

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" (**θεὸς**) 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 **εἶμι**, 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; Coll: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. Is11:1-2; 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., Jnl: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; Col1:27).
- [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 *παρα* 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] 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).

For scriptural support of the assertion that He was one with "the Father" (v30), which the Jews understood to be an assertion of deity (v33), Jesus quotes from **Psalm 82:6**, "I have said, Ye are gods"; though not quoted, the verse continues with, "and all of you are [sons] of the most High [God]". This quotation in the context of John 10:30-39 is admittedly difficult to interpret, and its proper understanding has confused most commentators³⁸. Psalm 82 contains exceedingly complex revelation concerning hierarchy and organization within the spiritual world, but suffice it to say that Jesus' citation of it here implies two profound truths. First, Jesus associates Himself with the spiritual realm in which the "gods"³⁹ (Heb., *elohim*), who are also called "[sons] of the most High [God]", dwell. Second, taken together with His assertion that "I and my Father are one" (v30), Jesus further identifies Himself with "God", who "judgeth among the gods" (Ps82:1). Thus, Jesus is "the Son of God" (v36) in the sense of essential equality with God "the Father". To support His claim, "I am the Son of God", Jesus could have quoted Psalm 2:7 as a seemingly more obvious reference to the identification of Messiah as God's Son, but that verse is set in the context of Messiah's future office as the "king" of Israel (Ps2:2,6), which could be misunderstood/rationalized as merely a reference to human (i.e., Davidic) kings of Israel who were sometimes described as God's "sons" (cf. Ps89:3-4, 26-27). In contrast, no such human kingship context exists in Psalm 82, so no such rationalization is possible.

[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.

³⁸ "Ye are gods" is commonly misinterpreted as an assertion that Jewish leaders/judges were at times called "gods" (i.e., they acted as God's representatives), such that Jesus' claim of such a designation for Himself should not be considered blasphemy; however, such an interpretation is not coherent for the following reasons: 1) human leaders are not in view in Psalm 82; 2) it does not do justice to Jesus' extraordinary assertion of equality with "the Father" (v30); and 3) it does not adequately explain the Jews' violent reaction to His assertion (vv33,39).

³⁹ The Hebrew term *elohim*, usually translated as "gods" when used in the plural, denotes the host of heaven, which is often over-simplified as merely a designation for angels, but which in actuality is a term Scripture uses of all entities that dwell in the spiritual realm (e.g., God, angelic creatures, and even disembodied human spirits).

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**⁴⁰, 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] loveth"; 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".

⁴⁰ 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).

- [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".
- [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 "calleft 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 Bible⁴¹. 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).

⁴¹ The shortest verse in the Greek N.T. is 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

- [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. 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).

REACTION TO THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

- [45] The purpose of Jesus' "signs" were that "the Jews" might "believe on him" (Jn20:30-31).

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).

- [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 PROPHECIES 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).
- [24] Jesus likens His death/burial to the planting of a "corn of wheat" in the "ground", in that it is the means necessary to "[bring] forth much fruit" (Cp., 1Cor15:36). Jesus' death on the cross as the Lamb of God occurred late on Passover (Nisan 14; cf. Lev23:5), prophetically fulfilling that feast (Jn1:29; 1Cor5:7); His burial occurred early the following day (Nisan 15), the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev23:6), in prophetic fulfillment of it.
- [25] For the believer, Christ is the example that sacrifice in this present "life" is warranted by glory in the ages to come (i.e., "eternal life"; cf. Rom8:18). Here, "hate" is used in a relative, but hyperbolic sense (Cp., Luk14:26).
- [26] To "follow" and "serve" Christ leads to "honor" and reward from God the "Father"; it also means that believers will spend the ages to come with Christ (Cp., Jn14:3; 1Thess4:17).
- [27] In His incarnation, Jesus is a genuine man. The knowledge of His impending death "troubled" His human "soul". From a human perspective, death is not something Jesus desired; yet, this was the purpose of His coming, and in that He submitted to the will of the "Father" (cf. Matt26:39,42,44; Mk14:36,39; Luk22:42-44).
- [28] "Father, glorify thy name" is a Hebraism in which one's "name" represents the person (Cp., Jn1:12; 20:31; Act4:12); this is a petition for the "Father" to glorify Himself. The "Father" is glorified by His Son perfectly doing His will at every moment of

Jesus' life on earth⁴². This is one of three occasions during the ministry of Jesus that the Father's "voice" speaks audibly from "heaven" (also at baptism and transfiguration; cf. Matt3:17; 17:5).

- [29] Those with Jesus heard the voice of God as "thunder", recognizing it was from heaven and likening it to that of an "angel" (Cp., Rev6:1), but apparently did not understand the words (Cp., Act22:6-9).
- [30] The audible voice of God speaking from heaven was a sign for those with Jesus (Cp., Jn11:41-42).
- [31] The work of the Lord Jesus Christ is two-fold: 1) to redeem fallen men (Rom5:8-11,18), and 2) to "destroy the works of the devil" (1Jn3:8). Here, Satan is referred to as "the prince of this [i.e., fallen] world" (i.e., *principality*; cf. Eph6:12), a role intended for man (Gen1:26-27; Ps8:4-8).
- [32] Jesus' death by crucifixion (v33) is the prevenient work of God necessary to "draw all men" to Himself (cf. Jn6:44,65). Because of the work of Christ, all men have the ability to come to Him.
- [33] To clarify, by "lifted up from the earth" (v32), Jesus referred to His "death" by crucifixion (not His ascension to heaven).
- [34] Here, "Christ abideth forever" is probably an allusion to Psalm 102:26-27 and/or Isaiah 9:6-7. The "people" properly understood that Jesus is speaking of His death, but they failed to recognize that the Messiah was prophesied to die (Ps22; Isa53; Dan9:26); they presumed that if Jesus died, He could not be the Messiah (Cp., Luk24:13-27).
- [35] Jesus is "the light" (Jn1:7-9). In figurative language, Jesus communicates that He would be with the people only for a "little while", and that they should take advantage of the time they have with Him. As the written and incarnate Word, He is God's revelation to men, without which a person "knoweth not where he goeth".
- [36] Note that "believe in the light" corresponds to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Act16:31).
- [37] This is the point in the historical narrative as presented in the Gospel of John where the rejection of Christ by the nation of Israel is officially recognized. It is Israel's unpardonable sin (Matt12:24-32; cf. Num14:39-45; Jer7:16; 11:14; 14:11; Ezek14:13-14,20). The "miracles" Jesus had performed were signs sufficient to lead them to the conclusion that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (Jn20:31), "yet they believed not on him".

Dispensational Note. It is only **after** the official rejection of Christ by the nation of Israel that the revelation of the coming dispensational transition to the Church and its unique doctrines, made possible by the death of Christ which secured the blessings of the New Covenant, takes place (i.e., the Upper Room Discourse, which occurred the night before the crucifixion).

⁴² Neither Lucifer (Isa14:12-12) nor Adam (Gen3:6) submitted to the will of God the Father. As the "last Adam" (1Cor15:45) and the "Son of God", Jesus came to "destroy the works of the devil" (1Jn3:8).

- [38] This is a quotation of the opening verse of Isaiah 53, the implication of which being that the rejection of Christ by the nation of Israel, which led to His death, was foretold by "Isaiah the prophet".
- [39] This short version is profoundly significant, since it connects two quotations from the Book of Isaiah (Isa53:1 in v38 and Isa6:10 in v40) with "that Isaiah said again". The conclusions of modern, higher criticism concerning the Book of Isaiah is that (at least) two different authors wrote the book, divided as Isaiah 1-39 and 40-66; this verse renders such a conclusion impossible.
- [40] This is a quotation of Isaiah 6:10. It is a prophecy of the judicial hardening of the nation of Israel concerning the Messiah (at His first coming). It does not mean that Israel was preemptively hardened such that they could not receive Messiah, but that following a probationary period during which Israel could have received Messiah (but did not), their willful decision would be confirmed by God without a subsequent opportunity to repent (in the context of the first coming); this is the effect of the unpardonable sin, after which it is not possible for that generation of the nation of Israel to repent and receive Christ. This pattern of judicial hardening is illustrated in the Book of Exodus, in which God is said to have hardened the heart of Pharaoh (first occasion in Exod9:12), but only after Pharaoh had repeatedly hardened his own heart (cf. Exod7:13,14,22; 8:15,19,32; 9:7). The opportunity God gives to repent never lasts indefinitely.
- [41] This refers to the context in which Isaiah recorded v40 (Isa6:10), which was his vision of the glorified Messiah sitting on His throne in the heavenly temple (Isa6:1), implicitly asserting His deity.
- [42] Here, the "chief rulers" who "believed" that Jesus was the Messiah are Jewish civil authorities, including members of the Sanhedrin (Cp., Jn3:1). Yet, for fear of being "put out of the synagogue" (Jn9:22), which was under the control of the "Pharisees", they would not publicly "confess" their belief (cf. Jas2:20-22).
- Doctrine of the Remnant. Though it may be small (1Kgs19:18), there is always a remnant of believers within the nation of Israel (Cp., Rom9:6), even among the generation that rejected Christ at His first coming, and even during the Church Age (Rom11:1-5).
- [43] Here is the test of faith all men face. Do we love God more than we love "the praise of men" (cf. Luk14:26; Jn21:15; Jas4:4); do we fear God more than we fear all else (cf. Matt10:28)?
- [44] The coming of Christ was a watershed event for the nation of Israel. They cannot "believe" in God without also believing in His Son (1Jn2:22-23).
- [45] Compare to John 14:8-9.
- [46] Jesus is "the light" (Jn1:7-9). This is a continuation of the "light" vs. "darkness" motif in the Gospel of John, where "light" represents Jesus/God and "darkness" represents Satan (cf. Act26:18).

- [47] At His first coming, Christ came to "save the world", not "judge" it (Jn3:16-17; cf. 2Cor6:2). However, at His second coming, Christ will come for the purpose of judging the world (Rev19:11).
- [48] The standard of judgment "in the last day" (i.e., the Great White Throne judgment of unbelievers from all ages) will be "the word [of God]" (cf. Rev20:11-15; Cp., Heb4:12-13).
- [49] It is important that Jesus "[had] not spoken of [himself]" alone. The "commandment" given by "the Father" was the Law of Moses. The testimony of Jesus and "the Father" fulfill the requirement for two witnesses under the Law of Moses (Deut19:15).
- [50] Even under the Mosaic covenant, the "commandment[s]" of God were characterized as "life" (Deut32:46-47), though the context and promise under that covenant was a prolonged natural life in the Promised Land. Under the New covenant, the death of Christ will secure the promise of "life everlasting" (cf. Matt26:28).

CHAPTER 13

JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES IN THE UPPER ROOM

With the formal rejection of Christ by the nation of Israel recorded in John 12:37-40, in John 13-17 Jesus begins the preparation of His apostles to become the "foundation" of the Church (Eph2:20) in the coming Dispensation of Grace (Eph3:2). The new ministries of the Holy Spirit that Jesus reveals are presented in the future tense; they will not be realized until after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ (Jn16:7) and the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Act2:1-4).

THE LAST SUPPER

- [1] There is considerable debate among many as to whether the last "supper" (v2), the supper Jesus ate with His disciples the evening before His crucifixion, was a Passover meal. **Indeed it was**, as clearly indicated in the synoptic Gospels (cf. Matt26:17-19; Mk14:16; Luk22:8,15). Although, it is here said here in John's Gospel to have occurred "before the feast of the passover", considerable misunderstanding of this comment results from a general ignorance as to how the Feast of Passover was celebrated *nationally* during the 2nd Temple period, as well as failure to remember that a Jewish day begins at sundown. Passover occurred "in the fourteenth day of the first month **at evening**" (Lev23:5). The common Jewish family observed a Passover meal at evening, as did Jesus with His disciples. The following morning (still the 14th day by Jewish reckoning) was the *national* observance of Passover, at which the priests offered Passover lambs in the Temple; however, these lambs were eaten only by the priests and before sundown⁴³. It was at the very same time on the

⁴³ This explains why the "priests" would not enter Pilate's "judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover" (Jn18:28) on the morning of the crucifixion. Furthermore, if the Passover meal were eaten after sundown, it would then be the 15th day of the first month, which was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (cf. Lev23:6).

morning of Passover, as the lambs were being offered in the Temple, that Jesus as "the Lamb of God" was sacrificed (cf. Jn1:29; 1Cor5:7).

Whereas up until this time Jesus had avoided certain confrontations that might accelerate the timetable leading to His death (cf. Jn2:4; 7:30; 8:20), "now ... his hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto they Father" (i.e., submit to death; Dan9:25-26). Here, John alludes to Jesus' "love" for His disciples (cf. Jn15:13).

