The entrance (i.e., "door")

to the fold was guarded overnight by a "porter" (v3). In the morning, the shepherds would return to lead their flocks out of the fold.

- [2] The "shepherd" entered the fold through the "door"; anyone attempting to enter the fold by climbing over the walls was unauthorized, and would do so only with evil intent.

Note, Jesus was a Jewish man, born under the Law (Gal4:4), who lived His life in perfect obedience to the Law (Matt5:17).

- [3] The "shepherd" would lead his flock of "sheep" out of the fold by calling to them; he "calleth his own sheep by name" (Cp., Matt7:22-23; Jn11:43; 20:16).

Note, the nation of Israel will not end (Jer31:35-36), but the Mosaic covenant will. The Mosaic covenant was conditional (Exod19:5), thus temporary; it was never the guiding principle for the Gentile nations (Ps147:19-20), and the time will come when it will not be the covenant that governs the nation of Israel (Gal3:19-25; Heb8:13).

- [4] The "sheep" recognize the "voice" of their "own" shepherd, and they "follow him".

Note on Calvinism. The contrast used by Jesus is not between "sheep" and "goats" (i.e., believers and unbelievers; in fact, goats are never mentioned in the Gospel of John), but between sheep that are Jesus' "own" (i.e., the nation of Israel; Jn1:11; Rom9:3-5) and sheep that are outside of the nation of Israel (and not under the Mosaic covenant).

- [5] Sheep will only "follow" their own shepherd; they will "flee" from a "stranger". Since sheep will follow their shepherd, they must have a good shepherd (v11).

- [6] Here, the Greek word translated "parable" is not *παραβολή* (the normal word transliterated as "parable"), but a word meaning *proverb* or *allegory*. Still, "they" (i.e., the Pharisees; Jn8:40) "understood not" this teaching of Jesus (Cp., Matt13:10-11).

- [7] Jesus declares, "**I am** the door of the sheep" (the 3rd of Christ's 7 metaphorical "I am" statements). The Law of Moses was given to lead the nation of Israel to Christ (Gal3:19-25).

- [8] The Pharisees are an example of "thieves" and "robbers"; they had forsaken the Law of Moses in favor of their traditions (cf. Matt15:1-9; Mk7:1-13), they excommunicated anyone who would confess Jesus as Christ (Jn9:22), they attributed His miracles to Beelzebub rather than God (Matt12:24), and they even sought to kill Him (Jn7:1).

- [9] The "door" is a consistent type of Christ throughout Scripture. The sheepfold, the ark of Noah, and the Tabernacle/Temple each had only one "door", a depiction that access to God and His blessing of salvation come only through Christ (Matt7:13-14; Jn1:51; 14:6; 1Tim2:5).

- [10] The "thief" (i.e., false shepherd) cares about himself, not the sheep (Ezek34:2); he uses the sheep to satisfy his own lusts. In contrast,

Jesus puts the needs of the sheep (i.e., eternal "life") above all else.

- [11] Jesus declares, "I am the good shepherd" (the 4th of Christ's 7 metaphorical "I am" statements). "Shepherd" is a title with profound Messianic significance (cf. Ps23; Ezek34); it is an assertion that Jesus is to be the King of Israel (Luk1:31-33; Jn19:14), as the figure of "shepherd" is used for Israel's kings (Ezek34:2,23; 37:24; cf. Isa40:10-11; Zech11:4-14). Israel's preeminent obligation under the Mosaic covenant was to install Messiah as king upon His arrival (Deut17:15).

Since sheep follow their shepherd (v4), the "shepherd" (i.e., king) must be "good"³⁷ (i.e., He must be God; Mk10:18). The chief characteristic which defines the "good[ness]" of the shepherd is that he "giveth his life for the sheep" (Cp., Jn15:13; Rom5:7-8).

- [13] A "hireling" does not own the "sheep", nor does he love the "sheep"; he is a hired hand who works for a wage. As a consequence, he does not have a genuine commitment to the welfare of the "sheep", as does the "shepherd", and the "hireling" will "fleeth" and "leaveth the sheep" when danger comes (Cp., 1Tim3:3; 1Pet5:2).
- [14] The "good shepherd" is set in contradistinction to the "hireling". The pronouns "my" and "mine" indicate a possessive relationship; the good shepherd owns the "sheep". Here, to "know" is used idiomatically for love (Cp., v15; Matt7:23; 25:12; 1Tim2:19). The good shepherd loves his sheep (Jn3:16), and they love him (1Jn4:19).
- [15] The loving relationship between the good shepherd and his sheep (v14) is likened to that between God "the Father" and Jesus Christ His Son. Furthermore, the magnitude of the love the good shepherd has for his sheep is demonstrated in that, "I lay down my life for the sheep" (cf. Act20:28; Rom5:8; 1Jn3:16; 4:10), something a "hireling" would never do.