- [2] It was "the devil" who worked to orchestrate Jesus' crucifixion and death, using "Judas Iscariot" as his willing human agent (which Jesus had prophesied; Jn6:70-71).
- [3] Even in His humanity, Jesus understood His foreordained mission and destiny. Though Satan believed it was his own plan to kill Jesus (v2), in actuality it perfectly fulfilled the plan of God—which Satan regretted after the fact (cf. 1Cor2:6-8).
- [4] Contrast Jesus' act of humility with the fact that just that afternoon the disciples had been caught arguing over "who [among them] should be the greatest" in the kingdom (cf. Mk9:33-35).
- [5] Foot washing was a daily necessity for those who wore sandals in the dusty land of Israel; in a wealthy home, it was normally performed by servants (cf. 1Sam25:41). Washing the feet of His disciples (which included Judas) was the ultimate expressssion of Jesus' acceptance of His role as a "servant" (cf. Matt20:28; Mk10:45; Philip2:6-8).
- [6] Apparently only "Simon Peter" objected to the inappropriateness of Jesus, their "Master and Lord" (Jn13:13), washing the feet of His disciples/servants (Cp., Matt10:24). This was analogous to John's objection to Jesus submitting Himself to John for baptism (Matt3:14).
- [7] Jesus asserts that Peter would understand this reversal of natural roles only "hereafter" (i.e., after Jesus' death/resurrection; cf. 1Pet5:5-6).
- [8] Here, Peter was still thinking of the physical act of Jesus washing his feet, but Jesus has transitioned to a spiritual discussion.
- [9] Peter submits to washing. However, he mistakenly assumes that the physical washing of his "hands" and "head", in addition to his "feet", might provide even greater communion with his "Lord".
- [10] In this verse, "washed" (Greek, *λούω*, to bathe) is the translation of a different Greek word than "wash" (Greek, *ἵπτω*, to wash). Jesus alludes to a one-time washing/bathing⁴⁴ (of the whole body) that renders one "clean" and never needs to be repeated, in contrast to an on-going need to "wash" (the "feet"). The one-time bathing of the body is analogous to **regeneration** (cf. Eph5:25-26; Tit3:5; Rev1:5), which is necessary for salvation, whereas the repeated washing of the feet is analogous to daily confession of sin (cf. 1Jn1:6-9), which is

⁴⁴ Some have erroneously equated this one-time bathing with baptism, often in support of the false doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Under the Law of Moses, baptisms were performed repeatedly (See Note on Baptism at John 1:25).

necessary for fellowship⁴⁵. Jesus asserts of His disciples, "ye are clean" (i.e., saved).

- [11] "Ye are not all clean" refers to Judas (cf. Jn17:12).
- [12] The foot-washing ritual was intended to teach a spiritual lesson, which Jesus wanted His disciples to understand.
- [13] "Master" was how Jesus was addressed by disciples, whereas "Lord" was how He was addressed by servants (Matt10:24; Cp., Jn1:37-38; 15:15).
- [15] Jesus' act of humility was an "example" for His disciples to emulate (cf. Mk10:42-45).
- [16] The natural order is that the "lord" is greater than the "servant", and "he that sent" is greater than "he that is sent".
- [17] Understanding "these things" is not equivalent to "do[ing] them" (Cp., Jas1:22).
- [18] By "whom I have chosen", Jesus means the twelve—which includes Judas (Jn6:70). His choice of Judas was not a mistake, but part of God's plan as demonstrated by His quotation of Psalm 41:9 as fulfilled "scripture".
- [19] In prophesying His own betrayal, specifically by Judas, Jesus demonstrates that He is the "I am" (i.e., God; Exod3:14; cf. Isa41:21-23; 46:9-11).
- [20] The authority of he who is "sent" is that of the one who sends him. Jesus was "sent" by God the Father (Jn5:30), so He should be "received" as one having the authority of God. The apostles were "sent" by Jesus (Matt10:5; cf. Matt28:18-20; Mk16:15; Act1:8), so they should be "received" as having the authority of both Jesus and God the Father.
- [21] What the disciples have failed to take seriously, until now, is that he who will "betray" Jesus is "one of [them]" (i.e., one of the twelve men in the room with Jesus).
- [22] The disciples do not believe it could be one of them.
- [23] In John's Gospel, he refers to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (cf. Jn20:2; 21:7,20). In this intimate setting, he is presented as "leaning on Jesus' bosom", which is the place normally reserved for a bride⁴⁶ (cf. Song8:5). John the Apostle should be considered a type of the Church, the Bride of Christ (cf. Eph5:23,25,32; see THE APOSTLE JOHN AS A TYPE OF THE CHURCH).

⁴⁵ This same pattern is observed for the priests under the Law of Moses. Upon entering the priesthood, a man's whole body was bathed once (cf. Exod29:4; Lev8:6), after which he washed only his hands and feet in the brass laver when serving in the temple (cf. Exod30:18-19).

⁴⁶ This intimate relationship between Jesus and John is analogous to that of David and Jonathan (cf. 1Sam18:1,3; 20:17; 2Sam1:26). It was not homosexual in nature, as some have blasphemously suggested. Homosexual behavior was expressly forbidden under the Law of Moses (Lev18:22; 20:13), and Jesus kept the Law in every minute detail (Matt5:17-18; Heb4:15; 1Pet1:19).

- [25] Why does "Peter" enlist John to ask, "Lord, who is it"? Was it merely because John was nearest to Jesus, and could presumably speak to Him privately, or was it because of the more intimate relationship John had with Jesus? Both are seemingly true.
- [26] Jesus answers the question by giving the "sop" to "Judas Iscariot"; note the specificity in the identification, since there was another apostle also named "Judas" (see Jn14:22; also called Thaddaeus; cf. Matt10:3; Mk3:18). For the host to offer a guest the "sop" was an expression of friendship/fellowship (Cp., Ps41:9).
- [27] By directly confronting Judas as His betrayer, Jesus forced his hand; Judas could no longer remain among the disciples. At this point, Judas was personally possessed by "Satan" himself⁴⁷. Since the precise fulfillment of Daniel 9:25 had already occurred three days before (Jn12:12-15), there was now no reason to delay the events that would lead to Jesus' crucifixion; in fact, there is now an urgency to accelerate those events, since in order to fulfill the type of the Passover Lamb (Jn1:29; 1Cor5:7; cf. Matt27:15-26; Jn19:14-15), Jesus' crucifixion must occur on the day that follows (despite the strong desire of the Jewish leadership that it not occur on the "feast day"; cf. Matt26:5; Mk14:2). Thus Jesus commands, "What thou doest, do quickly".
- [28] Apparently not all the disciples heard/understood Jesus' identification of Judas as His betrayer.
- [29] The disciples were not alarmed by the sudden departure of Judas; since "Judas had the bag", they assumed Jesus sent him out for some legitimate purpose.
- [30] At this point Judas departs, such that Jesus' so-called Upper Room Discourse (John 14-17), His revelation of the dispensational changes that will come following His death, resurrection, and ascension, will be spoken only to the eleven believing disciples.
- [31] Here, "now" corresponds to "his hour was come" (v1). Jesus' determination to submit to the will of the Father brings glory to Himself as "the Son of man" and "God" the Father (cf. Luk22:42).
- [32] In submitting to His death by crucifixion, Jesus is trusting "God" to "glorify" Him by resurrection (cf. Philip2:8-11).
- [33] Jesus speaks of His death, resurrection, and ascension, which will happen in "a little while" (i.e., the next day). Knowing this is His final night with the disciples, He prepares to deliver His most important teaching to them (i.e., the Upper Room Discourse). In addressing His disciples as "little children" (a term of endearment that becomes a favorite of the Apostle John himself (Cp., 1Jn2:1,12,28; 3:7,18; 4:4; 5:21), Jesus recognizes they are not adequately prepared to face the world without Him.

⁴⁷ Though demon possession occurs often in Scripture, especially in the Gospels, only Judas and the future Antichrist are said to be personally indwelt by Satan (Rev13:4); likewise, only Judas and the Antichrist are called "the son of perdition" (cf. Jn17:12; 2Thess2:3). Some have mistakenly interpreted these associations to mean the Antichrist will in some way be Judas reincarnated; that cannot be the case since the Antichrist will be a Gentile (Dan9:26).

- [34] The Law of Moses already required the Jews to "love thy neighbor **as thyself**" (Lev19:18; cf. Matt22:39; Mk12:31; Luk10:27). What was "new" about Jesus' "commandment" was the standard: "**as I have loved you**, that ye also love one another". Although the Law was a standard of righteousness, it was an insufficient standard (Matt5:20; Rom3:20; Gal2:16); the ultimate standard of righteousness is God Himself (Matt5:48). Here, the Person of Jesus and that of God the Father are implicitly assumed to be an equivalent standard; "God is love" (1Jn4:8,16).
- [35] The "love one to another" among Christians will be their distinguishing characteristic (Cp., 1Cor13:1-13; 1Jn2:8-11).
- [36] Jesus speaks of His upcoming death, resurrection, and ascension as "go[ing]" to His Father (i.e., heaven), but the disciples do not understand this to be a euphemism. Whereas the time of the disciples' deaths is not "now", they will "follow" Jesus to heaven "afterwards".
- [37] "Peter" professes to be willing to "lay down my life for thy sake". Whereas some believers will be called to die for the cause of Christ (Rev2:13), more often Jesus desires that we live for Him (Rom12:1-2).
- [38] However, Peter's profession of faithfulness to Christ (v37) will prove to be empty (Cp., Jn18:17,25,27).

CHAPTER 14

JESUS COMFORTS HIS DISCIPLES

The disciples had lived with Jesus for the past three years. Having learned that Jesus was soon going away and that they would not be able to follow Him (i.e., a euphemism for His death; Jn13:33,36), they were distraught. Jesus comforts them with the promise of His return for them (i.e., an allusion to the mystery of the Rapture).

- [1] Jesus prepares to reveal a mystery (Cp., 1Cor15:51) to His disciples intended to "comfort" (cf. 1Thess4:18) their "troubled" hearts. He prefaces the revelation with an exhortation for the disciples to "believe" in Him in the same way that they "believe in God" (i.e., as the one who can perfectly reveal the prophetic future; cf. Isa41:21-23; 46:9-11).
- [2] The "Father's house" in some cases is a reference to the temple (Jn2:15-16); in this case, however, Jesus alludes to the residence of God in the New Jerusalem (cf. Rev21:2-3). In Jewish wedding imagery, the "mansions" likely refer to the addition to his father's house that a groom "prepare[s]" in advance to be a home for himself and his bride. Here, Jesus addresses the apostles as representatives of the future Church (cf. Matt16:18; Eph2:20), which will be the bride of Christ (cf. 2Cor11:2; Eph5:22-32).

Mansions, Rooms, or Dwelling Places? The KJV and NKJV translate the Greek word **μοναί** as "mansions", whereas modern translations render it as "rooms" or "dwelling places". The word literally means "abode" and is translated as such in John 14:23. However, the most

appropriate translation always depends upon context. In John 14:2, the context is the "Father's house". If the "Father's house" was a single building, "rooms" might be an appropriate translation. However, the "Father's house" is "the holy city, new Jerusalem" (Rev21:2), where personal residences are better understood to be independent structures inside the walls of the city (Cp., Isa65:21). Furthermore, as the believer's existence in the age to come is consistently portrayed as surpassing in extravagance anything imaginable in this present world (cf. Isa64:4; 2Cor2:9), "mansions" is the most appropriate translation.

- [3] Jesus' promise to His disciples, which here represent the Church as the Bride of Christ (cf. v2), is to "come again" to "receive" them and take them to be "where I am" (i.e., heaven). This is the promise of the Rapture of the Church⁴⁸. A comparison of John 14:1-3 with Paul's description of the Rapture (1Thess4:13-18) reveals a perfect one-to-one correspondence.

Points of Correspondence in Rapture Passages

John 14:1-3	1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
v1 "troubled"	v13 "sorrow"
v1 "believe"	v14 "believe"
v1 "God", "me"	v14 "Jesus", "God"
v2 "told you"	v15 "say unto you"
v3 "come again"	v15 "coming of the Lord"
v3 "receive you"	v17 "caught up"
v3 "unto myself"	v17 "to meet the Lord"
v3 "where I am, there ye may be"	v17 "ever be with the Lord"

- [4] The disciples should "know" where Jesus is going because He had told them, and they should also know "the way" (Cp., 11:25-26).
- [5] Ever doubtful (Cp., Jn20:24-25), "Thomas" professes ignorance.
- [6] Jesus declares, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (the 6th of Christ's 7 metaphorical "I am" statements). The "way" of salvation is trusting a Person, Jesus Christ, who is both "truth" and "life"; He is "truth" in the sense that He is the standard against which every proposition is evaluated (Cp., Jn17:17), and He is the source of both physical and spiritual "life" (Cp., Jn5:21,25). In that the definite article (i.e., "the") is used with all three substantives, the assertion is that Jesus is the only "way" (not one way among many possible ways; Cp., Matt7:13-14; Act4:12), the only "truth" (i.e., absolute truth; Cp., Isa8:20; 65:16), and the only source of "life". The exclusivity of Jesus' claim is reinforced by His assertion that "no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Cp., 1Jn2:23).

⁴⁸ For many reasons, the Rapture of the Church is an event distinct from the second coming. At the second coming, Christ descends from heaven to establish His kingdom on the earth for a thousand years (cf. Rev19:11-16; 20:1-6). Here, Jesus promises to take His disciples from the earth to return with Him to heaven. Logically, it must be inferred that these events are not the same.

EQUALITY WITH THE FATHER

- [7] Beginning with "If", Jesus seems to be rebuking His disciples for their failure to acknowledge His equality with the "Father" (cf. Jn5:17-29); Jesus prophesies that "henceforth" (i.e., in the future) the disciples will finally understand and affirm this divine relationship (e.g., Jn20:28).
- [8] Moses asked to see God's glory (cf. Exod33:18-23). The universal desire of man is to 'see God', which in its perverted form always results in pagan idolatry.
- [9] Jesus asserts that to have "seen me" is to have "seen the Father" (cf. Jn1:18; 12:45; Coll:15; Heb1:3); this was an assertion of deity by Jesus, which if untrue would have been blasphemy.
- [10] In the incarnation of Christ, the "Father" was "in" Jesus (cf. Col2:9). At His first coming, Jesus lived as a mere man (i.e., the "last Adam"; 1Cor15:45); thus, the miraculous "works" associated with His ministry were performed through Him by "the Father" and/or the Holy Spirit (cf. Matt12:24,31-32).
- [11] This divine relationship between Jesus and His "Father" should be "believe[d]" by Jesus' disciples, if not by Jesus' testimony alone, then by the supernatural "works" that have validated His testimony (cf. Jn5:36).
- [12] The "greater works" that those who "believeth on [Jesus]" will "do" should be understood as "greater" in quantity, not greater in quality. Jesus' earthly ministry lasted a mere three years, whereas the power of God manifested through the Body of Christ (i.e., the Church) has gone on for almost two millennia.

PRAYER IN JESUS' NAME

- [13] Jesus previously taught that prayer was properly addressed to "the Father" (Matt6:9). Now, He adds that prayer be made "in my name". This specific phrase is not given as a ritualistic or magical formula; rather, prayer is to be offered as Christ's "ambassadors" (2Cor5:20) in the course of representing Him on the earth.
- [14] John clarifies this promise in 1 John 5:14-15. Petitions made "in [Jesus'] name" and "according to his will" shall be answered. James explains that often our prayers are not answered because we "ask amiss, that [we] may consume it upon [our] lusts" (Js4:3).

PROMISE OF THE INDWELLING SPIRIT

- [15] Under the Mosaic covenant, Israel's keeping of the Law of Moses was motivated by promised "blessings" and threatened "cursings" (cf. Lev26:1-46; Deut28:1-68). The keeping of Christ's "commandments" are motivated by a believer's "love" for Him (Cp., Eph4:32).
- [16] Since He is going away, Jesus promises to give His disciples "another Comforter" (i.e., the Holy Spirit; v26). Unlike Jesus, this "Comforter" will not go away, but will "abide with you forever".

This signals a new ministry of the Holy Spirit during the Dispensation of Grace. Whereas the Holy Spirit came and went under previous dispensations (cf. 1Sam16:13-14; Ps51:11), believers during the Church Age will experience the **permanent** presence of the Holy Spirit.

- [17] Here, the Holy Spirit is called "the Spirit of truth", in that "he will guide you into all truth" (Jn16:13). Yet another dispensational change in the Spirit's ministry is that whereas He was formerly "with" believers, He will be "in" believers. Thus, during the Church Age, believers will experience the permanent and personal **indwelling** of the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph1:13-14).
- [18] Here, there is some ambiguity in Jesus' promise, "I will come to you". Does it refer to the previously revealed rapture (cf. vv1-3)? In the context of His concern to "not leave you comfortless", it is likely a reference to the coming of the Holy Spirit in His new ministry of permanently indwelling the believer, which will begin on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2).
- [19] Here, "live" refers to eternal life. The resurrection of Jesus assures our own resurrection (cf. 1Cor15:20-23).
- [20] "At that day" is also somewhat ambiguous. It could mean the day of Christ's resurrection (v19), although in context it is likely a reference to the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). The coming ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit will reveal to the believer his mystical union with Christ (cf. 1Cor1:30; 2Cor5:17; Eph2:6; Col1:27) effected by spirit baptism into the body of Christ (cf. 1Cor12:12-13,27; Eph1:22-23; Col1:24).
- [21] Again (cf. v15), it will be "love" for Christ that motivates the believer to "keep" His "commandments". These are not the "commandments" of the Law of Moses, but those given by Christ and His apostles. Jesus and the Father "love" those who "loveth" Him, but the promise of Jesus to "manifest" Himself is to those who walk in obedience to Him.
- [22] This "Judas" is Thaddeus (cf. Mk3:18). His question is good, which is how will Christ's promised manifestation (v21) to the believer, but "not unto the world", occur?
- [23] This manifestation will result in the indwelling of not only the Holy Spirit in the believer, but the entire triune Godhead, including the "Father" and the Son.
- [24] Keeping the commandments of Christ is not a requirement for salvation (cf. Eph2:8-9). However, the believer expresses his "love" for Christ by obedience to Him. The one who "keepeth not my sayings" does not love Christ (Cp., Deut6:5-6; 1Jn2:3-6).
- [25] What Jesus revealed to His disciples when He was "present" with them was only part of what they needed to know (Cp., Jn16:12).
- [26] The "Father" will send the "Holy Spirit" ("in [Jesus'] name") on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). He will both bring to "remembrance" the things Jesus "said" while He was with the disciples (v25) and "teach you all things". This signals the Spirit's coming ministry of

inspiring the words of the N.T. (cf. 2Pet1:20-21). Further, the Spirit's ministry of illumination will enable believers to understand the words of Scripture (cf. 1Cor2:9-14).

PROMISE OF PEACE

- [27] Jesus promised His disciples "peace", which should dispel all "trouble" and fear from the "heart" of a believer. "Peace" comes from knowing Christ will return to rapture His Church (v3), He will answer prayer (v14), and He will provide the Holy Spirit to permanently indwell, comfort, and teach believers (vv16,17,26). This is not "peace" as the "world" understands it, since it is independent of circumstances.
- [28] When Jesus said, "I go away, and come again unto you", He referred to the promise of the rapture (cf. vv1-3). This is the "blessed hope" of the Church (Tit2:13), which should lead believers to "rejoice". Whereas Jesus has repeatedly asserted equality with God "the Father", "the Father is greater than [the Son]" in the sense that there is subordination of role within the Godhead (cf. 1Cor11:3).
- [29] Jesus used prophecy as an apologetic method. The defining, irrefutable attribute of deity is a perfect knowledge of the future (cf. Isa41:22-23; 46:9-11).
- [30] Jesus' time to minister to His disciples has almost ended, since "the prince of this world", by indwelling Judas (Jn13:27), is quickly moving to destroy Him.
- [31] Since it is the "commandment" of "the Father" that Jesus submit to the cross (Matt26:39; Mk14:36; Luk22:42), Jesus does not resist Satan; this would not be victory for Satan, but his own undoing (cf. 1Cor2:6-8).

CHAPTER 15

THE OBLIGATIONS OF DISCIPLESHIP

In John 15, Jesus teaches on the subject of discipleship. He addresses: 1) the relationship of disciples to Jesus (vv1-10), 2) the relationship of disciples to one another (vv11-17), and the relationship of disciples to the world (vv18-27). Relative to these three relationships, the obligation of a disciple is to: 1) abide in Christ, 2) love one another, and 3) bear witness for Christ. Note, the subject of discipleship applies to believers, not unbelievers.

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

The figure of the vine and branches illustrates a new relationship between Jesus and His disciples that will exist in the coming dispensation. In the dispensation of grace (Eph3:2), believers will be baptized into the Body of Christ (1Cor12:13), and their relationship will be characterized as being "in Christ" (cf. Rom8:1; 1Cor1:30; 2Cor5:17). This new relationship will be a subject of greatly expanded revelation in the epistles of the Apostle Paul.

- [1] Jesus declares, "I am the true vine" (the 7th of Christ's 7 metaphorical "I am" statements). In this assertion, Jesus contrasts Himself with the nation of Israel (cf. Ps80:8-9; Isa5:1-7; Jer2:21; Matt21:33-41); the expectation of the "vine" is that it "bear much fruit" (v8), which the nation of Israel had failed to do (cf. Hos10:1; Matt21:18-19; Luk13:6-7). As the "husbandman" (i.e., vinedresser), God the "Father" had provided all the care necessary for Israel to be fruitful (Isa5:4), such that the responsibility for the failure was Israel's, not God's.
- [2] In the coming dispensation (i.e., the Church Age), the vine that God will cultivate will be Christ, and by virtue of being "in me" His growing Body (i.e., the Church; cf. 1Cor12:27; Eph1:22-23; Col1:24). Branches that are not fruitful will be "take[n] away", since they are not fulfilling their purpose of bearing fruit (Cp., Eph2:10); branches that bear fruit will be "purge[d]" (i.e., pruned), so they will bear even "more fruit".

The subject in John 15:1-10 is not salvation, but **fruitfulness**. Both the unfruitful and fruitful branches are "in [Christ]". The removal of unfruitful branches should not be taken to mean loss of personal salvation for a believer, since members of the Body of Christ are sealed against such loss (cf. 2Cor1:22; Eph1:13-14; 4:30); rather, it should be understood as divine discipline, up to and including physical death (Cp., 1Cor5:5; 11:30; 1Tim1:20; 1Jn5:16). Fruitful believers can be made even more fruitful by the elimination of sins and unproductive behaviors (Cp., Heb12:1).

Note on Calvinism. Calvinism does not acknowledge the existence of a "carnal" Christian (i.e., a believer who bears no fruit; cf. 1Cor3:1-3). However unfortunate, Scripture asserts that this is a possibility (cf. 1Cor3:15); for the Christian, the loss of rewards is possible, but not the loss of salvation.

- [3] The eleven remaining disciples were "clean" (Jn13:10); thus, they were properly cultivated and expected to bear fruit. The cleaning process was effected "through the word" (cf. Ps119:9; Eph5:26; 2Tim3:15-17).
- [4] To "bear fruit", the believer must "abide in [Christ]"⁴⁹, which is a moment-by-moment yielding to God/Christ/Holy Spirit (cf. Rom6:11-16; 12:1-2; Eph5:18).
- [5] The power to "bear fruit" resides in the "vine" (i.e., Christ), not the "branch" (i.e., believer), just as the power of faith resides in its object (Cp., Jn14:12).
- [6] As a "branch" removed from the vine "wither[s]", so a believer who fails to "abide" in Christ cannot grow. In the agricultural metaphor, separated branches serve no purpose and are "cast into the fire" and "burned"; believers do not bear fruit will forfeit positions of service and become objects of divine discipline in this life, and they will suffer "loss" at the "judgment seat of Christ"

⁴⁹ Salvation is conditioned upon believing in Christ (Jn3:16; 6:40; Act16:30-31), whereas fruit-bearing is conditioned upon abiding in Christ (Jn15:4).

(which is described as a trial by "fire" in which unfruitful works are "burned"; cf. 1Cor3:11-15; 2Cor5:10).

- [7] The believer who is "abid[ing] in [Christ]" can have confidence that his prayers will be answered (see discussion at Jn14:14).
- [8] The chief purpose of believers, who are "disciples" of Christ, is to glorify God the "Father" (1Cor6:20); God is glorified when believers "bear much fruit".
- [9] Jesus "love[s]" His disciples (v8) even as "the Father hath loved [Christ]" (Cp., Jn3:35; 5:20). Here, "continue" is the same Greek word that has been translated "abide" (vv4-7; Cp., v10).
- [10] To "[continue]/abide in [Jesus'] love" includes keeping His "commandments" (Cp., Jude21). The illustration of this is Jesus' relationship with His "Father".

LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER AND FRIENDSHIP WITH CHRIST

Jesus give His disciples a new "commandment" (John 15:12), and the relationship of the disciples to Christ changes from that of "servants" to "friends" (Jn15:13).

- [11] Jesus' revelation to His disciples of the coming dispensational changes were intended to impart His own "joy" to them in "full" (cf. 1Jn1:4).
- [12] This is a reiteration of the "new commandment" (see comments on Jn13:34).
- [13] The greatest demonstration of a man's love for his "friends" is to "lay down his life" for them (cf. Rom5:8; 1Jn3:16).

Note on Calvinism. Calvinists see in this verse support for their doctrine of Limited Atonement; namely, that Christ will die **only** for His "friends" and not others. However, such an inference commits the logical fallacy of *illegitimate totality transfer*. For example, the Apostle Paul asserted that Christ "loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal2:2), but to infer that Christ **only** loved Paul, and that He **only** gave Himself for Paul, would be a logical fallacy.

- [14] This is the first time Jesus has call His disciples "friends". Friendship with Christ (i.e., discipleship) is conditioned upon obedience to Him.
- [15] The change in relationship of the disciples with Christ, from "servants" to "friends", comes with profound privilege. A "servant knoweth not what his lord doeth", but the Lord reveals His future plans to His "friends" (cf. Jn16:13). This principle is illustrated in Abraham, the only person in the O.T. to be called the "friend of God" (cf. 2Chron20:7; Isa41:8; Jas2:23), to whom God revealed His future plans for Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. Gen18:17ff).
- [16] These eleven disciples/apostles had been "chosen" and "ordained" by Christ, which was the opposite of the traditional process in which disciples chose their rabbi. While these eleven were certainly

saved, Christ's choice of them had to do with their purpose in fruit-bearing, not their salvation (note that elsewhere Judas was also said to have been "chosen"; Jn6:70-71). The "fruit" that the apostles would "bring forth" in the coming dispensation would be the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ (cf. 1Cor3:10; Eph2:20; 1Tim3:15), and that "fruit" would "remain" (cf. Matt16:18); in that commission (Matt28:18-20; Mk16:15-18; Act1:8), the apostles were assured that their prayers "in [Christ's] name" would be answered by "the Father".