Law vs. Grace. Note the great contrast between Moses and Christ, or law and grace (Jn1:17). Under the Law of Moses, the sheep had to die as sacrifices in the place of their shepherds; in grace, the Good Shepherd (i.e., Jesus Christ) dies as the Sacrifice in the place of His sheep.

Note on Calvinism. Jesus is said to lay down His life for "the sheep" (vv11,15), which is a broader category than His "own sheep" (vv3-4). This verse does not say He lays down His life for only His "own sheep" (Cp., Matt13:44), and to draw that conclusion from this verse would be an example of the *negative inference fallacy* (Cp., Gal2:20). Thus, John 10 cannot be used to support Calvinism's doctrine of Limited Atonement.

³⁷ The lesson learned from the history of Israel/Judah in the Books of Kings and Chronicles is that the nation prospered under good kings and suffered under evil kings (because sheep follow their shepherd; Jn10:4). One of the distinctive features of the Dispensation of the Kingdom will be a perfectly righteous government (Isa11:4-5) with Messiah as "king over all the earth" (Zech14:9).

- [16] Here, "this fold" is the nation of Israel under **the Mosaic covenant**. That Jesus has "other sheep" that are not of "this fold" indicates there are peoples outside the nation of Israel, and not under the Law of Moses (i.e., Gentiles), who will enter the kingdom (cf. Isa56:7-8; Matt25:31-34). There will be only "one shepherd" (i.e., Jesus Christ) over both Jews and Gentiles, and both will be blessed by means of "one fold". That is, salvation will be provided to both Jews and Gentiles by means of the **New covenant** (in contrast to the Mosaic covenant), which is merely an elaboration of the third provision of the **Abrahamic covenant** (cf. Gal3:6-9; see CHART: GOD'S UNCONDITIONAL COVENANTS WITH ISRAEL).

Many Bible students *erroneously* equate the "one fold" to the Church. However, the Church was a mystery when Christ spoke these words (i.e., prior to His formal rejection by the nation of Israel; Eph3:1-10), so it is unlikely He was alluding to the as yet unrevealed Body of Christ at this point in His ministry. While the New covenant (i.e., the sacrifice of Christ; Matt26:28) certainly provides the basis for salvation of both Jew and Gentile in the Church (i.e., the Body of Christ; Eph1:22-23), the salvation of Gentiles as Gentiles (Cp., 1Cor10:32) was always foreseen in the O.T. (cf. Isa2:2-4; 60:6-9; 66:18-21; Mic4:1-2; Zech14:16; see CHART: CATEGORIES OF HUMANITY ON THE EARTH).

- [17] God the Father loves the Son, for the Son submitted His own will to that of the Father (cf. Luk22:42; Jn8:29). From the human point of view, the nation of Israel crucified Jesus (Act2:36). However, from the divine point of view, Jesus "[laid] down [His] life"; He did so with full confidence in His subsequent resurrection (Ps16:10).
- [18] This is an assertion of the aseity of Jesus as God the Son. When the Roman soldier went to break the legs of Jesus on the cross (to hasten His death), he found Jesus "dead already", because He had willfully "bowed his head, and gave up the ghost" (Jn19:30-33).
- [19] Jesus came for the purpose of creating "division" (Luk12:51).
- [20] The "Jews" (v19) could not deny the authenticity of the miracles Jesus performed, but the Pharisees asserted He was demon possessed and did so by the power of Satan (Matt12:24).
- [21] This is an allusion to the healing of the man born blind in John 9 (Cp., Jesus' casting out a dumb demon; Matt12:22-23). In both cases, Scripture prophesied these miracles would only be performed by the Messiah.

JESUS ASSERTS EQUALITY WITH THE FATHER

A final confrontation of Jesus with the Jews in Jerusalem occurred at the Feast of Hanukkah, after which He withdrew from the city because they sought to kill Him (Jn10:39-40).

- [22] The "feast of the dedication", which occurred in the "winter", is Hanukkah.