Note on Calvinism. Calvinist frequently commit the error of eisegesis, reading their view of election (i.e., God's unconditional choice of particular individuals for salvation) into every use of the terms "elect" or "chosen", regardless of context.

- [17] Jesus reiterates the priority to "love one another" (cf. 1Cor13:1-3,13; 1Jn4:20-21).

BELIEVERS AND THE WORLD

James said, "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (Jas4:4). The relationship of Christ's disciples to the world will be one of hostility, even hatred. Nevertheless, the disciples' obligation is to "bear witness" (Jn15:27) of Christ.

- [18] The "world" hated Christ; therefore, it will hate His disciples. This should be the expectation of Christ's disciples (1Jn3:13).
- [19] The "world" hates disciples of Christ for four reasons (vv19-22). First, they are no longer part of the "world" system; they no longer think the way the "world" thinks, or value what the "world" values (cf. Rom12:2; 1Cor2:14-16; 2Cor10:4-5). Though they remain in the world (Jn17:15), they are not "of the world".
- [20] Second, since the supreme object of the world's hatred (i.e., Christ Himself) is no longer in the world, the world's hatred will be directed toward His disciples. The "servant" should expect the same reception as "his lord".
- [21] Third, the world will hate the disciples of Christ because "they know not him that sent me" (i.e., God the Father; cf. 1Jn2:22-23).
- [22] Fourth, the coming of Christ and His subsequent sending of the Holy Spirit "reprove[s] the world of sin" (Jn16:8; Cp., Act17:30-31); disciples of Christ living according to the divine standard He revealed will also convict the world of "sin", for which they will be hated.
- [23] After the coming of Jesus Christ and His revelation as the Son of God, there can be no moral distinction made between Him and His "Father"; it is not possible to love God the "Father" and hate Jesus Christ His Son (cf. 1Jn2:22-23).
- [24] The "hat[red]" Jesus engendered from the Jews for both Himself and His "Father" was a result of the fact that His "works" exposed their "sin"; that is, the sign-miracles Jesus performed were clear and

undeniable proof of His Messiahship, such that for Israel to fail to receive Him as Messiah was "sin" (not ignorance; Cp., Jn1:10-11).

- [25] Israel's unjustified "hat[red]" of Jesus as Messiah was a fulfillment of prophecy (cf. Ps69:4).
- [26] Jesus promises to "send" the "Comforter" (i.e., Holy Spirit), who will "testify of me"; that is, the supernatural witness to the Messiahship of Jesus will continue after His death under the ministry of the Holy Spirit. This promise is fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (Act2:1-4). He is called the "Spirit of truth" in that He will "guide [believers] into all truth" (Jn16:13), most notably by inspiring the writing of the N.T. scriptures (cf. 2Pet1:19-21).
- [27] In addition to the Holy Spirit (v26), the apostles "shall bear witness" of the Messiahship of Jesus as eye-witnesses of all His sign-miracles "from the beginning" and especially of His resurrection (cf. Act2:32).

CHAPTER 16

THE PROMISE OF PERSECUTION

- [1] Jesus warned His disciples of the persecution that would come upon them because of Him, in order "that ye should not be offended".
- [2] In the beginning, the Jewish apostles and disciples of Christ continued to minister in the "synagogues" (cf. Act6:9; 9:20; 13:5,14-15; 14:1; 18:4), and the Romans considered Christianity to be a sect within Judaism (cf. Act24:5,14-15; 28:22). However, the day would come when they would be "put out of the synagogues" (i.e., excommunicated from Judaism) and even "kill[ed]" by their fellow Jews who believed that by doing so they "doeth God service" (cf. Act7:54-8:1). Of the eleven disciples Jesus addressed here, it is believed that ten died as martyrs (the exception being John).
- [3] The persecution of Christians by the Jews was not the service of God (v2), but because "they have not known the Father, nor me" (Cp., 1Jn2:23; 4:20). Jews (then and now) who continue in the religion of Judaism, while rejecting Jesus as Messiah, are unbelievers.
- [4] Jesus did not tell His disciples of the persecution that would come on them "at the beginning", because He was with them. But, after His death, by "remember[ing]" this prophecy their faith in Jesus as the Son of God would be strengthened (cf. Isa41:22-23; 42:9; 46:9-11).
- [5] Despite Jesus repeatedly instructing His disciples that He was going away, none asked, "Where goest thou?" (Cp., Jn14:5). Had they understood Jesus was returning to His Father, they should have rejoiced for Him.
- [6] However, their preoccupation was with their own "sorrow" over Jesus' departure (cf. Jn14:1-3).

THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The most significant dispensational change that will come following the death of Christ will be the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer (cf. Act1:5; 2:4; 1Cor6:19; Gal5:16; Eph5:18).

- [7] Jesus tells His disciples that it is "expedient" (i.e., good) for them that He "go away", since He is only able to "send" the "Comforter" (i.e., the Holy Spirit) to them as a glorified Man from heaven (cf. Matt28:18; Jn7:39; Eph1:20-21). For the disciples, having the "Comforter" with them is even better than the physical presence of Jesus among them; this was because Jesus lived among them as a mere man, relying Himself on the power of the Holy Spirit, which He will make available to them (Act1:8).
- [8] The ministry of the Holy Spirit relative to "the world" will be three-fold, to "reprove" them of: 1) "sin", 2) "righteousness", and 3) "judgment".
- [9] The Holy Spirit will reprove the world of the "sin" of not "believ[ing]" on Jesus as Lord and Christ (cf. Jn3:18; Act2:36; 4:12; Rom10:9).
- [10] The Holy Spirit will reprove the world of "righteousness" (i.e., that Jesus is the very "righteousness" of God, which is required of every man and imputed by faith alone; cf. Matt5:38; Rom1:16-17; 3:10-12; Philip3:9).
- [11] The Holy Spirit will reprove the world of "judgment, because the prince of this world is judged". Satan has lost his appeal with God (cf. Job1:8-12; Rev12:10), so those who ally themselves with him will be judged with him (cf. Matt25:41; Rev20:7-9).
- [12] Jesus did not tell to His disciples all they would need to know concerning the coming dispensation, because "ye cannot bear them now", but He prophesies and in effect pre-authenticates the N.T. scriptures to come which would complete that revelation (cf. Rev1:1).
- [13] When "the Spirit of truth" (i.e., the Holy Spirit; Jn15:26) comes on the day of Pentecost, "he will guide you into all truth" by means of inspiring the writing of the N.T. scriptures (2Pet1:19-21) and illuminating believers to understand them (1Cor2:9-13; 1Jn2:27). As the Son came, not to do His own will, but that of the Father (Jn6:38), so words that the "Spirit" inspires will not be those "of himself", but those intended by the Father. The N.T. will include prophetic revelation as a means of self-authentication (cf. Isa41:22-23; 42:9; 46:9-11).
- [14] The ministry of the Holy Spirit in the coming dispensation will be to "glorify" the Son. Modern movements within Christendom that magnify the Person and work of the Holy Spirit above that of the Son are not from God.
- [15] Here, Jesus anticipates His inheritance of "all things" from "the Father" that will occur following His resurrection as a glorified Man (cf. Matt28:18; Jn3:35; 13:3; Rom8:32).

JESUS PROPHECIES HIS DEATH, RESURRECTION, AND ASCENSION

- [16] Here Jesus gives an implicit prophecy of not only His soon death, in "a little while" (i.e., on the next day), but also His resurrection (i.e., "ye shall see me again") that would also occur in "a little while" (i.e., 3 days). By saying "I go to the Father", He prophesies His ascension to heaven and distinguishes His death from all those before Him; the risen and glorified Jesus will be the first Man to enter heaven.
- [19] Jesus recognizes that the disciples do not understand the meaning of His words concerning His death, resurrection, and ascension.
- [20] The disciples will "weep and lament" over Jesus' death, even as "the world shall rejoice" (Cp., Rev11:7-10). However, their "sorrow shall be turned to joy" at the resurrection.
- [21] Just as a woman's "anguish" in childbirth is forgotten after the birth of her child, so...
- [22] The disciples' "sorrow" brought about by the suffering and death of Jesus will be "remember[ed] no more" for the "joy" of seeing Him alive again (Cp., 2Cor4:17); seeing their resurrected Lord will be a "joy [that] no man [can] take from" them.
- [23] Here, "in that day" is a reference to the ascension of Christ. After Jesus finally departs from them, their prayers will be directed to "the Father in [Jesus'] name".
- [24] "Hitherto" Jewish prayers had been addressed to God the Father (cf. Matt6:9). After the completed work of Christ, prayers to God the Father will be offered "in [Jesus'] name". This new approach in prayer anticipates the coming dispensational change in which believers as members of the Body of Christ are in union with Him (cf. 1Cor12:27; 2Cor5:17; Eph2:6; Col3:1).
- [25] Much of Jesus teaching during His earthly ministry was intentionally cryptic and often offered in "proverbs" (or parables; Matt13:10). His reference to "the time cometh" when He "shall show you plainly of the Father" prophesies the coming of the N.T. scriptures (Cp., 2Pet1:19-21).
- [26] Again, "at that day" is a reference to the ascension of Christ (v23). Christ's ministry in heaven will be one of intercession with "the Father" on behalf of believers (cf. Rom8:34; Heb7:25; 1Jn2:1).
- [27] Here, the love of "the Father" for the disciples of Jesus is tied to their love for Him, and their acceptance of Him as the one who "came out from God" (i.e., Messiah). This describes an intimate relationship believers have with God "the Father" (cf. Rom5:1-2) that goes beyond His love for the world (Jn3:16).
- [28] Jesus was the only one who "came forth from the Father" (i.e., heaven), and He will be the first Man to "go to the Father" (i.e., heaven) when He "leave[s] the world" (cf. Jn3:13).
- [30] The disciples now confess they understand Jesus' teaching, because they believe Him to be speaking "plainly" and not by "proverb" (v29).

- [31] Jesus' question suggests the disciples do not properly understand His words.
- [32] The fact that the disciples have not properly understood Jesus' teaching in advance concerning His upcoming death, resurrection, and ascension will be evidenced by their behavior following His arrest, trial, and crucifixion; the disciples will be "scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave [Jesus] alone". Yet, Jesus will not be "alone, because the Father is with [Him]", until the final moments on the cross (cf. Matt27:46: Mk15:34).
- [33] For a disciple of Christ, "peace" will be found only "in [Him]" (Cp., Rom5:1; Eph2:14). Jesus makes clear that His disciples should expect the world to hate them (Jn15:19) and that they should suffer "tribulation" (Cp., 2Tim3:12); isolated places or brief periods of time when that is not the case will be the exception rather than the rule. However, the believer's hope is in Christ's promise that, "I have overcome the world" (cf. Rom8:37; 2Cor2:14; 1Jn5:4-5; Rev3:21), to be realized at His return (cf. Rev19:11-16).

CHAPTER 17

CHRIST'S INTERCESSORY PRAYER AS HIGH PRIEST

Having concluded His time of teaching the apostles about the dispensational changes that will come following His death, resurrection, and ascension (Jn13-16), Jesus prayed. He prays for: 1) Himself (vv1-5), 2) His apostles (vv6-19), and 3) all believers (vv20-26). Christ's intercessory prayer begins in earnest His work as High Priest, which will culminate in His substitutionary sacrifice at Calvary (cf. Heb5:5-10).

JESUS PRAYS FOR HIMSELF

- [1] When Jesus prayed, He "lifted up his eyes to heaven" and addressed His prayer to the "Father" (Cp., Matt6:9). In Scripture, the posture assumed during prayer includes standing, kneeling, and prostrating oneself face down; however, it is never recorded that one's eyes are closed. By "the hour is come" is meant the appointed time of His death (cf. Dan9:26). In submitting to the will of His "Father" (Matt26:39), Jesus will "glorify" Him; this serves as an example for all believers (Cp., 1Cor6:19-20).
- [2] Jesus' request for His own "glorif[ication]" (v1) will result in Him being given "power over all flesh" following His resurrection (cf. Ps2:8; Joel2:28; Matt28:18), including the power to "give eternal life". Here, those "given him" should be understood as all who will be incorporated into the Body of Christ (cf. Eph1:4-6).
- [3] Beginning in the new dispensation, access to "life eternal" will come by knowing both the Father and the Son (cf. 1Jn2:23). Note that Jesus speaks of Himself as "Christ" (i.e., Messiah; cf. Jn4:25-26).
- [4] Jesus "glorified [the Father]" in His earthly ministry by "finish[ing] the work [God] gave [Him] to do".

- [5] Before His incarnation, Jesus shared the same "glory" as the Father in heaven (Jn1:1-2). His divine "glory" was veiled during His ministry on earth as a mortal man (cf. Philip2:6-8), although some of the apostles received a glimpse of it on the mount of transfiguration (cf. Mk9:2-3). In the resurrection, Jesus Christ as the God-Man will receive the "glory" He deserves (cf. Philip2:9-11).

JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS APOSTLES

- [6] Here, the use of the Father's "name" is a Hebrew idiom denoting His whole Person. In His incarnation, Jesus "manifested" God the Father to "the men whom [the Father] gavest [Jesus] out of the world" (i.e., the apostles; Cp., Jn1:18; 14:8-9). Jesus' commendation of His apostles was that "they have kept thy word" (Cp., Rev3:8,10).
- [7] To receive Jesus as Messiah was to "know" that He was truly sent by God (v3,8).
- [8] The apostles "received ... the words" Jesus gave to them. These "words" were recorded by the apostles as the N.T. scriptures (cf. Jn14:26; 2Tim3:16; 2Pet1:19-21).
- [9] At this particular moment, Jesus prayed "for them whom thou hast given me", meaning His apostles (v6).

Note on Calvinism. Calvinists teach that when Jesus said, "I pray not for the world", He did so because His sacrifice was not offered for (their conception of) the non-elect; thus, neither His sacrificial death nor His intercessory prayer were offered on behalf of the non-elect, but the elect only. This is consistent with Calvinism's doctrine of Limited Atonement. However, such an understanding reads far too much into the text of John 17:9. Jesus' statement does nothing more than indicate that at this point in His prayer, He prayed specifically for His apostles, not others.

- [10] This is an expression of the unity and equality of the Father and the Son. As the Father was glorified by His Son's obedience (v4), so the Son will be "glorified" by the obedience of His apostles⁵⁰.
- [11] Looking ahead to His death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven to take His place at the Father's right hand (i.e., "I come to thee"; cf. Mk16:19; 1Pet3:22), Jesus petitions His "Holy Father" for the preservation and unity of the apostles. Note, it is the obligation of God the "Father", in response to Jesus' prayer, to "keep" all those who have been born again (cf. Jn10:29; 1Pet1:3-5); this is consistent with the doctrine of Eternal Security (cf. Eph1:13-14).
- [12] Jesus assumed the obligation of keeping the apostles "while [He] was with them in the world" (Cp., Jn18:8). The only apostle that was "lost" was Judas, "that the scripture might be fulfilled" (cf. Ps41:9; 55:12-14; Act2:23). Here, "lost" should not be understood to mean that Judas was a believer who "lost" his salvation, but an apostle who "lost" his apostleship (cf. Act1:15-20); Judas was a "devil" from the beginning (Jn6:70-71). Jesus refers to Judas as

⁵⁰ Excepting John (cf. Jn21:22), all of the believing apostles died as martyrs in obedience to Christ.

"the son of perdition" (i.e., destruction), a title Scripture uses only of Judas Iscariot and the Antichrist (2Thess2:3).

- [13] Jesus prayed that His apostles might share in the "[full] joy" He would experience in returning to His Father, and that His resurrection was a guarantee of their own (cf. Jn14:1-3; 1Cor15:20-23,51-57).
- [14] In saying, "I have given them thy word", Jesus' implication was that God's "word" is **sufficient** (2Tim3:16-17). The "world ... hated" the apostles because they accepted the "word" of God alone as truth (cf. v17; Rom12:2; 2Cor10:5; Col2:8).
- [15] Jesus did not pray that His apostles would be removed from the "world", but that the Father would "keep" them while they remained in the "world" (Cp., 1Pet1:5). While in the "world", their principal enemy would be "the evil [one]" (i.e., the devil; Eph6:11); that is, their war was to be waged not against men, but against "spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph6:12; Cp., 2Cor10:5).
- [16] Though remaining in "the world", the apostles and all those who have been born again are no longer "of [this] world". That is, they are by nature a "new creation" (2Cor5:17) whose "citizenship is in heaven" (Philip3:20), but who remain in this world as "ambassadors for Christ" (2Cor5:20).
- [17] While the Holy Spirit has a role in "sanctify[ing]" the believer, He never works apart from "[God's] word" (1Cor2:13-14; Cp., Prov1:23; Eph5:18; Col3:16). The primary means of "sanctif[ication]" is "[God's] word" (i.e., Scripture). Here, God's "word" is asserted to be "truth". This assertion is infinitely more than the claim that God's "word" is true (Ps119:160); God's "word is truth" in the sense that it is the standard of "truth", against which all other propositions are to be measured (cf. Isa8:20; 2Tim3:16-17). **Only that which is consistent with Scripture can be true; nothing inconsistent with Scripture can be true** (cf. Ps36:9; Rom12:2; 2Cor10:5).

Education and the Bible. Because "[God's] word is truth" (Jn17:17), and nothing inconsistent with Scripture can be true, any program of education (on any/every subject) undertaken apart from the revelation of God preserved in the Bible is incomplete at best, and perverted at worst. "The Bible is authoritative on everything of which it speaks. Moreover, it speaks of everything" (Cornelius Van Til). "Education is useless without the Bible" (Noah Webster).

- [18] During His earthly ministry, Jesus was sent only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt15:24), and He sent His disciples "not into the way of the Gentiles" but only "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt10:5-6). However, after His resurrection, Jesus "sent" His apostles "into all the world" (Mk16:15) to "teach all nations" (Matt28:19).
- [19] Jesus' claim that "I sanctify myself" relates to His death; He had dedicated Himself to that fore-ordained end (cf. Luk22:37; Act2:23). But this end was "for their sakes" (i.e., the apostles), since by means of Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension the Holy Spirit

would be sent (Jn15:26) to "sanctify" them by guiding them into all "truth" (Jn16:13).

JESUS PRAYS FOR ALL BELIEVERS

- [20] At this point, Jesus shifts from praying "for these alone" (i.e., His apostles) to praying for "them also who shall believe on me through their word" (i.e., all believers). The "[apostles'] word" includes more than their personal preaching during their human lifetimes, but also the N.T. scriptures they penned which "endureth forever" (1Pet1:25).
- [21] Jesus' prayer for all believers (v20) was that they would manifest the same unity among themselves as existed between the "Father" and the Son. Such unity among believers would be the preeminent characteristic by which "the world" recognizes their divine authority. In this prayer, Jesus foresees the coming dispensation in which He will build His "church" (cf. Matt16:18), the Body of Christ (cf. Eph1:22-23), which will be in spiritual and organic union both with Himself and each other (cf. 1Cor12:12-13,27; Col1:27).
- [22] The ultimate destiny of the Body of Christ is to experience the same "glory" as Christ Himself (cf. Rom8:29; 1Cor15:35-49; 1Jn3:2).
- [23] The testimony of the Body of Christ to "the world", both that God "sent" the Son in the Person of Jesus Christ and that God "hast loved" both Christ and His Body, is to be the unity of the Body. When the Church fails to manifest such unity, it obscures its testimony to "the world".
- [24] This petition of Jesus, "I will", for the Body of Christ, which is sure to be answered, is that: 1) they would "be with me where I am" (fulfilled at the Rapture; cf. Jn14:3; 1Thess5:17), and 2) "they may behold my glory", a "glory" in which His Body will share (cf. Col3:4; 1Jn3:2). The "Father" has loved the Son from all eternity (Cp., Jn3:35; 5:20).
- [25] The "world" did not "know" (i.e., recognize who He was) Jesus when He came (Jn1:10), and this continues to be true for the majority of people (cf. Matt7:14). Those who "have known that thou hast sent me" are believers, to whom are given "eternal life" (v3).
- [26] Jesus has "declared" God's "name"⁵¹ (a Hebraism connoting His entire Person; Cp., Jn1:18), which is both a perfect and the final revelation of God to men (cf. Matt21:37; Heb1:1-2). Jesus again foresees the coming dispensation in which: 1) the standard of "love" for believers will be that of God's (cf. Jn13:34; 1Jn4:8,16), and 2) He will indwell the believer (Col1:27; 3:16).

⁵¹ God's "name" is JEHOVAH (Ps83:18). Note that the "name" Jesus means *JEHOVAH is salvation* (cf. Matt1:21).

CHAPTER 18

BETRAYAL AND ARREST OF JESUS

Having "sanctified Himself" for the purpose of vicarious sacrifice (Jn17:19), and recognizing that "his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father" (Jn13:1), Jesus submitted to arrest; by doing so, the events that will quickly lead to His crucifixion were set in motion.

THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

- [1] Though not mentioned in John's Gospel, the "garden" was located on the Mount of Olives and named Gethsemane (Mk14:26,32). Gethsemane means *olive press*.
- [2] Since Gethsemane was a place to which Jesus and His disciples "resorted often", "Judas" expected to find Jesus there.
- [3] The "band" (*spira*, a Latin loan word in the original meaning 1/10th of a legion, ~600) of Roman soldiers assembled to take Jesus was overwhelming in number. The soldiers were under the direction of "the chief priests" (i.e., Sadducees; cf. Act5:17) and "Pharisees", so the two principal sects of Judaism were united in the plot to kill Jesus.
- [4] Jesus does not ask, "Whom seek ye?" (also v7), because He is ignorant of their purpose.
- [5] When Jesus said, "I am" (Greek, **Εγώ εἰμι**; note, *he* is a supplied word in English not present in the Greek text), the Word of God (Jn1:1; Rev19:13) spoke the personal name of God (cf. Exod3:14).
- [6] The personal name of God simply spoken by Jesus, the Word of God, had power to cast His enemies "backward" and to "the ground". Had Jesus not voluntarily submitted to arrest, no band of men of any size would have had the power to take Him (Cp., Jn10:18).
- [8] As the "Good Shepherd", Jesus "giveth his life for the sheep" (Jn10:11), but also instead of His sheep. While Jesus intends to be arrested, He is unwilling for His disciples to be taken.
- [9] In commanding the soldiers to "let these go their way" (v8), Jesus "fulfilled" His promise/prophesy to "lose nothing" His Father had given Him (Jn6:39; 17:12).
- [10] Given the size of a Roman "band" (v3), it is unlikely "Peter" believed he could escape by force; rather, this should be viewed as Peter following through on his commitment to "die" for Jesus (cf. Matt26:35). Both Luke and John record that it was the "right ear" that was "cut off" (Luk22:50), but only John records "Malchus" as the name of "the high priest's servant", consistent with the personal relationship John had with the high priest (cf. v15). Luke records Jesus' healing of Malchus' ear (Luk22:51).
- [11] The "cup" which Jesus has determined to "drink" is His sacrificial death (cf. Matt20:22; 26:39; Mk14:36; Luk22:42).

JESUS BEFORE THE HIGH PRIESTS

Annas (a contraction of Ananias) had been high priest from 6-15 AD, at which time he was deposed by the Roman prefect over Judea. Even after his official service ended, he remained an extremely influential figure in Jewish politics. Since several of his sons, as well as his son-in-law **Caiaphas**, succeeded him as high priest, he was considered the real power behind the priesthood even after his deposition. Caiaphas was high priest at the time of Jesus' trial (32 AD), but the gospels refer to both Annas and Caiaphas as "high priests" (cf. Luk3:2). According to Josephus, it was Annas who originated and administered the practice of money exchange and selling of sacrificial animals in the outer court of the temple; as a consequence, Annas was immensely wealthy. When Jesus drove the money-changers from the temple (cf. Matt21:12; Mk11:15; Luk19:45; Jn2:15), he damaged the lucrative financial enterprise of Annas.

- [13] "Caiaphas" was officially the "high priest", though Jesus was first taken to "Annas".
- [14] "Caiaphas" had unwittingly prophesied "that it was expedient that one man should die for the people" (Jn11:49-50; Cp., Isa53:4-6,8,10-11; Jn1:29).
- [15] Both "Peter" and John (i.e., "another disciple") followed Jesus to the "palace of the high priest". Because of an unexplained personal relationship with the Annas, John was allowed to enter the palace, while Peter remained outside.
- [16] John, "that other disciple", interceded on behalf of "Peter", and he was allowed to enter the palace.
- [17] This was Peter's first denial of Jesus.
- [19] Annas the "high priest" questioned "Jesus" concerning His "disciples" and His "doctrine" (note, "doctrine" is singular; cf. Jn7:16).
- [20] Rather than answer Annas' questions, Jesus pointed out that nothing He "taught" was in "secret", but was taught "openly" in both the "synagogue" and the "temple".
- [21] Here, Jesus insinuated that this trial was not being conducted according to the requirements of the Law of Moses. Before He could be called upon to defend Himself, any charges against Him had to be formally established by the testimony of two or three eyewitnesses (cf. Deut19:15). Since He had taught "openly" in both the "synagogue" and the "temple" (v20), there ought to be ample eyewitnesses available to testify concerning His "doctrine" (v19).
- [22] Jesus was not being disrespectful of the "high priest" by refusing to answer his questions; rather, the "high priest" was demanding Jesus do something that the Law of Moses did not require.
- [23] No "witness" had been produced to testify of any "evil" committed by Jesus; thus, Jesus was not required to defend Himself.