Background on Hanukkah. Hanukkah is celebrated on the 25th of Chislev (the 9th month of the Jewish calendar) in commemoration of

the rededication of the 2nd Temple by the Maccabees (in 165 BC), a family of priests who led the revolt against Greek rule over Israel, following its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes (i.e., the first occurrence of the "abomination of desolation", which foreshadows the ultimate desecration of the Temple to be performed by the Antichrist; cf. Matt24:15; 2Thess2:3-4; Rev13:14-15). Although it is not a festival ordained in the Law of Moses, the events that led up to it were prophesied by Daniel (cf. Dan8:9-14; 11:31-35); a detailed account of these events as they transpired in history is given in the apocryphal books of 1&2 Maccabees. Since Scripture records Jesus' participation in the festival of Hanukkah, this serves to validate its observance by Jews.

- [23] As part of the process to prepare the Temple for rededication, the priests "cleansed the sanctuary, and bare out the defiled stones into an unclean place. And when as they consulted what to do with the altar of burn offerings, which was profaned; they thought it best to pull it down, lest it should be a reproach to them, because the heathen had defiled it: wherefore they pulled it down, and laid up the stones in a mountain of the temple in a convenient place, until there should come a prophet to show what should be done with them" (1Mac4:43-46). The place where the defiled stones were stored was "Solomon's porch" (cf. v31).
- [24] The "Jews" charge Jesus with obscuring His true identity, implying He has not taught "plainly" enough for them to ascertain whether or not He is "the Christ". Jesus will demonstrate this charge to be ludicrous.
- [25] Jesus asserts that He has "told" them [plainly]. The issue is not that "the Jews" have not been provided evidence that Jesus is "the Christ", but that they "believed not" the evidence that was provided (Cp., Rom1:18). The "works" Jesus performed publicly were signs that definitively identified Him as "the Christ" (see **Miracles Unique to the Messiah**; Jn3:2).

The Psychology of Unbelief. Unbelievers always seek to cast themselves in a position of neutrality toward God and genuinely open to evidence in His favor; in doing so, they seek to cast God in the position of having not provided sufficient evidence for them to believe (i.e., it is God who is deficient, not themselves). Evangelists/apologists who accept their characterization find themselves in an endless cycle of presenting more and more evidence, which the unbeliever never finds sufficient (cf. Prov26:4). However, the testimony of Scripture is that no man is neutral toward God (Matt12:30; Luk11:23), but all men are in fact His enemy (Jas4:4). God has provided sufficient evidence for all men to believe, such that they are without excuse if they do not (Rom1:19-20). Rather than having insufficient evidence, unbelievers "suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom1:18).

- [26] The issue is that "[they] believe not". They are revealed to be "not of [Christ's] sheep" because they do not recognize His voice (v4).

Note on Calvinism. This verse does not say these "sheep" cannot believe, simply that they do not believe; they do not believe because

they are following the wrong shepherd (cf. Jn8:44)—they claimed to be following Moses, but they were not (cf. Jn5:46; 7:19).

- [27] The Jews who were faithfully following God/Moses/John recognized Jesus as Messiah and followed Him (cf. Jn1:41,45; 18:37). One purpose of the Law of Moses was to lead those who followed it faithfully to recognize the Messiah when He arrived (Gal3:23-24). They did not receive Jesus because they did not believe Moses (cf. Luk16:31; Jn5:46).
- [28] Jesus Christ is the source of life (Jn1:4; 5:21), and He gives His "sheep" (i.e., those who recognize His voice and follow Him; v27) "eternal life". Eternal life begins the moment it is bestowed, and it will not come to an end by virtue of being "eternal" (or everlasting; Jn3:16). Thus, a person who has received "eternal life" from Christ "shall never perish" (i.e., eternal life cannot be lost). The surety of this is expressed figuratively as being securely held in the "hand" of Christ, the all-powerful second Person of the Godhead.
- [29] The surety of eternal life is reiterated figuratively as being securely held in the "hand" of God the "Father"—the all-powerful first Person of the Godhead, who is "greater than all". Ephesians 1:13-14 describes the role of the third Person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, as sealing the believer until the day of redemption (i.e., glorification at the Rapture or resurrection; Rom8:23,30).
- Note on Calvinism. Here, the clause which says the Father "gave" Christ His sheep should not be understood in the sense of having given individuals for salvation, but the "flock" for care; with the advent of Christ as the "Good Shepherd", the Father entrusts the care of the flock to the Son—there will not be a flock of the Father and another of the Son (cf. v16).
- [30] To address the Jews' charge of obscurity relative to Christ's identity (v24), Jesus "plainly" asserts that "I and my Father are one". That is, they are "one" in nature/essence; the Messiah is a divine Person equal with God the "Father" (Ps2:2,7; Jn1:1). Here, liberals interpret this assertion to teach Jesus and God are merely "one" in purpose, rather than "one" in nature; however, the "Jews" did not understand Jesus' assertion in that way (cf. vv33,36), nor did Jesus correct their understanding (Cp., Act14:11-15).
- [31] This action indicates "the Jews" believe Jesus to be guilty of a capital crime under the Law of Moses.
- [32] Jesus inquires of which capital crime He is guilty.
- [33] The sin of "blasphemy" carried the death penalty under the Law of Moses (Lev24:16). The Jews understood Jesus' assertion (v30) to be a declaration that He is "God", even as the "Father" is "God". If Jesus were merely "a man", this would indeed be "blasphemy". Note that Jesus does not correct this understanding of "the Jews".
- [34] "Ye are gods" is a quotation from Psalm 82:6. Psalm 82 presents God as the supreme "judge" (v1) over all the earth (v8). But God addresses the human judges appointed over the nation of Israel as "gods" (Heb., *elohim*); this is not to suggest that these men had a