- [24] Frustrated at not being able to lure Jesus into self-incriminating, and embarrassed by having been shown to be acting in violation of the Law of Moses, "Annas" sent Jesus to "Caiaphas, the high priest".
- [25] This was Peter's second denial of Jesus (cf. v17).
- [26] One of the "servants" present was a "kinsman" of Malchus and had been present when Jesus was taken (cf. v10); he attests to "see[ing]" Peter "in the garden with [Jesus]."
- [27] This was Peter's third denial of Jesus (cf. vv17,25); "immediately the cock crew" in fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus (cf. Matt26:34). It was very early in the morning, as the first cock crowing occurred during the 4th watch of the night (3-6 am).

JESUS BEFORE PILATE

- [28] Next, Jesus is sent from Caiaphas the Jewish high priest (v24) to Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea. Since this was the home of a Gentile, the priests "went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be [made ceremonially unclean]", which would have prevented them from eating the special "passover" lamb to be slain the next morning.
- [29] Though very early in the morning, "Pilate" was undoubtedly expecting Jesus to be brought to him since he had authorized the Roman "band" which arrested Him (cf. v3).
- [30] Pilate inquires as to the "accusation" against Jesus (v29); the Jews assert Jesus to be a "malefactor" (i.e., a law breaker), but offer no specific charge (in violation of the Law of Moses).
- [31] Suspecting this was a religious rather than a civil matter, Pilate directed the "Jews" to "judge him according to your law" (i.e., the Law of Moses). However, the "Jews" sought to "put [Jesus] to death", which the Law of Moses prescribed as the judgment for many crimes, but the Romans had revoked the authority of the Sanhedrin to impose the death penalty in **30 AD**.
- [32] This is an example of the providence of God; had Jesus' coming occurred only a few years earlier, His trial would have been conducted under the authority of the Sanhedrin, and He would have been executed as a false prophet by stoning (Cp., Matt26:60-61). However, since Jesus had previously "spoke" concerning the "death he should die" (i.e., crucifixion; Jn3:14; 12:32-33), He had to be executed by the Romans.
- [33] Though not recorded in John's Gospel, when the Jews realized Pilate required an accusation against Jesus of violating Roman law, they accused Him of: 1) "perverting the nation", 2) "forbidding to give tribute to Caesar", and 3) "saying that he himself is Christ, **a king**" (cf. Luk23:2). The first two accusations were patently false (cf. Luk20:25); however, Jesus did claim to be the Christ/Messiah, which Scripture prophesied would be king (cf. Ps2:2,6; Luk1:31-33). This is the context to Pilate's question of Jesus, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" Note, Pilate's inquiry ignored the issue of Jesus' messiahship (a religious matter) and focused solely on the charge

that Jesus was "a king" (i.e., a rival to Caesar, the civil crime of sedition).

- [34] Jesus inquired as to the source of the accusation; was it from Pilate "himself", or did it come from "others" (i.e., did the question come from the perspective of a Roman or a Jew?).
- [35] "Pilate" suspected this was chiefly a religious dispute that he did not understand; "Am I a Jew?" It was extraordinary that the Jews would hand over one of their kinsmen to the Romans for judgment. Pilate's only concern was, "What hast thou done [as a rival to Caesar]?"
- [36] "Jesus answered" Pilate's original question (v33). The statement of Jesus, "My kingdom is not of⁵² this world", is a favorite of Amillennialists, who see in it a denial of a future kingdom on earth. But Jesus' statement about the "kingdom" concerned its source, not its location. Jesus did not deny His "kingdom" would exist on "this world" (i.e., earth), but that it would not come by "world[ly]" means (i.e., His "servants" would not "fight" to establish it). The final clause reinforces this understanding; "but **now** is my kingdom not from hence" (Cp., Act1:6-7). The Greek word translated "now" is **νυν**, which in this context means at *this time*, but is strangely untranslated in many modern versions (e.g., NASB, ESV, CSB). Thus, Pilate should not fear Jesus or His disciples, as they had no intention of inciting a rebellion against Rome.
- [37] "Thou sayest that I am a king" is a Hebrew idiom meaning that what Pilate had said (i.e., "Art thou a king, then") is true. Pilate's question had the idea of, given that you and your servants do not intend to fight for a kingdom (v36), in what sense are you a "king"? "Jesus" clearly acknowledged that he was "born" for the purpose of being "king" (cf. Matt2:2; Luk1:31-33). Though Jesus would not fight for a kingdom at *that time*, He came into "the world" to recruit citizens for His future kingdom; all who affirm "the truth" of Jesus' words will be those citizens.
- [38] Pilate's sarcastic question, "What is truth?", indicates he did not recognize that the man standing before him was "the truth" (Jn14:6) and His words were "the truth" (Jn17:17). Pilate's declaration, "I find in him no fault at all" (see also Jn19:4,6), highlighted Jesus' typological fulfillment of the requirements of the Passover lamb (cf. Exod12:5; Jn1:29; 1Pet1:19).
- [39] Having found "no fault" in Jesus worthy of death, Pilate desired to release Him (Cp., Mk15:10). And yet, also desiring to keep the peace among his Jewish subjects, he hesitated to simply deny their request to judge Jesus (v31). Being clever, Pilate assumed that if he offered the Jews their choice of whom he should release, which was a "custom" observed each "passover", Jesus or Barabbas (a "robber" who had "committed murder" during an attempted "insurrection"⁵³; cf. Mk15:7), they would choose Jesus—thus alleviating the need for him to pass judgment on Jesus.

⁵² The English preposition "of" is a translation of the Greek **εκ**, which generally has the meaning of "out of" or "from".

⁵³ Note, Barabbas was actually guilty of the crime of which Jesus was wrongly accused.

- [40] However, the crowd of Jews chose "Barabbas" for release instead of Jesus (in fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus; cf. Jn5:43). Barabbas is a type of the sinner, deserving of death, who goes free because Jesus receives the judgment he deserved (Rom6:23).

CHAPTER 19

Jesus' trial before Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judea, continues...

- [1] Pilate's "scourg[ing]" of Jesus may have been an attempt to garner the sympathy of people for Him, as Roman scourgings were brutal. Performed using a leather whip with bits of metal, glass, or bone attached to the ends, the number of lashings in a Roman scourging was not limited (as under the Law of Moses; cf. Deut25:3) and often left its victim near death (cf. Isa52:14; 53:5).
- [2] The "crown of thorns" and "purple robe" were intended to mock the claims of Jesus to be both a king and God⁵⁴, respectively. The "thorns" are symbolic of Jesus as a man suffering under the curse of God as a consequence of sin (Gen3:18).
- [3] Ironically, the Romans recognized Jesus' claim to be "King of the Jews" better than the Jews did.
- [4] Pilate appealed to the Jews a second time, implicitly suggesting Jesus might be released, since "I find no fault in him" (Cp., Jn18:38).
- [5] Here, Pilate seemingly mocked the Jews' outrage that Jesus claimed to be God (cf. Jn10:33) by presenting Him as, "Behold the man!" Ironically, this is the precise language used by the Prophet Zechariah to describe the Messiah (cf. Zech6:12).
- [6] Pilate's implicit offer to release Jesus was met by the cry to "crucify" Jesus, led by the "high priests" (i.e., Sadducees). Pilate declares his view that Jesus was innocent a third time (Cp., Jn18:38; 19:4) and refused to "crucify him", suggesting rather that the Jews "crucify him".
- [7] This new accusation of the Jews is that Jesus is guilty of blasphemy under the "law [of Moses]", which carried the death penalty (Lev24:16), "because he made himself the Son of God" (cf. Jn10:36).
- [8] Pilate was "more afraid" as he realized this dispute was purely *religious* (i.e., that the claim to be a king was actually a red herring, the real issue was the claim to be God), and he was utterly unequipped to discern what the proper course of action under Roman law should be.
- [9] Pilate's question, "From where art thou?" (i.e., from earth or heaven), sought to elicit from Jesus information pertaining to the religious nature of His dispute with the Jews. However, "Jesus gave him no answer" in fulfillment of Isaiah 53:7.

⁵⁴ In Roman culture, "purple" attire was reserved for the gods; a purple toga was first worn by Julius Caesar.

- [10] Pilate is astounded at Jesus' refusal to answer, expecting Him to offer some evidence that might convince Pilate to "release" Him. However, Jesus, as the "lamb of God" (Jn1:29), had entirely identified with sinful man (v5; Cp., 2Cor5:21) and was fully committed to submitting to a vicarious death (cf. Isa53:4-6). Jesus offered no defense, because there is no excuse for the sin of humanity (cf. Rom1:20).
- [11] Pilate was deluded in believing he had "power" over Jesus (Cp., Jn10:17-18); any "power" he exercised was "given" from "above" (i.e., God); the crucifixion of Jesus was according to "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Act2:23). Though Pilate authorized the crucifixion of Jesus, the "greater sin⁵⁵" was committed by those who "delivered [Him]" (i.e., the Jews).
- [12] "Pilate sought to release [Jesus]", having found Him to have committed no crime worthy of death under Roman law, but "the Jews" pressed the accusation that He "maketh himself a king" in competition with "Caesar".
- [13] It was the charge that Jesus was a rival to Caesar (v12), rather than His claim to deity (v7), that ultimately compelled Pilate to concede to the execution of Jesus.
- [14] The "sixth hour", reckoning time according to the Romans, was 6 am. This day was the "passover", not the day before the passover. It was called a day of "preparation" because the following day would have been the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was a sabbath (Lev23:5-7; cf. v31). In formally presenting Jesus to the assembled nation of Israel, "Behold, your king!", Pilate used the precise language of the Prophet Zechariah in describing the Messiah (Zech9:9).
- [15] The ultimate obligation of the nation of Israel under the Mosaic covenant was to install the Messiah as King at His coming (cf. Deut17:15; 18:15-19). When the "chief priests", as representatives of the leadership of the nation of Israel, asserted "We have no king but Caesar", it was a catastrophic breach of the Mosaic covenant requiring its ultimate "curse" (i.e., dispersion from the Land; cf. Lev26:32-39; Deut28:63-68).

THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST

- [16] Here, "them" are the "chief priests" (v15); though Roman soldiers carried out the crucifixion of Christ, they acted under the direction of the Jewish leadership.
- [17] Jesus bore His own "cross" (likely only the cross beam) to "Golgotha⁵⁶" (which in "Hebrew" means "skull"), consistent with the prophetic type of Isaac who carried the firewood to be used for his own sacrifice up the mountain⁵⁷ (cf. Gen22:6).

⁵⁵ Not all sins are equal, some are "greater" (Cp., Matt26:24; Luk12:47-48).

⁵⁶ In the Gospel of Luke, the Latin name of this mountain is given, Calvary (Luk23:33), both of which mean "skull".

⁵⁷ Many teach that the Temple Mount, upon which both the 1st and 2nd temples stood, was the very place of Abraham's offering of Isaac on the mountain of Moriah, that

What about Simon of Cyrene? The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record Simon of Cyrene carrying the cross of Christ (cf. Matt27:32; Mk15:21; Luk23:26). The issue is not simply that John omitted this detail in his Gospel; rather, John 19:17 indicates that Jesus was "bearing His cross" when He arrived at Golgotha/Calvary. Most have presumed that Jesus began to carry His cross, but because of weakness (presumably from the scourging that preceded it) He collapsed under its weight at some point along the way, unable to continue, at which point the Roman soldiers compelled Simon to carry it the rest of the way. A more careful analysis of the accounts in Matthew, Mark, and Luke indicate Simon was compelled to carry the cross at the beginning of the journey to Calvary, not at the end. It was the Roman soldiers who presumed Jesus would be unable to carry His own cross as a result of the scourging He received, and they compelled Simon to carry it from the outset. It was Simon, not Jesus, who at some point collapsed under the weight of the cross, at which time Jesus took the cross from Simon and bore it to Calvary. The symbolism behind the real record is magnificent. No man helped Jesus in His work of propitiation, **Jesus performed His work alone.** Even the one man whom the Romans compelled to help Jesus in His journey to the cross failed in the attempt to do so (cf. Eph2:8-9).

- [18] Execution by crucifixion was common within the 1st century Roman empire; on this particular day, three were "crucified", with Jesus on the "middle" cross⁵⁸, in fulfillment of Isaiah 53:12 (i.e., "he was numbered with the transgressors"). Furthermore, David prophesied in the 10th century BC that in the death of Messiah, "they pierced my hands and my feet" (Ps22:16), a phenomenon unique to crucifixion, but not practiced until the Roman empire.
- [19] The "title" Pilate had superscribed above the "cross" was undoubtedly meant to mock the claim of "JESUS" to be "THE KING OF THE JEWS"; ironically, it was true!
- [20] The place where Jesus was crucified was "[near] to the city", but outside of it, consistent with the prophetic type of the sin offering which was commanded to be burned "without the camp" (Lev4:12,21; Cp., Heb13:10-12). The superscription above the cross was written in "Hebrew", "Greek", and "Latin", representing the three-fold division of humanity as descended from the sons of Noah: Shem, Japheth, and Ham (Gen10:1ff).
- [21] The "chief priests" objected to Pilate's superscription (v19), concerned that while Jesus presented (i.e., "He said") Himself as "King of the Jews", a claim they denied, the inscription as written appeared to assert it as a fact.
- [22] Nevertheless, in the providence of God, the truth of who Jesus was remained above the cross despite the objections of the chief priests.

allegedly being the reason God chose it for the site of the Temple. However, Genesis 22:14 indicates that the place of Isaac's offering on Mount Moriah would be the place of Christ's crucifixion.