divine nature, but that they acted in the place of God with authority delegated from Him to "judge". God's rebuke of Israel's human "gods" (i.e., judges) in this psalm is due to the fact that they "judge unjustly" (v2).

Note, the "law [of Moses]" (Heb., Torah) used in its denotative sense refers to the first five books of the O.T. (also called the Pentateuch). Here, however, "law" is used connotatively to refer to all of the Hebrew scriptures (cf. Ps1:2; 119:97,142; Isa8:20).

- [35] Jesus' point (v34) is that if God called those "unto whom the word of God came" (i.e., were the delegates of God authorized to act on His behalf) "gods", it is not blasphemy (v33) for Him to say "I am the Son of God" (v36)—since His works have demonstrated conclusively that He is sent from God. Jesus' assertion that "the scripture cannot be broken" speaks of both its **infallibility** as well as its role as the absolute **standard** for all judgment (cf. Isa8:20; Jn17:17).
- [36] Jesus says of Himself that He has been "sanctified" by God "the Father". Note, "sanctified" means *having been set apart*, especially in the sense of something dedicated to God; it is not insignificant that Jesus spoke these words at "the feast of the **dedication**" (v22; i.e., Hanukkah).
- [38] Jesus did not ask the Jews to "believe" His claims without authentication, since "the Jews require a sign" (cf. Jn20:30-31; 1Cor1:22). The implication is that Jesus' works (i.e., signs) definitively authenticate His identity as Messiah.

Note on Calvinism. Calvinism asserts that no one is able to "believe" until after God's supernatural work of regeneration (i.e., Calvinism's axiom that "regeneration precedes faith"). But by calling on these unregenerate Jews to "believe" His words and works, Jesus presupposes they have the ability to "believe".

- [39] The "works" of Jesus are irrefutable messianic signs. Thus, since the works cannot be denied, the only course of action for those who refuse to "believe" (v38) is to "take him" (i.e., kill Jesus; cf. Jn7:1).
- [40] Jesus must leave Jerusalem in order to avoid those seeking to "take him" (v39).
- [41] The testimony of John (the Baptist) was instrumental in pointing many Jews to Jesus as the Messiah. John "did no miracle", but simply preached the prophetic scriptures concerning Christ.
- [42] It was the leadership of the nation of Israel that rejected the messianic claims of Jesus (cf. Matt12:23-24; 27:20; Mk15:11; among the people, "many believed on [Jesus as the Christ]").

CHAPTER 11

7TH SIGN: RAISING LAZARUS FROM THE DEAD

Jesus' 7th and final sign to the nation of Israel was raising Lazarus from the dead, which foreshadowed "the sign of the prophet, Jonah" (Matt12:39),

with Christ's own resurrection after three days being the actual fulfillment of Jonah's prophetic type (cf. Jon1:17; Matt12:40). Note that resurrection was a doctrine that divided the Pharisees and Sadducees (Act23:8).

- [1] "Lazarus" is the Greek form of the Hebrew name **Eleazar**³⁸, meaning *God is my helper*. "Mary" is the Greek form of the Hebrew name **Miriam**. Miriam was a very common Hebrew name, and there are six distinct women named Mary in the N.T.
- [2] John reveals that Lazarus' sister "Mary" is the woman who "anointed" Jesus with "ointment", and "wiped his feet with her hair". This account is given in Mark 14:3-9, yet the woman is unnamed in Mark's Gospel (note Mk14:9).
- [3] Lazarus is referred to as "he whom [Jesus] lovest"; the implication is that Jesus and Lazarus had a very intimate friendship, perhaps even comparable to that of Jesus and John (Cp., Jn13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7,20).
- [4] Like the man born blind (Jn9:3), the "sickness" and "death" of Lazarus had a divine purpose; namely, "that the Son of God might be glorified for it".
- [5] Mary, "Martha", and "Lazarus" were a family that Jesus "loved". Here, the Greek word used for Jesus' "love" of Lazarus is *ἀγαπάω*, whereas in v3 *φιλέω* is used; it is important to recognize that these two Greek words for "love" as used in the N.T. are *synonymous*.
- [6] Jesus and His disciples are in Bethabara (Cp., Jn1:28; 10:40), which was an easy one-day walk to Bethany (v1). Had Jesus left for Bethany as soon as He received the news of Lazarus' sickness, He could have arrived before Lazarus died. Jesus "abode two days still in the same place where he was" in order for Lazarus to die.
- [7] Jesus waited for Lazarus to die, because it was His intention to raise Lazarus from the dead.
- [8] Bethany is essentially a suburb of Jerusalem, which Jesus had left because "the Jews sought to [kill Him]" (Jn10:39-40); to return to Judea so soon justifiably concerned His disciples.
- [10] Verses 9-10 continue the light vs. darkness motif that runs through John's Gospel. Jesus is essentially responding to the disciples' concern over returning to Jerusalem by asserting that as long as they walk in the will of God (i.e., "in the day"), no harm can come to them before God's appointed time.
- [11] Jesus uses "sleep" as a euphemism for death, which is used only of the death of believers in the N.T. (Cp., 1Cor11:30; 15:51; 1Thess4:13-15).
- [13] The "disciples" fail to recognize Jesus' euphemistic use of "sleep".

³⁸ Lazarus/Eleazar is essentially the title used of the Holy Spirit, translated as "Comforter" in the KJV (Jn14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7), but as "Helper" in many modern versions (e.g., ESV, NASB). Abraham's servant Eleazar is used as a type of the Holy Spirit in Genesis 24 (cf. Gen15:2).

- [14] To clarify the misunderstanding of the disciples, Jesus said "plainly, Lazarus is dead".
- [15] No one ever died in the presence of Jesus. For this reason, Jesus implied that had he been with Lazarus, he would not have died. If such were the case, however, the disciples would have been deprived of witnessing an important and necessary sign-miracle.
- [16] Ever the pessimist, "Thomas" assumes that for them to return to Jerusalem at this time would be suicide; perhaps the risk would have been warranted if there was a chance to save Lazarus, but would seem to be pointless now that Lazarus has died.
- [17] Jewish custom is to bury a dead body on the day of death. Having been "in the grave four days already", it would seem that Lazarus died shortly after Jesus received word of his sickness (v3).
- [18] A furlong is 1/8 of a mile, so "fifteen furlongs" is just under two miles.
- [19] These "Jews" had come from Jerusalem (v18).
- [21] Martha's assumption was probably correct, as no one ever died in the presence of Jesus; on the contrary, Jesus healed all who came to Him (cf. Matt4:24; 8:16; 12:15; Luk4:40; 6:19). Martha's attitude seems to indicate she believed Jesus could have healed Lazarus while he still lived, but does not expect/believe Jesus can bring her brother back to life now that he is dead.
- [22] It is not clear what Martha expects of Jesus. She believes Jesus will do something, but she does not expect Him to immediately raise her brother from the dead (cf. v24).
- [23] Jesus asserts that Lazarus "shall rise again", but does not specify the timing of his resurrection.
- [24] Martha assumes that Jesus is speaking of the eschatological resurrection, "at the last day", that will occur when Messiah comes following the great Tribulation to establish His kingdom (cf. Dan12:1-3). Though denied by the Sadducees (Matt22:23), it was a fundamental belief within Judaism that Jewish believers would be resurrected in order to inherit the kingdom promised to Abraham and his seed (cf. Gen12:1-3,7; 13:14-18; 15:18-21; 17:7-8).
- [25] Jesus declares, "I am the resurrection, and the life" (the 5th of Christ's 7 metaphorical "I am" statements). This is an assertion that Messiah not only has power to heal the living, but He has power over life/death. Those who "believeth in [Jesus]", though they may die, they shall live again, since Jesus has the power of resurrection (Cp., Jn5:21).
- [26] Furthermore, Jesus alludes to the fact that there are some who "believeth in me" that will "never die". This is true of two categories of believers: 1) those alive at the end of the Church Age who experience the Rapture (1Cor15:51-52; 1Thess4:16-17), and 2) those alive at the end of the Tribulation who enter the kingdom in

mortal bodies (and apparently live for 1,000 years kingdom; cf. Isa65:20-22; Matt25:31-34).