⁵⁸ This cross had presumably been intended for Barabbas.

- [23] The fact that Jesus had a seamless coat, being quite valuable, is a mystery. However, it appears to be consistent with the prophetic type of the "coat of many colors" that Jacob gave to his most beloved son, Joseph (Gen37:3).
- [24] The fact that the "soldiers" divided the "raiment" of Jesus among themselves, and "for my vesture did they cast lots", was a fulfillment of Psalm 22:18.
- [25] There are four women mentioned as being at the cross, three of which were named "Mary". Mary's "sister", not named in John's Gospel, was Salome (Mk15:40), who was apparently the wife of Zebedee and mother of James and John (Matt27:56).
- [26] It was an obligation of the firstborn son to care for a widowed mother. Thus, it fell to Jesus to provide for Mary (cf. Matt1:25). From the cross, Jesus entrusted the care of His mother Mary to "the disciple, whom he loved" (i.e., John), rather than to His half-brothers, likely because they were not believers at this time (cf. Jn7:5).
- [27] From that time, John cared for Mary in "his own home". It is possible that the "elect lady" John addresses in 2 John 1 was Mary.
- [28] Despite the unimaginable agony Jesus experienced on the cross, He was in full command of His mental faculties and consciously moving events along their prophesied course (e.g., "knowing that all things were now accomplished"). In saying, "I thirst", Jesus "fulfilled scripture" (cf. Ps22:15; 69:3).
- [29] The "vinegar" (i.e., sour wine) was offered to victims of crucifixion as a mild anesthetic; Jesus accepted it (v30) in fulfillment of Psalm 69:21, but only after His sacrificial work as High Priest was complete (cf. Lev10:9; Matt27:34,45). It was offered to Jesus "upon hyssop", commonly used in Passover ceremonies (Exod12:22) and sacrifices (Cp., Num19:6; Ps51:7; Heb9:19).
- [30] In saying, "It is finished" (a single word in Greek, *τετέλεσται*, which could properly be translated as *paid in full*), Jesus referred to His propitiatory work as "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn1:29). From God's point of view, everything necessary to propitiate sin, allowing Him to forgive sinners, was completed by the work of Christ on the cross (cf. Rom3:25-26; Col2:14-15; 1Jn2:2). Once completed, Jesus "gave up the ghost" in fulfillment of His own prophetic words (cf. Jn10:17-18).

Note on Psalm 22. Psalm 22 is a psalm of David written from the perspective of Christ **on the cross** (cf. Ps22:14-18). The first and last recorded sayings of Christ from the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt27:46) and "It is finished" (Jn19:30), are the first and last⁵⁹ verses of Psalm 22. Some have suggested that Jesus might have actually quoted Psalm 22 in its entirety while hanging on the cross. Nonetheless, even if Jesus did not quote the

⁵⁹ Though Psalm 22:31 as it appears in most English versions does not read, "It is finished", the Hebrew word and grammatical construction is identical to 2 Chronicles 4:11 where it is rendered, "finished the work".

entire psalm, by quoting its distinctive first and last verses it would have been immediately brought to the mind of every Jew.

THE BURIAL OF JESUS

- [31] Much confusion has resulted from a misunderstanding of the day (of the week) on which Jesus was crucified. Here, the day of the crucifixion is called "the preparation", which is most often used to designate Friday⁶⁰ (i.e., the day before the weekly "sabbath"). However, Christ was crucified on the day of Passover (cf. Lev23:5), which was the day before the Feast of Unleavened Bread began (cf. Lev23:6), the first day of which is a "sabbath day" regardless of the day of the week on which it falls (Lev23:7); thus, Passover is always a day of "preparation", whether it occurs on Friday or not. That the particular "sabbath day" in view here was not the weekly sabbath is clear, as "that sabbath day was an high day" (i.e., the start of the Feast of Unleavened Bread).
- "The Jews" petitioned "Pilate that their legs might be broken" as a way to hasten the death of Jesus, since death by crucifixion often took days to accomplish. Since the mechanics of being hung by the wrists put tremendous pressure on the chest cavity, breathing was aided by pushing up with the legs; once the legs were broken, death by suffocation occurred relatively quickly. The concern of the Jews was that the body of Jesus be removed from the cross to avoid defiling the high holy day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread that would begin at sunset (cf. Deut21:22-23).
- [32] Pilate consented to the request of the Jews, and the "legs" of the two thieves were "broke" first.
- [33] However, "when they came to Jesus", "He was dead already". From the human perspective, the extreme exhaustion caused by the scourging Jesus received (v1) probably left Him too weak to continue pushing up to breathe; from the divine perspective, Christ chose the very moment of His death (cf. Luk23:46; Jn19:30). Since He was already dead, "they broke not his legs" (cf. v36).
- [34] Presumably to confirm that Jesus was dead, a Roman soldier "pierced" His "side" (cf. v37). Out of Jesus' side flowed "blood and water". Much discussion concerning this detail has focused on what it reveals about the death of Jesus medically. However, this detail is not primarily medical, but theological (cf. v35).
- [35] John (the writer of this Gospel) "bore record" as an eyewitness to the way in which Jesus died, which he asserts in his first epistle guarantees "eternal life" to any who "believeth on the Son of God" (cf. 1Jn5:6-12).

⁶⁰ The reference to "the preparation" in John 19:31 is the only biblical argument used for a Friday crucifixion, but it is not a conclusive argument since Passover is always followed by a sabbath day regardless of the day of the week on which it falls. Thus, John 19:31 does not necessarily indicate that Jesus was crucified on a Friday. In actuality, the crucifixion occurred on a **Thursday**; for a full discussion of this issue, see the box concerning this subject at Matthew 28:1 in the NOTES ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

- [36] That Jesus' legs were not "broken" (which was common for victims of crucifixion) "fulfilled scripture" concerning the Passover Lamb (Exod12:46; Ps34:20).
- [37] That Jesus was "pierced" also fulfilled "scripture" concerning the Messiah (Zech12:10; cf. Rev1:7)
- [38] "Joseph, of Arimathaea" was a wealthy man (Matt27:57). He was also a Pharisee who was a member of the Sanhedrin (Luk23:50), but he "had not consented to the counsel and deed of them" when they voted to condemn Jesus (Luk23:51). He was also counted among the Jews "who waited for the kingdom of God" (Luk23:51), meaning he was part of the righteous remnant of believing Jews when Christ came (cf. Luk2:25,38; Jn1:12). But most importantly, he was "a disciple of Jesus", though this fact was not publicly known until after His death. His wealth and position on the Sanhedrin gave him access to "Pilate", and Pilate granted his request for "the body of Jesus".
- [39] "Nicodemus", also a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin (cf. Jn3:1) who also did not consent to condemn Jesus (cf. Jn7:50-51), is similarly revealed to be a believer after His death.
- [40] Joseph and Nicodemus hastily prepare "the body of Jesus" for burial.
- [41] Jesus' body was placed in a "new sepulcher" that was owned by Joseph (Matt27:60; cf. Isa53:9). Sepulchers were expensive, and they were typically used to bury many of the bodies of a family. That the "sepulcher" was "new" indicates that the body of Jesus was the first to be placed in this sepulcher, typologically consistent with the requirement that a sin offering be taken "without the camp unto a **clean place**" (Lev4:12; cf. Heb13:13).
- [42] The body of Jesus was "laid" in the "sepulcher" by Joseph and Nicodemus on the "preparation day" (i.e., Passover) to avoid defiling the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (cf. Lev23:5-7; Deut21:22-23) which would begin at sunset.

CHAPTER 20

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

The resurrection of Christ occurred on the Sunday following Passover, which would have been the Feast of First Fruits (cf. Lev23:11). Thus, the resurrection of Christ was a typological-prophetic fulfillment of the Feast of First Fruits (cf. 1Cor15:20), even as the sacrifice of Christ was the typological-prophetic fulfillment of Passover (1Cor5:7); in both cases, Christ's fulfillment of the prophetic aspects of the feast day occurred on the very day the feast was being observed.

- [1] The "first day of the week" on the Jewish calendar was **Sunday**, which was the day of Jesus' resurrection. "Mary Magdalene" came to the sepulcher "early, when it was yet dark"; thus, sunrise had not yet occurred, although the "day" began at sunset the evening before. The "stone" used to cover the "sepulcher" has already been "taken away" when Mary arrived.

- [2] The use of the plural pronoun "we" indicates that others came to the sepulcher with Mary, including "the other Mary" (Matt28:2) and "Salome" (Mk16:1). They came to "anoint" the body of Jesus (i.e., complete the preparation of the body for burial), since there had not been adequate time to do a thorough job on the afternoon of Passover⁶¹; since there had been two sabbaths (i.e., Friday and Saturday; cf. Matt28:1) since Passover on Thursday, Sunday was the first day in which this activity could be performed. Discovering the sepulcher to be empty, "Mary" returned to inform "Peter" and "the other disciple, whom Jesus loved" (i.e., John), presuming the body to have been "taken" (i.e., stolen).
- [4] "Peter" and "that other disciple" (i.e., John) ran to the "sepulcher", with John arriving first.
- [5] Though John arrived at the sepulcher first, he did not enter it; John's hesitation to enter the sepulcher might suggest he was a Levite (Cp., Jn18:15). Yet, peering in he could see "the linen clothes lying", without the body of Jesus.
- [6] Upon Peter's arrival, he immediately entered the "sepulcher" to inspect "the linen clothes lying" empty, indicating that the resurrected body of Jesus had simply passed through them; otherwise, Peter would have found an unrolled mass of linen strips.
- [7] The scene in the empty sepulcher is not what would have been expected had Jesus' body been stolen.
- [8] When "that other disciple" (i.e., John) finally entered the sepulcher, he realized from the scene what obviously must have happened, and he "**believed**". The resurrection of Jesus was the final "sign" (cf. Matt12:39-40; Jn20:30-31).
- [9] During their time with Jesus, He discussed His own death and resurrection with His disciples (Cp., Matt16:21-22; Luk18:31-34). However, it says the disciples "[understood] not the scripture" which prophesied Christ's resurrection (cf. Matt12:39-40; Act2:27,29-31); these scriptures were explained by Jesus to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (cf. Luk24:25-27,44-46).

THE POST-RESURRECTION APPEARANCES OF CHRIST

- [11] Apparently "Mary [Magdalene]" (v1) had returned to the sepulcher with Peter and John, but she remained when they went home (v10).
- [12] The scene inside the sepulcher that Mary saw was a picture of the Holy of Holies inside the Tabernacle/Temple (Cp., Exod25:19), the one place on earth where atonement for sin could be made. While the "body of Jesus" was absent, His blood presumably stained the place on which He had lain (cf. Lev16:15). This was, in effect, the "shadow of things to come" the high priest saw every year, when he entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement (Col2:17). Note, the

⁶¹ Jesus died about 3 pm on Passover (cf. Matt27:46-50), with the sabbath associated with the Feast of Unleavened Bread beginning at sunset (approximately 6 pm), so Joseph and Nicodemus would have had a few hours at most to obtain the body from Pilate, anoint and wrap it, and transport it to the sepulcher before sundown.

detail that the angels were "sitting" reinforces the fact that the work of sacrificing is complete (cf. Heb10:11-18).

- [13] Mary's "weeping" (v2) indicates she still thought the body of Jesus had been stolen.
- [14] "Jesus standing"⁶² indicates resurrection. In His resurrection body, Jesus was often not readily recognized at first (though it eventually was), even by those who had been closest to Him (Cp., Luk24:16; Jn21:4,12). The resurrection body can be expected to be very different (cf. 1Cor15:35-44), though recognizable.
- [15] Even hearing His voice, Mary did not immediately recognize Jesus in His resurrection body. Note that the very first post-resurrection appearance of Jesus was to Mary, a "woman", although she is not included in Paul's enumeration of post-resurrection witnesses⁶³ (cf. 1Cor15:5-8).
- [16] Mary recognizes "Jesus" when He speaks her name. She responds with, "Rabboni", which means "[my] Master" (i.e., my Teacher).
- [17] Jesus did not allow Mary to "touch" Him at this time, because "I am not yet ascended to my Father". While the perfect sacrifice had been made in the death of Jesus, the blood⁶⁴ of Christ had "yet" to be applied to the mercy seat in the heavenly Temple (Heb9:22-26; cf. Exod25:9; Lev16:15,33; Heb8:5; Rev11:19). Note that Jesus referred to His disciples as "my brethren", indicating a new relationship exists between believers and Jesus Christ after His resurrection (Cp., Jn15:15).
- [18] Mary communicates to "the disciples" that she had seen "the Lord".
- [19] On "the same day at evening, being the first day of the week" (i.e., Sunday evening; cf. v1), Jesus appeared to "the disciples" in a room in which "the doors were shut" without requiring the "doors" to be opened. This suggests a resurrection body does not have the physical limitations of a mortal body (Cp., 1Cor15:40; 1Jn3:2).
- [20] Apparently the resurrection body of Jesus bears the scars of His crucifixion, at least "his hands and his side" (Cp., Rev5:6).
- [21] "Peace" (Heb., shalom) is the standard Jewish greeting, but in this context it has a profound significance (cf. Rom5:1). Jesus' reference to the divine "send[ing]" of the disciples is the first post-resurrection reference to the so-called Great Commission (cf. Matt28:19-20; Mk:16:15; Luk24:47; Act1:8).
- [22] Jesus imparted "the Holy Spirit" to the disciples by "breath[ing] on them" (Cp., Gen2:7). This was not spirit baptism (cf. Act1:5,8), as

⁶² The Greek word for "resurrection" is *ἀνάστασις*, which means *to stand again*.