- [27] Martha's confession, "thou art the Christ [i.e., Messiah], the Son of God", is equivalent to that of Peter (Matt16:16).
- [28] Jesus "calleth for" Mary, "secretly". Apparently Jesus wanted to privately comfort and instruct Mary.
- [30] Jesus first interacted with Mary and Martha privately, since the Jews who had come from Jerusalem (v19) were the same as those who previously "sought to take him" (Jn10:30); once His presence in Bethany become known to them, circumstances would likely become more chaotic (v31).
- [32] Like Martha (v21), Mary's presupposition was that Jesus had the power to heal the living, but no power over the dead.
- [33] Jesus is moved with compassion for Mary and Martha, whom He loved (v5), who were distraught over the loss of their brother. As a genuine man, with a human "spirit", Jesus experienced every human emotion (Cp., Heb4:15).
- [35] This verse is the shortest in the English Bible³⁹. Knowing He was about to raise Lazarus from the dead, why did Jesus weep? "The sting of death is sin" (1Cor15:56). God's original desire for His creation was that there would be no sin; thus, no death (cf. Gen2:15-17; Rom5:12).
- [36] The "Jews" misinterpret the weeping of Jesus; they presume He is distraught over His inability to prevent the death of His friend (v37).
- [37] The Jews reason from the greater to the lesser. They believe opening the eyes of the man born blind (Jn9:1-7) was a greater miracle than healing Lazarus of his sickness would have been.
- [38] Jesus' "groan[ing]" is due to the failure of the Jews to understand the purpose of His mission. Lazarus' body had been placed in a "cave" (as Jesus' body would be; cf. Matt27:59-60; Mk15:45-46; Luk23:52-53; Jn19:41-42), a burial method common in ancient Israel.
- [39] After "four days", the body would have begun to decompose and "stinketh". "Martha" does not think viewing the body of her brother in that condition would be appropriate.
- [40] Again, Mary, Martha, and the Jews all believed Jesus could have healed Lazarus prior to his death (vv21,32,36-37), but they presume Jesus is powerless now that Lazarus has died. Yet, Jesus said from the beginning that the "sickness" of Lazarus was "not unto death", but for "the glory of God" (v4). In their grief, Mary and Martha are not properly processing the implications of Jesus' words; if Lazarus remains dead, Jesus was wrong.
- [41] The implications of Jesus' prayer to the "Father" are significant. Jesus did not raise Lazarus using His own divine power (cf.

³⁹ The shortest verse in the Greek N.T. is 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

Philip2:5-8), but was empowered to do so by God the Holy Spirit as granted by God the "Father". This must be the case, since Jesus necessarily lived a genuine human life as the "last Adam" and "second man" (1Cor15:45,47) and could not exercise His divine nature and prerogatives to do so (i.e., He could make use of no advantage that was not also available to Adam, as His temptation had demonstrated; cf. Luk4:3-4).

- [42] Jesus knew that His prayer would be heard and answered by the "Father", because He always prayed according to the will of God (cf. Luk22:42; 1Jn5:14). Jesus prayed aloud in order to allow those around Him to hear. This miracle was to be a sign (Matt12:38-40; Jn20:30-31) such that "they may believe" that Jesus was the Messiah sent from God.
- [43] This is an illustration of Jesus as the good Shepherd, who "calletH His own sheep by name" (Jn10:3).
- [44] The raising of Lazarus from the dead foreshadowed Jesus' ultimate power over death (1Cor15:54-57), which is the "last enemy" (1Cor15:26). Lazarus was raised from the dead into a mortal body, so he died again. However, Jesus Himself would be resurrected into a glorified body, which would never die, and which would be the pattern for all believers after Him (Rom6:5; 1Cor15:20-23).

Typology of Raising Lazarus. Raising Lazarus from the dead was the 7th sign in the Gospel of John and final sign of Jesus to the nation of Israel (Matt12:39). It foreshadowed "the sign of the prophet Jonah" (cf. Matt12:38-40), which was **resurrection** (Jon1:17). This sign points to Jesus' own resurrection after three days, which was the fulfillment of prophecy (cf. Matt16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19; Mk10:33-34; Luk18:31-33; Jn2:19) and definitive proof of the Messiahship of Jesus (cf. Luk24:21,25-27; Act2:27-32).

REACTION TO THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

- [45] The purpose of Jesus' "signs" were that "the Jews" might "believe on him" (Jn20:30-31).
- [46] Apparently "the Jews" who witnessed the raising of Lazarus were not "Pharisees", but immediately informed them because of the clear spiritual significance of the miracle.
- [47] The "chief priests" are Sadducees (Act5:17). They, along with the "Pharisees", oppose Jesus' messianic signs and claims (for different reasons), but they must conspire together to offer an explanation for the "miracles" of Jesus—which are leading many "Jews" to "believe on him" (v45).
- [48] This is the concern that motivates the Sadducees (i.e., priests), who are theological liberals but are in lucrative positions of power under the "Romans". In contrast, the Pharisees' opposition to Jesus is motivated by theological reasons (e.g., Jesus refuses to submit to the traditions of rabbinical Judaism; cf. Matt15:1-9; Mk7:1-13).

- [49] "Caiaphas" had been installed as "high priest" by the Romans for political reasons, replacing his father-in-law Annas (although both are referred to as "high priests" in the Gospels; Luk3:2; Jn18:13).
- [50] Being high priest and a Sadducee concerned with the possibility of the Romans taking away his place over an uprising instigated by the followers of Jesus (v48), the intention of Caiaphas by this statement is most likely that Jesus should be killed in order to prevent Roman intervention into the Jewish nation (cf. vv48,53).
- [52] However, God's intention by Caiaphas' statement was prophetic of Jesus' substitutionary sacrifice for both the nation of Israel (v51; cf. Isa53:3-6; Matt1:21) and the world (v52; cf. Jn1:29; 1Jn2:2). God uses even the evil intentions of men for His ultimate good (Cp., Gen50:20; Rom8:28).
- [53] According to the parable in Matthew 21:33-41, these Jews who sought Jesus "to put him to death" understood He was Messiah/God's Son and killed Him for that reason (Matt21:38).
- [54] In order to prevent the prophetic timeline of His death from being accelerated (Dan9:25-26), Jesus had to leave Jerusalem.
- [55] The third and final Passover during the ministry of Jesus was "nigh at hand" (Jn12:1).
- [56] Those seeking to take Jesus understand that He must return to Jerusalem for the Passover as a requirement of the Law (Deut16:16); this is implicit testimony (from hostile witnesses) to the fact that Jesus kept every detail of the Law of Moses (Matt5:17).
- [57] This reveals the conspiracy between the Sadducees and the "Pharisees" to murder Jesus. Judas responded to this "commandment" (Matt26:14-16).

CHAPTER 12

THE FORMAL REJECTION OF JESUS BY THE NATION OF ISRAEL

John 12 records the formal rejection of Jesus as the Messiah/Christ by the nation of Israel, which under the Mosaic covenant was the national sin of "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost [which] shall not be forgiven" (Matt12:31). Thus, after this point in the ministry of Jesus, repentance by Israel was no longer possible (Cp., Num14:42; Jer7:15-16; 11:14; 14:10-12; 15:1; Ezek14:12-14), and the judgment of God upon that generation of the nation was assured (cf. Matt21:43-44; Luk19:41-44). This is analogous to Moses' generation of Israelites that were not allowed to enter the Promised Land because of their unbelief (cf. Heb3:7-19), but a subsequent generation led by Joshua entered Canaan in fulfillment of God's promise.

MARY ANOINTS JESUS IN PREPARATION FOR HIS DEATH

- [1] This would be the third and final "passover" of Jesus' ministry. Being "six days before", this day was the Saturday before the crucifixion.

- [2] Immediately after his resurrection, "Lazarus" is seen seated with Jesus and enjoying a "supper". This could point typologically to "the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev19:7-9).
- [3] Mary's "anoint[ing]" of Jesus is also recorded in Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9. In both of those accounts the woman is unnamed, although it is said that what she did would "be told for a memorial of her" (Matt26:13; Mk14:9). According to Matthew and Mark, this home in Bethany was that of "Simon, the leper", one who had undoubtedly been cleansed by Jesus. The "ointment of spikenard" is **myrrh**; it was so "costly" that most women only used it on their wedding night (cf. Song1:12-13).
- [5] Judas Iscariot objects to what he portrays as a frivolous use of so "costly" an "ointment". The cost is said to be "three hundred pence", where "penny" (KJV) is a translation of *denarius*, a Roman coin representing the wage of a common laborer for one day of work (cf. Matt20:1-2); thus, "three hundred pence" represents a full year's pay.
- [6] Concern for the "poor" may have resonated with the other disciples, but Judas' concern was not for the "poor"; he was a "thief" who pilfered from the "bag".
- [7] Jesus defends Mary's use of the ointment as appropriate. While this ointment was probably reserved for use on her wedding night, Mary instead chose to use it to anoint Jesus. Jesus implies she did so because of her consciousness of His approaching death, which meant she took the teaching of Jesus more seriously than His disciples (Cp., Matt16:21-22; 17:22-23; 20:18-19; Mk10:33-34; Luk18:31-34; Jn2:19-20).
- [8] Alluding to Deuteronomy 15:11, Jesus refutes the alleged objective of socialism. While giving to the "poor" is admirable and expected, the elimination of poverty will not occur until the kingdom.
- [9] News of the very public raising of "Lazarus" travelled fast and attracted many "Jews".
- [10] The "chief priests" were Sadducees (Act5:17), who denied resurrection (Matt22:23). Thus, Lazarus was a very public refutation of their false ideology.
- [11] Jesus' final sign fulfilled its intended purpose; namely, "many of the Jews ... believed on Jesus" (Jn20:30-31).