⁶³ No women are mentioned in Paul's list of witnesses, probably because the testimony of women was not accepted under the Law of Moses (Deut19:15).

⁶⁴ For this reason, the propitiation of the sins of the world (1Jn2:2) requires more than the death of Christ, but also necessarily includes the application of His blood to the mercy seat in heaven; this explains the emphasis on the "blood" of Christ relative to our redemption (cf. Rom3:25; 5:9; 1Cor11:25; Eph1:7; 2:13; Col1:14,20).

the Body of Christ did not begin until Pentecost (Act2:1-4; Cp., Act11:15-16), but probably the giving of "the Holy Spirit" in His ministry of illumination (cf. 1Cor2:12), such that the disciples would begin to understand those things Jesus had taught them.

- [23] This verse has nothing to do with Roman Catholic dogma that asserts that God has invested the power to forgive sins on earth in a human priesthood. Rather, it is connected to the Great Commission (v21; Mk16:15) in which those Christ "sends" have the privilege of announcing to all (i.e., "whosoever") the exclusive terms by which "sins" are "remitted" (Cp., Mk16:16; Act13:38-39) through the preaching of the gospel of grace (cf. 1Cor1:17-18,21). The forgiveness of sins is a blessing promised in the New Covenant (cf. Jer31:31,34) made possible after the sacrifice of Christ (Cp., Matt26:28; Heb10:4).

JESUS APPEARS TO THOMAS

- [24] "Thomas" was not present with the other disciples when Jesus first appeared to them on Sunday evening, the day of the resurrection (v19). "Didymus" means *two-fold* or *double* and is often used to mean *twin*.
- [25] Here, Thomas represents the stereotypical Jew, who "will not believe" unless he sees a sign (cf. 1Cor1:22). This position implicitly assumes that human experience is more authoritative than the testimony of Scripture; both Jesus and the Apostle Peter refute that assumption as false (cf. v29; 2Pet1:15-21).
- [26] By Jewish reckoning, "eight days" later would have been the following Sunday. Jesus exactly repeated His previous appearance with "Thomas" present (Cp., v19).
- [27] Jesus characterized Thomas' demand for a sign as "faithless" and called on him to "believe".
- [28] Thomas' confession, "My Lord and my God", was an acknowledgement of both the Messiahship and Deity of Jesus. For him, the resurrection of Jesus proved He was the Son of God (cf. Rom1:4).
- [29] Thomas "believed" only after "see[ing]" the resurrected Jesus (Cp., 1Cor1:22); this was genuine faith, yet very few will have the privilege of physically seeing Jesus as His disciples did. However, Jesus asserted that there is a greater "bless[ing]" for "they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (cf. Jn17:20; 2Cor5:7; 1Pet1:8; Heb11:1).
- [30] John (the Gospel writer) asserts that Jesus did "many other signs", "which are not written in this book"; obviously, many of these "other signs" were recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, although we should not presume that even their Gospels are exhaustive records. Note that "signs" are supernatural events (miracles) that **signify** something; they are miracles that should be expected to have **typological** significance.

The Noah Webster Dictionary (1828) gives the following definition:
"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".

- [31] The seven "signs" recorded by John in his Gospel are evangelistic in purpose. To believe that "Jesus is the Christ" is by definition to acknowledge His Messiahship; to believe that Jesus is "the Son of God" is to acknowledge His Deity (cf. Jn10:33,36). Note the use of the helping verb "might", which indicates the subjunctive mood; "believing" which results in "[eternal] life" has been made possible, even for Jews who "require a sign" (cf. 1Cor1:22), but it is not assured. Implicit in this assertion of John is that these seven "signs" alone are sufficient for belief.

CHAPTER 21

EPILOGUE

John 20:30-31 seemingly brings this Gospel to a powerful and fitting end. John 21 serves as an Epilogue (or Appendix) to address two outstanding issues: 1) the restoration of Peter as a disciple after his denial of Christ, and 2) the correction of a misunderstanding that had developed concerning John's relationship to the return of Christ.

RESTORATION OF PETER'S DISCIPLESHIP

- [1] Some time had passed since Jesus' appearances to His "disciples" in Jerusalem (Jn20:19-29), since they were now at "the Sea of Tiberias" (i.e., Galilee).
- [2] Seven of the disciples were present, two of which are not identified by name. The "sons of Zebedee" are James and John (Cp., Luk5:10).
- [3] Fishing was not a recreational activity then as it is today. When "Peter" declares, "I go fishing", it expresses his intention to return to his former occupation (Cp., Matt4:18-22). That they "caught nothing" after fishing all "night" brings to mind a similar encounter with Jesus three years before, after which "they forsook all, and followed him" (cf. Luk5:1-11).
- [4] This was yet another occasion of Jesus not initially recognized in His resurrection body (Cp., Jn20:14; v12).
- [5] Jesus compelled them to acknowledge that their labor apart from Him had been fruitless (cf. Jn15:1-8).
- [6] The resurrected Jesus demonstrated that His power and authority over the creation had not been diminished (Cp., Luk5:4-6; cf. Matt28:18).
- [7] It was "that disciple whom Jesus loved" (i.e., John) who was first to recognize the "Lord" Jesus, but it was the ever impulsive "Peter" who swam to shore in order to be first to meet Jesus.
- [8] The disciples who remained in the boat struggled to "drag" the large catch to shore, since it was too heavy to lift into the boat (v6).

- [9] Upon their arrival at shore, the disciples learned that Jesus already had a meal of "fish" and "bread" prepared for them. This was a demonstration that a return to fishing as an occupation was unnecessary; Jesus expected them to remain in ministry full-time, and their provision would come from the Lord (Cp. Matt6:31-33).
- [10] In fishing under the leadership of Peter, the disciples had caught nothing. Jesus called them to quantify the result of their labor under His direction.
- [11] In the disciples' prior encounter with Jesus, their catch under His direction was so large it had broken the net (cf. Luk5:6), which necessarily resulted in the loss of some fish. In this post-resurrection encounter, the "net" was not "broken"; thus, no fish were lost (Cp., Jn6:39; 17:12; 18:9).

The Significance of 153 Fish. Commentators have long struggled to ascertain a significance for the "hundred and fifty and three" fish that were caught. Many have attempted to connect it with the number of nations in the world, hoping to show that "fish" would be caught from all the nations of the world; although true (cf. Rev5:9; 7:9), that does connection does not seem to fit⁶⁵. However, there may be a mystical connection to that same end. The gospel of grace was entrusted to two men (cf. Gal2:7): Peter was to take the gospel to the circumcision (i.e., Jews), and Paul was to take it to the uncircumcision (i.e., Gentiles), which together represent the whole world. Coincidentally, the names "Peter" and "Paul" each occur in **exactly 153** verses of the Bible⁶⁶.

- [12] To "dine" with Jesus is a picture of intimate fellowship with the Lord (Cp., Gen18:1,5; Rev3:20).
- [13] Jesus provided His disciples with "fish", without the necessity for them to fish. This communicated to them that they were to continue in ministry on Jesus' behalf, and He would provide for their needs.
- [14] Although there were seven post-resurrection appearances of Jesus, this was "the third time" (cf. Jn20:19,26) he appeared with "his disciples" (i.e., apostles).
- [15] In this encounter, Jesus addresses Peter as "Simon". "Simon" was his name before Jesus called him to be His disciple, whereas "Peter" (meaning *great rock*) was the name Jesus gave him as His disciple (cf. Jn1:42); in denying Jesus three times, Peter had lost his discipleship.

Jesus asked "Simon", "lovest thou me more than these?" Here, "these" refers to the other apostles, since Peter had previously asserted he would be that last of Jesus' disciples to forsake Him (cf. Matt26:33; Mk14:39; Jn13:37). Peter confessed, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee" (omitting any comparison of his love for Jesus relative to others, which would have been moot at this point), which led to Jesus' command to, "Feed my lambs". Rather than a fisherman, Peter's

⁶⁵ At one point the United Nations had 153 members, which made this interpretation particularly popular. However, in the Biblical worldview, the world is comprised of 70 Gentile nations plus Israel, not 153 (Genesis 10; Deut32:8).

⁶⁶ This phenomenon only occurs in the King James Bible.

occupation was to be a shepherd-like Christ (cf. 1Pet5:1-4). Note that the "lambs" are Christ's (Cp., Jn10:14), not Peter's.

- [16] Jesus repeated the same question, and Peter again confessed, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee". Jesus commanded, "Feed my sheep". Here, Jesus changed the objects of Peter's care from "lambs" (v15) to "sheep". Jesus spoke figuratively of believers, so "lambs" represent babes in Christ (1Pet2:2), whereas "sheep" represent mature believers (Jn10:27). Jesus commanded Peter to care for the whole flock (i.e., Church; cf. Act20:28).
- [17] Jesus repeated the same question "the third time". Peter was "grieved", presumably because Jesus' three-fold questioning of his love for Christ accentuated his three-fold denial of Christ in the hours leading up to the crucifixion (Jn18:17,25,27). Peter confessed a third time, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee". Peter appealed to the divine omniscience of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ to "know" that he genuinely "loved" Him. In this encounter, the grace of God is on display (Cp., Jn1:14,17) in that it is the "love" of Peter for Jesus that is determinative of his relational position, not Peter's behavior (i.e., the heinous sins of repeatedly denying Christ). Peter's three-fold confession of love for Christ supersedes his three-fold denial; Peter's discipleship⁶⁷ is restored.

Going Back to the Greek: Agapao vs. Phileo. In the dialogue of John 21:15-17, Jesus and Peter each used the verb "love" three times. However, in the Greek text, two different words are used. In His first two usages, Jesus said *ἀγαπᾶω*, but the third time He said *φιλέω*; Peter said *φιλέω* all three times. Many (perhaps most) commentators attempt to find significance in this variation. However, an analysis of the usage of these two verbs in the Greek N.T., and especially in the Gospel of John, seems to indicate that these two verbs are used synonymously as a matter of style. An example of this is found in John's familiar and repeated expression, "the disciple whom Jesus loved", which occurs 5 times (Jn13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7,20), and which also includes stylistic variation between *ἀγαπᾶω* and *φιλέω*.

- [19] In v18 Jesus gave a prophecy concerning Peter's death. The prophecy "signif[ied] by what death he should glorify God", meaning that Peter would die by crucifixion (Cp., Jn13:36; 2Pet1:14). While a prophecy concerning his own death must have been unnerving, at least Peter could find solace in the knowledge that when he again faced death over the issue of his loyalty to Christ, he would be found faithful and "glorify God". Jesus' command for Peter to "Follow me" was specific language of a Rabbi directed to His disciple (Cp., Jn1:38,43), affirming that Peter's discipleship had been restored.

JOHN'S RELATIONSHIP TO CHRIST'S RETURN

- [20] "Peter" turns his attention to "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (i.e., John).

⁶⁷ What had been lost was Peter's discipleship, which is dependent on abiding in Christ (cf. Jn15:7-8), not his salvation (cf. Mk16:7).

- [21] Jesus had prophesied concerning Peter's death (v19), and Peter seemingly seeks from Jesus a prophecy concerning John's death.
- [22] Jesus' response to Peter was, in effect, that His "will" concerning John should be of no concern to Peter. As a hyperbolic example, Jesus said, "[What] if I will that he tarry till I come"⁶⁸.
- [23] In the subsequent decades, Jesus' hyperbolic example concerning John (v22) had come to be understood by many as meaning "that that disciple should not die". At the time of the writing of this Gospel (c. 85-90 AD), John took the opportunity to correct the record; "Jesus said not unto [Peter], [John] shall not die". This is an instructive illustration of the use of a literal hermeneutic applied to the words of Jesus.
- [24] The "disciple whom Jesus loved" (v20; i.e., John) is "the disciple" who "wrote these things" (i.e., authored this Gospel).
- [25] John testified that there were "many other things which Jesus did" that were not written in his Gospel (nor in those of Matthew, Mark, and Luke). It is simply not possible to record every detail of a human life in "books" in this "world" (Cp., Rev20:12). Nevertheless, John asserted that what he did record was sufficient, such that one "might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (Jn20:31).

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

⁶⁸ Although used as a hyperbolic example that was not literally true (i.e., John physically died before the return of Christ), John did live to a very old age, he outlived all the other apostles and eyewitness disciples of Christ, and he was privileged to see the Second Coming of Christ in the grand prophetic vision recorded in the Book of Revelation.

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