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY OF JESUS INTO JERUSALEM

The so-called Triumphal Entry (a.k.a. Palm Sunday) fulfilled the first 69 of Daniel's prophesied 70 Weeks. This represented the formal presentation of Jesus to Israel as "Messiah" and "Prince" on the prophesied day (April 6, 32 AD; Dan9:24-25); the obligation of Israel under the terms of the Mosaic covenant was to "set him king over thee" (cf. Deut17:15).

- [12] "On the next day" would be Sunday (cf. v1). Many were already arriving in Jerusalem for "the feast" (i.e., Passover).

- [13] The general population of Jews receive Jesus back into Jerusalem as "the King of Israel", singing the messianic Psalm 118 (cf. vv22-26). "Hosanna" means *Oh, save, or save now* (Cp., Ps118:25).
- [15] Jesus entered Jerusalem riding upon a "young ass", as prophesied in Zechariah 9:9. This is analogous to the way in which King Solomon entered Jerusalem for his own coronation (Cp., 1Kgs1:33,38). This manner of arrival signified peace (cf. Isa9:6; Zech9:9), in contrast to war (Cp., Rev19:11).

Typology of Palm Sunday. This particular Sunday (April 6, 32 AD) was the 10th of Nisan on the Jewish calendar, the day the Passover lambs were selected for inspection (cf. Exod12:2-6). On this day Jesus offered Himself to Israel as "the [Passover] lamb of God" (Jn1:29; cf. 1Cor5:7). Jesus spent the next 4 days in Jerusalem allowing Himself to be tested by the Jewish (and Roman) leadership (cf. Matt21:23-27; 22:15-46) to demonstrate that He was "without blemish and without spot" (1Pet1:19). The conclusion from this period of inspection was Pilate's declaration concerning Jesus, "I find in him no fault at all" (Jn18:38; also Jn19:4,6).

- [16] The significance of "these things" were not understood by Jesus' own "disciples" until after His resurrection (Cp., Luk18:31-34; Act11:16).
- [18] The public "testimony" of those Jews who had witnessed Jesus' raising of "Lazarus" was causing the crowds around Jesus and His disciples to swell.
- [19] The reaction of the "Pharisees" that "the world is gone after him" is hyperbole, but the result is that their plans to "take him" (Jn11:57) are now not possible.

GENTILES SEEK JESUS

- [20] Some have viewed these "Greeks" as Hellenistic Jews (Cp., Act6:1), but it is better to understand them to be Gentiles; they were likely God-fearers, like Cornelius (Cp., Act10:1-2,22,34-35), who had come "to worship at the feast".
- [21] These Gentiles attempted to gain access to Jesus through "Philip" (interestingly, a disciple with a Greek name).
- [22] Though "Philip" and "Andrew" inform "Jesus" of the desire of the Gentiles to see Him, there is no indication such access was granted. This is consistent with the mission of Jesus to the Jews only at His first coming (cf. Matt10:5-6; 15:21-28); it is not until after His resurrection that Jesus redirects His disciples to "Go ... [to] all nations" (Matt28:10; cf. Mk16:15; Luk24:47).

JESUS PROPHESES HIS CRUCIFIXION

- [23] Whereas Jesus had previously avoided public confrontations that might accelerate the timetable leading to His death (cf. Jn2:4; 7:30; 8:20), now "The hour has come" (Dan9:24-26). The cross of Christ was

the means by which "the Son of man should be glorified" (cf. Jn17:1; Gal6:14).

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CHAPTER 13

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With the formal rejection of Christ by the nation of Israel recorded in John 12, in John 13 Jesus begins the preparation of His apostles to become the "foundation" of the Church (Eph2:20) in the coming Dispensation of Grace (Eph3:2).

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Note that "signs" are supernatural events (miracles) that **signify** something deeper; they should be expected to have **typological** significance. Noah Webster Dictionary (1828): "SIGN. 1. A token; something by which another thing is shown or represented; any visible thing, any motion, appearance, or event which indicates the existence or approach of something else".

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--- S.D.G. ---

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